

## Shakings — "Yet once more"

"Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Heb. 12: 26).

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In these words the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gave a free rendering of a prediction first uttered by the prophet Haggai, and he quoted them to lay stress on the word, "once." Let us mark it well! "**Once** more;" then of course, since no further shaking will take place, it will be the final thing. It will be an act of God, and hence the next verse of the chapter explains that, "this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." We know therefore what the end will be of everything that has been undermined by sin; and we need not be surprised if there are shakings today.

When an earthquake smites some part of the earth's surface it comes as a bolt from the blue. Without the slightest warning the catastrophe falls, and people are hurled off their feet by the fearful convulsion of nature which takes place, and then for weeks and even months after there are subsequent shakings of a minor sort. The earth has had its great displacements, but there are a number of lesser jolts before it settles down into its new position. That is the way in created matter, but God's way in dealing with men seems to be the reverse.

When, for instance, God shook Egypt to its centre by the death of the firstborn, He heralded the approach of this major disturbance by the nine preceding minor disturbances, which we call, "the plagues." These were providential judgments with a tendency to increase in severity. Then lastly came the great shock, when by the angel of death God Himself came down in judgment.

So it is to be once more on a vaster scale. The book of Revelation is the forecasting of the shakings, which grow in intensity, until they reach the heavens as well as the earth, and eventuate in the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus in judgment. But we may feel inclined to enquire, Why shake the heavens as well as this sinful earth?

The answer to that question is clearly this, that the heavens are the seat of Satan's power. He is called, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2: 2), and under him there are "principalities" and "powers," "the rulers of the darkness of this world" and "spiritual wickedness in high [or, heavenly] places" (Eph. 6: 12). The evil movements that fill the earth are largely directed from Satan's seat of power in the heavens. God is going to deal in judgment not only with the sin and the evils that fill the earth **below**, but also with the Satanic powers **above**, whence all is directed.

So in reading the book of Revelation, we see the Divine hand beginning to shake things on earth, when we reach Revelation 6; and when we reach Revelation 12, we find the heavens are shaken, and Satan dispossessed and cast down to the earth; and then this final shaking from the hand of God reaches its completion in Revelation 19.

At the present moment it is manifest that the affairs of men are in a very insecure position. Was there ever a moment in the history of the world when the spirit of self-assertion, unrest, insurrection was more powerfully displayed in every quarter of the earth? What we may call earth-tremors are becoming more and more distinct. Nations, governments, organisations, the whole world-system, in fact, has become like a building showing ugly rents and fissures, awaiting, as we know, the final shake — "yet **once** more."

Now, is the Christian to be alarmed and down-hearted? Indeed he is not! He receives "a kingdom which cannot be moved," as verse 28 of our chapter states. A careful reader of the whole epistle can hardly fail to note the adjectives that frequently occur — "**eternal** salvation" — "two **immutable** things" — "an **unchangeable** priesthood" — "**eternal** redemption" — "an **enduring** substance" — "the **everlasting** covenant." In faith we have already come to a region of blessed realities, as set forth in verses 22 to 24, of this twelfth chapter. In chapter eleven faith is strongly stressed, since only! by faith are these abiding realities really embraced by us at the present time.

What then is our business, living as we do in the midst of this shaky world? It clearly is, as the close of our chapter states, to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." To be acceptable, our service must be in accord with His revealed mind and will for the present time. We are not sent to prop up the crumbling world-system, since God as "a consuming fire" will deal with it in its season. God's expressed purpose for this time is the taking out of the nations "a people for His name" (Acts 15: 14). And His purpose further includes, "the perfecting of the saints . . . the work of the ministry . . . the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4- 12).

May God stir us all up to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear, while we still find ourselves amidst these preliminary shakings that mark this present evil age.