

AN UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM

- A. Introduction: Jesus Christ is coming back to this world in the not too distant future. The Bible reveals that His return will be preceded by perilous times on the earth, including tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen (II Tim 3:1; Matt 24:21-22). In this series, we are discussing what will happen and why so that we are prepared to deal with the challenging times ahead of us.
1. The Bible speaks of a final shaking before the Lord returns. Last week, we began to talk about the final shaking, in part because many are attributing the turmoil in our country and the world to God shaking the world. Is this the final shaking? Is God responsible for the increasing chaos and violence? Not at all! God is good and good means good.
 - a. The deteriorating conditions in the world are the result of human choice as humanity increasingly abandons Almighty God and Judeo-Christian morality and ethics (many lessons for another night).
 - b. If we are going to have peace and hope in the months and years, we must understand that God is not the cause of the turmoil. Rather, He is our help and protection in the midst of it.
 2. To appreciate what the final shaking is and isn't, we must understand the big picture—why God created human beings and the heavens and the earth in the first place.
 - a. Humans were created to become holy, righteous sons and daughters of God who live in loving relationship with Him. Earth was created to be home for God and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Rom 5:12
 - b. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin at the Cross and open the way for men and women to become sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. He will come again to cleanse the family home of all corruption and death. Almighty God will come to live with His family in the home He made for us. John 1:12-13; Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1-7; etc.
 1. The term final shaking refers primarily to changes that will take place in the earth when it is transformed, renewed, and restored to a fit forever home for God and His family.
 2. To have peace of mind in the difficult years ahead we must learn to live with the awareness that there is more to life than just this life. We need to live with the awareness that God's plan for humanity and the earth is about to be completed and our future is bright.
- B. To rightly interpret any statement in the Bible we must always consider what it meant to the first hearers. A passage cannot mean something to us that it would not have meant to the original readers. What did a final shaking mean to the first Christians?
1. When Jesus came to earth the first time, He was born a Jew and His first followers were Jewish. Their worldview was shaped by the Old Testament. The Old Testament is primarily the history of the Jews, but it also predicted a coming Redeemer (Jesus) and gave much information about what He would do.
 - a. Based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus' first followers expected Him (as the Redeemer) to restore the world to what God always intended and establish His kingdom on earth. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; Isa 65:17; etc.
 - b. Matt 19:27-29—At one point during Jesus' ministry, Peter (one of His original disciples) asked Him what reward he and the others disciples will receive for having left all to follow Jesus.
 1. The Lord told them that their reward will come in the regeneration—"the new age—the Messianic rebirth of the world" (v28, Amp). The Greek word translated regeneration literally means new birth (Titus 3:5). Jesus didn't have to explain to them what He meant by regeneration because they knew from the Old Testament that the world will be made new.
 2. Jesus told them that they will be rewarded with positions of authority in His kingdom on earth. And everything they gave up, they'll get back over and above (one hundred fold) what was lost.
 2. Matt 24:1-3—Near the end of His earth ministry, Jesus told His followers that He was leaving soon. A few days before He went to the Cross, they asked Him what signs will indicate that His return is near.
 - a. Matt 24:3—Tell us, when will this take place, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the

end—that is the completion, the consummation—of the age (Amp). Jesus’ disciples understood that His return will bring big changes to the world.

1. Jesus had just told them that the Temple would be destroyed. They knew from the prophets that the coming of the Lord will be preceded by warfare, much of it centering on Israel. They no doubt connected the Temple’s destruction to that turmoil. Note, Jesus’ words didn’t scare them because they also knew that God will deliver His people. Zech 14:1-4; Dan 12:1-3
 2. Matt 24:29—Jesus gave His disciples much information about the chaos leading up to His return. He stated that just prior to His second coming the sun will be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.
 - b. This was not new information. They knew from the prophets that His coming will be preceded by signs in the heavens and that both the heavens and the earth will be shaken. But they also knew that the end result will be good for those who know the Lord. Joel 2:31-32; Joel 3:15-16; Haggai 2:6-7
 3. These first century men understood that this world is going to be transformed and restored when the Lord returns. Before we go on, we need to clear up a common misunderstanding of a statement Jesus made as He answered His disciples’ questions that day.
 - a. Matt 24:35—Jesus said that heaven and earth will pass away. Some have mistaken His statement to mean that the world will be destroyed when He returns. Consider the context of Jesus’ words.
 - b. Jesus wasn’t telling them that the world will someday cease to exist. He has just made a number of predictive statements to them in response to their question about when He will return.
 1. The Lord concluded His answer by assuring them that His Word is so reliable that the heavens and the earth will pass away before His Word goes unfulfilled.
 2. These first century men couldn’t imagine anything wiping out the earth (such as a nuclear war) so they understood Jesus’ point: Nothing can stop God’s Word (what He has just predicted) from coming to pass.
 - c. Ps 102:25-27—The first Christians understood that earth will be changed and restored, not destroyed, even though this passage is sometimes used to say that God will destroy the earth.
 1. The theme of the psalm is the fact that the Lord never changes—even though everything else does. This material world will fade, but He is ever the same.
 2. Heb 1:10-12—This particular passage from the psalm is cited in the New Testament and shows us how the first Christians understood these words. The idea is change, not annihilation.
 3. Many years later, in II Pet 3:10-12, Peter gave a more detailed description of what they knew about the transformation that is coming to this world.
 - A. Some wrongly say this passage means that earth will be destroyed by fire. The original Greek makes it clear that Peter was describing earth’s transformation, not its destruction.
 - B. Pass away, in the Greek, carries the idea of passing from one condition to another. Melt (v10) and dissolve (v11-12) are the same Greek word and means to loose. Melt (v12) is *teko* in the Greek. We get our English word thaw from the word.
 4. Peter and the other disciples knew that the corruption and death that infused creation when Adam sinned will one day release their grip on this world and the earth will be loosed from bondage to both. Earth will be restored.
- C. The apostle Paul, another of the Lord’s early followers, had much to say about the final shaking of the heavens and the earth. Paul was converted three years after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection when Jesus appeared to him as he was traveling to Damascus, Syria. Acts 9:1-6
1. Paul was born a Jew, raised as a Pharisee, and thoroughly schooled in the Old Testament (meaning that he had the same world view as the original twelve apostles). After Paul became a follower of Jesus, the Lord appeared to him a number of times and taught him the gospel that he preached. Gal 1:11-12
 - a. Paul referred to the final shaking of the world in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This letter was written to Jewish believers in Jesus who were being pressured by unbelieving fellow countrymen to

abandon Jesus, reject His sacrifice on the Cross, and return to Temple sacrifices and worship.

- b. The whole purpose of Hebrews was to encourage these people to stay faithful to the Lord. Paul used many arguments, including warning them of the severe consequences of rejecting the Lord. He reminded them how their ancestors missed out on God's purpose for them by refusing to enter the land of Canaan after He had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Heb 2:2-3; Heb 3:15-17
2. As his closing argument, Paul made reference to another event in their history—when God descended visibly on Mount Sinai and gave them His Law (known as the Law of Moses). Ex 19:18
 - a. They saw God descend in the form of fire and heard the voice of the Lord thunder. When God spoke, the earth shook (Ex 19:18). The sights and sounds were so formidable (frightful, awe inspiring) that the people begged God to stop speaking. Even Moses was afraid (Heb 12:21).
 1. Heb 12:22-24—Paul wrote that as awesome and formidable as that event was, they (his readers) had come to something better than a physical mountain with thunderous sounds and fearsome sights. You have come to Mount Zion, the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.
 2. The city of Jerusalem was located on Mount Zion and is sometimes referred to as Zion. Paul wasn't talking about that city. He was referring to a heavenly city, the present capital of Heaven which will come to earth once it is made new (more on this in a moment).
 - b. Old Testament men and women lived with the awareness that there is an unseen realm or dimension that is normally not perceptible to our physical senses. It is the home of God and His angels. The unseen was created before the seen realm and will outlast and ultimately transform all that we see (II Cor 4:18; Col 1:16; etc.). Paul made a number of references to this reality in his epistle.
 1. He reminded his readers that the Tabernacle Moses was instructed to build was according to the pattern of one in Heaven and that the priests “serve in a place of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven (Heb 8:5, NLT). Paul wrote that that “the earthly tent (Tabernacle) and everything in it...(are) copies of things in heaven (Heb 9:23, NLT).
 2. Paul further wrote that their ancestors desired “a better country, that is a heavenly one” (Heb 11:16, NASB) and that they “were looking forward to our city in heaven, which is yet to come (Heb 13:14; NLT).
3. Back to Paul's appeal to the Hebrew Christians in Heb 12:25-26. The generation of Israel that saw and heard God at Mount Sinai refused His voice and missed Canaan. Paul urged his readers: Don't make the same mistake. Listen to His voice because not only is the earth going to shake again, the heavens will also shake (Haggai 2:6).
 - a. The term shaking is used in the Bible in several ways to describe the effect on the material world when God comes on the scene.
 1. It refers to a literal shaking of the earth (Ex 19:18) and to the shaking up the rulership of this world when the Lord ultimately takes control of the world (Haggai 2:7-9).
 2. The first Christians understood the final shaking to be the changes that will take place in the earth itself when Jesus returns. That which is temporary will be replaced with what is eternal.
 - b. Heb 12:27—Now this expression, Yet once more, indicates the final removal and transformation of all [that can be] shaken, that is, of that which has been created, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain and continue (AMP); This means that the things on earth will be shaken, so that only the eternal things will be left (NLT).
 1. Paul reminded his readers that they now belong to a kingdom that cannot be moved, that will remain unshaken because “you have come to (are now part of) the assembly of God's firstborn children whose names are written in heaven” (Heb 12:22-23, NLT).
 - A. Because of Jesus' sacrifice at the Cross, all who believe on Him have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into His kingdom. Col 1:13
 - B. Phil 3:20—We are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior (NLT).
 2. Jesus Himself made this statement about those who remain faithful to Him—Because you have

obeyed my command to persevere (you) will be citizens in the city of my God (Rev 3:12, NLT).

- c. In other words, Paul exhorted these people to live with the awareness of what is ahead. You belong to an unshakeable kingdom. When this kingdom comes to earth, the world will be transformed.

This awareness will sustain you in the challenges you are facing and will continue to face.

4. John the apostle was shown what is ahead. The Book of Revelation is the account of a vision he was given of the years leading up to Jesus' return and the resulting transformation in earth—the final shaking.

- a. In the vision, given about AD 95, John saw events in Heaven and on earth in the last few years preceding Jesus' second coming. Although John witnessed great destruction, his vision ended, not

with the world destroyed, but with it transformed. Rev 21:1

1. John used a specific Greek word for the new earth (*kainos*). It means new in quality or form as opposed to new in time. It is the same word that Peter used when he referred to the new heaven and new earth (II Pet 3:13). Note that in Rev 21:5 God Himself said: I make all things new (*kainos*), not I make all new things.

2. John referred to this present world as the first heaven and earth. First, in the Greek, is *protos* which means first in time or place. We see the root of our English term prototype in *protos*. A prototype is an original model on which something else is patterned (*Webster's Dictionary*).

3. John said that the first heaven and earth passed away. Peter used the same Greek word when he described earth's transformation (II Pet 3:10). It has the idea of passing from one condition to another. It never means cease to exist.

- b. John saw the unseen city of Jerusalem descend to earth, the invisible kingdom of God come to earth visibly. He witnessed this heavenly Jerusalem come out of the unseen realm when God arrived on the earth to live with His family forever. Rev 21:2-3; Rev 21:10

- D. Conclusion: For the last several decades, the emphasis in the American church has been on how to make this life the best it can be, with little or no reference to the life to come. This has left many ill prepared to deal with the times we are in. The emphasis in the New Testament is on the life to come. Consider these statements by Peter and Paul as we close this lesson.

1. Paul wrote that “this world in its present form is passing away” (I Cor 7:31, NIV). Jesus died to “deliver us from the present wicked age and world order” (Gal 1:4, Amp). Paul faced a martyr's death with the confidence that God “will preserve and bring [me] safe unto His heavenly kingdom (II Tim 4:18, Amp).

2. In the context of living holy lives, Peter wrote that we (Christians) “are sojourners, strangers and exiles in the world” (I Pet 2:11, Amp) and “you should conduct yourselves with true reverence throughout the time of your temporary residence [on the earth whether long or short]” (I Pet 1:17, Amp). He died a martyr's death anticipating, waiting in hope (looking for) the new heavens and new earth (II Pet 3:13).

- a. Remember in Matt 19 when Jesus told Peter and the others that they will get back all that they lost in service to him—along with eternal life. Jesus wasn't being religious. He was assuring them that in the life to come there will be no more loss.

- b. Peter, Paul, and the others understood that they belonged to an unshakeable kingdom with no more death, no more sorrow and mourning, no more grief or pain—for the old conditions and the former order of things have passed away (Rev 21:4, Amp). Lots more next week!