

HOLY HELPS

EARTHQUAKES ACCORDING TO JESUS**Matthew 24:7*****“There will be earthquakes in various places.”***

It sounded like a freight train! The first indication was the rumbling sound and then the house began to tremble, followed by a rolling motion. We tried to stand but were thrown off balance. Then it was over – the earthquake, that is. We just had another one yesterday afternoon, Easter Sunday, registering 7.2 on the Richter Magnitude Scale, and today, in Indonesia, there was a 7.8 quake.

My wife and I have endured, I have chosen that word purposefully, for I do not know how better to describe the emotional experience of going through several earthquakes while living on the West Coast. We endure them – we are not endeared to them nor do we enjoy them – we endure them! That’s all we can do. We can’t predict them, stop them or minimize them. We are at their mercy.

Are Earthquakes on the Increase? The United States Geological Survey has a web site that lists earthquakes year by year. A look at the list covering the last ten years indicated that the average per year is fairly the same. However, the recording and reporting of them is on the increase.

The United States Geological Survey reports: “We have definitely had an increase in the number of earthquakes we have been able to *locate* each year. This is because of the tremendous increase in the number of seismograph stations in the world and the many improvements in global communications.

In 1931, there were about 350 stations operating in the world; today, there are more than 8,000 stations and the data now comes in rapidly from these stations by electronic mail, internet and satellite. This increase in the number of stations and the more timely receipt of data has allowed us and other seismological centers to locate earthquakes more rapidly and to locate many small earthquakes which were undetected in earlier years.”

We did not have to have a monitoring station in our backyard to feel the earthquake that hit us yesterday, Easter Sunday afternoon. It was a 7.2 quake about 30 miles south of the United States border, in Mexico. We rocked and rolled – without music!

Jesus said, “*there will be earthquakes in various places.*” (Matthew 24:7)

What Jesus said about earthquakes was prophetic. How do earthquakes relate to future events? Why would He mention earthquakes when speaking about events relating to His return? Are earthquakes an indication that God is about finished with this old world? Is there a message from heaven in the quakes of earth?

How Do We Approach Any Subject From The Biblical Perspective?

When Christians hear about earthquakes or read about them, they often ask questions such as: Does the Bible have anything to say about earthquakes? Are earthquakes related to Bible prophecy? Why should we be interested in what the Bible has to say about such events as

famines, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, earthquakes, etc.? Is it so that we can make sensational predictions and/or advance our own private agendas? Or, do we genuinely want to understand from God's perspective what in the world is going on? In asking these questions we should be clear about our motive.

Curious Minds Want To Know.

There are those who want to have answers simply because "inquiring minds want to know." They are curious about what the Bible has to say about any subject, just as they are curious about what the current political gossip is or what the latest news headline is. They have no intention of relating the information that they might glean from such knowledge to their lives in a sanctified sense. They want information but have no interest in the information being formational. They are inquisitive but remain insensitive to spiritual truth.

Contentious Minds Want To Know.

Sadly, there are, among Christians as well as the population in general, persons who want to know simply to be able to argue better! They are always into controversial issues and enjoy fussing, fueding and fighting. Paul the Apostle wrote to Timothy saying, "*Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.*" (2 Tim.2:23)

Conscientious Minds Want To Know.

The contemporary, conscientious Christian wants to know God's view about disturbing events so that they can live more consecrated lives and intelligently communicate God's perspective. Peter's reason for studying cataclismic events in the light of Bible truth is as follows: "*Since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.*" (2 Peter 3:11)

The Christian should study the Bible in order that there might be certainty and conformity of life to the purposes and plans of God. We should apply the knowledge gleaned from the Bible, about whatever God reveals about the hereafter, to life here and now.

Predictions of Earthquakes In The Bible

Various scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments refer to the occurrence of earthquakes as being a factor in the end times. Some of those passages are as follows:

In his description of the Day of the Lord, a phrase that refers to the coming judgments on the earth, Isaiah writes that "*Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.*" (Isaiah 2:19)

In Isaiah 13:13 is this prophetic picture of global judgment: "*Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.*"

A further description of catastrophic events is recorded in Isaiah 24:19, 20 as follows: "*The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, and the earth is shaken exceedingly. the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard.*"

Isaiah presents one other sobering scenario in which an earthquake will occur. He says that in the end times armies will surround Jerusalem and God will intervene to defend the city. Here are his words: *“The LORD Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire.”* (Isaiah 29:6)

When we put these statements together it is obvious that the ultimate focus of these prophecies is yet future, because they have not been fulfilled to date. It is also apparent that when that day to which Isaiah refers comes, earthquakes will be one of the features of the chaos that will take place.

Isaiah is not the only prophet who talks about earthquakes at the time of the end of life on earth as we now know it. Jeremiah, speaking of the same period of time has this to say: *“I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth.”* (Jeremiah 4:24) Haggai’s prophecy is: *“I will shake the heavens and the earth.”* (Haggai 2:21)

Zechariah describes one of these earthquakes in vivid language *“Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.”* (Zechariah 14:1-4)

In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, there are 5 horrendous earthquakes that occur as part of God’s judgment upon the world of unbelievers *after* the removal of the church at the Rapture. (Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 11:19) Concerning the last mentioned earthquake it is recorded: *“There was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.”* (Rev. 16:18)

And Now, Earthquakes According to Jesus

When are the “*end times*”? The end times began with the birth of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1 & 2 tells us that *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”* With the coming of Christ, the count-down to the end of time began. When Jesus was talking with His disciples in Matthew 24, He was referring to the time of the end.

Keep in mind that Jesus is speaking in Matthew 24 in the context of His return with reference to Israel and the Great Tribulation. He is speaking of His return *with* His church, not *for* His church. He is speaking of His coming *“with power and great glory”* (Matt. 24:30) which is the second phase of His Second Coming. Enoch prophesied of this event as follows: *“Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”* (Jude v. 14, 15)

There are only three verses in the Gospels that mention earthquakes. Each is a quotation

from Jesus. The references are: Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11. Best known is Jesus' own prediction already cited but repeated here: "*There will be earth-quakes in various places.*" (Matthew 24:7) He did not say that there will be more earthquakes. However, in Luke's account of Jesus' prediction, he writes, "*And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.*" (Luke 21:11)

Luke adds the word "*great*" which is the Greek word "*megas*" from which we get our English word "mega." It means "exceedingly great, the greatest, large, loud, mighty, strong." The word for "*earthquake*" in the Greek is "*seismo*" from which we get the English "*seismology*" and "*seismograph*." The Greek word means a violent shaking or commotion and includes not only the idea of an earthquake but all that is associated with it – landslides, avalanches, fires, floods, famines, pestilences, etc.

Jesus use of the word "*great*" is significant. While He did not say that there would be more earthquakes, He did say that there would be more "*great*" earthquakes. This is indeed very interesting. So much is couched in that one word.

The United States Geological Survey reports that in the ten years, 2000 – 2009, there have been 285,082 recorded earthquakes worldwide or an average of slightly over 28,500 per year. Of this number, there was an average of 4,256 earthquakes in the United States per year. Most of them are of the unfelt variety.

According to long-term records (since about 1900), we have had an average of about 17 major earthquakes in the world (7.0 – 8.0) per year and great earthquakes (7.0 +) are on the increase. We are not having more earthquakes, however, earthquakes of magnitude 7.0 or greater seem to be becoming more numerous. Is this cyclical or a signal?

In 2001 in the first 96 days there were 2 magnitude 7 + earthquakes worldwide. In the first 96 days of 2010 there have been 8 magnitude 7+ earthquakes worldwide. Some seismologists say that some years have seen more earthquake activity than others and that there is no pattern that can be established from such data.

Terra Firma isn't so "firma"!

What are we to make of the scriptural statements about earthquakes? The most obvious answer, it seems to me, is that there are earthquakes every day in various places, an average of 78 per day or 28,500 per year! These devastating shakings are not a figment of the imagination. Great destruction, loss of life and unimaginable hardship, in some cases, are the aftermath of these real events. Should we say, "Well, that's just the way things are. It happens all the time. Let's just ignore them and go on with life as usual?" Or, should we give consideration to the accumulated evidence in the Bible that these, and other horrendous happenings, these disturbances in the natural world, could be attention-getting occurrences?

Jesus warned that throughout history, international discord widespread famines, devastating diseases among humans and earthquakes would shatter the tranquility of mankind. Sometimes the outlook might be bleak, but the Christian should never forget that God is still on His

throne; that ultimately, His perfect will would be accomplished.

The phrase *"the beginning of sorrows"* in Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:8, comes from the Greek words which mean "birth pangs." The difficulties of the future would not be evidence that God had abandoned his people; they would suggest that in spite of the nation's sin, He would birth a new world in which righteousness would be dominant. When the Lord Jesus sat up on the Mount of Olives, answering the questions of the disciples, He not only saw the immediate future, but His vision reached to the end of time.

If a rainbow reminds us of God's covenant mercy to mankind, then an earthquake reminds us of the might and power of God. Perhaps we should look upon every earthquake, every famine, every pestilence as another tick on God's clock, exhorting us to arise and be active for the Lord.

In the light of the whole teaching of the Bible on the subject of uncommon calamities, they proclaim that this world is our temporary residence and that the Lord is preparing a better place for His children. He is coming again to take us there and we should get ready," *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*" II Cor. 5:1)

The devil, the old usurper, is *"the God of this world"* (II Cor. 4:4); *"We know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."* (Rom.8:22) This world is under the judgment of God. God does not want us to settle down and make this earth our permanent home. Political and natural disturbances have always been a part of world history, so do not allow them to worry you but to warn you.

Jesus said, *"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."* (Matt. 24:4-8)

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*"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. **So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.**" (Psalms 46:1, 2 NLT)*

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