

## Heb. 12:25-29: The Kingdom of Christ (part 4): An Unshakable Kingdom

When I drink coffee in the morning I usually add some sweetened oat milk. And the bottle says, “*shake before using.*” For when I shake it up, it changes the mixture of what is on top with that which is on the bottom so that it tastes properly. We often shake things before we eat them or drink them . . . Today our text speaks of God . . . “shaking” the earth and “shaking” the “heavens” and establishing a kingdom that CANNOT be shaken. Now we know this is just a picture for us. God does not have literal “hands” in which He grabs the earth or the heavens and shakes them. Today and next week, I want us to discover the meaning of these pictures by asking . . . and answering 4 questions. Here they are: 1) What; 2) When; 3) Results; and 4) What do we do? (Receive the Kingdom) (We will only get through three of these this week.)

Question 1: **What** is the author speaking of when he speaks of “shaking” the earth and then of “shaking” the heavens. What are these events? In order to answer this question, we must look at other passages in the Bible that speak of God “shaking” something, particularly heaven and earth. This kind of language is used often to signify that, in the providence of God, great CHANGE is coming. In Ps. 60:2 we read: “**You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair its breaches, for it totters.**” This makes sense in the context of the next verse which says, “**You have made your people see hard things.**” Is. 13:13, speaking in the context of great change (judgment) coming upon the Babylonians we read: “**Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place . . .**” There are many more. But, let’s move to the Book of Haggai for a moment.

In our passage, the author, as he always does, moves to the OT to support what he is teaching (great example for us). And in our verses today he recalls the prophecies of Haggai. Haggai is preaching and prophesying during the time of Israel’s captivity to Babylon. Jerusalem, its walls, and Solomon’s great temple had been destroyed. And God sends great encouragement that he is about to “shake” the “heavens,” the “earth,” and even the “sea” and “dry land.” He is going to take them from captivity, back to Jerusalem, where they will rebuild the temple and dwell in the land again. Listen to his words from the first part of his prophecy. “**Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land**” (Hag. 2:4-6). In other words, GREAT CHANGE IS COMING. And GOD will bring about this change. It is described as a “shaking” of “heaven” and “earth.”

These are the words our author uses to describe the great change God is doing in the gospel of Christ with the ending of the old covenant and the fulfillment of his promise in the new. Now, you might say, “*Haggai was only prophesying the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple.*” BUT . . . there is more to his prophecy. In vv. 7-9 he says, “**And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts . . . The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts**” (Hag. 2:7-9). This is SO interesting. He says that the nations will come to this temple. And, this temple will have “more glory” than the old. And finally, it will be a place of peace. If

you know your history, you know that the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple was not near as glorious as the first (though Herod did beautify it later). And, the glory of the Lord never came down upon the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple as it did in the days of Solomon. So, how can this “temple” be more glorious than the first.

Think about it! You know the answer! This rebuilding of the temple and the greater glory that follow speak of a time in the future when God will bring about great change. He will “shake” the heavens as we will see. God will send his Son, the true prophet, the true King, the great High Priest to his temple! I cannot help but think of Jesus riding on a humble “colt” down the Mount of Olives, coming to his temple, as the crowds of people cry out, **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** (Matt. 21:9). And with his coming, his sinless life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, we find the greatest change in history, the greatest “shaking” of the heavens. This is EXACTLY what happened with the coming of Christ and the establishment of a NEW covenant. The old has passed, the new has come.

Question 2: **When** does this “shaking” of the earth and “shaking” of the heavens take place? If you are paying attention, we have already answered this question. In this passage, he is speaking of the fulfillment of the new covenant in Christ as the old system associated with Mosaic Law, all the washings, all the ceremonies, the sacrificial system, was “shaken,” and in Christ, the “heavens” were also “shaken.” The entire passage is comparing Mt. Sinai with Mt. Zion. Look at v. 26: **“At that time his voice shook the earth . . .”** That was exactly what happened with the coming of the Law on Mt. Sinai. God “shook” the ground, and God “shook” their world. He had just delivered them from slavery, lead them into the desert and to the great mountain at Sinai. And there, he gave them his laws. No people on earth had ever been given such privileges. They became a great nation under a great God with his great and holy laws. We must say, **“their world was shaken.”** We cannot imagine the great change/changes that took place at Sinai with the nation of Israel!

Now, look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of v. 26-28. He says, **“But now he has promised, Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken . . .”** Do you see the comparison? The shaking of the earth was the giving of the law at Sinai. The shaking of the heavens was the coming of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. This is the kingdom of Christ! This is the gospel which we believe and which we proclaim.

Today, we do not stand at the foot of an earthly mountain as our own sins condemn us before a holy God. Today, we come to **“Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”** (12:22). We **“behold the Lamb of God”** who takes away our sins (John 1:29). This is what the Book of Hebrews is about. Heb. 1:1-2: **“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”** From where does the Son come? He comes from heaven (See the rest of cp. 1)! He is greater than the prophets. He is greater than Moses. In 3:5-6: **“Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son.”** And then back in v. 3: **“For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more**

**honor than the house itself.**” Jesus is greater than Joshua. For Joshua never gave the people rest. But, Jesus says to us, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matt. 11:28). Jesus is greater than Aaron! Each of the priests and even the high priests of the old covenant had to give offerings for their own sins as well as the sins of the people. But, 4:15 says, **“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are . . . yet without sin.”** Jesus is the sinless son of God, the one who came from heaven! For He **“did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’** And, **“You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”** (Heb. 5:5-6).

Look over at Heb. 8:1-2: **“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.”** Brothers and sisters, let me ask, **“Has there been such a shaking of the heavens in history?”** I think not! There are many who believe this “shaking” of the heavens is speaking only of the future. And Yes, there will be a “shaking” in the future with coming of Christ and the great judgment and the new heavens and the new earth. But, in the history of God’s plan, NOTHING compares to giving of his Son . . . from heaven.

In the plan of God, there has been no greater “shaking” of the worship of mankind than the giving of the Son who is the fulfillment of all the things promised in the old covenant. There has been NO GREATER “change” than what we find between the old covenant and the new. This is why the Book of Hebrews is so important! It explains this “shaking” of the earth and “shaking” of the heavens in a clear and precise way for both Jew and Gentile to understand. But because there was a such a great change, the Jews of Jesus day and the Jews of the first century, and many today still do not embrace this change that happened with the coming of Christ, which is the coming of the gospel, which is also called the kingdom of Christ.

Question 3: What is the **result** of this “shaking” of the earth and the “shaking” of the heavens? Brothers and sisters, the “shaking” of the earth and the “shaking” of heaven results in a KINGDOM that cannot be shaken. In other words, the great changes that took place at Sinai and the great changes that took place in the coming of the new covenant in Christ results in a kingdom that CANNOT be shaken. This is the Gospel of Christ. This is the kingdom and rule of Christ. This is the result!

Look closely at vv. 26-27 again: **“At that time his voice shook the earth . . .”** That was Sinai and the giving of the Law of Moses under the old covenant. **“But now he has promised . . .”** Here, the author shifts from past to present emphasizing God’s promise to bring about a kingdom that cannot be shaken. It continues: **“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. This phrase ‘yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made— . . .** He speaks of a “removal” of things that are shaken. What is removed? This is the old covenant, the earthly things, things that have been made. Why? Look at the rest of v. 27: **“in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.”** And what remains? Look at v. 28: **“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken . . .”** The old is removed . . . the new has come . . . And what has come cannot

be shaken. It will last forever! This is the promise from Haggai (and the promise from ALL the prophets using different kinds of language).

One of the clearest prophecies is found in Daniel. Do you remember the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel interpreted? He had a wild dream about of an image of some kind of man with a head of gold, with a chest and arms of silver, a midsection of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. And then, he saw stone that was not cut out by any HUMAN hand. And the stone struck the image and destroyed every part of it so that it became like chaff. Do you remember what happened to the stone? In Dan. 2:35 it says, **“The stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the earth.”** Daniel interprets this dream, showing that the parts of the body, (gold, silver, iron, clay) are kingdoms. And in 2:44 we read: **“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.”** Brothers and sisters, this “rock” not made by human hands, is Christ and his Kingdom that will never end. And it will crush all the kingdoms of this earth.

This event is God fulfilling his promise (see v. 26). This is nothing other than God keeping his word. This is the context of Haggai with the building of the temple . . . and establishing his glory in another “temple” at a later time. This is the author’s purpose in quoting the prophet . . . to show that God is fulfilling his promise to “shake the heavens” so that the things of the “earth” are removed. When God speaks of a promise, he does not speak of destruction. Therefore, this “shaking,” and this “removal” is not the ultimate destruction of the earth and its inhabitants, but the removal of a system to make way for the new. This is why Paul says, **“Set your mind on things above . . . where Christ is!”** (Col. 3:2)

So let me ask, “What is the result of this “shaking” of the heavens so that the things of the “earth” will be removed?” This is the Gospel of Christ! This is the kingdom of Christ which cannot be shaken! This is the establishment of the church, as v. 28 says, **“those who have received this kingdom . . .”** This means God will not “shake” again, what he has accomplished in the kingdom of Christ. Today, where does Christ sit? He sits at the right hand of God? Until when? All his enemies are made his footstool (Ps. 110, Ps. 2). This means there will not be other institutions from Mosaic Law and the theocratic system of worship given to Israel in the old covenant. God’s final word is in his Son in the new covenant. There will not be another!

There will be no new revelations to make any changes. There will not be any new institutions besides the Church of Christ. The things of the “earth” under the old covenant were mutable (changeable), not so in the new covenant. The first covenant was meant to pass away, the second eternal. The first was founded by Moses, the second the ONE who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This means the gates of hell will not prevail upon the kingdom of Christ, which is represented here on earth in the church. The Kingdom of Christ is an everlasting one. It shall not be shaken! Christ will be our eternal head forever. (He will one day deliver the kingdom over to his father, but in essence He is God, still the one who fills all things—great mystery.)

Also, this kingdom will fill the earth. I know there is a difference of opinion between the post millennial position and the a-millennial as to when this will be accomplished. But, wherever you

fall on that one, the spreading of the gospel is going forth throughout the nations. This does not happen at an earthly temple, but unto Christ alone! And let me also say that I do believe there will be a “shaking” one day when faith will be turned to sight, when our time of grace and hope will turn to glory. For us here, now, it is a spiritual kingdom. It is a kingdom of grace, as we wait for a kingdom of glory.

So, what does this mean for us? What must we do? We will get specifics next week, but for now. We do not refuse him who is speaking (v. 26). We must not reject this warning, which does not come from Sinai, but from heaven itself where Christ sits. Let us be grateful for this kingdom, knowing that the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ (v. 28). “Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe . . .”