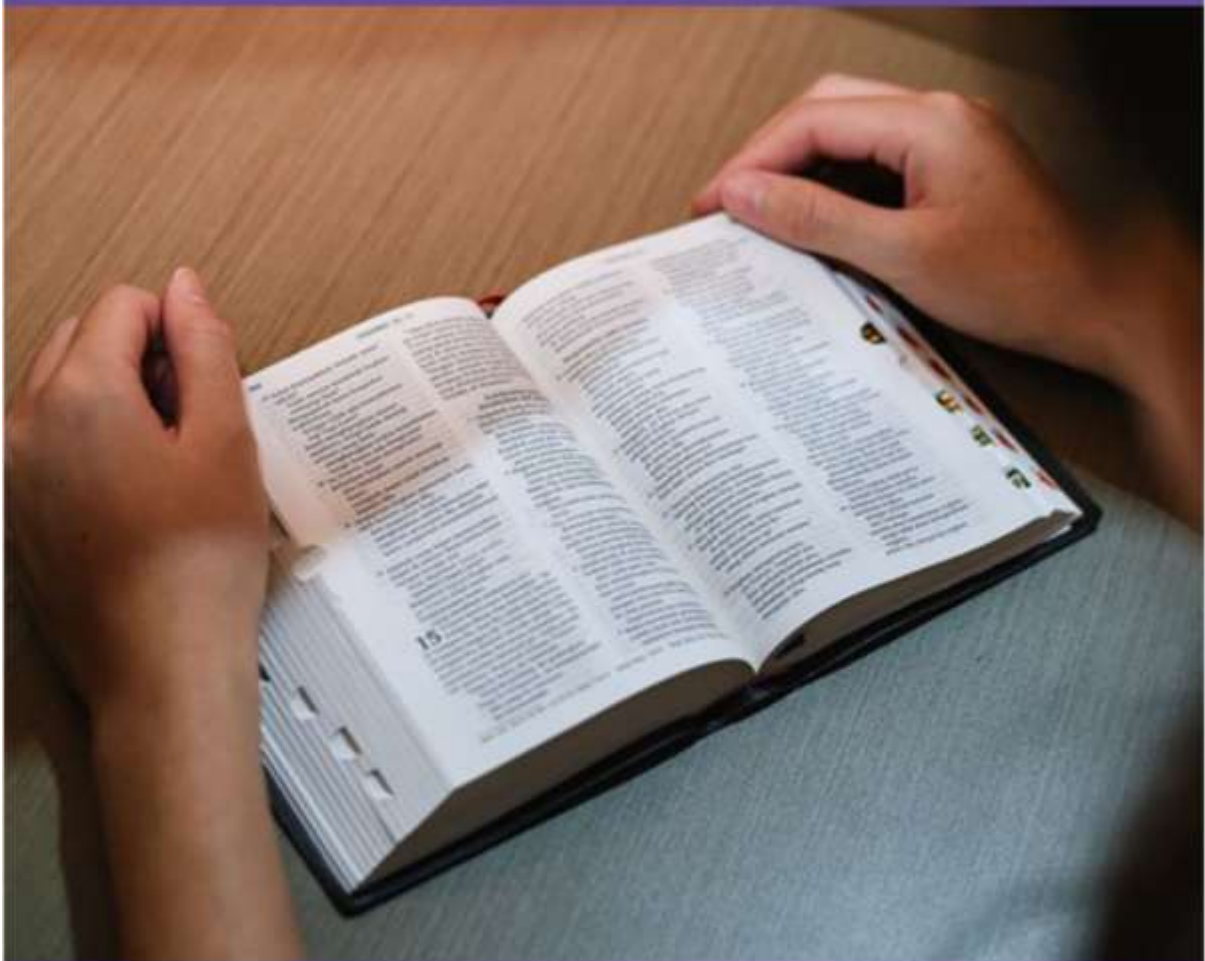


Persistent In Reading The Bible

Yunus Ciptawilangga, M.B.A.



FOREWORD

The Bible is the living word of God. Therefore, every believer truly needs to persistent in reading it. Through this little book, the author would like to invite readers to re-read and reflect on every part of God's word, from Genesis to Revelation, without missing a single one.

Thus, we can get to know and be closer to God. We will also realize that reading, understanding, and doing what is written in the Bible can bring extraordinary blessings. However, our lack of understanding of the Bible can cause us to be easily led astray, so that we can lose our salvation.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Author

PERSISTENT IN READING THE BIBLE

Reading the Bible

If the author asks whether readers like reading the Bible? The author is sure that most readers will say "Yes!" There may also be readers who say, *"I read the Bible every day."*

However, what the author means by reading the Bible is **reading the entire contents of the Bible**, namely from Genesis to Revelation without skipping anything. So, it's not just reading a few verses today, then tomorrow reading a few other verses, or for example reading reference verses from daily devotions. So, what is meant by "reading the Bible" in this book is reading the entire Bible without skipping anything.

Some people argue that we don't need to read the book of Leviticus because it is related to the Torah. There are also those who feel that there is no need to read the book of Deuteronomy because the contents are repetitive. Others skip the books of Job, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, even the book of Revelation because they are considered difficult to understand.

Once again, in this book, reading the Bible means reading the entire Bible without skipping or leaving out anything, not just one book, one verse, one word, or even one punctuation mark.

Furthermore, the author would like to convey that the material in this book is mostly related to the author's personal experience, hopefully the readers will not mind.

Perhaps some readers already know that the author became a Christian after 20 years of studying the five religions in Indonesia, from 1980 to 2000. This experience has been briefly written in a book entitled *20 Years of Searching for the True Religion*.

Awondatu and Zainuddin M.Z.

The author has been to Sunday School since childhood and was baptized in his teens. In 1980, when he was in his first year of college, there was a Comparative Religion lesson. That lesson made the author realize that, besides Christianity, there were four other religions that were recognized in Indonesia at that time, namely Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Catholicism. The author was curious and wanted to know which of all those religions was true.

In an effort to increase his knowledge about Christianity, the author enjoyed listening to sermon cassettes because at that time he still had his own car, without a driver, so he could listen to sermons while driving. One of the author's favorite preachers was the late Rev. Awondatu.

At that time, every fasting month, before breaking the fast, the author usually was in front of the TV to watch and listen to the sermon of the late K.H. Zainuddin M.Z. For a whole month the author listened to his sermon to be able to understand Islam better.

As for studying Hinduism and Buddhism, the author usually went to temples or monasteries, observing the activities of the congregation.

Other activities carried out by the author to increase knowledge about these religions are reading, observing and discussing with followers and figures of these religions.

God is Most Just

When the author studied the five religions, one of the foundations was that God is most just, so when studying these religions, one of the criteria was whether the religion was fair or not. If it is not fair, it is likely not the true religion.

The author strongly believes that God is most just, so His teachings are certainly fair, especially those related to the criteria for whether or not someone can enter heaven, there is a basis for justice in it.

During that search, the author does not remember whether he had ever read the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation or not.

Then, in 2002, together with the late Ir. Matius Nanang, a lecturer at Tiranus Bible School, we wrote a book related to how to apply modern management in churches or Christian institutions, entitled *Winning in Church Competition*.

We wrote the book because we believed that the management system of churches or some Christian organizations was far behind compared to the systems in secular companies. The book, among other things, contains how to apply modern management simply and briefly in churches or Christian organizations.

In 2000, when he decided to become a Christian, the author began to read the Bible more seriously, but he does not remember whether he ever read the entire Bible or not.

What the author does remember is that he started reading the Bible from beginning to end as soon as he finished writing the book about church management.

Because the book was related to the church, it was possible that one day the author would be invited by a church or theological school. Because those things were related to the church and theological schools had a lot to do with the Bible, it was also very possible that they would ask about things related

to the Bible. So, the author thought that it would be very embarrassing if one of them asked something related to a simple Bible verse, but the author could not answer. Moreover, for example, when they mentioned a passage or verse from a book, the author had difficulty finding it because he did not know whether the passage or verse being asked about was in the New Testament or the Old Testament. Since then, the author began to read the entire Bible at least once a year.

The Bible Is Just an Ancient Book

Although he had read the Bible, at that time the author himself did not believe that what was written in the Bible was the word of God. This was due to the assumption that the Bible was just an ancient book. The reason why the author held this view was because at that time the author had completed his Masters in Management with a concentration in Marketing. In the world of marketing, what is studied are the newest or most up-to-date techniques or ideas. Therefore, every time he went to Singapore, the author would buy the newest marketing or management books that he did not have yet.

The Bible itself from the past until that time, even until now, its contents are the same. Nothing has changed. So, the author considers the Bible to be an ancient book, to be precise a good ancient book.

The Zacchaeus Passage

However, something extraordinary happened in 2004, when the author and his wife were paying their respects at the Bumi Baru funeral home. As usual, there was a consolation service and the one who delivered the word of God was an elderly pastor. The theme was about Zacchaeus. The author tried to listen to the sermon because, for the author, the theme of Zacchaeus for a consolation service was a strange theme.

Then, when he got home, the author talked to his wife about what Zacchaeus had to do with the consolation service. In our understanding, a servant of God must certainly deliver a theme that is appropriate to the situation and conditions. For example, in a consolation service, the theme chosen should be one that comforts the bereaved family, it could also be one that is themed on preaching the gospel, or a theme that reminds us all to prepare ourselves because we can be called by God at any time. However, the Pastor's sermon about Zacchaeus that night did not seem appropriate to the situation and conditions.

Finally, the author became curious and wanted to know what the Zacchaeus passage was actually explaining. If the story about Zacchaeus climbing a tree, the author had known since Sunday School. The author became increasingly curious and wanted to study the passage about Zacchaeus in more depth.

How surprised the author was when he studied the story of Zacchaeus himself, which turned out to be different from the story of Zacchaeus that is usually told by God's servants and Sunday School teachers, who generally explain that Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector who became rich because of corruption.

On the contrary, when the author studied it, both in the Indonesian and English versions of the Bible, it turned out not to be like that. Zacchaeus was not rich from collecting taxes, but was rich because of something else. In Luke 19:2 it says,

*"And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the publicans, **and** he was rich." (KJV).*

*"A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector **and** was wealthy." (NIV).*

The word "and" explains two different things. Spoons and forks, husband and wife. What does it mean? Zacchaeus was not rich because he collected taxes. If he was rich from collecting excise, perhaps the verse would be "a rich chief tax collector." He was a rich man and that was not because of the results of collecting taxes.

Fifteen Traits of Zacchaeus

When studying the passage about Zacchaeus in more depth, it turns out that the author found fifteen traits that explain

why Zacchaeus could become a successful businessman. The author interprets that Zacchaeus was rich because he was a businessman and the reason he was successful was because he had fifteen extraordinary traits.

How could the author find fifteen extraordinary traits of Zacchaeus from just seven verses in the passage (Luke 19:2–8)? It turns out that every punctuation mark, whether it is a period, semicolon, question mark, or exclamation mark, has its own meaning. Likewise with conjunctions and capital or lowercase letters, all have meaning.

As explained earlier, the presence of the conjunction "and" gives a different meaning to "a rich chief tax collector". This passage is what finally convinced the author that the Bible is the word of God because no human being - no matter how intelligent - is able to fit fifteen points into seven verses.

In fact, the author had planned to publish a book about the fifteen traits that made Zacchaeus a successful entrepreneur with the title *15 Secrets to Becoming a Successful Entrepreneur, Taken from the Zacchaeus Passage*.

After the book was finished, the author felt the need to ask for input from other parties. Then, the book was reproduced in ten copies and distributed to the author's friends, both businessmen and servants of God, to obtain their input or comments.

As far as the author can remember, there were at least seven people who agreed with the contents of the book. However, there were two people who disagreed. The first wrote a comment that the interpretation of the passage was excessive, while the other said that the passage was related to Zacchaeus' conversion and had nothing to do with being a businessman.

Therefore, the author did not publish it because, for the author, it was not important whether the book was published or not. What was more important was that the passage convinced the author that the Bible is the word of God. That is what is most important.

Reading and Meditating on the Word

In addition to this belief, the experience also made the author finally get used to reading the Bible slowly. When there are commas, exclamation marks, periods, capital letters, lower case letters, conjunctions, and so on, they will be noticed. So, it doesn't just go overboard.

The incident also made the author more diligent in reading the Bible because he is convinced that the Bible is truly the word of God. If previously he only read the entire Bible once a year, the author then read it twice a year. Usually, the author reads the LAI Bible twice or reads the LAI Bible, then continues by reading

other translated Bibles or English Bibles, either the King James Version or the New International Version.

Blessed Christian Family

The belief that the Bible is the word of God is strengthened by Bible verses related to family.

Both of us, the writer and his wife, were born into a family with parents who often fought. Therefore, when we wanted to get married, we were determined to form a good household, a harmonious household, without many fights.

Praise God, this year we just celebrated our 41st wedding anniversary and, as far as we can remember, during 41 years of marriage, we have fought less than twenty times, yes, we do not fight once a year. Why did that happen? Is it because we, husband and wife, are good people, extraordinary people? No. It happened solely because of God's promise in His word.

In addition to reading the Bible, we also often read books or attend seminars about family. When we tried to do what the books or seminars said and what was stated in the Bible, we found that what was written in the Bible was true.

What God requires and says in His word is what ultimately truly allows us to have a blessed family. What we experienced

was later written by the author in a book entitled *The Blessed Christian Family*.

The family that God blesses is based on **the head of the family who fears God**.

*¹Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him.²You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. ³**Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.**
⁴**Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord.**
⁵May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. ⁶May you live to see your children's children—peace be on Israel. (Ps. 128:1–6).*

Fear of God

If we read the Bible, it clearly says that God loves and blesses those who fear Him. The author has discussed what is meant by fear of God in several of the author's books. However, the author will explain it again here.

Let's associate "fear of God" with "fear of the police". There are three requirements for us to be afraid of the police.

The first requirement is that we know what the police are like. We need to know the characteristics of a police officer, both from their uniform, posture, attributes, and others. We need to

know the uniform because traffic police, water police, air police, or tourism police have their own characteristics.

In addition, we also need to know what the posture of the police is like, for example related to their minimum height. Likewise, we need to know the attributes related to the police so that we can distinguish between the police, the Indonesian National Army, or security guards (some of whom wear uniforms similar to the police).

The second requirement is that we must also know the laws related to the police, for example those related to the Traffic Unit, which is a police unit whose duties are related to matters or regulation of highway traffic: for example, if there is a police line, we know that road or place cannot be passed. Likewise with other police units, for example those that handle criminal and civil cases (Satreskrim) for which we must also study the laws.

The third requirement is that we obey the orders or instructions of the police and obey the laws related to the police.

To be able to be a person who fears God, we must know God. We must also understand and know His laws and commands and then obey. We cannot possibly obey if we have never read the Bible because God and all His laws are there.

Maybe some of us think that we don't need to read the Bible to be able to know God because every Sunday we go to church and listen to sermons. If we count, we go to church 52 times a

year. Even if we go twice a week, maybe only 100 times and usually we have forgotten the contents of last week's sermon, let alone the longer ones. If our knowledge is not supplemented by reading the Bible, maybe our knowledge will not be enough to know God and His laws. Therefore, if we do not know God and do not know His laws, we cannot possibly obey. If we do not obey, we cannot possibly be people who fear God.

Enoch Was Taken by God

The Book of Genesis records that there was a person named Enoch who did not die because he was taken by God while he was still alive.

Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. (Gen. 5:24).

This verse explains the reason why Enoch was taken by God, namely that *he walked faithfully with God*. What is the description of walking faithfully with God? According to the author, walking faithfully with God is one level above fearing God.

As explained previously, fearing God is knowing God and His laws and commandments, then obeying. It is like knowing Mr. Prabowo as our current president. We may know his date of birth, his military career, the names of his family members, the

location of his house, but we do not know his habits: what time he usually wakes up or goes to bed, what he does before going to bed, what he does if he has trouble sleeping, what he does if he is thinking about something, what he does if there is a serious problem, what food he likes, what food he doesn't like, and so on.

We can only get along well with Mr. Prabowo if we are in touch with him for a long period of time so that we can get to know him deeply, and we can even get to know very personal things about him.

Enoch could walk closely with God because he walked with God for 300 years, before he was finally taken away.

*After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God **300 years** and had other sons and daughters. (Gen. 5:22).*

Because Enoch walked with God for so long, he knew God deeply and could walk faithfully with God.

From Enoch's life, we can see that in God's eyes, people who walk with God are seen as Special. Therefore, God also treated him Specially.

Got a Traffic Ticket

The author remembers an experience in 2007. At that time, the author, his wife, and son and daughter-in-law were on vacation in Canada. At that time, our son and daughter-in-law wanted to go snowboarding. The author's son advised us not to wait at the snowboarding place because it was cold and boring. The snowboarding place was located on a hill and at the bottom of the hill there was a village or small town called Whistler. We were asked to wait there. Later, after they finished playing, they would go down to Whistler.

So, when we left, the author's son took the car to Whistler first to introduce the place to us, then we went up to the snowboarding place. After they got off, the author took the car down to Whistler. When we arrived at Whistler, the author looked for a parking space and saw a parking lot in front of the shops with a number of cars parked there, then decided to park there too. Then, we walked around and had lunch at Whistler. The place was very beautiful, there were many hotels, restaurants, and shops.

After finishing snowboarding, our son and daughter-in-law came to see us and planned to have dinner somewhere else. When we returned to the parking lot, the author's son said, "*Wow, I think we got a ticket!*" The author was surprised, "*Why, huh? I don't think Dad did anything wrong.*" When our son read the paper in the envelope attached to the car's wiper, he laughed, saying, "*The car is parked in the wrong place.*" Then, our son

pointed to a parking sign that explained that from Friday to Sunday and holidays the maximum parking limit was 2 hours. So, if we want to park longer, we have to park in another location that is further away from the shops.

As a tourist in another country, of course the author does not want to commit a violation. However, because he did not understand, the author parked in the wrong place. Likewise, we, we cannot be obedient and become people who fear God if we do not know God and His laws and commandments.

Literal vs. Symbolic

In the author's sermons and books, the author is one of those who encourage tithing. One day a friend shared a video that contained an explanation from a senior servant of God about tithing, especially related to Malachi 3:10.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

The servant of God in the video explained that the part of the verse, *"I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it,"* is symbolic or figurative by explaining it based on the

history and customs of the Israelites at the time the verse was written. In the author's book or sermon, it is explained that the part of the verse has a literal meaning, namely the intent or meaning of the verse according to what is written.

The author's friend then asked which one was correct. The author replied that to prove the truth of the verse **is to practice it or do it**. Later we can see which one is correct, whether the verse is literal or symbolic because the Bible is a living Word, not just a writing that has no power. The author believes that the verse has a literal meaning not based on its history, but **based on the author's experience**.

The incident occurred several years ago, when the author had been tithing for more than 30 years. Indeed, during that period the author had stopped tithing twice. The author stopped, then started again; stopped again, then continued until now.

The author himself does not remember why he stopped tithing. However, the most important thing is that the author can remember and compare the conditions of his life when he tithed with when he did not. That is why the author is very sure that the verse has a literal meaning **because the author experienced it himself**.

Tithing is an act of obedience that reflects our faith in God's promises. Tithing is not just about money, but also about our hearts being aligned with His purposes. In addition to expressing

faith, practicing tithing is a form of our gratitude to God for His blessings.

Joshua Believes in the Word

Now, let's turn to Joshua who was commanded by God to conquer Jericho. God said,

³March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. (Josh. 6:3–4).

First, at that time Joshua did not take a historical approach because the Israelites had never conquered a city by marching around. Second, it was not their custom either. In fact, the custom of carrying the ark of God had only occurred once or twice and never again after the ark of God was captured by the Philistines when they lost the battle. So why did Joshua want to do it? **Because he had faith, he believed that God's word was true and would definitely happen.**

God is Most Just

When studying or searching for the true religion, the author believes that God is most just. Likewise, when reading and

studying the Bible, the author believes that **because God is Most Just, all of God's children are given the ability to understand the Word**. It is impossible that God's word can only be understood by those who are graduates of theological schools, people with high intelligence, or those who have a certain education. The author believes that anyone can understand. That is why, from the beginning, the author immediately read the Bible without ever attending a theological school or following a Bible study program.

When routinely reading the Bible, the author finally found verses that explained that, as children of God, we can all understand the contents of the Bible. In fact, our hearts will be filled with the Word that comes from the Holy Spirit, as stated by the Lord Jesus before he ascended to heaven.

*³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, **rivers of living water will flow from within them.**" ³⁹By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:38–39).*

When we accept Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are redeemed from death to life and become God's property. In fact, God gives us the Holy Spirit as a sign that we belong to Him, which is also a guarantee that we will receive everything He has promised.

²¹Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²²**set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.** (2 Cor. 1:21–22).

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we are adopted as children of God, who had the right to call God, the Creator of heaven and earth, “Father.”

*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, **the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”*** (Rm. 8:15).

As a Father, God longs to be known by his children. Therefore, God has revealed himself through the Spirit who dwells in our hearts, who will reveal all things, even the hidden things of God, because the Spirit is God.

¹⁰*these are the things **God has revealed to us by his Spirit.** The Spirit searches all things, **even the deep things of God.*** ¹¹*For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except **the Spirit of God.*** (1 Cor. 2:11).

Because the Spirit that God gives into our hearts is God's own Spirit, He will teach and remind us of all His words. The Spirit of God will also lead us to be able to understand the whole word

of God. In fact, He will also convey to us things that will happen in the future.

- *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26).*
- *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and **he will tell you what is yet to come.** (John 16:13).*

Therefore, our level of education or intelligence shall not hinder us from understanding his word. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and he shall give us understanding.

- *As for you, **the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you.** (1 John 2:27a –NIV).*
- *But Christ has blessed you with the **Holy Spirit.** Now the Spirit stays in you, and **you don't need any teachers.** (1 John 2:27a – CEV).*

Studying the End Times

God gave the writer the opportunity to study the end times since the end of 2006. Together with two other writers, namely Rev. Dr. Jopie Rattu, D.Th., Ph.D. and Mr. Sridadi Atyanto, Ph.D., we have written six end times books published in Indonesia by Kalam Hidup Publishers and in America by Elm Hill

HarperCollins Publishers. These end times books are based on signs in the sky.

When the Lord Jesus first came as a baby, God gave a sign in the sky in the form of a star in the East, which then led the wise men to meet the Lord Jesus.

- *and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw **his star** when it rose and have come to worship him.” (Matt. 2:2-NIV).*
- *Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen **his star in the east**, and are come to worship him. (Matt. 2:2-KJV).*
- *After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. (Matt. 2:9-NIV).*

In connection with the second coming of the Lord Jesus, God also gave a sign in the sky in the form of solar eclipses and total lunar eclipses.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. (Acts 2:20).

From 2014 to 2027, God has given 26 signs that are in accordance with the verse, consisting of 13 solar eclipses and 13 total lunar eclipses (blood moons). Of the 26 eclipses, 22 eclipses occurred right on the feast days of the Israelites and 4 eclipses occurred right on the days that we interpret to be related

to the great tribulation that will occur in Jerusalem as recorded in the book of Revelation 2:10.

*Do not be afraid of what you are **about to suffer!** The devil is about to **throw some of you into prison** to be tested, and you will have tribulation **for ten days**. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*



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If we look at the eclipse table from 2014–2027, in addition to the eclipses occurring on the feast days of the Israelites and

the days associated with the 10 days of great tribulation in Jerusalem, the difference in days between the eclipses that occur in one year and the difference in days between the eclipses that occur in other years is the same.

For example, the difference in days between the total solar eclipse that occurred at the beginning of the year on 1 Nisan (March 20, 2015) and the total lunar eclipse that occurred on Passover on 14 Nisan (April 4, 2015) is 15 Gregorian calendar days or 14 Jewish calendar days. It is also the same with the difference in days of the eclipses and their partners, namely the total lunar eclipse that occurred at the beginning of the year 15 Shevat (January 31, 2018) and the partial solar eclipse that occurred on Passover on February 15, 2018, which is a difference of 15 days according to the Gregorian calendar or 14 days if calculated according to the Jewish calendar. The same thing also happens with eclipses and their partners for other years.

The calculation of days based on the Gregorian calendar is different from the Jewish calendar because the Gregorian calendar starts a new day from after midnight or 00:01, while the Jewish calendar starts a new day from sunset according to the day of creation.

*God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.”
And **there was evening**, and there was morning—the first day.
(Gen. 1:5).*

The Bible is Very Accurate and Detailed

If you read our end-time books, you will find that both the words and the numbers in the Bible are very accurate. In fact, that is what allows us to find the signs in the sky in the table.

For example, the beginning of the end times we find related to the verse in the book of Daniel 9:27.

*And **he shall confirm the covenant** with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (KJV).*

This means that the beginning of the end times is related to the confirmation made by the antichrist "*he shall confirm the covenant*" of the agreement that will burden many people. It turns out that this is related to the 85th birthday of Pope Benedict XVI.

Then, the book of Daniel 12:12 states,

*"Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the **1,335 days**."*

It turns out that 1,335 days from the beginning of the end times falls on the 7th candle of Hanukkah.

Next, if we look at the solar eclipses in the eclipse table, there are three types of solar eclipses, namely total solar eclipses, partial solar eclipses and annular solar eclipses. It turns out that the Bible also explains these types of solar eclipses in detail,

Acts 2:20,

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. (KJV).

(**The sun turned into darkness** refers to a **total solar eclipse** such as the eclipse on March 20, 2015).

Matthew 24:29,

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall **the sun be darkened**, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. (KJV).*

(**The sun be darkened** refers to a **partial solar eclipse** such as the eclipse on September 13, 2015).

Revelation 6:12,

*And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the **sun became black as sackcloth of hair**, and the moon became as blood.*

(The sun became black as sackcloth of hair refers to an annular solar eclipse like the one on December 26, 2019.)

Keep Watch

In the parable of the five foolish and five wise virgins written in Matthew 25:1–13, the Lord Jesus ended it with the message,

*“Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know the day or the hour.” (Matt. 25:13).*

One way to be watchful is to increase our understanding of the word of God because in the last days false prophets and false messiahs will arise who will deceive many of God’s children.

- ⁴*Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one **deceives** you.*
- ⁵*For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.*
- ¹¹*and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.*
- ²⁴*For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 24).*

If we do not have sufficient understanding of the word of God, we will be like the five foolish virgins who had no oil in their

jars. We will be easily led astray and will be left behind and unable to enter the banquet hall.

Therefore, let us use this very limited remaining time by reading, meditating, and practicing the word of God so that we will have oil in our jars so that we will not be easily led astray by false teachings and can still hold fast to our faith.

Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Mk. 13:13).