

## **COVID: What on Earth is Going On?**

**Tony Evans**

**I want to state for you a very important biblical principle. If you really want understand what on earth is going on, everything visible and physical is preceded by something invisible and spiritual. So, if you want to deal with a physical, visible problem, you must identify the invisible spiritual invisible cause. Let me say it another way. If what you see is all you see, you do not see all there is to be seen. Behind every physical reality is a spiritual reality. But if you don't get to that, I mean, look at the pandemic, people having physical problems about something they cannot see. Until they address what they cannot see, they won't be able to fix what they really do see and feel going on in their lives and their bodies, and being transferred to the human race.**

And so, in Hebrews chapter 12, we read these words to help us answer the question, what on Earth is going on? Beginning in verse 25, "See to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking, for if those did not escape when they refused when he warned them on earth, much less how will we escape when we turn away from the one who warns us from heaven? 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 heavens.' This expression yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things, so that those things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we've receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a

When there is a cloudy, threatening day, the weatherman gets a lot of attention. Because what we want to know is what the weatherman sees. Given what the atmosphere looks like, what does he see that we need to know about? Is it going to rain? Do I need an umbrella? Do I need a raincoat? Is it going to be cold? We shift how we operate based on what the weatherman has to say. God is talking. And one of the ways God speaks is through allowing circumstances into our lives and into our world that are not pleasant. He allows those circumstances to get our undivided attention. It's a wake-up call. It's sort of like your alarm clock going off. When your alarm clock goes off and wakes you up, it brings you out of one reality of slumber and sleep into a new reality of alertness. The further you remove God from a life of family and a culture, the more chaotic things will become.

And so, oftentimes in the Bible and in the world, God will shake things. What does the Bible mean by shaking? Shaking means when God allows disruption in the normal order of things. Life is going along like you prefer it, like you want it, like you desire it, like you love it. And all of a sudden, there is an interruption in the affairs of normalcy. That's what God does all through the Bible, he would shake things up when he wanted to get our undivided attention. The text that we read says, "Don't turn away from him who is speaking". And you know he is speaking because you've been shaken, your world has been disrupted.

[This pandemic has disrupted our lives](#), our work, our play, our sports, our travel, our fun. It has disrupted our gatherings. It has turned what was normal and made it abnormal. In fact, it's made it in some sectors very, very dangerous. But this is a grand opportunity to return to the God who allowed the shaking to occur. Because the text says when God allows the shaking, it is because he's trying to get our undivided attention. Which means we have wandered from him, we have marginalized him. We had gotten idols, which is any noun, any person, place, thing, or thought that you look to as your source. We've gotten something to replace him.

**God is not just interested in us singing a song, "God Bless America". He's not interested in only a pledge of allegiance to a nation. He's interested in a pledge of allegiance to himself. And when he detects that he is being marginalized and we're more interested in blessing America or blessing something else rather than blessing him, he will allow us a disruption. But the reason he**

**allows this disruption is because he wants to create a new opportunity for his favor. That's why I love Lamentations chapter 3, verses 31 to 33, which says God will allow grief so that we might return to him. So, he allows a bad day so that we can desire the sunshine again. And he has the sunshine ready to break forth. This is sort of like a mother in labor. That's a painful situation. The labor part is not desirable.**

Now, I don't know that by experience, but that's what I'm told. Now, the labor period is not what you would prefer. But when you know what's coming from the labor, when you know that bursting out of this is new life and new opportunity and new growth, then all of a sudden the labor is good news in a bad situation. We got a bad situation. And I am very grateful for the doctors, and I'm very grateful for the nurses, I'm very grateful for the hospitals and the medicine and all the effort being put forth to reduce and ultimately eradicate this pandemic. But if we would allow God, who is speaking, who is shaking up our normalcy, to become frontpage news again.

I mean, look at what has happened. This situation has got folk talking who weren't talking to each other. I mean, we got folk in Washington trying to agree on stuff because they have been forced to because there is something bigger than them taking place that affects us all. You've got people wanting to help other people that they didn't think of before because they see the crisis. You've got people taking care about cleanliness, about responsibility, because we have been forced into it. God is forcing us to not just say we're one nation under God, but to start acting like we're one nation under God. And the reason he's doing this according to verse 25 is that if you belong to God and you know Jesus Christ, you're part of an unshakable kingdom.

faith alone in Christ alone. And that guarantees it for everyone who puts faith alone in the cross of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. Yes, I've got my eternal destiny secure, but let me tell you why else I love being a Christian. Because I belong to another realm, which he calls another kingdom, another rule of God which is not subject to the circumstances on earth. He says we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken even when things are being shaken.

You know, when there's an earthquake, things tied to the ground shake. But if you're in an airplane, you're not going to shake with the ground 'cause you're not attached. What God wants to do is dislodge us from dependency on this life to him. And if he can dislodge us to him, then we're able to live this life in the way it ought to be lived. This is not chance, this is not luck. This is not just another virus, it's too big for that. It's too awesome for that. It's too unstoppable for that. This is God saying, not making the disease, but not stopping not stopping it from doing what it's doing yet because he wants a focus on him, a return to him, part of this unshakable kingdom. And I love the way he bring this home. He says, "For our God is a consuming fire".

**What does a consuming fire? Well, it burns stuff up, right? But why? Well, this is coming from the Old Testament, when they would take the sacrifices and put it on the altar. That was bad news for the lamb that was being slain or the goat that was being slain. That wasn't good news. But the purpose of it was powerful because that sacrifice meant sin was being dealt with, forgiveness was being granted, and eternal life was being experienced. Or life then is being offered to the people because it was being consumed.**

Let me bring it up to contemporary discussion. When you put on a wrinkled shirt, or you wear a wrinkled blouse, ladies, that's not what you want. So, what you gonna do? You're going to put on it some consuming heat. That's called an iron on an iron board. You take that iron, you get it hot. You put that shirt, those pants, that blouse, and you put it down there, and you begin to iron it. Why? Because you want the wrinkles consumed by the heat. If the shirt could talk, it would probably say, "Leave me alone. It is too hot up in here up in here, up in here, up in here. You smoking me to death". The shirt would complain. However, the reason why you put consuming fire on the shirt is because

you want to wear it and look good in it. So, you're not trying to hurt the shirt, but you need the fire on the shirt for the shirt to be the shirt worth you wearing.

God wants to put you and me on, but not with wrinkles. And so, what he does is he lets the fire hit our lives, our circumstances, the Bible calls them trials, until he irons out the wrinkles. Now, how long do you put an iron on a shirt? Till you get the wrinkles out. How long do we have to deal with all this stuff we dealing with? Until God can get the wrinkles out of America, and out of the culture, and out of the world, and out of our lives, and out of our families, and out of our circumstances. He wants to get the wrinkles out. And he'll keep the heat on no matter how many experts you get, no matter how technically advanced you are. He knows how to bring the heat in order to get the attention.

So, this trial that we are going through as individuals and as a nation has created an opportunity for you to become part of this unshakable kingdom that is no longer tied, tethered, and limited to what earth has to offer. I can't guarantee that you won't feel some of the pangs of this trial that we're going through. What I am saying is that you won't be controlled by it or owned by it if you're part of this unshakable kingdom. That's why I love what he says. He says, as I wind down here in verse 25, "Since we are a part", assuming you are a part, "of this unshakable kingdom, you are to give thanks and you are to serve him".

**Oh, wait a minute, and he's talking about when things are shaking. Did you know you can give thanks right now? You don't give thanks for the problem, you give thanks in it. God, I want to thank you right now how you're gonna use this mess to create my miracle, how you're gonna use this trial to give me my triumph. And God, I am gonna praise you for how you're gonna use this crisis to bring America together, bring it back to God 'cause it's wandered far away from him, and do it in such a way that you get the glory that you deserve and not just a prayer meeting in an emergency, when we forget you when the emergency is over. The last thing he says is that, "What I want you to do is I want you to serve".**

Hey, we're being told to wash our hands, and to wash our hands a lot. Well, as you wash your hands, I want you to wash somebody else's feet. I want you to go and serve your neighbor. Serve other members of your family. This is not a time for fighting and arguing. This is a time to serve those who desperately need your help, the homeless and the helpless. This is the time to reach out and not be selfish with your goods and have to get it all for you when some can be left for someone else. This is the time when we can be kind to one another in our nation. And this is a time when we can glorify our great God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, in closing, if you are a Christian, if you're part of this unshakable kingdom, I want you to give thanks that this pandemic does not own you 'cause God owns you. And that's why I love Matthew 6:33, which clearly says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his standard, his righteousness, and all the rest will be added to you". And in that same passage, he says, "And when you put my kingdom first, I got your back and I have your worry". Your worry will dumb down when your kingdom commitment rises up.

So, don't be a casual Christian, this is a time for full-time Christians, not part-time saints. This is a time for you to be all in with the Lord. If you're here today this morning and you're listening and you're not a Christian, you haven't come to faith alone in Christ alone, don't go another day without securing your eternal destiny and having divine help in time. And the way you do that is simply acknowledging that you need a Savior because you're a sinner, acknowledging that you can't save yourself. Because if you could save yourself, you wouldn't need a Savior.

**So, acknowledging you are a sinner, that you need a Savior. And going to Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as your substitute, who rose from the dead, and who offers you the free gift of salvation if you would simply receive him as your personal substitute. You do that right now**

**and you become part of the kingdom that cannot be shaken. You surrender and now learn to live under him in a great church nearby you, and then you will grow in your faith and not be shaken by what's shaking everybody else. Hey, there's good news in a bad situation. In fact, there's great news in a bad situation. Become part of the kingdom that cannot be shaken. This pandemic, as bad as it is, is subject to a greater king, who is in charge of a greater kingdom.**

**Male:** You talked about serving and praying in a hardship. Why does serving and being focused outward help me with my problem?

**Tony:** Because of Luke 6:38, which says, "Give and it will be given back to you". So, whatever you want God to do for you, do for somebody else because God says, "I'll boomerang that". Why? Because now you've become a conduit and not a cul-de-sac. A cul-de-sac you can go to, but you can't go through. But when you're a conduit, God sees you expressing his love through you, which means you're being like him, which means he wants you to do more of it, so he'll circle it back to you so you can keep doing it.

**Male:** Wait, say that again. That's good.

**Priscilla:** I think that people probably think too that you talked to us like this when we were kids. Like you would stand with your Bible and preach a whole sermon. But our family dynamic was exactly like they might picture it would be with four small children. So, how did you lead in devotions when you had, you know, a two year old, and a four year old, and a six year old, and chaos around? What are you about to say, Chrystal?

**Chrystal:** I was gonna say Jonathan was usually under the table.

**Priscilla:** He was usually under the table, that's right. So for someone that's thinking, "Well, this is great for this Sunday morning because you all are leading us. How do I do this on Monday or on Tuesday, just gathering my family together to read a few verses of Scripture today"?

**Tony:** Well, first of all, it became clear when we were going all through all that that y'all needed to be converted. So, that was one of the things. But what we were trying to do was emphasize principles. So, maybe read a verse, emphasize a principle, and talk about that principle with life, and try to make it age-appropriate. So, you can do it based on age. There are many devotional books, Jonathan and I wrote one for families to gather around the table. But extract a principle about God and about life, attach that principle from God to life, and then let them repeat it back to you. Because that helps you to know whether they got it, whether they picked up that principle or not. And repetition is the key. If you're around the table once a year, the Bible says in Psalm 128, verse 3 that the way you grow your children is around the table. So, you don't just come to table to eat, you come to table to bless, to pray for, to encourage, to correct, and to give spiritual principle.

So, grab a principle, extract that principle, give a biblical reference for that principle, and then discuss that principle to the age appropriate level of your children. Extract the principle, repeat it, have it repeated back to you. And what you're doing is you're building roots. And you're building a boomerang principle. Here's a principle every parent needs to know. When you instill biblical principles, you're instilling a boomerang so that if they do depart they, can go but so far because you've put a bungee cord over on them. And they got to bounce back because you have given something that their spirit cannot get away from. So, put it in and let the Holy Spirit keep reminding them of it.

**Male:** Well, while dad was talking, while you were doing your sermon right here, I was looking up at you. And I think this is the first time since we were kids when we've sat at the table with just the four of us and you did what you did growing up, like gave us, this is a longer Bible lesson today, but I was thinking about that what I have in me because of you doing this your whole life. Just right here while I was looking up at

you talking, I was flashing back to being a kid, and like he's done this since I can remember, where he's instilled principles in us along the way, where if we struggle, we get pulled back. So, I'm just a testament to what you're saying. He's not just giving instruction to you as we are sitting around this table. And it's just an amazing, this is a beautiful moment, the detour just started really when it comes to us and all the crazy stuff we're going through, but this moment is a beautiful view of us being able to do this together.

**Tony:** And I have I have to add your mother was a critical part of that because when I couldn't be there, she was there. And she would do it and make sure it continued when I was absent. So, it was a team effort.

**Priscilla:** And the beautiful thing about the two of you is that your parents were chainbreakers. They made decisions that changed the trajectory of our family. So, for somebody that's watching, maybe they are single and haven't been married yet, or don't have children of their own, or someone that their parents didn't set the pace for them. They have the opportunity to be the one that breaks the chain and sets a whole new course for their life, and you've modeled that as well.

**Chrystal:** I was thinking as you were talking in this passage. You said, well, the Scripture says, "See to it that you do not refuse him". And you were talking about how we are part of a kingdom that's unshakable. But of course, we've had a couple of years of a lot of shaking. And I was thinking about the person who's not sitting at their table, you know, with their family. They're at their table by themselves. They're in the middle of their own difficulty, maybe like us caused by grief, and they don't have the family support like we do. Or maybe they're shaking because, like so many people recently have found out, they can't go to work. And that has immediate implications on their ability to provide, to get food, or whatever. And so, when we're looking at this passage and we talked about us sitting in the table and all of the wonderful things that have come about in our family as a result, you know, we've been shaken. And I'm thinking about all the people who are currently shaking. Can you speak to the person who is not refusing God, who has been faithful? And while they understand this principle of not being shaken, they are very much so feeling shaken 'cause I have felt shaken. Sometimes, I still do. And I know lots of people are sitting here watching us right now and they're like, "This is great and I'm trying, but I am shaking in my boots". Can you give a word to that person?

**Tony:** To that person that you just described, I want to send you in a hurry to Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40 spends most of the chapter talking about the sovereignty of God. He comes down to the last few verses and people are asking questions. They're saying, "Why am I going through this? And life isn't fair". We've all felt that. And what he tells you is that even when you do not understand why and how and all of the questions that we all ask, you must return to the character of God. Once you leave that, you're in quicksand to your emotions, to your circumstances, to your pain, to your fear. You rush back. God is good. God is faithful. God is sovereign. God is love. And even though times are bad, that's not who God is. And God makes a promise at the end of Isaiah 40, "If you will return and make your focus on me". It's like a phone that's losing its power, and you take it back to the base to get recharged. God's character is the base. And you go back to that base of the character of God. While he may not answer all your questions, he says, "What I will give you is new strength. I will give you the ability to keep going when your get up and go has gotten up and gone". That's what Job found out. He said, "Even though I've lost everything, my eyes have seen him. And now that my eyes have seen him", chapter 42, "I can handle my situation 'cause I went back to the base". Go back to God's character. If not, you'll be awash in your circumstances.

**Priscilla:** And finally, dad, would you just speak to all of the believers who are scattered, they're not in their local churches? They remember, you know, historically that's what they've done, that's what they've always done every Sunday. Now, they're at home. Would you just talk about, number one, the role of the body of Christ globally during this time, but also individuals' responsibility and commitment to the local church even while we're gathering in homes and gathering in unconventional ways?

**Tony:** A Christian who is not meaningfully attached to a local church is like a body part not meaningfully attached to the body. You have limited the blood flow of the Spirit of God. When you are a detached Christian, you are a disobedient saint. And God is not going to bless your disobedience when you're holding back the body of Christ because the body needs you, and you need it. You should be contributing to it time, talents, and treasures, and it should be contributing to you growth, and ministry, and support

during your times of need. So, strengthen your local church, whatever your church is. Let the pastor in your leadership know you're not a SMO, Sunday Morning Only. You're not just a person who shows up occasionally. No, you are a vital part of the program of God, and you want God to use you because he blesses you when he knows he can trust you and when he knows he can use you. God is not going to skip the church house to fix the White House. So, God is waiting on the church so he can do something better in the culture.