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Apocalypse: Earthquakes, Archaeology, and the Wrath of God

Amos Nur
Dawn Burgess
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The proper pursuit of any science involves the knowledge of many disciplines, and archaeology should be no exception. Some archaeologists and anthropologists, however, disregard the findings of geologists. With braggadocios and pomposity they dismiss any ideas that do not involve man decimating his own culture through war with invading armies, civil conflicts over religious strife, and/or political upheavals. The theory that earthquakes may have caused the destruction of many ancient cities is unpopular and controversial, even though the ruins of Mycenae, Sparta, and Bet Shean all show signs of geological devastation.

Amos Nur (with Dawn Burgess) illustrates these ideas with convincing prose and meticulous research. Nur writes, "The either/or debates that rage in archaeological circles imply a strange separation of the human world from the natural world, as if earthquakes would hold off until human conflicts were resolved…The suggestion that the two are inevitably linked is seen as a capitulation, a sign of a weak theory that must be bolstered by unlikely coincidences."

Even when there is overwhelming evidence that an earthquake has occurred, like fault scarps within walls, fallen columns, and crushed human remains; the scientific community is reluctant to blame the destruction on an "act of God" or random event in nature.

To explain how the uncertainties of an earthquake impact what we think we know about the history of earth, Nur introduces the reader to a relatively new science that studies the effects of earthquakes on archaeology called Archaeoseismology. But when Nur and his team of geophysicists attempt to combine their efforts with a team of archaeologists the results are disappointing. Nur writes, "…the first time a group of archaeologists and geophysicists had ever convened…The level of communication, in any case, was not particularly high…"

Readers will discover that earthquakes that have occurred in recent times have parallels to the remnants of destruction left from earthquakes in the distant past.

Amos Nur is a Wayne Loel Professor of Earth Sciences and Professor of Geophysics; *Apocalypse* is a result of his determined effort to expel the fallacies in archaeology with the hard

science of geophysics and to have a better understanding of the past to prepare for the unavoidable earthquakes of the future.

Lee Gooden