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THE MESSAGE OF EARTHQUAKES

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe”
(Hebrews 12:28).*

We are guests at an international conference of the Royal Nature Explorers in Colorado Springs, Colorado. All the presenters at this conference are adults, except for one special panel presentation, which we are now attending. The Presenter is an eleventh-grader named Jeremy Collins of Canoga Park, California. The three-member panel is composed of twelfth-grader Alexei Ivanov of St. Petersburg, Russia, tenth-grader Lars Sievertsen of Oslo, Norway, and eighth-grader Christelle Kouassi of Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Jeremy: “Distinguished panel, I am honored to speak before you today. Last year, I had the privilege of presenting the subject of spiders and what those lowly creatures tell us about our Creator. The topic I have selected for this afternoon is not so ‘lowly,’ but one that does bring us low before God. I am going to share with you the science of earthquakes, and how they proclaim both *the mercy and the wrath of Christ.*”

A LESSON FROM HISTORY

Jeremy: “Before I present the science of earthquakes, I would like to touch upon their human impact. If the panel will permit, I have chosen a lesser known earthquake from history that illustrates this ‘human element.’

“On the morning of Sunday, November 1, 1755, the citizens of Lisbon, Portugal, were preparing to celebrate All Saints’ Day. Throngs of people were streaming to the city’s many cathedrals for worship. As a city, Lisbon was the jewel of Europe in 1755. Millions of dollars’ worth of diamonds and gold had been mined in South America by the government of Portugal, and much of that wealth was used to enrich Lisbon. The city was full of extravagant churches and palaces, though sadly, most people lived in poorly constructed homes.

“At 9:42 AM, under God’s reigning providence, the city was struck by a



Copper engraving of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake

devastating earthquake. The ground in and around Lisbon began to shake violently. Eyewitness accounts paint a rather grisly picture of the humbling events that followed: ‘Many Lisboetas were attending Mass in the city’s numerous and lavish churches when the earthquake began.’ People ‘were crushed under a rain of falling masonry as many churches quickly crumbled.’ In addition, land surrounding Lisbon’s harbor on the Tagus River began to move up and down like storm waves on the sea.

“It is estimated that the tragedy lasted seven to eight minutes—an incredible length of time for an earthquake—coming in three distinct, convulsive waves. Within just 15 minutes, ‘the great city was laid in ruins.’ If this had been the end to Lisbon’s suffering, she might have breathed a sigh of relief. Just 30 minutes after the quake, however, she was pummeled by three or four successive tsunamis—up to six stories in height—that sank ships and washed many victims out to sea.¹

“Between thirty and forty thousand people lost their lives that day, a number that staggers the mind and breaks the heart to think about it.” (Jeremy fights back tears.) “The violence of the 1755 Lisbon quake was produced by a geological event estimated to have been between magnitude 8.5 and 8.8. It was felt throughout most of Europe and was so powerful that the waters of Scotland’s Loch Ness—1,400 miles/2,250 km away—were

greatly agitated.” There is a long pause as Jeremy gathers his thoughts.

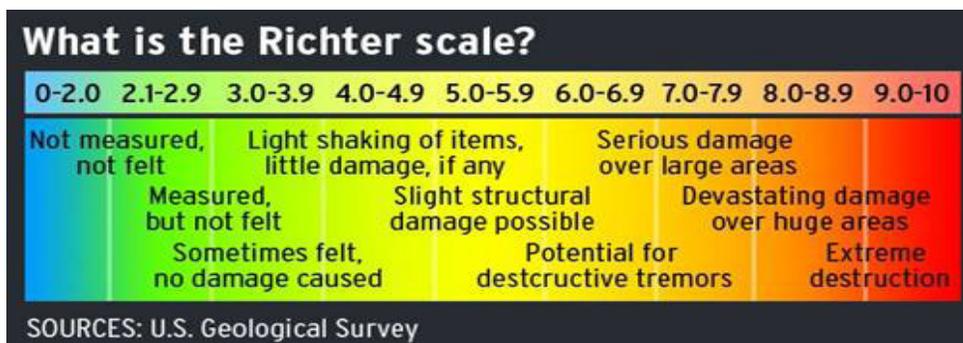
MODERN SEISMOLOGY

Jeremy: “In God’s providence, the 1755 Lisbon disaster became a catalyst for modern earthquake study. Days after the tragedy, Portuguese government officials asked survivors to fill out a detailed questionnaire. Questions were carefully crafted to help determine the extent, direction, and effects of the quake. The science of ‘sismologia’ or seismology [size - MOL - uh - gee] was born.

“Over the next hundred years or so, scientists developed ways of measuring earthquake intensity using similar such surveys. It wasn’t until the 1880’s, though, that the modern *seismograph* was invented. A seismograph is an instrument that measures the *magnitude* of an earthquake, replacing the measure of its *intensity*, which is more subjective, and dependent upon what people feel and experience during an earthquake.

“In 1935, an American geologist working at Cal Tech, Charles Richter [RIK - tur], proposed a ten-point scale of earthquake magnitude, now known as the Richter scale. Each successive number, from one to ten, represents ten times more *ground vibration*. So a magnitude 8 earthquake produces vibrations ten times greater than a magnitude 7 quake.

“As with much of God’s creation, it has



¹ Read about tsunamis in *CREATOR* Vol 18 Num 3.

since been discovered that earthquake science is *far more complex* than was proposed in 1935. Scientists now realize that an increase of one on the Richter scale actually represents 32 times more *energy released*. If we compare a magnitude 8 quake with a magnitude 6 quake, we discover that the energy produced by the earth during a magnitude 8 event is one thousand times that of a magnitude 6 quake ($32 \times 32 = 1,024$). Even a magnitude 6 event can cause damage to well-constructed buildings; this gives us a sense of the almost inconceivable amount of destruction produced by the 8.5 to 8.8 Lisbon earthquake!”

Alexei: “Jeremy, was the Lisbon quake of 1755 the greatest earthquake in history?”

Jeremy: “Depends on how we define ‘greatest.’ The *strongest* quake on record was magnitude 9.5 on May 22, 1960, in Chile. The *deadliest* earthquake took place in Shaanxi, China, on January 23, 1556—it killed 830,000 people and has been estimated to have been magnitude 8.0. The *longest* quake on record occurred on December 26, 2004, in Sumatra, Indonesia—it lasted ten minutes (the duration of most earthquakes is ten to thirty seconds). The strongest quakes are not necessarily the most destructive. It all depends upon the number of people living in a certain region, how well buildings and homes are constructed, soil and ground conditions, etc. These factors, plus the magnitude and duration, determine destructive power.”

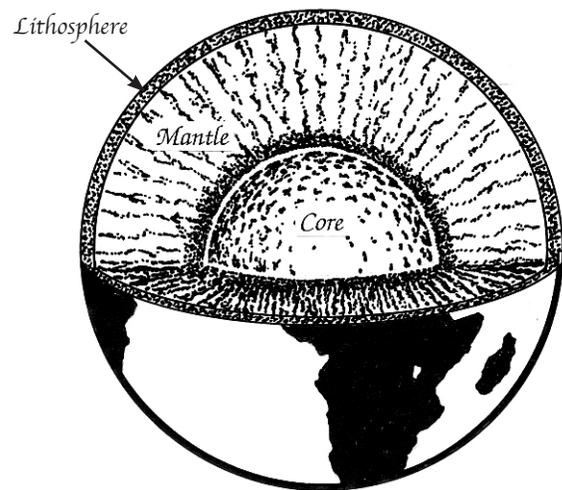
ANATOMY OF EARTH

Jeremy: “To understand earthquakes, we need to have a working knowledge of our planet’s anatomy. Christ, our Creator, constructed Earth as a ‘ball’ with layers. The outermost layer consists of a thin shell called the *lithosphere*, which is about 60 miles or 100 km thick. We could think of the lithosphere as the shell of a chicken egg—a shell that has been gently cracked all over. These cracks in Earth’s crust form a number

of enormous plates, known as *tectonic plates*, on the outer surface of the planet. Geologists have cataloged seven very large tectonic plates and many smaller plates that cover Earth.

“Sticking with our analogy, the inside of Earth is composed of a ‘yolk’ or core of metallic iron and nickel, and a layer of viscous rock located outside the *core*, known as the *mantle*. (The mantle corresponds to the ‘white’ of an egg.) It has recently been discovered that Earth’s core seethes with a temperature of almost 11,000° F or 6,100° C. The core’s immense heat creates convection currents in the upper mantle, just beneath the crust, or lithosphere—currents similar to the churning of boiling water in a pot on the stove.

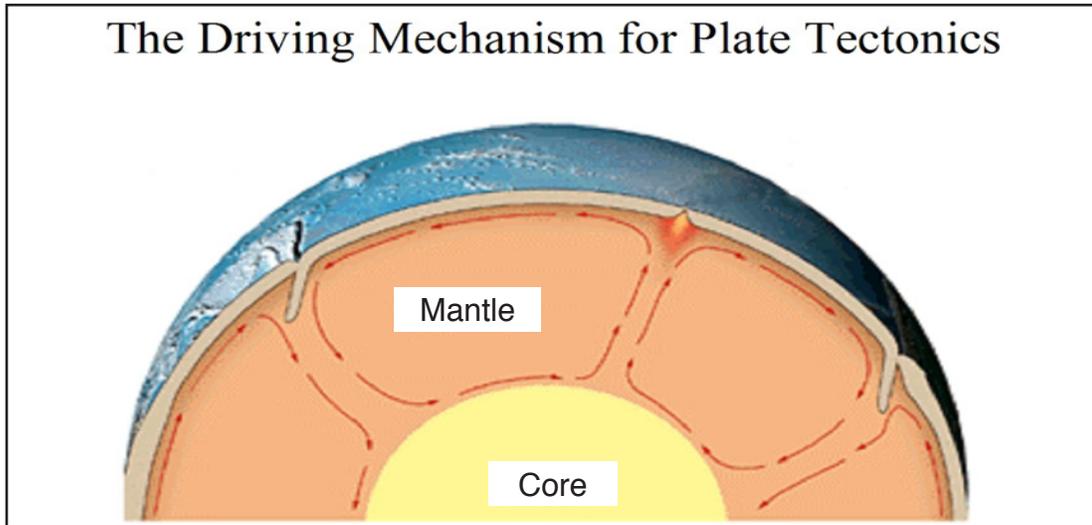
Earth’s Structure



“Research suggests that these powerful convection currents cause the numerous plates ‘floating’ on top of the mantle to move relative to one another. Trouble occurs when the jagged edge of one rigid plate gets caught on the jagged edge of another plate . . . similar to an old wooden door becoming stuck in a door jamb. Over many years, a great deal of pressure can build up along plate boundaries or *fault zones*.”

Lars: “Why is that, Jeremy?”





Jeremy: “The pressure is due to the convection currents beneath our feet. They slowly drive the plates in all directions. The Pacific Plate moves steadily northwest, about two inches or five centimeters each year, relative to the North American Plate, which is moving slowly in a westerly direction. This might not seem like much, but considering how enormous these objects are, it doesn’t take very many years before a lot of strain has built up along the fault zones.

“Sooner or later, the pent-up energy becomes so great that the plates suddenly give way, jerking past each other and creating an earthquake. It would be like the abrupt opening of our stuck door, if we put enough shoulder into it. The sudden slip of one plate relative to another releases a colossal amount of energy throughout the earth in the form of *body waves*.²

Christelle: “Would that be like the sound waves a stuck door produces—the loud bang we hear—when it’s forcefully opened?”

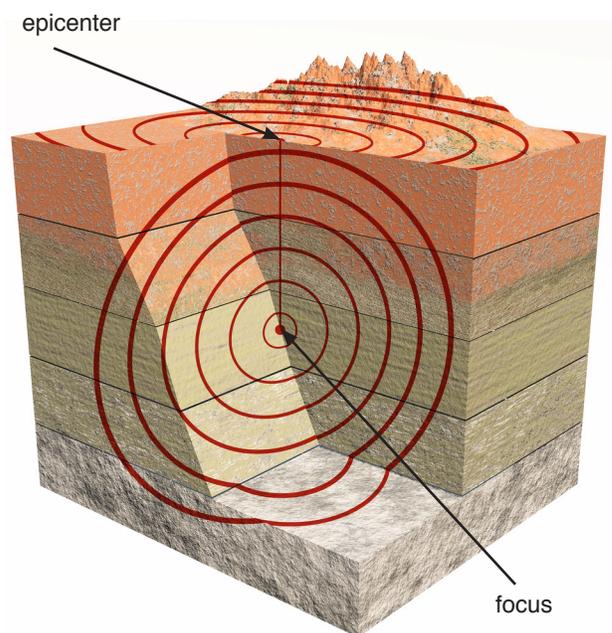
Jeremy: “Yes, Christelle, that’s right! The strength of body waves can be measured on a seismograph. If several seismographs around the world are compared with each other, both the *focus*—which is the spot within the

earth where the quake originated—and the *epicenter* can be determined.”

Christelle: “Jeremy, can you explain what the epicenter of an earthquake is?”

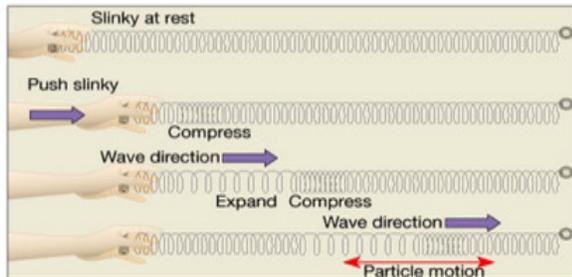
Jeremy: “Yes. The epicenter is the place on *the surface of the earth* directly above the focus. An earthquake focus may be located several hundred feet or meters to many miles or kilometers below the surface of the

Earthquake Epicenter & Focus

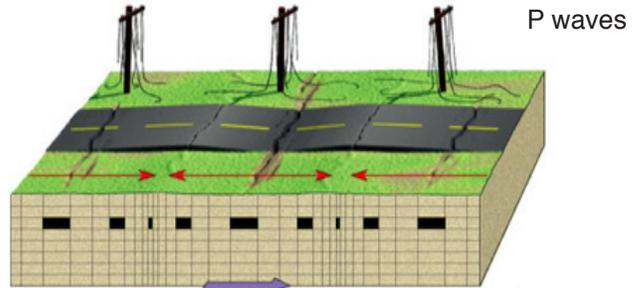


²These seismic waves are called 'body waves' because they move through the body of the earth, as distinct from the surface.

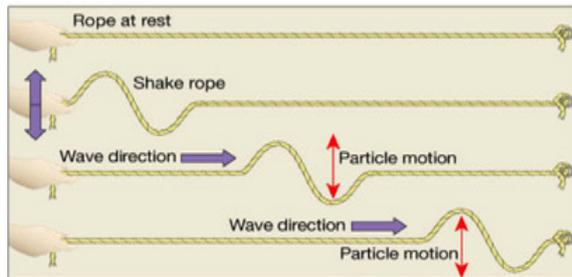
Seismic Waves Produced by Earthquakes



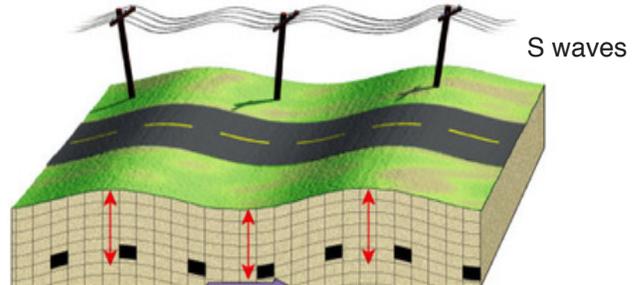
P waves are compression waves that alternately compress and expand the material through which they pass.



The back-and-forth motion produced as P waves travel along the surface can cause the ground to buckle and fracture.

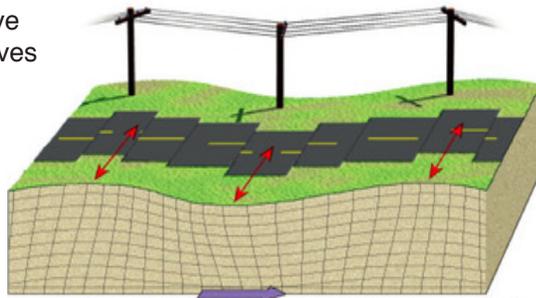


S waves are transverse waves which cause material to shake at right angles to the direction of wave motion. The length of the red arrow is the displacement, or amplitude, of the S wave.



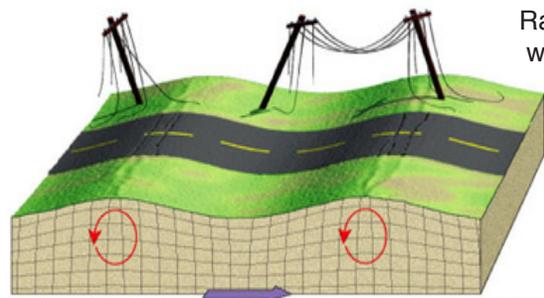
S waves cause the ground to shake up-and-down and sideways.

Love waves



One type of surface wave moves the ground from side to side and can damage the foundations of buildings.

Rayleigh waves



Another type of surface wave travels along Earth's surface much like rolling ocean waves. The arrows show the movement of rock as the wave passes. The motion follows the shape of an ellipse.

earth. By the way, it's important to mention that shallow earthquakes are the most devastating of all, because the energy released is so close to the surface.

"I want to also briefly mention that there are two types of body waves: *P*, or *Primary waves*, and *S*, or *Secondary waves*. P waves are *compression* waves similar to sound waves. They compress the rocks through which they travel, moving the ground back and forth. S waves are *transverse* waves, which means that they cause the rocks through which they travel to move up and down or side to side. S waves can be likened

to the ripples created on a pond when a stone is thrown into it. Both P waves and S waves 'ring out' from a quake and rapidly travel through the earth in all directions."

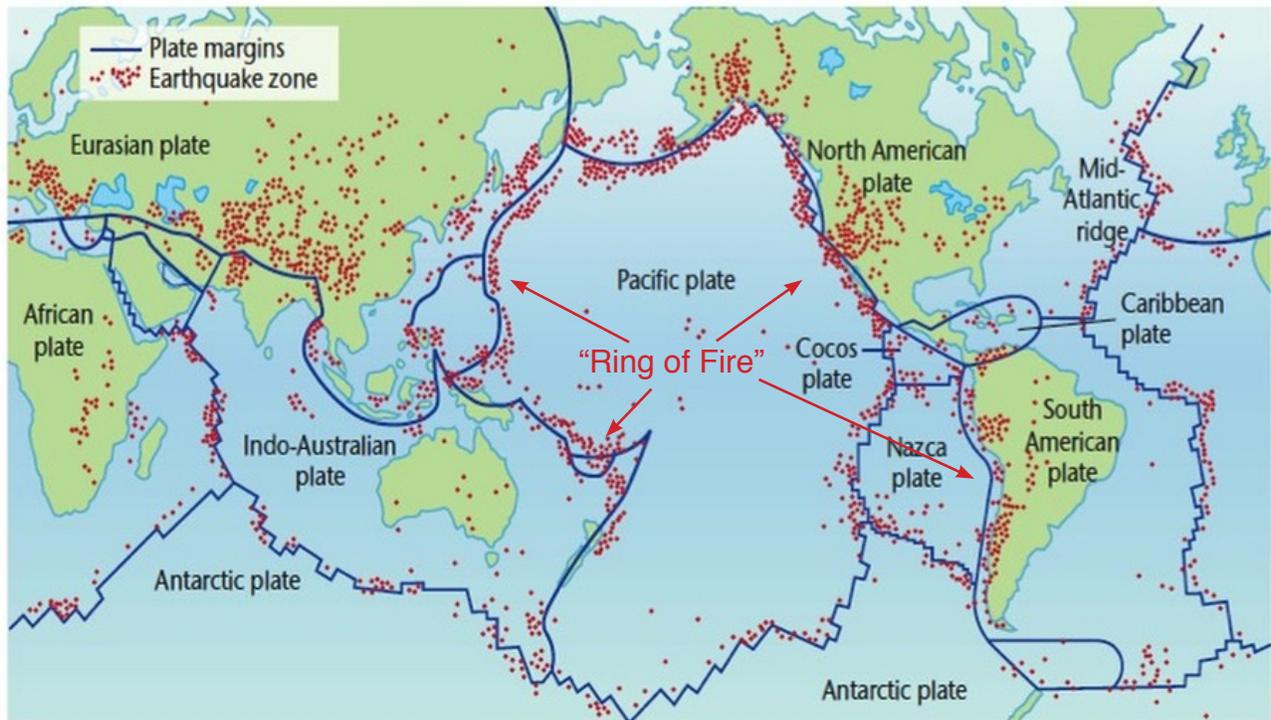
Lars: "How rapidly, Jeremy?"

Jeremy: "Very fast—up to 8.5 km per second, which is about 19,000 miles per hour. It takes the vibrations produced by an earthquake in Japan only minutes to register on a seismograph in Germany.

"When body waves make contact with the earth's surface, two additional seismic waves, known as *surface waves*, are produced:



Tectonic Plates



Rayleigh [RAY - lee] waves, which are similar to S waves, and *Love waves*.”

Christelle: “Why are they called that?”

Jeremy: “Rayleigh waves are named after British physicist Lord Rayleigh. Love waves are named after British mathematician Augustus Love. It is the Love waves—which move the ground side to side—that cause much of the shaking during an earthquake and, therefore, most of the damage.”

WHO IS IN DANGER?

Jeremy: “The risk of earthquakes is not the same everywhere on Earth. Rather, Christ Jesus has providentially ordained two main lines of earthquake activity—the first is a horseshoe-shaped arc surrounding the Pacific Ocean, known as the *Circum-Pacific belt* or ‘Ring of Fire.’ The other is the *Alpide belt*, where the Eurasian Plate meets and rubs up against the African Plate.

“Seventy percent of all earthquakes occur along the arc surrounding the Pacific Ocean. This includes the historically great earthquakes of Chile, Mexico, California, Alaska, Japan, the Philippines, and New Zealand. Twenty percent of major earthquakes take place along a line stretching from the eastern Atlantic Ocean near Portugal and southern Spain, all the way east to Indonesia. This zone includes the great earthquakes of Lisbon, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran, and China. Then there are regions of the world where earthquakes rarely occur—northern Canada and Greenland, Brazil and western Africa, and Antarctica.”

Alexei: “Why is the Circum-Pacific belt called the ‘Ring of Fire?’”

Jeremy: “Because volcanoes often erupt along that line as well.”

Alexei: “Oh, I see.”



THE MESSAGE OF EARTHQUAKES

Jeremy: “I would now like to move from the science of these disasters to the ‘theology’ of earthquakes. There is wisdom to be gained from the ‘message’ of these events. In Scripture, earthquakes are always an indication of God’s power and glory (1 Kings 19:1-12; Psalm 77:18; Isaiah 6:4; Matthew 28:2; Acts 4:31; 16:25-30). *Sometimes* these natural disasters proclaim our Lord’s wrath (Jeremiah 10:10; Revelation 16:18), *but not always*. When God spoke to Elijah, He used an earthquake to get his attention, though He spoke to the prophet through a gentle breeze.

“If we read Nahum 1:2-8, we see that God does use earthquakes to reveal His wrath to the wicked, but in love He also provides Himself as the Refuge for His people (Proverbs 14:26). The very One who is terrifying also becomes the One who brings peace and comfort, in the midst of terror, to those who trust Him. In this case, an earthquake can be seen as a type of *divine wrath*, and a *merciful warning* of a far greater punishment to come (see Matthew 24:1-14).”

Lars: “What of those who believe that earthquakes are simply natural events, and that God has nothing to do with them?”

Jeremy: “That’s an old Deist argument. The Deists of the 18th century believed that God created the universe, but then stepped away, simply allowing natural laws to determine the course of nature with no interference from the Creator. This is not what the Bible teaches. All things that exist and everything taking place in the universe must have a proper cause, and that Cause is Jesus Christ (John 1:3,10; Acts 17:24,28; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3).

“The medieval Christian philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, correctly taught that God is the *First Cause* of everything. All created things, including people, stars, mountains, molecules, and all their motions—which would, of course, include earthquakes—are

‘second causes.’ These *secondary causes* are absolutely dependent upon the First Cause—the One who has sovereign control over all things in Heaven and on Earth at all times.

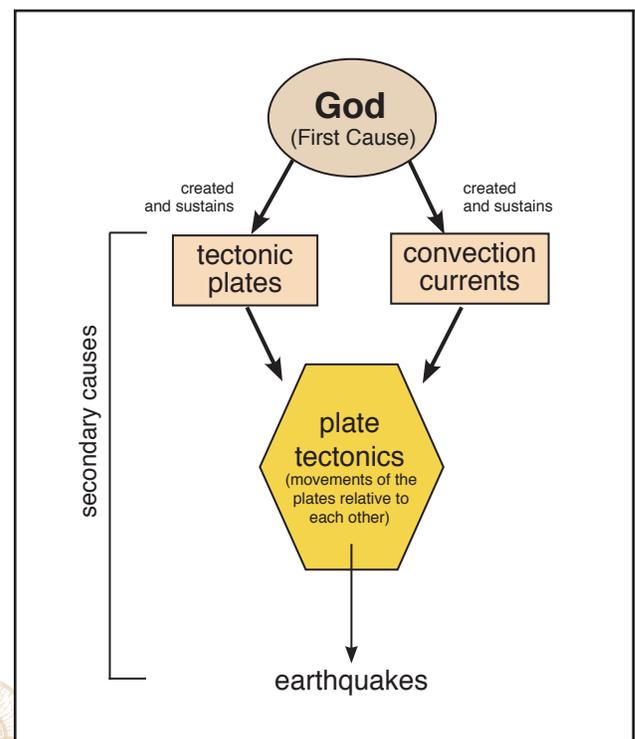
“I would add that earthquakes are not only a work of God, but a *holy* work of God. Earthquakes are a holy work because God is holy and all that He does is holy:

*The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble;
He sits enthroned between the cherubim,
let the earth shake. . . . Let them praise Your
great and awesome name—He is holy*

(Psalm 99:1,3).

Late Scottish pastor Robert Haldane summarizes it well, ‘Our Heavenly Father’s motivation for bringing disaster upon people throughout history issues forth from His holiness, and His means for doing so are perfect. In other words, He never misjudges a situation nor does He make mistakes.’

“Severe earthquakes are an *otherworldly* experience, outside the normal everyday lives of most people. In this sense, too, they are a holy work. That God brings disaster upon people should not amaze us. What should amaze us is that He doesn’t bring terror



upon the whole creation every day because we all sin! His is a heart of great patience and mercy. God does not willingly afflict the children of men with suffering; our Lord's most natural work (for now) is mercy, not wrath. In his commentary on Lamentations 3:33, late pastor Matthew Poole (1624-1676), points out that wrath is 'God's strange work.' Our Creator takes no pleasure in the death of anyone. He would rather that people repent and live (Ezekiel 18:32)."

Lars: "But what of those folks who want to see others punished, who might see God's work in earthquakes as *only* wrath?"

Jeremy: "The prophet Amos warns against such attitudes (Amos 5:18). And to say that the sum and substance of the One who ordains earthquakes is only wrath and nothing more, severely distorts His character! Our Lord is a God of wrath, but also of mercy. Jesus is, at the same time, both *the Avenger of His Father's glory* (Revelation 19:11-21) and *the Deliverer from the consequences of sin*. He is the only one who can rescue us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

"Although many people died in Lisbon on November 1, 1755, eighty-five percent of her citizens escaped with their lives. One could say that's fifteen percent wrath and eighty-five percent mercy."

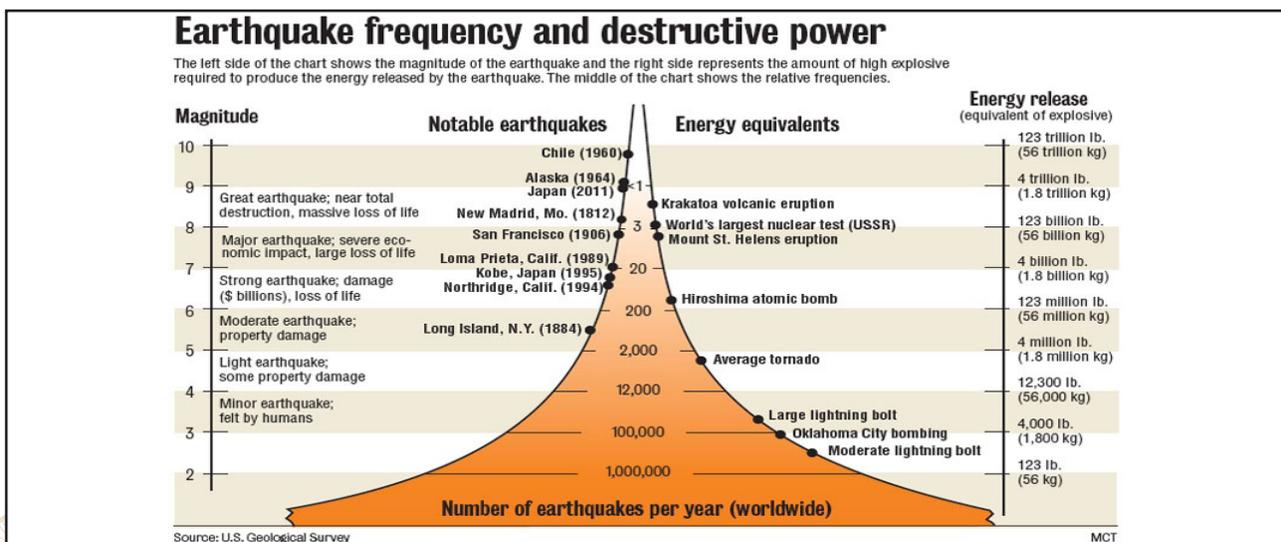
Christelle: "That's assuming that the Lisbon earthquake originated—at least partially—in the wrath of God."

Jeremy: "That the earthquake was ordained by God, there can be no doubt. And yes, you're right to caution us against deciding why He ordained it. But I am convinced that it was His merciful call to the people of Lisbon to repent."

Alexei: "Some might see that as 'severe' mercy."

Jeremy: "Severe, yes; yet richly merciful. Is it not merciful for God to awaken people from the danger of false worship? Lisbon at that time was full of rites, rituals, and idolatry. Might God have sent this earthquake to draw her citizens away from such things? Not a few of Lisbon's own citizens saw the quake as a warning, and a powerful sermon preached by God Himself. Might we see, in this, God's mercy and compassion for the people of Lisbon?"

"Voltaire—an 18th Century philosopher—struggled with the idea that a good God could be the Author of such catastrophe. In his 1759 work, *Candide*, Voltaire questioned the goodness of the Creator with his stinging comment, 'Lisbon is destroyed, while they dance in Paris.' I would strongly argue that the people of Lisbon were shown *more*



mercy than those in Paris. I am certain that Lisbon's disaster caused at least some of her citizens to examine themselves and repent of their sins."

Lars: "Some might not see that as fair—God warning Lisbon, but allowing Parisians to continue in sin!"

Jeremy: "It is true that God shows no favoritism, but He is also sovereign—He has every right to warn or punish some and not others (Amos 4:7; Romans 9:15). A lot of events in history may not seem 'fair' to us, but to repeat Pastor Haldane, these events are rightly directed by God's perfect and holy will. Lars, I don't want to seem harsh, but the only truly fair thing would be for the Lord to send us all to Hell right now, for we all have rebelled against Him in one way or another." There is dead silence in the room.

Jeremy: "God brings calamity on people for several reasons—some of which are difficult to understand. *In Fatherly love*, He sometimes allows His children to suffer. He may do this to glorify Himself, and His beloved, by gently and powerfully sustaining them through a tragedy. At other times, He may bring trials into our lives to show the world that He will never leave us nor forsake us. And on some occasions, God may use hardship to correct the sinful behavior of a Believer and move them to fix their eyes on Jesus (Colossians 3:1-2; Hebrews 12:1-11). *In divine mercy*, God brings disaster on His enemies to show them the eternal danger they are in so that they might repent unto salvation. And *in sovereign judgment*, He forsakes others, including people we know—loved ones, neighbors, or coworkers who seem to have a good life, but want nothing to do with God. This is a bad place for someone to be because it implies the Lord has passed them by. But we can always pray that our Savior's heart be moved in pity for that person, as it was for the two blind men of Jericho (Matthew 20:29-34).

Lars: "In other words, you're saying that it's a good

thing for God to bring destruction on a city?"

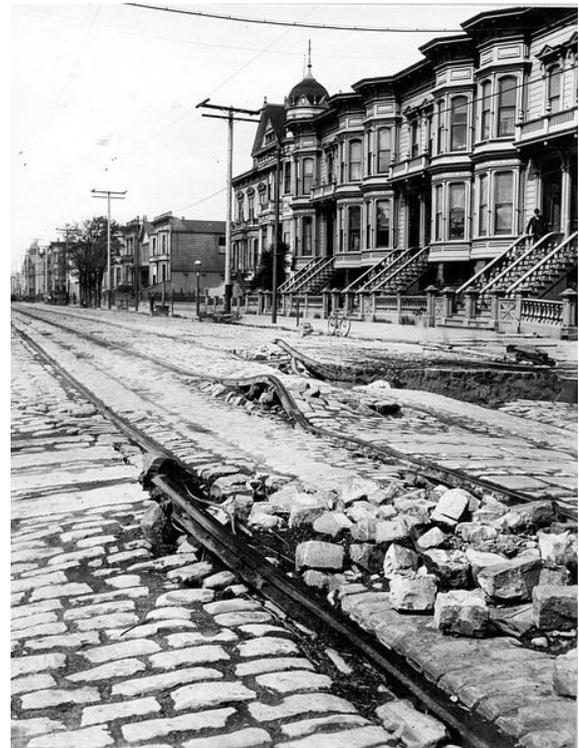
Jeremy: "It's far better than being forsaken." Christelle appears to be visibly shaken.

Jeremy: "Christelle, are you all right?"

Christelle: "I'm beginning to realize just how much God cares for me in the face of all the hardships my family and I have gone through in the Ivory Coast. Before today, I resented the trials He had put before us, but now I see how much He loves us! My attitude has been so wrong! I feel so ashamed."

Jeremy: "Oh, Christelle, Jesus has done a wonderful thing in your heart today!" Christelle begins to cry . . . both Alexei and Lars put a hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

Jeremy: "God lovingly urges Believers not to treat trials and tribulations with contempt (Hebrews 12:3-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-19). Dr. R.C. Sproul reminds us that God does not 'show or permit violence purposelessly.' He goes on to say, 'suffering is



Damaged streetcar rails and cobblestone street after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906



here [on Earth] only because sin has marred an otherwise good creation' (*Answering Evil*, Ligonier Ministries).

Lars: "It seems like you're turning our understanding of suffering on its head."

Jeremy: "Yes, I suppose that I am. The world universally sees suffering as a bad or evil thing. But I'm saying that God can use a disaster—like an earthquake—as an instrument of His love."

"Puritan Thomas Vincent, having been an eyewitness to the bubonic plague and great London fire of 1665-1666, wrote, 'God's gentle voice³ is not heard or minded, therefore He speaks more loudly and terribly,⁴ that people might be awakened to hear.' In the midst of God's terrible wrath here on Earth, we must remember that there is always great mercy (Habakkuk 3:2). Too many people in London ignored what Pastor Vincent termed, 'the sweet calls of the Gospel.'

Alexei: "Maybe in God's eyes the sins of London and Lisbon were worse than the sins of other cities."

Jeremy: "Alexei, we simply can't know that. Jesus strongly warned against our drawing such conclusions (Luke 13:1-5). The people of His day also wondered if disasters were due to the heinousness of sin in a particular group of people. Christ rebuked that idea to jolt us into recognizing our own sinful hearts." Alexei humbly nods in agreement, greatly

convicted by Jeremy's statements.

Jeremy: "If God visited London and Lisbon with disaster because of sin, then we can be certain that He did it for holy reasons. And we might wonder why He doesn't visit us with similar horrors. The truth is, God never punishes us more than our sins deserve, but often He punishes us far less than we deserve."

Christelle: "If I can add — Jesus used the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18 to caution us against wrongly judging people. The Pharisee easily recognized sin in others, but not in himself. Alexei, I think what Jeremy is saying is that God may use natural disasters to show His anger at sin, but we must be very careful about our conclusions. Tragedy should move us to pity those afflicted, *and* examine our own hearts as the tax collector did."

Lars: "But what would you say to those who reject the idea that God is a God of wrath?"

Jeremy: "If we don't see, in the majesty of God, His wrath against sin, then we don't see the majesty of God (Isaiah 2:10; 8:13). That God is angry with our sins every day is clearly taught in the Bible (Psalm 7:11). God's Word must have the final say: 'When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?' (Amos 3:6). This does not mean that calamity speaks only of God's wrath, but it would be difficult to deny that wrath is a central theme of its message in many instances."

Lars: "Some might wonder if God could have used less traumatic warnings throughout history to show His anger at sin."

Jeremy: "Well, Lars, man in his fallen state does not respond positively to Christ's threatenings in the Bible that He is angry at sin. His anger is a *holy* anger and it will, therefore, be *traumatic* in some way. There's no avoiding this. But consider—geologists estimate that the world experiences about 100,000 earthquakes a year, earthquakes that can be felt by people. Of those, only one



Painting of the great London fire of 1666

³ Through the preaching of God's Word by His faithful pastors
⁴ Through disasters

hundred or so—one in a thousand—cause significant damage to cities and towns. So most earthquakes are not severely traumatizing. God does reveal His wrath through earthquakes *sometimes*, but His heart of compassion in warning us via small quakes is at least a thousand times greater!”

Alexei: “So wouldn’t it be better for us to focus more on the love of God than the terror of God? After all, does not Scripture say, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin?’”

Jeremy: “If you keep reading in Exodus 34, it also says, ‘Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.’ *God is not at war with Himself.* Both His love and His wrath will triumph in the end. For God to simply dismiss His wrath against sin, out of hand, would do great violence to His perfect and holy justice, and it would be an unthinkable insult to His Son, who sacrificed Himself on a cruel cross that the sins of His people would be forgiven.”

Lars: “Some will argue, ‘But the message of Jesus should be good news, and this is what the world needs to hear—good news.’”

Jeremy: “It most certainly is good news! But where there is good news, there must also be ‘bad’ news. The Good News is that God wants all peoples to be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth. The bad news is that most people reject the offer of the Gospel and will suffer God’s wrath forever. It’s so sad.”

Jeremy again fights back tears.

Jeremy: “We cannot escape this fact—God is terrible in His judgment against our sins. Here is the Good News—‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’ Otherwise we must stand before God in judgment and answer for our own sins. If we remain in unbelief, we will then have to pay the penalty for those sins in Hell forever. *There are no other options.*

“If we receive Christ Jesus as Lord, and

repent of our sins, then we are delivered from the horror of God’s punishment and brought into a joyful and godly fear of His greatness. It’s like seeing a total solar eclipse—for a brief moment we can enjoy the fearfully wonderful and beautiful glory of the sun, which would otherwise destroy our eyes. If we love Jesus as our eternal Rock, then, like the moon, He eclipses the wrath we deserve and allows us to enjoy the glory of His Father forever without fear of being destroyed (Exodus 33:18-23). How wonderful is that?!”



Total solar eclipse

“Not only that—earthquakes also point to the beauty of Christ.”

Christelle: “Oh, please tell us more!”

Jeremy: “He mercifully saves many from the horror of earthquakes—so too, He saves those humbled by His Cross from the horror of His own wrath (Psalm 2:12; Revelation 6:15-16). There is beauty in this great work, revealing Jesus to be *the beautiful Savior*. Simply put, Jesus is our hero, and what hero does not appear ‘beautiful’ to those he rescues (Isaiah 4:2)?”

“Earthquakes give us a glimpse into God’s infinite power, a power that rescues. The power of God displayed on the Cross to defeat Satan, sin, and death, and to resurrect Christ, is far greater than has ever been displayed in an earthquake.”

Christelle: “Wow, I never thought of that.”



Jeremy: “The greatest ‘earthquake’ the world has ever known did not occur in Japan or Chile, but just outside Jerusalem. Its ‘epicenter’ was located in a place called Calvary, and its effects reverberated throughout the universe. The moment Jesus died on the Cross, the landscape of Satan’s evil kingdom was shaken to the core and irreparably damaged. I believe that the physical earthquake that occurred when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51,54) is a symbol of that victory.

Christelle: “Shouldn’t the power of God revealed in natural disasters also cause us to realize how little control we have over our lives? And shouldn’t this produce humility and godly fear within us?”

Jeremy: “It should! I began my presentation by positing that earthquakes display both the mercy and wrath of God. I purposely placed mercy before wrath because, as Hebrews 3 teaches, now is the time of God’s mercy. His wrath is coming, and once it descends upon those who have rejected the true God of the Bible, then there will be *no more mercy available to them*. There is no such thing as Purgatory or second chances after someone dies. So it is right that we see mercy in the message of earthquakes, ahead of wrath.

“The suddenness of earthquakes reminds us of Christ’s sudden return at the end of time. We all need to be prepared to come before Him in judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10). Earthquakes also teach us to hold loosely to the things of this world, as they can easily be lost or damaged. Rather, we should cling to that which won’t be destroyed (Matthew 6:19-21). Believers in Christ are receiving *a kingdom that cannot be shaken*, for their faith is build upon the eternal, unshakeable Rock, who is Christ (Hebrews 12:28).

“Please allow me to close my presentation with one last quote from Thomas Vincent: ‘Never did there appear in the world a person of such high dignity, of such admirable beauty and such wonderful love as the Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from the Father and clothed Himself with our nature

that He might become our Savior, Redeemer, Surety, and Advocate and that He might deliver us from [the] wrath to come!’”⁵
There are smiles on all the faces of the panelists.

“Great and marvelous are Your deeds,
LORD God Almighty.
Just and true are Your ways,
King of the nations.
Who will not fear You, Lord,
and bring glory to Your name?
For You alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before You,
for Your righteous acts have been revealed.”
(Revelation 15:3-4).



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