

Here are some devotional thoughts on Hebrews 12 that you might consider in your family if you worship at home March 15th.

HEBREWS -12: 18-29

Shaken

18 For you have not come to a *mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. 20 For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."

21 And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR (DEUT 9:19) and trembling."

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the festive assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood of Abel*

25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."

27 This *expression*, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

What got my attention in v. 25-29 is this idea of the shaking of the earth and also the heaven.

I think it is fair to say that in the past week our "world" has been shaken. It's been going on for a couple of weeks, but this past week was so huge. When something happens that suspends the NBA season, shuts down Broadway, Back Alley Theatre, airlines, cruise lines, conference basketball tournaments, and even March Madness, then things are being shaken.

How do we as believers respond individually and corporately? V. 28-29

HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?? V. 28

28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

We should live with the recognition that God's people have always had:

We are to express gratitude

We are finite creatures; we are a vapor; our days are numbered. Despite what we like to think, we are not in control.

God is Infinite, He does not change, He is our Creator and King. Despite what we like to think, HE IS IN CONTROL.

We are to live as God's people have always been called to live- with gratitude, serving Him with reverence and awe of God, not in awe of a virus.

The more I pondered this passage in light of the past couple of weeks, the more it seems as if it were written for us, to us, for this moment in time.

One set of insights comes from C.S. Lewis, who faced different forms of being shaken during his life – WWI, death of a spouse, WWII; he died on Nov 22, 1963, the day the world was shaken by the assassination of JFK.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cs-lewis-coronavirus/>

C. S. Lewis's words—written 72 years ago—ring with some relevance for us. Just replace “atomic bomb” with “coronavirus.” **Present Concerns: On Living in an Atomic Age**

In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb.

“How are we to live in an atomic age?”

I am tempted to reply:

“Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.”

He is telling us that we should not begin by focusing on our situation as if it were unique. There is always uncertainty for us in this world. The Fall is real and its impact was on us, as those made in the image of God, and on creation itself.

Rom 8

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Since, and because of, the Fall in Genesis 3 we have all been living under a death sentence. We're not doomed because of Coronavirus, but because of sin and our willing participation in it.

There is GOOD NEWS in the midst of the sad headlines. THANKS BE TO God who has given us a mediator.

The Gospel is the incredible news that even though we were enemies of God, alienated by our sin and deserving eternal punishment, He reached out to us by sending His Son to take our punishment by dying in our place on the cross. Now through faith in Jesus we've been reconciled to God, adopted into His family, and given a fresh start and the gift of enjoying Him forever.

In his own way, that is what the AOH has been telling us for 12 chapters.

Lewis goes on to say this, (think Coronavirus or other threat instead of 'bomb'...)

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.

In Christ we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Rejoice in it and show gratitude.

We have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the festive assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,

Don't let an abundance of fear cause us to forget that we have been redeemed by Christ. Our salvation doesn't mean that we won't get the Coronavirus, but it does mean that if we get it, it won't change a single eternal reality or spiritual blessing that is ours in Christ.

Satan, and the spirit of the age, want to hold us in bondage through the fear of death.

Hebrews 2 – Jesus took on flesh and blood so that through death He might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. FRIENDS, let's not live in fear. Let's not be foolish either. We should practice good habits of health, and wear our seat belts, and helmets when riding a bike, etc, but we don't have to be subject to fear all our lives.

Prior to Coronavirus did any of you think you would live forever? Did any of us think that the world would exist forever?

Don't be fooled into thinking that death is the worst thing that we can face. Heed the voice of Jesus...

Matthew 10:28

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Catching or even dying from Coronavirus or cancer or an accident or other illness is NOT the great tragedy. The real tragedy is in v. 26 – “to refuse Him who is speaking.”

The eternal tragedy is to live in unbelief, especially when you are surrounded by the message of the Gospel.

The call of Hebrews is to not lose sight of Christ in the good times or in the times when we are shaken.

Christ never promises that we will not get sick from COVID-19 or some other illness, now or in the future. But he surely does promise to be a fortress that stands against the uncertainty of this world, a place to reside and seek rest in spite of the restless siege of sin. – Caleb Keith

Here's a warning from this chapter: Don't be lulled into thinking that there are two God's or two ways of salvation represented by the two mountains. The God is the same and salvation by faith in the God of grace is the same.

Some mistakenly believe that the God of Sinai is all mean and judgmental while the God of Mt. Zion is sugar and spice and everything nice and would never judge anyone or exhibit wrath.

Dr. Rayburn makes a great point that if you take that view then you lessen the punch of what the AOH is saying. He is speaking to a New Covenant audience and is warning them that the God of Mt. Zion is holy and is a consuming fire. Unbelief in the day of Sinai and unbelief in the day of Mt. Zion have the same horrific consequence. Nothing in the NT supports the idea that the God of Mt. Zion will not display his just wrath against unbelief.

v. 27-28 give yourself to, and build your life on, what can't be shaken

God will shake and take away wants needs to be taken away. It sounds scary, but don't we want that?

The cosmic shakedown will leave what will remain –EX build on rock, not sand.

This is about idolatry, allegiance, where we look to find meaning and purpose in our lives – job, money, health, a person or possession. They don't really give life, but drain us and are shaky structures.

How do we know if we're building on those things?

Check your response when they are shaken, taken away, or barely in your grasp? Do you compromise to keep them or get them?

God is coming to bring a cosmic shakedown. It is how He gives us life by taking away the things that weigh us down.

EX Eustace in

<http://kezzie-kez.blogspot.com/2007/04/eustace-dragon-meets-aslan.html>

<https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/narnia-sanctification-and-the-hardest-prayer>

Eustace was a mean selfish boy who found a treasure that belonged to a dragon. He fell asleep on top of it and woke up as a dragon. Thus the treasure was useless to him. Then Aslan shows up and leads him to water where Eustace tries to scrape off the dragon scales, but he can't. Finally Aslan tells him that he must make a deeper cut. This is how Eustace describes the process...

I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now... The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt...Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off- just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times, only they hadn't hurt- and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobby-looking than the others had been... Then he caught hold of me...and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment...Then I saw...I'd been turned into a boy again.

When things start shaking, where do we turn??

In times such as these it is important for us to remember and proclaim that there is Someone who is a solid rock on which we can stand. We need to proclaim that there is hope, that though we are shaken in this life, this life is not all there is.

We are called to a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Whether it's Coronavirus or "natural disasters" or any other form of shaking, our only true refuge and fortress is in the God of Mt. Sinai, the God of Mt. Zion, who is the God of a THIRD MOUNTAIN, called Calvary.

In v. 24 there is a reference to Abel's blood that cries out from the ground? Why Abel?

Remember Genesis 4 where Able and his brother Cain offer sacrifices and Abel's sacrifice by faith is accepted, but not Cain's. Cain is, angry, and bitter so he kills Abel, whose blood cries for justice.

Hebrews opens up the truth of a second Abel, one whose sacrifice is perfect and righteous, but his blood cries out for mercy for those who believe in Him. His blood brings mercy for those whose sin was the reason he went to the cross. His blood brings grace to those who were his enemies but are now brought near by the cross.

Jesus went up that hill to be shaken so that we don't have to be. THIS IS GOOD NEWS.

Mt. Zion is a festive assembly – it's a party and celebration because we have a better mediator and a better sacrifice who brings an eternal kingdom that can't be shaken.

Let us rest our hearts in the unfailing grace and kingdom of God.