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The Great Destruction in the Americas at the Death of Jesus Christ

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Abstract: Isaiah prophesied, “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) Some questions immediately come up, “Who will be visited by the Lord with such great destruction? And when will this occur, or has it already?” The Book of Mormon provides answers to these questions.

The Great Destructions in the Americas at the Death of Jesus Christ

By Lyle Fletcher

Isaiah prophesied, “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) Some questions immediately come up, “Who will be visited by the Lord with such great destruction? And when will this occur, or has it already?”

The Book of Mormon provides answers to these questions:

But, behold, *in the last days*, or in the days of the Gentiles—yea, behold *all the nations* of the Gentiles and also the Jews, both those who shall come upon this land and those who shall be upon other lands, yea, even upon all the lands of the earth, behold, they will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations—And when that day shall come they [i.e., all the iniquitous nations] shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts, with thunder and with earthquake, and with a great noise, and with storm, and with tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire. And *all the nations that fight against Zion*, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision; yea, it shall be unto them, even as unto a hungry man which dreameth, and behold he eateth but he awaketh and his soul is empty; or like unto a thirsty man which dreameth, and behold he drinketh but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; yea, even so shall the multitude of *all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion*. (2 Nephi 27:1–3, emphasis added)

As the Book of Mormon makes clear, this prophesied destruction of the nations that fight against Zion is still to come, and it includes some key elements: (1) thunder, (2) earthquake, (3), great noise, (4) storm, (5) tempest, (6) flame of devouring fire. As Isaiah’s prophecy states, this destruction is the Lord’s doing and is described as a visitation of the Lord of Hosts. This is only one of a multitude of prophecies related to the great destruction of the wicked that will occur in the last days.

A similar destruction of the wicked was prophesied to occur at the time of the death of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon gives us both the prophecies about this great destruction and an account of their fulfillment. In this article, we’ll explore some of the major elements of these prophecies and their fulfillment at the great destructions that occurred at the time of Christ’s death. We’ll also examine some accounts of a series of earthquakes in Joseph Smith’s day and review other evidence relevant to the great destructions at the death of Jesus Christ.

Our purpose will be threefold: (1) to understand how literally prophecy is fulfilled, (2) to understand in greater detail the great destructions that occurred in the Americas at the death of Jesus Christ, and (3) to understand the self-consistent complexity of the Book of Mormon—a complexity that we in our day are only beginning to glimpse.

The Prophecies of Destruction

Approximately six hundred years before the coming of Jesus Christ, the prophet Nephi saw his people in vision and gave the following prophecy:

And it came to pass that I beheld many generations pass away, after the manner of wars and contentions in the land; and I beheld *many cities*, yea, even that I did not number them. And it came to pass that I saw a *mist of darkness* on the face of the land of promise; and I saw *lightnings*, and I heard *thunderings*, and *earthquakes*, and all manner of *tumultuous noises*; and I saw the *earth and the rocks*, that they *rent*; and I saw *mountains tumbling into pieces*; and I saw the *plains* of the earth, that they were *broken up*; and I saw *many cities* that they were *sunk*; and I saw *many [cities]* that they were *burned* with fire; and I saw *many [cities]* that did *tumble to the earth*, because of the *quaking* thereof. And it came to pass after I saw these things, I saw the vapor of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth; and behold, I saw multitudes who had not fallen because of the *great and terrible judgments of the Lord*. And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself unto them. (1 Nephi 12:3–6, italics added)

Although Nephi does not tell us that this destruction will occur at the death of Jesus Christ, he does tell us that it will occur prior to the time “the Lamb of God” descends “out of heaven” and shows himself to them. It is clear, however, from other prophecies in the Book of Mormon that the destruction Nephi saw in vision would occur at the time of Christ’s death and that it would be a destruction of the wicked.

Nephi was “grieved” and “overcome” because he had seen two “destructions of [his] people” in vision, and he “considered that [his] afflictions were great above all.” (1 Nephi 12:15, 19; 15:4–5) Though he knew that these prophesied destructions “must unavoidably come to pass because of the wickedness of the children of men” (1 Nephi 15:4), and though he greatly sorrowed for the sins of his people as the righteous do (e.g., Alma 8:14; 31:24, 30–31; 3 Nephi 28:9; Mormon 5:8–11), he continued to “exhort [his brethren] with all the energies of [his] soul, and with all the faculty which [he] possessed, that they would give heed to the word of the Lord and remember to keep his commandments always in all things.” (1 Nephi 15:25)

As Nephi continues to teach his people and write his prophecies “that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 19:1–5, 18), he also quotes the words of other prophets that his people “might know concerning the doings of the Lord.” (1 Nephi 19:22; see also 20–24) He writes that “the very God of Israel” will be “lifted up, according to the words of Zenock,” “crucified, according to the words of Neum,” “buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos.” (1 Nephi 19:7, 10)

Nephi also tells us that Zenos prophesied about the great destruction that would come at the time of Christ’s death:

[Zenos] spake concerning the *three days of darkness*, which should be a *sign given of his [Jesus’] death* unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel. For thus spake the prophet: *The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day*, some with his *voice*, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the *thunderings* and the *lightnings* of his power, by *tempest*, by *fire*, and by *smoke and vapor of darkness*, and by the *opening of the earth*, and by *mountains* which shall be *carried up*. And all these things must surely come,

saith the prophet Zenos. And the *rocks* of the earth *must rend*; and because of the *groanings of the earth*, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers. (1 Nephi 19:11–12, italics added and punctuation altered)

Nephi also provides another prophecy about destructions at the time of Christ's death:

And after the Messiah shall come there shall be *signs* given unto my people of his birth, and also *of his death and resurrection*; and great and terrible shall that day be unto the *wicked*, for they *shall perish*; and they perish because they cast out the prophets, and the saints, and stone them, and slay them; wherefore the cry of the blood of the saints shall ascend up to God from the ground against them. Wherefore, *all those who are proud, and that do wickedly*, the day that cometh *shall burn* them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, for they shall be as stubble. And they that kill the prophets, and the saints, the *depths of the earth shall swallow them up*, saith the Lord of Hosts; and *mountains shall cover them*, and *whirlwinds shall carry them away*, and *buildings shall fall upon them and crush them* to pieces and grind them to powder. And they shall be visited with *thunderings*, and *lightnings*, and *earthquakes*, and *all manner of destructions*, for the fire of the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against them, and they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them, saith the Lord of Hosts. O the pain, and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people! For I, Nephi, have seen it, and it well nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord; but I must cry unto my God: Thy ways are just. But behold, *the righteous* that hearken unto the words of the prophets, and destroy them not, but look forward unto Christ with steadfastness for the signs which are given, notwithstanding all persecution—behold, they are they which *shall not perish*. But *the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them*; and he *shall heal them*, and they shall have *peace with him, until three generations* shall have passed away, and many of the fourth generation shall have passed away in righteousness. And when these things have passed away *a speedy destruction cometh unto my people*; for, notwithstanding the pains of my soul, I have seen it; wherefore, I know that it shall come to pass; and they sell themselves for naught; for, for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yield unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell. (2 Nephi 26:3–10)

Five years before the *birth* of Christ, another prophet, Samuel, prophesied that great destruction would accompany the *death* of Christ:

But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign, *a sign of his [Jesus'] death*, behold, in that day that he shall suffer death the *sun* shall be *darkened* and refuse to give his light unto you; and *also the moon and the stars*; and there shall be *no light* upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, *for the space of three days*, to the time that *he shall rise again* from the dead. Yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be *thunderings and lightnings* for the space of *many hours*, and the *earth shall shake and tremble*; and the *rocks* which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be *broken up*; Yea, they shall be *rent in twain*, and shall ever after be *found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments* upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath. And behold, there shall be *great tempests*, and there shall be *many mountains laid low*, like unto a valley, and there shall be *many places* which are now called *valleys* which *shall become mountains*, whose height is great. And *many highways* shall be

broken up, and many cities shall become desolate. And many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many. And behold, thus hath the angel spoken unto me; for he said unto me that there should be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours. And he said unto me that while the thunder and the lightning lasted, and the tempest, that these things should be, and that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days. And the angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men—And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation. (Helaman 14:20–29, italics added)

Summary of Prophecies

In order to see more clearly the fulfillment of these prophecies, we'll first review a summary of the key elements. Here are the key elements of the prophecies of the great destructions as given by Nephi, Zenos, and Samuel.

Nephi

1. Many Cities
2. A Mist of Darkness (*Zenos*: smoke and vapor of darkness)
3. Lightnings and Thunderings (*Nephi*: the Lord God shall visit some with the thunderings and the lightnings of His power; they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings; *Samuel*: thunderings and lightnings for many hours)
4. Earthquakes (*Nephi*: they shall be visited with earthquakes; *Samuel*: the earth shall shake and tremble)
5. Tumultuous Noises (*Zenos*: groanings of the earth)
6. The earth and the rocks rent. (*Zenos*: the rocks of the earth must rend; *Samuel*: rocks broken up, rent in twain, and found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath)
7. Mountains Tumbling into Pieces (*Samuel*: many mountains laid low, like unto a valley)
8. The Plains of the Earth Broken up (*Zenos*: opening of the earth)
9. Many cities were sunk. (*Samuel*: many cities become desolate)
10. Many [cities] were burned with fire. (*Zenos*: fire; *Samuel*: many cities become desolate; “fire should come down out of heaven and destroy . . . [the] great city of Zarahemla” if the people did not repent. (Helaman 13:12–14))
11. Many [cities] tumbled to the earth, because of the quaking. (*Samuel*: many cities become desolate)
12. (Note: The previously listed elements are grouped as to time by Nephi.) After these things, the vapor of darkness passed from off the face of the earth.
13. Multitudes Who Had Not Fallen Because of the Great and Terrible Judgments of the

Lord (*Nephi*: the righteous shall not perish)

14. The heavens open, and the Lamb of God descends out of heaven, comes down and shows Himself unto them. (*Nephi*: the Son of righteousness shall appear unto the righteous, shall heal them, and shall have peace with Him until three generations—then speedy destruction; *Zenos*: the Lord God shall visit some with His voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation.)

15. Wicked Shall Perish (*Nephi*: Proud shall burn)

16. Depths of the earth shall swallow them up.

17. Mountains shall cover them.

18. Whirlwinds shall carry them away.

19. Buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder.

20. Wicked Visited with All Manner of Destructions (*Zenos*: those not righteous to be visited by the Lord with thunderings, lightnings, tempest, fire, smoke and vapor of darkness, the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up)

Zenos

21. Three Days of Darkness—A Sign of Jesus' Death unto Isles of the Sea (*Samuel*: sun, moon, and stars darkened—no light for three days as sign of Jesus' death, and ending as a sign that Jesus is resurrected)

22. Tempest (*Samuel*: great tempests)

23. Mountains shall be carried up.

24. Many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers.

Samuel

25. Many valleys shall become mountains, whose height is great

26. Many Highways Broken up

27. Many Graves Opened, and Many Saints Shall Appear unto Many

The Literal Fulfillment of the Prophecies

Now we'll look at the literal fulfillment of the prophecies of the great destructions at the time of Jesus' death.

1. Many Cities

How many is "many"? The history of the fulfillment of this prophecy has a number of interesting aspects that have a bearing on the number of cities in existence at the time of Christ's death. In the decades before Christ's birth, the people "did flourish exceedingly, both in the north and in the south." (Helaman 6:12) "The people of Nephi . . . began to multiply and spread, even until they did cover the whole face of the land, both on the northward and on the southward, from the sea west to the sea east." (Helaman 11:20; see also 3 Nephi 1:17)

Five years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Samuel prophesied to the Nephites:

“Wo be unto all the cities which are in the land round about, which are possessed by the Nephites, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in them. And behold, a curse shall come upon the land . . . that whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more. . . . For I will, saith the Lord, that they shall hide up their treasures unto me; . . . because they will not hide them up unto me, cursed be they and also their treasures; and in that day shall they be smitten.” (Helaman 13:16–23)

After the birth of Christ, “the Gadianton robbers . . . did lay waste so many cities.” (3 Nephi 2:11) So the righteous people gathered “by thousands and by tens of thousands” and did “dwell in one land, and in one body” in “the land southward, because of the great curse which was upon the land northward” in order to fortify themselves against the robbers. (3 Nephi 3:22–25) The righteous had “left their lands desolate” and brought “provisions, and horses and cattle, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years, in the which time they did hope to destroy the robbers from off the face of the land.” (3 Nephi 4:4)

The Nephites were “continually marching out by day and by night, and falling upon their [the robbers’] armies, and cutting them off by thousands and by tens of thousands.” (3 Nephi 4:21) Because of this “great destruction which came upon them by night and by day,” the robbers decided to “march into the furthestmost parts of the land northward.” (3 Nephi 4:22–23) Before the robbers could do so, the Nephites surrounded them in the twentieth-second year after Christ’s birth, and “there were many thousands [of the robbers] who did yield themselves up prisoners unto the Nephites, and the remainder of them were slain.” (3 Nephi 4:24–27)

The people returned “to their own lands and their possessions, both on the north and on the south, both on the land northward and on the land southward” and granted unto the robbers lands. (3 Nephi 6:1–3) “And it came to pass that there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired. And there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place.” (3 Nephi 6:7–8) The people “enjoyed peace but a few years” (3 Nephi 6:9–18), and “six years had not passed away” before “the more righteous part of the people had nearly all become wicked” (3 Nephi 7:7–8)

Three or four years before the death of Christ, the king of a wicked band of robbers “commanded his people that they should take their flight into the northernmost part of the land” in order to “build up unto themselves a kingdom.” (3 Nephi 7:9–12) At this same time, Nephi was preaching “boldly” for the people to repent, though “there were but few who were converted unto the Lord.” (3 Nephi 7:16–21)

From this short summary, it appears that the land northward had a curse on it, that the righteous left their cities desolate to gather in one body against the robbers, and that there were now many wicked in the land. It also appears that the work of building many new cities and repairing many old cities took place in the twelve years between the time the righteous conquered the robbers and the time of Christ’s death. Some of the cities were called “great” cities by the people and by the Lord (Helaman 13:12, 14; 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:3–5, 9; 10:4), and Mormon refers to “many great and notable cities” which were later destroyed. (3 Nephi 8:14)

2. A Mist of Darkness (Zenos: Smoke and Vapor of Darkness)

Mormon tells us that “the thirty and third year had passed away; And the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face

of the land.” (3 Nephi 8:2–3) In the “thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month,” the destruction began. (3 Nephi 8:5)

After three hours of “great and terrible” destructions, “there was *darkness* upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that there was *thick darkness* upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen *could feel the vapor of darkness*; And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that *there could not be any light at all*; And there was *not any light seen*, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the *mists of darkness* which were upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen; and there was great mourning and howling and weeping among all the people continually; yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon them. (3 Nephi 8:19–23, italics added) Those who “were spared . . . were not . . . overpowered by the *vapor of smoke and of darkness*.” (3 Nephi 10:13, italics added) After “three days pass[ed] away,” “in the morning . . . the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land.” (3 Nephi 10:9)

3. *Lightnings and Thunderings (Nephi: the Lord God shall visit some with the thunderings and the lightnings of His power; they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings; Samuel: thunderings and lightnings for many hours)*

“And there was *terrible thunder*, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder. And there were *exceedingly sharp lightnings*, such as never had been known in all the land.” (3 Nephi 8:6–7, italics added; also 8:12, 17) “The thunderings, and the lightnings . . . did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater.” (3 Nephi 8:19)

4. *Earthquakes (Samuel: the earth shall shake and tremble)*

“And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of . . . the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth.” (3 Nephi 8:11–12) “And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of . . . the quaking of the earth.” (3 Nephi 8:17) “The quakings of the earth . . . did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater.” (3 Nephi 8:19) “And . . . thus did the three days pass away. And . . . in the morning, . . . the earth did cease to tremble. And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood.” (3 Nephi 10:9–10) At the death of Christ, “the earth did quake” in Jerusalem also. (Matthew 27:50–51)

5. *Tumultuous Noises (Zenos: groanings of the earth)*

“And . . . thus did the three days pass away. And . . . in the morning, . . . the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away.” (3 Nephi 10:9)

6. *The Earth and the Rocks Rent (Zenos: the rocks of the earth must rend; Samuel: rocks broken up, rent in twain, and found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath)*

“And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams and in cracks, upon all the face of the land.” (3 Nephi 8:17–18) “And . . . thus did the three days pass away. And . . . in

the morning, . . . the rocks did cease to rend. . . . And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood.” (3 Nephi 10:9–10) At the death of Christ, “the rocks rent” in Jerusalem also. (Matthew 27:50–51)

7. *Mountains Tumbling into Pieces (Samuel: many mountains laid low, like unto a valley)*

“And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land.” (3 Nephi 9:12) “And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets.” (3 Nephi 10:11)

8. *The Plains of the Earth Broken up (Zenos: opening of the earth)*

“And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed . . . and many smooth places became rough.” (3 Nephi 8:11–13) Those who “were spared . . . were not sunk and buried up in the earth,” and “all these deaths and destructions . . . by the opening of the earth to receive them” are “unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.” (3 Nephi 10:13–14)

9. *Many Cities Were Sunk (Samuel: many cities become desolate)*

“And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate. And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great, and there were many in them who were slain.” (3 Nephi 8:14–15)

Ten named cities were sunk (one of which was covered with earth): “And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned. And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof. . . . And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth; Yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocum and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof; and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof. . . . And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.” (3 Nephi 9:4–8; see also 8:9–10, 25) Those who “were spared . . . were not sunk and buried up in the earth; and they were not drowned in the depths of the sea; . . . neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death.” (3 Nephi 10:13)

10. *Many [cities] were burned with fire. (Zenos: fire; Samuel: many cities become desolate; “fire should come down out of heaven and destroy . . . [the] great city of Zarahemla” if the people did not repent. (Helaman 13:12–14))*

“And many [cities] were burned.” (3 Nephi 8:14) “Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof.” (3 Nephi 9:3; see also 8:8, 24) “And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth . . . ; therefore I did cause them to be burned. . . . And behold, the city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof, because of their wickedness. . . . And because . . .

there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them.” (3 Nephi 9:9–11) Those who “were spared . . . were not burned by fire.” (3 Nephi 10:13) “All these deaths and destructions by fire” are “unto the fulfilling of the prophecies.” (3 Nephi 10:14)

11. Many [Cities] Tumbled to the Earth, Because of the Quaking (Samuel: many cities become desolate)

“And many [cities] were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate. And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great, and there were many in them who were slain.” (3 Nephi 8:14–15) Those who “were spared . . . were not . . . fallen upon and crushed to death.” (3 Nephi 10:13)

12. After These Things, the Vapor of Darkness Passed from off the Face of the Earth

“Thus did the three days pass away. And . . . in the morning . . . the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land.” (3 Nephi 10:9)

13. Multitudes Who Had Not Fallen Because of the Great and Terrible Judgments of the Lord (Nephi: the righteous shall not perish)

“And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared.” (3 Nephi 10:12) “And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.” (3 Nephi 11:1)

14. The Heavens Open, and the Lamb of God Descends out of Heaven, Comes down and Shows Himself unto Them (Nephi: the Son of righteousness shall appear unto the righteous, shall heal them, and shall have peace with him until three generations—then speedy destruction; Zenos: the Lord God shall visit some with His voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation.)

“And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land.” (3 Nephi 9:1) “And now behold, it came to pass that all the people of the land did hear these sayings, and did witness of it. And after these sayings there was silence in the land for the space of many hours; For so great was the astonishment of the people that they did cease lamenting and howling for the loss of their kindred which had been slain; therefore there was silence in all the land for the space of many hours. And it came to pass that there came a voice again unto the people, and all the people did hear, and did witness of it.” (3 Nephi 10:1–3)¹ “And the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer.” (3 Nephi 10:10) See 3 Nephi 11–28 for the appearance of Jesus Christ to the righteous; 3 Nephi 17 for the healing of the people; 4 Nephi for peace until three generations (especially verse 22); Mormon 1–8 for the final destruction of the people of Nephi.

15. Wicked Shall Perish (Nephi: Proud shall burn)

For cities being destroyed by fire and more of the wicked being burned, see element #10. “And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send

down fire and destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them. And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.” (3 Nephi 9:11–12; see also 9:7–10, 13; 10:12–14)

16. Depths of the earth shall swallow them up.

“And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them. And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth.” (3 Nephi 9:5–6) See element #9 for wicked inhabitants of other cities which were sunk. Those who “were spared . . . were not sunk and buried up in the earth.” (3 Nephi 10:13) “All these deaths and destructions . . . by the opening of the earth to receive them” are “unto the fulfilling of the prophecies.” (3 Nephi 10:14)

17. Mountains shall cover them.

“And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain.” (3 Nephi 8:10) “And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimginno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.” (3 Nephi 9:8) Those who “were spared . . . were not sunk and buried up in the earth.” (3 Nephi 10:13)

18. Whirlwinds shall carry them away.

“And there were some who were carried away in the whirlwind; and whither they went no man knoweth, save they know that they were carried away.” (3 Nephi 8:16) “The whole face of the land was changed, [partly] because of . . . the whirlwinds.” (3 Nephi 8:12) Those who “were spared . . . were not carried away in the whirlwind.” (3 Nephi 10:13) “All these deaths and destructions . . . by whirlwinds” are “unto the fulfilling of the prophecies.” (3 Nephi 10:14) See element #22 for tempests.

19. Buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder.

“And many [cities] were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate.” (3 Nephi 8:14) Those who “were spared . . . were not . . . fallen upon and crushed to death.” (3 Nephi 10:13)

20. Wicked Visited with All Manner of Destructions (Zenos: those not righteous to be visited by the Lord with thunderings, lightnings, tempest, fire, smoke and vapor of darkness, the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up)

See all of the other destructive elements. “And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.” (3 Nephi 9:12) The righteous who “were spared” were those “not sunk and buried up in the earth; . . . not drowned in the depths of the sea; . . . not burned by fire, . . . [not] fallen upon and crushed to death; . . . not carried away in the whirlwind; . . . [not] overpowered by the vapor of

smoke and of darkness. . . . All these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are . . . unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.” (3 Nephi 10:13–14)

21. Three Days of Darkness—A Sign of Jesus’ Death unto Isles of the Sea (Samuel: sun, moon, and stars darkened—no light for three days as sign of Jesus’ death)

See element #2 and element #24. “And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.” (3 Nephi 11:2) Although the Bible mentions an earthquake and three *hours* of darkness at the time of Jesus’ death (Matthew 27:50–51; Luke 23:44–46), the Bible does not mention three *days* of darkness except as one of the plagues in Moses’ time.²

22. Tempest (Samuel: great tempests)

“And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land. And there was also a great and terrible tempest.” (3 Nephi 8:5–6) “And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, [partly] because of the tempest and the whirlwinds.” (3 Nephi 8:11–12) “And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, [partly] because of the tempests.” (3 Nephi 8:17) “And it came to pass that . . . the storm, and the tempest . . . did cease—for behold, they did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater.” (3 Nephi 8:19) “All these deaths and destructions . . . by tempests” are “unto the fulfilling of the prophecies.” (3 Nephi 10:14)

23. Mountains Shall Be Carried up

“And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain.” (3 Nephi 8:10) “And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimginno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof.” (3 Nephi 9:8) Those who “were spared . . . were not sunk and buried up in the earth; . . . neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death.” (3 Nephi 10:13)

24. Many of the Kings of the Isles of the Sea Shall Be Wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to Exclaim: the God of Nature Suffers.

The Nephites considered themselves on an “isle of the sea” (2 Nephi 10:21), yet the prophecies mention “isles of the sea.”³ Since the Book of Mormon only mentions one “king” alive at the time of the death of Christ (though this king, Jacob, was burned shortly thereafter), we must look to other records to document the fulfillment of this prophecy about other “kings.”

25. Many Valleys Shall Become Mountains, Whose Height Is Great

“And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.” (3 Nephi 9:12) See element #23.

26. Many Highways Broken up

“And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.” (3 Nephi 8:13)

27. Many Graves Opened, and Many Saints Shall Appear unto Many

This prophecy was fulfilled after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (3 Nephi 23:6–13; see also Matthew 27:52–53.)

Summary of the Literal Fulfillment of Prophecies

As we have seen, these prophecies of the great destructions were literally fulfilled. We have read the prophecies from three prophets: Nephi, Zenos, and Samuel. Nephi, who lived about six hundred years before the birth of Christ, quoted the prophecies of Zenos. Samuel prophesied in greater detail only five years before Jesus was born, making it less than forty years before the literal fulfillment of his prophecies.

We broke the prophecies into twenty-seven key elements and showed how each of them was literally fulfilled. Though the literal fulfillment of some elements was documented in greater detail than others, all were literally fulfilled. For example, Mormon gave few details about the fulfillment of “mountains tumbling into pieces,” “many mountains laid low, like unto a valley” (element #7), “mountains shall be carried up” (element #23), and “many valleys shall become mountains, whose height is great” (element #25). (Documenting the fulfillment of prophecies about many mountains is much more of a challenge than seeing these things in vision.) Though the details of the fulfillment are not given, there is no question but that these prophecies were fulfilled literally as well. (We know there were mountains at that time, because the robbers infested the mountains. See Helaman 11:28, 31; 3 Nephi 1:27; 2:17; 3:20; 4:1.) As Mormon affirms, “And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets.” (3 Nephi 10:11) We also know that the Lord has great power—even “all power unto the fulfilling of all his words.” (1 Nephi 9:6; see also Alma 7:8; 37:16)

To keep track of all these prophecies and carefully document their fulfillment obviously would not be an easy task. That the record keepers occasionally made “mistakes” in recording the fulfillment of prophecy is known (e.g., element #27), though the prophecies were, of course, fulfilled.⁴ We are encouraged by Moroni to not condemn the things of God if we find any “faults” or “mistakes” in the Book of Mormon record. (Mormon 8: 12, 17; Title Page)

Let’s assume, in our Gentile charitableness (see Ether 12:23–41), that Mormon’s wise, perspective-jolting commentary on the great “nothingness of the children of men” is how he decided to “document” the fulfillment of these prophecies:

O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth. For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God. Yea, behold at his voice do the hills and the mountains tremble and quake. And by the power of his voice they are broken up, and become smooth, yea, even like unto a valley. Yea, by the power of his voice doth the whole earth shake; Yea, by the power of his voice, do the foundations rock, even to the very center. Yea, and if he say unto the earth—Move—it is moved. . . . And behold, also, if he say unto the waters of the great deep—Be thou dried up—it is done. Behold, if he say unto this mountain—Be thou raised up, and come over and fall upon that city, that it be buried up—behold it is done. (Helaman 12:7–13, 16–17)

Thus, we have seen the complex nature of these prophecies and their literal fulfillment. The Book of Mormon record is consistent with itself and is a continuing testimony to the greatness of God’s power and an enduring witness to “how merciful” the Lord has been to the children of men in all ages. (Moroni 10:3)

Book of Mormon to Come Forth in a Day of Destructive Terrors

We now turn to the fulfillment of another Book of Mormon prophecy. The prophecy is that the Book of Mormon “shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.” (Mormon 8:29) The amount of information on the fulfillment of this prophecy is voluminous, so we’ll only examine a few of the elements in detail. Our purpose will be twofold: (1) to show the fulfillment of prophecy, and (2) to show some of the parallels with the destructions that occurred in the Americas at the time of Jesus’ death.

“Vapors of Smoke in Foreign Lands”: Volcanoes

We start with volcanoes. A number of volcanic eruptions occurred around the world in the first three decades of the 1800s. Few would disagree that volcanic eruptions produce “vapors of smoke,” and thus these volcanic eruptions can be seen as the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Book of Mormon would come forth in a day in which “vapors of smoke in foreign lands” occurred.

Bart Kowallis, a professor of geology at Brigham Young University, has shown that many of the elements of the great destructions at the time of Christ’s death can be attributed to volcanoes,⁵ and we’ll summarize here his findings, focusing mainly on those elements that pertain both to the 3 Nephi destructions and the “vapors of smoke in foreign lands” prophecy.

In his discussion, Kowallis mentions volcanoes that erupted in the years preceding 1830, the year the Book of Mormon was published to the world. One of these was the eruption of Tambora in 1815. This was no small volcano. For comparison, Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980, ejecting enough material to fill a block that measures a mile long by a mile wide by three-quarters of a mile deep. Mount Pinatubo erupted in 1991 with a volume eight to ten times that amount. Tambora, on the island of Sumbawa in Indonesia, spewed forth a volume a hundred times the size of the eruption of Mount St. Helens.⁶ In short, though scientists have been documenting the volcanic eruptions around the world of the last few decades, these eruptions have been quite small by comparison.

The massive power of the Tambora eruption can be seen from the following:

- **Timing and Prelude.** “The first explosions were heard on this island (Java) [three hundred miles from Tambora] in the evening of the 5th of April: they were noticed in every quarter, and continued at intervals until the following day. The noise was, in the first instance, universally attributed to distant cannon. . . . On the following morning, however, a slight fall of ashes removed all doubt as to the cause of the sound; and it is worthy of remark, that as the eruption continued, the sound appeared to be so close, that in each district it seemed near at hand. . . . From the 6th the sun became obscured; it had every where the appearance of being enveloped in a fog. . . . This lasted several days. The explosions continued occasionally. . . . But on the evening of the 10th, the eruptions were heard more loud and more frequent; from Cheribon eastward the air became darkened by the quantity of falling ashes; the sun was nearly darkened; and in some situations, particularly at Solo and Rembang, many said that they felt a tremulous motion of the earth. It was universally remarked in the more eastern districts, that the explosions were tremendous, continuing frequently during the 11th, and of such violence as to shake the houses perceptibly. An unusual thick darkness was remarked all the following night, and the greater part of the next

day. . . The distance also to which the cloud of ashes was carried, so quickly as to produce utter darkness,” was 217 nautical miles from the volcano in one direction (Celebes) and 300 geographical miles in another (Gr’sik on Java).⁷

- **Sights and Sounds.** “About 7 p.m. on the 10th of April, three distinct columns of flame burst forth near the top of the Tomboro [sic] mountain (all of them apparently within the verge of the crater), and after ascending separately to a very great height, their tops united in the air in a troubled confused manner. In a short time, the whole mountain next Sang’ir appeared like a body of liquid fire, extending itself in every direction. The fire and columns of flame continued to rage with unabated fury, until the darkness caused by the quantity of falling matter obscured it at about 8 p.m. Stones, at this time, fell very thick at Sang’ir [about twenty-five miles away]; some of them as large as two fists, but generally not larger than walnuts. Between 9 and 10 p.m. ashes began to fall, and soon after a violent whirlwind ensued, which blew down nearly every house in the village of Sang’ir, carrying the ataps, or roofs, and light parts away with it. In the part of Sang’ir adjoining Tomboro [sic] its effects were much more violent, tearing up by the roots the largest trees and carrying them into the air, together with men, horses, cattle, and whatever else came within its influence. (This will account for the immense number of floating trees seen at sea). The sea rose nearly twelve feet higher than it had ever been known to do before, and completely spoiled the only small spots of rice land in Sang’ir, sweeping away houses and every thing within its reach. The whirlwind lasted about an hour. No explosions were heard till the whirlwind had ceased, at about 11 a.m. From midnight till the evening of the 11th, they continued without intermission; after that time their violence moderated, and they were only heard at intervals, but the explosions did not cease entirely until the 15th of July.”⁸

- **Noise.** “In April, 1815, one of the most frightful eruptions recorded in history occurred in the mountain Tambora, in the island of Sumbawa. It began on the 5th of April, and was most violent on the 11th and 12th, and did not entirely cease till July. The sound of the explosions was heard in Sumatra, at the distance of nine hundred and seventy geographical miles in a direct line, and at Ternate in an opposite direction, at the distance of seven hundred and twenty miles. . . . The area over which tremulous noises and other volcanoes and other volcanic effects extended, was one thousand English miles in circumference, including the whole of the Molucca islands, Java, a considerable portion of Celebes, Sumatra, and Borneo.”⁹

- **Darkness.** “Mount Tambora was reduced in height by over four thousand feet when it erupted in 1815, and ‘the darkness occasioned in the daytime by the ashes in Java was so profound, that nothing equal to it was ever witnessed in the darkest night,’ making it ‘impossible to see your hand when held up close to the eye.’ ‘There was total darkness by day for three days within 200 miles of the volcano.’ ”¹⁰

- **Widespread Aftereffects Elsewhere.** “Eruptions in Iceland and Japan in 1783 significantly chilled the northern hemisphere, but the eruption of an Indonesian volcano in 1815 had even more adverse results. Tambora volcano ejected so much ash into the stratosphere that total darkness prevailed for three days hundreds of miles from the volcano. The eruption killed 10,000 people and another 82,000 died of starvation and disease. Millions more in Europe and North America suffered from the cooling effects of Tambora’s deadly ashcloud. Snow blanketed New England in June and frosts blighted crops every month of the

growing season. Heavy rains fell in Ireland, England, and northern Europe from May through October, making 1816 as ‘the year without a summer.’”¹¹

- **Brilliant Sunsets and Dry Fog.** “Between 28 June and 2 July, and later between 3 September and 7 October 1815, prolonged and brilliantly colored sunsets and twilights were frequently seen near London, England. . . . The following year, 1816, during the spring and summer, a persistent ‘dry fog’ was seen and reported in the northeastern part of the United States” and “neither surface winds nor rain dispersed it.”¹² “Two and a half years after the eruption, some haze still remained.”¹³

- **Effects on Joseph Smith and His Family.** “In 1815, Joseph Smith’s family had just suffered through a second year of drought in Norwich, Vermont, and were in desperate need of a good crop in 1816. This, however, was not to be. The dust and ash that had been injected into the atmosphere the previous year by the eruption of Tambora cooled the world’s climate and caused the summer of 1816 in New England to be the coldest on record. Snow fell in June, and killing frosts occurred as late as July 12. Then a series of unusually early frosts hit again after August 20. . . . This third successive year of crop failures in New England drove many farmers from the area, including the Smith family. It is interesting that a volcano in a far-off corner of the world could have been instrumental in motivating Joseph’s family to move where they needed to be for the restoration of the gospel to occur.”¹⁴

- **Largest and Deadliest Volcanic Eruption Known.** “The largest and deadliest volcanic eruption in recorded history was the explosion of Mount Tambora.”¹⁵

- **Documentation Sparse.** Though “the eruption of Tambora in 1815 was probably the most spectacular eruption in historic times, . . . [it] was almost completely unreported at the time it occurred, and detailed available accounts of the eruption are still rare.”¹⁶

Even with this brief summary, it is evident that we’re dealing with something of great significance. The largest volcano in recorded history began to blow its top on the evening before 6 April 1815, just fifteen years before the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Clearly this is a literal fulfillment of the prophecy that the Book of Mormon “shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and *vapors of smoke in foreign lands*; And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.” (Mormon 8:29, emphasis added)

In addition, the destructive elements in these accounts parallel the destructive elements of the 3 Nephi destructions. However, because the data is sparse on Tambora and because Kowallis has gathered many accounts on the destructive elements of volcanoes in general, we present here only a brief summary of his findings on the destructive elements accompanying volcanoes:

- **Storm, Tempest, and Whirlwinds.** “Large explosive volcanic eruptions are often accompanied by violent winds and whirlwinds.”¹⁷ Witnesses estimated winds at “nearly two hundred miles an hour” during the eruption of Mount St. Helens.¹⁸ A witness to the eruption of Mt. Pel’ee in 1902 stated, “It was like a terrible hurricane, and where a fraction of a second before there had been a perfect calm I felt myself drawn into a vortex and I had to brace myself firmly. It was like a great express train rushing by, and I was drawn by its force.”¹⁹

- **Terrible Thunder and Sharp Lightning.** In this century, Bezymianny Volcano in eastern Russia erupted: “Together with the cloud came also and was growing a rumble of loud thunder accompanying incessantly flashing lightnings. . . . Peals of thunder were

crashing with deafening loudness without any interruption.”²⁰

- **Loud Noises.** As we’ve seen in the Tambora eruption, “the thunderous noises produced by an eruption may carry for distances of several hundred miles.”²¹ In addition, the loud noises from “the earthquakes that occur almost continuously during some eruptions” can combine with the explosive sounds from eruptions.²² “When the Coseguina volcano in Nicaragua erupted in 1835, it was reported that the sounds accompanying the shaking were alarming and heard up to four hundred miles away and that ‘the roar was practically continuous for seven hours.’ ”²³

- **Thick Darkness.** “Rapidly falling ash can accumulate to several inches thick in a few minutes, even at considerable distances from the erupting volcano.”²⁴ “The darkness during the eruption of Bezymianny Volcano in eastern Russia is described as ‘so impenetrably dark that one could not see his own hand, even if brought up to the very face,’ and the cloud of darkness described as ‘very thick and almost tangibly heavy.’ ”²⁵ “Even though most of the noise and shaking caused by the eruption of Coseguina ceased after a few hours, the eruption itself and the darkness caused by the ashfall continued on for three to four days.”²⁶

Kowallis brings together many interesting and detailed accounts (both firsthand and scientific) of explosive volcanic eruptions. He shows that many of the destructive elements mentioned in 3 Nephi are also features of an explosive volcanic eruption. However, he also makes it clear that earthquakes often accompany such volcanic eruptions:

During the eruption of Krakatoa, the shaking of the earth lasted throughout the night of August 26, 1883, and on into the next morning. Earthquake vibrations rose to thirty to forty times the normal background level during the eruption of a volcano on Raoul Island, northeast of New Zealand in 1964, continuing throughout the eruption. Reports from the 1902 eruption of the Santa Maria volcano in Guatemala tell of earthquake activity that lasted for several hours, rising to several peaks of shaking during the climax of the eruption.²⁷

“Earthquakes in Divers Places”: Earthquakes

We now turn our attention to earthquakes to see the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Book of Mormon would come forth in a day when “earthquakes in divers places” (Mormon 8:29) will occur. A number of large earthquakes occurred in the years preceding the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon. These earthquakes can be seen as the fulfillment of the “earthquakes in divers places” prophecy.

As we look at earthquakes that occurred in the years preceding the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, we will also examine some of the destructive elements associated with earthquakes to see parallels with the 3 Nephi destructions we’ve already examined. Though Kowallis focused less on earthquakes and more on volcanoes to explain the destructive elements, we will examine accounts that show that earthquakes *alone* can produce many of the destructive elements mentioned in the 3 Nephi destructions. Of course, combining large earthquakes and explosive volcanoes together would yield some powerfully destructive forces, resulting in vast, unfathomable destructions.

Kowallis tells us that some of the “phenomena associated with large earthquakes” include aftershocks that come intermittently for several days after the main quake, landslides or rock falls off of steep slopes, liquefaction of sandy solid causing the collapse of building, tidal

waves or tsunamis in coastal areas, rare displays of lightning or other electrical phenomena, thunderlike noises, and the spread of fires through cities or towns with concentrated housing made of wood.²⁸

Kowallis also mentions that “the shaking of the earth during . . . massive earthquakes may last for a *few minutes*.”²⁹ Yet it is clear from what we have examined thus far that a great amount of quaking and shaking occurred during the 3 Nephi destructions, and we know that the quaking and shaking of the earth lasted for about *three hours*.

We will examine information mainly on the New Madrid series of earthquakes of 1811–12 because these earthquakes have many similar elements to those of the 3 Nephi destructions. This series of earthquakes lasted for *five months*, and one witness was able to track 1,874 separate jolts, many of which were quite severe.³⁰ Yet this series of earthquakes did not occur in the Pacific rim—where most volcanoes and active faults lie. It occurred in so-called “stable continental crust.”

If you’re skeptical at this point, you’re not alone. In 1985, “an entire roomful of eminent seismologists at a workshop” were not able to “identify the largest earthquake recorded in stable continental crust.”³¹ It wasn’t until the late 1980s that researchers in America started turning their attention again to “the earthquake America forgot”—the one so powerful that it caused the Mississippi River to run backward for a time.³² That earthquakes can and do occur in so-called “stable continental crust” is now being recognized and researched by scientists.

Though “the rarity of such earthquakes and the fact that the largest ones took place before good instruments were developed have made their study a seismological backwater,”³³ here are a few things researchers have learned about these earthquakes:

- They can occur hundreds or thousands of miles from tectonic plate boundaries.³⁴
- Though these earthquakes are less frequent and seemingly less powerful (as measured on the moment magnitude scale or Richter scale), they are many times more efficient in carrying shock waves (and thus creating damage) over longer distances.³⁵ For example, the center of the New Madrid quakes was one thousand miles inland, though they “damaged masonry as far away as the East Coast and collapsed scaffolding erected around the U.S. Capitol.”³⁶
- Of the hundreds of “stable-continent earthquakes” researchers have studied all over the world in the world’s history, the top four occurred in 1811, 1812 (two), and 1819. “The largest stable-continent earthquakes on record turned out to be the [three] great earthquakes centered in New Madrid, Missouri, during the winter of 1811–12,” and these three quakes “*may have been felt over a wider area than any other earthquake in history*.”³⁷ The 1819 earthquake occurred in India, and its effects were “dramatic” as well.³⁸

We now will examine some of the effects of these quakes that parallel the 3 Nephi destructions. To do so, we’ll begin by looking at some firsthand accounts of the earthquakes of 1811–12, then we’ll summarize some of the major elements.

Our first account is from Eliza Bryan, writing from New Madrid, territory of Missouri, 22 March 1816:

Dear Sir:—

IN compliance with your request, I will now give you a history, as full in detail as the limits of a letter will permit, of the late awful visitation of Providence in this place and its vicinity.

On the 16th of December, 1811, about two o'clock, A.M., we were visited by a violent shock of an earthquake, accompanied by a very awful noise resembling loud but distant thunder, but more hoarse and vibrating, which was followed in a few minutes by the complete saturation of the atmosphere, with sulphurous vapor, causing total darkness. [COMMENT: *Notice the elements thus far: (1) earthquake, (2) loud noise, (3) darkness in the atmosphere—all attributed to a "visitation of Providence."*] The screams of the affrighted [sic] inhabitants running to and fro, not knowing where to go, or what to do—the cries of the fowls and beasts of every species—the cracking of trees falling, and the roaring of the Mississippi—the current of which was retrograde for a few minutes, owing as is supposed, to an irruption in its bed—formed a scene truly horrible. [COMMENT: *The earthquakes caused the Mississippi River to run uphill.*] From that time until about sunrise, a number of lighter shocks occurred; at which time one still more violent than the first took place, with the same accompaniments as the first and the terror which had been excited in every one, and indeed in all animal nature, was now, if possible doubled. The inhabitants fled in every direction to the country, supposing (if it can be admitted that their minds were exercised at all) that there was less danger at a distance from, than near to the river. In one person, a female, the alarm was so great that she fainted, and could not be recovered. There were several shocks of a day, but lighter than those already mentioned until the 23d of January, 1812, when one occurred as violent as the severest of the former ones, accompanied by the same phenomena as the former. From this time until the 4th of February the earth was in continual agitation, visibly waving as a gentle sea. [COMMENT: *This means at least eleven days of "continual agitation"—considerably longer than the three hours in the 3 Nephi destruction.*] On that day there was another shock, nearly as hard as the preceding ones. Next day four such, and on the 7th about 4 o'clock A.M., a concussion took place so much more violent than those which had preceded it, that it was denominated the hard shock. The awful darkness of the atmosphere, which as formerly was saturated with sulphurous vapor, and the violence of the tempestuous thundering noise that accompanied it, together with all the other phenomena mentioned as attending the former ones, formed a scene, the description of which would require the most sublimely fanciful imagination.

Our informant, Eliza Bryan, continues her account by describing the effects of these earthquakes—how the river “took with it whole groves of trees,” how it left “a great many fish” on its banks, and how it was “literally covered with the wrecks of boats.” She then writes:

In all the hard shocks mentioned, the earth was horribly torn to pieces—the surface of hundreds of acres, was, from time to time, covered over, of various depths, by the sand which issued from the fissures, which were made in great numbers all over this country, some of which closed up immediately after they had vomited forth their sand and water. . . . It is impossible to say what the depth of the fissures or irregular breaks were; we have reason to believe that some of them are very deep. The site of this town was evidently settled down at least fifteen feet, and not more than half a mile below the town there does not appear to be any alteration on the bank of the river; but back from the river a small distance, the numerous large ponds or lakes, as they were called, which covered a great part of the country, were

nearly dried up. The beds of some of them are elevated above their former banks several feet, producing an alteration of ten, fifteen to twenty feet, from their original state. And lately it has been discovered that a lake was formed on the opposite side of the Mississippi, in the Indian country, upwards of one hundred miles in length, and from one to six miles in width, of the depth of from ten to fifty feet.

After a few observations about the lake and how the inhabitants of the area had fled early on then returned, Eliza Bryan continues:

We have, since their commencement in 1811, and still continue to feel, slight shocks occasionally. It is seldom indeed that we are more than a week without feeling one, and sometimes three or four in a day. There were two this winter past much harder than we have felt them for two years before; but since then they appear to be lighter than they have ever been, and we begin to hope that ere long they will entirely cease.

After closing her letter, in which she states that “the truly awful scenes” she writes of were not “related with that precision which would entitle it to the character of a full and accurate picture,” she adds a postscript:

There is one circumstance which I think worthy of remark. This country was formerly subject to very hard thunder; but for more than a twelve month before the commencement of the earthquake there was none at all, and but very little since, a great part of which resembles subterranean thunder. The shocks still continue, but are growing more light, and less frequent.—E. B.³⁹

In other words, Eliza Bryan continued to feel earthquakes for *more than four years* after the initial earthquake.

Another firsthand account comes from William Leigh Pierce, written on 25 December 1811 from Big Prairie (on the Mississippi River, 761 miles from New Orleans). He and his party were traveling on the Mississippi River at the time. After some preliminary remarks, William Pierce writes:

At precisely 2 o'clock on Monday morning, the 16th instant [i.e., of December], we were all alarmed by the violent and convulsive agitation of the boats, accompanied by a noise similar to that which would have been produced by running over a sand bar. . . . The idea of an earthquake then suggested itself to my mind, and this idea was confirmed by a second shock, and two others in immediate succession. These continued for the space of eight minutes. . . . At the dawn of day, I went on shore to examine the effects of the shocks; . . . and we had an opportunity of beholding, in full extent, all the horrors of our situation. During the four first shocks, tremendous and uninterrupted explosions, resembling a discharge of artillery, was heard from the opposite shore. . . . This fifth shock explained the real cause. Wherever the veins of the earthquake ran, there was a volcanic discharge of combustible matter to a great height, and incessant rumbling was heard below, and the bed of the river was excessively agitated, whilst the water assumed a turbid and boiling appearance—near our boat a spout of confined air, breaking its way through the waters, burst forth, and with a loud report discharged mud, sticks, &c. from the river's bed, at least thirty feet above the surface. These spoutings were frequent, and in many places appeared to rise to the very Heavens.—Large trees, which had lain for ages at the bottom of the river, were shot up in thousands of instances, some with their roots uppermost and their tops planted; others were

hurled into the air; many again were only loosened, and floated upon the surface. Never was a scene more replete with terrific threatenings of death; with the most lively sense of this awful crisis, we contemplated in mute astonishment a scene which completely beggars all description and of which the most glowing imagination is inadequate to form a picture. Here the earth, river &c. torn with furious convulsions, opened in huge trenches, whose deep jaws were instantaneously closed; there through a thousand vents sulphureous streams gushed from its very bowels, leaving vast and almost unfathomable caverns. Every where nature itself seemed tottering on the verge of dissolution.

After remarking that it was only the “manly pretence of mind and heroic fortitude of the men” that saved them, William Pierce continues:

During the day there was, with very little intermission, a continued series of shocks, attended with innumerable explosions like the rolling of thunder. . . . One of the spouts which we had seen rising under the boat would inevitably have sunk it, and probably have blown it into a thousand fragments. . . . [The boiling “spouts” threw trees everywhere.] One of these [trees] whose huge trunk (at least 3 feet in diameter) had been much shattered, was thrown better than a hundred yards from the bank, where it is planted into the bed of the river. . . . Several small islands have been already annihilated, and from appearances many others must suffer the same fate. . . . Two days . . . the shocks continued, though not with the same frequency as before. . . . The continuance of this earthquake must render it conspicuous in the pages of the Historians, as one of the longest that has ever occurred. From the time that the first shock was felt, at 2 o’clock in the morning of the 16th, until the last shock, at the same time in the morning of the 23d, was 168 hours. . . . The sun rarely shot a ray through the heavens, the sky was clouded, and a dreary darkness brooded over the whole face of the creation. The stars were encircled with a pale light, and the Comet appeared hazy and dim. . . . [In the one week’s time, there were] eighty-nine shocks—it is hardly possible to conceive the convulsion which they created, and I assure you I believe that there were many of these shocks, which had they followed in quick succession were sufficient to shake into atoms the firmest edifices which art every devised.

As part of his lengthy account, William Pierce describes damage at other points along the Mississippi River and enumerates other phenomena. On 13 January 1812, he writes another letter, commenting on the “range” of the earthquake, including “the Indiana territory, and the states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee.” Then he offers the following observations:

It is a singular, but well authenticated fact, that in several places on the Mississippi, where the shocks were most severe, the earth was rent (as it were) by two distinct processes. By one it was burst asunder, and instantaneously closed, leaving no traces whatever of the shock; by the other it was rent, and an electric flash ran along the surface, tearing the earth to pieces in its progress.—These last were generally attended with an explosion, and streams of matter, in a liquid state, gushed from the gaps which were left open when the shock subsided, and were in many instances of an immense depth.⁴⁰

A third informant living at New Madrid, Missouri, wrote a letter on 16 December 1811 to his friend in Lexington, Kentucky:

At about 2 o’clock this morning we were awakened by a most tremendous noise, while the house danced about, and seemed as if it would fall on our heads. I soon conjectured the cause of our troubles, and cried out it was an Earthquake, and for the family to leave the

house; which we found very difficult to do, owing to its rolling and jostling about. The shock was soon over, and no injury was sustained, except the loss of the chimney, and the exposure of my family to the cold of the night. At the time of this shock, the heavens were very clear and serene, not a breath of air stirring; but in five minutes it became very dark, and a vapour which seemed to impregnate the atmosphere, had a disagreeable smell, and produced a difficulty of respiration. I knew not how to account for this at the time, but when I saw, in the morning, the situation of my neighbours' houses, all of them more or less injured, I attributed it to the dust and sut, &c. which arose from their fall. The darkness continued till day-break; during this time we had EIGHT more shocks, none of them so violent as the first.

At half past 6 o'clock in the morning it cleared up, and believing the danger over I left home, to see what injury my neighbours had sustained. A few minutes after my departure, there was another shock, extremely violent—I hurried home as fast as I could, but the agitation of the earth was so great that it was with much difficulty I kept my balance—*the motion of the earth was about twelve inches to and fro*. I cannot give you an accurate description of this moment; the earth seemed convulsed—the houses shook very much—chimneys falling in every direction.—The loud hoarse roaring which attended the earthquake, together with the cries, screams, and yells of the people, seem still ringing my ears.

Fifteen minutes after seven o'clock, we had another shock. This was the most severe one we have yet had—the darkness returned, and the noise was remarkably loud. The first motions of the earth were similar to the preceding shocks, but before they ceased we rebounded up and down, and it was with difficulty we kept our seats. At this instant I expected a dreadful catastrophe—the uproar among the people strengthened the colouring of the picture—the screams and yells were heard at a great distance. . . . [One person] thought the Day of Judgment had arrived, until he reflected that the *Day* of Judgment could not come in the *night*.

Our New Madrid informant continued to write, and on 24 December 1811 he pens the following:

The shocks still continue—we have had eight since Saturday—some of them very severe, but not sufficiently so to do much additional injury. I have heard of no lives being lost—several persons are wounded. This day I have heard from the Little Prairie, a settlement on the bank of the river Mississippi, about 30 miles below this place. There the scene has been dreadful indeed—the face of the country has been entirely changed. Large lakes have been raised, and become dry land; and many fields have been converted into pools of water. Capt. George Ruddell, a worthy and respectable old gentleman, . . . informs me . . . his family at this time were running away from the house towards the woods; a large crack in the ground prevented their retreat into the open field. They had just assembled together when the eleventh shock came on, after which there was not perhaps a square acre of ground unbroken in the neighbourhood, and in about fifteen minutes after this shock, the water rose round them waist deep. The old gentleman in leading his family, endeavouring to find higher land, would sometimes be precipitated headlong into one of those cracks in the earth, which were concealed from the eye by the muddy water through which they were wading. As they proceeded, the earth continued to burst open, and mud, water, sand, and stone coal, were thrown up the distance of 30 yards—frequently trees of a large size were split open, fifteen or twenty feet up. After wading eight miles, he came to dry land.⁴¹

These earthquakes were felt over all the inhabited portion of the eastern United States at the time, and numerous accounts of the earthquakes were published in the newspapers. Samuel L. Mitchill gathered a number of these accounts and tried to corroborate the details. In 1814, he presented his findings to a learned society in New York. Not only did he gather information about the New Madrid earthquakes, he also presented what he had gathered about other recent phenomena of nature—including violent snowstorms along the Eastern coast of the United States. As Mitchill states, “During the time that North America was shaken by earthquakes of greater violence than had been experienced before, the regions of the southern section of the western hemisphere, were the seat of more terrible disasters,” including volcanic eruptions and destructive earthquakes.⁴²

Samuel Mitchill puts the accounts of the earthquakes into his own words, making them less reliable than firsthand accounts, so we’ll only quote a few. Some of these accounts of the New Madrid earthquakes mentioned something akin to the “vapor of darkness” mentioned in the 3 Nephi destructions. As will be evident, the manifestations accompanying the earthquakes were somewhat different in each location:

- Columbia, South Carolina: “During the first agitation, it was observed, that the air felt as if impregnated with a vapour, which lasted for some time.”⁴³
- Columbia, Tennessee: “The inhabitants were suddenly alarmed by a violent agitation in the earth. It was accompanied by a peculiar sound. . . . Immediately after the shock had ceased, a very large volume of something like smoke was discovered to rise in the quarter whence the sound appeared to come.”⁴⁴
- Jeffersonville, Indiana Territory: “Smokiness distinguished the weather for some time after.”⁴⁵
- St. Louis, Louisiana: “A vapour hovered over every thing, and shrouded the morning in awful gloom.”⁴⁶
- Herculaneum, Louisiana: “In this last shock, the water in the river Mississippi was thrown into commotion, bubbling like boiling water; and, in a few minutes, the whole atmosphere was filled with smoke or fog, so that a boat could not be seen within twenty paces from the water’s edge; and the houses were so shrouded as not to be seen fifty feet; this smoke continued all the forepart of that day.”⁴⁷

Nearly a century later, another researcher compiled a more scientific account of the New Madrid earthquakes. Commenting that this series of quakes “has lapsed from the public mind,” Myron L. Fuller presents over one hundred pages, along with photographs, diagrams, tables, and maps.⁴⁸ In his discussion of “atmospheric phenomena,” Fuller states that “the atmosphere seems to have become darkened during the more severe shocks in the Mississippi Valley.”⁴⁹ In addition, “sulphurous or otherwise obnoxious odors and vapors were an attendant feature of the earthquake at many points, as stated by nearly every writer.”⁵⁰ He then quotes a number of accounts to support these statements (many of which we have already quoted). One account not quoted previously is that of Godfrey Le Sieur: “A ‘dense black cloud of vapor overshadowed the land’ after the severe shocks.”⁵¹ Fuller also presents a number of quotations on the noises heard.⁵²

In the 1990s, two researchers, David Stewart and Ray Knox, published a series of books on the New Madrid earthquakes. They have gathered a wealth of materials on these quakes,

reacquainting the public with what has passed from the public mind. In one of these books, these researchers label the vapors “earthquake smog” and quote a number of firsthand accounts:

- Eliza Bryan: “My maw tried to light the lamps, but the darkness was so dense they didn’t help at all.”⁵³
- John James Audubon (yes, the famous one): “I saw a sudden and strange darkness rising from the western horizon and heard what I imagined to be the distant rumbling of a violent tornado.”⁵⁴
- Wilson Thompson: “Those notable earthquakes . . . rent the earth with deep chasms in many parts of southern Missouri. . . . For three days and nights the sun, moon, and stars were concealed by a mist and fog which dropped like a heavy dew.”⁵⁵

Other Destructive Disturbances in the Decades Prior to 1830

We have already mentioned Samuel Mitchill’s presentations to a learned society in New York on other disturbances and destructions that occurred in the first two decades of the 1800s. A number of other researchers give a historical context to the earthquakes or volcanoes they discuss.

In addition to presenting information on the “continual agitation” of the earth, places sunk, towns that disappeared, the twenty-four varieties of seismic land forms found in abundance, loud noises, etc., Stewart and Knox also try to put the New Madrid earthquakes in their historical context:

The new year had been swept in by a destructive hurricane during December of 1810 that devastated the east coast from Cape Hatteras to Newfoundland.⁵⁶

The Year of Wonders, “Annus Mirabilis,” that’s what the year 1811 eventually came to be called. Comets, eclipses, record floods, droughts, Indian uprisings, provocations by the British, Napoleonic War in Europe, revolutions in Mexico and South America, volcanic eruptions, strange animal happenings, electricity in the atmosphere, and then, to finish out the year, there were the earthquakes.⁵⁷

Fuller also writes of “contemporaneous disturbances”:

The years 1811, 1812, and 1813 were characterized by unusual seismic activity in many other parts of the Western Hemisphere, as well as at New Madrid. On March 26, 1812, a terrific earthquake occurred at Caracas, throwing down churches and other buildings and destroying 10,000 persons. A little over a week later another heavy shock produced geologic effects of considerable magnitude, over 300 feet of the top of one of the mountains being lost by a landslide. Other shocks were felt at New Grenada and other of the West India islands, while a very important earthquake occurred in California at about the same time. Volcanic action was similarly active. On April 27 [1812] the eruption of St. Vincent Soufriere began. During the year preceding more than 200 earthquake shocks presumably of volcanic origin had been felt. Farther away, the island of Sabrina in the Azores was built up to a height of over 300 feet above the sea by a submarine eruption.⁵⁸

A writer on California earthquakes gives us this picture of the 1812 “earthquake” mentioned by Fuller:

The year of 1812 was known as *el año de los temblores* in California. A series of

tsunamis inundated the low-lying areas of San Francisco. . . . The earthquakes in southern California began in May and were incessant for the remainder of the year. Hubert Howe Bancroft, the California historian, wrote: "A series of earthquake shocks, the most fatal if not the most severe that have ever occurred in California, caused this year the wildest terror throughout the southern part of the province." . . . John B. Trask [California's first state geologist] . . . combed mission records and talked to inhabitants in the 1850s. At Mission San Juan Capistrano, near the coast in what is now Orange County, there were forty days of earthquakes climaxed by a particularly hard tremor on October 21. . . . [Trask tells us that] on Tuesday, December 8, 1812, . . . an unusual loud, but distant rushing sound was heard in the atmosphere to the east and also over the water, which resembled the sound of strong wind, but as it approached no perceptible breeze accompanied it. The sea was smooth and the air was calm. So distant and loud was this atmospheric sound that several left the building attracted by its noise. . . . Spanish churches toppled all over southern California during that month of sustained terror. . . . [One priest recounted that] at the presidio there occurred an earthquake so violent that the sea receded and rose like a high mountain. . . . [He and others later] placed a pole with a ball tied to it. It was fastened in the ground at a place where the air would not move it, and . . . it was in continual movement for 8 days. After the 8 days the ball was still for 2 or 3 hours and then started to move again, and this lasted for about 15 days.⁵⁹

During his visits to South America during the years 1799 to 1804, Alexander von Humboldt observed firsthand the effects of earthquakes and volcanoes. He chronicles many of these which occurred in the last half of the 1700s.⁶⁰ While discussing his experiences in Venezuela, he makes the following observations:

If it be the duty of the men of science who visit the Alps of Switzerland . . . to extend our knowledge respecting the glaciers . . . , it may be expected that a traveller who has journeyed through Spanish America, should have chiefly fixed his attention on volcanoes and earthquakes.⁶¹ Several facts tend to prove that the causes which produce earthquakes have a near connection with those which act in volcanic eruptions. . . . Everything in earthquakes seems to indicate the action of elastic fluids seeking an outlet to diffuse themselves in the atmosphere.⁶² We can scarcely doubt, that the earth, when opened and agitated by shocks, spreads occasionally gaseous emanations through the atmosphere, in places remote from the mouths of volcanoes not extinct.⁶³ I am inclined to think that in the majority of earthquakes nothing escapes from the agitated earth; and that, when gaseous emanation and vapours are observed, they oftener accompany or follow, than precede the shocks.⁶⁴

In November 1844, von Humboldt finished the preface to a compilation of his scientific observations. In this compilation, *Cosmos*, von Humboldt writes extensively about earthquakes and volcanoes, many of which occurred in the late 1790s and in the first decades of the 1800s:

There are instances in which the earth has been shaken for many successive days in the chain of the Andes in South America, but I am only acquainted with the following cases in which shocks that have been felt almost every hour for months together have occurred far from any volcano, as for instance, on the eastern declivity of the Alpine chain of Mount Cenis, at Fenestrelles and Pignerol, from April, 1808; between New Madrid and Little Prairie, north of Cincinnati, in the United States of America, in December, 1811, as well as through the whole winter of 1812; and in the Pachalik of Aleppo, in the months of August and September, 1822.⁶⁵

A more recent book on earthquakes in California gives this context for the New Madrid earthquakes:

The year 1811 became known as the *annus mirabilis*, and 1812 was called “the year of the earthquakes,” not only because of events in the Midwest but also because of the deadly temblors in California and South America. A comet, the harbinger of calamity, flashed across the fall and winter sky, and there was an almost total eclipse of the sun. . . In late 1811 and early 1812, however, there were floods on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, followed by drought, “unprecedented sickness” among the inhabitants of the river valleys, strange weather and animal behavior, earthquake lights and sounds, an unusually brutal murder, Indian troubles, [and] war looming with the British. . . . In Congress, it was called “a time of extraordinariness.” Noting the succession of earthquakes, a Connecticut paper commented:

The period is portentous and alarming. We have within a few years seen the most wonderful eclipses, the year past has produced a magnificent comet, the earthquakes within the past two months have been almost without number and in addition to the whole, we constantly “hear of wars and summons of wars.” May not the same inquire be made of us that was made by the hypocrites of old: “Can ye not discern the signs of the times.”⁶⁶

Thus, a number of significant disturbances and destructions occurred in “divers places” during the decades preceding 1830.

The Fulfillment of Prophecy: A Summary

Let’s review the prophecy again. The prophecy is that the Book of Mormon “shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.” (Mormon 8:29)

We’ve seen that the largest volcanic eruption in recorded history occurred in 1815—the Tambora volcano. The top four “stable-continental” earthquakes occurred in 1811, 1812 (two), and 1819. The New Madrid earthquakes continued for about five months, yielding nearly two thousand countable shocks, with the earth in “continual agitation” sometimes for days at a time. We’ve seen that numerous other destructive disturbances occurred between 1800 and 1830, many of which are labeled “unusual” by their chroniclers.

Though we’ve only examined a few of the elements in detail (since the amount of information on the fulfillment of this prophecy is voluminous), it is clear that this prophecy was fulfilled—the Book of Mormon came forth in a day when there were great destructive disturbances around the world.

In addition to showing the fulfillment of this Book of Mormon prophecy, we’ve seen that many of the destructive elements of volcanoes and earthquakes have close parallels with the elements of the great destructions that occurred in the Americas at the time of Jesus’ death. One of these elements, the “vapor of darkness,” demands further attention.

More on the “Vapors of Darkness”

Since “vapors of darkness” will disappear with time, most of the information on “vapors of darkness” comes from researchers who have compiled a great number of firsthand accounts on earthquake phenomena. We have examined some of these firsthand accounts already. We will

briefly examine the findings of other researchers who discuss “vapors of darkness” associated with earthquakes. Our purpose is to show that “vapors of darkness” can accompany other types of earthquakes—not just “stable-continent” earthquakes.

Helmut Tributsch spent many years gathering information about earthquakes, many of which were firsthand accounts. His research includes ancient, as well as modern, accounts from around the world, and he devotes a whole chapter in his intriguing book to what he calls “earthquake fogs.”⁶⁷ However, because Tributsch focused his attention more on earthquake *prediction*, his discussions are usually limited to earthquake precursors rather than phenomena that accompany or follow earthquakes. One example will suffice:

From Japan, too, there are many reports about unusual weather conditions that precede earthquakes. It is often asserted that immediately before an earthquake the air becomes muggy and that sometimes mysterious fogs appear. Examples include the following reports. Before the earthquake of 1802 (force $M = 6.6$), which ravaged Sado Island in the Sea of Japan, a businessman climbed a hill to assess the sailing weather. A seaman who accompanied him was amazed by the very strange weather. It was like no weather he had ever seen before. It was foggy, but in a very unusual way: Only the lower mountain slopes were covered by fog, while the upper ones could be seen quite clearly. The sailor, who could usually predict the weather by observing the sky, did not know what to make of this situation, but the businessman remembered something his father had told him several years earlier: “Before an earthquake a strange air called *chiki* [literally, “earth-air”] comes out of the ground.” Both got their baggage from their inn, and they had marched about 15 kilometers (9 miles) when an intense tremor shook the ground. Later when the businessman visited a gold mine he was surprised to learn that none of the miners had been hurt in the earthquake. The miners told him that they had known 3 days ahead of time that an earthquake was coming. As they had been doing for years, they had watched for the appearance of *chiki*, which in the mine can become so thick that you can barely see the man working next to you.⁶⁸

Another researcher, Thomas Gold, a prominent research scientist, has been interested for many years in a wide variety of natural phenomena. In one chapter of his recent book (a popular synthesis of his thinking over many years), he discusses firsthand accounts of earthquakes that support the idea that earthquakes are caused by upwelling of gases deep in the earth. In his chapter on earthquakes, he mentions “visible hazes in the atmosphere, or fogs along the ground” that accompany earthquakes.⁶⁹ A more technical discussion of “earthquakes and volcanism” that parallels Gold’s thinking is found in a wide-ranging volume of interconnected geological theories. This volume places Gold’s thinking in the context of today’s leading-edge geological theorists.⁷⁰

Fulfillment of Prophecies: Past and Yet to Come

It’s easy to forget the past—more especially when it’s the past we did not experience firsthand. To learn from the past requires that we occasionally review the past and ponder on what we can learn from it.

From the Book of Mormon, we learn that the wicked were warned by the Lord’s prophets that they would be destroyed at the time of the death of Jesus Christ. We’ve examined these prophecies in detail and seen their literal fulfillment. Few other prophecies in the Book of Mormon have such details about their literal fulfillment. (Examples with more details about their literal fulfillment include the prophesied destruction of the Jaredites and the prophesied

destruction of the Nephites.) The conclusion is inescapable: God speaks through His prophets and fulfills His words. (Doctrine and Covenants 1:37–38) In addition, we have seen that the Book of Mormon is consistent with itself on so many details, making it unthinkable that someone could concoct such an account on the fly.

We've also examined some accounts of destructive earthquakes and explosive volcanoes that occurred in the decades prior to 1830, showing some parallels between the destructive elements that accompany these disasters and those which occurred as part of the great destructions at the death of Jesus Christ. We have seen numerous parallels that add considerably to the credibility of the Book of Mormon account. Nevertheless, we are constrained to admit that, compared to God's knowledge, power, and wisdom, our collective human understanding of geology and everything else is extremely limited.⁷¹ We are constrained by our weakness and nothingness before Him to acknowledge the greatness of the Lord: "Behold, are not the things that God hath wrought marvelous in our eyes? Yea, and who can comprehend the marvelous works of God?" (Mormon 9:16) In truth, we must humbly admit that earthquakes and volcanoes alone simply are not adequate explanations for the fulfillment of prophecies given hundreds of years beforehand, and we must also confess that God's power and works are not limited to our finite understanding of them.

Finally, we have seen that these deadly disasters and disturbances occurred in fulfillment of the prophecy that the Book of Mormon would come forth in a day of disasters and disturbances. And, as we shall soon see, these destructions, disturbances, and disasters of the decades prior to 1830 are only a foretaste of what is to come.

Final Words of Warning

We end where we began, with prophecies of the destruction of the wicked in the last days. Similar warnings came to the people in the Book of Mormon, and many chose to follow the broad road that leads to destruction instead of the way marked out by the Lord's prophets. The words of the prophets make it clear that the Lord has His arm of mercy extended to those who repent: "O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!" (Mormon 6:17) But the wicked who receive and ignore the warning will be destroyed: "Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll? Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him." (Mormon 5:23)

To give Abraham understanding concerning the Lord's great power, the Lord spoke the following words:

For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly. (Abraham 2:7)

What we have not pointed out thus far is that Enoch was shown in vision of the great destructions that would occur at the time of Christ's death:

And the Lord said unto Enoch: Look, and he looked and beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men; and he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the earth groaned; and the rocks were rent. (Moses 7:55–56)

Though Enoch lived before the Flood, before the Tower of Babel, before the dividing of the earth in the days of Peleg, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and before the destruction of Jerusalem, he also saw all these things in vision and knew that the wicked would be destroyed according to what he had seen in vision. (Moses 7) Enoch also saw that *before* “the earth shall rest, . . . the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men.” (Moses 7:61) He “saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man,” and Enoch saw that, before His coming, there will be “great tribulations among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men’s hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which should come upon the wicked.” (Moses 7: 65–66)

The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that at Christ’s coming, “the presence of the Lord shall be as the melting fire that burneth, and as the fire which causeth the waters to boil,” and “the mountains [shall] flow down at [his] presence.” (D&C 133:41, 43) When He comes,

his voice shall be heard among all people; and it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. (D&C 133:21–24)

The Lord also spoke through His prophet, Joseph Smith, the following prophecy:

For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig-tree. And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people. For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand. And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds. And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people. (D&C 88:87–91)⁷²

Brigham Young, another prophet of the Lord, is a further witness of the two “testimonies”—one by the Lord’s servants, the next one by the Lord Himself:

“Do you think there is calamity abroad now among the people?” Not much. All we have yet heard and all we have experienced is scarcely a preface to the sermon that is going to be preached. When the testimony of the Elders ceases to be given, and the Lord says to them, “Come home; I will now preach my own sermons to the nations of the earth,” all you now know can scarcely be called a preface to the sermon that will be preached with fire and sword, tempests, earthquakes, hail, rain, thunders and lightnings, and fearful destruction. What matters the destruction of a few railway cars? You will hear of magnificent cities, now idolized by the people, sinking in the earth, entombing the inhabitants. The sea will heave itself beyond its bounds, engulfing mighty cities. Famine will spread over the nations, and nation will rise up against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and states against states, in our own country and in foreign lands; and they will destroy each other, caring not for the blood and lives of their neighbours, of their families, or for their own lives. They will be like the

Jaredites who preceded the Nephites upon this continent, and will destroy each other to the last man, through the anger that the Devil will place in their hearts, because they have rejected the words of life and are given over to Satan to do whatever he listeth to do with them. You may think that the little you hear of now is grievous; yet the faithful of God's people will see days that will cause them to close their eyes because of the sorrow that will come upon the wicked nations. The hearts of the faithful will be filled with pain and anguish for them.⁷³

The Lord is pleading with us *now* so that we will conduct our lives in such a way that the following will not be said of us:

How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trumpet, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not! (D&C 43:25)

The Lord does not excuse our “vanity and unbelief” or our treating “lightly” the Book of Mormon and the prophecies we have received. Neither will He shower upon us the great blessings only He can offer us if we are animated by fear of destruction instead by profound reverence and all-encompassing love for Him. He desires that we show forth our great love for Him by bringing forth fruit worthy of His kingdom. (D&C 84:54–59) The Lord asks us to “search” the words He has so graciously and mercifully given us through His servants, the prophets—“for the prophecies and the promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.” (D&C 1:37)

The Lord says to each of us, “If thou lovest me, thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments.” (D&C 42:29) “Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of the earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof. Behold, canst thou read this without rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for gladness? Or canst thou run about longer as a blind guide? Or canst thou be humble and meek, and conduct thyself wisely before me? Yea, come unto me thy Savior.” (D&C 19:38–41)

Can we not show *our* great love for Him who has loved *us* so greatly?

¹ See 3 Nephi 10:3–7 for a possible fulfillment of those “at Jerusalem” being visited by the voice of the Lord.

² “And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” (Exodus 10:21–23) Notice that there was no earthquake or volcano associated with the darkness.

³ Zenos prophesied that the sign of the three days of darkness “should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel.” (1 Nephi 19:10) In addition, Zenos prophesied that “all the house of Israel”

would be visited by the Lord at that day—the death of Christ (1 Nephi 19:11) and that “many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers.” (1 Nephi 19:12) See 3 Nephi 10:3–7 for a possible fulfillment of those “at Jerusalem” being visited by the voice of the Lord.

⁴ In the Book of Mormon, we also have an example of a prophecy from Abinadi being fulfilled, though the words of Abinadi’s prophecy are not given to us. See Mormon 1:19.

⁵ Bart J. Kowallis, “In the Thirty and Fourth Year: A Geologist’s View of the Great Destruction in 3 Nephi,” *BYU Studies* 37 no. 3 (1997–98): 136–190.

⁶ Kowallis, 145–46.

⁷ Thomas S. Raffles, *History of Java*, 2 vols. (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 1:30–32.

⁸ Thomas S. Raffles, *History of Java*, 1:32–33.

⁹ Quoted in Kowallis, 155 n. 13.

¹⁰ Quoted in Kowallis, 177 nn. 98–100.

¹¹ Stephen L. Harris, *Agents of Chaos: Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and Other Natural Disasters* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1990), 181. On the aftereffects, especially on climate, see C. R. Harington, ed., *The Year without a Summer: World Climate in 1816* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Nature, 1992) and K. Ya. Kondratyev and I. Galindo, *Volcanic Activity and Climate* (Hampton, VA: A. DEEPAK Publishing, 1997), 93–101.

¹² Richard B. Stothers, “The Great Tambora Eruption in 1815 and Its Aftermath,” *Science* 224 (15 June 1984): 1194.

¹³ Stothers, 1195.

¹⁴ Kowallis, 146.

¹⁵ Stothers, 1191.

¹⁶ Kowallis, 181–82.

¹⁷ Kowallis, 148.

¹⁸ Kowallis, 149.

¹⁹ Kowallis, 150.

²⁰ Kowallis, 155 n. 42.

²¹ Kowallis, 155. For example, even the Mount St. Helens eruption was heard as far away as 690 miles, and “residents along the Oregon coast thought they were hearing sonic booms, thunder, and dynamiting all rolled into one 15-minute barrage.” However, volcanoes are often completely silent for many miles surrounding them during an eruption. Two researchers collected more than 5,200 responses and “concluded that Mount St. Helens had been wrapped in a zone of silence that extended approximately 60 miles in every direction.” Rob Carson, *Mount St. Helens: The Eruption and Recovery of a Volcano* (Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 1990), 39.

²² Kowallis, 155.

²³ Kowallis, 160 n. 59.

²⁴ Kowallis, 179.

²⁵ Kowallis, 177 n. 97.

²⁶ Kowallis, 160 n. 60.

²⁷ Kowallis, 160 n. 56–58.

²⁸ Kowallis, 158–59 n. 53.

²⁹ Kowallis, 158, emphasis added.

³⁰ Myron L. Fuller, *The New Madrid Earthquake*, Bulletin 494 of the United States Geological Survey (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912), 13–42, esp. 33.

³¹ Arch C. Johnston and Lisa R. Kanter, “Earthquakes in Stable Continental Crust,” *Scientific American* 262 (March 1990): 68.

³² David Stewart and Ray Knox, *The Earthquake America Forgot: 2000 Temblors in Five Months—and It Will Happen Again* (Marble Hill, MO: Gutenberg-Richter Publications, 1990). On America’s memory loss, see pages 1–17, and on the Mississippi River, see page 200. The memory loss is also mentioned in Philip L. Fradkin, *Magnitude 8: Earthquakes and Life along the San Andreas Fault* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 25–26.

³³ Johnston and Kanter, 68.

³⁴ In 1886, Charleston, South Carolina, experienced such a quake (number 7 in the top 15 of these “stable-continent” quakes), though it “lies well away from a plate boundary; the eastern edge of the North American plate is thousands of kilometers offshore, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.” Johnston and Kanter, 68, 70.

³⁵ Johnston and Kanter, 70–71.

³⁶ Johnston and Kanter, 70.

³⁷ Johnston and Kanter, 70, emphasis added.

³⁸ Johnston and Kanter, 70, 72. “On the 16th June 1819 an earthquake was felt over a great extent of country, but its centre was in Cutch [on the northwest coast of India]. It is the most violent recorded in India. . . . The alarmed inhabitants of Bhooj fled in all directions to escape from their falling habitations. A heavy noise, the violent undulatory motion of the ground, the crash of the buildings, caused dismay and terror. The shock lasted for two or three minutes, and during that brief time Bhooj was almost levelled with the ground, and nearly 2000 persons perished in Bhooj alone. . . . Until the 1 July there were two or three shocks daily; one daily throughout July, one every three days in August and September, about six in October, and three in November,—about 100 in all. The great shock was felt at Calcutta . . . [and at] Khatmandu [both in eastern India]. . . . It embraces a space of 18 degrees of latitude and 20 of longitude.” Edward Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia*, . . . , 3 vols. (London: N.p., 1885), 1:1016. For more details on the 1819 earthquake in India, see R. D. Oldham, “The Cutch (Kachh) Earthquake of 16th June 1819 with a Revision of the Great Earthquake of 12th June 1897,” in *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India* 46, pt. 2 (Calcutta: Government of India, 1926). Though many of the effects of this earthquake were long lasting and could be observed over sixty years afterward, Oldham provides evidence that in some places the uplifted ground returned over time to its original level, leaving few, if any, physical traces of the earthquake. *Ibid.*, 31, 76–77. That such a phenomenon can occur is evident from an account by Strabo of an earthquake at Mount Casius in Egypt that occurred approximately in 23 B.C.: “The ground, to a considerable distance, after a violent and single shock fell in parts, at once exchanging places; the elevated parts opposed the access of the sea, and parts which had subsided admitted it. Another shock occurred, and the place recovered its ancient position, except that there was an alteration (in the surface of the ground) in some places, and none in other.” Cited in D. Neev, N. Bakler, and K. O. Emery, *Mediterranean Coasts of Israel and Sinai: Holocene Tectonism from Geology, Geophysics, and Archaeology* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1987), 88–89. These same researchers provide additional evidence for such “oscillatory” earthquake phenomena (mainly in chapter 4). For firsthand accounts showing that the earth can visibly move large objects and buildings “but leave nothing disturbed in its wake,” see Fradkin, 44–45.

³⁹ Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite . . .*, 4th ed. (Washington, OH: Joshua Martin, 1848), 344–46.

⁴⁰ “The Earthquake,” *Philadelphia Gazette*, 19 February 1812.

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- ⁴¹ “The Earthquake,” *Philadelphia Gazette*, 26 February 1812, italics in original.
- ⁴² Samuel L. Mitchill, “A Detailed Narrative . . .,” *Transactions of the Literary and Philosophical Society of New York* 1 (1815): 281–307; Mitchill’s presentations on the other disasters follow (pages 308–340).
- ⁴³ Mitchill, 284.
- ⁴⁴ Mitchill, 287.
- ⁴⁵ Mitchill, 288.
- ⁴⁶ Mitchill, 289.
- ⁴⁷ Mitchill, 291.
- ⁴⁸ Fuller, 7.
- ⁴⁹ Fuller, 44.
- ⁵⁰ Fuller, 45.
- ⁵¹ Fuller, 44.
- ⁵² Fuller, 101–102.
- ⁵³ Stewart and Knox, 237.
- ⁵⁴ Stewart and Knox, 238.
- ⁵⁵ Stewart and Knox, 246.
- ⁵⁶ Stewart and Knox, 55.
- ⁵⁷ Stewart and Knox, 55.
- ⁵⁸ Fuller, 109.
- ⁵⁹ Fradkin, 48–51, italics in original.
- ⁶⁰ Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, During the Years 1799–1804*, trans. Thomasina Ross, 3 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), 1:153–71.
- ⁶¹ von Humboldt, 1:164–65
- ⁶² von Humboldt, 1:171–72.
- ⁶³ von Humboldt, 1:166.
- ⁶⁴ von Humboldt, 1:167.
- ⁶⁵ Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, trans. E. C. Ott’, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1877), 1:211; see also the wealth of details on earthquakes and volcanoes (many of which occurred in the decades preceding 1830) on pages 1:202–28.
- ⁶⁶ Fradkin, 25–26.
- ⁶⁷ Helmut Tributsch, *When the Snakes Awake: Animals and Earthquake Prediction*, trans. Paul Langner (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 132–42. Despite its strange title, this book is a wide-ranging, theory-testing discussion on many scientific topics, including electrical phenomena related to geology.
- ⁶⁸ Tributsch, 136, bracketed material in original.
- ⁶⁹ Thomas Gold, *The Deep Hot Biosphere* (New York: Copernicus, 1999), 147; see also 141–63. Though Gold’s more recent book is easier to read, his earlier work includes more firsthand accounts of earthquake phenomena. Thomas Gold, *Power from the Earth: Deep Earth Gas—Energy for the Future* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1987).
- ⁷⁰ C. Warren Hunt, ed., *Expanding Geospheres: Energy and Mass Transfer from Earth’s Interior* (Calgary, Alberta: Polar Publishing, 1992). In this volume, three authors tackle some of the most persistent paradoxes of geology with their comprehensive, detailed theories.

⁷¹ There is so much that we don't understand, but here's a brief sampling related largely to the topics at hand. For a historical perspective on the recent "upheavals" in geology and related sciences, see Trevor Palmer, *Controversy, Catastrophism and Evolution: The Ongoing Debate* (New York: Kluwer Academic, 1999). See pages 163–64 for a discussion of *warm-blooded* dinosaurs. For an understanding of "how science works," see William Glen, ed., *The Mass-Extinction Debates: How Science Works in a Crisis* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), especially chapter two. That scientists are just beginning to understand volcanoes is evident from Haraldur Sigurdsson, *Melting the Earth: The History of Ideas on Volcanic Eruptions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). That there is more to geology than plate tectonics can deliver is evident by a recent review that states, "orogeny [mountain building] is all too often treated as a crustal process, the crust being the feature that most obviously distinguishes continental from oceanic plates. But we have shown that orogeny is not limited to the crust; it is a phenomenon that pervasively deforms the entire continental plate." To explain this, the researcher offers "the most straightforward explanation": that "continental plates are simply coupled to the mantle below," though "this does not mean that all plates are coupled to the mantle." Paul G. Silver, "Seismic Anisotropy beneath the Continents: Probing the Depths of Geology," in *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences* 24 (1996): 385–432, quotations on 419–20. After reading D&C 133:26, consider the following: "In 1918, an eruption under a glacier unleashed a flood of meltwater, called a glacial burst. In a matter of days, it released up to 20 times more water than the flow of the Amazon, the world's largest river. At least 13 similar underglacier eruptions have occurred during the last half of this century." Jon Erickson, *Craters, Caverns and Canyons: Delving beneath the Earth's Surface* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 48. "Some 200 surge glaciers that are heading toward the sea exist in North America. During most of its life, a surge glacier behaves normally, moving along at a snail's pace of perhaps a couple of inches a day. At regular intervals of 10 to 100 years, however, the glaciers gallop forward upwards of 100 times faster than their normal speed. . . . [One moved] 5 miles in one year, at times achieving speeds of 16 feet an hour. . . . [Another] 80-mile-long river of ice surges ahead as much as 46 in one day." *Ibid.*, 66. That there are "factors not yet understood" that affect radiocarbon dating is evident by the fact that analyses "made by three laboratories having high standards" yielded "inconsistencies in apparent ages." In addition, "analyses made by the same laboratory on samples from opposite ends of the same stick (1 m long and 3 cm diameter) from an Early Bronze I chamber tomb excavated at Bab edh-Dhr" yielded ages of about 5100 B.P. and zero (D. Ortner of the Smithsonian Institution, personal communication)." David Neev and K. O. Emery, *The Destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Jericho: Geological, Climatological, and Archaeological Background* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 52. After a detailed discussion of the great amount of scientific data available concerning the destructions of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Jericho, these two authors admit that "there is confusion in dating some physical events like earthquakes, climatic changes, and resulting invasions and cultural breaks" and that "much of it [i.e., identifying the locations of those cities that were destroyed] is still enigmatic." *Ibid.*, 150. Who is left to rely on when you can't rely on seasoned scientists with a wealth of data at their disposal to reliably date earthquakes, climatic changes, invasions, and cultural breaks or to reliably identify cities?

⁷² By comparison, during the greater shocks of the earthquakes of 1819 in India, the earth was moving up and down to the point that people had difficulty walking or running. "It is evident that there was a very considerable vertical component in the motion of the ground. The movement was so strongly undulatory that it was no easy matter to keep one's feet. 'The waving of the

surface was perfectly visible and in attempting to walk, the motion has been most aptly compared by a gentleman to that felt when walking quickly on a long plank supported at both ends;—when one foot was elevated, the earth either rose to meet it, or sunk away from it in its descent.’ ” Oldham, 39–40. The earthquakes of 1811–12 opened up “thousands” of fissures that “can still be observed today” in Missouri and Arkansas. One observer tells us that “the earth rolled in waves several feet high with visible depressions between the swells, finally bursting and leaving parallel fissures extending in a north-south direction for distances as great as five miles in some cases.” Stewart and Knox, 228. From a different observer we learn that seven Indians were “swallowed up” in one of these fissures. The one Indian who escaped to tell about it related that he found himself in a crack in the earth “100 trees in length.” The crevasse began filling up with water, and he swam for his life as he was lifted by the rising water. “He had to swim and wade four miles before finding dry land.” Stewart and Knox, 227. Imagine the great power behind “earthquakes” that will not even permit people to stand—or that move whole continents.
⁷³ *Journal of Discourses* 8:123.