

A STUNNING PORTRAIT OF JESUS (vv. 8-9)

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

1. While Psalm 8 presents a stunning portrait of humanity, it offers an even more stunning portrait of Jesus. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that what we do not at present see in ourselves, we do see in Jesus. What does the writer of Hebrews tell us, "at present we do not see?" What do we see in Jesus?
2. In what ways is Jesus everything God created us to be?
3. How does Jesus fulfill our vocation (reflecting the heart and character of God and stewarding the works of his hands for his glory and the benefit of others)?
4. What has Jesus done so that we might be everything God created us to be?
5. What would the renewed image of God in us look and feel like?
6. What would the renewed rule over the works of God's hands look and feel like?
7. What is your most important takeaway from this study?



The writer of Hebrews opens his letter by declaring, Jesus is "as superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs (1:4)." In chapter 2, however, we find a stunning reversal. "But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels (2:9)." While the author of Hebrews has been talking about Christ's exalted position at the Father's right hand. He now turns his attention toward the humility of the Son in leaving the comfort of heaven to enter our suffering and humanity.

Paul captures the heart of Jesus' humiliation and exaltation in an ancient Christian hymn.

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:3-11).

Jesus laid aside the glory and grandeur of heaven to identify with us, redeem us, and restore us. He was made lower than the angels.

ANGELS AND THE WORLD TO COME (v. 5)

⁵ It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.

The "world to come" is a reality that was inaugurated with the coming of Christ and will be consummated when he returns. As believers, we live in the tension between the present evil age and the age to come.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that the world to come will not be subject to angels. Angels do, however, play a significant role in the present age. In Deuteronomy 32:8, Moses tells us, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance... he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God (ESV)." "Sons of God" is almost certainly a reference to angels or heavenly beings. It seems that angels play a role in the affairs of the nations. In the book of Daniel, we see angels who are assigned to specific countries or territories. In Daniel 10:20, we are introduced to the "Prince of Persia" and the "Prince of Greece." Michael is referred to as "The Great Prince of your people (Daniel 12:1)." We also see Michael and an unnamed angel contending with the Prince of Persia (Daniel 10:22), so not all angels are on the same side. Some are well-intentioned toward us, and others are not. Paul reminds us, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12)." In another obscure reference, Paul asks the Corinthians, "Do you not know that we will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3)?" No, Paul. We did not know that! We were created to rule over all the works of God's hand, but for the time being, because of the fall, we are subject to the powers of this age. The good news is that Christ "disarmed the powers and authorities" by making "a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15)."

1. What does it mean for us to live as citizens of both "this world" and the "world to come?" What are some of the inevitable tensions we will face as people who are living between two worlds?
2. What does the fact that we were created to rule over God's creation but are now subject to the powers and authorities of this age tell us about the depths to which humanity has fallen?
3. How do we experience Christ's triumph over the powers and authorities of this age right now?
4. What will Christ's triumph over the powers and authorities look like in the age to come?
5. C. S. Lewis observed, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other

is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." (Introduction to The Screwtape Letters).

What happens when we are oblivious to the powers and authorities of this age?

What happens when we become more enamored with the powers and authorities than we are the one who has triumphed over them by the cross?

A STUNNING PORTRAIT OF HUMANITY (vv. 6-8)

⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

*"What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
a son of man that you care for him?"*

*⁷ You made them a little lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and honor*

⁸ and put everything under their feet."

The writer of Hebrews begins his exploration of Christ's humiliation or condescension with an exploration of Psalm 8. In its original setting, Psalm 8 was a meditation on the exalted role of humanity in creation. David is stunned that God would be mindful of humanity, much less elevate him over the rest of creation. David has the creation account in mind. We were created in God's image and likeness to reflect his heart and character and steward the works of his hands for God's glory and the benefit of others.

Interestingly, the word translated angels in the original text is Elohim. It can be translated as God, angels, or heavenly beings. The Hebrew text could just as easily be translated, "You made them a little lower than God, which is our actual position in creation—subordinate to no one but God. That is, until we willingly gave ourselves to the "god of this age."

1. What does it mean to reflect God's image and likeness?
2. What does it mean to rule over and subdue (or faithfully steward) the rest of creation?
3. How well, would you say, we are fulfilling our vocation?
4. How has the fall impacted the wisdom and grace with which we rule over creation and our overall ability to oversee creation?