

## *Earthquakes*

A geologic phenomenon that God uses to demonstrate his presence and power at times is the earthquake. We understand that the world undergoes seismic activity and this is due to physical 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 weren't due to the normal state of the earth and therefore symbolized the power of God. One of these episodes happens during the time of the prophet Elijah. Persecuted, pursued and living with a death threat, Elijah retreated to the wilderness in fear of queen Jezebel's threat to kill him. 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 to Elijah by a strong wind and an earthquake (**1 Kng 19.11**). God declared that he was greater than any of these and informed Elijah that there were others he was unaware of, 7000 to be exact, who hadn't served the 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 struck the land during the reign of king Uzziah (**Amos 1.1**) which served as a reminder of the force of the Lord's anger. The prophet Zechariah refers to this in his message to the nation as well using this event as a figure to demonstrate the force of his judgment and coming 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 spiritual significance. The fact that Christ had come to fulfill, and thus finish the Law, was finalized the moment 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 the supernatural darkness God brought over the land some of those present 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**).

Christ's resurrection 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 most significant event in the Bible, and all time, highlighting the power of God over life and death accompanied by this powerful demonstration.

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An earthquake that shook the prison where Paul and Silas were being held in Philippi resulted in the conversion of their 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 don't fully understand the mechanics of the earth, or the power of God but it is clear that a being who can shake the Earth itself is one to be respected, feared and worshiped.

Earthquakes can rarely be predicted and they are beyond the control of humans. God utilized earthquakes as a symbol of his power and the devastating power of the consequences for evil. Christ's identity was confirmed by an earthquake that caused the veil of the Temple to tear in half symbolizing the end of the Law of Moses and the dawn of the Gospel era. Earthquakes were used figuratively in God's messages through the prophets providing us with a way to understand the extent of his anger. Just as the earthquake is a sobering reminder of God's power to destroy we need to remember that his power to save is just as powerful.