

## SESSION TEN

# THE BLESSINGS FROM THE SON'S HUMILIATION

## *Heb 2:5-18*

### I. CONNECTION WITH THE PRECEDING MATERIAL

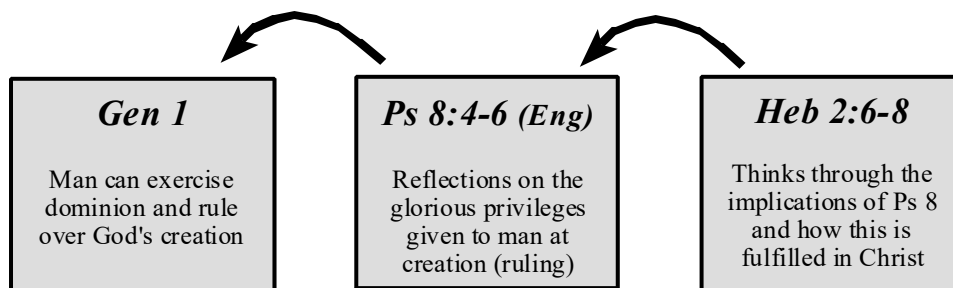
Having duly warned his readers that there is much at stake for them in this consideration of the Son and His kingly destiny, the author continues his consideration of the comparison of Jesus with the realm of angels. In chapter one, he has clearly shown the Son's superiority to angels. Now he elaborates why the Son was briefly "lower than the angels." He did so in order to give *help* to the realm of mankind . . . a help which is multifaceted.

### II. THE SON'S ESCHATOLOGICAL HELP TO MAN (2:5-9)

#### A. Reflections on Man's Original Purpose

The author is now going to show that man originally was given a glorious role of ruling over God's created order, hence being a co-ruler with God. Through the fall, that original purpose was lost (at least for the most part). But through Jesus Christ there is hope that man will regain that lofty status which God intended for him.

To develop his argument, the author will resort to Psalm 8. However, Ps 8 is the psalmist's reflection on Gen 1.



#### B. The Introduction to the Quotation (Heb 2:5-6a)

1. In a further argument to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to angels, the author points out that angels were never given the right to exercise dominion over creation, whereas this divine intention is fulfilled with Christ (who is part of mankind and does so on behalf of mankind).

2. The author clarifies what he has been talking about in the context of ch 1–2

"the world to come concerning which we are speaking"<sup>1</sup>

The author has already stressed in chapter one that Christ is slated to inherit all things (1:2), that He is the "Son" to whom an eternal throne-kingdom was promised (1:5), that He is coming into the world again (1:6), and that the Son is promised to have a kingdom as θεος and "companions" (μετοχοι) who will share this with Him (1:8-9). Hence He is sitting at the Father's right hand until His enemies are completely subdued (1:13) and His rule will be complete.

Lane points out that the term οἰκοθμένην is used in Pss 92:1 (MT=93) and 95:10 (MT=96) of the eschatological kingdom of God that will not be shaken (something to which the author alludes in Heb 12:28). Lane (1:46) concludes that this "world to come" is a designation of the eschatological realm of salvation . . . the consummation when every relationship will reflect the sovereignty of God's Son [for Lane, however, this is strictly in the heavenly realm].

Although the author is stressing the superiority of Christ to the angels, he does so against the backdrop of the Son's future eschatological reign in which He will inherit all things and His believers will inherit "salvation" with Him. If we understand this, then we can understand the author's appeal to Ps 8. Psalm 8 is about the subjection of all things to "man," which has its fulfilment in Jesus Christ and His future reign.

### C. The Quotation Itself

1. The quotation in Heb 2:6-8 is drawn from Psalm 8:4-6 (Eng), which is 8:5-7 in the MT and LXX.
2. The quotation is essentially the same in the LXX except for one line which is left out.<sup>2</sup> Ps 8:7a of the MT/LXX is missing:

MT = תַּמְשִׁילָהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵיךָ

"You have made him to rule over the works of Your hands"

3. The Primary Concern of the Quotation

The main concern is to get to the last line of the quotation which clarifies that it is to man that all things were meant to be subjected.

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<sup>1</sup>The word used for "coming" (the world to come) is the Greek term μελλω. This is used nine times in Hebrews. Similar concepts are (1) the "age to come" in 6:5; (2) the "good things to come" in 10:1; and (3) "the city which is to come" in 12:14. The author has a profound interest in our future experience in the eschaton (cf. Heb 11:10, 13-16, 40; 12:22). There are probable connections with "the rest" in ch 4 ("there remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God"). All of these seem to have a common factor of the coming age in which Christ shall rule. Here, the οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν in 2:5 contrasts with the τὴν οἰκουμένην which has already been mentioned in 1:6.

<sup>2</sup>There is a textual problem at this point. Many of the mss do include this verse, though it appears that the evidence favors the omission.

## D. Comments about the Quotation

## 1. Heb 2:6b,c

"Man" (ἄνθρωπος) and "son of man" (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) are used in *parallelism* in the Hebrew text, and are used synonymously for "mankind" (not Jesus Christ specifically). In these lines, the psalmist is marveling that God would grant so much to *man* (i.e., letting him share God's rule by having dominion), since *man* is really so insignificant. He is only a creature of God, far removed from the glories of God Himself.

## 2. Heb 2:7

Compared to how insignificant man really is in the universe, God has seemingly exalted man way out of proportion. Hence, the psalmist can say:

You have made him a little lower than angels,

You have crowned him with glory and honor.

a. MT = מֵעַט מַאֲלָאִים וְתַתִּיבָהוּ (than Elohim!)

b. LXX = ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχὺ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους

c. The LXX translation of אֱלֹהִים as ἀγγέλους is peculiar, but not impossible. Does our author commit a hermeneutical blunder in following the lead of the LXX and assuming "angels" as the primary intent?

d. A thorough study of אֱלֹהִים in the OT will reveal that it can have a broader meaning than "God."

(1) Helmer Ringgren (*TDOT* 1:282) takes *Elohim* in Ps 8:6(5) as 'divine being.'

(2) The *NIV* translates Ps 8:6(5) "a little lower than the heavenly beings."

e. Despite the lexical and hermeneutical tension, the point is still clear: man is not a spiritual being as God and the angelic realm are, yet he has been given a dignity that comes close to it.

## 3. Heb 2:8a

The astonishing dignity given to man is now pointed out: "You have put all things in subjection under his feet." Man was given the role of ruling . . . exercising dominion over God's created order. Nothing was exempted! This is the role that man should have had, but which was spoiled by the fall. The "all things" (πάντα) in this verse gives more significance to Christ as the heir of all things (πάντων) already mentioned in 1:2.

## E. The Implications of Ps 8 in Regard to Man and to Jesus (Heb 2:8b-9)

## 1. Introduction

Psalm 8 is about mankind's role as originally assigned by God. Although it is not specifically to Jesus Christ, nevertheless He, too, is within the scope. Because He fully participated with humanity, this was His birthright as well. Furthermore, these original

intentions will ultimately have their fulfillment in Him. The Fall does not negate the intentions for Him, because He was born of a virgin and lived a perfectly sinless life. Therefore, He is qualified to inherit the fullness of God's purposes of having dominion, i.e., for all things to be subjected to Him. The author of Hebrews now elaborates how all this comes to find fulfillment in Jesus.

2. Heb 2:8b,c

The author begins his exposition by making two acute observations:

- a. For God's intention to be fulfilled, everything must be in subjection to man. It is not enough just to have a partial subjection.
- b. In the present state, everything is not subjected to man. This is obviously so, because "death" is still operational and keeping man in bondage. Mention could also be made of the demonic realm that is still "at large" and afflicting mankind.

Therefore, *man* is in some sort of interim state. There is a consolation, however, which the author now explains in Heb 2:9:

3. Heb 2:9 - We have now been given a hope through Jesus Christ!

- a. "We do see Jesus who has been made for a **little while lower than the angels.**"

Of course the present readers don't literally see Jesus. But humanity has been allowed to see Him, i.e., in His First Coming. He was "lower than the angels" in that He took on human form. At this point, it is important to our author to point out that this being "lower than the angels" was a temporary arrangement and a necessary arrangement. It does not mean that angels are superior (since they are pure spirit beings). It was necessary for Christ to be "lower" for a little while, that He might become a propitiation for our sins. Notice how Ps 8 is being fulfilled with man and with Christ. For man, he has been exalted to a status almost as lofty as the heavenly angels. For Christ, He has humbled Himself below the heavenly angels—all the way to becoming a human being.

- b. "On account of the suffering of death, having been **crowned with glory and honor**" (Heb 2:9b)

Notice that this line picks up on part of Ps 8! For man, he was "crowned with glory and honor" by being given dominion over God's created order. For Jesus, He is "crowned with glory and honor" by being exalted upon the successful completion of His atoning work at the cross. Hence, Jesus is *crowned with glory and honor* by being resurrected and exalted to the Father's right hand (and being granted "all authority").

- c. "that by the grace of God, He might taste death for every one" (Heb 2:9c)

Having mentioned the Savior's "suffering of death" in the previous line, the author now underscores what was accomplished by Messiah's suffering: He "tasted death" for each and every person," a miracle that demonstrates the sheer grace of God.

Observation: "for every one" = ὑπὲρ παντὸς

Here, ὑπὲρ has the sense "on behalf of", thus speaking of His substitutionary act (note the use of ὑπὲρ in 1 Cor 1:13). Also, this act was on behalf of παντὸς, which is a masculine singular form. This is the only occurrence of ὑπὲρ παντὸς in the NT (contrast ὑπὲρ πάντων in 2 Cor 5:14). We have a similar joining of ὑπὲρ and πᾶς in 1 Tim 2:6 where the phrase ὑπὲρ πάντων occurs. This speaks of Christ who gave Himself as a "ransom for all." What should be observed here is that these similar phrases have nothing in the context to suggest that something less than *every single person* is in view. This seems to be a powerful argument against the doctrine of *Limited Atonement*. There is no discussion about Jew/Gentile in the context. Notice the Greek carefully: it does not say that He died for *all men* (whether Jew or Gentile), but that He died for *each one* (singular!). So, He can't have *everything* (πάντων – 1:2) until He has died for everyone (παντὸς – 2:9).

#### 4. Conclusion

Man was originally intended to exercise dominion (Gen 1). This right has been seriously *hindered* by the Fall, though it can be recovered. Because Jesus partook of our humanity, this divine intention can be fulfilled with Him. Presently, the divine intention is not being fulfilled. But ultimately it will be. Because Jesus was victorious and obedient to the Father, He will regain the dominion intended for man. The fulfilment of this will come with the Second Coming of Christ. This was important to the author of Hebrews, because it ties in with what he has been emphasizing from the outset of ch 1, namely, that Jesus is "heir of all things." Furthermore, those who follow Him can participate with Him in this recovery of the divine intention (hence, they can "inherit salvation" - Heb 1:14). Clearly, Jesus (as heir of all things in His future kingdom) is thus greater than the angels.

### III. HOW THE SON'S SUFFERINGS LINK HIM TO US (Heb 2:10-18)

#### A. Heb 2:10

Having highlighted the fact of Christ's "suffering of death" in vs. 9, the author now proceeds to explain how the Son's sufferings uniquely benefit believers. Three things are highlighted in verse 10:

1. First, the author wants us to understand that ultimately "all things" belong to the Father: "for whom are all things (τὰ πάντα) and through whom are all things (τὰ

πάντα)." This is related to Ps 8:6 in which all things (πάντα) were meant to be subjected to man. They will be to Jesus Christ, and (in turn) to those who follow Him. The Father has granted the "dominion rights" of mankind to Christ! Hence, He will be the "heir of all things" (πάντων) as Heb 1:2 foretold.

There is a principle here that ought to be heeded by the readers: great reward awaits those who are willing to endure the sufferings involved in doing God's will. This was true for Christ; it is also true for His followers.

2. Second, the author reminds us that just as the Son passed through His sufferings to arrive at glory (δόξα), so the Father is at work in "bringing many sons to glory" (εἰς δόξαν). The word δοξα draws our attention back to Ps 8 once again: "You have crowned him with glory (δόξα) and honor." In Ps 8, the "glory" in view is the glory of exercising dominion. In relation to Christ, this has already been initiated (vs 9b) with His resurrection and exaltation at the Father's right hand. Christ is already experiencing the glory that Ps 8 spoke about! Hence, to "bring many sons to glory" looks at the affirmation of God's plan for believers to also share in glory as Christ Himself did upon the successful completion of His earthly pilgrimage. Because of their faith in Him, they will eventually receive the glory of resurrection and a sharing in the glorious reign and dominion of the Son. [Notice the word "salvation" in 10c which draws us back in thought to 1:14 and 2:5].
3. Third, the author points out that the "leader of our salvation" was *perfected* through sufferings. The word "leader" is the Greek ἀρχηγος, used only four times in the NT (once more in Heb 12:2, and twice in Acts—3:15 and 5:31). In the two cases in Acts, the word is properly translated "Prince." In the LXX (18x), it can be used for tribal heads (Num 13:2; 14:4) or for military leaders (2 Chr 23:14; 1 Chr 26:26). In this context, the translation "leader" or "Prince" is better than "author" (*NIV* and *NASB*)—though Lane (1:57) prefers the translation "champion". The word "salvation" (σωτηρίας) should be understood in continuity with how it has been used in ch 1–2, i.e., in reference to the future eschatological salvation brought about by the return of Christ to receive His kingdom. The author has referred to believers as "those who will inherit salvation" (1:14). Hence, Christ is the "leader of our salvation." He has made our future salvation possible; He has regained for man the right to have dominion, and He Himself will rule over all. If we follow him as our "leader," He will safely guide us into this salvation that awaits us.

Although He is the "leader" for those journeying to the future salvation, He had to be "perfected" through sufferings. Of course, Christ was always *perfect*. Sufferings did not make Him more perfect, as He has always been flawless. The word "perfected" is referring to the matter of Christ *experientially learning* obedience through what He endured (see 5:8). The word "perfected" is the Greek word τελειωω, which means to bring something to its goal. The goal of Christ's life on earth was to obey the will of the Father, no matter what He might have to endure in the process. This was accomplished in Christ's life. He achieved the goal. [Be sure and notice the close association between being perfected by sufferings in 10c and being sanctified in 11a].

B. Our Near Relation with Christ as "Brethren" (Heb 2:11-13)

In Heb 2:10, Christ is referred to as the "leader of our salvation." Those involved with Him in this process, however, share a deep intimacy with their ἀρχηγός. He unashamedly looks upon them as "brethren" (2:11).<sup>3</sup> To support this assertion, the author draws upon two quotations from the OT.

1. Heb 2:12 = Ps 22:22 [LXX = 21:23]

The OT reference is *typico-prophetic*. David is first in view, as he gives praise to the congregation for God's deliverance. Yet, David stands in the kingly role that will ultimately be served by Christ. David's experience *typifies* the experience of the Messiah.

2. Heb 2:13 = Isa 8:17b and 8:18a from the LXX<sup>4</sup>

Hermeneutics of the quotation from Isa 8:

Looking back to Isaiah 8, the context seems to have in mind Isaiah and his sons (whom God used as *signs* for the nation at that time). How does the author of Hebrews take this in reference to Christ?

We should note first of all that the Messiah is clearly involved in the general context of these verses. In Isa 8:14, we are told that the Lord will become a sanctuary, "but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over." In other words, for some, the Lord will be a sanctuary, while for others a stumbling block. That this refers to Jesus Christ is clear from its quotation in Romans 9:33 (cf. 1 Pet 2:8).

An understanding of the historical context helps. At that time, the southern kingdom of Judah was led by King Ahaz, an unrighteous king. He was being threatened by the northern kingdom of Israel, which had formed an alliance with Syria (note 7:1) and had invaded Judah. Rather than turning to the Lord for deliverance, King Ahaz turned to the Assyrians and offered to be a vassal state of Assyria in exchange for protection (see 2 Kgs 16:5-9). At this time, there were many in the nation who had turned away from the Lord. Nevertheless, there were a faithful few, including Isaiah and his disciples (Isa 8:16). During this time, they "trusted" in the Lord. In a similar manner, Christ has his "children" who stand with Him and take His side, following the great demonstration of His "trusting" the Father.<sup>5</sup>

C. The Son Offers Help to Believers (2:14-18)

1. He has annulled the power of the Devil, the one who had the power of death, and has delivered us from the fear of death (2:14-16).

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<sup>3</sup>Lane (1:59) feels that the occasion for this is the *parousia* in light of the connection with "bringing many sons to glory" in v 10 (cf. Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26).

<sup>4</sup>The first quotation in 2:13a has similarities with Isa 12:2 and 2 Sam 22:3 as well. Since the second quotation is drawn from Isa 8:18a in the LXX, I tend to think that the first one is from the preceding line (i.e., Isa 8:17b).

<sup>5</sup>The use of the term "children" (παἰδία) suggests their need for παιδεία, i.e., child-training (discipline), a subject the author will address in Heb 12:4-11.

Christ's incarnation was absolutely essential. It took His death to nullify the power of death that Satan used to enslave us. Hence, Christ removes the fear of death for believers. That is something we have which unbelievers do not. Death became man's lot by the original disobedience to God. Satan's trickery had worked, and since then he has used death to bludgeon humanity with fear. Lane (1:61) states, "It is ironical that human beings, destined to rule over the creation (Ps 8:5-7 LXX, cited in vv 6-8), should find themselves in the posture of a slave, paralyzed through the fear of death." [As the author wrote these words in v 16, he may have had Isa 41:8-10 in mind].

Practical Application—

We need have no fear of death! Our earthly pilgrimage should be marked by spiritual bravery. We should be able to step out in faith to serve our Savior with great boldness!

2. He now stands as a merciful and faithful high priest to help believers who are tempted (2:17-18).

The inferential conjunction ὅθεν in 2:17 brings vv 10-16 to a conclusion. His incarnation in order to make propitiation for sins also exposed Him to the realm of human temptation. He had learned experientially what we go through. Yet this enables Him to help us with the temptation(s) we face. In particular, He knew the temptation to give up and turn away from the living God. In contrast to the wilderness generation of the OT, however, He remained faithful! He knows what it takes to endure, and He can help us do the same!

Notice that the final two verses provide a "link" to the next section. Christ will be highlighted as "faithful" in Heb 3:1–4:13, and as a "merciful high priest" in Heb 4:14–5:10.