

# “Jesus: The Better Kingdom”

Session 12 – Hebrews 12:18-13:25



**Leaders Notes:** This session bridges the gap between the theology of the New Covenant and the practicality of daily life. We contrast the terrifying nature of Mount Sinai with the inviting reality of Mount Zion. Because we belong to an unshakable kingdom, our lives should look different. We focus on the regular rhythms and practices of the Kingdom found in Chapter 13, anchored by the truth that Jesus—our King—never changes.

## Timing Tips and Notes for Skipping:

- **The 5-Minute Warning:** If the group is deeply engaged in the "Ethical List" in Section 2, do not cut it short, as this is the primary practical application. Instead, move Section 3 (The Unchanging Table) to a "take-home" activity to reclaim 10 minutes.
- **Strategic Skipping:** If you are running behind, skip the specific discussion on "Submission to Leaders" (vs. 17) in Section 2 to ensure you have time to cover the "Source of the Work" in Section 4.
- **The Discussion Buffer:** If Section 1 runs long because of the "Consuming Fire" discussion, prioritize Question 2 in Section 4 over Question 1 to ensure you end on the empowering truth of God's grace rather than just our sacrifices.

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## INTRO – 3 min

**Say It:** (Lead your group by reading this section aloud to them.)

We have spent weeks learning why Jesus is better. Today, we move from the 'why' to the 'how.' The author shows us two mountains: one that represents fear and the Old Covenant, and one that represents grace and our new home. Because we live in this Better Kingdom, our relationships, our money, and our worship find a new, healthy rhythm.

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## SECTION 1 – Two Mountains, One Choice (15 min)

### Hebrews 12:18-29

**Read it:** (Ask someone to read this passage aloud.)

- Hebrews 12:18-29

**Discuss It:** The “Discuss It” sections of this guide should be where you spend most of your time. The goal is 100% participation in discussion. We want everyone to feel like they are a part of the group.

#### **1. Fear vs. Celebration: How are these mountains different?**

Give your group a couple minutes to look over the passage and contrast them. Sinai represented the Old Testament Law and was characterized by fire and darkness; Zion represents our relationship with Jesus and is seen with thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

**Say It:** (Lead your group by reading this section aloud to them.)

In verses 18–21, the author describes Mount Sinai (the Old Covenant) as a place of darkness, storm, and terrifying judgment—like a courtroom where you know you are guilty. In verses 22–24, he describes Mount Zion as a joyful party with thousands of angels where God is still judge, but Jesus, the mediator, stands beside us.

Most of the time, Christ Followers only see one side of God. . . we see Him like He revealed Himself on Mount Sinai, or we see Him like He is on Mount Zion.

#### **2. If God is both judge of all and host of the party, what chains or old labels are still making you feel like a defendant instead of a guest? What is holding you back from joining the celebration?**

It is true that God is the Judge of all (vs. 23), but this "courtroom" isn't a place of terror for the believer because Jesus' blood has already settled our case. Many people still live with a "defendant" mindset, feeling they must constantly prove their worth or pay for past mistakes. We acknowledge God as Judge, but we celebrate because Jesus has declared us righteous. We aren't ignoring His justice; we are resting in the fact that His justice has been

satisfied by Jesus. **The Judge of the world is also the Host of your party; stop acting like a stranger when you've been invited by Jesus and given a seat at the table.**

**3. The Unshakable Kingdom:** Verse 27 says God will shake the earth so that only what is "unshakable" remains. **In a world that feels like it's constantly shaking, what parts of your life feel firm because they are built on the "Better Kingdom"?**

Everything man-made (finances, health, status) is subject to "shaking." The only things that cannot be moved are God's character, His promises, and our citizenship in His Kingdom. Building on Zion means finding peace in what is permanent rather than what is passing. **Jesus is the Better Anchor; the world shakes, but His Kingdom stands.**

**4. Consuming Fire:** Verse 29 says, 'For our God is a consuming fire.' **How do you reconcile the 'Joyful Party' image of Zion with the 'Consuming Fire' image of God's holiness?**

These aren't contradictory. Fire consumes what is temporary and purifies what is permanent. God's holiness is a "Better Fire" because it doesn't seek to destroy us, but to burn away the things that hinder our life in His Kingdom. **God's fire doesn't destroy the citizen; it destroys the sin.**

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## SECTION 2 – Kingdom Rhythms & Practices (20 min)

### Hebrews 13:1-17

#### Read It:

- Hebrews 13:1-17 (Ask someone to read aloud.)

#### Say It: (Lead your group by reading this section aloud to them.)

As New Testament Christ followers we aren't running from a Judge, but living with an unchanging King. We have been given a new way to live. These aren't just 'rules' we follow to stay in God's good graces ; they are the healthy rhythms and practices that our loving Father has designed for our benefit so we can truly flourish. Let's look at the specific lifestyle markers the author gives us.

**Discuss It:** (Spend most of your time in discussion.)

**1. The Kingdom Rhythms:** Look at the following verses and discuss: **Which of these rhythms feels the most counter-cultural or challenging for you to pursue right now?**

- **Hospitality (vs 1-2):** Rhythms of loving the stranger.
- **Empathy (vs 3):** Practice of remembering those who are suffering.
- **Marriage (vs 4):** Keeping the marriage bed pure and honored.
- **Contentment (vs 5):** Practice of living without the love of money.
- **Integrity (vs 9):** Staying anchored in the Gospel instead of being carried away by new ideas.
- **Worship (vs 15):** Daily practice of offering praise and sharing with others.
- **Submission (vs 17):** Trusting and encouraging spiritual leaders.

Try to spend a little time on each of these practices. It might also be helpful to remember that the people this book was written for are being persecuted and marginalized for their faith. Consider how these little acts can be revolutionary.

**2. Strength to Keep going:** Verse 8 says Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. How does His unchanging nature give you the strength to stay faithful to these rhythms and practices when the world around us is constantly changing its mind about what is right?

Cultural morals shift like sand, but Jesus is a fixed point. We don't obey to earn His love; we obey because His love is the one constant in our lives. **A changing world needs an unchanging King.**

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## SECTION 3 – Unchanging Table (10 min – optional)

**Reflect on It:** (Optional Activity) Print a copy of the handout on found on page 7 for each participant.

**Say It:** (Lead your group by reading this aloud to them.)

Hebrews 13:8 says, Jesus is the same “yesterday, today, and forever.” For the next few minutes we will take the truth of who God is and apply it to our current lives. We are going to look at the “Yesterday” version of Jesus—the one who was faithful to you in the past—and remember that He is the exact same “Today.”

Use the handout to work through this exercise.  
Give them a few minutes to reflect.

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## SECTION 4 – The Pleasing Response (10 min)

### Hebrews 13:15-21

#### Read It:

- Hebrews 13:15-21 (Ask someone to read this passage aloud.)

#### Say It: (Lead your group by reading this aloud to them.)

In the Old Covenant, the people brought animal sacrifices to a priest. In the New Covenant, we don't bring animals to pay for sin; we bring our lives as a response to grace. The author highlights two specific things that are 'pleasing to God': our words (praise) and our actions (sharing). This is the lifestyle of the Better Kingdom.

#### Discuss It: (Spend most of your time in discussion.)

- 1. The Sacrifice of Praise:** Consider verse 15. **Why do you think the author calls praise and sharing Him with others a sacrifice? Does it ever feel like a sacrifice to speak well of God when your circumstances feel difficult?**

A sacrifice costs the giver something. Praising God when things are going well is easy; praising Him and speaking well of Him to others when you are in pain or doubt costs you your pride and your preference. It is pleasing to God because it proves you value the King more than your own comfort. **Praise is a sacrifice when it costs you your complaint.**

- 2. The Source of the Work:** The author prays in verses 20-21 that the 'God of Peace' would work in you 'that which is pleasing in his sight.' **How does it change your perspective on 'being a good Christian' when you realize that God is the one providing the power to do what He asks?**

We often view the rhythms and practices in Chapter 13 as a heavy burden we must carry alone. But the blessing reveals that we are not the primary workers—God is. He is the Great Shepherd who equips the sheep. Our job isn't to manufacture holiness, but to yield to the God of Peace who is already

working it into us. **We don't work FOR God's favor; we work FROM His power.**

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## DO IT: (5 min)

Ask your group members to choose one or two options to practice this week. Talk about your plan and encourage them to share their goals with one another.

- **The Equipment Inventory:** Look back at the "Kingdom rhythms list" of rhythms and practices from Section 2. Identify the one area where you feel most "ill-equipped." Pray the words of verse 21 every morning this week: **"Lord, equip me with everything good for doing Your will in my [Marriage/Finances/Worship] today."**
- **The Hospitality Challenge:** Perform an act of kindness for a stranger or neighbor.
- **The "Forever" Reminder:** Put the phrase "Yesterday, Today, Forever" somewhere visible to reset your focus during moments of anxiety.

**The Leader Support:** Send a text or brief note of encouragement to a church leader, thanking them for their service.

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## PRAY IT: 2min

**Prayer:** (Lead your group by praying this prayer this aloud with them.)

Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are the Great Shepherd of the sheep and the unchanging King of a Better Kingdom. We confess that we often live like defendants in a courtroom, trembling in fear or performing for favor, but today we choose to step into the joyful celebration of Mount Zion. Thank You that Your blood speaks a better word than judgment and that Your perfect love invites us home.

When the world around us shakes and our circumstances feel uncertain, remind us that You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Help us to live out the rhythms of Your Kingdom—to love the stranger, to be content with Your presence, and to honor our commitments. May our lives offer a continual sacrifice of praise that values Your character more than our own comfort. We thank You that we do not carry these instructions alone; work in us now that which is pleasing in Your sight and equip us with everything good to do Your will. Amen.

## TOTAL TIME: 65min

## Hebrews 13:8 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

### Yesterday

Write one way God was faithful to you in the past.

### Today

Write one area of your life that feels uncertain or shaken.

### Forever

Synthesize the other statements into a statement of faith. (Example: Because God is \_\_\_\_\_, I will trust Him with \_\_\_\_\_.)