

THE SHAKING OF THE NATIONS

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning January 4th, 1863

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At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 5 Number 211

“And I will shake all nations.” Haggai 2:7

THERE are two classes of interpreters of this verse. The one class tell us that the desire of all nations here means universal peace and plenty, so that all the world may prosper, and have all earthly good in possession, and so go on all comfortably together, every man sitting under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none to make him afraid. That, say they, is the meaning. The next class of interpreters tell us that the desire of all nations is the Lord Jesus Christ. They try to get up an idea that all the ancient nations desired the coming of Christ, and that therefore Christ was the desire of all nations; and so, when Christ came the desire of all nations came. I am no more myself satisfied with this interpretation than I am with the former one; for it is not true that Jesus Christ was that kind of person that all nations desired; it is not true that the ancient any more than the modern nations, saw such beauty in the promised Messiah as to desire that he would come. Prophets and righteous men desired to see his day, I grant; and that the ancients who were taught of God, the whole race of ancient believers, looked with ardent feeling to the appearing of the promised seed, and to the achievement of that victory that he did achieve at Calvary's cross. All heaven looked for this, and Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration looked for this and spoke of the decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem. So then, first, that the desire of all nations, the meaning cannot be that of universal peace and plenty in the earthly, fleshly, carnal, creature sense of the word; second, that it cannot mean that Jesus Christ was, or is, or ever will be, in the universal sense, the desire of all nations. If the meaning be not found in either of these interpretations, then wherein lies the meaning? Why, the meaning is very clear from the verse itself. Before I enter upon the subject, just notice one thing; the shaking comes first, and the desire comes next, and the glory comes next. And so, at the end of the Jewish dispensation, the word of God was then no longer confined to that one nation, but was sent out into all nations; “Go you into all the world;” and just in proportion as individuals, here called all nations, out of all nations, peoples, kindreds, and tongues; just in proportion as they were shaken in the sense here intended, just so far, and no farther, the Savior became their desire, and as he became their desire he came according to that desire which the Holy Ghost had created; and the desire of all nations, that is, all the nations so far as they are shaken in the way we have carefully to describe this morning, so far as they are shaken there is a living desire; that living desire shall be answered in the most glorious

way possible; for it here says that the desire of these nations that are shaken (mind, the shaking comes first) “shall come, and I will fill this house;” and God’s people are his house, they are his temple; and that temple, God’s temple, God’s house, God’s church, shall be filled, and that to eternity, with his glory, and God shall thus be all and in all. So that the term, “all nations,” here, is limited by the subject of which it treats. Some people tell us we should always notice the context and be guided by the context. Now that is true sometimes, but not always. But it is an unexceptionable rule that you should be guided by the subject of which the language treats; and then the language may be universal, pertaining to the subject upon which it treats; but not universal pertaining to that to which it does not belong. Hence, “God loved the world;” that is true so far as the objects of God’s love are concerned; but if you make that to mean all Adam’s race, you carry it beyond its meaning. Christ is the propitiation, not merely for one nation, but for the whole world; that is, for all the people who are the objects of his death. If you carry it beyond that, you carry it beyond its meaning, and you adopt the position you never can substantiate. And so the apostle says of God that “he will have all men to be saved;” and if you take that to mean all that God has willed to eternal salvation, all classes of men, all kinds of men, Jew or Gentile, learned or unlearned; let your interpretation be governed by the subject that you have in hand, and then you will be right; but if you carry it beyond that; you will deceive yourself, and you will go the wrong way, and when you come to die, instead of your being in a position by which you will enter heaven, you will sink to hell. For those that are taught of God shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free; and as that truth came from heaven, it unites with the souls of those that are born of God, and takes such to heaven; but it will not take any others to heaven but those that are one with the truth as it is in Jesus.

I had thought to have taken the whole verse as a text: but I very soon saw I should not be able to go through it in one sermon; so I thought the first clause would be quite enough for our time this morning. Having thus given you what I believe to be the doctrine of the text, of course it is for me now to proceed presently, and to give you the experience and the practical advantages of the text. After I have just observed, then, if we take the “all nations” here to mean all nations so far as the gospel should go, so far as the gospel should reach, the word “all nations” must be limited in that respect which I have stated: it never was, and it never will be, down to the end of time, true that the whole population of the globe are Christians; it is delusion, and the Lord deliver us from all delusion, and help us in the truth as it is in Jesus. Well, now, our text may be noticed under two main parts. First, *the awakening*; and secondly, *that which they are awakened to*; for the shaking here means the awakening of the soul from its state by nature. First, then, *that they are awakened effectually to their condition as sinners*; and secondly, *that they are awakened effectually into an acquaintance with the way in which the Lord saves them*. These two will occupy, the Lord enabling me, what little time we have.

First, then, *that they are awakened effectually to their real condition as sinners*. That this is the meaning, several scriptures would show; but I shall now name only one; I mean that in the 37th of Ezekiel; when the prophet prophesied as he was commanded, “There was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.” Therefore, the shaking of all nations will mean the awakening them up. And you will perceive it has an allusion by figure of speech to one person waking another; laying hold of him; and shaking him until he could waken him thoroughly up out of his sleep. Now the Lord alone can do this spiritually. If a man be asleep, however fast he may be in his sleep, you may shake him, and shake him, and shake him till you thoroughly wake him

up. But you cannot do this spiritually with a man. You cannot wake a dead man literally, and so you cannot wake a dead man spiritually; it is God's work. So that the man is spiritually dead. God knows, as far as my feelings are concerned, if I believed that men, by nature, had a particle of spiritual life in them, I would, as it were, in the spiritual sense, shake everyone I met with; I would get hold of every man I met with, in public and in private, and, by the word of God, I would shake them, and hammer at them, and cut at them; and if they half killed me for doing it, if I felt it was my duty, and felt I ought to do it, I would really do it. But then I am convinced that man has no spiritual life in him by nature, and, therefore, all attempt at anything of the kind is nothing else but a disbelief of man's state by nature, and it is nothing else but a taking the place of the Most High. My text says, "I will shake all nations." And until God awakens a sinner, that sinner will remain in his sleep of death until the heavens be no more, if the living God himself do not minister life to the soul and awaken that sinner up unto his sad condition. But let us then review for a few moments what it is to be awakened up, what we may liken the awakening to. There are several things to which we may liken it, and I will mention three or four things this morning, by way of illustration of this matter. We will suppose, in the first place, that thieves have robbed you of everything that you had, and have left you in a state of entire privation, and you wake up to know this; and when you awake, and find that everything you had is gone, that you are left entirely destitute of anything and everything you had, how this would alarm you! how this would distress you! So, my hearer, sin and Satan are the thieves which have robbed us of our original holiness; and there stands the solemn declaration to denote the awfulness of the loss, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" and of that holiness we originally had, sin and Satan have robbed us; so that there is none holy, no, not one. Sin and Satan robbed us of our original righteousness, and there stands the solemn declaration, that "the unrighteous, shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" and yet sin and Satan have originally robbed us of this. And there stands the truth that the unclean cannot come to where God is; that not anything that defiles, or makes a lie, can enter into his presence. Sin and Satan robbed us of our original purity; left us unholy, and left us unrighteous, and left us unclean; have deprived us of our original life and possessions. And the state in which Satan has left us is this, we cannot, perhaps, get a scripture more expressive of the state in which these thieves have left us than this, that he lifted up his eyes in hell, and besought that Lazarus might be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool his tongue. Such is the poverty, such is the privation, such is the dreadful condition to which we are thus subjected. Now, when God awakens, shakes a sinner out of his deathly state, and awakens him up, he sees how he has been robbed, he sees how he has been plundered, he sees the condition he is in; he sees nothing but destitution, he feels destitution; he feels what a poor, depraved creature he is. This is one thing a poor sinner feels. Truly the thief comes, then, I say, truly the thief comes to steal and to destroy. And then, second, it may be likened also to a house being on fire. You wake up; what a terrible sensation that would be! We all felt, at least, those of us that read it, the deepest sympathy with a family, a whole family, the other day, down in the south of England, burnt to death. We all feel a something dreadful about it, something alarming about it. And so, when God awakens a sinner, and such an one is led to exclaim that "Your wrath is like a fire in my bones; they are burned, like an hearth;" when his wrath is like a fire in the conscience, and there is a solemn apprehension of unquenchable fire, there is a solemn apprehension of the wrath of Almighty God, there is a solemn apprehension of the great truth that the great Redeemer shall descend in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, If your house were on fire, and you woke up and found it so, and the flames around you, could you then take it easy? What would be your concern? Why, your concern would be to escape; everything would be subservient to that desire

for life. "All that a man has will he give for his life." What shall it profit you, if you could gain the whole world and lose your own life? What would you give in exchange for your life? Oh, for a way of escape! And what would be your feeling if, in the very midst of your black despair, a way appeared in which you could at once escape? And just so spiritually. When a sinner is brought into real soul-trouble,

"Ah, whither shall I flee,
To hide myself from wrath and thee?"

Religion with him now is no plaything. He sees there is the worst of all fires to escape; he sees that he stands in danger of the greatest of all evils. "Ah," he says, "miserable me! lost me! unhappy me! Shall I be cast into that lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where the fire is not quenched, and where the worm dies not?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." This is the way God does. He awakens the sinner up; he sees he has been robbed and apprehends this fire of danger in which he is. Depend upon it, if we have not these convictions, it is not essential they should come all at once; but if we do not grow down by degrees, if it has not been done almost instantaneously, if we are without an apprehension of this our need of God's mercy, if we have not been thus shaken, there is no root in our religion; there is no bass note, I was going to say, in the music; there is no foundation work, there is no solid work, there is no preparation work. That man that is unconvinced of his condition, and that has not sighing and groaning at the very bottom of his soul, that man's heart is not prepared for the gospel of God to take a living root therein. Third, it is like a man being awakened up from a very pleasant sleep, and a very pleasant dream; he is dreaming of all sorts of possessions and pleasant things, and he is as happy as can be in his dream. And so, all men by nature are in a kind of dream. Presently he is shaken out of this, and a long list of crime is read down to him; the Ten Commandments, in a way that demonstrates to him that he is entirely, at least in his nature and heart, guilty of every one; and the terrible penalties of those crimes are read down to him. Away goes his dream, away goes his pleasant sleep, away goes the whole of it; and his adversary, the law, takes his conscience, as it were, into custody, and threatens to deliver him up to the Judge, and threatens to cast him into the prison of hell, and that he shall not come out thence till he has paid the last mite. Think you, what will be that man's paramount concern? what will be that man's anxiety? what will be that man's feeling? Why, when he is tried, what his defense can be; how he can get out of this trouble; how he can get out of the hands of justice; how he can get out of the hands of the officer. "Ah," he says, "what dreadful crimes! I knew not before there was such deadly heinousness in these crimes, in these sins. I knew not before that the law was armed with such thunder. I knew not before that I stood in such a state as this. Oh, woe is me! What shall I do?" This will wake the man up. He can no longer dream, he can no longer slumber, he can no longer sleep. His eyes are opened; he is miserable, his misery is to himself; he tastes the wormwood and the gall, and the great concern with him is the remedy for that woe, God having shaken the sinner out of his deadly sleep into that life by which he must become a new man.

Again, the natural man, every natural man, every ungodly man, every unregenerate man, is deluded some way or another. Every natural man is deluded in some shape, either profanely, or else by a false religion. And Solomon's words may be applied to all, let them be deluded in what way they may, Solomon's words, in his 23rd of Proverbs, concerning the drunkard, that he is as one "that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies upon the top of a mast;" and a friend comes and smites him, but he still remains unconscious; a friend comes and beats him again and again, and

“They have stricken me, shall you say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.” That is the state of every man by nature. And when once we adopt any one of the family of the vices into our bosom, whether it be lust, or whether it be liquor, or whether it be covetousness, or whether it be dishonesty, or whatever sin we adopt into our bosom, that sin will be like the Pope and the devil, be content with nothing but universal dominion; all the powers of soul and body must be prostrate to that one of the family of the vices that we may adopt, and while we thought to make them servants, they will be our masters, if left to adopt them. And so, millions are on their way to hell, as fast as these tyrant sins can carry them. On the other hand, when we come to religion, there is a mysterious sweetness that the devil is suffered to throw into a false religion that the carnal mind relishes and enjoys. One carnal mind relishes and enjoys Popery; another carnal mind relishes and enjoys Puseyism; another carnal mind relishes and enjoys free-willism, universal charity; another carnal mind enjoys duty-faithism, conversion and conversion, when their own souls are as dead in sin as that of an African in the central regions of Africa. So that Satan is suffered to throw a sweetness into these false doctrines, and bring them into a fool’s Paradise, and all these men are as he that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies on the top of a mast. And you may smite them by way of reproof and argument, and you may beat them by way of testimony, and yet you cannot move them. No, says my text, “I will shake all nations.” Now I appeal to some of you in this part of my subject. I refer not now to those of you that were profane and profligate before God called you by his grace; but I refer to those of you that, like myself, tried free-will, and that tried duty-faith; how did you find out your error there? Was it not by your solemn conviction of the deep depravities of your heart? Was it not by a solemn conviction of the fact that your state as a sinner was ten thousand times worse than you thought it was, and worse than your minister said it was, and that you need a better remedy and a better religion, and you are awakened up? Why, say you, I have been deluded. The profane man will say, Those sins had such dominion over me, that I was like a man thus lying down in the midst of the sea, or on the top of a mast. I must have lost my life, if a friend had not interposed, shaken me out of my sleep, awakened me up, and delivered me from my danger. And just so, the man that was in danger from false doctrine, and was deceived, as all the Pharisees of old were, we see they were, such an one will say, Bless God for awakening me up out of delusion. I was contenting myself with something short of real godliness, short of God’s Christ, and short of God’s covenant, and short of those things which alone can save my soul. Now, my hearers, what know we of this awakening? What know we of these ponderous things being laid home upon our souls, and bowing our souls down, bowing our hearts down, making us little in our own eyes, making us vile in our own sight, and making us base in our own estimation; bringing us before the Lord as in sackcloth and ashes, sighing and crying that he would arise and have mercy upon such poor lost creatures as we are? Such, then, is this shaking.

Now I think what I have already said will pretty clearly show the room for the other part of the verse, though that is not what I shall this morning dwell upon, the after parts of the verse. But still I may just observe here, that where this experience is of which I have spoken, does not Jesus Christ become the supreme, the earnest desire of such? Does he not become the object of their desire? And while God delights in mercy, does not that mercy by Christ Jesus become the very object that these persons, with one mind, with one heart, and with one consent, sincerely seek?

After, then, these few remarks, I now hasten, in the next place, to show that persons who are thus awakened up to their sad condition, that they shall be made thoroughly acquainted with the remedy.

What, then, is the remedy? I will now go on to show the several parts of the remedy. First, strength to live. Here is a poor sinner in self-despair, I don't see how I can live. How can I have eternal life? how can I hope in God? how can I live, and not die, when I have so much against me? Here comes the remedy. "Awake" for he who awakens us up to the one will awaken us up into an acquaintance with the other, "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion." Strength of life; and what is that strength? Christ Jesus. "That the power of Christ may rest upon you." Ah, to believe that Jesus has power, not merely to restore to us what the thieves have robbed us of, but to replace what those thieves have taken, away by a holiness, a righteousness, a purity, infinitely surpassing that which we have lost, and that he is able, yes, that he has put away all crimes and all sin, that he has quenched the fire, that he has put down all delusions. "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion." "Put you on," says the apostle, "the Lord Jesus Christ;" to believe in him, to see him as the end of all your woe, to be awakened unto him, and to see there you shall have a hope that is strong enough to bear you up, a hope that is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. Here, then, you shall live. And then, secondly, not only strength to stand against it all, and to hope against hope, but also adornment. "Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, for there shall no more come in unto you the uncircumcised and the unclean." The uncircumcised and the unclean passed through you in the first Adam; but here, in Christ Jesus, you shall be arrayed in sanctification, you shall be arrayed in justification, you shall be beautified with salvation, and you shall be clothed with zeal as with a cloak, and you shall have a standing in Jesus where the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no more pass through you. Thus, then, weak you are, but Jesus shall be your strength; filthy garments are your covering, but the Lord will take them away, and Jesus, in all the beauties of his person and work, shall be your divine array. Then, third, a throne of glory, in contrast to the dust. "Shake yourself from the dust of death and self-despair, "arise; and sit down, O Jerusalem." But you must arise first. 2nd of Ephesians, "He has raised us up" there it is, out of the dust, out of the dunghill, out of death, "he has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Here, then, poor sinner, you shall rise to the throne of glory, you shall rise to the throne of Jesus, you shall rise to the throne of God, and by his perfection you shall stand before God without fault, without guile, without spot, without wrinkle; and instead of being cast out and cast away, you shall be kindly, graciously, yes, you shall be welcomed by all the acclamations of heaven, and the presence of a smiling God, and thus inherit the throne of glory. Here, then, he awakens us up to the remedy. Fourth, freedom; not only strength, adornment, and elevation, but freedom. "Lose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Liberty seems to stand last there. And it is astonishing how much experience is required to make a Christian sensible of his real privilege as a liberated man. He must carry a little *do, do*, with him somewhere; he must carry a little of the old leaven with him somewhere. Oh, it requires precept upon precept, line upon line, trial upon trial, experience upon experience, before the Christian understands the perfection of that freedom he has in Christ. And so I know some now that I should think are good people, and they seem to be somewhat strong in the Lord, and seem to be adorned with Christ, and seem to walk with him, and yet, somehow or another, there is a legal twang about them, they are not altogether free, not yet got to the liberty. "Lose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Let your feet be as hinds' feet. Don't creep along as though you had no right there, as though afraid to move; there is plenty of room, plenty of freedom, plenty of everything; let your feet be as hinds' feet, to walk upon her high places, and rejoice that the Lord God is your strength, and your salvation. "Lose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." And the soul does this by the power of the Holy Ghost, receiving the emancipating, liberating power of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a one, when

he has got even thus far, he shakes his head with a sort of duty-faith hint; oh, something I ought to do now; something now; afraid your minister goes too far now and so he is afraid of his own mercy. And then a little more experience, and he says, I don't know whether that minister is not right now; I think I must come to that dangerous gospel now; but I will read the Bible again. Do; and what are the next words to those I last quoted? "Lose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. You have sold yourselves for nothing." Well, Lord, I did that in the first Adam, I have done it in my heart and life; that's true, Lord, "and you shall be redeemed without money." There it is you see; the Lord puts a negative upon all your pretensions. "You shall be redeemed without money." I think that declaration has a twofold meaning. If you are to be redeemed without money, then it means that you are not to be redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Then, second, it means that you shall be redeemed freely, without money and without price. Do you understand it now? Yes, I begin to see now. If this be it, then God is better than I thought he was. Of course, he is. If this be it, then Jesus Christ is better than I thought he was. Of course, he is. If this be it, then the Holy Spirit is a freer Spirit than I thought he was. Of course, he is. If this be it, then the gospel is a better gospel than I thought it was. Certainly, it is. And if this be it, then the Christian is in a better position than I thought he was. Certainly, he is. If this be it, then I shall love the Lord better than ever. That's right, that's just the spirit of the gospel. Here, then, they are awakened up to their condition, and awakened up to the freedom of the gospel.

I will just crowd another thought or two, if I can, into my short sermon, and that's all; though I have a long, sparkling, attractive train of things opening out before my mind. We are now got to the freedom, made free by the Lord Jesus Christ. I will just have two scriptures, and then close upon this subject. Now, my text says, "I will shake all nations." This word, when thus applied to the persons, as in our text, means what I have stated; but the Lord uses the same word sometimes to denote the exercise of his power, and that in a way of mercy. Hence, when the Lord would destroy the separation existing between himself and poor sinners, when the Lord would destroy the floods of hell that carry sinners away into ignorance of him, and enmity against him, when the Lord would shake many at once, and bring them near to himself, he speaks like this, "In that day," that is, the day of Pentecost, that's the beginning; go back to your nominative, then you will get all the after parts of speech right, if you keep your eye upon the nominative, not else; "In that day," the day of Pentecost, "the Lord with his mighty wind," when the Holy Ghost descended as a mighty, rushing wind, "shall shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams. He shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea," the tongue of tyranny; the tongue of the Egyptian sea was a tongue of tyranny over the people of God; "and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod," make them go over as though there was no wrath, dry shod; for the sea, the Red Sea, is a figure of God's wrath; that, as the believing Israelite escaped, the unbelieving Egyptian was drowned. The Israelite went over dry shod, so you shall have access to God, as though there was no sin; yes, by the blood of Christ there is no sin, for his blood cleanses from all sin. "And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." Here, then, sins, and threatening's, and things that lay between us and God, and keep us away from God, are compared to rivers; God dries them up, shakes his hand over these rivers, and thus causes us to pass over from enmity into reconciliation, from ignorance into knowledge, and from distance into nearness with himself. One more Scripture. The same doctrine of freedom is set forth in the 10th of Zechariah. There, in the

11th of Isaiah, is the day of Pentecost, but in the 10th of Zechariah it is not the day of Pentecost, but the day of mediation. "He," that is, Christ Jesus, "shall pass through the sea." What a mercy that is! Fallen angels fell into the sea of wrath, and there they remain: lost man becomes drowned in perdition; there he remains. But here comes a wonderful person that can divide the sea of wrath and sin, can dry up the waters of the sea, the great deep, and make the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over; he shall pass through the sea, he shall come into deep waters, but he shall come again out of the deep waters; he shall die, but he shall live again. "He shall pass through the sea with affliction;" ah, he did! he was afflicted, yet opened not his mouth; he was indeed afflicted and bruised, and yet he passed through, rolled this ocean back, made a way for the ransomed to pass over. "He shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria," the pride of an ungodly world, "shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away." And those who are brought into this that Christ has done, "I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, says the Lord."

Thus, then, we are by nature settled down in sin; we are by nature settled down with Satan, we are by nature settled down with death and hell; we are by nature settled down in delusion. But now, the Lord having shaken us out of that, and brought us out of that, and brought us over unto himself, now we are settled down in salvation, now we are settled down with Jesus Christ, now we are settled down in God's love, now we are settled down in God's kingdom. We are no longer orphans, we have a Father with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning; we are no longer wanderers, but like children at home; we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens With the saints, and of the household of God; we are no longer left to go begging bread, for in our Father's house is bread enough and to spare. We have a good home; Zion is our home, Jerusalem our happy home, heaven our happy destiny, and the living God our portion for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.