

Hebrews 12:25-29 Our world falls down while God kingdom stands up

Intro: It seems irresponsible not to address the Coronavirus.

- This may be the last thing you want me to talk about. And, I understand.
 - This morning, the **U.S. Coronavirus** statistics are 311,656 and 8,454 deaths.
 - Global cases climb to **1.2 million**.
- What these numbers mean to you vary depending to how you interpret and apply them.
- You may put the Coronavirus in a category like any other national or world statistic where people die.
- You might be sick with the virus or know someone who is or someone who has died from it.
- This makes things very personal.

To assume these dynamics are not affecting you right now would also be irresponsible.

- Impersonal big dynamics impact our smaller ones.
- Christians tempted to doubt their spiritual conditions.
- Old temptations you assumed dead, resurface.
- Depression and despondency return.

It is important to recognize the fact that we *have never had real time data* like this in our society.

- Massive cause and effect like never before.
 - No need to start up a computer or find a TV to know things.
 - Just look at or call out to your mini-computer on your wrist or in your hand.
- There are several questions we probably all have.
 - **“Mask or no mask”** and which level of a “mask.”
 - Some of you, no doubt, are speaking back to me through livestream!
 - Opinions are flying.

The biggest questions are,

- **“How long with the pandemic be spreading and killing with high numbers?”**
- **“When will I return to work?”**
- **“Will our economy return to full swing?”**

Early this week, battle cruisers were sent down to patrol and protect the southern Florida and Caribbean Sea from the drug runners and the Cartel.

- This begs the question, “How vulnerable are we from enemies?”
- Warnings to enemies given by our President with military bases have been under siege in the Middle East.

The impact in **China, Italy** and our own **New York City** symbolize the extreme impact of the virus.

The answer to these questions is that we do not know the answer to these questions.

- But, this morning’s section of Scripture.
- Being right on schedule asks and answers a broader question.

[Question] “Why is God allowing our world to fall apart right now?”

[Answer] “We do not exactly know”

[Question] “What do we know?”

[Answer] “Jesus is making a new world and he wants you there”

[TRANS] Our text is a warning with hope

[Prop] Responding to a warning with hope

1. God speaks through cataclysmic events (vv. 25-26)

The first point to pay attention to is that **God is currently speaking.**

- **When** our fallen world appears to be breaking apart, this is when **God’s voice** becomes clear.
 - Volume turns up.
 - In this case, God warns these early church believers to “**See to it**” they not “**refuse**” God’s Word! (v. 25).

God is speaking to them.

- They knew their **Old Testaments**, they knew their history where the *first generation* children of God heard from God when, “**At that time his voice shook the earth**” (v. 26a).
- This refers to God given the **Law or Ten Commandments at Mount Sanai** when his thundering voice shook the earth.

- This is the **final warning of this great epistle** is for believers to listen and to not “**refuse**” **God’s grace** when offered.
 - Times were tough on believers in the first century.
 - Temptations to walk away were apparent.
- **True believers will not walk away.**
- **The warning is given to the fence-rider.**
- **Someone who has not made a full commitment to Christ. The ambivalent.**

[TRANS] The example of the **first generation Israelites is apropos.**

- **Sinai is when God spoke** but the **ultimate test of their faith was not there.**
 - Earlier, **verse 19** says, God’s “**...voice...made hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them**” (v. 19).
 - This was not their **ultimate sin**.
 - It foreshadowed their **ambivalence toward God.**

Over the **next four decades** these **Israelites would doubt, complain, and commit idolatry.**

[KEY] It was not their refusal in the moment that condemned them but their patterned refusal that ultimately condemned them.

- “**...they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth”** (v. 25).

1 Corinthians 10 tells the story of their wilderness failure.

ESV **1 Corinthians 10:1-12** For I want you to know, brothers,¹ that our fathers were all under ^athe cloud, and all ^bpassed through the sea,

² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

³ and ^aall ate the same ^bspiritual food,

⁴ and ^aall drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for ^athey were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as ^athey did.

⁷ ^aDo not be idolaters ^bas some of them were; as it is written, ^c“The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.”

⁸ ^aWe must not indulge in sexual immorality ^bas some of them did, and ^ctwenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

⁹ We must not put Christ¹ to the test, ^aas some of them did and ^bwere destroyed by serpents,

¹⁰ nor grumble, ^aas some of them did and ^bwere destroyed by ^cthe Destroyer.

¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but ^athey were written down for our instruction, ^bon whom the end of the ages has come.

¹² Therefore ^alet anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (1Co 10:1-12 ESV)

[Question] **Their primary sin? The sin of self-confidence!**

- **Idolatry (v. 7); sexual immorality (v. 8); testing God (v. 9); and complaining (v. 10). Barely out of Egypt and committed idolatry, (cf. Ex. 32).**
 - **3,000 executed** for instigating an orgy at Sinai (**Ex. 32:35**).
 - **Twenty-three thousand** fell referring to **3,000 killed by Levites (Ex. 32:28)** and **20,000 dying of a plague (Ex. 32:35)**.
 - **Numbers 21:6 complaining against God**, the protector and provider of the spiritual Rock who is Christ, **brought fiery serpents**.
 - And, the **“Destroyer”** the angel who opened the earth that swallowed the tribe of **Korah into the earth (cf. Numbers 16:28-35)**.
- **1 Corinthians 12:12** highlights the **extreme danger and sin of “self-confidence.”**
 - **Or, “over-confidence.”**
 - **Given tremendous freedom.**
 - **Miraculously delivered and miraculously cared for being fed with manna and water from the Rock.**
- From the initial exodus, only **Joshua and Caleb would enter the Promised Land.**
- Everyone else died!
- Even **Moses and Aaron disqualified** themselves and did not make it in.

[KEY] Moses and Aaron were believers but I suspect all the others who were **“laid low” (cf. v. 5)** in the wilderness **were not** believers.

[TRANS] Verse 25 works its argument from the lesser to the greater. **“...much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven” (v. 25b).**

- The **earlier verses describe heaven**, what we have inherited.
- **God speaks from heaven directly to our hearts.**
 - As demonstrative as the physical warnings were to the wilderness children, God speaking to our hearts from heaven is far greater!
 - We have the complete revelation and story.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 10:29** How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one ^awho has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned ^bthe blood of the covenant ^cby which he was sanctified, and has ^doutraged the Spirit of grace?

³⁰ For we know him who said, ^{ab}"Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, ^b"The Lord will judge his people."

³¹ ^aIt is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:29-31 ESV)

Verse 26 compares God's voice through shaking Sinai verses the **future universal shaking!**

- Interestingly he quotes **Haggai 2:6**.
- **This future shaking on this scale is not new data!**

Haggai brings us to the time when Israel was back from exile were commissioned under king Zerubbabel to the **rebuild the temple**.

- **Lacking motivation** God through **Haggai** says, **"Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens"** (v. 26).
 - **Not only God's promise to remove kingdoms such as Persia and Greece (cf. Dan. 7).**
 - Also, **future cataclysm predicted in Revelation 6-19** when **the sun becomes black, moon like blood, and stars fall to the earth.**
- The **sky split apart like a scroll** and **every island moved out place**.
- When **all nations are subjected** to **Christ!**

^{ESV} **Revelation 6:13** and ^athe stars of the sky fell to the earth ^bas the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. (Rev 6:13 ESV)

God shook, **"...not only the earth"** but promises for the future, **"I will...also the heavens"** (v. 26b).

- It is important to include **"the heavens"** when we consider what God will shake!

The "heavens" speaks of the one hundred thousand million galaxies – each containing at least that many stars-each galaxy one hundred light-years across. With a word from God all will shake out of existence! [Hughes]
- Comparing this to **God shaking Sinai** really **is no comparison**.
- **To refuse this God means there will be no escape.**

[Point] Whether God speaks through a **famine, tsunami, the wind of a hurricane, or a lethal pandemic**, God speaks **a warning of what is coming**. But not without **HOPE**.

- ***He is in charge.***
 - **No, God does not cause sin.**
 - **God did not cause our world to be fallen, sin cursed, unpredictable, filled with wars, and fragile.**
 - **Nevertheless, he is sovereign over it all.**

[TRANS] This **second point builds** on the first.

2. God clarifies the difference between two distinct worlds (vv. 27)

The author, an **expositor** of the Old Testament, **exposits and applies** Haggai 2:6.

- What is going to happen, ***“Yet once more...”***
 - **Universal shaking!** He goes on to explain exactly what will happen.
 - This ***“indicates the removal of things that are shaken – that is things that have been made” (v. 27b).***
- **So, all of creation because God is the Creator.**

[TRANS] Here I want to zero in on ***why***.

[Note] ***“the removal of things that are shaken”*** is when **God destroys everything he made with fire. Like the flood, God has set the world under judgement.**

[KEY] This is prophesied in **2 Peter 3:1-12.**

[Note] The word ***“shook” (v. 26); “shake” (v. 26); “shaken” (vv. 27, 28)*** is ***picture language***.

- What happens when **a tree with many dead leaves** and **branches are blown by a high wind.**
- Or, when a **dog shakes itself to fling off the water from its fur.**

ESV **Luke 3:16-17** ^aJohn answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but ^bhe who is mightier than I is coming, ^cthe strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you ^dwith the Holy Spirit and with ^efire.

¹⁷ His ^awinnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to ^bgather the wheat into his barn, ^cbut the chaff he will burn with ^dunquenchable fire." (Luk 3:16-17 ESV)

ESV **Psalm 1:1-6** Blessed is the man¹ who ^awalks not in ^bthe counsel of the wicked, nor stands in ^cthe way of sinners, nor ^dsits in ^ethe seat of ^fscoffers;

² but his ^adelight is in the law¹ of the LORD, and on his ^blaw he meditates day and night.

³ He is like ^aa tree planted by ^bstreams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its ^cleaf does not wither. ^dIn all that he does, he prospers.

⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like ^achaff that the wind drives away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked ^awill not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in ^bthe congregation of the righteous;

⁶ for the LORD ^aknows ^bthe way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (Psa 1:1-6 ESV)

[Question] “Who or what survives the shaking? [Answer] Whatever cannot be “shaken.”

- These are **believers**.
- The ones who are **“receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (v. 28a)**.
- At the **Great White Throne Judgment** there is a **picture of Creation being wiped clean**.

ESV **Revelation 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence ^aearth and sky fled away, and ^bno place was found for them. (Rev 20:11 ESV)

- **Time stops. What is left is you and the Lord.**
- **You are an eternal being who’s soul lives in heaven or hell forever.**

Then comes the New Heavens and New Earth.

ESV **Revelation 21:1-4** Then I saw ^aa new heaven and a new earth, for ^bthe first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

² And I saw ^athe holy city, ^bnew Jerusalem, ^ccoming down out of heaven from God, ^dprepared ^eas a bride adorned for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, ^athe dwelling place¹ of God is with man. He will ^bdwell with them, and they will be his people,² and God himself will be with them as their God.³

⁴ ^aHe will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and ^bdeath shall be no more, ^cneither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev 21:1-4 ESV)

[Point] This is the **kingdom to come**.

- No more sickness and no more death!

[KEY] This was what the **ministry of Jesus** pictured while he walked this earth!

- Why did **Jesus bring healing**?
- Like the **Coronavirus** there was **not antibiotic** that would **combat diseases in the times of Jesus**.
 - This meant **Jesus was the solution**.
 - **Believers with disease truly will be healed in this life or the life to come**.

[TRANS] Why not “refuse him who is speaking?” (cf. v. 25).

A new world is coming! Clarity draws a line between two kingdoms and God’s kingdom is better!

3. God promises complete stability for you in heaven (vv. 28-29)

Verse 28 offers the **only response “for receiving”** God’s kingdom. **Gratitude!**

- When **everything melts away, you will be left standing there.**
- The only thing left is “...**offering to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe**” (v. 28).

You can cross-reference **Romans 12:1-2**.

ESV **Romans 12:1-2** ^aI appeal to you therefore, brothers,¹ by the mercies of God, ^bto present your bodies ^cas a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.²

² ^aDo not be conformed to this world,¹ but be transformed by ^bthe renewal of your mind, that by testing you may ^cdiscern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.² (Rom 12:1-2 ESV)

[Question] “Are you presently conformed to this world?”

- **If you are conformed then you are not transformed.**
- **If you are not transformed, then you are not yet fit for heaven.**
- **Are you worshipping shakable possessions? Or, is your heart focused on God?**

[TRANS] When you stand before God, you stand before **“a consuming fire”, the same God of the Old Testament.**

ESV **Deuteronomy 4:24** For ^athe LORD your God is a consuming fire, ^ba jealous God.
(Deu 4:24 ESV)

[Key] Moses warned the **2nd generation** before entering the **Promised Land** to **not to fall prey to over confidence!**

- **Self-confidence!**
- **Like the 1st generation, Moses bemoaning his own fate not entering either!**

ESV **Deuteronomy 4:22** For I must die in this land; ^aI must not go over the Jordan. But you shall go over and take possession of ^bthat good land. (Deu 4:22 ESV)

[Conclusion] The author of **Hebrews Warns but with HOPE!**

He warns that God is giving you the one way to heaven through Christ.

Over confidence means, you and your sin will be consumed forever in Hell.

Contra to this, by humbling yourself to Christ, “standing in reverence and awe” (v. 28)

Before the holiness of God

One who is an all consuming fire to all sin,

Means you have the *asbestos righteousness* of Christ!

[Question] “Which kingdom is yours?”

- Two worlds. One world is vulnerable, volatile, dangerous, and temporary.
- The other world is perfect, predictable, safe, and eternal.
- Our world is being shaken but this is but a taste of the future judgment for sin.
- However, a new world is coming!