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Endtime Earthquakes, Pestilences, Famines & Disasters: When? – Part I

B y W i l f r e d H a h n

According to Swiss Re, the international reinsurance company which publishes the annual Sigma Report (the latest subtitled, “Natural Catastrophes and Man-made Disasters in 2010”) the cost of disasters rose last year compared to 2009.



Quoting the report:

Natural catastrophes and man-made disasters claimed nearly 304,000 victims and resulted in economic losses of close to USD 218 billion in 2010. The cost to insurers was more than USD 43 billion. Compared to 2009, insured losses were more than 60% higher in 2010, but still below 2005, the year that insured losses soared after Hurricane Katrina, Wilma and Rita struck the US. In 2010, 304 catastrophic events occurred, consisting of 167 natural catastrophes and 137 man-made disasters. [...] Some of the most devastating earthquakes in history occurred in 2010. In fact, 78% of approximately 297,000

fatalities caused by natural disasters in 2010, were attributable to earthquakes.

Clearly, natural disasters were the cause of the largest catastrophes, not to mention the largest underwriting losses for insurers. However, sadly as noted, earthquakes were the cause of the most deaths.

Certainly, earthquakes have been front page news in recent years. Looking back, among the most widely reported in recent years were the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake, which triggered the tsunami wave devastating the coastline of Indonesia, Thailand and other Asian



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countries, killing 230,000 people; and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti resulting in approximately 220,000 deaths. This year (2011), other headline earthquakes have occurred. Among them, New Zealand (6.3 on the Richter Scale, February 11) and the catastrophic 9.0-scale quake in Japan on March 11.

Are the incidence and severity of earthquakes increasing? It's a pivotal question for several reasons, not the least of which is that Bible prophecy makes frequent references to earthquakes. In the book of Revelation alone, the word "earthquake" (*seismos* in Greek) comes up seven times. As such, can recent earthquakes be seen as fulfillment of Bible prophecy? To answer those questions, we will need to turn to the Bible. A number of other last-day disasters are also prophesied, including famines, pestilences, and hailstorms, among others. We will have to consider the advent of these phenomena as well in answering the question of when earthquakes are prophesied to increase.

As we will see, if we rightly balance all of Scripture, the Bible gives clear guidance on these questions. We find wonderfully confirming symmetry and alignment between Old and New Testament prophecies. Moreover, as we will conclude, the Lord's return (the Rapture) is right at the door and could occur at any time.

Earthquakes and Natural Disasters Prophesied

Indeed, the Bible in no uncertain terms indicates that great natural disasters, famines, and other types of disruptions will occur in the very last days. Their scale and impact will be greater than ever before in history. But when, exactly, will these occur? Can some of these phenomena already be identified today? In answering this question, we will primarily focus on earthquakes, partly for reasons of space, but mostly because they play such a prominent role in the Bible and prophecy.

The entirety of Creation is often shown to display its fear and reverence for the Lord in the form of "quaking" in a number of Scriptures (Psalms 75:3, 96:9, 99:1, 114:7, Exodus 15:14 to name a few). Moreover, the Bible mentions historical earthquakes (i.e. the great earthquake during the time of King Uzziah, which is mentioned by both Amos and Zechariah). Most sobering, however, are the earthquakes that are prophesied to occur in the endtimes. Not only are they a frequent subject of prophecy, but Jesus Christ himself also confirmed that there would be "earthquakes in diverse places" before the end comes.

Where do we find the key information on endtime natural disasters in the New Testament ... particularly earthquakes? For the most part, primarily in two places: in the prophecies of Christ (the Olivet Discourse, found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21) and the Book of Revelation.

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



When the disciples asked Christ, “When shall these things be?” He said the following:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows (Matthew 24: 6-8).

All three accounts of the Olivet Discourse confirm that the “earthquakes in various places” occur during the period called the “beginning of sorrows.” Crucial to note at this point is that these earthquakes do not occur at the “end” of sorrows, nor before the sorrows. They clearly occur during the “beginning of sorrows.”

According to this writer’s understanding, this time of “sorrows” refers to the first half (42 months) of the 7-year tribulation period. The time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) and the “day of Lord” (a term often mentioned by the Old Testament prophets, though this latter term can refer to other periods as well ... i.e. the entire Tribulation, the last half of the Tribulation period, the final day that Christ overthrows Satan and the rulers of earth) refer to the second period of 42 months, often called the Great Tribulation. When Christ says that “the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6, Mark 13:7 and Luke 21:9), in this writer’s opinion, He is referring to the entire 7-year Tribulation period. In other words, the Tribulation period has not started yet.

We note then that Christ clearly partitions his prophecies into three separate time periods: 1. that which is before the “end” comes (“the end is not yet”); 2. the beginning of the end, which is re-

ferred to as the “beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8, Mark 13:8); and 3. the time that comes thereafter (events described from Matthew 24:9 onwards).

As such, we must conclude that the earthquakes that Christ says will occur in “diverse places” occur in the first 42 months of the Tribulation period. However, before we settle on this conclusion, we have yet more evidence to examine. Next, we must address this question: just when do the earthquakes mentioned in the book of Revelation occur?

The Earthquakes of Revelation

The book of Revelation tells us of at least 5 earthquakes that occur during the Tribulation period.

The first one mentioned occurs at the time of the 6th seal (Revelation 6). It is a massive, worldwide earthquake that signifies the start of God’s wrath (and, in this writer’s opinion, likely the start of the Great Tribulation). The entire world recognizes this fact, stating that “the great day of His wrath is come” (Revelation 6:17). Fearsome apocalyptic phenomena occur at that time, which are clearly seen to be “acts of God.”

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; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face

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2010 Haiti earthquake

According to the WEF, natural disasters could have a monetary impact of some \$1 trillion over the next 10 years.



of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:12-16). Several Old Testament prophets also prophesy of this time.

Says Isaiah:

So man will be brought low and mankind humbled—do not forgive them. Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! (Isaiah 2:9-10, NIV). 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).

Hosea also sees this time: “[...] Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’” (Hosea 10:8). Luke confirms this vision—“they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” (Luke 23:30). Joel says: “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining”

(Joel 2:10). (See also Job 9:6, Hebrews 12:26-27 and Isaiah 13:13.)

Ezekiel also speaks in alignment with the words spoken through other prophets by the Holy Spirit:

[...] that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the

beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground (Ezekiel 38:18-20).

The next earthquake occurs at the onset of the 7th seal. A single earthquake occurs at this time, along with other events, including thunder and lightning. “And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake” (Revelation 8:5).

The third earthquake of Revelation occurs at the time of the second woe, the 6th trumpet. This is a local one. “And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven” (Revelation 11:13).

After the 7th trumpet is blown by the 7th angel, a fourth earthquake is mentioned. Again, a single earthquake occurs along with other phenomena. “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple



the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (Revelation 11:19).

In the final Part II of this article series, we will complete our review of prophesied earthquakes and other apocalyptic phenomena. One more earthquake, the greatest of all history, remains to be reviewed. We will also conclusively answer the question: are earthquakes already increasing today?

Points to Ponder – Part I

To no surprise, the commercial world is fixated with the possibility of the costs of disasters and other risks. The World Economic Forum (WEF) (an organization sponsored by some 1,000-plus multinational corporations) every year

publishes a world risk report. Its latest risk assessment (Global Risks 2011, Sixth Edition) considers the “perceived impact” (their term for potential losses) due to infectious diseases, earthquakes, volcanic disruptions and food security at a total of \$500 billion. These outcomes are considered “likely” to occur over the next ten years. Two additional natural phenomena (of a total of some 40 factors reviewed) fall into the natural disaster category—flooding, and storms and cyclones. Their probability is considered to be even higher—namely, “very likely”—accounting for another \$500 billion in “perceived impact.” As such, according to the WEF, natural disasters could have a monetary impact of some \$1 trillion over the next 10 years. Would the Bible agree? We continue in Part II. (MC)

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