

Shaking the earth

dkm April 2020

During family prayer my wife referred to the corona virus pandemic as the Lord shaking the earth. I was thinking the same thing, but she gets to pray first! I turned to Hebrews 12 and read: 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth but also heaven', which is a quote from Haggai 2:6. Why does the Lord need to shake the earth? Because, as the previous verse indicates, people refuse to listen to Him who speaks from heaven (Heb 12:25). Moses went to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, with a message from God. Did he listen? No. And what did God do? He sent plagues upon the land of Egypt. As the pandemic began in China, the government there decreed that 'religious leaders and organisations display complete devotion to the Chinese Communist Party'.

Back in the days of Noah the people refused to listen to God and he sent the flood that covered the whole earth- but saved Noah and his family through the flood. The Lord promised to never again flood the whole earth -so we do not fear rising sea levels! But Jesus does say that this world will come to an end when he returns from heaven. We are living in the Last Days, in which he says there will be signs such as famine and pestilence or disease (Luke 21:11). When God gives signs it is for the purpose that we might listen and pay heed, that we might confess our sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Jesus you will be without an 'Ark' when the end comes.

I am reminded of what C.S. Lewis said about pain and suffering: **"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."** (*The Problem of Pain*, ch6). Has the Lord got your ear as he shakes our nation, and the world, with this tiny virus? Or are you still intent on controlling everything in your life? Who do you think is in control of the 'ship' that is our world- man or God?

If you believe that God is sovereign and all-powerful you will not be filled with fear and panic, like so many at this time. Jesus said, 'In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16:33); he was not specifically referring to corona

virus but he knew about it. Nothing ever happens outside the will and purposes of almighty God. This virus came because of the wickedness of men, yet in the purpose of God. God is able to bring it to an end. He is able to protect you and your family. Did not Jesus stop the storm, and heal many lepers and sick people?

This is a time to remember the promises of God. If you are confined within your home why don't you take your Bible down from the shelf and read what God has to say. If you are listening to the TV news you will be getting more and more confused and worried. If you are watching movies you will only be distracted for a time. Reading your Bible will bring peace to your heart, and peace to your family. Please remember the children getting caught up in the fear and panic that is gripping our cities and our world.

'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28). This promise is still here in the Bible! Has any good come out of this pandemic? I read that the red light district in an Indian city has been shut down and the girls caught up in this evil sent back to their homes. The note said that people who disregarded venereal diseases are filled with fear because of this virus!

Of course, the greatest blessing is when men and women turn from sin and believe in Jesus. Is this how you have responded? There is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. As a child of God you will not fear this virus or anything in this world because nothing in all creation 'is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 8:39). As a child of God you will sing: 'My feet will stand with confidence upon a level place, and in the people's gathering I'll praise the God of grace' (Psalm 26:12).

While living in India we faced diseases like cholera, TB, typhoid, rabies, and even leprosy, as well as communal riots and curfews. I carried a booklet called, 'Words of Comfort' in my top pocket and often read the verse set down for day 22; 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in Thee' (Isaiah 26:3).