

Thy Kingdom Come 1 — The Tale of Two Mountains

Sermon File Type	Sermon
Passages	Hebrews 12:18-29
Sermon Series	Thy Kingdom Come
Topics	Forsaken; Wrath; Crucifixion
Tags	Heaven
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Introduction (Connection):

[Invite to Hebrews 12]

- Comment on Mariah's baptism and gratitude for Spauldings
- New mini-sermon series called *Thy Kingdom Come* // looking at heaven.

Tension:

Future relief of restrictions // finding hope and happiness in what is coming

Future relief of all worldly pains and problems // finding hope in heaven & what is to come.

Called: Eschatology = study of end times

Often left to theologians and scholars because there are too many positions about the millennial kingdom and tribulation.

Eschatology is “primarily about the problem of evil and how that problem will be solved. [It’s] about how one deals with the sad things in the world.”¹

We need eschatology right now; we need to look ahead to the coming kingdom of heaven.

What do you see heaven as?

Most can answer that question.

Almost everyone has an understanding or view of heaven.

Besides the atheist or the naturalist, many have an ideal heaven.

“Australian aborigines pictured heaven as a distant island beyond the western horizon. The early Finns thought heaven was a distant island in the faraway East. Mexicans, Peruvians, and Polynesians believed they went to the sun or the moon after death. Native Americans believed that in the afterlife their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo. The Gilgamesh Epic, an ancient Babylonian legend, refers to a resting place of heroes and hints at a tree of life. In the pyramids of Egypt, the embalmed

¹ Michael J. Kruger, “We Need Eschatology Right Now” (article, The Gospel Coalition, May 13, 2020), available online at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/we-need-eschatology/> [accessed May 15, 2020].

bodies had maps placed beside them as guides to the future world. The Romans believed that the righteous would picnic in the Elysian fields while their horses grazed nearby.”²

Muslims who are killed in the battle of Jihadi think they will be granted 72 virgins in heaven when they die.

Both Hindus and Buddhists look forward to Nirvana in which all desires, aversions, and delusions have been extinguished, the full absence of all suffering.

Nominal Christians = Heaven is the fullest experience of your favorite worldly pleasure.

Love to fish? Heaven is you fishing all the time.

Hunt? Heaven is full of wild game to hunt.

Play golf? Tee time all the time.

Cook and bake? Heaven’s kitchen is always open.

Love to garden? Eden is waiting!

Love cats? Out of luck, there won’t be any.

² Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Tyndale, 2004), quoted in Craig Brian Larson and Phyllis Ten Elshof, *1001 Illustrations That Connect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2008), 164.

Of course, that's not the main point of heaven.

Surprised by how many Christians have a low, poor, or wrong view of heaven.

Talk about *The Culture of Heaven* according to Hebrews 12 to help all get on the same page.

Exposition:

Define **culture**: the learned and shared attitudes, values, and ways of behaving of a people.

What is the tone, the temperament, the norms, the complexes, the traits of those in heaven?

Start of w/ one view unfortunately too many have of heaven.

Read Hebrews 12:18-21

Hebrew History here — Mt. Sinai

Exodus from Egypt; parted the red sea

Led into the wilderness to Mt. Sinai, a literal, physical mountain that could be touched.

There God descended (Exodus 19)

This is the picture of his presence on that mountain.

- A blazing, consuming fire covers the top

- Smoke billows, covers the sun, darkness falls across the base of the mountain, and gloom.
- Wind from the heat rushes past as the raging fire sucks every molecule of oxygen

I can't help but think of Mount Doom in Mordor from *The Lord of the Rings*, though it pales in comparison.

God is on the top of Mount Sinai

Ex. 19:19 — “As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in the thunder.”³

Over the sound of rushing wind, raging fire, and billowing thunder comes the bone-shaking, trembling blast of a horn, which signifies war and the stern summons of a king.⁴

Then a voice rumbles from the mountaintop and shakes the wilderness.⁵

This is when God gives the 10 commandments in Exodus 20.

What's the response of the people? **Read Heb. 12:19b-20**

³ [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), Ex 19:19.

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: Hebrews*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 422.

⁵ Psalm 29:8

Comes from...

Exodus 20:18-19 — “All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain surrounded by smoke. When the people saw it they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹‘You speak to us, and we will listen,’ they said to Moses, ‘but don’t let God speak to us, or we will die.’”⁶

At this terrible sight, they ask, “No more!”

They weren’t the only ones terrified, Moses was too!

Read v. 21 (quotes Deut. 9:19)

Ask: Do you have a Mt. Sinai perspective of Heaven?

All we feel:

- Terror, utter terror at the majesty of God
- So frightening you cowered down and hide away
- Like Isaiah in ch. 6 “Woe is me, I am undone”

⁶ [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), Ex 20:18–19.

One commentator: "The terror which Moses and the people experienced in the presence of God at Sinai was motivated by their awareness of the infinite gap between their humanity and God's divinity."⁷

- Distant — "The Lord seemed ever to be saying to the whole of His people... 'Do not come near here.' It was the dispensation of distance,"⁸
 - Infinitely worse than the feelings we get in social distancing... people like intentionally avoid you.
 - God is far above, untouchable
 - We're far below, unacceptable

My own view for a long time: constant feelings of lowliness, distance, undeserving, fear.

This will be a repeated experience in heaven, but it isn't the permanent experience.

Sure, at times we'll stand in fearful awe of God's holiness, but that won't be the constant and sole experience of heaven.

Author of Hebrews: "That isn't what we've come to as Christians." (v. 18)

That is not what is coming to us when the Kingdom comes.

⁷ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 590.

⁸ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: Hebrews*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 422–423.

This is not the culture of heaven.

If this is your understanding of heaven, then I can see why you'd want to live here as long as you can.

Think: "If all heaven will be is me eternally bowing before every glimpse of God's glory and singing songs of praise, then I'm not sure I want in on that... that seems pretty gloomy."

Not sure you want to pray "Thy kingdom come."

We're not coming to that kingdom... to the culture of Mt. Sinai.

We're coming to the culture of Mt. Zion.

Read v. 22-24

We have come and are coming to the Heavenly Kingdom of Zion.

Zion...

...on a map = the hill on which God's temple sat, more equivalent to the city of Jerusalem

...as an idea = a place in the OT where God dwells.

- Safe
- God is their refuge
- a place of paradise & permanent provision

Psalm 46:4-5 — “There is a river—its streams delight the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High. ⁵God is within her; she will not be toppled. God will help her when the morning dawns.”⁹

This is Zion // the city of the living God // the heavenly Jerusalem

All the same!

This sight is not terrifying // beautiful.

Psalm 50:2 — “From Zion, the perfection of beauty, God appears in radiance.”

God dwells there!

Psalm 9:11 — “Sing to the Lord, who dwells in Zion”

Instead of...

...mountain top = distance

...City = community // closeness // invitation to come near

Rev. 22:3 — “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”

Can you see how different the culture of Zion is already?

⁹ [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), Ps 46:4–5.

Look at what else we come to:

v. 22 — “to myriads of angels”

Instead of this raging fire that consumes, we have angels who serve.

Heb. 1 refers to them as fiery flames sent out to serve those who are going to inherit the kingdom.¹⁰

Can you see these flames of fire come and go, who excel at serving God with all their strength?

Psalm 20:2 — “May he send you help from the sanctuary and sustain you from Zion.”

Next...

v. 22 — “a festive gathering”

The Greek word, which means “joyful assembly” was used in the Greco-Roman for civic festivals and athletic competitions.

Picture the roar of the Pittsburgh Steelers stadium when they score the game winning touch down seconds before the clock runs out...

¹⁰ Hebrews 1:7, 14

That pales in comparison to the roar of the festival gatherings in Zion.

Ps. 9:11 — the roar of the people in Zion will be heard among the nations declaring God's praises.

Instead of the roar of rushing wind and raging fire, we hear the roar of shouts for joy.

Song will constantly fill the streets of this city.

Psalm 48:1-2 — "The LORD is great and highly praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, rising splendidly, is the joy of the whole earth. Mount Zion—the summit of Zaphon—is the city of the great King."

There is enough joy in this city alone to cover the whole earth.

v. 23 — "to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven"

Instead of distance and separation felt at Sinai, we have been registered as permanent citizens of heaven...we belong there because we are firstborn, adopted as sons and daughters through faith in Jesus Christ.

Firstborn pictures passover // by the blood of the lamb.

Everyone who has been spared by the blood of Jesus from all of history will be assembled together as one.

Who is waiting for you in Zion? You'll be with them again!

v. 23 — “to a Judge, who is God of all.”

This may not sound that great... but we have been reconciled with this Judge.

There is no therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ!

This Judge is for us, not against us! We have no reason to fear.

Even better, this means Zion will be a place of perfect justice!

Isa. 33:5 — God has filled Zion with Justice and righteousness.

Ps. 48:11 — We will rejoice in his judgments.

Ps. 110:2 — God will rule over all with a mighty scepter.

We have come to a reconciled judge with no prosecution against us.

v. 23 — “to the spirits of righteous people made perfect”

Instead of a Culture of Sinai that always highlights our unworthiness and sinfulness

In Zion, we will all be perfected; every root of sin ripped from our souls.

This means we will be at perfect rest. What more have we to do?

We fought the fight, we ran the race, we kept the faith.

We have been crowned.

This is what we're coming to!

v. 24 — “and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant”

Instead of the horn of war and summons of a king who comes and burdens us with laws impossible to keep that only exposed our sinfulness, we come to Jesus who sings over us, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened. I will give you rest.”¹¹

This is the New Covenant: no longer must blood be shed by bulls and goats, but the Lamb of God, once for all, made atonement for sin.

v. 24 — “to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.”

Notice it doesn't just say shed blood, but sprinkled blood, which is specific to OT Temple sacrifice ritual which atoned for sin.

¹¹ Matthew 11:28

The blood of Christ has been sprinkled upon us, atoning for our sin, and his blood speaks a better word than Abel's.

Remember Abel? He was killed by his brother Cain because Abel was accepted by God because of his faith.

Abel's blood only spoke of murder, or condemnation, of guilt and depravity.

Not in Zion. Jesus' blood speaks of...

Life

Acceptance

Pardon

Confirmation

Reconciliation

Purification

Sanctification

Joy

Preservation

Access

Nearness

This is home in its best sense!

Charles Spurgeon — “You have come to the land of pardon, peace, and promise: you are in the home of life, love, and liberty. You have come to the Lord of adoption, acceptance, and glory.”¹²

Application/Challenge:

This is the city of Zion // the culture of heaven

Over us there does not rest the impenetrable cloud of apprehension;
we are not buried in a present darkness of despair;
we are not tossed about with a tempest of horror.

We will not be slaves to fear.

We will not experience abject terror.

We will not faint in alarm of our sinfulness and depravity.

We are not coming to Sinai; we are coming to Zion.

The culture of Zion is the coming kingdom.

Zion is what you’re praying for when you ask, “Thy Kingdom Come.”

I could end this with a story about what I felt when I arrived at a place I longed to go, like on my honeymoon with Kaitlin or when I went to Disney World...

¹² Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: Hebrews*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 424.

But that would be like telling you to come play in a puddle when the infinite ocean is inviting you in.

Leave with this question: Do you see heaven like Sinai or Zion?

Conclusion (Cast Vision):

Prayer: view of Zion

When you do: pleasures in this world don't satisfy
Treasures here hold little sway over the treasures there
You'll bring as many people as you can along with you.

[Pray]