

Steeple News

April 2024

Reflection on the Coming Eclipse

In a few days after you receive this monthly newsletter, we will observe a natural astronomy phenomenon which will happen only once in our lifetimes, the total eclipse of the sun. We, here in central Texas, will have the best view of this as anywhere else in America. How often do we look at the skies and observe the sun, the moon, and the stars? These heavenly lights have looked upon us from their whirling spheres since the beginning of time. They seem unchanged as they meet their appointed revolutions of days and years, seeming unchanged while empires of men come and go. People from the past gave them names and human forms, worshipped them, feared them, and slowly began to understand them.

In the inscrutable wisdom of God, knowledge is not free for the asking. All truths, religious or scientific, represent some person's endless toil: some truths represent the painful labors of entire civilizations. Astronomy is no exception. The truths we take for granted today concerning the universe are the results of centuries of detailed observations and experience. The entire history of astronomy is filled with heroic figures who fought their way through dense jungles of superstition, ignorance, and error in their attempt to uncover truth. This includes the Greek astronomers who assumed without proof the shape of the earth and the distance to the moon, the Egyptian mathematicians who began the geometric computations for cosmic relationships, and the Italian and German astronomers who added their observations to the slowly developing body of truth. Entire lives were sacrificed to the gathering of minute facts, all contributing to our awareness of ourselves and of our vast surroundings.

So, we come to our present time with our ever increasing knowledge that we live on this revolving sphere surrounded by endless time and space. This planet of ours which revolves through the universe with precision along with other spheres, other stars, and other galaxies is part of a universe we cannot understand. We stand in awe of creation and the majestic work of our creator. With all that we have learned, we sail on our maiden voyage in life into the entire universe of truth and knowledge.

Through astronomy we discover human truths. As we turn our telescopes toward the sun and the stars, and we see the coming eclipse, we find reflected there an image of ourselves. With great clarity, revealed against the handiwork of God, we see our impotence and futility and our dependence upon our creator of the heavens and earth.

Not in agnostic doubt or atheistic scorn do we observe the stars and the eclipse, but with reverence. We look, we ponder, and then we praise, saying the same thing as our creator God who brought all things into being, "It is Good."

Rev. Hans Lillejord