

Weekly Reflection: Hope-filled Warnings

Hebrews 12:25-29

God has appointed that the end of this world will come by a great final shaking of the earth.

Hebrews 12:26: *“At that time His voice shook the earth,”* (This is referring to Mt Sinai in Exodus 19:18) *but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”* Then comes the interpretation in verse 27: *“This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.”* What that means is that God has appointed a time in which He will shake the earth one final time and what can be shaken will be shaken and will be gone. And what will remain will be the unshakable, that is the Kingdom of God and all that belong to it. There will be a great final shaking of this world, it has been promised.

I want you to see this from other scriptures as well. **Isaiah 13:9-13:** There's coming a day, the Day of the Lord, of fierce anger and retribution and justice upon the earth for its sin, and the earth will be shaken out of its place. **Isaiah 24:18-20:** There again, a decisive prophecy that this world is going to be shaken on its foundations someday and collapse as we know it; and it will be over. And only God and His people will stand. **Revelation 6:12-17:** So, there's a great earthquake coming when all the unbelievers who have spurned the gospel, who have lived for worldly pleasures, who have ignored God will want to be crushed under the rocks of the mountains rather than face God. **Revelation 16:17-20:** Our imaginations cannot conceive of what it will be like when the stars are falling, the skies are rolled up like a scroll, and the earth comes out of its foundations and collapses, and all the islands and the mountains vanish, and there is only God with whom to deal. The Lord has appointed that the world will come to an end with a great earthquake.

Smaller shakings will precede the great final shaking like birth pains before a baby is born.

These smaller shakings are meant to give hopeful warnings of the great final shaking. *“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”* (Matthew 24:6-8 ESV) Notice three things from these verses. One, there is an end coming. It says, “the end is not yet.” This shows that the end is coming. Second, before it comes there will be wars, earthquakes and famines. Many calamities will precede the coming of the end. Third, these calamities before the end are called birth pains, or labor pains, contractions. Birth pains mean a birth is about to happen. Something good is about to happen, something glorious is on its way. The fullness of the Kingdom of God is coming. I'm quite confident that birth pains are not pleasant, but they are purposeful, they prepare the mother and the baby for birth. These calamities are meant to be hope filled warnings. King Jesus is coming soon!

In Romans 8 we see a text that is very foundational for understanding the futility of this creation. *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope”* (Romans 8:18-20 ESV) Who subjected this world to futility? This can only be talking about one person. Satan did not subject this world to futility “in hope.” God did. God brought the curse upon this creation because of sin. But He did it in hope. It's in hope that we experience the tragedies of the fallen creation. It's in hope because the futility of this creation is like birth pains pointing us to the truth that hope is coming, the Kingdom is coming, the King is coming. *“that the creation itself will be set free from its*

bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” (Romans 8:21-22 ESV) If you ask me, “Why do you think that God has ordained that there be calamities as the end draws near?” The only answer I have is that God wants to give hope filled warnings, like birth pains, of the coming of the fullness of the Kingdom of God. He doesn’t want it to catch us off guard. When that final great shaking happens and Jesus comes, He wants us to be awake and ready to meet our maker. God means to give birth-pains to the world so that the world wakes up and knows something is about to happen. This is mercy that with all the tragedy that there is in all the calamities of the world, it's the loud voice of a holy God saying, "Get ready there is a shaking coming that will leave no house standing, no building standing, no place to stand but before the throne of the King of kings." Whether it's your own little private calamity of a stopped heart, or whether everybody together rolls with the earthquake. It is coming, and the Lord is warning us that it is coming. Again, and again He is shaking people awake to the reality of the instability of this world and the desirability of the unshakable kingdom that He offers.

Church, it is our job to help people be awake and ready for that final shaking. Not in some weird way, not by trying to give an answer to why every earthquake happened or trying to proclaim which people God was judging or trying to predict when Jesus is returning. But as we hear and see these hope filled warnings we would live with urgency to tell people about the Living Hope that we have, to give our lives to inviting people into the unshakable Kingdom of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

God is giving to everyone who believes in His Son a kingdom that cannot be shaken and will never end.

This is the message of the whole Bible. And we see it here in verse 28 of our text: ***“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.”*** Notice: we have already received it. This is the great joy of being a Christian, you have a kingdom which has already been given to you, and your life in Christ is unshakable. It does not mean there are no Christians killed by earthquakes. There has been. ***“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:22-23)*** We share in the futility and decay and calamities of creation as long as we are in our earthly bodies. Receiving an unshakable kingdom does not mean safety for the body in this world. It does not mean that we'll escape the calamities of this world. It means that ***“I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39 ESV)***

Therefore, we should worship God with reverence and awe because our God is a consuming fire.

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28-29 ESV) The question for believer and unbeliever alike is this: Are you worshiping the unshakable God, or are you worshiping shakable possessions? What is your life built on, the shakeable or the unshakeable? Do you stand with reverence and awe before the power and holiness of God, who is a consuming fire toward all sin? Have you clothed yourself with the fireproof righteousness of Jesus Christ, so that the fire of God can be seen as glory and not as punishment? Since God can shake the heavens and move the earth, and since God Himself is unshakable, it makes a lot more sense to trust in God than even the ground we stand on and the air we breathe.

Receive the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Mark 10:15 ESV) See how simple it is? What does "like a little child" mean? It means you humble yourself and recognize that you can't make a place for yourself to stand. You can't cut it in life and make the future what it needs to be. You just humble yourself like a little child. You recognize that there's a holy and just God in heaven. You see the gift offered through His Son Jesus Christ, forgiveness and the hope of eternal life and a firm kingdom that can't be shaken; you extend your hands and say, "Sinner though I am, I receive it. This is now my destiny forever and ever."