



July 29, 2007

## *Earthquakes*

We have been taking a look at some of the ways in which God has manifested himself in times past. We began by remembering the statement of Paul in his letter to the Romans (**Rom 1.20**) that the invisible things of God are made known by those that are visible. God's power was manifested at various times to demonstrate his promises (**rainbow**) and his presence and power (**thunder and lightning**). Another of these physical phenomena that God uses is that of earthquakes. We understand that the world undergoes seismic activity and these are due to geologic forces set in place by the creator. Scientists can explain the dynamics and sometimes predict the occurrence of such things but there are examples in the Bible that indicate that some earthquakes were not due to the normal state of the earth and therefore symbolized the power of God. One of these episodes happened during the time of the prophet Elijah. Persecuted, pursued and living with a death threat, Elijah had retreated to the wilderness. He was discouraged and in spite of the recent victory against the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (**1 Kng 18.17-39**), he was becoming weary of life. As he stood on Mount Horeb God demonstrated his presence and power further by a strong wind and an earthquake (**1 Kng 19.11**). God then revealed that he was greater than any of these and informed Elijah that there were others the prophet was unaware of who had not served idols. God uses earthquakes in a figurative sense as well to embody the force of judgments against those who had done evil. As Judah strayed from God the Lord sent such warnings through the prophets. Isaiah writes, "***Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.***" (**Isa 29.6**). An earthquake also apparently had struck the land during the reign of king Uzziah (**Amos 1.1**). As God sent his word through the prophets he used this event as a figure to demonstrate the force of his judgment and wrath against the people. "***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.***" (**Zech 14.5**). In the New Testament we find a few events that are linked with earthquakes which also have great spiritual significance. The fact that Christ had come to fulfill, and thus finish the Law, was finalized the moment that he died. To demonstrate this God used an earthquake. "***Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent...***" (**Matt 27.50-51**). As a result of this earthquake and other things there were those present who believed in Christ. "***Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.***" (**Matt 27.54**). The resurrection of Christ is also marked by an earthquake. "***And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.***" (**Matt 28.2**). This is the single most significant event in the Bible, and all time, and the power of God is manifested in a powerful demonstration. An earthquake that shook the prison in which Paul and Silas were being held resulted in the conversion of the Philippian jailor (**Acts 16.23-33**). In the closing book of the New Testament, God once again uses the figure of the earthquake as a symbol of judgment against the evil of the Roman empire. These figures are related to judgments against the earth (**Rev 6.12, Rev 8.5**), to the glory of God and the revelation of his power (**Rev 11.19**). We still do not fully understand the mechanics of the earth, nor do we understand the power of God but scriptures reveal how God has used them in the past both figuratively and physically.

TLC