

A SHAKING IS COMING

- A. Introduction: When Jesus left this world He promised His followers that He would return (Acts 1:9-11). But He also told His followers that the years leading up to His return would be filled with increasing trouble and turmoil that will culminate in the worst tribulation the world has ever seen. Matt 24:6-8; Matt 24:21-22
1. The circumstances and chaos that Jesus predicted are beginning to set up right before our eyes. For a number of months we have been talking about why this is happening and how we should respond.
 - a. We have been making the point that the calamity in these final years of human history doesn't come from an angry God who has finally had it with sinful humanity. It is the result of human choice and the consequences of their choices. (See previous lessons for more details.)
 - b. As part of our discussion we took several weeks to address questions about the Old Testament where it seems as though God does reign terror down on people when He is angry. We have considered some of those incidents in terms of how the first Christians would have heard them.
 1. Last week we began to connect what the Old Testament says with what the New Testament about the Lord's return. We looked at Isaiah 13:9-13. This passage makes reference to the day of the Lord, the Old Testament term for what we know as the second coming of Jesus.
 2. According to the prophet Isaiah the day of the Lord will come with terrible, cruel wrath, and fierce anger to destroy sinners. The first Christians understood this to mean that God is awe inspiring and deserves reverence and He abhors sin. They understood that to destroy sinners means to remove them.
 2. Jesus Christ is coming back to complete God's plan for a family with whom He can live forever on this earth. God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Jesus. And He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Rev 21:1-7; etc.
 - a. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin with His death on the Cross so that all who believe on Him can be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. He will come again to cleanse the earth of all sin, corruption, and death and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family.
 - b. Part of the process of restoring the family and the family home involves removing forever all those who throughout human history have refused to acknowledge Almighty God from contact with Himself or the family home. (See previous lessons for more details)
 3. Isa 13:10; Isa 13:13—In the passage we've been examining Isaiah revealed that the removal of sinners will occur when the stars, the sun, and the moon do not give their light. He further stated that at that time the Lord will shake the heavens and the earth.
 - a. The New Testament clearly identifies this time as the second coming of Jesus. In tonight's lesson we're going to address Isaiah's statements in light of the New Testament and learn more about how the first Christians interpreted what Isaiah predicted.
 - b. As we begin, remember that second coming is a broad term that covers a period of time and a number of different events on earth and in Heaven (lots of lessons for other times). My goal is to help you see the big picture and emphasize the end result—God on earth with His redeemed family.
- B. Matt 24:1-3—Just a few days before Jesus was crucified some of His disciples (apostles) asked Him what signs will indicate that His return is near. He gave them a lengthy answer and a number of signs.
1. Jesus told them there will be a time of tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen. Right after that, the sun and moon won't give their light and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. v21; v29
 - a. This wasn't new information to His listeners. God's been talking about the end since the beginning because He is working out a plan. Many more people are interested in Jesus' return than just us. The culmination of His plan will affect every human being who has ever lived.

- b. Jesus' apostles knew from the Old Testament prophets that calamity will precede the Lord's return, but that those who belong to Him will make it through. Dan 12:1; Zech 14:1-4
- 2. They further knew that there will be signs in the heavens and that the earth will be shaken, but that the end result is good for those who belong to God through Jesus.
 - a. Joel 2:30-32—The prophet Joel (835 BC) indicated that in the day of the Lord (the second coming) He will show wonders in the heavens. The sun will be darkened, the moon turned to blood red and the stars will cease to shine. But whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.
 - b. Joel 3:15-16—Joel prophesied that when the sun, moon, and stars are darkened, the earth will be shaken but that the Lord will be the hope and strength of His people.
 - c. A century later (740-680 BC) Isaiah also prophesied that in the day of the Lord the sun, moon, and stars will not give their light, the heavens will shake, and the earth will remove (shake, tremble).
 - 1. But Isaiah also foresaw a day when the conditions of Eden will be restored and the earth will be made new. Isa 51:3; Isa 35:1-7; Isa 55:12-13; Isa 65:17
 - 2. According to Isaiah, at that time God will celebrate with His people on earth: The Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef. In that day He will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears (Isa 25:6-8, NLT).
- 3. Haggai 2:6-9—Haggai was another prophet who made reference to the heavens and the earth being shaken and connected it to what we now know is the second coming of Jesus (520 BC). Let's get the context of Haggai's statement
 - a. In 586 BC the people of Israel were forcibly removed from their land because of their persistent, unrepentant idol worship. The Babylonians invaded Israel, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and took the Israelites back to Babylon as captives.
 - b. The Israelites were allowed to return to Canaan after seventy years when a new leader, Cyrus the Persian, sent them home to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. They faced many obstacles and Haggai was raised up to encourage them to complete the rebuilding of the Temple.
 - 1. Among other things, the people were concerned that this second temple did not compare with the beauty and splendor of the original. But the Lord assured them that the glory of this house would surpass the former. This would be the Temple that Jesus stood in when He came to earth the first time. Jesus is the Desire or delight of all nations.
 - 2. The Old Testament prophets did not see clearly that there would be two separate comings of the Lord. Many prophecies make reference to both the first and second coming. That is true of this prophesy.
 - A. Notice that Haggai connects the coming of Jesus with the time that the heavens and the earth will be shaken. The earth did shake or quake when Jesus was crucified (Matt 27:50-51). But the first Christians understood that another final shaking was coming (more on this in a moment).
 - B. Notice one point in connection with our present discussion. The shaking of the heavens and earth when the Lord returns ends well for His people: And in this place I will bring peace. I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken (Hag 2:9, NLT).
- C. We find a New Testament reference to this final shaking in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Let's get the context. This epistle was written to Jewish believers in Jesus who were being pressured to repudiate Jesus and His blood and go back to Temple worship.
 - 1. Hebrews was written to urge them to stay faithful to Christ and obey His Word. Paul (the author) used a number of arguments to persuade them. As part of his argument, Paul referred to their ancestors—the

ones who were delivered from Egyptian slavery by the mighty hand of Almighty God. This generation and their example was well known to every generation of Jews after them.

- a. Heb 3:7-4:2—Do not be like your ancestors who saw My power deliver them and then experienced My provision for them in the wilderness. But they refused to listen to Me and enter Canaan.
 - b. As Paul was coming to the end of his epistle he made an impassioned plea: See to it that you obey God, the one who is speaking to you. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, how terrible our danger if we reject the one who speaks to us from Heaven (Heb 12:25—NLT).
 - c. The generation that left Egypt did not escape destruction. God destroyed them for unbelief (Jude 5). Destroyed doesn't mean that God killed them. The Lord sent them back to the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan for forty years where they lived as nomads.
 1. That generation missed out on God's purpose for them—Canaan. They became an example of what happens to those who don't believe on Jesus—they miss out on their created purpose, to become sons and daughters of God. They are eternally separated from God and the family.
 2. Heb 12:22-24—Paul has just made the point that there is more to life than just this life. There's an unseen realm which we are now part of—the kingdom of Heaven. Don't make a choice that gives you temporal ease (no more persecution from your fellow Jews because you reject Jesus) but costs you your future (a life and home with Almighty God).
2. There are many important points in Paul's statement (lessons for another time). But note this point in connection with our discussion of earth and heaven shaking. Heb 12:18-21
- a. Paul reminded his readers of the time when their ancestors came to Mt. Sinai. They saw God descend on the mountain and heard Him speak. It was such an awesome sight that even Moses was terrified and trembling.
 - b. That's the context in which the author says that if the people who refused Moses' instructions to enter Canaan didn't escape destruction, how much more you (us) when God is speaking to us from Heaven.
 - c. Then, Paul made the statement that God, whose voice shook the earth at Sinai, will once again shake not only the earth but the heavens, just as He promised. This is a reference to the prophet Haggai's prophesy which was (and still is) yet to be fulfilled when Christ returns.
 - A. Heb 12:26-29—Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also. This means that the things on earth will be shaken, so that only eternal things will be left. Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. For our God is a consuming fire (NLT).
 - B. Paul was writing to encourage his readers to stay faithful to Christ no matter what. His words were meant to be incentivizing and to offer them hope for the future. If the shaking of the heavens and the earth was a bad thing that was going to mean destruction for God's people, then it wouldn't be a source of hope and encouragement.
- C. Conclusion: The term shaking is used in the Bible to describe the effect on the material world when God comes on the scene.
1. Among other things, it refers to shaking up the rulership of this earth. The prophet Haggai noted that the Lord will shake the nations (2:7). When Jesus returns, the rightful ruler of earth, Almighty God will take His place as the King over all. Rev 11:15; Rev 19:6
 - a. Almighty God will bring His throne and the capital of Heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem, to earth and live with His family forever (the city that Paul referred to in Heb 12). Rev 21:2-3; Rev 21:24-25
 - b. The nations will live in submission to the rightful King and the world will finally have permanent peace, just as Isaiah and Haggai prophesied. Rev 22:3; Isa 9:7; Haggai 2:9

2. This final shaking refers primarily to changes that will take place in the earth itself when Jesus returns. First century Christians understood from the prophets that the earth is not going to be destroyed. It will be transformed and made new.
 - a. II Pet 3:13—The apostle Peter, In a letter written shortly before he was martyred for his faith in Christ wrote that he was looking forward to the new heavens and earth. Isaiah the prophet was the first to use this term (Isa 65:17).
 - b. Peter used a specific Greek word for new (*kainos*). It means new in quality or form as opposed to new in time. God isn't going to destroy this world. He's going to renew and restore it to what He always intended it to be—a fit forever home for God and His family.
 - c. Throughout his ministry, Peter preached this message to believers. Shortly after Jesus returned to Heaven, Peter told an audience that Heaven: must receive [and retain] Jesus until the time for the complete restoration of all that God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets for ages past—from the most ancient time in the memory of man (Acts 3:21, Amp).
3. When Peter made his statement about the new earth he had just finished describing the process of transformation that will take place in this physical world. We have more to say next week, but consider these thoughts as we close.
 - a. II Pet 3:10-12—But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall **pass away** with a great noise, and the **elements shall melt** with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be **burned up**...all these things shall be **dissolved**, and the elements **shall melt** with fervent heat.
 - b. This passage is sometimes misinterpreted to mean that the earth will be destroyed by fire when the Lord returns. But Peter isn't describing destruction. He's describing transformation. God will speak and purge the physical elements that make up this world with the fire of His Word. Jer 23:29
 1. **Pass away** is made up of two Greek words that mean to come or go by. It carries the idea of passing from one condition or state to another. It never means cease to exist. **Elements** is a Greek word that means the most basic components of the physical world (atoms, molecules).
 2. **Shall melt** (v10), **dissolve** (v11-12) are the same Greek word and means to loose (John 11:44—loose him and let him go). **Burned up**, in the earliest Greek manuscripts, is a word that means found or shown. The idea is the exposure of corruption for the purpose of removal.
 3. **Shall melt** (v12) is the Greek word *teko*. We get our English word *thaw* from it. Winter releases its grip when the spring thaw sets in. Corruption and death will one day release their grip on this world and the earth will be loosed from bondage to both.
 - c. II Pet 3:11-12—With some of his final words, Peter urged believers: Since all these things are thus on the verge of dissolution, what sort of men ought you to be in all holy living and godly conduct (Weymouth), looking for and hastening the coming of the Lord. Hasting in the Greek means to speed or urge on, and by implication, to await eagerly.
4. Increasingly challenging times are coming on this earth. We must learn how to keep our focus on the big picture.
 - a. We have no reason to fear the Lord's return. Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan for a family by cleansing and renewing this earth. Life will finally be what we all long for it to be.
 - b. Until He comes, the Lord will lead us and guide us as we keep our priorities straight. What matters most is that men and women come to saving knowledge of Jesus. Lots more next week!