



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

“EARTHQUAKES — God’s messengers of judgment!”



Earthquakes are among the most powerful events on earth, and their results can be terrifying. Large earthquakes beneath the ocean can create a series of huge, destructive waves called tsunamis that flood the coasts within which the earthquake occurred for many miles. That was demonstrated at the end of last year in Asia. Earthquakes can trigger landslides that cause great damage and loss of life.

That has been seen in recent times in various places, particularly in the recent earthquake in Pakistan. There are many thousands of earthquakes each year with as many as 20 each day. On average, a powerful earthquake occurs less than once every two years. At least 40 moderate earthquakes cause damage somewhere in the world each year. Scientists estimate that more than 8,000 minor earthquakes occur each day without causing any damage. Of those, only about 1,100 are strong enough to be felt.

I. EARTHQUAKES REMIND US OF THE TREMENDOUS FORCES HARNESSSED WITHIN OUR UNIVERSE

A severe earthquake may release energy 10,000 times as great as that of the first atomic bomb. That is beyond our comprehension. If the area of destruction which surrounded Hiroshima were multiplied by 10,000, what an area of the world’s surface would be devastated! It would be almost the whole of the earth. Because earthquakes take place underground much of their energy is dissipated there and absorbed by the earth’s crust. Nevertheless, there is still sufficient energy to move and toss around billions of tonnes of mountains, rock and plain and displace hundreds of square miles of the earth’s surface and destroy man’s constructions. How glorious, how mighty must be the Creator and Controller of such forces? Remember, the earth is but a grain of sand in an immeasurable expanse of universe where it is likely other planets likewise are experiencing earthquakes. All this adds up to a degree of power that is not merely beyond our comprehension but, in truth, is incalculable!

II. EARTHQUAKES ARE HERALDS OF THE DYING OF THE EARTH

1. The earth is declining, decaying and dying. That is taught in the Bible. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” Romans 8:22-23. For the Christian, there is a future putting off of this corrupt body, that happens at death, and a putting on of a glorious body “like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself,” Philippians 3:21. Contrary to the teaching of evolutionists, the earth and all of creation is dying. Even the sun is dying and its energy gradually diminishing. The movement of the earth is but it groaning under the burden of God’s curse which fell upon it in consequence of man’s sin. “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast



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eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life," Genesis 3:17. As already quoted, Paul says that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." Earthquakes are but a creation groaning in pain, easing itself of the pains as would a dying person move upon his deathbed to ease himself of the pains of death that are gripping him.

2. It is a death out of which will come life. Listen to the Saviour speaking as recorded in John's gospel. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world," John 16:21. In childbirth, a woman descends into great pain, death-like pains in order to give life to her child. Likewise the groans of the earth remind us that one day it will be reborn. The earth is on what might be called a parallel path to that upon which the redeemed of Christ are travelling. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life," 2 Corinthians 5:4. So the groans of the earth herald a coming day of renewal. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Revelation 21:1, 4. Peter spoke of that same glorious event. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," 2 Peter 3:10. We still use the euphemism "pass away" to speak of a person dying. That is the phrase Peter uses here of the death of the present earth. The new heavens and the new earth will be created in the day of the Lord, at the end of that day. All of the prophets of God since time began have spoken of the restitution of the earth by the power of God. "Whom the heaven must receive (Christ) until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," Acts 3:21. Life will come out of the death that the earth will eventually have to yield to and which is signalled by earthquakes.

3. It will be an earth in which there is no death. ". . . and there shall be no more death," Revelation 21:4. No dying means no earthquakes since the earthquake is but a herald of the death that is coming upon this present creation.

III. EARTHQUAKES ARE THE FORERUNNERS OF THE LAST GREAT SHAKING THIS EARTH WILL EXPERIENCE

A great earthquake will be among those physical phenomena which will announce the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ in great power and glory. "And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth," Isaiah 2:19-21. This is the earthquake referred to in Revelation



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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." Christ spoke of earthquakes in Luke 21:25-28 and linked this with His return in glory. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring (Will this not be the result of underwater earthquakes?); men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Earthquakes have always preceded God's great judgment.

1. The judgment of the world in Noah's day. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up (cleft asunder), and the windows of heaven were opened," Genesis 7:11. This signalled the beginning of that universal flood which destroyed mankind in that day. It was a pattern of that which is to come. "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men," 2 Peter 3:6-7.

2. Judgment in the days of Amos. Amos 1:1. The book opens with references to impending judgments on many nations. Those judgments were preceded by an earthquake of such proportions it was still part of the nation's memory some 300 years later. (See Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5.)

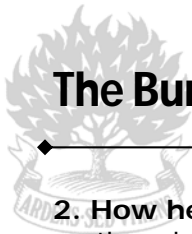
3. The death and resurrection of Christ. Matthew 27:50-54; 28:2. He suffered the wrath of God's judgment for His people and earthquakes were among the signs that accompanied that dark and terrible event. It marked the beginning of new life. "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death, Revelation 1:18.

4. At the fall of Jerusalem and the judgment of the Jewish nation. Luke 21:10-11, 20-22.

5. At Christ's return. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee," Zechariah 14:3-5. The word "cleave" is the same as that translated "broken up" in Gen 7:11.

Let us learn some lessons from what we have discovered about earthquakes.

1. How unexpectedly earthquakes take place! Despite the increasing watchfulness of men and the means they have devised to detect earthquakes, mankind is still caught out by them.



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2. How helpless are men before them! Nothing can withstand the direct power of an earthquake. All must give way.

3. How dreadful are their consequences! We have little concept of the grief, the suffering and misery that befall the people who are victims of an earthquake. When the news report is over and another topic is taken up by the newscaster, our memories of the tragedy fades but the misery and pain of those we have just been looking at continues on!

4. Only those in an “earthquake-proof” shelter will escape! Men have devised special shelters which can withstand most earthquakes. They but remind us of the shelter that God has provided for those seeking to escape judgment. Christ is that shelter. He is the Ark which will safely convey His people through the storm.

Illustration

A story told by H A Ironside illustrates the safety that is found in Christ for the believing sinner. Pioneers were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They travelled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, and progress was necessarily slow. One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly. They had crossed a river the day before but it would be impossible to go back to that before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it. As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, “Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?” The leader replied, “My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!” What a picture of the believer, who is safe in Christ!

*On Him Almighty vengeance fell,
Which would have sunk a world to hell.
He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus becomes our Hiding Place.*

The fires of God’s judgment burned themselves out on Him, and all who are in Christ are safe forever, for they are now standing where the fire has been. Where do you stand as judgment day draws on?