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The Removing of Those Things That Are Shaken

by T. Austin-Sparks

Transcribed from a message given in January 1958.

The letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12 at verse 26: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe." Chapter 13 and verse 14: "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."

Now, into a very few minutes I want to put just a few things that are on my heart at this time, I believe as partly introductory to the conference which is ahead of us during this next week. You, most of you at least, know why this letter to the Hebrews (as it is called) was written. That is, from the Divine standpoint, why God had it written and preserved. And that undoubtedly was in the light of what we have just read: an imminent, great, shaking... for this letter was written a little before the end of the Jewish system and regime and dispensation. The year 70 was fast approaching when the Roman legions would throw their siege around Jerusalem and reduce it - as the capital and centre of the Jewish world - to rubble; literally fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus, "They will not leave one stone upon another". It was the end of that long, long Jewish era, and that was on the very near horizon when this letter was written. And we can see therefore, the infinite wisdom of God in bringing into view the heavenly and eternal counterpart of that whole system of earthly things. That system was to be shaken to its foundations and toppled to the earth. But after all, as the whole letter shows, at most and at best it was but an earthly representation of heavenly things and the

earthly was passing now and it was therefore necessary for men and women of faith in the Lord Jesus to have their anchorage in the heavenly, and the abiding; the eternal. And that was the purpose of the letter.

But you can clearly see, even from the fragments which we have read, that that was not the end of the matter. For even here when that had happened, when it had happened, the whole earthly thing broken to pieces and passed away, there's a pointing on. There's still a future vision, and even these who looked beyond the figures and the types and the symbols and the earthly and the temporal, had in view a City which was never of this earth and of this world: "We look for a City, we have here no abiding City...". That was very evident with the passing of Jerusalem, but: "...we seek one."

Now, dear friends, of course that opens up far more than I can put into fifteen minutes but out of that and around that I want to gather one or two things a little on my heart very much in these days. If it is true that that shaking was only *half* of the great shaking and the other half will be the shaking not only of the earth but of the heavens also (that is, not only of the temporal but of the spiritual, not only of the local but of the universal) then to bring in the setting which is abiding... everything that is not abiding, that cannot stand has *got* to be shaken to its foundation.

When the Lord Jesus was speaking in many words about this very day of Jerusalem's destruction and passing and Israel's scattering, He gave many indications; signs which would clearly indicate that that day was at hand. He spoke about the "signs of the times" as we call them; spoke about a fig tree and other things which would clearly indicate that that day was at hand. But then He passed beyond that and carried us to the end of this dispensation and He gave many further signs of how we should know that this greater end than the end of Jerusalem and Jewry was at hand; given us many signs and I'm not going to try to gather up or even mention, but they are indeed very significant. I think, dear friends, this is the point: I think that we have today an almost overwhelming amount of evidence that we are on the point of this far greater shaking. In other words: that we are at the end of another dispensation.

I always hesitate in the realm of prophecy, you never hear me say very much about prophecy; I've had enough of the confusion of prophecy in fifty years of study of it. But at the same time, with all that, with all my carefulness about it, I cannot but feel that everything today is *most* portentous. I would not be surprised (if I may say it) if during this past week one of the most significant things has happened in relation to the end. There is a great system, the very heart and core of which is anti-God and anti-Christ. And one of the things which the Bible tells us will mark the manifestation of the man of sin who will put himself in the place of God is that he will be a tremendous showman, calling down fire from heaven. Everybody can see how easy that could be any day now, calling down fire from heaven! We are almost familiar with that aren't we, and many other such things.

Now I could dwell on that side of the matter for a long time but I simply mention that, I think... indicative of so much more that points to our coming to the end of this dispensation very soon - the heading up of the final great shaking of heaven and earth. But what I want to touch upon at least this morning is what this means to believers. And that means you and me. What are *we* to expect? What will be the *spiritual* signs of the times? We are fascinated with the material, the temporal signs; tremendously impressed with the outward, but what will be the spiritual signs? I just mention it; you must take it away and think about it.

I believe that the Word of God makes very clear (we shall see that much more fully later) that as we get near to the end, as the end approaches, two or three things are going to happen where believers are concerned. One is, one is that they are going to be brought very definitely to the point of accountability for all that God has given them - accountability for all that God has given. God has given much: a *great* revelation, a *great* deposit in His Word and through His Word, in ministry, ministry which He Himself has given. I'm not speaking just here, but to His people; a *tremendous* amount of ministry that God has given through His Word. But there the foundation and substance of it is all preserved in a most marvelous way in the Scriptures and at the end you and I are going to be brought to our accountability to God for what He's given us. I believe the church, the people of God, are really going to have to face up to what they've got; what they've received. There, I feel, and I could show you from the Word, that that is made perfectly clear in the Scriptures: that we are going to be brought face to face in very real and even drastic ways with what we've got, with what we've received; to answer for it and to it.

Let me carry that further. I believe the Word shows very clearly that the people of God will pass into a phase of spiritual experience where what they have is required to be their very life. What they have is required to be their very life and their very survival! That could be said in another way: that the things that you and I have received and think we know are going to be sifted right down of all mere teaching, interpretation, mental grasp; stripped of everything. Now then, what about that that you have taught, you have believed? Now then, what about the meaning of the Cross? Now then, what about the meaning of the Body of Christ, spiritual unity and fellowship? What about it? Now then, what about the sufficiency of Christ? See? I believe that that is going to happen. Reality! *Downright reality* is going to be the emphasis of the Holy Spirit at the end and you and I and the people of God will pass into such an *intensity* of spiritual experience under pressure, under stress, under trial and testing that we shall be found out as to what proportion of all that we have claimed to hold is *really* our being and our life. We're going to be just stripped down to that.

I believe that is what is happening just now and may be the explanation. We have spoken of Christ as our Life. Very well then, the Holy Spirit says, "Let's find out how true that is and how much there is." It may be an explanation of the physical; something along that line - how much is Christ our Life physically? Have we proved Christ as our Life for our bodies as well as for our spirit? Have we? Because there is divine Life for the body dear friends, some of us would not be here today if that were not true. There *is* divine Life for the body to be had, if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead be in you... "He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your *mortal* body". That's not the dust that's in the earth; that's your body now "by His Spirit that dwelleth within". Well what about it? That's only one point, there's many others.

We're just going to be brought to this: *is it real?* Is the Cross real? Is the Life real? Is Christ real? How much so? That's going to be sifted out at the end and there's going to be a shaking of all that can be shaken. And does this not explain very much? Yes there'll be a great falling away because the large measure of mere profession or claim that is not justified deep down in the very constitution of those people. Well, this is it. This letter, this whole letter, puts its emphasis here: the *thing*, the thing that matters is the eternal. All history... the Lord has built up a tremendous history around that, do you notice? And what a lot of light it throws upon things, although many problems associated with it.

Have you noticed that whenever, during the whole Christian era from apostolic times to this day, whenever anything that was raised up by God at its beginning became crystallized and static, fixed and set, the Lord had no further interest in preserving it? The explanation of why things have a

wonderful beginning and their end... what? Well, you don't see the Lord preserving it intact! It's living on a past. It's simply holding a tradition. The Lord doesn't care about that. It's become something fixed down here on this earth and God is *only* interested, in this dispensation, in the eternal! The City is *not* here, it's there. "We are come unto the *heavenly* Jerusalem." The Lord won't let us, won't let us! And we here have got to be as careful of this as any others have in their connection, that what we call or what is called "Honor Oak" never becomes a fixed system of things, a rigid, set, crystallized, boxed compass of teaching and truth: "That's that! Finished! Complete!". Never! God forbid that ever anything like that should happen to us. If so, the Lord won't preserve it; He won't! He will have no interest in our preservation for that is the history of things: something new from God (and we could put our finger upon so many couldn't we?) down through the centuries. Yes, something from God; the reformation, and Wesley, and the Brethren, and all the rest; but... but! Has God founded something so dear to His heart that He would preserve it intact and never allow it to go to pieces and become confused and divided and mixed up? Not at all. Why? Because it became Protestantism; an *ism*. It became an *ism* you see. Something like that, fixed, set and rounded off. He's not in that at all. This heavenly, eternal, spiritual is His interest and He won't let it settle down here. No ambitions on this earth or in this world will be allowed by God in His people. Have anything like that and you're in for a bad time, a really bad time.

Now, you see I'm defeated entirely trying to range this, but what I wanted to say, and what is really on my heart that I'm feeling so strongly, is just this: that if we can see anything that corresponds to this in the experience of the Lord's people today, a sifting, shaking, stripping, getting down to roots and foundations and finding out where we are - *that is a sign of the times*. It's a real sign of the times, an internal one. The day is far spent, the coming of the Lord is drawing near. And of course we agree that's right. We say it's right. It must be. Surely it's the thing that must happen! The Lord mustn't come and find us in a false position; mustn't come and find us in a position where it's make-believe, it's not true; not at all.

So the end may be through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom, the Word says so: "receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken". A part of the much tribulation through which we enter the kingdom is just this: finding out, oh by such drastic ways, in discipline and chastening and hammering and battering and pressure... finding out how much is real. How much is real? How much is *true*? Well, the Lord throw more light on that.