

A Greater Kingdom

JESUS IS GREATER #23 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 2, 2025 - Hebrews 12:14-29

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our series entitled, "JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews." Our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far **greater than** the angels, just as the name God gave him is **greater than** their names.

Today, we're concluding our study of Hebrews chapter 12. And we're nearing the finish line of a marathon—the race of faith that Hebrews 12:1-3 first began to describe to us. But just as a runner must not break stride, the author of Hebrews gives us some final, urgent warnings and overwhelming motivation to continue running for the goal. And what is the goal? It's Christ Jesus and His Kingdom. That's why we've entitled this sermon: A GREATER KINGDOM! Because we're called to run life's race for Christ and His kingdom.

Need: Yet many of us are exhausted, distracted, and the world is always calling us to settle for less. Many of us are living as if the finish line is here on earth, pursuing things that are guaranteed to decay, rust, and ultimately pass away. At the same time, the world around us is "shaking"—economically, politically, morally. We need something greater, something unshakable.

Trans: And this is exactly what the Lord is calling us to in Hebrews 12— a greater, unshakeable kingdom!

BODY: In the book of Hebrews chapter 12:14-29, the author challenged believers to stay faithful in running life's race as citizens of Christ's greater, unshakeable Kingdom. We can understand why Christ's Kingdom is greater. Why is Christ's Kingdom greater? The text reveals **three reasons** why Christ's Kingdom is greater.

Read text: Hebrews 12:14-29 (ESV) ¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. ¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. ²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS GREATER ...

1. Because it calls us to a **better pursuit**.

EXP: (14-17) Look at v.14, "strive for." This is a continuation of the running the race metaphor. In life's race of faith, we've seen how OT saints ran (Heb. 11), we've been called to endure as Jesus ran (Heb. 12:1-13), now we are given further encouragement on what to pursue (peace and holiness) and what not to pursue (worldliness and fleeting pleasure as Esau did).

"Strive" (14) (διώκω, *diōkō*) (PAM) - to pursue, to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire, chase.

"Peace" (14) (εἰρήνη, *eirēnē*) - harmony, concord; harmony. Here, "with everyone." Pursue peace.

"Holiness" (14) (ἁγιασμός, *hagiasmos*) - consecration, holiness, sanctification. Pursue holiness.

"See the Lord" (14) (ὀπτάνομαι, *optanomai*) - to look at, behold; to allow one's self to be seen, to appear

"See to it" (15) (ἐπισκοπέω, *episkopeō*) (PAP) - Lit., "seeing to it." This imperatival participle introduces the 3-part contrast of what not to "strive for."

"Fails to obtain the grace" (15) - to suffer want, to be devoid of, to lack (be inferior), to fail.

"Root of bitterness" (15) (ρίζα πικρίας, *rhiza pikrias*) - root of wickedness, bitterness. (Deut. 29:18 refers to one who turns away from God to serve idols and becomes a bitter root, poisoning God's people.)

"Defiled" (15) (μιαίνω, *miainō*) - to dye with another color, to stain; to defile, pollute, sully, contaminate, soil

"Sexually immoral" (16) (πόρνος, *pornos*) - a prostitute, a debauchee (libertine); fornicator, whoremonger.

"Unholy like Esau" (16) (βέβηλος, *bebēlos*) - unholy, ungodly. Esau, son of Isaac, brother of Jacob.

"Sold his birthright" (16) (πρωτοτόκια, *prōtotokia*) - the rights of the first born son. (See Gen. 25)

A Greater Kingdom

JESUS IS GREATER #23 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 2, 2025 - Hebrews 12:14-29

Genesis 25:29-34 (ESV) ²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." ³² Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" ³³ Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

"He desired to inherit the blessing" (17) (κληρονομέω, *klēronomeō*) - to receive a part of an inheritance

"Rejected" (17) (ἀποδοκιμάζω, *apodokimazō*) - to disapprove, reject. "The implied actor for the verb has been taken to be Esau's father, Isaac, or God. It is likely intended to be both." (David Allen, *NAC: Hebrews*, 587)

"No chance to repent" (17) (μετάνοια, *metanoia*) - a change of mind, repent.

"Sought it with tears" (17) (ἐκζητέω, *ekzēteō*) - to seek out, beg. "What he lost through his disobedience was the birthright, not his 'salvation'" (Allen, 588). "The cost for Esau's worldliness was the loss of something so much greater. He gave up everything for nothing, and by the time he realized the value of what he had forsaken, it was too late" (Charles Swindoll, *Insights on Hebrews*, 204).

Genesis 27:34-35 (ESV) ³⁴ As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" ³⁵ But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing."

ARG: We are called to "press on," pursuing a life of faith in Christ Jesus as Paul did.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV) ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

ILL: Imagine a runner veering off course to grab a snack from a concession stand—he might satisfy a craving, but he'll lose the race. That's Esau's story—and it's ours if we trade eternal reward for temporary pleasure.

APP: The greatness of the Kingdom requires that we treat our spiritual life with the discipline it deserves. **What is the temporary, material, or emotional craving in my life right now that I am prioritizing over spiritual growth?** Strive for peace by initiating a difficult reconciliation, and strive for holiness by confessing a secret sin. These steps of obedience confirm that we value the eternal goal over the fleeting comforts.

2. Because it speaks to us a better word.

EXP: (18-25) Christ's Kingdom is greater because it speaks to us a **Better Word** of assurance and grace. Look at v. 24 "speaks a better word." The author contrasts two covenants from two mountains: Mt. Sinai (18-21) and Mt. Zion (22-24). Christ's Kingdom is greater because its built on a better, new covenant word!

"You have not come" (18) - Believers have not come to Mt. Sinai but to far better kingdom called Mt. Zion.

"Blazing fire ... darkness and gloom ... tempest ... sound of a trumpet ... voice" (18-19) - These are the images from Mount Sinai in the Exodus narrative. (see Exodus 19-20)

"Beg no further messages" (19) - a reference to Ex. 20:

Exodus 20:18-19 (ESV) ¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."

"You have come to Mount Zion" (22) (Σιών, *siōn*) - Here the holy mount in heaven, "heavenly Jerusalem."

"Innumerable angels in festal gathering" (22) (μυριάς, *urias*) - ten thousand, an innumerable multitude.

"Assembly of the Firstborn" (23) (ἐκκλησία, *ekklesia*) - the whole assembly of Christians, the church. All Believers both living and dead. We are heading to that place where the entire congregation will gather.

"Enrolled in heaven" (23) (ἀπογράφω, *apographō*) - to enter in a register or records; to enroll.

"God, the judge of all" (23) (κριτής, *kritēs*) - one who passes or arrogates to himself, judgment on anything

A Greater Kingdom

JESUS IS GREATER #23 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 2, 2025 - Hebrews 12:14-29

"The spirits of the righteous made perfect" (23) - "Probably refers to the spirit apart from the body awaiting the final resurrection." (Allen, 592). Saints in present heaven.

"Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (24) (μεσίτης, *mesitēs*) - mediator, go-between.

"Blood that speaks" (24) (ῥαντισμός, *rhantismos*) - sprinkling (purification); blood of sprinkling.

"A better word than the blood of Abel" (24) (κρείττων, *kreittōn*) - more excellent, better. "The author's list of things to which we've come climaxes with Jesus Christ. Now we've come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that says better things than the blood of Abel (11:4). Jesus's priestly work is the foundation of this city, so it is fitting that the writer caps this list by drawing our attention back to the blood of Jesus" (Albert R. Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, Loc #4449, Kindle Edition).

"See that you do not refuse" (25) (βλέπω, *blepō*) (PAM) - to see; to discern, understand. "Hebrews 12 climaxes with the fifth and final warning passage in the book of Hebrews. 1) "Pay attention lest you drift!" (2:1-4); 2) "Beware of a hard heart!" (3:7-4:13); 3) "Don't stray from the path of spiritual growth!" (5:11-6:20); 4) "Stand firm in the faith or be judged by God!" (10:19-39). Now, in the fifth warning passage of the book of Hebrews, the author says, "Don't refuse Him!" (12:25-29). The warning of Hebrews 12:25-29 is a final call to those who had begun to stray from the path leading to Mount Zion" (Swindoll, 208).

"They did not escape" (25) - "They could not escape the declaration of the Law or the terrible penalties which awaited all transgressors." (Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers)

"Who warned them on earth" (25) - The Lord at Mt. Sinai

"Much less will we escape if we reject him ... who warns from heaven" (25) - A better word has been spoken by the blood of Jesus. Eternal rejection to those who reject the better word of salvation in Jesus.

ARG: **The blood of Jesus speaks a better word, a better covenant, a better access and confidence!**

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NIV) ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings...

ILL: Do you remember your teacher or coach calling roll? Someday the Lord Jesus will call roll for all those enrolled in His Kingdom. It reminds me of an old hymn written by James Black in 1893:

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more,

And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;

When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,

And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

When the roll is called up yonder (4x) ... I'll be there

APP: You don't have to live at the foot of Sinai, trembling in fear. You can come to Zion, rejoicing in grace. That's why Christ's Kingdom is greater — it's built on relationship, not regulations.

3. Because it offers us a better future.

EXP: (26-29) Christ's Kingdom is greater because it offers us a **Better Future**—a permanence that cannot be shaken. The author quotes Haggai 2:6, warning that God will one day shake "not only the earth but also the heavens" (26). This shaking is not random; it is God's deliberate process of removing everything that can be moved, so that "what cannot be shaken may remain" (27). The only thing guaranteed to remain, the only certainty, is the Kingdom we have received.

"At that time his voice shook the earth" (26) (σαλεύω, *saleuō*) - His voice at shook the earth at Mt. Sinai.

"Promised" (26) (ἐπαγγέλλομαι, *epangellomai*) - "Yet once more..." A quote from Haggai 2:6.

"Removal of things shaken" (27) (μετάθεσις, *metathesis*) - transfer, remove.

A Greater Kingdom

JESUS IS GREATER #23 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 2, 2025 - Hebrews 12:14-29

“Remain” (27) (μένω, *menō*) - to remain, abide. Only “unshakable” things remain— Christ’s Kingdom!

“Be grateful” (28) (χάρις, *charis*) (PASubj) - grace; that which affords joy, pleasure, delight.

“A kingdom that cannot be shaken” (28) (βασίλεια, *basileia*) - we are receiving the heavenly Mt. Zion which is a far better place spoken from a far better word... the blood of Jesus.

“Acceptable worship” (28) (λατρεύω, *latreuō*) - to serve, worship. (Rom.12:1-2 “Living sacrifices...”

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect

“With reverence and awe” (28) (εὐλάβεια, *eulabeia*) - reverence, veneration; reverence, godly fear, piety

“Consuming fire” (29) (πῦρ καταναλίσκον, *pur kataliskon*) - to consume utterly by fire. A reference to ...

Deuteronomy 4:24 (ESV) For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

ARG: **We run without losing heart because we’re heading for an unshakeable, eternal future.**

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV) ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

ILL: Jesus himself taught this principle in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-27): only the house built on the solid rock of his teaching will withstand the inevitable storms and shaking.

Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV) ²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

APP: Since we are “receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (v. 28), where are you investing your time, talent, and treasure? If the shaking of the world is guaranteed, stop trying to reinforce the shakable things! Instead, dedicate your life to the only thing that will remain. Offer your life as “acceptable worship with reverence and awe” (28), knowing that your service is to a God who is a “consuming fire” (29)—holy, powerful, and absolutely permanent.

CONCLUSION: We have answered the question: Why is Christ’s Kingdom greater?

1) It’s greater because it calls us to a better pursuit, preventing us from trading our eternal prize for temporary pleasure.

2) It’s greater because it speaks to us a better word, replacing the terror of Sinai with the confidence and acceptance of Mount Zion.

3) It’s greater because it offers us a better future, remaining stable when God shakes everything else.

Look around you—the shaking has already begun. The writer of Hebrews tells us that everything that can be shaken will be shaken. Don’t invest your hope, your energy, or your future in the temporary, shaking things of this world. Anchor your soul to the only thing that will always remain: Christ’s unshakable Kingdom.

Let us therefore hold fast to the grace by which we may offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe, for our God is indeed a consuming fire.

Let’s pray.