

Conclusion

“The Bible is a story of cosmic history: it begins in creation and ends in new creation. Christ stands at the center disclosing, accomplishing, and making present in his life, death, and resurrection where universal history is going. That is the gospel. At the center of the biblical story is a community that has been chosen to embody and announce God’s redemptive purpose to the world..... They bear the gospel of the kingdom in their lives, deeds, and words. Together they experience kingdom-salvation and point and witness to the new creation that is coming.” (M. Goheen and T. Sheridan. *Becoming a Missionary Church*. 243.)

LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- In the middle of the above quote is the claim, “That is the gospel.” Have you ever considered the gospel in this light? How might this reshape one’s understanding of or response to the Gospel?
- What are the two “origin stories” described in Hebrews 12:18-29? What symbol is used for each?
- Do you think you have ever lived as if the story of Mt. Sinai were your origin story rather than the story of Mt. Zion?
- What was the purpose of the Pentecost celebration prior to the events of Acts 2? How does that change our understanding of the events of that day?
- In light of Isaiah 4:4-6 how are Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion similar and different?
- What 3 things from Acts 1 help us understand what is happening in Acts 2 (and the rest of the book)? What one thing are they all about?
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Imagining the Kingdom: You Have Come to a Mountain

Jerry Cisar — May 28, 2023

Text: Hebrews 12:18-29

Introduction: Our Origin Story

I. Pentecost and the First Mountain – Sinai

- A. What do you think about when you hear the word “Pentecost”?
- B. A New Covenant
 - i. Fire descends and separates, coming to rest on each one.
 - a) Jer. 31:31-33 (quoted in Heb. 8)
 - b) On Pentecost, the Spirit fills a new temple.
 - ii. Pentecost is the beginning of the restoration of the kingdom to “Israel.”
- C. The relationship between Pentecost and Mt. Sinai

II. Pentecost and the Second Mountain – Zion

- A. Mount Sinai and Mount Zion
 - i. Mt. Zion is a hill. Also used for the capital city of Jerusalem (Davidic kingship). The temple, wherein the throne room of God is, or the source of God’s rule.

“First, God has chosen Zion for his holy abode; second, Zion is protected by God by virtue of his presence there. ... What is emphasized in the prophets in relation to Zion is God’s cosmic rule and authority.” (The IVP Dictionary of Old Testament: Prophets -- IVPDOTP)

- ii. There is a relationship between what happened on Mt. Sinai and what was promised to happen on Mt. Zion. (Isa. 4:4-6)

The imagery of Zion is similar to Sinai, but the meaning is transformed.

B. It all happened at the temple, the symbol of earthly Zion.

“Zion represents God’s people living in God’s place under God’s rule” and “absorbs the grandeur of Israel’s Sinai theophany [appearance of God] into a new vision of God’s universal reign in creation.” (IVPDOTP)

- i. Sinai was intended to be the source of God’s people living in God’s place under God’s rule. But that covenant was broken and done away with.

Zion is “a symbol of new creation and redeemed humanity that lives before God without sin, death or pain because God rules in its midst.” (IVPDOTP)

- ii. Zion is the place where God rules in creation. Zion is the future. Yet, we have already come to Mt. Zion (Heb. 12:22)

Pentecost was the beginning of the future for humanity!

C. In Jesus, the kingdom of God has come, is coming now as we live under His reign, and will come in fulness one day.

III. Pentecost and the Restoration of the Kingdom

- A. *Mountains* in biblical language were associated with *kingdoms*.
 - i. Remember the temptation of Jesus? (Matt. 4:8-9)
 - ii. Having come to Mt. Zion with all it included was summed up and restated with the phrase, “*since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*” (Heb. 12:22-24, 28)
 - iii. The story of Pentecost didn’t begin with a “chptr 2” heading.
- B. Three things in Acts 1 set up Acts 2:
 - i. For 40 days Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God.
 - a) An example of one such conversation (Acts 1:6-8).
 - b) What kingdom was going to be restored to Israel?
 - ii. The Ascension (1:9)
 - a) Acts 1:9 expresses what is arguably the climactic event of the Gospel *in the most restrained manner possible*.
 - b) Christ’s Ascension and reign are necessary in order for us to come to Mt. Zion!
 - iii. Identifying the 12th Apostle: *The problem of a missing Judas*