



6: A Better Man

"For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying:

"What is man that You are mindful of him,
Or the son of man that You take care of him?
You have made him a little lower than the angels;
You have crowned him with glory and honour,
And set him over the works of Your hands.
You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."

Hebrews 2:5 – 9

At the start of of chapter 2 the writer of the Book of Hebrews left his main line of reasoning to give us an opportunity to think about the implications of what he had written up to that point. Now in verse 5, with the word "for", he returns to it.

He has told us that Jesus is better than the angels and at this point someone might object, "But don't we believe that Jesus was a man? Aren't men lower than angels?" The writer, who is in the business of constructing a watertight argument, deals with that question by demonstrating that yes, Jesus became a man, but even as a man He is better.

Who Rules The World To Come?

"The world to come." is a phrase that would have been familiar to Jews of the day. It was their hope. it was what they looked forward to. They looked forward to a perfect world-wide kingdom ruled by the Messiah with righteousness and justice: a kingdom that would be the fulfilment of all God's promises, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ. That that is what's in the writer's mind is confirmed by

the words, "of which we speak." At many points through the Book he will have things to say about that coming kingdom.

He begins with a bold statement of fact. He writes, "The world to come will not be ruled by angels", and right away that begs a question. If it's not to be angels, who will rule there? To find the answer the writer takes us back into the Old Testament to Psalm 8. He quotes verses 4 to 6.

The quote is introduced with the words, "But one testified in a certain place, saying..." We would probably say something like, "It says in Psalm 8." The writer's way of putting it doesn't mean that he couldn't remember where he got the quote from. Take it as just the way they would have spoken in those days.

In the first part of the Psalm — it's not quoted in the Book of Hebrews but the words would have been very familiar to those who first read it — David wrote about how the greatness of God is displayed in the things He has made.

"O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!"

Psalm 8:1

It was that thought that led him to ask the question, "What is man?"

"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,
What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?"

Psalm 8:3 – 4

In comparison to the rest of God's creation and placed alongside God Himself man is very tiny and insignificant: why would God even give him a thought? But the word translated "mindful" means not just to remember but to remember with affection and to "visit" is to care for or help. So the question is not just why would God even give man a thought, it is, why would such a great God have compassion toward man and care for him in the way He does? The thought David was focussed on and the thought the writer of Hebrews wants us to be focussed on is not man's insignificance but God's amazing compassion for man and, as we're about to see, His high plans for him.

The Psalm, as quoted, goes on to say three things about man.

Man Is Lower Than The Angels

First, God has made man a little lower than the angels. The past tense tells us that there was a point in the past when God made man lower than the angels: it was not always that way. The word "little" can be understood in two ways. A little lower than the angels could mean inferior to the angels by a small degree or it could mean inferior for a little while. Both things are true but since the same expression is used of Jesus in verse 9, it makes more sense to put our emphasis "for a little while."

- ◆ *In what sense is man lower than the angels?*
- ◆ *When and why, do you think, did God make man lower than the angels?*

Man Is Crowned With Glory And Honour

The second thing David said about man in the verses quoted from Psalm 8 is that he is crowned with glory and honour. It was in Eden that God gave man authority to rule over all creation (Genesis 1:26): it was His purpose from the beginning that man should be crowned with glory and honour.

- ◆ *What, practically does it mean for man to be crowned with glory and honour?*

Man Has Authority Over Everything

The third thing said about man is that absolutely everything God has made has been put under his authority. What was said to him at the end of Genesis 1 has not been rescinded. That's the point the writer of the Book of Hebrews wants us to take from his quote from Psalm 8 and he confirms that by adding his own comment.

"For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him."

Hebrews 2:8

- ◆ *What do you envisage it will be like when everything is in subjection to man?*

But...

But of course someone is bound to say, well it's not happening, there's not much sign of everything being under man's authority. The writer forestalls that by raising the point himself when he writes, "but now we do not yet see all things put under him." Instead, we see Jesus.

Look At Jesus

In verse 9 we are told what, in particular, it is about Jesus that the writer wants us to focus on. We're told that Jesus was made lower than the angels for a little while so that He could suffer death on behalf of everyone and that because of the death He suffered He is now crowned with glory and honour. So:

Jesus was made lower than the angels just as man was made lower than the angels: In other words, Jesus became a man, equal in rank and honour to all men.

Jesus became a man for a reason: so that "by the grace of God, He should taste death for everyone." To "taste" death is not merely to sample it; it is to fully experience it in full.

Jesus is now crowned with glory and honour, because He suffered death for everyone, as Paul says in Philippians 2:

"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:8 – 11

Summing Up

Summing up then, man was made to rule with full authority over everything God has made but we don't see that happening yet. What we do see is Jesus who became a man and died in our place crowned with glory and honour and reigning with all authority. The implication is that because He, as a man, now reigns with all authority, all men will one day reign with him. But the point is that even as a man Jesus has been exalted to a position high above that of every angel: even as a man Jesus is better.

- ◆ *What practical difference should what you have learned from these verses make to your life?*