**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (5): The Book Of Better Things**

**“The Humiliation and Glory Of Jesus Christ”**

**Hebrews 2:5-9**

**February 4, 2024**

As we know, Hebrews is a book of ***exaltation***. It glorifies and honors the Lord Jesus Christ from the very beginning. In the opening chapter, for example, our author has made it clear that Jesus is God’s full and final revelation to the world. More than that, He is the One through whom God created all things and the One destined to inherit all things. He radiates God’s glory and is the exact imprint of His character. He is sustaining and carrying everything to its God ordained end. By His sacrifice on the cross He cleansed us from sin, and then sat down at God’s right hand. He is, therefore, greater than all the angels in heaven (1:1-14).

Hebrews is also a book of ***exhortation***. Because of the glorious superiority of Jesus to angels, we are urged to pay close attention to Him (2:1) and exhorted not to neglect the “great salvation” that He has provided (2:3). We are also warned of the dire consequences of devoting ourselves to anything other than Him. It is nothing short of spiritual suicide to neglect the Lord Jesus and to occupy ourselves with lesser things.

But Hebrews is also a book of ***expectation***. In the verses before us today, our author informs us that he is “*speaking of the world to come*” (2:5). That’s a reference to “*the coming age*” (Heb. 6:5), when Christ returns to this earth and rules over the entire creation. It’s also the final phase of that “*so great a salvation*” our author has just described (2:3).

Christ died and rose again to obtain for us an eternal salvation (1:3). We have been cleansed from our sin, reconciled to God the Father, and adopted into His family. But a central component in that salvation is the fulfillment of God’s original plan that humanity should have dominion over the earth.

As we work our way through these verses (vv. 5-9), it becomes clear that this will happen for all who are united to Christ by faith, as He is the true “man” through whom God has worked to bring this glorious plan to fruition. It’s also clear, given the context of these verses, that we, and not the angels, are destined to have all creation put in subjection to our feet. That’s because our destiny is wrapped up in Christ’s; and since no angel has ever been crowned with glory and honor at God’s right hand, Jesus is better than the angels. Here’s our author’s argument:

**A. The Opening Premise (v. 5):** “*It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking*.” The “*world to come*” awaits the time when Christ returns and reigns over the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5). So, if the stewardship of the “*world to come*” has not been entrusted to angels, then to whom has it been entrusted? The answer is – to us. In order to explain this, our author directs our attention to Psalm 8:4-6. But as we shall see, Psalm 8:4-6 is David’s affirmation of God’s original mandate given to Adam in Genesis 1:26-28.

**B. The Divine Intention (2:6-8b):** “*But there is a place where someone has testified: ‘What is man* (*mankind*, NIV, 2015) *that you are mindful of him, the son of man* (*a son of man*, NIV, 2015) *that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet*” (Ps. 8:4-6). There are several important things to note about these verses:

First, the author of Hebrews is careful *not* to name the author of any Scripture that he is quoting. For him, “the human instrument is insignificant, it is really God who has spoken” (Gerald Hawthorne). Therefore, his rather vague introduction to Psalm 8 (“someone testified somewhere”) was not a lapse of memory – especially since he is quoting the Septuagint (LXX) verbatim.

Second, in Psalm 8, David is overcome with wonder as he thinks of the glory and honor that God has bestowed on mankind – in comparison with the beauty and majesty and greatness of God’s natural creation. Hence his question: “*What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*” In this verse, the reference to both “man” and “the son of man” is a collective reference to human beings, or what we today call “mankind.” In Psalm 8, the second line of the verse restates the meaning of the first line, but with slightly different words (“man” and “son of man” have the same meaning; an example of synonymous parallelism).

Third, although man was created “*a little lower than the angels*” (and therefore inferior to them), God crowned him “*with glory and honor and put everything under his feet*.” It’s clear that the language of this Psalm is plainly based on the words of the Creator in Genesis 1:26; “*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the creatures that move along the ground*.” That was God’s declared purpose when He created the first man and woman. He gave them dominion over His creation. So, our author adds, “*In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him*.”

But here we have a serious problem. This has not yet happened. Something has gone terribly wrong. It is obvious that man today is *not* exercising dominion over creation. We cannot control the fish, the fowl, or any of the animals. “In fact,” writes Wiersbe, “man has a hard time controlling himself.” This takes us to the last part of verse 8.

**C. Man’s Condition (2:8c):** “*Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him*.” **Q.** So what happened after God created Adam? **A.** The fall of Adam is what happened, and the devastating consequences of sin and wickedness and rebellion and unbelief, and ultimately death. As one commentator has noted, “The glory designed for human beings was not to become a reality in human history. Instead, human history is littered with the wreckage of destruction and death – a world gone mad” (Thomas Schreiner).

Ultimately, the power of death is the reason why we fail to exercise dominion over God’s creation. So, is there any hope that the original mandate given to Adam (Gen. 1:26) and reaffirmed in Psalm 8 will ever be fulfilled? The answer to that question is found in verse 9.

**D. The Divine Solution (v. 9):** “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone*.” In contrast to the first Adam’s failure, we can now look to Jesus, the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), who is the forerunner of man’s restored dominion over the earth.

When our author applies Psalm 8 to Jesus, he is interpreting these verses typologically. Therefore, the ultimate “man” that David had in mind when he wrote verses 4-6, the “man” who was for a little while made “*lower than the angels*” and has been “*crowned with glory and honor,*” is the man, Jesus Christ. By becoming a human being, the Son of God embraced the lowly status of a man “*for a little while*” (ESV), an obvious reference to the 33 years that He lived on earth. That was the time of His humiliation when He became “*a little lower than the angels.*” He was ridiculed, mocked, betrayed, arrested, scourged, and nailed to a cross. No angel ever suffered such humiliation, and no angel ever died.

But He didn’t deserve to die. His death was the expression of the saving “*grace of God*” on behalf of “*everyone*.” **Q.** And what does “everyone” mean? **A.** The “*everyone*” of verse 9 is the “*many sons*” He will bring to “*glory*” in verse 10; his “*brothers*” (and “sisters”) in verses 11-12, and the “*children of God*” in verse 13. By suffering death in *their* place, he destroyed the power of death that has prevented mankind from having dominion over everything that God originally designed for us!

Then, “*because He suffered death*,” God crowned Him with “*glory and honor*,” where He currently reigns at God’s right hand. So, when we see Jesus, what do we see? We don’t see all of His enemies subdued, nor do we yet see Psalm 8 fulfilled in ourselves. But we *do* see Him seated in power at the right hand of God. By looking to Him in faith and hope, we see that *our* ultimate destiny is wrapped up in Him. For we *know* that if we have trusted in Him, we are united to Him, and will be raised with Him, and will reign with Him over all the earth – forever and ever (Rev. 22:5). **The destiny of the Redeemer *is* the destiny of the redeemed!**

Unfortunately, we live at a time when the last part of verse 8 is still true: “*Yet at present we do not see everything subjected to him*.” Nor has everything been put in subjection to us (and all those united to Him by faith.) *Nature* continues to exert its authority over us. We are victims of the devastating effects of floods and hurricanes and tornadoes and tsunamis and earthquakes and volcanoes. *Sickness and disease* continue to exert authority over us. Our friends and family members suffer from the ravages of brain cancer and paralysis and coronary disease and lymphoma and brittle diabetes. *Death* continues to exert its authority over us. Young fathers and mothers die. Babies and children and teenagers die. Good friends die. Ministers of the gospel die.

**Q.** So, how do we survive the harsh realities and adversities of this world? What’s the solution to our struggles in this life? **A.** It is by looking to Jesus Christ and believing that our ultimate destiny will be fulfilled in Him. Yes, we are still subject to death and disease and war and famine and financial collapse and natural disasters. “*But we see Jesus . . .*” with the eye of faith and a heart filled with hope.

Jesus Christ defeated death. He restored the hope of Psalm 8 for all who are in Him. We will reign with Him, and one day all things will be put in subjection to us. So, we press on, believing in our heart of hearts, that “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose” (Jim Elliot).