



Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Good Shepherd Church - March 4, 2012

Sermon Title: The Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken

Sermon Text: Hebrews 12.25-29

Related Texts: Psalm 136.1-9; Exodus 19.10-25
1 Corinthians 3.10-15; Psalm 146

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

What has been your experience with earthquakes? How have you experienced being "shaken" by life's experiences?

II. Introduction

Throughout the Letter to the Hebrews, the author has issued strong warnings against apostasy - turning away, or falling away faithfully following Jesus Christ. The basic premise is that if one turns away from God's only provision for salvation, for life in relationship with God, and for life in the eternal kingdom of God, they are forsaking the only true hope they have.

The immediate context for our passage this week is the call to run the race of faith with perseverance, with discipline, with the encouragement of others, and with an eye on the eternal "Mount Zion," that is, the new Jerusalem to come in which heaven and earth are fully interrelated, God is fully present in a new heaven-earth union, and we reign with Christ for eternity.

III. Study the Text – Read Through Hebrews 12.25-29

1) Read through the passage. What warning is issued in verses 25-27? Who is the one who "speaks" (see verse 24)? Compare this to the warnings found in the following:

a. Hebrews 2.1-4 A warning to not _____

b. Hebrews 3.7 - 4.13 A warning against _____ your _____

c. Hebrews 6.4-8 A warning against rejecting _____

d. Hebrews 10.26-31 A warning against rejecting _____

2) In verse 26 we find a reference back to the voice speaking on Mount Sinai (See Exodus 19.10-25).

a. What future event is indicated here by the phrase "I will shake not only the earth but the heavens" found in verse 27?

b. How complete will the "shaking" be according to verse 27? What is destroyed? What remains?

c. Compare this to 1 Corinthians 3.10-15. Here the imagery is a refining fire that

tests or refines the believer's works. What works will survive this divine refining process? What does this suggest to you about the things you are investing your life in?

- d. The divine shaking of Hebrews 12.25-27 applies to the entire cosmos. What will survive this shaking?

Note: One of the most important aspects or dimensions of God's Being is that God is a consuming God

3) Hebrews 12.28-29 offer both encouragement and an exhortation.

a. What is the encouragement that comes from trusting in God whose kingdom cannot be shaken - that is, whose kingdom will withstand the divine refining "shaking"?

b. What is the exhortation that comes in the context of having inherited God's unshaken kingdom?

c. Think a little about being thankful. How does thankfulness convey true worship of God - acceptable, reverent awe-filled worship? Read Psalm 136.1-9. How does thankfulness re-align a person with God (a creature with the Creator)? How does thankfulness give you a healthy perspective on life, on God, on the future?

d. Verse 29 seems to be a reiteration of the fact God is a "consuming fire." Do you tend to lose sight of the fact God is utterly holy, perfect, powerful, and hates evil? We don't have to be overwhelmed with fear and trembling (like at Mt. Sinai) for we know the mercy and grace of God. However, do you think we could lose sight of the holiness and otherness of God who will shake and purify and refine and consume all evil?

IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) In *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe* one of the Chronicles of Narnia written by C. S. Lewis, Lucy, a young girl who has experienced the mystical land of Narnia and has encountered the Christ-figure, Aslan the Lion, asks whether Aslan is a good Lion. The response is something like "Oh yes, he is good, but he is not a tame Lion." How does this reflect the message of this passage? Do you believe God is good? What do you think about the idea that God - and the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ - is not tame? Can you trust in God's goodness and still have a sense of awe in God's majesty and splendor and holiness and being the judge of all evil and injustice who will purge it all one day?
- 2) Psalm 146 is an expression of thankfulness and praise to God. Read through this Psalm as you prayer of thankfulness and praise. How does it help to align or re-align you (the created one) with God (your Creator)?
- 3) Offer prayers of thankfulness to God. For whom and for what are you thankful? For what things God has done in your life are you thankful? As you think about the present and future - and even about the things that may be uncertain about them - how can you give thanks to God?