



# WHY EARTHQUAKES ARE PART OF GOD’S PROGRAM

## - PART 2

### MESSAGES FOR MANKIND IN STONE RUBBLE

By **Wilfred Hahn**

On recent travels to Mediterranean environs, we encountered many ancient structures and ruins built of stone dating back millennia. Such ancient history surely will impress anyone living in Canada (as this writer does) —a country that is only celebrating its 150th birthday this year.



Our itinerary included stops in Rome, Athens and ancient Ephesus, among many other history-laden places. We viewed incredible structures that mankind had built, showcasing the pride of past societies—including the

Parthenon in Athens, Ephesus, and various structures in Rome.

There was one tell-tale commonality to them all: These structures all showed signs of earthquake damage. Despite their massive, seemingly immovable construction, these edifices were moved from their foundation.

We see throughout history that earthquakes (geophysical forces) continue to repeatedly lay low the works of mankind.

#### **Ephesus: A Proudful Example**

Ephesus was particularly interesting. It had been the New York City of ancient Greek and Roman cultures. At one point, it was a key geopolitical and

globalist nexus point of the world, becoming a prosperous center of trade and commerce. Anyone who was an elite would have wanted to savor the wealth, human accomplishment and grandeur of that city.

Around the time that Apostle Paul visited Ephesus (AD 52-54), the city was in its prime. According to historians, it was second in importance and size to Rome itself. When Augustus became emperor in 27 B.C., he made Ephesus the capital of proconsular Asia. Apostle Paul surely would have witnessed its splendor.

Today, only partial reconstructions of a few of its ancient buildings can be seen. Ephesus had later suffered various wars and invasions. It was further destroyed by an earthquake in 614 AD. Its one-time magnificent buildings and statues ended up as nothing more than piles of rubble.

#### **Seismology: Then and Now**

If the city of ancient Ephesus had been built according to today’s building codes, it would likely not be lying in ruins. Construction engineers have made great strides in quake-proofing buildings over the years.

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The Japanese were among the first to begin designing earthquake-resistant buildings, beginning in the 1850s. Japan has always been prone to earthquakes, some causing great catastrophe and loss of human life (20 earthquakes of greater than 6.0 on the Richter scale in the last 10 years alone). Italian engineers soon followed. Today, it is claimed that large buildings of 50 stories and more can survive major earthquakes of up to a level of 8 on the Richter scale. As a reference point, earthquakes of level 3 and above can usually be sensed by humans.

Building codes are invariably influenced by the regional history of natural forces, whether floods, earthquakes or otherwise. For example, if an area has not had an earthquake of a certain magnitude—for illustration, let us say 7.0 on the Richter scale—in the last 250 years, building standards will be set accordingly. Over-anticipating the advent of major earthquakes will of course add to the cost of a building. As such, engineers will find a balance between probabilities and costs. The same approach can apply to defining a safe flood plain for new buildings.

The key point to recognize here is that building codes are based upon rearward looking data ... and, for that matter, relatively recent statistics. This approach assumes that tomorrow will be as today, “or even far better” (Isaiah 56:12). As such, were an earthquake of surprisingly greater magnitude to occur, many buildings and lives would be harmed.

### Types of Earthquakes in the Bible

As mentioned, earthquakes have a number of roles in the Bible.

They are shown as actual events, as well as symbols. For example, the Bible mentions a historical earthquake—the great quake during the time of King Uzziah. This was recorded in both Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5.

The entirety of Creation is often shown to display its fear and reverence for the Lord in the form

of “quaking.” These are likely not literal earthquakes, but a metaphor that God is the foundation of everything. Only He can make the Creation tremor in fear and awe. We see this in a number of Scriptures. For example, consider Psalm 75:3, 96:9, 99:1, 114:7, and Exodus 15:14, to name a few.

Most sobering, earthquakes play a key role in future prophecy, these being mentioned in both the New and Old Testaments.

In the New we find information on endtime natural disasters—particularly earthquakes—mainly in two places: 1. The prophecies of Christ (the Olivet Discourse, found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21); and 2. The book of Revelation. Christ Himself confirmed that there would be “earthquakes in diverse places” before the end comes (Matthew 24:7). In the book of Revelation alone, the word “earthquake” (*seismos* in Greek) comes up seven times. (Also, Apostle Paul refers to a “great shaking” [Hebrew 12:25-27], to which we will return in the conclusion.)

However, readers may find it surprising to learn that the earthquakes of the Olivet Discourse are not the same ones mentioned in Revelation. Not only are they different, but also they occur in separate stages of the last days.

Some Bible expositors are of the opinion that we are today living in the prophesied era of “earthquakes in diverse places” that Christ mentioned in the Olivet Discourse. We do not share that view for several reasons. Our interpretation of Scripture is that an increase in earthquakes takes place in the first half of the Tribulation ... namely, occurring during the “beginning of birth pains” (this is the first half of the Tribulation in our understanding). We will not dwell further on this question here. (For a fuller review of this topic, please see *Midnight Call* July and August 2011.)

Old Testament references to “prophetic” earthquakes, in contrast to New Testament references,



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all align with the five earthquakes mentioned in Revelation. Endeavoring to keep the many earthquakes properly sorted, we list the differentiations of the earthquakes of Biblical prophecy.

1. The book of Revelation tells us of five specific earthquakes that occur during the Tribulation period (the time of God’s wrath).

2. In Revelation, there is no mention of earthquakes before the time of the sixth seal. All earthquakes mentioned occur from that point forward.

3. All earthquakes mentioned in Revelation are of “supernatural” character, being instruments of God’s wrath. None are natural phenomena such as are occurring today, or as may be the “earthquakes in diverse places” that Christ indicated. All are divinely enacted, either through Christ or angels.

4. All prophesied earthquakes in the Old Testament (with one possible exception) are specific to the “day of the Lord” ... in other words, are the instruments of divine judgment and clearly refer to the time of God’s wrath.

5. Most, if not all, earthquakes prophesied in the Old Testament are part of the time of wrath to come. As such, these will align with those mentioned in Revelation. And, most of them are global in scope. They are truly apocalyptic and not part of a generic

group of earthquakes that occur in “diverse places” on the earth, which Christ mentions in the Olivet Discourse.

6. Moreover, the “earthquakes in diverse places” prophesied by Christ are non-specific to location and number, in that there are multiple earthquakes in various places. By contrast, all five earthquakes of wrath mentioned in the book of Revelation are singular and specific events.

7. The earthquakes mentioned by Christ occur during the period that is called the “beginning of sorrows.” The three accounts of this prophecy (in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) are all in agreement on this point. The earthquakes mentioned in Revelation, on the other hand, all occur at the time of the sixth seal and thereafter. That period is not the “beginning of sorrows,” but rather much later, likely (as in this writer’s opinion) the Great Tribulation period (the second half of the Tribulation period).

8. One additional “future” earthquake could be considered. At the time that Christ’s feet alight upon the Mount of Olives, the mountain will split into two. Says the Bible: “On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south” (Zechariah 14:4). If this is to be counted as a prophetic local earthquake, it is different from the five mentioned in Revelation. It occurs after “wrath” and is a local manifestation.

As mentioned, several of the prophecies involving earthquakes in Revelation, correspond to earthquakes prophesied in the Old Testament. We will review some of these links in the closing Part III, where we will conclude our discussion of the role of earthquakes in God’s kingdom. Crucially, we will examine the greatest earthquake of all time. (MC)