

Glad Tidings

"And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers..." (Acts 13:32)

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What Do Earthquakes Signify?

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Two major earthquakes recently shook Venezuela earlier this month leaving death and destruction in its seismic wake. 5,000 and counting is the current death toll. The quakes registered 7.2 and 7.5 respectively on the Richter magnitude scale as the two quakes occurred in minutes of one another. The earth, under our feet, quakes when massive slabs of rock, forming the outer layer of the earth's crust, slips, and snaps into a new position.

Despite the fact that 500,000 earthquakes occur every year, many of which we do not even feel, some religious leaders point to the Bible declaring earthquakes are a definite sign that the Lord will soon appear. Especially is this true when we have a series of major magnitude earthquakes.

Matthew 24:7-8 are verses to which many point connecting earthquakes to the coming of the Lord. Jesus declares, "*For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail.*" This verse is found in the context of events being accomplished in the days of Jesus' generation, not in our's: "*Verily I*

say unto you, this generation shall not pass away; till all these things be accomplished" (*Matthew 24:34*) Jesus is speaking of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. The buildings of the temple did crumble under the assault of the Roman army in A.D. 70. Romans tore down and burned up the temple, not the friction of shifting tectonic plates.

Also, Jesus says wars, famines, and earthquakes would be "*the beginning of travail*," not the end of the world (cf. *Matthew 24:8*). The point Jesus is making is that there will be more sources of sorrow or pain (persecution) than just the common ones that continue since the world and societies began (famines, wars, and earthquakes).

The Gospel would also be preached in the whole world, and then "*the end*" would come (*Matthew 24:14*). The Gospel was preached to all nations and disciples were persecuted to death in the first century before the destruction of Jerusalem occurred, exactly as Jesus promised (cf. *Colossians 1:23, Acts 7:59, 2 Tim. 4:6*).

In Scripture, earthquakes are a sign of God's *power, presence, and wrath* (*Job 9:6, Psalms 68:8, 18:7, Isaiah 13:13*). While the

great persecuting city would experience "*a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men on the earth...*" (*Revelation 16:18*). It would only divide the city, weakening it, not bring it to an immediate end.

God used earthquakes to grab man's attention at Jesus' death, and three days later to gloriously usher in Christ's resurrection (*Matthew 27:51-54, 28:2*). He employed an earthquake to give assuring comfort to prayerful disciples of the Lord, and then assist in ushering the freeing of His apostles (*Acts 4:31, 16:26*). The timing of these earthquakes manifest God is in control of their occurrence, not mere nature.

In the 1960's the two strongest earthquakes of recorded history occurred in Chile – May 22, 1960, 9.5 magnitude ; and then Alaska – March 28, 1964, 9.2 magnitude. Later, December 26, 2004 recorded an earthquake registering 9.0 in magnitude which caused a "tsunami" sending devastating waves upon the shores of Indonesia, killing over 170,000 people. Over 66 years have chronicled the major magnitude earthquakes with no end of the world occurring. Be careful in what you believe earthquakes, especially the multiple and powerful ones signify.