



“And now I am no more in the world,  
but these are in the world...” (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance  
of this week’s lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®  
or Standard Lesson Quarterly®.

### **A VISION IN THE HEAVENS**

On Monday, the “great American eclipse” got the attention of a nation that has been focused for months on political rivalries and racism—prejudices that die hard. However, last weekend, millions of Americans were united in a singular quest: to find a way to view the August 21 eclipse in which the moon’s shadow traced a path from Oregon to South Carolina. For a time, and for at least some of us, the struggles and riots fomented by various prejudices took second place to a vision in the heavens.

### **A VISION FROM HEAVEN**

The gloom of moral darkness also cast its shadow across the Roman world. The great eclipse of ethnic and religious prejudice could have prevented the church from extending beyond the Jews. Peter required a vision from heaven to convince him that, in God’s eyes, the barrier between Jews and Gentiles had been removed. God considers none of us “unclean,” and thus we are all equally included in God’s call to become a part of his fellowship through the church.

1. What lesson, if any, do you see in the fact that a solar eclipse “eclipsed” the other earthly concerns of Americans for at least a short time?
2. Why did it take an eclipse to join us together when the well-being of our nation was not sufficient cause to make us more inclusive in our attitudes?
3. Likewise, why did it take a dramatic vision for Peter to be more inclusive in his attitudes?
4. In what matters should the church be inclusive? Are there matters in which the church should be exclusive? If so, explain.
5. Would some people assume they wouldn’t be welcome in your church? If so, what could be done to change that?

—Charles R. Boatman

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