

**HEBREWS 46**  
**(Hebrews 12:25-28)**

**The Passing Away of Judaism**  
**By Ron Harvey**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

We saw last time that God met with Moses and the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai. It was 1500 years before Christ came to this earth. And it was here, at Mt. Sinai, that Judaism had its beginning. Think about it. For 2500 years there was no religion called Judaism. From Adam to Moses there was no nation of Israel. There was no Mosaic law. And there was no religion called Judaism.

You see, this Mosaic Law and all things consequent to the Law like the nation of Israel, animal sacrifices, feast days, the tabernacle, the temple, the holy of holies . . . all these things came along relatively late in the history of the Old Testament. There was no Levitical priesthood in the time of Adam and Eve and Cain and Able. Noah had no religion called Judaism. Judaism was a “Johnny come lately” in the Old Testament.

So, it is clear that Judaism was not always the religion prescribed by God. And furthermore, God saved many people before there was ever a religion called Judaism. So salvation certainly is not exclusive to that religion.

Now when we consider Judaism, we understand that the distinguishing feature of Judaism, indeed, the thing that created such a thing as Judaism was the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law made Israel a unique nation, different from all others. The Mosaic Law made Israel a theocracy. The Mosaic Law defined who Israel was. The Mosaic Law dictated the terms of their religion. And it was a different religion than what had ever been practiced before. In addition to moral laws, God gave them judicial laws and ceremonial laws. And a new religion was born.

Judaism was characterized by ceremonies. Animals were sacrificed ceremonially. Priests performed rituals ceremonially. And Judaism was in many ways a 1500 year ceremony which pictured true religion in Christ.

Now these ceremonies were performed by one nation, but true religion in Christ would ultimately be enjoyed by people from every nation.

By very nature, ceremonies are not effective. Ceremonies are physical acts which symbolize some greater truth. And Judaism was the performance of physical acts for 1500 years that prefigured the great reality of the coming Christ. Christ was the sum and substance of those ceremonies.

If you take Christ out of Judaism, then all you are left with is empty ceremonies that mean nothing at all and you make Judaism something it was never intended to be. Judaism was never intended to take the place of Christ. It was intended to picture him. Judaism was never intended to stand alone, but rather, to work alongside the promises of God.

But it appears that Israel viewed Judaism as a mechanism of salvation. They thought their religion saved them without Christ. They came to think of the ceremonies as having saving influence, when in fact, they never had saving influence at all. And when they took Christ out of their religion, they were left with a religious system that had no power to save them and instead slew them. Judaism which does not look to Christ as the Savior is merely a religious system of works. Paul called Judaism a ministration of death and a ministration of condemnation. (II Corinthians 3:7, 9)

And let me further point out that the law and Judaism was never intended as a permanent fixture. It was not needed for 2500 years before Moses. And it is not needed after Jesus Christ has come.

*Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.*  
Galatians 3:19

And therefore you clearly see that Judaism, as a viable religion, had a life expectancy of 1500 years.

This is a very important point that is made by Paul. Paul says that the Mosaic Law and the religion and the whole economy established by that law, had a beginning and it had a terminal point and that terminal point was the coming of the Messiah. The function of Judaism was to pave the way

for the Messiah. But when the Messiah came, Judaism would necessarily give way.

Now I have titled this message, The Passing Away of Judaism. And I think this captures the heart not only of the entire book of Hebrews but also of our immediate text for this morning.

In the first twelve chapters of Hebrews, the writer has labored hard to demonstrate the vast superiority of Christ to Judaism. He has shown Christ to be the sum and substance of it all. He has shown the excellencies of Christ compared to the weaknesses of Judaism. And he has shown that Christ is sufficient unto salvation whereas Judaism was not effective at all.

And the message of Hebrews, and the message which I urge upon each one of you, is to hold fast to Jesus Christ and him alone. Only he can save you and you must wholeheartedly put your faith and your whole confidence in Him and if you are tempted to trust in any other religion, whether it be Judaism or any other Christ-less religion, then you are in great danger.

### Historically, God prepared the Jews gradually for the passing away of Judaism

Now, let me say that God always intended for Judaism to be temporary. And in his mercy he prepared the Jews gradually for the passing away of Judaism.

It is impossible for us to imagine how difficult it was for a devout Jew to recognize that Judaism had been set aside by God. All of their ancestors had practiced Judaism. All of their sentiments and national patriotism were wrapped up in Judaism. And furthermore, Judaism was a religion that had been established by Jehovah himself. There had been much glory down through the years in this great theocracy. And now they were asked to lay it down and abandon it in favor of Christ.

But let me say that God was merciful to the people of Israel in that he gave them hints along the way that a better religion was coming. God didn't just drop the bombshell on them at the last moment. Rather, he told them that the Messiah was coming and the government shall be upon his shoulder and he shall save the people from their sins. God told them

through the prophets that there was coming a better day, a day when he would write his law upon their hearts instead of upon stone tablets.

There was ample prophecy in the Old Testament that should have prepared the faithful for the end of the Jewish economy.

And when Jesus taught during his public ministry, he taught them about the overthrow of the system of Judaism.

Jesus told the woman at the well,

*The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

John 4:21

That was an astonishing statement since Judaism demanded that true worship was at Jerusalem.

And Jesus told the Jews,

*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

Matthew 23:38

This was a hint that the house of Israel was about to crumble.

One day Jesus and his disciples were looking out at the temple and Jesus told his disciples,

*The days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

Luke 21:6

And there were other hints along the way. When Jesus died, the temple veil was rent in two. And this was a sign for all to see that the way unto God was no longer through the veil and into the holy of holies, but the way unto God was now open to all through the blood of Christ. In a very real sense, not only the veil, but also that religion of Judaism was rent in two when Christ cried, "It is finished."

Even in the days after Christ died, there were hints that Judaism had given way. When Stephen preached his sermon in Acts, he preached that “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” (Acts 7:48) Why, this was a slap in the face of the Jews who vehemently asserted that God lived in their temple.

But there are even greater evidences that Judaism has vanished away.

When God saved Saul of Tarsus and commissioned him as the apostle to the Gentiles, this was a clear indication that the grace of God had burst out of the narrow banks of Judaism. No longer did the grace of God flow exclusively down that little stream called Judaism, but it flowed out to the whole world. This was a great sign that Judaism had seen its day.

When the church leaders met at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, after much discussion, they determined that circumcision was not a requirement of salvation and should not be imposed on the Gentile converts. And because circumcision was a clear and definite requirement of Judaism, this further showed that Judaism was no longer the operative religion.

And yet, the masses of Jews continued to perform the rituals of Judaism. Jerusalem was still a viable city and they continued to come there according to the tenets of Judaism. The temple was still standing and they continued to perform religious ceremonies according to the tenets of Judaism. And for the masses of Jews, the religious services of Judaism continued just as though nothing had changed.

Now some chose to abandon Judaism and follow Christ and they were persecuted by those who clung to Judaism. Christians were deemed heretics and Satan worshippers. And because of the persecution, many of them were slipping back into Judaism.

And that is the occasion of the book of Hebrews. The writer is arguing for the superiority of Christ. Christ is better than Moses. Christ is better than the angels. Christ is better than Joshua. Christ is better than Aaron. The sacrifice of Christ is better than the sacrifice of animals.

And now in our text for this morning he is concluding his book of Hebrews not only by suggesting that Christ is better than Judaism, but by declaring that God has shaken the heavens and the earth and he has removed that old religion and brought in a new kingdom.

Now we have previously seen in our study of Hebrews a similar reference to Judaism passing away.

*In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

Hebrews 8:13

*Which stood only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

Hebrews 9:10

Now in text, I want you to notice that the writer of Hebrews refers to a removal of something that has been shaken and something that remains because it cannot be shaken.

*And 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.*

Hebrews 12:27

I hope you will begin to grasp that the things that are shaken and the things that are removed are the things belonging to that old religion of Judaism. It is that whole economy that is removed. It is that old covenant that is being shaken and removed. It is the animal sacrifices that are removed. It is the washings and the burning of incense that is removed. It is the temple that is being removed. It is the holy of holies that is removed. It is the Levitical Priesthood in all its human frailty that is shaken down and removed. It is that old city of Jerusalem that is removed. It is the nation itself that is removed.

There is a new economy that came in with Christ and it shall stand forever. There is a new covenant that shall never pass away. There is a new sacrifice that shall ever remain an effective and efficient sacrifice for sins and shall never be shaken. There is a new washing which replaces the old washings of Judaism and it is called the washing of regeneration. There

is a new temple of God for God does not live in a building of stones, but God lives in his people. There is a new holy of holies and it is at the throne of God in heaven. There is a new mercy seat where the blood of Christ is offered for sins. Take that old one out to the junk heap – remove it. There is a new priest in town and his name is Jesus and there is no more need for sinful priests. Remove those priests. There is a new city whose builder and maker is God. It is a city with foundations. It is the city where an innumerable host of angels live and where the faithful shall reside forever. And it is also the place where God resides eternally. Let Titus and the Roman army come and level this old Jerusalem, for God has prepared a better city. There is a new Israel. Earthly Israel was all of Abraham's descendants, but true Israel are all those who believe in Jesus Christ whether they be Jew or Gentile.

Now you will notice in verse 26 of our text that there is a shaking that is going on. In fact, there are two shakings.

*Whose voice shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. (v.26)*

And let's talk a bit this morning about,

### What Shaking the Earth Means

Now in the Bible, when God would interject himself into human affairs and into the affairs of human governments, it was often called a shaking. God would "shake the earth" so to speak, and nations and kingdoms would be realigned.

Now let me give you an example. In about 600 years BC, Babylon was the most powerful and wealthy kingdom in the Middle East. You will remember that King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took Daniel and others captive. But even before all of this happened, God had foretold in the Scriptures not only that Babylon would take Israel captive, but also that Babylon would eventually fall. You see, kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall according to the appointment of God. And God foretold of the rise of Babylon and God foretold of the fall of Babylon.

Now take a look at Isaiah 13, and I would like for you to see the language that is used in foretelling the destruction of Babylon. It was described as a great shaking up of things.

Now if you read this out of context, you might think that this was describing the end of the world. But it is not describing the end of the world at all. It is describing the end of Babylonian empire. Look in Isaiah 13.

*The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. (v.1)*

*Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. (v.9)*

And notice the language that Isaiah used to describe the destruction of this kingdom of Babylon.

*For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. (v.10)*

Now the destruction of Babylon occurred around 538 BC. And the sun didn't burn out and the moon and the stars didn't stop shining. This cataclysmic language that you see in verse 10 is oriental language in its most expressive symbolism. For Babylon, it would be the end of the world. They would be utterly destroyed. It would be as though the stars in the sky had gone out. It would be as though the sun and the moon would not shine any more upon them.

And look in verse 13. Still talking about the destruction of Babylon, it says,

*And I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. (v.13)*

So, in this passage, Isaiah foretells of the eventual end of the world for Babylon. This eventually came to pass historically when the Medes came down and conquered Babylon. And when this kingdom of Babylon is thrown down, it is called a shaking of the heavens and the earth. It is like

God takes the earth in his hands and he shakes it and kingdoms are thrown down.

By the way, how great is our God who causes kingdoms to rise up and then on their day of appointment, he grabs the earth and he shakes those kingdoms down.

In Chapter 23:11 Isaiah is talking about the city of Tyre. And Isaiah foretells of the destruction of Tyre. And look how he describes this destruction of Tyre.

*He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.*

God stretched forth his hands and he shook the city of Tyre loose. And the city fell.

In chapter 24, Isaiah is foretelling of the ultimate shaking down of all the kingdoms of the earth. You might say, "This is the big one."

*Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. (v.1)*

You see here that, ultimately, God will overthrow all earthly kingdoms. In figurative language, He will put his hands on the earth and turn it upside down.

And look how this overthrow of kingdoms is described in verse 13.

*When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree. (v.13)*

And so, I want you to see that it is God who brings kingdoms to power and who brings them down. It is God who decreed them into existence. It is God who brings kingdoms to pass by the mysterious working of his providence. And when God establishes kingdoms or brings them down, the Scriptures often refer to it as a shaking.

I want to refer you to one last Old Testament passage where we see this figure of shaking. Turn to Haggai 2:6.

Now Haggai was a prophet in about 500 BC when the exiled Jews had been allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. And Haggai is encouraging the people to continue on in the work of rebuilding the temple. And the people are a little discouraged because the new temple is going to be nowhere near as big and glorious as the previous temple. But if you will allow me to summarize, Haggai tells the people to keep on with the work because in a little while there is going to be a shaking. (v.6) There is going to be a great cataclysmic event with regard to nations and kingdoms. And that is, the Messiah will come. (He is called the desire of all nations, v.7) And when Messiah himself sets foot in this temple, then this temple will be filled with glory. The glory of this temple will be even greater than the glory of the former temple. (v.9)

You should notice here that this shaking that Haggai describes attends the incarnation of Christ. It is a shaking of kingdoms that occurs when the Son of God comes to earth as a man. It is clearly not a shaking that occurs at the end of time. It is not something that happens at the final judgment. But it is a realignment of kingdoms that occurs when the Messiah first comes.

Now, go back to Hebrews 12:26 and I would have you notice that the writer of Hebrews is picking up on this idea of a shaking. And the first shaking that you see in our text is the shaking that occurred when God spoke to Israel at Mt. Sinai. It is an earthly shaking. This was the shaking that went on when God established his earthly people. This is the shaking that went on when God established himself as King over his earthly people Israel. It was the shaking that signified the establishment of a new economy. It was the establishment of Judaism.

And this was quite a moment in human history. Never before had God established a nation for his very own earthly kingdom. But God came down upon Mt. Sinai and He shook up the world and he chose a people and he set up his own government over that people. God made the laws for this people of Israel. And this was the first true theocracy ever known to man.

And essentially God said, “Woe unto all the other kingdoms of the earth, for Israel is my earthly people.” And the wicked nations in the land of Canaan had no idea that God was shaking things up on Mt. Sinai and that there was coming a great realignment of power. And God sent Joshua into Canaan and overthrew the nations of the world. And God set Israel to rule over the land of Canaan. And this was the first shaking.

But look more closely at verse 26 of our text and you will notice that there are two shakings in view.

*Whose voice then shook the earth: but now, he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.*

So we see that there are two shakings going on in this passage. One shaking was on Mt. Sinai when God set up his earthly government with Israel. But the question is, “What is this second shaking?”

When the writer refers to this second shaking, he is actually quoting the prophecy that we just read from the book of Haggai.

Now let’s try to identify the two shakings. We already know that the first shaking was when God spoke on Mt. Sinai and it attended the establishment of Israel as a nation and of Judaism. But we are trying to identify the second shaking. And it is clear that in quoting Haggai, the writer of Hebrews is saying that the second shaking attends the coming of the Messiah into the world. God put his hands on the earth and he shook it and a new kingdom was established. It is a new economy. It is a new covenant. It is a new way of doing things. And the story of the book of Hebrews is that it is a better way.

Here is what this passage is saying. When Jesus Christ came into the world God shook up the order of things. And those things which were faulty and inefficient and shadowy and earthly and typical and temporary were removed. And those things which were perfect and efficient and substantive and heavenly and permanent those things remained.

This passage teaches that Christ came to earth and established his kingdom.

His kingdom was heavenly in nature. You will notice the contrast between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Christ. One is earthly and the other is heavenly. (v.25; v.26)

Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." And by that Jesus meant that his kingdom is a heavenly kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom. His land is a heavenly land. He sits on a heavenly throne. He has built for us a heavenly city. He calls us with a heavenly calling. His kingdom is now. The kingdom of Israel was then. (v.26) God shook the earth in 1500 BC when he spoke to Israel. That was then. But now, he says, there is another shaking. And it is the establishment of Christ's kingdom that is now.

Much more could be said about this passage. But the key question might be, "How do I get into this kingdom which Christ has brought in?" And the answer is that it must be received. Look at verse 28.

*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved . . .*

This kingdom must be received. You don't get into this kingdom by birth or by effort or by merit. But you get in by receiving. Christ's kingdom is entered into by grace. You receive it.

When King Saul died, David became the king of Israel. And when he went into the cities of Israel they received him as their king. How did they do that?

1. They cheered him and they opened the gates of the cities to him.
2. They recognized his rule.
3. Whatever he said to do they did it.
4. They accepted his authority.

And Jesus offers himself to your king. And he offers his kingdom to you if you will receive it. But the sad truth is that many refuse the king and his kingdom.

*He came unto his own and his own received him not.*

John 1:11

*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. (John 1:12)*