

## THE ISLES ARE SINGING

### Chapter 13

#### SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS

<sup>1</sup>*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

<sup>2</sup>*Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

<sup>3</sup>*There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*

<sup>4</sup>*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Psalm 19:1-4a

“Honey, are you awake?”

“Yes, what can all that shouting and commotion be?”

“Mmm, I wonder what’s going on now. What time is it anyway?”

“Two-thirty.”

“Sounds like they’re running around out here.”

“They’re coming to the house.”

Knock, knock.

“*Wet liklik. Mi kam.*” (Wait just a bit. I’m coming.)

Wenera and a few other boys were at the door, greatly excited. “*Yu bin lukim mun? Kam lukim mun.*” (Have you seen the moon? Come see the moon.)

“Honey, is there an eclipse of the moon?”

“Yes.”

“I thought it seemed awfully dark on the night of full moon.”

Lewis explained briefly in the trade language, Melanesian Pidgin, to Wenera and the others about the earth’s casting a shadow on the moon. He was able to learn from them the Owena word for shadow, which is the same as their word for spirit.

Lewis and Kevin got dressed and went down to the village to talk to the people who were greatly frightened. (Kevin and Marge Jenson had just arrived in Owena a couple weeks earlier to partner with us in reaching the Owena people.) None of these people had ever seen anything like this before. Having no scientific knowledge of such phenomenon, or even that the sun is the moon’s source of light, all they could think of was that the end of the world had come. They had learned through the teaching of an itinerant medical mission that changes would occur in the moon during the Great Tribulation, and now they expected that Jesus would come any moment, that the moon would fall apart, and that the earth would be destroyed. They were concerned that perhaps we were no longer there, as they had been informed that Christians would be taken from the earth before these other things happened.

Lewis and Kevin tried their best to give a natural explanation; but since we had only been there a couple months and were limited to the trade language, not yet having learned much of the tribal language, it was difficult for the people to understand what the two men were saying. On top of that, nearly everything in the lives of the Owena people is built upon the supernatural, making it very difficult for them to believe a natural explanation. Therefore, they were still very much afraid and asked if we could hold *lotu* (church meetings) every week. At this time, only a handful of the Owena people knew the trade language, and Lewis tried to

explain that Pidgin was not adequate for teaching them spiritual things. They agreed that this was so, and Lewis told them they would have to help us learn their own language first.

Around this same time, two older men in the village passed away into a Christless eternity. This was a grim reminder to us of their hopeless estate and their profound need to hear the Gospel. Their hearts were ripe for the truth; and, as we watched their daily lives so steeped in fear and darkness, our own hearts became more and more burdened for their salvation. For several nights, there was loud weeping and mournful singing as the villagers carried out numerous rituals to assure that living relatives were kept safe from the spirits of the dead who roamed about the village seeking to harm those relatives who did not carry out proper rites.

Following these events, the people from the youngest to the oldest diligently sought to drill their language into our heads and hearts. Our home was abuzz many hours a day with people coming and going to get medicine, to sell us food, or just to visit and look at picture books. Viewing slides of themselves with a slide viewer was always exciting. They loved having their pictures taken, and they had great fun singing and hearing their voices echo back to them on the tape recorder. At times, we visited in their homes or sat with them outside their houses to listen, observe, and learn more about their culture and thinking. We were excited to see progress in the language, but knew there was a long road ahead before we could effectively communicate the gospel.