



KINGDOM: GOD REIGNS

Part 1 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | June 29, 2008

KINGDOM: GOD REIGNS

Last lecture, number thirteen, “Kingdom: God Reigns.” Here we’re talking about the end. Where is history going? The Bible says we come from God, we’re saved by God to be with God forever. There are false views of what happens when you die. What happens when you die? That’s the big question.

There are false views, one is universalism. Everybody wins and goes to heaven. It doesn’t matter who you are, rapist, murderer, pedophile, thief, unrepentant, evildoer, dictator, warlord. Everybody gets in in the end. It’s not true, not true. Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone in the Bible. Universalism is a joke. It laughs at the justice of God.

Just hypothetically think it through. We’ll do something called a *reductio ad absurdum*. Just think something through to its logical conclusion to show that it’s insane. People who hate God, disobey, defy him, and hate his people, go to heaven to be with him and them forever. Heaven? It’s hell. It’s total hell. If they can’t die and they live forever and they get to do evil, I don’t know about you, heaven sounds like Detroit to me. It doesn’t sound like heaven.

How about this one? Annihilationism. When you die, you cease to exist, either initially or eventually, just gone, cease to exist. It’s not true. Daniel 12:2, in that day, the day of resurrection, like Jesus, all will arise, some to everlasting life, others to everlasting death. It’s crazy to say, “Well, people who go to heaven live forever and everybody else just stops living forever.” Christians and non-Christians have an immaterial, immortal soul. We live forever. The only question is where. You can’t say, “Well, some people live forever in heaven, and the rest are just like a candle that gets blown out.” The Bible says no, you arise, eternal life, eternal death, Daniel 12:2.

Number three, reincarnation and purgatory. This is a second chance. Purgatory is the teaching you die and you go to some third place. It’s not heaven, it’s not hell. It’s not as bad as hell, it’s not as good as heaven. You go there and suffer until you pay God back for your sins. It’s like the airport, to me purgatory is like the airport. It’s not where you were, it’s not where you’re going, it’s a terrible place where you’re stuck in the interim.

Now, purgatory has no basis in Scripture whatsoever and it makes a mockery of the cross of Jesus. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” what he didn’t mean was, “It’s almost finished. And all you gotta do now is, in addition to my suffering, have your suffering, and in addition to me paying back your debt, you need to pay off the rest of your debt and then it will all be settled.” It’s a mockery of the cross. It has no basis in Scripture, and it’s self-salvation, atoning for my sin, not Jesus.

Additionally, reincarnation is nonsense. It’s nonsense. Reincarnation says if you do bad things in this life, you’ll come back and you’ll pay God back. It doesn’t make any sense practically. Why in the world is the human population growing if we’re all going through karmic stages of reincarnation to pay off our karmic debt to God so we can go into the nothingness of nirvana? Then the population should be decreasing, not increasing. Where are all these new people coming from? Additionally, the Bible says this in Hebrews 9:27, it’s appointed once for a person to die and then judgment. You die and get judged. You don’t die and come back and die and come back and die and come back.

Practically, here’s the problem with reincarnation: if you go to those nations that believe in reincarnation, they don’t practice mercy or compassion or love or justice. Why? Think of it this way, let’s say I live a really bad life, I do some very bad things and I die. And rather than standing before God for judgment, I come back. That would mean all the suffering and the pain and the struggle in my life is now deserved, and I’m paying my debt to God.

That would mean that you shouldn’t help me, because if you help me, you’ll alleviate my suffering and if you alleviate my suffering, you’ll negate my repayment to God. And if you negate my repayment to God, you’re messing up my karmic debt and you’re gonna make me come back and pay for it in my next life. So what you should do is let me suffer injustice, poverty, oppression, and evil, so that I could pay God back.

That’s why certain cultures have a caste system. There are certain people that are untouchables. We don’t even help them. We don’t love them. We don’t care for them. They’re not actually even necessarily fully human. They’re sort of animal-like. And if they’re raped or beaten or a worker class that are just to serve until their body breaks, well, that’s okay. If they don’t have full rights as citizens to own land or vote, that’s okay. We shouldn’t help them because they’re paying God back, and we don’t want to mess that up. See, Westerners get addicted to crazy Eastern thinking that if you think it through to its logical conclusion, it’s cruel because demons always come up with cruel ideas.

That means those who don’t suffer, they’re haughty and proud. “Oh, my life is good. I must have been a good person in my past life. I must have earned my higher caste and class. Oh, in your suffering, you must have done a bad thing. I would help you, but I don’t want to ruin your karma or mine. So you suffer and I’m spoiled and I get proud because I’ve earned it and you weep, but you reap what you sow.” It’s horrible.

You combine this with evolutionary thinking, material, New Age, reincarnation, quasi-Hindu thinking that dominates everything from Oprah-ism to new spirituality. “I’m highly evolved. You’re not. I’m more physically and mentally developed than you. Furthermore, if you’re suffering, it’s because of your karma. If I’m not suffering it’s because I’m a better person than you. I’m spiritually more developed, evolved, enlightened. You’re more primitive, more undeveloped, more under-advanced. You’re pathetic. I’m wonderful. I’m proud.

You're a mess. I won't help you because I'm too good for that, and you don't deserve it."

Do you really want a world that looks like that? Do you want to live in that culture? Do you really want to be the kid born with Down syndrome in that culture? Do you really want to be the person who gets cancer in that culture? Do you really want to be the rape victim in that culture? Those who will espouse this ideology will talk about compassion and they have no basis for it whatsoever.

Some teach "soul sleep," this is Seventh-day Adventists, that a Christian dies and their body and soul sleep, and then they resurrect, but that the soul upon death doesn't go to be with the Lord. Philippians 1:21-23, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." It doesn't say "and to die is nap." To die is gain. Death is better than life for the Christian. "My desire is to depart and be with?" "Christ," not soul sleep, "for that is far better." Paul says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Soul sleep, Seventh-day Adventism says, to be absent from the body is to take a really long nap until the resurrection of the dead, that the soul and the body lie asleep in the grave until the resurrection. It's false.

Another false view of heaven, cartoon heaven. You're a fat cherub with goofy wings that could never sustain that size of mass in any long flight. You have a diaper on. I can't think of anything more hellish than that. My whole goal is to never wear a diaper again. It's on my to-do list, you know? Playing a harp, plink, plink, plink, plink. Just so you know, if that's heaven, I'd rather go to hell, you know? And I love Jesus, but that doesn't sound like any fun at all. Sitting on a puffy, white, cottonness cloud forever . . . plink, plink, plink. Can't even fly away. I'm too fat and the wings are too small. I don't know why I need the diaper, there's nothing to eat on a fluffy white cloud. All right, this sort of cartoon view of heaven. You gotta be careful when you define heaven. "Oh, do you want to go to heaven?" Most of you are like, not really, not if that's it. You know if the Wile E. Coyote—if that's the cartoon version of heaven you believe, let me just give you good news, that's not the real heaven.

The real heaven is about resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15, that Jesus resurrected. He shows us what our future holds. He's gone to the other side of the grave. Like Jesus, those who believe in Jesus will resurrect to live forever with him. Jesus says it this way, John 5:25-29, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. . . . An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

Jesus says this, "I'm coming back. I'm crying out. Everyone's coming forth. Christians go to heaven. Non-Christians go to judgment in hell." We're all gonna live forever somewhere, somewhere. Heaven or hell?

Mars Hill, closed-handed issue. We believe in heaven and hell. We believe heaven is good, hell is bad. That's our official position. You die once, you're judged, you go to heaven or hell. Your soul goes before God and one day your body and soul will be rejoined, you'll be resurrected, body and soul, to live either in heaven or hell.

Now let me say a few things about hell. We believe in the literal, eternal, conscious torments of hell, we do. Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone. He refers to it as Gehenna frequently. Gehenna was the garbage dump outside of town. It was where all the refuse and the dung and the dead bodies were thrown. And Gehenna burned day and night. You could look out of the city and you could see Gehenna always burning. It was the place where, prior to being a dump, human and child sacrifice was committed in idolatry to demons and idols.

It was a forsaken place, a disgusting place, a despicable place, a deplorable place. It was a cursed place, so they put the dump there, defiled ground. And the worms were always feasting there, and the fire was always burning there. And it was grotesque and it was a stench and it was in every way reprehensible.

And Jesus says that Gehenna is like hell. He speaks of hell in terms of Gehenna, and quoting Isaiah 66, he talks about it being the place where the worm does not die, the fire is not quenched, and the smoke of their torment rises forever. Hell is like Gehenna but worse.

Some of you say, "So is that where Satan rules?" No. Jesus says that hell was created for Satan and demons. Satan does not rule in hell, Jesus does. Satan, according to the end of Revelation, will be chained and bound and gagged and he will be sentenced and tormented in hell. Everyone in hell gets punishment fitting their crime. Satan gets the worst. It's perfect justice. A sin against an eternal God requires an eternal payment, either the eternal God, the Lord Jesus Christ, pays that penalty or you pay it for how long? Eternity. It's the logic of hell. Jesus rules in hell. He's the Lord of all.

Revelation 14:10, let me terrify you: they "will be tormented forever in the presence of the Lamb," that's Jesus, "and his holy angels." Jesus rules in hell. Jesus rules in hell. This dualistic myth that Jesus reigns in heaven and Satan rules in hell, Satan doesn't rule in hell. He's bound, judged, sentenced, punished forever in hell. Satan doesn't win anything. He doesn't rule over anyone in eternity.

We believe in heaven. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and the children of God to be with him forever. If you want to read more about this, the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21-22, speak about the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It speaks about the curse being lifted. Romans 8 says that creation is longing, yearning, crying out in eager expectation of the liberation of the sons of God, that creation is bearing this curse, that the glory of God's created world is marred and stained by sin as we are and that Jesus will return.

We believe in the return of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus Christ will return, that he will crush Satan, sin, and evil forever. He defeated it at the cross and he will destroy it at the Second Coming, that he will sentence evildoers to a just, eternal hell, that he will resurrect God's people to be with him forever, that he will have a new creation free of sin and the curse and the presence and the power and the effects of evil. The Bible says that the sun will always shine, that he will personally wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no sickness, no death, no cancer.

You won't have locks on the doors of your home. You won't live in fear. There will be no soldiers and no police because there will be no sin. There will be no war. Isaiah says that swords will be recycled as plowshares for harvest. The Bible says that the lion will lay down with the lamb, that there will be absolute peace and harmony in God's eternal kingdom.

It says that the lame will walk, that the blind will see. You won't see a wheelchair in heaven. You won't see a hospital in heaven. You won't see a police car in heaven. You won't see a fire truck in heaven. You will not see an ambulance in heaven. We'll never have an election in heaven. There'll be one King, and he'll rule over all people in perfect love and justice and mercy and kindness. His name is Jesus.

What you and I long for is a world like that. And because of sin, no matter how hard we try, this world is never that world. That's because to have shalom, we need the prince of

shalom. His name is Jesus and he's coming to establish his kingdom.

My kids often ask me about heaven. They ask me questions like "Dad, can we play in heaven?" Sure, it's not a sin. My little boy asked me "Can we climb trees in heaven?" Sure, it's not a sin. "Can we go swimming in heaven?" Yeah, it's not a sin. My little daughter loves to sing songs and dance. "Can we make music in heaven?" Yes. Heaven is this world minus sin as God intended at the beginning. The best music in heaven will be God's music. Zephaniah 3:17 says this, "In that day the Lord himself will rejoice over his people with singing." God will sing. God will sing and we will sing too.

The Bible then is this kind of story: beginning, middle, beginning. In the beginning, there is creation. In the end, there is new creation. The first two chapters are about creation. The last two chapters are about new creation. The third chapter is about sin and judgment. The third chapter in from the end is about final judgment of sin. In the beginning, God intended a perfect, glorious world and in the end, through Jesus, he will have it. In the middle, there is redemption for sinners and salvation for the ill-deserving and the difference between heaven and hell is whether or not you belong to Jesus.

So I would close with this: have you repented of sin? Have you trusted in Jesus? If so, heaven is your eternal destiny. If not, hell is your eternal destiny, and some would say, "This doesn't matter, I need to live my life." And I would say, eternity is a very long time and life is very brief and time is of the essence and people need Jesus, that's what we believe.

Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.