

Articles and Sermons :: The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes by Charles Wesley (1750)

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"Come and see the works of the Lord — the desolations He has brought on the earth!" Psalm 46:8

Of all the judgments which the righteous God inflicts on sinners here in this world — the most dreadful and destructive is an earthquake. This He has lately brought on our part of the earth, and thereby alarmed our fears, and bid us to "prepare to meet our God!"

Earthquakes are the works of the Lord, and He alone brings this destruction upon the earth. That God is Himself the Author of earthquakes, and sin the moral cause of earthquakes, (whatever the natural cause may be,) cannot be denied by any who believe the Scriptures. Earthquakes are set forth by the inspired writers — as God's proper judicial act for the punishment of sin.

"He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in His anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble!" Job 9:5-6

"He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they pour out smoke!" Psalm 104:32

"Then the earth shook and quaked — the foundations of the mountains trembled; they shook because He burned with anger!" Psalm 18:7

"In His presence the mountains quake, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles, and its people are destroyed. Who can stand before His fierce anger? Who can survive His burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in His presence!" Nahum 1:5-6

Sin is the cause of God's anger — earthquakes the effect of His anger!

"I will bring disaster on the world, and their own iniquity, on the wicked. I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and will humble the pride of the ruthless. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of His burning anger." Isaiah 13:11, 13

"See, the Lord is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; He will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants! The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken!" Isaiah 24:1, 19

And again, "The Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire!" Isaiah 29:6

Nothing can be more express than these Scripture testimonies, which determine both the cause and author of this terrible calamity. We cannot conceive that the universe would have been disturbed by these furious disasters, before sin entered. Therefore reason, as well as Scripture, sufficiently assure us that earthquakes are God's works of judgment — the proper effect and punishment of sin.

Nothing can be so affecting as this judgment of an earthquake, when it comes unexpectedly as a thief in the night, when there is no time to flee, or method to escape, or possibility to resist; when no sanctuary or refuge remains; when the earth opens suddenly, and becomes the grave of whole families, towns, and cities — either sending out a flood of waters to drown them, or vomiting out flames of fire to consume them, or closing over them; when parents and children, husbands and wives, and all people, without distinction, in the midst of health, and peace, and business — are buried in a common ruin, and pass all together into the eternal world; and there is only the difference of a few hours or minutes between a famous city — and none at all!

Now, if war is a terrible evil — then how much more an earthquake, which, in the midst of peace, brings a worse evil than the extremity of war!

If a raging pestilence is dreadful, which sweeps away thousands in a day, and ten thousands in a night; if a consuming fire is an amazing judgment — then how much more astonishing is an earthquake, whereby houses, and inhabitants, towns, and cities, and countries, are all destroyed at one stroke in a few minutes!

For a man to feel the earth, which hangs upon nothing, (as some vast ball in the midst of a thin air,) totter under him — must fill him with astonishing fright and confusion!

History informs us of the fearful effects of earthquakes in all ages; where you may see . . .

rocks torn in pieces;
mountains not cast down only, but removed;
hills raised, not out of valleys only, but out of seas;
fires breaking out of waters;
stones and cinders belched up;
rivers changed;
seas dislodged;
earth opening;
towns swallowed up; and
many such-like hideous events!

Of all divine judgments, there is none more horrid, more inescapable, than an earthquake! For where can we think to escape danger, if the most solid thing in all the world shakes!

With what horror are men struck when they hear the earth groan, and feel it trembling beneath them; when houses are loosened from their foundations; when the roofs fall upon their heads, and the pavement sinks under their feet!

In other evils there is some way to escape; but an earthquake encloses what it overthrows, and wages war with whole provinces; and sometimes leaves nothing behind it to inform posterity of its outrages.

More insolent than the fire — which spares rocks;
more cruel than the conqueror — who leaves walls;
more greedy than the sea — which vomits up shipwrecks
— the earthquake swallows and devours whatever it overturns!

Therefore, fear God — even that God who can in a moment cast both body and soul into hell!

When God makes the mountains tremble, and the earth shake — shall not our hearts be moved? "Should you not fear Me?" declares the Lord. "Should you not tremble in My presence?" Jeremiah 5:22

Will you not fear Him — who can open the windows of heaven above, or break up the fountains of the deep below, and pour forth whole floods of vengeance when He pleases!

Will you not fear Him — who can "rain upon the wicked — snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest!" Psalm 11:6

Will you not fear Him — who can kindle those earthquakes in the caverns of the earth, and make them force their way to the destruction of towns, cities, and countries!

Will you not fear Him — who can thus suddenly turn a fruitful land into a barren wilderness — an amazing spectacle of desolation and ruin!

O that His fear might this moment fall upon all you who read these words; constraining every one of you to cry out, "My flesh trembles in fear of You — and I am afraid of Your judgments!" Psalm 119:120

O that all might see that His hand is now lifted up, as in act to strike! It is stretched out still — and He shakes His rod over a guilty land, a people fitted for destruction!

God will never lack ways and means to punish impenitent sinners. He has a thousand other judgments in reserve; and if the earth should not open its mouth — yet you shall surely at last be swallowed up in the bottomless pit of Hell! Truly, "I

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Hebrews 10:31

If the earth just now were to open its mouth and swallow you up — what would become of you? Where would you be?

Video of this reading: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIMGqXHVEFA&feature=youtu.be>