

PROPHECY UPDATE

# IS PREPARING FOR A *NATURAL DISASTER* A LACK OF FAITH?

— BY PERRY STONE —



**M**onths ago a discussion ensued about the danger zones in the United States. It is public knowledge that the San Andreas fault line, located in California, that stretches for 800 miles, has been rumbling. Californians have been warned that the “big one” is coming, and could suddenly occur at any time. Then there is the New Madrid Seismic Zone, a major seismic fault line that runs for 150 miles through the southern and Midwestern United States. The New Madrid system was responsible for a major earthquake that struck in 1811-12, that shook windows in Washington, DC. This seismic system stretches through Illinois, Missouri, Western Tennessee, and Arkansas, and is 3 to 15 miles under the earth’s surface. Seismologists have projected that should the San Andreas system produce the highly anticipated big quake, 35 million homes would be damaged or destroyed along with tens of thousands of businesses. Should the New Madrid trigger, University researchers from Illinois and Virginia Tech projected that if the quake reached a 7.2 magnitude, 86,000 casualties, 3,500 fatalities, with 715,000 buildings damaged or destroyed, with economic losses impacted by the quake estimated at \$300 billion dollars. When these two systems were discussed in my presence recently, a person in the room said, “I’m not concerned about any of that, the Lord will take care of everything.” In my mind I questioned, “Is that type of thinking truly faith? Or this that denial or passivity?” I went to the Bible for my answer.

## THE WARNINGS OF DESTRUCTION

The premier example of a nation being warned of future destruction is Christ’s warnings concerning the future

destruction of Jerusalem and the sacred Temple. This content of his discourses are recorded in the latter section of Matthew 23 and the early portion of the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24. Luke, the physician, presents more details in his gospel in Luke chapter 21. When compiling the information listed by these eyewitnesses, we gain a clear imagery of Christ’s attitude toward national destruction and his concern that his own disciples were not aware, but prepared and had an evacuation plan in place prior to the actual destructive episode unfolding.

First, Christ gave a warning as to what would occur. When speaking of the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, he predicted that, “Not one stone would be left upon another that shall not be thrown down” (Matt. 24:2). Luke adds that the city would be “laid to the ground,” (Luke 19:44). Christ also predicted the major sign they would see, knowing the destruction was coming, when he said, “When you see Jerusalem compassed (surrounded) by armies, know that the desolation thereof is near” (Luke 21:21). Amazing! He gave a more specific time frame as to when this terrible catastrophe would unfold, when he said, “Verily I say unto you, all of these things (desolations) shall come upon this generation” (Matt. 23:36). Based upon Israel’s wandering in the wilderness recorded in the Torah and Psalms 95:10, God was grieved forty years with the generation that came out of Egypt, and the original Hebrews who departed in Exodus 12 all died in the wilderness except Moses (who died before entering the land) and two older men survived, Joshua and Caleb. Christ warned of the coming desolation within one generation and his disciples would have understood this to be an average of forty years. If Christ spoke this prediction around 32

AD, then within forty years all of his warnings concerning the toppling of the temple stones and the destruction of Jerusalem would be fulfilled (more on this in a moment).

Finally, Christ gave his disciples and their future children, that would see the Roman armies invade Jerusalem, a plan of escape. He told them:

*“And when you see Jerusalem compassed with armies, know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them, which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter there into.”*

– Luke 21:20-21

Christ further instructed;

*“Let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains: let him which is in the house top not come down, to take anything out of his house; neither let them which is in the field return back to take his clothes.”*

– Matthew 24:16-17

The fourth century father Eusebius and Epiphanius of Salamis both wrote that before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Christians in Jerusalem would be “given an oracle” (verbal prophetic warning) to get out and they fled across the Jordan River to a Decapolis city in Jordan named Pella. Epiphanius makes mention that the disciples of the apostles had great spiritual results ministering in Pella prior to the destruction and was reporting the signs and miracles occurring in Jerusalem, when an angel of the Lord warned them to leave Jerusalem and make exodus to Pella, which the Christians in Jerusalem did. Thus, Christ warning of *what* was coming, gave a sign to indicate *when* it would occur

and revealed the importance of an escape plan to follow. It was not a lack of faith that the Christians left before the destruction, but a strategy to save their lives. Josephus wrote that the Romans surrounded the city, stopping any food from entering, and the people in the city, starving, were attempting to eat the leather on their shoes and one woman went as far as to boil her child. Jews were busting down doors looking for even a morsel of food and when the Romans broke through the walls, thousands of Jews were slain, including woman and children by the Roman Tenth Legion. Remaining in the city, attempting to defend it, was an automatic death sentence, and any survivor was either slain or taken as a prisoner to Rome.

### **A TIME TO STAY AND A TIME TO GET OUT**

This true story is an example that it was not a “lack of faith” that moved the disciples away from the danger zone, but it was God protecting a remnant from being slain in the city. In the book of Acts, plans were being made in the time of Peter, as the people knew the warnings Christ had spoken. In Acts, wealthy believers were selling their property and distributing the income to the needy in Jerusalem, not only to assist their poor brothers and sisters in Christ, but knowing the city would be decimated, why hold on to land and houses, when within a generation, nothing would remain? It is also interesting that when Christ delivered the man of Gadara from 2,000 demons, this miracle occurred in the area of the Decapolis. Word of this deliverance spread and large crowds came to hear Christ and many were healed and converted. This perhaps opened a great door to the future disciples who ministered in the region, as they were received when they fled from Jerusalem and chose to live in Jordan.

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There will be times that believers will receive advanced warnings of danger that lurks in a particular place, or a possible selective judgment that is coming. Man can create their own crisis, such as when people start fires that burn woods and homes. There are not “judgments” but manmade disasters. If a major flood comes and a levy is not properly built a levy can break causing destruction. The water is not God smiting evil, but man’s lack of integrity and work ethic. In the past, cars have crashed because breaks failed (a mechanics failure) and planes crashed because of pilot error thinking they had enough fuel when they didn’t. When it comes to floods, fire, hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes, devastation comes to the righteous and unrighteous as it “rains on the just and unjust” (Matt. 5:45). However, when scientists and other informed experts warn of coming destruction that is not “if” but “when,” it is not a lack of faith to be prepared with what is needed to ride out the storm or provide for your family in a crisis.

### **IS IT FEAR MONGERING?**

Some would suggest that it is “fear

mongering” to tell people it is ok to be prepared for a natural disaster. Prophetic ministers are often accused of creating fear of the future when sharing prophetic warnings of danger or possible judgment coming to an area. However, Paul wrote that Noah “warned of things not seen being moved by fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house” (Heb.11:7). This was not a “spirit of fear” which God does not give (2 Tim. 1:7) as wrong types of fear brings “torment” (1 John 4:18). However, there is a fear of the Lord that brings wisdom (Psa. 111:10). The best verse to sum up being prepared in advance is in Proverbs:

*“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her meat in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.” – Proverbs 6:6-8*

*“A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” – Proverbs 22:3*

In conclusion, after interpreting Pharaoh’s dream Joseph set out a plan to store grain for seven years. Perhaps people mocked him, just as they did when Noah prepared the Ark. However, when famine came, Egypt and the surrounding nations were spared massive casualties from starvation. Each person must hear from the Lord on their own and not be moved by speculation (which is often wrong) but by revelation, which is the unveiling of something concealed. The Lord said he would do nothing unless he reveals his secret to his servant the prophets (Amos 3:7). Listen to praying people and not self-appointed, self-anointed prophetic “watch dogs.” Most of all fear God and not your circumstance. ■