



## Biblical Perspectives in Everyday Life

# EARTHQUAKES & END TIMES

Often we take something at face value without checking it out for ourselves. For example, who hasn't heard, and maybe even believed, that one out of every two marriages in America ends in divorce? In spite of the frequency that this "urban legend" is repeated, even in the church, it is not true.

Approximately two million *new* marriages occur each year, and it is estimated there are one million divorces annually. However, there are 50 million marriages already in place that will not end up in the divorce court this year. When all the marriages are placed in the statistical pool for a year (52 million), perhaps 2% (1 out of 50) of all married people will be divorced this year. That's too many, but that's a far cry from the claim of "1 out of every 2 marriages will end in divorce this year."

You may wonder, "What do earthquakes and end times have to do with a misunderstanding of marital statistics?" The connection is that speakers can use erroneous data to promote a specific conclusion.

Have you heard that the Lord Jesus will soon return to earth because the reality of Matthew 24:7 is being played out before our eyes? That verse says, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places." The next verse states, "All these are the beginning of birth pains."

Definitely, nations and kingdoms are rising against one another. This fact has been a constant for 2,000 years, as have famines and earthquakes. However, some teachers claim that the number of earthquakes is increasing in our times and has increased dramatically over the last 50 years. Armed with this supposedly reliable information, they conclude that the return of Christ is near.

The return of Christ is near, much nearer than it was 2,000 years ago or 50 years ago. However, one is on shaky ground (pun intended) by linking the return of Christ with a supposed increase in earthquakes, especially the "big ones." Research indicates that there were more big earthquakes between 1900 and 1950 than after 1950. In fact, there has been an obvious *decrease* in the frequency of big earthquakes in the last 50 years. (The research behind this conclusion is on the internet at <http://www.icr.org/article/424/>). Since this is the case, if we use the information concerning earthquake frequency to tell us about the return of Christ, then we would have to conclude that His return was "nearer" for Christians living between 1900 and 1950 than for those of us living now.

What are the lessons that we can learn from this? One lesson is that we should not accept statistical claims without knowing where the data originated. A much larger lesson is that we don't have to link Christ's return with some natural phenomenon in order to gain assurance that this supernatural event is close at hand. For a believer, the "when" of Christ's return is not the issue. Most importantly, we should stay focused on the return of Christ, which, in itself, gives us motivation to stay pure in our daily lives, as 1 John 3:2-3 indicates:

*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

We should live each day as though *today* would be the day He may appear. Our response should be in line with what Jesus told His disciples after they asked if this would be the time that the kingdom would be restored. Jesus said:

*"It is not for you to know times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and*

*Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).*

Our purpose during these end times is to grow in Christ-likeness and be faithful witnesses, no matter how much longer we have before we see Jesus face to face. We don't need earthquakes to motivate us to respond to His grace in everyday life. We only need to remember His death on a cross just outside Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago and His promise that He will return.

*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

*So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

*Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen (2 Peter 3:8-18).*