

V. Lower Than the Angels

November 14/15/16, 2017 Hebrews 2:5-9

Aim: To appreciate Christ was made a little lower than the angels in His humanity, in order to raise us above the angels in the world to come.

Schreiner: The ‘for’ (*γὰρ, gar*) connects 2:5-18 (and 2:5-9 particularly) with the previous paragraph. The line of argument is as follows. Believers won’t escape judgment if they neglect such a great salvation and devote themselves to the law mediated by angels. Verses 5-9 explain why. Rule over the world hasn’t been given to angels, and thus human beings will only reach their destiny if they belong to Jesus as the son of man. Psalm 8 clearly attests that rule has been given to human beings instead of angels. The psalmist reflects on the creation narrative. Human beings are lower than the angels, but they are destined for glory and honor. Everything in creation is to be subject to human beings. The author reads the creation narrative and Psalm 8 through the lens of redemptive history. All things in creation are not subjected to human beings. The world is flawed and fallen. Still one human being has fulfilled the purpose for which He was destined: Jesus. He was lower than angels in His incarnation but now is crowned with glory and honor. The path to the crown, however, was the cross. Because of His suffering, His death, He is now the exalted one. Hence, His death was not for Himself alone but for every human being who belongs to Him. Human beings will only rule the world as God intended when they triumph over death. But Jesus is the only human being who reigns over death by virtue of His suffering. The rest of humanity will only share in that victory if they belong to Jesus. It is inconceivable, then, that readers would turn to angelic revelation that does not promise rule over the world and forsake the revelation that secures victory over death!

MacArthur: God alone will be Sovereign of the world to come, another indication of His superiority to angels. If angels are next below God, and Jesus is superior to angels, Jesus is obviously God. In addition to continuing the argument about the superiority of Christ above angels, this passage deals with man’s destiny. Man today is lost, totally lost. In losing his relationship to God, he also lost the meaning of his existence. These verses teach us what man’s intended destiny is, how and why it was lost, and how it can be recovered in the exalted Savior.

Phillips: ‘If the death and resurrection of Jesus is the solution to the problems of this world, and if He has already died and been raised again, then why are the problems all still here?’ It is to this question that the writer of Hebrews turns as he continues to exhort his first-century readers. He has been talking about Christ’s superiority to the angels. In demonstrating that point he has made much of the risen Lord Jesus’ present reign at God’s right hand, with all authority and dominion. Now he anticipates an object to his line of argument. His readers, after all, were facing the prospect of violent persecution; how could this be happening, people might wonder, if Christ is now enthroned in power? Our present passage offers a remarkable solution to this problem, providing a sweeping view of all history as it is centered on the death and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

A. The World to Come (Hebrews 2:5)

⁵*For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.*

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1. The Present World

Bruce: A further reason for emphasizing the superiority of Christ to the angels now appears. To angelic beings the present world has been entrusted for administration, but not so the world to come. The biblical evidence for the angelic government of the world is early; it goes back to the Song of Moses in Dt. 32. The Septuagint reading of Dt. 32:8 reads thus: ‘When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the angels of God.’ (The following verse goes on to say that Yahweh has reserved Israel as His own heritage.) This reading implies that the administration of the various nations has been parceled out among a corresponding number of angelic powers. At a later time this implication becomes explicit: in Daniel, for example, we meet the angelic ‘prince of Persia’ and ‘prince of Greece’ (Dan. 10:20), while Michael is ‘the great prince’ who champions the people of Israel (Dan. 10:21; 12:1). In a number of places some at least of these angelic governors are portrayed as hostile principalities and powers—the ‘world rulers of this darkness’ of Eph. 6:12. In Hebrews nothing is said about their possible hostility; all that matters in the argument of this epistle is that they are angels.

Hughes: The seeming insignificance of the original readers is countered by the writer in verse 5-9 as he shows how Christ, through His superiority, gives them massive significance in His ultimate intention for them. The author introduces the subject of God’s ultimate intention for believers with an implicit reference to the Biblical reality that angels co-minister the present world under God’s direction. This is what Jacob’s vision of the ladder was all about, because as he looked at the ladder he saw angels going up to Heaven and coming down (Gen. 28:10-17). The message was clear: there is angelic commerce between Heaven and earth on behalf of God’s people. Apparently the administration is organized so that the angel-princes—for example, the archangel Michael—preside over ordered ranks of angels who administer God’s will and combat evil spirits (cp. Dan. 10:20-21; 12:1; Eph. 6:12).

MacArthur: To get the whole issue in perspective, we should understand that this present world, our present inhabited earth, is ruled by the angels. The chief fallen angel is Satan, who is also prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30). We also know from Ephesians that this world is under tremendous demonic influence (Eph. 6:12). Not only do Satan and his fallen angels have some rule in this world, but even the holy angels now have a kind of sovereignty. Daniel 10 tells of Michael and another holy angel fighting against power fallen angels who were influencing the rulers of Persia and Greece. The rule of this earth, therefore, is now in the hands of both fallen and holy angels. Needless to say, this ‘joint’ rulership involves extreme conflict.

2. The Next World

Hughes: So amazing and significant is the angels’ administration that one would expect, therefore, that they will also administer the rest of God’s kingdom through the ages. But this is not the case, as verse 5 teaches. Angels are not going to rule the world to come! If God does not use the angels in the world to come, then who will He use? And the answer comes as a surprise to those who read on: *man!* God’s ultimate intention is to have His kingdom ruled by redeemed men and women. Those ‘insignificant’ people in that harried house-church, a minuscule dot in the Roman Empire, were going to rule everything!

MacArthur: ‘Subject’ translates the Greek *hupotassō*, primarily a term that referred to arranging soldiers in order under a commander. It also came to be used for any system of administration. God will not turn over the administration of the world to come to angels. This will be the great

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and glorious world, the world of perfection. Whoever reigns in that world will be glorious indeed. But it will not be angels. Their present superiority over men is temporary. The Greek word translated ‘world’ is not the general term *kosmos*, which means ‘system,’ or *aiōn*, meaning ‘the ages.’ The word used here is very specific: it is *oikoumenē*, ‘the inhabited earth.’ There will be, therefore, an inhabited earth to come.

Phillips: ‘The world to come’ is the time when Christ’s lordship will be consummated over all, when all the promises and prophecies of blessings are fulfilled in His final reign. In one sense, that consummation has already been secured, as Christ now reigns at God’s right hand. He is in control of His spiritual kingdom and now reigns over the world (cp. Mt. 28:18), and especially in the lives of those who call Him Lord.

Bruce: ‘The world to come, which is our theme’ is the new world-order inaugurated by the enthronement of Christ at the right hand of God, the world-order over which He reigns from that place of exaltation, the world of reality which replaces the preceding world of shadows. It has been *inaugurated* by Christ’s enthronement, although it is not yet present in its fullness; its consummation awaits the time when Christ will appear to bring His people into the final blessings of the salvation which He has procured for them. If this world to come has not been entrusted to angels for its administration, to whom has it been placed in subjection? To the Son of God, whom His Father has ‘appointed heir of all things’ (1:2).

Schreiner: The world to come, which has been the subject of the letter thus far, will not be subjected to angels. Human beings will rule the world for God. Hence, what the author describes is another way of referring to ‘a kingdom that cannot be shaken’ (12:28). The author makes his case from Psalm 8, which appeals to the creation tradition. Paul makes a similar argument to what we find here in Hebrews, claiming that believers will judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3). In any case, angels haven’t left our author’s mind, showing that chapters 1-2 belong together. It follows, then, that the warning in 2:1-4 is related to both 1:1-14 and 2:5-18. The words ‘that we are talking about’ are important, for they reveal that 1:1-2:4 were a discussion about the world to come (cp. also 1:6). Elsewhere in the letter he refers to the future ‘homeland’ (11:14) and to the city to come (11:16; 13:14), which is also described as ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’ (12:22).

B. The World As Created (Hebrews 2:6-8a)

Bruce: It is not in the role of the Son of God that He now appears, however, but as the Son of Man, in accordance with the words which our author quotes from the eighth psalm.

Schreiner: The writer in the subsequent verses quotes Psalm 8:4-6, showing that rule over the world wasn’t given to angels but to human beings. He then argues that this rule has become a reality in Jesus, the human par excellence.

It has been testified somewhere...

1. Testified (2:6a)

Phillips: The author introduces this passage by saying, ‘It has been testified somewhere.’ The point is not that he is uncertain of its location; rather, it is enough for him that God has said it in holy Scripture.

Schreiner: The introductory formula is interesting. At first glance the wording seems cavalier, ‘But one has somewhere testified.’ The author is not betraying ignorance, as if he doesn’t know

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the text he cites. The letter as a whole demonstrates that he is sophisticated and knowledgeable in his use of the OT. These are not the words of an uneducated novice. Hebrews doesn't focus on the person who uttered the words, or the exact place where they are found. The author wants us to pay heed to the OT Scripture as testimony (*διεμαρτυρατο, diemartyrato*), as the word spoken by God, and hence the human author remains unnamed.

MacArthur: The writer's saying, 'But one has testified somewhere,' does not indicate that he was either ignorant or forgetful of Scripture. He obviously knew the passage well, since he quotes it perfectly from the Septuagint. And Psalm 8, from which he quotes, names David as its composer. Throughout the book of Hebrews, however, no human author is mentioned by name. The writer is so concerned that his Jewish readers understand who really wrote the Old Testament that he ascribes it to no one but God. It is the voice of the Holy Spirit that concerns him; the human author is incidental.

Bruce: The writer to the Hebrews is not careful to name the particular author of a scripture which he may quote. All the Old Testament is to him is a divine oracle, the voice of the Holy Spirit; but as for the human author, the vaguest allusion will suffice: 'someone has borne witness somewhere.'

2. Psalm 8 (2:6b-8a)

... "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Phillips: Here, then, is the situation: Christ is presently reigning of His new kingdom and new humanity, yet at the same time the readers of this epistle, like us, find themselves still subject to the conditions of the old reality. This is the apparent problem, and as he has done before, the writer of Hebrews approaches it by means of a citation from the Psalms. His use of the Old Testament demonstrates that what is happening now is part of God's predetermined and pre-revealed plan for history. In this case he quotes Psalm 8, which he sees fulfilled in the life and achievement of Jesus Christ.

Hughes: The author establishes this as the *ultimate intention* by demonstrating that it is in accord with the *original intention* of God for humanity. His proof is a quotation from the middle of Psalm 8 that celebrates God's original intention for man. He introduces and recites it in verses 6-8a of our text.

Bruce: With these words he introduces Psalm 8:4-6 according to the Septuagint, with the omission of one clause. The one significant difference between the Septuagint and the Hebrew texts comes in the first line of Ps. 8:5; whereas the Hebrew is most naturally translated 'thou hast made him but a little lower than God,' the Septuagint says, 'thou hast made him a little [*or for a little while*] lower than the angels.'

[DSB Note: We can and should read the psalm as applying in multiple layers: 1) first to Adam; 2) then to mankind in general; and ultimately, pointing to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is the last Adam and the perfect Man.]

a) Applied to Adam

Hughes: This marvelous declaration of God's intention can only be appreciated in the full context of the Psalm. The psalmist is contemplating the might expanse of the evening sky,

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studded with its orbs of light, and he is so overwhelmed with the greatness of God that he bursts into psalm—first celebrating God’s majestic name, then declaring God’s worthiness of praise, and wondering at God’s intention for puny little man (vv. 1-6). The psalmist is completely astonished at God’s intention for man. Of course, the intention was not new because it was original spelled out in Genesis 1:26-28.

Phillips: Psalm 8 gives praise to God for His majesty as revealed in creation (v. 1). In comparison, David then reflects upon man’s insignificance and marvels at God’s care for His creature (v. 4). Nonetheless, God’s goodness to humanity is another cause for wonder (vv. 5-6). This is a poetic reflection on what God did in the creation of men and women in His image. His image is manifested in us in part through the dominion God granted man over the garden paradise. We see this in Genesis 1:26.

Bruce: The psalmist is overcome with wonder as he thinks of the glory and honor which God has bestowed on mankind, in making them but little lower than Himself and giving them dominion over all the lesser creation. The language of the psalm is plainly based on the words of the Creator in Gen. 1:26.

Schreiner: The psalm from which these words are taken celebrates the majesty of God and the dignity of human beings. The psalmist considers the universe God created, the moon and the stars, and reflects on the dignity of mankind. Human beings seem so trivial and insignificant in light of the grandeur of the world God has made.

Hughes: God’s original intention for His people is astonishing, especially with what we know today of creation. Think of man’s astonishing *position*: ‘You made him for a little while lower than the angels.’ Puny man is only lower than the angels in that man is in a corporal body and the angels are incorporeal. Man is therefore limited in a way angels are not and has lesser power. But man is not lower spiritually or in importance. What an astounding position for such temporary specks as us!

Hughes: Think of man’s astonishing *honor*: ‘You have crowned him with glory and honor.’ Adam and Eve were the king and queen of original creation. God set them in a glorious paradise and walked with them. Consider man’s amazing *authority*: ‘Putting everything in subjection under his feet.’ This was given to mankind through Adam (Gen. 1:28). Man was given rule over the world. Adam and Eve were God’s viceroys—creature king and creature queen with the responsibility of ordering creation under the Lordship of God.

Hughes: The original intention of God, to say the least, was stupendous. If the intention had been carried out, we descendants of Adam would be living with our primal parents in the same astounding position and honor and authority—a world of kings and queens. The implicit message to the beleaguered church is that we may feel ourselves insignificant, but we are not. We are in God’s image, and He *cares* for each one of us.

b) *Applied to Man*

MacArthur: These quoted verses from Psalm 8 refer to mankind, not to the Messiah, who is not mentioned in the Hebrews passage until verse 9. In verses 6-8 we see God’s planned destiny for mankind in general. Again, the writer beautifully makes his point by using the Old Testament. God made man to be king. Such is man’s destiny. The word ‘concerned’ in Greek has to do with looking toward someone with a view to benefitting him. It is much more than simply a wish or desire for the person’s welfare. It involves active caring.

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Schreiner: In verse 6 the author quotes Psalm 8:5, which poses a question about the significance of human beings. Why does God remember them or care for them? The verb ‘remember’ (*μυνησκη, mimnēskē*) is better rendered as ‘are mindful of,’ for the author is inquiring whether God is concerned about and cares for (*επισκεπτη, episkeptē*) human beings.

Schreiner: The question asked in verse 6 is now answered in verses 7-8. Who and what are human beings? For a limited period of time they are lower than the angels, but they are ultimately destined for glory and honor. The reference to the angels reflects the LXX of Ps. 8:5. The MT reads, ‘you have made him little less than God.’ The MT emphasizes the qualitative difference between God and human beings, but Hebrews, in dependence on the LXX, argues that the subordination of humans to angels is temporary. Ultimately, human beings are ‘crowned...with glory and honor,’ since they are the crown of creation. Psalm 8 is a meditation on the creation account where human beings are made in the divine image and are summoned to rule the world for God. They are intended to rule the world, and that rule will include rule over angels.

MacArthur: When God created man, He made him in one way lower than angels. It is not that he is lower than angels spiritually, or is less loved by God. Nor is he lower than angels in importance to God. Man is lower than angels only in that he is physical and they are spiritual. What does this mean? Just this: angels are heavenly creatures, while man is earthbound. Obviously, this is a limiting and major difference, and man is therefore now of a lower rank. But there is a time limit for this inferiority. The present chain of command is temporary. God has a destiny for man that will elevate him to king, when he will be on at least an equal basis with angels. ‘Crown’ is *Stephanos*, the crown of glory. When God made Adam pure and innocent, He gave Him honor and glory. Someday, He will restore it.

c) *Applied to Messiah*

[DSB Note: Perhaps to be covered in conjunction with introducing verse 9?]

MacArthur: Some take ‘the son of man’ as a reference to Christ, but I think it is simply a parallel to ‘man.’ ‘Son of man’ is often used in the Old Testament to mean mankind.

Schreiner: The two lines of verse 6, representing Hebrew parallelism, are roughly synonymous. So ‘man’ and ‘son of man’ both refer to human beings in the original meaning of the psalm. The words ‘son of man’ do not reflect a messianic title in the psalm, nor do they have that meaning in Hebrews. Still, the translation should retain ‘son of man’ instead of ‘mortals,’ for they may be echoes here of ‘One like a son of man’ in Daniel 7:13.

Bruce: Our author, however, applies these words not to the first Adam but to Christ as the last Adam, the head of the new creation and ruler of the world to come. Here is probably a tacit identification of the ‘son of man’ in Ps. 8:4 with the ‘one like a son of man’ in Dan. 7:13, who receives from the Ancient of Days ‘an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away.’ It is true that in the psalm ‘the son of man’ stands in relation of synonymous parallelism with ‘man’ in the preceding line; but then it is equally true that ‘one like a son of man’ in Dan. 7:13 simply means ‘one like a human being.’ The fact remains that, ever since Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of man, this expression has had for Christians a connotation beyond its etymological force, and it had this connotation for the writer to the Hebrews.

Hughes: We must understand that Psalm 8 was not only a celebration of the significance of man in the vast cosmos—it was also a messianic psalm that had its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. We

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know this because while the term ‘son of man’ originally meant nothing more than man, with the advent of Christ it came to be a messianic reference to Jesus. He repeatedly called Himself ‘the Son of Man.’ He is the son of man *par excellence* and fulfills everything the psalm celebrates regarding man.

Bruce: The conception of Christ as the last Adam is certainly no innovation on our author’s part, and it may not even be original with Paul. When one person fails in the accomplishments of the divine purpose (as, in some degree, all did in Old Testament times), God raises up another to take his place. But who could take the place of Adam? Only one who was capable of undoing the effects of Adam’s fall and thus ushering in a new world-order. The quotation from Ps. 8 is linked with what has gone before in that the clause with which the quotation ends—‘Thou has subjected all things beneath his feet’—echoes the earlier quotation from Ps. 110:1, ‘Till I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Not His enemies only, but the whole creation, will ultimately be brought into manifest subjection to Him.

Bruce: It is as the true representative of humanity that Christ is viewed as fulfilling the language of the psalm, and as fulfilling therewith the declared purpose of the Creator when He brought the human race into being. As mankind’s true representative, accordingly, He must share in the conditions inseparable from the human condition; only so could He blaze the trail of salvation for mankind and act effectively as His people’s high priest in the presence of God. This means that He is not only the one in whom the sovereignty destined for humanity is realized, but also the one who, because of human sin, must realize that sovereignty by way of suffering and death.

C. The World As Fallen (Hebrews 2:8bc)

1. Everything Under Subjection (2:8b)

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

Phillips: The author points out how thorough mankind’s dominion was: ‘Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.’ Such was the lordship man was given over all the creation.

Hughes: Grand and encouraging as God’s original intention was, something has gone wrong, and the writer purposely gives it dramatic expression by using the double negative in his comment on the psalm in verse 8b—‘Now in putting everything in subjection to him, He left nothing outside his control’—thus emphasizing the preceding line that God put ‘*everything* in subjection under his feet.’ There is nothing, he says, in this world that is not under man’s dominion—nothing—nothing!

Schreiner: In the second half of verse 8, the author offers commentary on the psalm. ‘Everything’ really means ‘everything.’ Everything is subject to human beings. But this immediately leads the author to another comment: It is obvious at the present time that the world isn’t under the rule of humans. The rule promised to human beings has not yet been realized in history.

Bruce: Our author does not add, as Paul did, ‘it is evident that He is excepted who put all things under Him’ (1 Cor. 15:27); but this exception is, of course, implied.

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2. Not Everything Under Subjection (2:8c)

At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Phillips: Yet, the writer points out, this is not the situation we currently enjoy. ‘At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.’ Here is a statement of the problem of our race—the problem of dominion lost. What God intended for man in creation is not what we see at present. What an understatement! As we look around, the Bible says, it certainly doesn’t appear as if man has everything under control! If God has placed everything under man’s feet, then something has gone awry.

Hughes: The author intends us to take exception. He wants us to say, ‘Wait a moment! That’s not true!’—and then he verbalizes it for us: ‘At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.’ You bet your life we don’t! Adam sinned, and as a consequence his God-given dominion became twisted. Man’s rule over creation had through the centuries become an ecological disaster. His reign over the animal world is superficial. The problem is, he cannot rule over himself, let alone others.

Bruce: As things are, however, the subjection of the created world to mankind, declared by the psalmist to be God’s ordinance, is not yet fully realized, and even the Man of God’s right hand does not yet command the willing allegiance of all. But the sovereignty which human beings have proved unable to exercise thus far is already wielded on their behalf by the true Son of Man; His suffering and triumph constitute the pledge of His eternal kingdom.

3. The Fall

Phillips: The second and third chapters of Genesis tell us how things went wrong. God had given Adam, the representative of our race, the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He was not to seek autonomy from God; though lord of the garden, he was to acknowledge his own subjection to the Creator. God then attached a threat of punishment: ‘In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’ (Gen. 2:17). Genesis 3 tells the horrible tale of what happened. The serpent deceived the woman, telling her that God gave the command to Adam only to keep them from their rightful destiny. It is always the devil’s aim to persuade us that God really is not good, despite the abundant evidence of His generosity. So it was in the garden. Speaking of God’s command against eating the forbidden fruit, Satan said to her, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing Good and evil’ (Gen. 3:4-5). Aided by Eve, Adam ate the forbidden fruit. He did come to know good and evil: he knew the good he had forfeited and the evil he had gained by rebelling against God. Adam did not become like God, but like the devil whom he had obeyed.

Phillips: Thus man—created by God as His image-bearer, crowned with glory and honor and dominion—became subject to God’s curse even to the point of death. That curse marks mankind even now, with all its frustration and futility. Far from reigning over the creations, each and every one of us instead will return to the dust from which we came. This is the problem of mankind: *Paradise lost*, and with it the dominion and blessing offered by God. This is the problem of history—the basic problem set forth at the beginning of the Bible—the answer to which is unfolded in all the rest of Scripture. God’s creation of mankind, recorded in Genesis 1:26 and poetically celebrated in Psalm 8, has been spoiled by Adam’s sin and the resulting curse of death. ‘At present,’ the writer says, ‘we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him.’

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Schreiner: The author of Hebrews reads Psalm 8, which is itself a meditation on creation, in light of the fall into sin. He doesn't read the Scriptures abstractly but in light of the whole story line found in the OT, for Psalm 8 was written after the fall into sin by Adam and Eve, a fall which brought pain, frustration, futility, and death into the world. Yes, human beings were destined to rule the entire world for God. Everything was supposed to be under the rule and dominion of human beings, but sin intervened to frustrate this rule. The subsequent argument will clarify that death (which is due to sin) thwarts human dominion over the world. The glory designed for human beings has not become a reality in human history. Instead, human history is littered with the wreckage of destruction and death—a world gone mad.

MacArthur: Something drastic happened. Man's revealed destiny was restricted by Adam and Eve's sin. Because all mankind fell in Adam, because he lost his kingdom and his crown, we do not now see the earth subject to man. The earth originally was subject to man, and it supplied all his needs without his having to do anything. He had only to accept and enjoy the earth as it provided for him. Then, tempted by Satan, man sinned, and his tempter usurped the crown. There you see the change in the chain of command. Man fell to the bottom and the earth, under the evil one, now rules man.

D. The World As Redeemed (Hebrews 2:9)

⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

MacArthur: Man's revealed destiny, restricted by sin, has been recovered by Christ.

Phillips: Man was created in glory and honor and dominion, but has fallen from that estate. The resources needed for the recovery of Paradise are now beyond the reach of his guilty and cursed hands. According to the Bible, there is only one solution to this problem, the remedy that comes not from man, but from God, not from the earth but from heaven (cp. Rom. 5:6-8). This is what the writer to Hebrews is saying. On the one hand, there is man, captured in the darkness of his Paradise lost. Then onto the stage God sends His own Son, the New Man and Second Adam. He is the answer both to man's problem and to the problem of history. He is the great, the last, the only hope of a dying race; in Him is the fulfillment not only of man's promised destiny but of God's plan as set forth in Psalm 8. History has become *His story*. Jesus is the new Adam of the new creation; what Adam lost He has regained. All who are found in Him through faith will partake of the new humanity's reclaimed glory and honor and dominion.

Hughes: What about God's intention? Will man's alleged significance ever be achieved? The answer is a resounding 'Yes!' that echoes for all eternity. Here our text takes a great turn in the transition between verses 8 and 9: 'At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Him [Jesus]....' 'We do not yet see...we see Him.' Not only is God's *original intention* achieved, but His *ultimate intention* is achieved in Christ, the second Adam.

Schreiner: The destiny for human beings, however, is revealed in the person of the true human being—Jesus. He was lower than angels during His incarnation, but now He rules at God's right hand and is therefore crowned with glory and honor. The rule He enjoys is because of the death that He died, and the death that He died was not for Himself alone; He experienced death for everyone.

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[DSB Note: Now go back and apply vv. 6-8a to Jesus as Messiah].

Phillips: Jesus' life and story can be organized into three distinct phases, the first two of which are set forth here: His humiliation and exaltation to the right hand of God.

1. Jesus' Humiliation (2:9a)

⁹*But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus...*

Phillips: First is Jesus' humiliation, which appears here with the words 'who was made lower than the angels.' We should remember that Jesus was the second person of the Godhead before His birth at Bethlehem. He is eternally God the Son. His existence before the incarnation was one of perfect glory, yet He took up mortal flesh for the sake of His redeeming work, humbling Himself beneath the angels as a man. The nadir of His humiliation came at the cross, where our Lord died a death that was shameful before men and cursed before God. Bearing the guilt of our sins, He was afflicted with the whole of God's wrath.

Hughes: The initial phrase of verse 9, 'But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels,' was fulfilled in Jesus' incarnation. But whereas the height of *exaltation* for man is in being made a little lower than the angels, it was for Jesus the depth of His *humiliation*. Jesus stooped to reach down to the height of man's glory! Significantly, this is the first use of the name 'Jesus' in the Book of Hebrews, and it is emphatic, stressing His humanity and His work of salvation. It is the same name given to Him by Gabriel at His birth (Mt. 1:21), and it means, 'the Lord is salvation.'

Schreiner: Jesus was 'made lower than angels for a short time.' Here the author reflects on Jesus' life on earth, His incarnation. As a human being He was not superior to angels during His life on earth but placed beneath them, for He, like all other human beings, was subject to death. Jesus' death, however, was for the sake of others, for He did not deserve to die since He was the sinless one (4:15; 7:26-27). His death, therefore, represented the grace of God.

2. Jesus' Exaltation (2:9b)

...namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death...

Phillips: In response to Christ's obedience unto death, God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand. This is the second phase of Christ's history. He is, verse 9 says, 'crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death.' In raising Christ from the dead, God the Father honored Jesus' perfect obedience, vindicated His cause, accepted His sacrifice, and established His reign over the new humanity of which He is both Lord and forerunner, the firstfruits of God's harvest. Death was not the victor over Jesus Christ, but rather the victim. Even now the Lord Jesus reigns in this second and present phase of His great and saving history, bestowing eternal life through the gospel on all who come to faith in Him.

Hughes: The next phrase, 'But we see him...crowned with glory and honor' was fulfilled, as verse 9 goes on to say, 'because of the suffering of death' (cp. Phil. 2:8-10). So we see that in Christ man's glorious potential was realized. Everything was put under His feet. As we look around we certainly see that not everything is subject to man, but we see Jesus exalted, and all creation is subject to Him. And with this the possibility of man's fulfilling God's ultimate intention is made possible.

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Schreiner: Jesus' death, however, was not the end of the story. He has now been exalted to God's right hand, as Ps. 110:1 prophesied (cp. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2)! The role ascribed to human beings in creation, which Psalm 9 reaffirms, has now been realized in Jesus Christ. He currently reigns at God's right hand, crowned with glory and honor. Certainly His reign has not come in its fullness. All His enemies are not yet subjected to Him. Nevertheless, in the reign of Jesus, we see the destiny of the human race, the destiny of all those who belong to Jesus. Death will not conquer. Remarkably, Jesus' rule over all and His exaltation take place because He suffered death. Death can only be conquered through death. The death deserved by human beings can only be undone by one who dies as a human being. The dominion of death is severed only through the suffering and death of the high priest. The author of Hebrews does not provide a full argument here, but it is evident that death is due to sin.

Bruce: For there, at God's right hand He sits enthroned, and 'crowned with glory and honor.' Jesus, who became man; Jesus, who was made 'a little lower than the angels'; Jesus, who endured death—this Jesus has been raised to the place of highest exaltation, and reigns there until all opposition to His sovereignty comes to an end. Then indeed in the fullest degree will be seen 'all things subjected to him.' Moreover, it is precisely because of His humiliation, suffering, and death that He has been invested with heavenly glory (cp. Phil. 2:9). The phrase 'because of the suffering of death' suggests that the crowning followed the suffering as its divinely appointed end than the crowning took place *with a view to* the suffering of death.

3. Jesus' Consummation (2:9c)

a) Taste Death

...so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Hughes: The way this happens is revealed in the final phrase of verse 9—'so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.' 'Taste' is a Hebrew metaphor that does not mean 'to sample' but 'to partake fully.' Jesus' real death for us procured our reign (cp. Rom. 5:17; Eph. 2:6-7). Because we have been redeemed, our solidarity with Christ is so close that it is described as being 'in' Him. Paul uses that designation some 169 times in his writings. The term suggests an exchange, an impartation from Christ. Being 'in Christ,' the redeemed are so united with Him that they share in the glory and dominion of His reign.

Schreiner: The word 'taste' (*γευσῆται, geusētai*) here means 'experienced,' signifying that Jesus faced death in its fullness with all its horrors. There are no grounds for the notion that 'taste' suggests death was partial or limited. Death signifies the frustration, futility, and despair of human existence, and hence Jesus died to free us from the consequences of sin. The author emphasizes that Jesus died for the sake of 'everyone' (*ὑπερ πάντος, hyper pantos*). The subsequent context will clarify what the writer means by 'everyone.' It seems that he has in mind everyone without distinction instead of everyone without exception. Jesus' death frees from futility and the fear of death the sons brought to glory (2:10), His brothers (2:11-12), the children given to Him by God (2:13), i.e., all those who belong to Abraham's family (2:16).

Bruce: As for the clause 'that...He should taste death for all,' it does indeed express purpose—not, however, the purpose of the crowning by itself, but rather the purpose of the whole sequence of preceding events, the humiliation, passion, and glory combined. Because the Son of Man suffered, because His suffering has been crowned by His exaltation, therefore His death avails for all.

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Phillips: Hebrews 2:9 speaks of Jesus ‘suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.’ Jesus’ death was not like the death of any other man, for He was not merely man but also God. He was not a sinner, but the spotless Lamb of God. By His death Jesus took God’s curse against sin upon Himself—the very curse that had ruined mankind. In the fall, man suffered death; but Christ came into the world as God and man that He might take that death upon Himself and thus deliver us out of death and into life (cp. 2 Cor. 5:21).

b) Eternal Life

Phillips: Jesus’ exaltation is what is going on in this world right now, and it sets up the answer to the question with which I began: ‘Why is this world still such a mess?’ If Christ’s death and resurrection is the solution to this world’s ultimate problem, and if He has died and has been raised again, then why do we still see these problems? The answer is that there is a third act to Jesus’ saving ministry that remains yet to come. His story is not yet complete, and in its culmination the history of this world comes to its glorious climax. Jesus suffered humiliation for us and then God exalted Him on high. But there is a third stage yet to come. The writer of Hebrews had it in mind at the beginning of this passage when he wrote, ‘It was not to angels that God subjected the world to come’ (2:5).

Phillips: Does Christ reign now? Yes, but not visibly so. In this sense, the words applied to mankind also apply to Him now: ‘At present, we do not see everything in subjection to Him’ (v. 8). Not every knee is bowed before Jesus; not every tongue confesses Him lord of all. Yet Christ does reign spiritually over this age. He is advancing against His enemies with the sword of the gospel in His mighty hand. He is leading His own out of this present evil age, a people set apart to Himself, who inherit eternal life even in the midst of a realm of death, who belong not to this world but to the world that is yet to come.

Hughes: The writer is doing his best in this section to comfort the afflicted in the beleaguered little church. They feel like an unwanted speck among the millions of the Roman Empire. But that is an illusion. The reality is, they are indeed submicroscopic spots in a huge, fallen, universe, but as God’s children they are objects of astounding attention, for God is minutely mindful of them and cares for them in the greatest detail. Not only that, He has an *ultimate intention* for them that no angel will ever attain—to rule the world to come! No Roman emperor in all his glory could experience a fraction of the glorious reign that is to be theirs. Moreover, the reign has already begun because they are now ‘in Christ.’ Christ on the cross is the measure of their worth. Christ on the throne is a prophecy of their significance and sure dominion.

Phillips: Here then, is the final answer and it is coming soon—Christ is coming again with glory to consummate His reign, to triumph over all His enemies—sin and death and the devil and this present evil world—all of which will be placed under His feet and destroyed, making way for the new creation in holiness and light. Already this coming triumph is working in the lives of His people as they turn away from sin, in the life of the church as it receives more and more new believers, and even in the secular culture as Christians live as salt and light to extend Christ’s reign.

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E. The World for You

1. Summary

Schreiner: We learn from this text that human beings are magnificent. As Francis Schaeffer said, ‘Human beings are wonderful because they are made in God’s image.’ In a world where human life is cheap and is often discarded casually or destroyed brutally, the author of Hebrews reminds us that human beings are the crown of creation. They were made to rule the world for God. Still the world has gone awry. More precisely, human beings have strayed from their calling. They were meant to rule and even to rule over angels, but sin and death have intervened. The world is not marked by peace, order, and harmony but by chaos and massive evil. The solution to the evil that has broken into the world comes from one man since Jesus Christ has tasted death for everyone. Through His death He now reigns at God’s right hand, showing that death has been dethroned.

2. Application

Phillips: This raises a vital question: To which age do you belong? In which age have you placed your hopes and dreams, your treasure and your salvation? If your trust is in this world, in this age, then you will suffer its fate when Christ comes in glory to separate His own from those lost in the guilt of their sin. The old world, in which we now live, is the one that is tangible to our senses, to our sight and our touch and to our whole mortal existence. But when Jesus was crowned on high, this present age lost its claim on all who trust in Him, even though it grinds forward toward its pre-appointed end. The age to come, the age of the glory of Christ, is appointed to take the place of this passing world, and through faith in Christ we are made citizens of that new creation.

Phillips: To the eyes of the world it is indeed true: ‘We do not yet see everything in subjection to Him.’ But the eyes of our faith see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, reigning over the history which points to Him and leads to His soon return, when every eye will see Him. This is the ‘already/not yet’ of the Christian life. Everything is *already* ours in Christ, though *not yet* realized in our experience. But by faith we see Jesus and spiritually partake of all the blessings of His coming reign.

Phillips: Let us, then, ensure that we do not belong to this judged and passing world, that we escape the guilt of Adam’s failure, and our own sin through faith in Christ. Let us not look back upon this present evil age with longing, but back only to the cross with gratitude, where Christ suffered death for us and broke the teeth of this present evil age. And let us look forward to the day of triumph, when Christ will come again in glory, the King coming to reign in righteousness, peace, and joy forevermore. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Hughes: This is meant to be our comfort today as well. On the authority of God’s Word you are important and of infinite value. You are just a little lower than the angels. You will be crowned with glory and honor. Everything will be put under your feet. You may say, ‘How can this be? I don’t *see* it.’ ‘But we see [Jesus], who for a little while was made a little lower than the angels, [now] crowned in glory and honor.’ He is our promise—He is God’s ultimate intention for us!

For next time: Read Hebrews 2:10-18.