

The Whole Earth Groans with Birth Pangs

Three things the Father wants to give you when everything around you is shaking

By Doug Stringer

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The earth is shaking.

In January, hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives when the nation of Haiti was shaken by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake. Close to a million people were left homeless. Only a few weeks later, an astounding 8.8 quake shook the nation of Chile. The Chilean quake was so powerful that scientists estimate it moved the earth's axis by as much as 8 centimeters and even shortened our day by 1.26 microseconds!

These tremors represent just a few of the thousands of earthquakes that will be recorded around the world this year, according to estimates by the U.S. Geological Survey. But earthquakes are not the only kind of shaking happening on earth. Natural and human disasters, economic and political crises, terrorist attacks, wars, famines, and disease—these are all the news headlines we see around the world. The earth is shaking!

Spiritual Seismophobia

Between the evening news and box office movies touting the end of the world, it's easy to become afraid. The "shaking" around us causes our minds to start racing with questions. What's going to happen? Will our economy fail? Will terrorists attack us? Will there be a war, a hurricane, an earthquake, or some other disaster that hits close to home? Will life as we know it change forever? Will we and our loved ones be safe?

When news of the Haitian and Chilean Quakes hit, people stated, "All I can explain is that it was apocalyptic." We've heard the different fodder regarding the movie 2012 addressing the Nostradamus prophecies, Chinese, Mayan and Aztec prophecies. People are sensing there's something about 2012 that is apocalyptic.

I've been asked what I think about the prophecies and the movie 2012. My initial response is that for some people the end is coming in 2 minutes, 2 days or 2 years. Regardless if it's 2 months, 2 years or 20 years the real issue is how are we living the time allotted to us right now... the lives we live before entering the portals of eternity. As my spiritual grandfather, the late Revivalist Leonard Ravenhill asked, "Is the life you are living worth Christ dying for?"

Just what are we to make of all these events in our world? For starters, we can look to God's Word and be confident that He knows what is going on. Jesus said in Luke 21:11, "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven." But why do you think the Lord told us these things would come? Was it to cause us to fear? To bring us anxiety and uncertainty?

No! Perhaps the most important part of Jesus' message is found two verses later in Luke 21:13: "*But it will turn out for you as an occasion for your testimony.*" When we hear about wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, we don't have to be afraid. These are our moments to rise up and share the good news of the kingdom of God.

All That Can Be Shaken

Beloved, it is critical that we understand—*There is more shaking to come*. On this point, the Bible is clear. We have already looked at Luke 21. Let's look at a few other scriptures as well:

Romans 8:22 – “For we know **that the whole creation groans and suffers** the pains of childbirth together until now.”

Haggai 2:6-7 – “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little **while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations**, and the desire of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

Hebrews 12:25-29 – “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking, for if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens.’ This expression, ‘Yet once more,’ denotes **the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain**. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.”

As Hebrews 12 says, *all that can be shaken* is going to be shaken. This world and its failing systems, its corrupt governments, even creation itself—it's all going to be shaken so that only the unshakable kingdom of God remains. We can count on it happening. All we can do is be prepared.

The View from Above

I recently had a dream about God the Father that helped me understand three things God wants us to have for the days ahead. In the dream, I was like a child, and all around me was a sea of people. The sea of people represented the world, and they were moving in a mass of noisy confusion. As a little boy in the crowd, I couldn't see what was happening because of all the people around me who were taller than me. I couldn't hear what was going on because of all the chattering voices.

Suddenly, I saw an image of the Father picking me up and putting me on His shoulders. He lifted me above the sea of people where I could now see and hear clearly what was going on. I was being carried safely on Daddy's shoulders, with an elevated view of everything around me.

This is the Father-heart of God. We live in a world of confusion and chaos, with voices clamoring all around us. And just like a child lost in the middle of a crowd, it's easy to become afraid and feel like you don't know what is going on. But our Father wants to lift us up upon His shoulders where we are safe, and where we can see with a new perspective and hear His voice above all the other noise.

As I reflected on this dream, I knew it held lessons for God's people in the last days. And I want to share with you three things I believe God wants you to have to be victorious even in the midst of shaking. These three things are **Perspective, Peace, and Purpose**.

Perspective: An Elevated View

The first thing that the Father did in my dream was to lift up the little child upon His shoulders. What was the result? The child had a new perspective, an elevated view.

In Psalm 61:1-2, David prayed, "Hear my cry, O God, attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." What do we need when we are overwhelmed? We need to go to the Rock that is higher than we are, where we can see above the confusion and the chaos and get a heavenly perspective.

Without the proper vision, we will perish (Proverbs 29:18). We need to be a prophetic people who understand the times we live in. We cannot afford to prophesy frivolous things when God is trying to show us the fire on the horizon. We must see the bigger picture.

How do you get this prophetic vision and revelation that comes from above? How do you get the understanding and insight you need for the days to come? You need an encounter with the Father. He alone can give us the perspective we need to stand in the days to come. Call out to Him, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Peace: Safe on His Shoulders

In His final days on earth, Jesus spoke at great lengths to His followers about the days to come. In John 16:33, He told them, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

As long as we live on this earth, we will have trouble. There will be days of shaking ahead. But the voice of Jesus gives us peace! He wants us to know that even though there is trouble all around us, we belong to the One who has overcome the world. We are His children and He wants to carry us on His shoulders.

Peace is something we all need. When catastrophes strike, we need peace. When the economy fails, we need peace. When we face an uncertain future, we need peace. When everyone around us is fearful, we need peace. Jesus said in Luke 21 that men's hearts would fail them from fear and expectation of the things that were coming on the earth. Fear, anxiety, stress, and sorrow will overcome many. But for those who know their Father, who are lifted up and carried in His arms, there is nothing to fear.

Purpose: An Occasion for our Testimony

We live in a world literally being shaken off its axis. There are tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, and economic and political uncertainties all around us. In the chaos and confusion, it's easy to be overwhelmed. It's easy to feel like you don't know what to do. But the Father is saying to us, "Shhh. Quiet your heart. Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). He picks us up, puts us on His shoulders, and says, "Look around. This is the big picture. Get my perspective and my vision. Look clearly at the days in which you live."

"But it will turn out as an occasion for your testimony."

God's intention in lifting us upon His shoulders is not just to give us peace and comfort. It's not just to give us a better view of things. God is infinitely interested in the billions of souls hanging in the balance. He cares for those who are being shaken and who don't know that they have a Father who cares for them. And He is looking for His people to stand in the gap for those who are perishing.

The book of Numbers tells the account of a terrible earthquake. In Numbers 16, we find out that the sons of Korah rose up against Moses and Aaron and sinned against the Lord. Because of this, the Lord caused the ground to shake and to open up. The earth swallowed the sons of Korah and a plague broke out against the people.

Moses and Aaron could have easily stood back and watched. They could have said, "Well, they're just getting what they deserve." But instead, Moses instructed Aaron to take his censer, which represents intercession, and to make atonement for the people. Verse 48 tells us that Aaron "stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped."

When disaster strikes and the earth shakes, how do we respond? Are we a people who will intercede for those who are perishing? Or do we stand back and say, "They're just getting what they deserve."

Psalm 60:2 says, "You have made the earth tremble. You have broken it. Heal its breaches, for it is shaking." It is the Lord who is bringing a shaking to the earth. He is establishing his unshakable kingdom and bringing judgment to every structure man has built that is not on the right foundation. But even though the Lord is bringing the shaking, we are still called to be intercessors standing between the living and the dead. Let us cry out for those who are perishing: You have made the earth tremble, Lord. Now heal its breaches! Bring life to those hanging in the balance, whose foundations have crumbled.

People are suffering all around us. They are suffering from disaster and disease. They are suffering economically, emotionally, and spiritually. They need you. They need me. They need those who have an answer to their problems. They need those who have peace in the shaking.

Creation's Longing

Our purpose—to share the good news of the kingdom—is part of what the shaking is all about. Romans 8:22 says that all of creation is groaning. Why is it groaning? Romans 8:19 tells us. The earth is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed! When everything around us is shaking, our moment to arise has come!

Your neighbors, your colleagues, your family members, your community, your nation—they're all waiting for you to share the answer you have. Romans 8:21 says that creation is waiting to be delivered from the bondage of decay into the glorious liberty of the children of God. You and I were made for such a time as this.

Don't get lost in the chaos and confusion. Don't be overcome by fear. Let the Father lift you up on His shoulders and show you the sea of people—the people all around you who need to know of the unshakable kingdom that is coming soon. Receive His perspective, His vision, and His revelation. Receive His peace, knowing that you are safe in His arms. And be stirred by His purpose, to rise up and let Christ be revealed in you.

The earth is shaking. Let us arise!

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