

"The Sun Do Move" is a powerful piece that often blends themes of faith, science, and the interpretation of scripture. The speaker passionately defends the belief in the Bible and its truths against skepticism, using humor and rhetorical questions to engage with critics.

Key Themes and Analysis:

Faith vs. Skepticism: The speaker emphasizes the conflict between belief in the divine and scientific reasoning. They highlight the absurdity of trying to quantify the distance to the sun while juxtaposing this with unwavering faith in God's word.

Biblical Authority: Central to the argument is the assertion that the Bible is the ultimate authority. The speaker cites Malachi, asserting that God's name will be great among all nations, reinforcing the idea that divine truth transcends human understanding.

Human Limitations: The speaker critiques the reliance on human intellect and calculations, suggesting that such endeavors can lead to confusion and disagreements. The various distances to the sun proposed by different scholars illustrate this point.

Hope and Assurance: Amidst the humor and critique, there is a profound sense of hope. The speaker encourages listeners to fix their eyes on spiritual truths rather than earthly measurements, asserting that true light comes from Jesus rather than celestial bodies.

Community and Responsibility: The speaker identifies with their audience as a shepherd to their flock, emphasizing a communal journey of faith. They express a deep connection to their listeners, urging them to remain steadfast in their beliefs.

Conclusion:

"The Sun Do Move" serves as a reminder of the tension between faith and reason while celebrating the enduring nature of hope and divine truth. The speaker's message encourages believers to stay rooted in their faith, regardless of the scientific uncertainties that may arise.

BEGIN SERMON

"Let me tell you," he said, keeping a calm face that couldn't hide the emotions bubbling inside, "when I was a young man and a slave, I didn't know anything worth talking about when it came to books. They were like sealed mysteries to me, but I really wanted to unlock them. I craved the knowledge. Whenever I saw books, I felt this strong urge to dive into them because I knew they had what I needed, but most of the time, they were off-limits to me.

"Then, by the grace of the Lord, something happened. I got a roommate—he was a slave too, and he had learned to read. In the dead of night, he would give me lessons from the New York Spelling Book. It was tough, I'll tell you; even tougher for him since he only knew a little, and it made him sweat trying to teach me something with my hard head. It was a struggle for me too. Every step was uphill, but when I finally got a bit of understanding into my brain, I felt like shouting, even though I knew I wasn't a scholar. Because of that, I moved along really slowly, picking up bits here and there until I could read the Bible pretty well by skipping the long words. That was the beginning of my education—at least, what little I have. I mention that young man because years have flown by since then, but I haven't forgotten my teacher, and I never will. I thank the Lord for him, and I carry his memory in my heart."

Here's a contemporary, informal translation of that passage:

"About seven months after I learned to read, God changed my life, and I think the first thing I asked Him for was the ability to understand His Word. I'm not bragging, and I don't like to pat myself on the back, but I have to say I really believe my prayer to understand the Scriptures was heard. Since then, I haven't cared about anything except studying and preaching God's Word.

"Now, my brothers, don't get me wrong; I'm not foolish enough to think I know it all. Oh no, not at all! I hardly understand myself, let alone half the things around me, and there are millions of things in the Bible that are way too deep for me—and probably for everyone else too. I don't have the keys to God's secrets, and He hasn't told me to peek inside, and even if I did, I'm so clueless I wouldn't recognize it. No, friends, I know my place at the feet of my Master, and that's where I stay.

"But I can read the Bible and grasp the things that are right on the surface. Outside of the Bible, I don't know anything special about the sun. I see it shining

grandly up there in the sky, but there's so much about that blazing orb that's beyond me. I know the sun shines powerfully, pouring down its light in floods, but that's nothing compared to the light that fills my mind from God's book. But you all know that already. I know the sun burns—oh, it burned so much during those July days. I can tell you it scorched my back many times when I was out hoeing in the cornfields. But you all know that too, and yet it's nothing compared to the divine fire that burns in the souls of God's children. Can't you feel it, brothers?"

Here's a contemporary, informal translation of that passage:

"But when it comes to the sun's movements, I've got that covered. I've gone through the whole blessed book and gathered the last word the Bible says about the sun's journey. I've got it all down pat. And let me say this: if I don't explain it to you correctly, if I get even one word wrong, just shout out, 'Hold on there, Jasper, you didn't get that right,' and I'll apologize. If I'm not telling the truth, come up here and call me a liar, and I'll accept it. I'm afraid I do lie sometimes—I'm so sinful that I struggle to do right; but my God doesn't lie, and He hasn't put any lies in the Book of eternal truth. If I give you what the Bible says, then I'm bound to tell the truth.

"This afternoon, I'm going to take you on a journey to a great battlefield. Most folks like to see fights—some are eager to get into them, while others are quick to sneak away when a battle breaks out. This time, I'll lead you to a scene where you'll witness a curious battle. It took place soon after Israel entered the Promised Land. You remember the people of Gibeon made friends with God's people when they first arrived in Canaan, and that was a smart move for them. But still, it got them into a terrible mess. The cities around there flared up at that, and they all joined forces, saying they were going to wipe out the Gibeonites, gathering all their armies to do it. When they came up so bold and brave, the Gibeonites were scared out of their minds, and they sent word to Joshua that they were in trouble and needed him to come help them. Joshua had the heart of a lion, and he was there right away. They had a fierce and bitter fight, but you know General Joshua wasn't there to get whipped. He prayed and fought, but the hours were slipping away too quickly for him, so he asked the Lord for a special order to hold the sun still for a while and let the moon shine down plenty of light on the lower part of the battlefield. In fact, Joshua was so caught up in the battle, so thirsty for the blood of the enemies of the Lord, and so wild with victory that he told the sun to stand still until he could finish his job. What did the sun do? Did it

glare down in fiery wrath and say, 'What do you mean stopping for, Joshua? I've never even started yet! I've been here all along, and it would break everything if I did stop'? No, it didn't say that. But what does the Bible say? That's what I want to know. It says that at the voice of Joshua, it stopped. I'm not saying it stopped; that's not for me to say, but the Bible, God's Book, says so. But I'll say this: nothing can stop until it has first started. So I know what I'm talking about. The sun was traveling through the sky when the order came. It hitched up its red horses and made quite a visit to the land of Gibeon. It showed up in the skies just as friendly as a neighbor borrowing something, and it stood there, looking like it enjoyed watching Joshua defeat those wicked armies. And the moon, she waited down in the low ground, pouring out her light and looking as calm and happy as if she were waiting for her escort. Neither of them budged as long as the Lord's army needed light to carry on the battle."

"I don't know exactly when Joshua hitched up and moved on, but I guess it was when the Lord told him to go. Anyone knows that the sun didn't stay there all the time. It stopped for business and moved on when it was done. That's about all I have to say about this particular case. I've shown you that this part of the Lord's word teaches that the sun stopped, which shows it was moving before that and went on afterward. I told you I would prove this, and I've done it, and I challenge anyone to say my point isn't made.

"I told you in the beginning of this discourse that the Lord God is a man of war. I expect by now you're starting to see that it's true. Don't you admit it? When the Lord came to see Joshua during his fears and battles, and actually made the sun stop dead still in the heavens so the fight could continue until all the enemies were slain, you have to understand that the God of peace is also a man of war. He can use both peace and war to help the righteous and scatter the hosts of the enemies. A man talked to me last week about the laws of nature, saying they can't possibly be overturned, and I had to laugh right in his face. As if the laws of anything were greater than my God, who is the lawgiver for everything. My Lord is great; He rules in the heavens, on the earth, and down under the ground. He is great, and greatly to be praised. Let all the people bow down and worship before Him.

"But let's move on, because there's a lot more coming. Let's next take the case of Hezekiah. He was one of those kings of Judah—a pretty sorry lot, I must say, those kings were for the most part. I tend to think Hezekiah was about the best among them, and he wasn't a mighty man himself. Well, Hezekiah got sick. I dare say that when a king takes off his crown and finery and is faced with mortal sickness, he looks just as common as the rest of us poor mortals. We know that Hezekiah was in a low state of mind, full of fears, and in terrible trouble. The fact is, the Lord stripped him of all his glory and brought him down to the dust. He told him that his hour had come and that he better set his affairs in order because death was at the door. Then it was that the king fell low before God; he turned his face to the wall, cried, moaned, and begged the Lord not to take him out of the world just yet. Oh, how good our God is! The cry of the king moved His heart, and He told him He was going to give him another chance. It's not just kings that the Lord hears. The cries of prisoners, the wails of the oppressed, the tears of dying thieves, the prayers of backsliders, and the sobs of sinful women are all likely to touch the heart of the Lord. It seems like it's hard for a sinner to get so far gone or so deep in the pit that their cry can't reach the ear of the merciful Savior."

"But the Lord did even better for Hezekiah—He told him He was going to give him a sign so he'd know that what He said was coming to pass. I'm not familiar with those sundials the Lord mentioned to Hezekiah, but anyone with a bit of sense knows they were the clocks of those old times, marking the sun's journey. So when God told the king that He would make the shadow go backward, it must have been like turning back the hands of a clock. But, mark you, Isaiah specifically says that the sun returned ten degrees. There you have it! Isn't that the movement of the sun? Bless my soul. Hezekiah's case surpasses Joshua's. Joshua stopped the sun, but here the Lord made the sun move back ten degrees; and yet they say the sun stands still and never moves. It seems to me it moves around quite briskly and is ready to go any way the Lord orders it to go. I wonder if any of those philosophers are around here this afternoon. I'd like to take a good look at one of them and ask him to explain this matter. He can't do it, my brothers. He knows a lot about books, maps, figures, and long distances, but I challenge him to take up Hezekiah's case and explain it away. He can't do it. The Word of the Lord is my defense and stronghold, and I fear not what men can say or do; my God gives me the victory.

"Allow me, my friends, to be clear about this movement of the sun. It's none of my business whether the sun moves or stands still, or whether it stops, goes back, rises, or sets. All that is entirely out of my hands, and I have nothing to say about it. I have no theory on the subject. All I ask is that we take what the Lord says about it and let His will be done about everything. What the will is I can't know unless He whispers to my soul or writes it in a book. Here's the Book. This is enough for me, and with it as my guide, I can't go too far astray."

"But I'm not done with you yet. As the song says, there's more to follow. I invite you to hear the first verse in the seventh chapter of the book of Revelations. What does John, under the power of the Spirit, say? He says he saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, and so forth. Let me ask if the earth is round, where does it keep its corners? A flat, square thing has corners, but tell me where the corner of an apple, a marble, a cannonball, or a silver dollar is. If there's anyone among those philosophers who has been taking so many jabs at my old head around here, he is cordially invited to step forward and explain this vexing business. I tell you, you can't square a circle, but it looks like these great scholars have learned how to make a circle square. If they can do it, let them step up and perform the trick. But, my brothers, in my poor judgment, they can't do it; it's not in them to do it. They are on the wrong side of the Bible; that's outside the Bible, and that's where the trouble comes in for them. They've strayed from the breastworks of the truth, and as long as they stay there, the light of the Lord will not shine on their path. I don't care so much about the sun, though it's mighty convenient to have it, but my trust is in the Word of the Lord. As long as my feet are planted on the solid rock, no man can move me. I'm getting my orders from the God of my salvation.

"The other day, a man with a high collar and sideburns came to my house. He was a nice Northern gentleman who thinks a lot of the colored folks in the South. They are lovely folks, and I respect them very much. From the start, he seemed kind of strict and cross with me, and after a while, he burst out furiously, fretting, and said: 'Allow me, Mr. Jasper, to give you some plain advice. This nonsense about the sun moving where you're getting it is disgraceful for your race all over the country, and as a friend of your people, I've come to say it has to stop.' Ha! Ha! Ha! Mr. Sam Hargrove never smashed me like that. It was equal to one of those old overseers way back then. I told him that if he would show me I'm wrong, I'd give it all up."

"My! My! Ha! Ha! He came at me with such a storm about science, discoveries, and God knows what else; I've never heard anything like it before. Then he tells me my race is against me and that poor old Jasper should shut his foolish mouth. "When he finally finished—though it looked like he never would—I told him that John Jasper isn't set up to be any scholar, doesn't know the philosophies, and isn't trying to hurt his people. I'm working day and night to lift them up, but my feet are on the rock of eternal truth. There I stand, and there I'm going to stand until Gabriel sounds the judgment note. So I said to the gentleman who scolded me—though I heard him make his remarks—I didn't hear from where he got his Scripture. Between him and the Word of the Lord, I stand by the Word of God every time. Jasper isn't mad; he's not fighting anyone; he hasn't been appointed janitor to run the sun; he's just a servant of God and a lover of the Everlasting Word. What do I care about the sun? The day will come when the sun will be called from its race track, and its light will be snuffed out forever; the moon shall turn to blood, and this earth will be consumed with fire. Let them go; that won't scare me nor trouble God's elected people, for the Word of the Lord shall endure forever, and on that Solid Rock we stand and shall not be moved."

"Am I satisfying you yet? Have I proven my point? Oh, you whose hearts are full of unbelief! Are you still holding out? I reckon the reason you say the sun doesn't move is that you're so hard to move yourself. You are a real trial to me, but never mind; I'm not giving you up yet, and I never will. The truth is powerful; it can break the heart of stone, and I must fire another arrow of truth from the quiver of the Lord. If you have a copy of God's Word with you, please turn to that minor prophet, Malachi, Here's a contemporary, informal translation of that passage: "Are you satisfied yet? Have I proven my point? Oh, you whose hearts are full of unbelief! Are you still holding out? I reckon the reason you say the sun doesn't move is because you're so hard to move yourself. You're a real trial for me, but never mind; I'm not giving you up yet, and I never will. Truth is powerful; it can break the heart of stone, and I must fire another arrow of truth from the quiver of the Lord. If you have a copy of God's Word with you, please turn to that minor prophet, Malachi, who wrote the last book in the old Bible, and look at chapter one, verse eleven. What does it say? I better read it because I have a notion that your critics don't carry any Bible in their pockets every day of the week. Here's what it says: 'For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles.... My name shall be great among the heathen, says the Lord of hosts.' How does that suit you? It looks like that

ought to settle it. This time it's the Lord of hosts Himself doing the talking, and He's talking about a wonderful and glorious subject. He's telling about the spreading of His Gospel, about His last victory over the Gentiles, and the worldwide glories that He will have in the end. Oh, my brothers, what a time that will be! My soul takes wing as I anticipate with joy that millennium day! The glories shining before my eyes blind me, and I forget the sun, moon, and stars. I just remember that around those last days, the sun and moon will go out of business because they won't be needed anymore. Then King Jesus will come back to see His people, and He will be the sufficient light of the world. Joshua's battles will be over. Hezekiah won't need any sun dial, and the sun and moon will fade out before the glorious splendors of the New Jerusalem.

"But what's the matter with Jasper? I almost forgot my business and nearly went to shouting over the faraway glories of the second coming of my Lord. I beg your pardon and will try to get back to my subject. I have to do like the sun in Hezekiah's case—fall back a few degrees. In that part of the Word I gave you from Malachi—where the Lord Himself spoke—He clarifies that His glory is going to spread. Spread? Where? From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. What? Doesn't that say that? That's exactly what it says. Isn't that clear enough for you? The Lord pity these doubting Thomases. Here's enough to settle it all and cure the worst cases. Come up here, wise folks, and get your medicine. Where are those high-collared philosophers now? Why are they lurking around in the brush? Why don't they come out into the broad afternoon light and fight for their colors? Ah, I understand; they have no answer. The Bible is against them, and in their consciences, they are convicted.

"But I hear you back there. What are you whispering about? I know; you say you sent me some papers and I never answered them. Ha, ha, ha! I got them. The difficulty about those papers you sent me is that they did not answer me. They never mentioned the Bible even once. You think so much of yourselves and so little of the Lord God that you think what you say is so smart that you can't even speak of the Word of the Lord. When you ask me to stop believing in the Lord's Word and to pin my faith to your words, I'm not going to do it. I take my stand by the Bible and rest my case on what it says. I take what the Lord says about my sins, about my Savior, about life, about death, about the world to come, and I take what the Lord says about the sun and moon, and I care little what the haters of my God choose to say. Do you think I will forsake the Bible? It is my only Book, my hope, the arsenal of my soul's supplies, and I want nothing else."

"But I have another word for you yet. I've worked over those papers you sent me without a date and without your name. You deal in numbers and think you're bigger than the archangels. Let me see what you've said. You set yourself up to tell me how far it is from here to the sun. You think you've got it all figured out. You say it's 3,339,002 miles from the Earth to the sun. That's what you say. One says it's 12,000,000; another claims it's 27,000,000. I heard that the great Isaac Newton figured it at 28,000,000, and later the philosophers raised it to 50,000,000. The last one even made it bigger than all the others, claiming it's 90,000,000. None of them agree exactly, so they're just playing a guessing game, and the last guess is always the biggest. Now, when these guessers can have a convention in Richmond and all agree on the same thing, I'd be glad to hear from you again, and I do hope by that time you won't be ashamed of your name.

"Lots of railroads have been built since I saw the first one when I was fifteen years old, but I haven't heard of a railroad built yet to the sun. I don't see why, if they can measure the distance to the sun, they can't build a railroad or a telegraph and let us find out something else about it besides just how far away it is. They tell me that a cannonball could make the trip to the sun in twelve years. Why don't they send it? It could be rigged up with quarters for a few philosophers on the inside and made comfortable for the ride. They would need twelve years' worth of rations and a whole lot of changes in clothing—very thick clothes when they start and very thin ones when they get there.

"Oh, my brothers, these things make you laugh, and I don't blame you for laughing, except it's always sad to laugh at the follies of fools. If we could laugh them out of existence, we might as well laugh day and night. What cuts into my soul is that all these men seem to be attacking the Bible. That's what stirs my soul and fills me with righteous wrath. I care little what they say about the sun, provided they leave the Word of the Lord alone. But never mind. Let the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing. Our King shall break them in pieces and dash them down. But blessed be the name of our God, the Word of the Lord endures forever. Stars may fall, moons may turn to blood, and the sun may set to rise no more, but Thy kingdom, oh Lord, is from everlasting to everlasting.

"But I have a word this afternoon for my own brethren. They are the people for whose souls I have to watch—for them I have to stand and report at the last—they are my sheep, and I'm their shepherd, and my soul is knit to them

forever. It's not for me to trouble you with these questions about the heavenly bodies. Our eyes go far beyond the smaller stars; our home is far outside of those twinkling orbs. The chariot that will come to take us to our Father's mansion will sweep past those flickering lights and never stop until it brings us into clear view of the throne of the Lamb. Don't hitch your hopes to any sun or stars; your home has Jesus for its light, and your hopes must travel up that way. I preach this sermon just to settle the minds of my few brethren, and I repeat it because kind friends wish to hear it, and I hope it will honor the Lord's Word. But nothing short of the pearly gates can satisfy me, and I charge you, my people, fix your feet on the solid Rock, your hearts on Calvary, and your eyes on the throne of the Lamb. These struggles and griefs will soon be over; we shall see the King in His glory and be at ease. Go on, go on, you ransomed of the Lord; shout His praises as you go, and I shall meet you in the city of the New Jerusalem, where we won't need the light of the sun, for the Lamb of the Lord is the light of the saints."