

Mar 15, 26 – Leader’s Guide

Hebrews 12:1-2, 18-29 “Endurance and the Kingdom to Come”

This passage brings the preacher’s appeal in Hebrews to its climax. Throughout the letter he has urged weary believers to hold fast to Jesus and run the race set before them. In these verses he brings his listeners to a fork in the road. Two paths lie ahead, two mountains rise before them. One path leads to Mount Sinai, a place of fear and distance before a holy God. The other leads to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, where Jesus the mediator welcomes his people into joy, belonging, and new creation.

As you discuss together, notice both the warning and the hope in this passage. The preacher wants us to see clearly what we have in Jesus, and how that future shapes the way we live now.

Read Hebrews 12:1–2; 18–29 and Exodus 19: 9-20; 20: 18-19

1. The passage contrasts two mountains: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. As you listen to the description of each, what words or images stand out to you? What emotions or experiences seem to be associated with each mountain?

Encourage the group to observe the text closely. Sinai is marked by fear, darkness, fire, trembling, and distance. Zion is marked by joy, celebration, belonging, and welcome. The preacher is contrasting two ways of encountering God. Sinai exposes the terrifying holiness of God before which sinful humanity cannot stand. Zion reveals what has become possible because of Jesus.

2. Throughout Scripture people often react strongly when they encounter God’s holiness (Isaiah cries “Woe is me,” Peter says “Depart from me,” Moses trembles). Why do you think human beings respond this way in the presence of God?

The aim here is to help the group grasp the weight of God’s holiness. When people encounter the living God, their illusions about themselves collapse. The sermon used the illustration of students whose identity was built on being the smartest, only to be undone in the presence of someone greater. In a far deeper way, encountering God exposes our sin and our limits. Sinai reminds us why humanity needs a mediator.

3. Verses 22–24 describe what believers “have come to” in Jesus. What are some of the realities listed here? Which one encourages you the most right now?

Help the group notice the richness of the description: the heavenly Jerusalem, the joyful assembly of angels, the assembly of the firstborn (all have access equally - difference of gender, wealth, ethnicity, ability carry no weight), God the judge, the spirits of the righteous made perfect (perfectly suited to steward new creation), Jesus the mediator (who draws us into the loving relationship that exists at the center of the universe), and the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word. The sermon leaned into the vision of new creation here — a future where brokenness, sin, injustice, and suffering no longer define our lives.

4. Verse 24 says that Jesus' blood "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." What do you think that means?

Abel's blood cried out from the ground for justice after his murder (Genesis 4). Jesus' blood speaks a different word. Though he too was killed by his brothers, his blood cries out for forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation, and new life. This is the heart of the gospel the preacher celebrates: where Abel's blood calls for justice, Jesus' blood calls for your forgiveness.

5. In verses 25–27 the preacher says that God will one day "shake" the heavens and the earth. What do you think this shaking represents? What kinds of things will remain after that shaking?

The shaking represents God's coming judgment and renewal. Everything that is out of step with God's kingdom will be removed. But not everything disappears. What remains is what belongs to God's life and purposes — justice, truth, beauty, love, righteousness, and everything shaped by the life of Christ.

6. The preacher says that we "have come" to this kingdom already, not simply that we will come to it someday. How might that truth shape the way we live our lives now?

This is an important tension in the passage. The kingdom is still coming in its fullness, yet we already belong to it. The sermon emphasized that this means our present lives can begin to reflect that future. Our priorities, relationships, work, and hopes can be shaped by the coming kingdom.

7. The sermon reflected on how much of our work in this world can feel small or unfinished — like painting only a single leaf of a much larger tree. How does the hope of God's unshakable kingdom encourage you when your work or efforts feel incomplete?

Much of our work in this life feels partial and fragile. Yet Hebrews suggests that what is done in step with God's kingdom somehow endures into God's future. Acts of justice, beauty, mercy, faithfulness, and truth are not wasted — they participate in what God is building.

Closing Reflection

Verse 28 says, "Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship."

Where have you seen signs of that kingdom this week?

What might it look like for you to live this coming week in gratitude for the unshakable kingdom we have received and so bring delight to the giver?

Acceptable worship here is not merely correct religious activity. It is a life lived in grateful response to God's gift — enjoying our relationship with him, enduring the hardships of life with hope, and investing our lives in what belongs to his kingdom.