

Jesus Was Lower, But Only Temporarily**Introduction**

As we have studied Hebrews, we have seen that the Bible is telling us that Christ is the supreme revealer of salvation. He surpasses the OT prophets as the final revelation of God, being actually God Himself en-fleshed. As such, He is also greater than any angel, as the OT quotations of chapter 1 prove beyond any argument. The beginning of chapter 2 was the first warning passage, telling us that it is critically important to heed the Christian message because the messenger is so great and the penalty so dire.

The book of Hebrews shifts now from a focus on the exalted majesty of the Son to a look at His humanity, with a view toward dispelling any further objections to the utter supremacy of the Christ. Someone may object that since He became human, He cannot be greater than angels. Chapter 2:5-9 will address this potential objection. The remainder of chapter 2 will address how His solidarity with humanity and suffering for us also do not undercut the thesis of the first couple of chapters.

Summary: The Message of 2:5-9

The overall argument is that Christ is superior to the angels because angels are not given dominion over the world to come; man was placed over the creation, but he lost a sizeable portion of that rule for the present time; instead Jesus took upon human nature, died to solve the problem man created in the Fall, and was subsequently crowned with glory and honor in a total reversal of the loss that man incurred at the Fall. He will sit enthroned over the creation and finally bring to complete fulfillment the contemplation of David in Psalm 8.

1. The Future Kingdom Will not be Under the Rule of Angels, v. 5

The “world to come” about which Hebrews is concerned refers to the future rule of Christ on the “forever” throne of 1:8. The Son is presently awaiting His enemies to be made into a footstool, when at last that rule will come to outward, active expression. The world to come, in other words, is the kingdom of Christ which we know as the millennial kingdom.

This statement proves that Christ is superior to the angels, because He, not they, will be ruling in the kingdom. It also connects back to 2:2 where we saw angels involved in the giving of the Law and other instructions like to Lot at Sodom. These words stood fast and if you didn’t heed, there was big trouble. But we need to listen even more carefully to the Son of God and His message of salvation, because the future world will be directly under His authority, not that of the angels. That is what the text means when it says “it will not be put in subjection to angels.” It

will be ruled by Christ and by the Church as co-regents with Him. Men will even rule over angels (note 1 Cor. 6:1-3).

2. God Has Placed Mankind Over Everything, 2:6-8a

Hebrews now quotes Psalm 8:4-6 to explain that humanity has an exalted place in God's arrangement of things. The author, by so doing, begins to fill in the big blank as far as who will run the future world. If it is not angels, then who is it?

A. Man's Place in Creation Seems Insignificant, v. 6

The Psalmist considers the vast universe of God's creation and compares that to the seeming insignificance of mankind. He asks, "What is man...or the son of man?" How is it that God could stoop to consider us, virtual specks of dust in the universe?

The phrase "son of man" is not a veiled reference to the Messiah. This is just Hebrew poetic parallelism which duplicates or reiterates the idea of "man" in the first phrase of verse 8. See Psalm 3:1 for an example of a restatement-type of poetry. In both "man" and "son of man" David is referring to humankind. There is no hidden reference here to the Messiah.

B. Man is Lower than the Angels, v. 7a

There is some debate as to whether man is "a little lower" than the angels in terms of rank or "a little while lower" than the angels in terms of rank and time. The Psalmist seems to suggest the first translation, whereas the NT version of the quote could go both ways. I take it that Hebrews is also talking about rank, to match more precisely with the Psalm. This lower ranking is temporary but we do not learn that clearly until we put some other Scriptures together with this one. The later part of the quote gives us a clue, but other Scriptures clarify it.

Presently, man and angels are not on the same level. David had it right when he said man was a little lower. For instance, we read of angels having some kind of ruling capacity over kingdoms of the world, like in Daniel 10:13. They were involved in the giving of the Mosaic Law as well. Man is also lower than angels because men die while angels do not (Luke 20:36).

C. Man is Steward Over All of God's Creation, v. 7b-8a

What God provided for mankind shows that He considers us more than mere dust. At the same time, it is a humbling thought to see how God treats humanity:

- They are in the care of God, the Creator of the vast universe
- They are or will be crowned with glory and honor
- They have a place over all God's works

Ideally, this is where man belongs. He does have a glorious place in creation.

The Psalm quote is true for the original creation of man. Adam and Eve were given the so-called dominion mandate in Genesis 1:28. This was a stewardship command for them to rule over the earth, being placed in charge of it as God’s stewards. The middle of verse 8, which is not part of the Psalm quote, reflects the commentary by Hebrews that this dominion mandate was thoroughgoing, over the complete creation.

3. A Big Problem, v. 8b

Ideally mankind is over all and everything is in subjection under him, but there is a problem. The last part of verse 8 says, “But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”

In other words, here is an objection to what the Psalmist has said, and thus to what Hebrews has quoted. The objection is this: the Bible says that mankind is over all of God’s creation, but it sure doesn’t look that way today! Given this exalted place, mankind has failed in fulfilling his place of rule in this day and age.

The objection is correct! Verse 8b admits as much. We do not see man exercising that dominion and stewardship today anywhere near its full extent. This is because sin entered into the world, and things really got messed up. To be sure, man’s dominion has not been completely eliminated. But nature is not perfectly under mankind: it still convulses out of control because of sin and the curse, and in turn makes mankind subject to it rather than the other way around. Man’s stewardship is not working right because of sin, rendering humankind unable to carry out its God-given responsibility.

A side note brought up by this whole issue of stewardship: On environmental issues, Christians should all be agreed on the moral obligation of good stewardship of the things that God has given us (1 Cor. 4:2). We may disagree in terms of application of that principle. However, this stewardship does not extend to complete non-use of God’s resources, nor to violating life or health with a hope of “saving the planet.” The stewardship is God-given and in balance with other God-given responsibilities like preaching the gospel, raising families, running governments, etc. It is not centered on the earth in a form of earth worship, as some of the present-day environmentalist movement is.

So what is the solution to this dilemma?

4. Jesus, the Solution to the Problem, v. 9

The idea is that since the Psalm gives a comprehensive statement, but we do not yet see it fulfilled, then there must be something more. And indeed there is, because though we do not “see” the Psalm completely fulfilled in our day, we do “see” Jesus who fits the description of mankind very well. In His incarnation, he was **made a little lower than the angels**. He became a man, thus being brought into connection and solidarity with man in the description of Psalm 8.

He came lower than the angels to suffer death for everyone. The text says He “tasted” death which means that He experienced it. He did so for everyone, which implies that somehow Christ’s work is available to all.

Finally, He was crowned with glory and honor, just like the Psalm says of mankind. It is true that mankind is the crown of God’s creation, and man has a certain glory and honor because he is made in the image of God, is a spiritual being, and so on. But the glory and honor we are talking about for Christ go beyond that and include His exaltation at the right hand of God (1:3, 13).

Verse 9 thus contrasts the non-ideal state of humanity with the ideal Man Jesus. On the one side of the comparison is mankind’s “not yet” rule over the world, a failure due to sin. On the other side of the comparison is Jesus, the ideal Man who fulfills all the parts of Psalm 8:4-6. He is the solution to the “not yet” problem. He will rule over all, and bring believing mankind along with Him in ruling over the works of God’s hands.

Conclusion

Even though someone might argue that Jesus was, like man, made a little lower than the angels, this was never a permanent estate for Him. He only took on human nature to accomplish a much greater thing. That involved His death (a subject we will examine in more depth in the next section). This then resulted in His glorification. Soon, in His humanity, Jesus will rule over everything, angels included. The superiority of Christ stands unshaken. The truth of Psalm 8, though not fulfilled in fallen humanity, will be fulfilled completely in Christ.

Truly, no angel could His place have taken, highest of the high though he. The Loved One on the cross forsaken was one of the God-head three. He experienced death for you so that you, even though you may die in your physical body, would not have to die in your spiritual body. Do you believe this? Do you give Jesus the honor due to Him?

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