

Coach House Church BEACONS

FAITH AMONGST THE 'HOT TAKES'

6TH OCTOBER 2020

Let me begin by reading you these 3 scriptures. They show us how to view our lives here on earth and our place in history, which God is bringing together. It's small a snapshot, and from my own limited perspective, so I encourage you to read Hebrews and Revelation in your own time.

1. The beginning of Hebrews 11 describes what faith is: 11:1 - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. I chose this verse because it shows us something very simple about the Christian faith: We can't see all that God is doing, has done, or will do. We don't directly see God in front of us, heaven before us, every wrong being righted or every tear wiped away. We are to have confident hope (faith) in the work of God during our lives on earth, which is something that God is able to give to us.

2. Further on, Hebrews 11 shows us the faith of people in the past and where their faith was pointing: 11:13-16 - 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

These people trusted that God would bring them somewhere good. While they may not have had a clear picture of God's ultimate plan to renew creation and live with them in the new, Heavenly Jerusalem, their faith in God encouraged them to believe that God was preparing a place for them beyond what they could currently see and experience. Their faith in the right person - God - was what set them apart, not their precise knowledge of the future.

3. Then, the beginning of Hebrews 12 summarises how we should respond as people who are living by faith today, in light of those who have gone before: 12:1-3 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart

Hebrews 12:1-3 pulls this together in a personal way for us. Many people have gone before us who have lived by faith in God and they cheer us on. Their lives are a testament to God's faithfulness – you can read through all of Hebrews 11 to get an expanded picture of this. These people have reached the end of their races, but we are alive, so we have not. From this passage, our responsibility is twofold – getting rid of sins and things that weigh us down – basically anything that hinders us from living by faith in Jesus. Secondly, it is running the race of faith with perseverance while keeping our focus on Jesus, who started us off in our faith and is perfecting our faith too. Jesus is the model for us. He persevered to the end by faith in God because of the joy set before him, and we should follow him in this.

4. Finally, This passage in revelation shows us how everything looks in the end, when all is said and done, and all that we have looked forwards to in faith has come about: Revelation 21:1-4: Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth,"[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21 brings us to the final outcome of history, the thing that all Christians should be looking forwards to, and where we will ultimately find our home as people of God, who have been saved and restored by God.

This might seem like a strange collection of scriptures to read out, but I did it because I want it to be the timeline, and the 'current events' that we are most

concerned about. For understandable reasons, we find ourselves easily obsessed with glut of news and content which the media is constantly churning out. We all love to speculate a bit. We like the fact that we have a lot of commonly shared topics for casual conversation. This is true whether it's about social justice, climate change, Covid, the presidential elections or Brexit. Do you find yourself getting sucked in? Do you find the desire to air your opinion rising up inside of you? It's easy to talk, it's easy to be a pundit, it's hard to care genuinely, it's hard to follow Jesus faithfully. This applies to the Beacons as well – they are easy to do (by God's grace), they are often hard to live.

In many respects, we have no idea where 2020 will take us. We think we know where tomorrow will take us, but we're never 100% sure. It's important to know that if we have a restored relationship with God, he will never let us go, and the biggest problems – separation from God because of sin which leads to hell – are problems which lie in the past and are dealt with. As Christians, we will not experience the second death described in Revelation 21:8. What a privilege that is. It is by God's amazing grace, and God's amazing work in us. Equally, as our passage from revelation shows, what a privilege it is to live with God in a restored earth with all things renewed (including, and especially, us). We may not feel like it, with God that is where history is heading and where we are heading.

None of that denies the reality of current events. Trusting in God, his work in the world, and his work in us will allow us to process events properly and live rightly. My challenge to you is to dig deeply into your faith in Jesus, and as you do so, as you express faith in God, knowing that he holds the future in his hands, you will have the character to face life rightly.

I can't do God's work justice. We are a breath in the wind and our understanding is so small. We must turn to God. We mustn't be infected by inferior views of life and the fickle new cycle which orders its values by how many views, likes and subscribers it will get. Nor must we be obsessed with hot takes on the media (one of which I've just given to you). We must look at what God is telling us and hear it rightly. I don't care if you don't care about my opinions on these scriptures, I do care that you care about the scriptures themselves and the God behind them. In summary, I encourage you to fix your eyes on Jesus and who he is through reading the Bible, talking with him directly, and having an open heart to hear from other Christians and encourage them too.

I encourage you to read and pray through each of these scriptures and let God speak to you through them.



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