

Christ is Superior to the Angels

“We See Jesus”

Hebrews 2:5-9

There are two views for this text. Some say this text is not speaking of Christ until verse nine, and that the quote in verses six through eight, taken from Psalm 8:4-6, are speaking of the superiority of man over the angels. Others say that the entire passage is speaking of Christ, as was the eighth Psalm. Considering that we studied that psalm a couple months ago on a Wednesday evening and it was my view on that text that it was Messianic, I hold that this text is also Messianic.

That said, however, there is a point to be made in viewing both as found together in this text. Man is made a little lower than the angels here, as we saw in the beginning of our study of this book, in a number of ways, primarily that of power. But to make this just of man and not about Christ is to miss the point of the whole of the context that began in chapter one about the superiority of Christ over the angels. Creation may be in subjection to man, and man may be superior to creation, but we are not superior to angels, and since it states that all things are put in subjection to him, the “him” cannot be man.

There is a reference to man in these verses, and there is a connection with these verses to verses ten through eighteen where the context demonstrates the humanity of Christ, coming as a man to redeem fallen man – that’s one of the challenges in interpreting this passage correctly.

Considering the unique change from one person to another in the Messianic Psalms, where the text can be speaking of the human author of the psalm or another person referenced and then change mid-sentence to the Messiah, this quote here should be viewed within that context.

Verse five connects back to chapter one and the comparison of Christ to the angels. The reference to the angels not having subjection “in the world to come” points back to chapter one and verse two and the phrase, “in these last days.” As a comparison, if we’re in the “last days,” and we have been for nearly 2,000 years, then “the world to come” won’t be the one we are in right now, but something yet future – the Millennial Reign of Christ on earth. As we consider the superiority of Christ to angels, if the world then isn’t subject to the angels, then the subjection must be to the Son of God, who is the only Being that can be superior to all others.

The majority of emphasis in this sermon is on verse nine and the work Christ came to do for mankind. This will be developed more in our study of the next nine verses. This is a single verse overview of what is going to be expanded in those next several verses.

“We see Jesus...”

I. IN SUBMISSION – VS. 9A

“BUT WE SEE JESUS WHO WAS MADE A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS”

A. Seen in His humanity

1. The use of the name “Jesus” here is pointing to His humanity as much as anything else does. It hearkens back to Philippians 2:5-11 and that great text on our Saviour humbling Himself to become a man so that He could die for our sins.

[Philippians 2:5–11](#)

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found

in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. “Who was made a little lower” – “This alludes to the temporal (‘for a little while’) and voluntary humiliation of the Incarnate Lord” (Cambridge).

a) Similar to the phrase “made under the law” in Galatians 4:4.

Galatians 4:4

⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

b) “Was made a little lower” - ἡλαττωμένον – this is in the passive tense and the Greek perfect corresponds to the perfect tense in English and describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated. Jesus only had to be “made lower” once, never to be needed again.

B. Seen in His humility – “than the angels”

1. As God, He is the One that created them – He created all things, including the angels.

John 1:1–3

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

1 Corinthians 8:6

⁶ But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Colossians 1:16

¹⁶ For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

2. To redeem man back to Himself, He humbled Himself to be lower than the angels for a time.

II. IN SUFFERING – vs. 9B

“FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR”

- A. The phrase “crowned with glory and honour” respond to “for the suffering of death” as a qualifier: because of the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honour.
 1. “Crowned” – to adorn or decorate.
 2. “With glory and honour” – once His substitutionary work was done, He returned back to Glory and was crowned with glory and honour, and “exalted to the right of the Father. There He sits on a throne from which He reigns and will reign forever. He did not glorify Himself. ‘So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee’ (Heb. 5:5).’
- B. In His High Priestly prayer recorded for us in John 17, we

find the issue of His glory given there.

John 17:5

⁵ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

John 17:22

²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

John 17:24

²⁴ Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

C. The sufferings He endured for us are almost indescribable.

1. It began in the Garden of Gethsemane where His heart broke and he sweat as it were “great drops of blood.” The pain of that would have caused most men to at the very least faint, but many would have died then and there.
2. The spit in His face.
3. They plucked out His beard (Isaiah 50:6).
4. They “buffeted” Him – they beat Him with their fists, making Him very bloody, and, depending on how long it went on, would have caused serious deforming injuries to His face, and serious internal injuries.
5. The slapped Him with their open palms after blindfolding Him, and then mocked him, asking who it was that was striking Him.

6. They beat Him with the cat-of-nine-tails, in such a horrific way that His flesh would have been shredded.
 7. They forced a crown of thorns upon His head. On top of all the other agonizing pain He had endured, this would have been horrendous.
 8. His hands and his feet were nailed to a cross, and when that cross was dropped into the hole they had dug, because of how the positioned His body, every joint would have gone out of joint (Psalm 22).
- D. Remember what we heard last week at the conclusion of the message on the story behind the gospel song, “He Could Have Called Ten-thousand Angels”? He was God, yet He suffered all that agony for you and me, even if I was the only one to ever be saved, He would still have done it all.

III. IN SACRIFICE – VS. 9C

“THAT HE BY THE GRACE OF GOD SHOULD TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN”

- A. He tasted death so we wouldn’t have to
1. “Tasted death” – this has the idea of the sense of experience. The phrase is common in Rabbinical writings. In the New Testament, it is only used in Luke 9:27 and here in Hebrews of Christ. Chrysostom (cited by Alford) compares Christ to a physician who first tastes his medicines to encourage the sick to take them.
 2. “For every man” – this is one of several verses that clearly show that grace is available to “every man,”

not just a select few.

How could words affirm more clearly that the atonement made by the Lord Jesus was unlimited in its nature and design? How can we express that idea in more clear or intelligible language? That this refers to the atonement is evident - for it says that he "tasted death" for them. The friends of the doctrine of general atonement do not desire any other than Scripture language in which to express their belief. It expresses it exactly - without any need of modification or explanation. The advocates of the doctrine of limited atonement cannot thus use Scripture language to express their belief. They cannot incorporate it with their creeds that the Lord Jesus "tasted death for every man." They are compelled to modify it, to limit it, to explain it, in order to prevent error and misconception. But that system cannot be true which requires people to shape and modify the plain language of the Bible in order to keep people from error! (Gill)

There is a rule of interpretation referred to as "The Golden Rule of Interpretation" that states:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."—Dr. David L. Cooper (1886-1965)

- B. The substitutionary atonement was given to us by the grace of God.

Conclusion:

He whom none may touch is seized;

He who looses Adam from the curse is bound.

He who tries the hearts and inner thoughts of man is unjustly
brought to trial;

He who closed the abyss is shut in prison.

He, before whom the powers of heaven stand trembling,
stands before Pilate;

The Creator is struck by the hands of his creature.

He who comes to judge the living and the dead is condemned
to the cross.

The destroyer of hell is enclosed in a tomb.

O thou who dost endure all these things in thy tender love,

Who has saved all men from the curse,

O long-suffering Lord, glory to thee.

– Vespers liturgy for Good Friday, "Eastern
Orthodoxy," Christian History, no. 54.