

Assurance: The Unshakeable Kingdom of Glory

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Heb 12:18-29

When the great lion falls, the hyenas rejoice. Foolishly they celebrate their own extinction.

Our nation is not beyond falling to fools. Those who celebrate its downfall are ignorant of the deeper issues which thoughtful people ponder. The great lion above is not a reference to Donald Trump, although I think he is often falsely vilified. No. The great lion is our Republic. When the Republic falls, the people will learn too late they no longer have no voice. Wolves will control the sheep.

Our nation is full of people who no longer think deeply. We refuse to read hard books. We are a generation of sound bites, headline blurbs, and tweets. We want videos for substance, feelings for reality, sugar for meat. We are easily led by media tyrants who tell us how we are to think. In terms of the Christian faith, most modern Christians think too little of the deeper issues of life. They are too often led by emotional, self-directed feelings than by the truths of God's Word or by the Holy Spirit. As one minister I listened to this week said, when it comes to spiritual warfare, "The Holy Spirit cannot call up Scriptures you haven't taken the time to memorize." Sound bite thinking and feel good sermons have left us weak and vulnerable to the enemy.

Of the issues for Basic Christianity, we have looked at conversion, the need for personal growth, including the need for study. Last week I spoke on the assurance we have of salvation by grace. Today, I want to take us to another concept of assurance. In Christ, we have assurance that we belong to a kingdom which cannot be shaken. The world around us may crumble and fall. We may lose all we possess and even our lives. Yet, one thing we will never lose is our citizenship in the Kingdom of God which will reign forever.

Hebrews 12:18-29 NIVO

¹⁸ You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned."

²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

²⁷ The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire."

1. You belong to a Kingdom that is greater than earth-bound religion.

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Hebrews was written to Christian Jews who were being pressured to return to the religion of the Law. Jewish people focused everything on the Law. It had the commands, the temple worship, the customs and traditions that gave them their identity as God's people. Yet, the Law as it was practiced was an earth-bound religion.

When God spoke at Sinai it was frightening. Sinai, likely in my thinking, was associated with volcanic nature – fire, smoke, thunder, earthquakes, lightening, dark clouds, harsh sounds – at least on the human sphere. Yet, more than that, God spoke out of that flame and fire. God spoke His voice. He spoke His will. He spoke His commands. The people were full of fear of God's voice and the flame and smoke and thunder. Yet, their fear was not enough to keep them in obedience, as many perished in the desert. Their earthly religion was not able to hold their hearts to God.

The people of Israel kept turning away from God through the many years that followed. They turned away until finally God swept them away in exile. When they finally returned, they formed a strict adherence to the code of the Law, yet it had now become merely an earth-bound religion. They served religion more than they revered God. The code now became tradition, a religion that focused on what we do rather than heaven's joy above.

In Christ Jesus, you have been bought by a divine price paid for sin. You are no longer earth-bound in your existence. You belong not to a Jerusalem here and now nor a temple on earth. You belong to the heaven itself. Heaven is God's throne, and you belong to Him. You belong to the new heavens and the new earth, which will come when God removes this old sin-stained world.

It does not matter how crazy our world gets, you belong to something that will outshine the sun. It does not matter if you lose loved ones, or even life itself, you belong to God who holds eternity in His hands. You belong to him, not because of religion. You belong to Him because of the blood of Jesus!

2. You belong to the eternal-church made perfect by the blood of Christ.

²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Those who are in Christ by faith in His blood atonement are enrolled in the eternal church above. We belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. More than that, we belong to millions of angels who gather with God's people above and rejoice in this salvation. We belong to the eternal-church because our names are written in heaven because we have placed our faith in the blood of Jesus for salvation.

We have come to the judge of all souls...

It may seem strange that I say you should rejoice to belong to the Judge! Yet, in fact you should. When you belong to the Judge who will have the final judgment of all souls, angels, and powers, then it means you have passed the test. The Judge stands at a very narrow gate, and only whom He approves gets through. Inside is the kingdom, life eternal, joy, people, the future, all that is coming... outside is darkness, gloom, flame and hell forever. The Judge stands at the gate. The Scripture says you have come to the Judge and He has declared you to be **perfect!**

You have come to the Judge already! Notice how it is worded. You do not have to wait until the end of the age to know how this will proceed. You already know. You have already come to Him because you have come to His Son, Jesus. Jesus and the Father are one. When you come to faith in Jesus, you accepted the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from sin. It is the blood of Jesus that makes you perfect. So, in Christ, you have already come to the Judge. He has declared you to belong to Him.

The blood of Jesus has made you perfect before God the Judge. You have already passed through the gate. You are part of the people of God above as the eternal church of the Lord.

You belong to the New Covenant, not the old covenant. The old covenant of the Law depended on external rules and regulations that could never make you perfect before God. The blood of Abel represents the human sacrificial system, that can only give human effort. Jesus mediates the New Covenant as God's act of cleansing of the soul. His death is declared to be a death, once for all time.

By faith in Jesus' blood atonement, you have already passed the test for eternity. There is nothing you can add to make you more acceptable to God.

You belong to the place of God's joyful assembly. Joy! Did you know that joy is one of the keynotes of heaven? New things bring excitement for a while, but not necessarily joy. Joy is something more relational and personal. Heaven is marked by joy.

Lori and I watched a movie recently called The Fishermen's Friends. It is a movie about the discovery of a fishermen singing group who sang sea chanties. The man who discovered them was a music scout. He found himself torn between the fast-paced life of the city and the joy he found with a young woman and a slow paced life in a fishing village. He ended up selling his place in the city and buying a place in the fishing village, because he wanted joy.

This world offers us many things that attract us to our busy, consuming lifestyles. Yet, heaven promises something better. It promises us joy in the presence of God with God's people.

3. You belong to the unshakable kingdom of God in Jesus Christ.

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

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We are cautioned to pay attention to those who preach to our souls. The context to this warning is a warning against the Jewish Christians that they must not abandon the faith to please their earthly Jewish friends. If Moses' words came with punishment, how much more will it be for those who refuse to listen to the words of those who proclaim the eternal kingdom?

This final statement reminds us that no matter how attractive the world is or how bitter it becomes, God will shake all of this with a final judgment. He will destroy all of this earth, its material wealth, power, accomplishments and human glory. He will remove all of the power brokers, the wealth of the nations who stand against Him. Moreover, God will sit on His throne and separate souls at the end of the age.

Are you prepared to survive the shaking of the kingdoms?

In California people are always trying to make houses and rooms that can survive earthquakes. They have so many of them out there, they have a lot of shaking happening. I saw a design concept for a bed that would survive a major earthquake in a collapsed building. The idea is that the bed would descend into a vault. Beneath the bed would be supplies like food and water, a hand radio. As the bed descends, it has a steel roof that comes and covers it to prevent anything from crushing the vault. So, I guess the idea is that after your building collapses, you sleep comfortably until someone comes and digs you out of your bed vault. I'd rather be outside!

God is going to shake things. He is going to shake everything and see what remains.

Before God makes everything new, Revelation 21:5, will come the destruction of all things.

2 Peter 3:10 NIVO

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

If we disregard the blood offering of God to make us holy so we can enter this eternal life, and if we disregard the warnings against sin, we are in danger of missing the unshakeable kingdom of God. All other kingdoms will be shaken, but God's will remain, unshaken and eternal.

If you are in Christ, you belong to the unshakeable kingdom of glory.