

Horror in Haiti:

Unprecedented Devastation

“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.”

—Isaiah 29:6

IN THE TWENTY-NINTH chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy, he foretells God’s condemnation against the people of Ariel, and his coming righteous judgments which would be meted out at the hands of the mighty Babylonian Empire. The word Ariel was sometimes used as an ancient symbolic name for Jerusalem. It is also used in connection with the lion of God. (Ezek. 43:15,16, *Marginal Translation*, and *Strong’s Bible Concordance*, #739,740). The prophet used powerful and destructive symbols in connection with God’s judgments. These were thunder, earthquake, noise, storm, tempest and fire.

God’s temple and sacrificial altar were located at Jerusalem and David resided there. In symbolic terms, Isaiah described the foretold devastation. “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city [the lion of God, *Marginal Translation*] where David dwelt! add ye

year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.”—Isa. 29:1,2

SEVERE UPHEAVAL

When Jesus’ earthly ministry was coming to a close, his disciples asked him what sign would mark his future Second Presence and the end of this present Gospel Age. In his answer, he used various symbols that included the term earthquake. “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”—Matt. 24:7,8

Jesus used the word ‘earthquake’ to illustrate the great worldwide revolution that would take place when he returned invisibly to earth. He explained that this shaking would ultimately remove the present kingdoms and institutions of this earth, and thus make way for Christ’s long-promised kingdom.

EARTHQUAKES

The Prophet Isaiah and our Lord Jesus both used symbolic language to illustrate destruction, and ‘earthquake’ was one of the most devastating. In its natural occurrence an earthquake is a very destructive phenomenon. It occurs as a result of a sudden release of energy, usually caused by a rupture along a geological fault located in the earth’s crust. Tremors then create seismic waves that manifest themselves by shaking and/or displacement at the surface of the earth. The closer to the surface the more destructive is the movement produced. If the epicenter is located under water the ruptured seabed may cause huge waves known as a tsunami.

Giant tectonic plates cover the entire earth like a jigsaw puzzle. Two of these are found in the Caribbean Sea, and are known as the Caribbean, which is contained on its own separate smaller plate, and the North American. These two slabs creep past each other about 0.8 inches per year, with the Caribbean plate moving eastward in relation to the North American. There is also a South American slab in the region that moves westward.

Studies conducted by the Geological and Planetary Sciences (GPS) indicate that the last major earthquake to occur along the Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault in the Caribbean Sea was in 1751. They calculate the accumulated strain over this period of time at 1.7 meters, and as evidence of the tectonic movement in the region.

HISPANIOLA

The nation of Haiti is located on the large island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. This is the site of land in the West Indies discovered by Christopher Columbus in December, 1492. He claimed the island for the Spanish Crown and named it La Isla Espanola which means "The Spanish Island." It has since been Anglicized to Hispaniola.

On January 12, 2010, the island nation was dealt a catastrophic blow by a powerful 7.0 earthquake causing widespread devastation. The quake struck about ten miles southwest of the country's capital and largest city Port-au-Prince, with a population in excess of two million people. As of this writing, there have been more than fifty aftershocks, some of which were powerful enough to cause severe damage.

UNIMAGINABLE MISERY

To add to the extreme distress and hardship, Haiti is an impoverished country and one of the poorest and least developed in the world. Its government was in no position to deal with the inevitable large quake, and its people were left to suffer the consequences of the disaster until help could arrive. The call for help was heard around the world and many nations rushed to offer the Haitian people whatever assistance they could.

The area surrounding the capital city has many steep hills of loose soil that have been built on. In an earthquake, this soil buckles and quickly undermines the buildings' foundations. The massive 7.0 quake leveled many sections of the city and destroyed government buildings, foreign aid offices, and countless slums.

While assessing the devastation, Prime Minister Preval declared, "Parliament has collapsed, the Tax Office has collapsed, schools have collapsed, hospitals have collapsed, and the death toll is unimaginable." It was soon discovered that the United Nations mission was also destroyed. Sixteen members of the peacekeeping force in Haiti were killed, and hundreds more were missing.

A NEWS REPORT

Los Angeles Times reporters Cara Mia Di Massa and Alexandra Zavis submitted an article two days after the disaster in Haiti struck (January 14, 2010), under the caption "Conspiring To Make Catastrophe," and from this article we quote in part. "Haiti's disaster resulted from tectonics, dense population, and poor building standards.

The catastrophic quake that struck Haiti involved a collision of lethal circumstances: a massive, shallow eruption below a densely populated city with few, if any, building codes.

“Kate Hutton, a seismologist at Caltech said the quake was similar to those seen along the San Andreas fault: it was shallow, a fact that enhances the intensity and makes it more localized through the region right along the fault. Before about 1950, a given-sized earthquake would do about the same amount of damage in the developed and underdeveloped world. Now the loss of life is typically 10 times higher in developing countries and the damage can be as much as 100 times higher.

“A spokesperson for the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said that part of the problem is that scientists have spent much of their time trying to understand the earthquake risks in California, Japan, and other well-off parts of the world with high seismic hazards, while ignoring poorer and more densely populated parts of the world.

“United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other international agencies have been helping vulnerable countries—including Jordan, Bhutan, China, Fiji, India, and Iran—to improve planning for earthquakes. The United Nations advises governments to upgrade schools, hospitals, and other public buildings to better withstand earthquakes; to impose stricter building codes; and to develop evacuation, rescue, and contingency plans. Jordan Ryan, director of the UNDP crisis bureau, said his agency estimates that 60 million people have been affected by quakes in the last ten years. He said it’s like the old insurance

argument: Who cares about prevention? We don't have enough money. We're a poor country."

A BROKEN STATE

An editorial was published by the *Los Angeles Times* (January 14, 2010) with the heading, "Helping Haiti Help Itself" in which the author stated, "Haitians have long been prey to hurricanes and coups, their nation ravaged by erosion and corruption, mudslides and marauders, poverty and violence. Now the few economic and political gains made over five years of relative stability have been buried along with thousands of corpses in the rubble of the magnitude 7.0 earthquake. The presidential palace, parliament, government ministries, and hospitals—indeed most of the capital of Port-au-Prince—are in ruins. An already dysfunctional state now lacks even the edifices of government. Gone, too, are some of the buttresses; the archbishop and his cathedral; the head of the United Nations mission and some of his top aides, who died when their headquarters collapsed.

"Not even a developed country could completely withstand such a powerful temblor so close to the Earth's surface and city center. Yet the full extent of Haiti's devastation is a result of its broken state, where 80% live below the poverty level. Port-au-Prince quadrupled to nearly 3 million people in the last twenty-five years as Haitians fled a denuded countryside in search of food and work. They built shanties out of watered-down concrete on precarious hillsides. They didn't have water and electricity, let alone zoning and inspectors to insist on safety.

“The international community has made some headway in building a civilian police force to provide security, but not as much in bolstering a civilian government to provide for its people. A school to train magistrates was to reopen this month; parliamentary elections were to be held in March and a presidential election in December. Tentative investments were trickling in to tourism and industry. All of that came to a screeching halt in seconds.

“Of course the United States and the international community must respond to the terrible emergency first. They must tend to the wounded, provide shelter for tens of thousands of homeless, and bury the dead. They also must plan now for rebuilding the capital and, even harder still, creating a functioning state. That’s nation building. It is the urban planning that never took place. It means working with the government to build adequate housing and schools. It requires job creation—and not necessarily in the capital. This is an agricultural country that must be able to farm and feed itself.

“For decades, the United States has turned its attention to Haiti only sporadically, only in times of crisis, when too many boatloads of hungry Haitians washed onto Florida shores, or when a government was about to fall—but then lost interest to another crisis. If the United States has the will and resources to build up governments in Afghanistan, Iraq, even Yemen, surely it can show leadership in building a functioning country on an island just a few hundred miles from the coast of Florida. Enough is enough for this failed state.”

MANY CHALLENGES

Our attention is turned to the many difficulties encountered by relief workers when they arrived at the scene of devastation. *The Los Angeles Times* (January 15, 2010) included a news report “International Aid Agencies Face A Dual Challenge” submitted by Shari Roan. Quoting in part, “Haiti has long suffered from a lack of medical care and rampant disease. Now relief groups must save lives and build a system on the fly.

“In Haiti, average life expectancy is 53, three-quarters of women give birth without a health attendant, diarrheal illnesses are the second-leading cause of death and 30% of children younger than 5 have stunted growth, and that was before the earthquake. This time, emergency medical responders will have to provide much more than the usual food, water, latrines, and bandages to stop the spread of disease, said Dr. Christina Catlett, associate director for health preparedness at the Johns Hopkins Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response in Baltimore. They’ll also have to create a public health system on the fly.

“It’s not clear yet whether aid workers will have enough resources to meet all needs. Haitians are in desperate need of clean water, and one person needs about four gallons of clean water for drinking and hygiene per day to limit disease. Haiti had significant health problems prior to the earthquake: HIV, tuberculosis, severe malnutrition, intestinal parasites, anemia, and a host of other problems.

“In the Western Hemisphere’s poorest nation, with a population of about 9 million, only \$96.00 per person is spent on health care compared with

\$6,090.00 in the United States. Half of all Haitian families live in a single-room dwelling. About 8% of newborns and children younger than 5 die of malnourishment each year. One-quarter of adult women are anemic. There are roughly three doctors in Haiti for every 10,000 people according to the World Health Organization. This would be a disaster anywhere, said Dr. Alina Dorian, assistant director of the UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters. However, when you're starting with pretty much zero infrastructure, this really overwhelms everything.

"Haiti will challenge the record of the global public health response to natural disasters, said Dr. Georgess Benjamin, the executive director of the American Public Health Association. Humanitarian support systems, such as the World Health Organization and non-governmental organizations, have been crippled by the disaster. According to news reports, only one hospital in Port-au-Prince, the capital, is functioning.

"Clean water is the most crucial need. Diseases such as cholera and dysentery may break out if people drink contaminated water. But food is also more crucial than in most other disasters. Many Haitians are already underweight and won't be able to survive as long as a healthy person without food. Emergency health responders need to set up therapeutic feeding stations to care for people in danger of starving. There is also the risk that people could resort to eating contaminated food, making food-borne illnesses likely. When you're hungry, you'll eat whatever you can find. People eat food that is not safe, and we will

have water and food-borne illnesses like E-coli and salmonella.

“If Haitians flock to shelters, which seems likely considering their limited options, crowding will increase the threat of disease. Haiti already has high rates of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and measles. These threats are much more real than those posed by the many corpses lying in the streets. Dead bodies transmit disease less than a live body.

“Haiti has gone through so much during the past decade; flood after flood and disaster after disaster and coup d’etat after coup d’etat, and the international community only responded on the surface. Now we have a country completely destroyed. The only way that we can respond is to rebuild Haiti.

AID ARRIVES

Under the title “Aid Surge Going In Haiti” (January 16, 2010), *Los Angeles Times* reporters Tina Susman and Joe Mozingo wrote, “The leading edge of a massive relief effort gained a toehold around the Haitian capital, with the United States military taking control of the airport and helicopters ferrying supplies from an aircraft carrier positioned off the coast. But deep within the city’s neighborhoods, residents fended for themselves—evacuating those who could go, caring for those who couldn’t and putting to rest those who would move no more.

“Hundreds of doctors and aid workers and tons of supplies arrived at the airport, now teeming with traffic. United States officials said their goal

was to land an aid flight every 20 minutes. Throughout the weekend, the United States military contingent assigned to the relief effort will grow to as many as 10,000, officials said. As aid poured in, those trying to distribute it faced the challenge of punching through mountains of rubble, smashed cars and streets strewn with bodies to reach a population clamoring for help.

“Aside from the few police officers trying to control crowds at a gas station or direct traffic, there was virtually no sign of any authority in Port-au-Prince. The capital seemed remarkably calm three days after the earthquake, despite the growing frustration of people with no food, water, or shelter.”

THE FUTURE HOPE

Although the present situation in Haiti is desperate, the Scriptures teach a hope for the Haitian people, and all mankind who await the establishment of Christ's future kingdom over all the earth. In his letter to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul spoke of this future time. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19) “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”—vss. 21-24

THE WHOLE CREATION

In this passage of scripture, we are assured of the promises of God that will be administered by Christ during his future kingdom. Paul spoke of the creature, or creation, meaning the whole sin-sick human creation that will be set free from the bondage of sin and its penalty death. He also points to the Lord's people who eagerly wait for the completion of The Christ who will share in dispensing life-giving blessings to all of the obedient of mankind.

SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

The Prophet Isaiah wrote concerning some of the wonderful features that will be identified with Christ's future kingdom of righteousness. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." (Isa. 11:1,2) Jesse was the father of King David. (I Sam. 25:10) David typified our Lord Jesus (II Sam. 7:12-17) who will establish his kingdom over the world.

"And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the

girdle of his reins.” (Isa. 11:3-5) “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—vs. 9

SHOWERS OF BLESSING

Showers of blessing will come to all people. “I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.”—Ezek. 34:25-28

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”—Rev. 21:3-5 ■