



## Is it scientifically possible for the catastrophes described in 3 Nephi to have really happened?

As a sign of the Savior's death, the Nephites and Lamanites experienced storm, tempest, whirlwinds, thunder, and lightning; shaking of the earth; cities breaking up, burning, or sinking into the sea; highways and earth breaking up; rocks breaking up and being scattered; darkness that could be felt; vapors of smoke; the inability to light fire and make light; and a change in the whole face of the land. The initial event lasted for three hours, and the darkness lasted for three days. (See 3 Nephi 8–10.)

As a matter of faith, we do not need a scientific explanation of the means by which God caused these cataclysms. But it is interesting to note that, in fact, all of these phenomena have been observed in connection with one type of geological event: a massive and explosive volcanic eruption.

A volcanic event of this scale is rare but not unheard-of. Tectonic activity, extraordinary electrical events, tornadoes, falling debris, days of dark and stifling clouds of ash—all of these have been associated with volcanoes before and have caused the kind of destruction and death described in the Book of Mormon. It could have been this or something else entirely. The important thing is that it actually happened, as prophesied. **NE**

See, for instance, Bart J. Kowallis, "In the Thirty and Fourth Year: A Geologist's View of the Great Destruction in 3 Nephi," *BYU Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3 (1997–98), 136–190.