

One Day Everything Will Be Shaken

It's true that the coronavirus is causing upheaval around the world. Whole countries are being quarantined. Massive sports events are being cancelled. Schools are being closed. The stock markets are collapsing. But this is a mere tremor compared to what is coming. One day the whole earth will be shaken.

As the author of Hebrews tells us, the Lord "has given us a promise, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also heaven.' And this statement, 'Yet once more,' signifies the removal of those things that can be shaken, things that are created, so that only those things that cannot be shaken will remain" (Heb. 12:26-27).

Everything will be shaken on that day.

This is how Jesus described it: ""There will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men fainting from fear and expectation of what is coming on the inhabited earth. For the powers of heaven will be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26).

Or, in the vivid language of the book of Revelation, "Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the commanding officers and the strong and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. They said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of His wrath has come. Who is able to withstand it?" (Rev. 6:15-17)

Can you even imagine a scene like this?

Very few want to talk about God's judgment today, even within the church.

Preachers choose to avoid it, and the congregants cheer them on. "Give us sweet stuff! Give us happy stuff! Tell us nice stories. Make us smile! We don't want to hear about judgment. That makes God sound mean."

To the contrary, that makes God sound just. He will judge unrighteousness. He will punish the wicked. He will bring retribution.

That is good news for the righteous and the godly. As the psalmist said, "Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness" (Ps. 96:13, NIV).

Judgment on the wicked also means salvation for the righteous.

The book of Revelation also speaks of the pouring out of seven bowls of divine wrath on the earth, resulting in horrific judgments on those who refuse to repent (see Rev. 16).

There will be no vaccines or cures on that day.

There will be no intervention by the federal government.

There will be no way of escape—other than running to the Lord for mercy and taking refuge under His wings.

Judgment is certainly coming!

Isaiah put it like this (please read this slowly and prayerfully): "See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants— it will be the same for priest as for people, for the master as for his servant, for the mistress as for her servant, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be completely laid

waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word. The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left" (Isa. 24:1–6).

Even if we understand that the prophets sometimes spoke in hyperbolic language, the overall meaning of these words is undeniable: One day, severe judgment will fall on a guilty planet.

Yet even in the midst of this terrifying description, there are words of hope for God's people. In fact, there is a divine invitation to take refuge in Him: "Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide for a little while until the indignation is over. For the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her bloodshed and shall cover her slain no more" (Isa. 26:20–21, MEV).

As Proverbs states, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe" (Prov. 18:10). And as Psalm 91 declares, there is a place of protection, a hiding place, in God Most High. (See here for an exposition of the psalm in Hebrew.)

That's why Jesus said this to His followers, immediately after warning of the judgment that would be coming to the earth: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28). The coming of the Lord is at hand.

And that's why the very passage from Hebrews that we quoted at the beginning of this article ends with this: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us

be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire'" (Heb. 12:28–29)

The whole world will be shaken, but God's kingdom—and God's people—will not be shaken.

As the psalmist declared, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day" (Ps. 46:1–5, NIV).

And this: "Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD. Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes" (Ps. 112:6–8).

It is true that the coronavirus has taken many lives so far, and every life is precious. And it is true that many more lives could be lost, along with real suffering for hundreds of millions due to economic crises.

But this is only a small blip on the radar compared to what is coming.

Now would be a good time for us, as God's holy people, to learn to trust Him in the midst of crisis, putting our spiritual roots down deep.

Now would be a good time to realize that all life is transitory and that, at best, we are only passing through this world.

Now would be a good time to take hold afresh of the beauty of the cross and the gift of eternal life.

And now would be a good time to be used as agents of mercy and hope to a hurting world. In Jesus, we have all we will ever need. And in Him, we will never be shaken.