

Mass Participation Events

Commentary for September 16, 2017 — When Singular Events Impact Millions

In a short span of time, the lives of millions of people were affected by widespread singular events in the United States. Not only were tens of millions influenced directly, but also tens of millions more participated indirectly and vicariously through television and internet in these mass participation events. One of those recent events was benign and caused no damage at all, but the other two were large-scale disasters.

The Solar Eclipse

The benign event was the solar eclipse of August 21, 2017, an event in space that had no deaths caused by the phenomena. Tens of millions of people were in the path of at least a partial eclipse of the sun by the moon.¹

- A CNN poll indicated that about half of the US population (323.1 million in 2016) planned to watch the eclipse live.
- About 12 million people live in the 70-mile path of totality of the eclipse, going from Oregon to South Carolina, with 2 to 7 million of the 200 million people who live within a day's drive to the path of totality would travel to see it.
- Others thought 20 million might be a conservative estimate for how many would watch from along the path.²
- The "Deadline Hollywood" website reported, "[NASA Claims 40 Million Watched Live Eclipse Broadcast Via Web & Social Media](#)." Even more saw news reports during and after the event.

"And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.'"

• **Genesis 1:14**

Read verses 15–19. Some signs are more important than others. The most important ones deal with the Messiah, Jesus Christ, both His first coming and future return. There is no mention in Scripture of lunar or solar eclipses except that the greater and lesser lights in the sky

¹ See the excellent article and wonderful short animation before the event in the *Wired* website, "[Total Solar Eclipse: Guess How Many People Can Actually Watch ...](#)" Twelve million people live in the path of the eclipse totality, but a much larger area is encompassed by shadow of a partial coverage of the sun by the moon. Of course, all numbers are estimates. Perhaps most people in the total/partial eclipse path went about their business and ignored the event. Yet the entire nation viewed it through media sources or, if they were outside, experienced the diminished light and temperature effects.

² The first three bullet items are from a *Vox* article, "[America's solar eclipse might have been the most watched in history](#)."

are for signs. It seems that partial and full lunar or solar eclipses have no identifiable prophetic significance as signs, other than as a timepiece of God's creation.

Even so, some will claim that the two disastrous hurricanes striking the southern coasts of the United States were connected with the eclipse.³ Statements like, "eclipses have always been bad omens portending doom," are not useful because they are not connected to any Scripture. There is no cause and effect link as to what kind of doom or disaster the eclipse predicted — only that something bad would happen after the eclipse.

The only "connection" between the eclipse and the hurricanes was their nearness in time. There is no predictive quality to such a time relationship. This is close to being magical thinking, which is condemned in the Bible. This may be what pagan "wisdom" teaches, but such thinking is not in the Word of God. If I am wrong, show me.

The signs relating to God's intervention in the affairs of man are given in the prophecies of Scripture. Some involve the entire world and others involve only Israel: **"Surely the Lord YHWH will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets"** (Amos 3:7). This statement applies only to the northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos was talking about the prophets in the time of King Jeroboam II of Israel and King Uzziah of Judah, the divided kingdom of the people of Israel (Amos 1:1).

Okay, who are God's prophets today? I am not one, and neither are you.⁴ We do not need prophets at this moment because we have the prophets and prophecies in the Scriptures. At some future time when events require it, prophets will arise to warn of events not presented in the text of the Bible. Even then, most of the prophetic warnings will be for Israel.

So, is it a coincidence that the two hurricane disasters struck a few days and weeks after the total eclipse that crossed the entire United States? No, it is not a coincidence. Events of such magnitude happen because God allows them to happen, for whatever reason, and we are not yet told "why." It is also possible that God allowed **"the prince of the power of the air"** (Ephesians 2:2, see Job 1:16, 18–19) to be the agents who make them happen. Again, like the eclipse, it shows the power of God's creation, and in the case of hurricanes, the power of wind (Psalm 78:26, 107:25, 135:7, 147:18), which is analogous to God's Spirit (John 3:8).

Natural Disasters

Within a short period, two great hurricanes struck the second and third most populous states in the country. Hurricane Harvey made landfall on August 25, 2017 on the coast of Texas just four days after the eclipse. The storm scraped the coast, moving northeast, affecting parts of Louisiana. The property damage was estimated to be hundreds of billions of dollars, but the death toll was surprisingly low due to timely warning from modern storm forecasting. Many along the Texas coast had sufficient time to evacuate. Those who stayed described the wind being like a roaring freight train lasting for hours. See the excellent interactive *New York*

³ Search for "eclipse, Harvey, Irma" on the internet. You will be amazed and amused.

⁴ We are God's children (1 John 3:1–2), with a much higher status than any prophet. Yes, there will be prophets again in the future (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). They will inform Israel, not the *ekklesia*.

Times article, "[Maps: Tracking Harvey's Destructive Path Through Texas and Louisiana.](#)"

Less than two weeks later, Hurricane Irma struck the southeastern state of Florida on September 10, 2017, a state of more than 20 million people. Every person still within Florida was impacted by Irma, including the panhandle, as it moved north through the direct center of the state, which seems to have decreased the intensity of the storm. Again, like Harvey, there were miraculously few casualties, but physical damage of multiple billions of dollars occurred, and damage to tens of thousands of homes. Again, the *New York Times* outdid themselves with outstanding interactive graphics in their internet article "[Maps: Tracking Hurricane Irma's Path Over Florida.](#)"

Mass Participation Events

Within a four week period, these three great events involved millions of people in the United States. Every person will retain a vivid memory of their experiences until they die. Each will deal with their experiences in different ways.

The eclipse brought to mind in many people the awe and majesty of the heavens, particularly of the unique "coincidence" that the disc of the moon precisely covers the disc of the sun to form a total eclipse, showing the corona.⁵ For us, this "sign in the heavens" tells us that creation was set in motion by a creator God, YHWH by name. No damage or loss of life occurred.

The experiences who went through the two hurricanes were different. With the hurricanes, for many people the dividing line between life and death became thin and death threatened to come from bad choices. Some were traumatized, others unaffected. During times of great threat, all reactions are genuine. God did not prevent the storms, but it seems He lessened the loss of life, even though these were some of the most powerful storms on record. They struck a wide portion of the southern coast of the United States after 12 years with no major hurricane-force storms in that part of the country. (See my Commentary "[Be Prepared.](#)")

In biblical times if you survived the devastation of your village, countryside, or kingdom or Temple by a natural disaster or by invaders, such traumatic events were remembered by future generations. It did not cause people to change from sin to righteousness (that is not possible except through Christ), but it caused people to pay attention to God for a while.

Future Worldwide and Biblical Mass Participation Events

One mass participation event prophesied to happen will be the deaths of the two witnesses. The world will watch their bodies to as a demonstration that they are still dead, and that they were false prophets, according to the antichrist's lies. The text of the events indicates the "watching of the bodies" will be a worldwide event. Only in the past few decades has technology been available for the constant viewing of such an event by a great mass of people:

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of

⁵ Sometimes, when the moon is farthest from the earth in its elliptical orbit, the disc of the moon is smaller and does not fully cover the sun. This is because the moon's orbit, like most of celestial bodies orbits, is elliptical, not a circle.

the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. ...

And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, 'Come up hither.' And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them."

• *Revelation 11:7–12*

The resurrection of the two witnesses probably will occur during Christ's return. This episode hints at the effect the antichrist will have when God gives the world a spirit of delusion before the return of the true Christ:

"And therefore God will be sending them an operation of deception, for them to believe the falsehood, that all may be judged who do not believe the truth, but delight in injustice."

• *2 Thessalonians 2:11–12, Concordant Literal Version*

Christ's Return

Christ's return will be the greatest mass participation event. It will not be pleasant and every-one on earth will experience it. Suddenly, day will be turned into night, so all in the world will see the bright glory of Christ's return:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall [1] the sun be darkened, and [2] the moon shall not give her light, and [3] the stars shall fall from heaven, and [4] the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

• *Matthew 24:29–30*

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

• *Mark 13:24–26*

"And there shall be signs [1] in the sun, and [2] in the moon, and [3] in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

• *Luke 21:25–27*

Christ's return will not be an eclipse event. The sun, moon, and stars are darkened. The darkness will show God's power just before the Son of Man shows His glory.

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