

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by

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BOOK TWO

THE MORAL GLORY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER TWO

THE PERFECT SON OF MAN

Hebrews 2:1-18

“Jesus . . . was made [for a little time] lower than the angels for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

Hebrews 2:1-4 is a parenthetical exhortation based on chapter 1; whereas 2:5-18 continues to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to angels by showing that, in the age to come, the angels will be subject to the humanity which our Lord took upon Himself when He **“was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”**

The Danger of Neglecting “So Great Salvation”

2:1-4

The very first word of chapter 2 links that which follows with the description of the personal glory of the Son of God as presented in chapter 1:

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip [drift away]” (2:1).

The picture here is that of a ship which drifts past the harbor into the storm at sea, or past the moorings into the strong current of the river. The application is plain: the strong current of persecution which the Hebrews of apostolic times faced was a very real source of danger to those who had given only intellectual assent to the gospel of Christ.

“The word spoken by angels” (v. 2) was the Law of Moses. (See Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19). Since the transgressor of the law received punishment which he deserved for his disobedience, **“how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”** (vv. 2, 3)?

In this warning we have another of the many striking contrasts of the epistle. The law was great and awe-inspiring; but the gospel of the Son of God is greater by far!

1. *It was spoken by the Lord* (v. 3).

Note Paul's own insistence here that the gospel was originally proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Himself, and not, as some would have us believe, by Paul or any other apostle. To His Father in heaven our Lord] Jesus said in the days of His flesh, "**I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me**" (John 17:8).

2. *It was confirmed by the apostles* (v. 3).

3. *It was witnessed to by miracles through the Holy Spirit* (v. 4).

- God thought it;
- The prophets taught it;
- The devil fought it;
- The Lord wrought it;
- The Spirit brought it home to our hearts;

Therefore, it is great. To reject God's grace is a more serious matter than to break His Holy law.

The Son of Man Is Better Than the Angels

2:5-18

Continuing the argument that Christ is superior to angels, the Holy Spirit, in 2:5-18, quotes four passages from the Hebrew Old Testament that prove our Lord's perfect humanity, as well as His superiority over all the angelic hosts.

1. *Christ, not angels—Ruler in the world to come*

"For unto angels hath he not put in subjection the world [Greek, 'the inhabited earth'] to come, whereof we speak" (v. 5),

When the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom over the inhabited earth (Daniel 2:44), it will be administered not by angels but by the Son of Man and "**his brethren,**" sons of God, brought by Him and with Him to glory.

God will never give up His original purpose in the creation of man, now fallen and under sentence of death. He already has a Man in the glory, in every way suited to express the image of God and to bear rule over the works of His hand. He has all things under His feet, according to Psalm 8, though we see not yet all brought into subjection to Him. This is the age of testimony and of faith in that testimony; "**the world to come**" will be the age of public display.

In the meantime, He is "**bringing many sons unto glory**" to a position higher than that of angels (verse 10).

When He reigns, His sons will share His throne. But as they are still in the place of trial and temptation, He who partook of flesh and blood in His earthly life, and who is still Man, though in a glorified condition, having made Himself acquainted when here with the sufferings of His brethren, succors them and carries them through victoriously. Though they are still in weakness, **“he is not ashamed to call them brethren,”** because He, the Sanctifier, and they, the sanctified, **“are all of one,”** that is, one Father, God, even as the cherubim and the mercy seat were all beaten out of one piece of gold.

The sanctified are those separated unto God by faith in Christ. Sanctification, in the Bible, is threefold:

(1) It is *redemptive*—the work of the Holy Spirit in setting sinners apart unto salvation, as in II Thessalonians 2:13;

(2) It is *positiona*— with respect to our standing before God, as suggested in Hebrews 10:10;

(3) It is *practical*—the result of the daily, hourly cleansing by the Word of God, as suggested by our Lord in John 17:17, and by Paul in Ephesians 5:26.

Scripture does not teach, however, the ultimate attainment of sinless perfection for the believer in this life.

2. *Christ’s perfect humanity “for the suffering of death . . . for every man”*

In describing His humanity, the Holy Spirit uses our Lord’s earthly name, **“Jesus”** (v. 9), which means **“Saviour.”** It is the name of the lowly Man of Galilee, the more striking when compared with His names of Deity used in chapter 1; and yet **“Jesus”** contains the word **“Jehovah.”** It is impossible to separate our Lord’s humanity from His deity!

The eternal Son of God became the perfect Son of Man in order to die. The emphasis here upon God’s purpose in the incarnation is marked:

“ . . . for the suffering of death” (v. 9)

“ . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (v. 9)

“ . . . [made] perfect through sufferings” (v. 10)

“ . . . that through death he might destroy [literally, ‘render powerless’] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (v. 14)

“ . . . to make reconciliation [propitiation] for the sins of the people” (v. 17).

Because, as the God-Man, He offered one sufficient sacrifice for sins; because He ever liveth to make intercession for His blood-bought sons; because He deals gently with them; therefore, He is qualified to be **“a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God”** (v. 17).

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted” (v. 18).

The Son of God did not become an angel—to redeem the fallen angels— when Christ was born in Bethlehem. As Man, He condescended to be made for a little time lower than the angels for the suffering of death.

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (v. 16).

Remember that the word **“destroy”** (v. 14) means *“to render powerless,”* or *“to bring to nought.”* It does not mean annihilation (cf. Revelation 20:10). The thought of this passage is forcefully expressed in I Corinthians 15:54-57. But in addition to that, Christ robbed Satan of the power of death, in order that His children might be delivered from the fear of death in this life (Read all of I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 1:21, 23; II Corinthians 5:8).

3. The moral glory of the Son of Man

That the eternal God, Creator and Lord, described in chapter 1, should pass by the angels, who are higher than man in power and glory, stooping to become man, opens up the display of new glories, glories which would have been impossible except for this self-emptying—not of His Godhead, but of the form of it when He appeared in the likeness of a servant (Philippians 2:5-8).

These new glories are exhibited by the moral glory of His human life on earth, the record of which is presented in the four Gospels.

Outside of these accounts, the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells more fully on this theme than does any other portion of the New Testament. Whatever our Lord touched in His earthly humiliation, He made glorious. Whatever relationships He sustained, He was always Himself in them, though His essential dignity was veiled, except to faith. Thus in His human existence here below a new kind of glory came into evidence.

It was the moral glory of the Son of Man on which heaven dwelt lovingly, watching His movements as **“a sweet savor of Christ”** went up from that life in this world made obnoxious by sin. The Gospels are not the record of what men saw in Jesus, but of what the Father saw in Him. He was the Object of heaven’s observation, heaven opening upon Him, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews the heavens are open to our view that we might see the Man who glorified God here below, now in the place of honor on high.

There were only a few who appreciated the **“poor”** man of Psalm 41—a prophetic picture of the Messiah. He was **“a root out of a dry ground,”** having **“no form nor comeliness.”** The masses saw no beauty in Him that they might desire Him (See Isaiah 53:2). Only those in whom the Father had been secretly at work could say, **“We beheld his glory.”** Although His deity was concealed under the veil of His humanity, the glory of grace and truth shone forth. His dependent humanity became the vehicle through which the indwelling Father could declare Himself and open His heart to man. As the hidden beauties of light are revealed by a lens through which it may pass, so it was that the obscure and lowly men of Galilee were privileged to see this glory.

Thus our Lord in the second chapter of Hebrews is seen taking up suffering and giving a new meaning to it. Many and varied were the sufferings of the Son of Man. As the Captain, or Author, of our salvation, He was made “**perfect through sufferings**” (v. 10). A similar statement is written in 5:8, 9:

“. . . Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

As Son of God it was His prerogative to command, but as Son of Man He followed a new course of action and learned obedience! It was not that He had to learn to obey as do fallen men. There was no principle of lawlessness in Him, but as the Holy Spirit wrote through Paul,

“Christ Jesus . . . became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

What moral glory! In a world where everybody aims at self-exaltation—the nature of the “**man of sin**”—that One who originally was in the form of God, but took upon Himself the likeness of a bond servant and as found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, becoming acquainted with human sorrows, trials and temptations. He was made perfect through offerings. He was graduated from that school, so to speak.

What a sight to move our hearts! In the second chapter of the epistle we see Him stooping to be made lower than the angels that, as Man, He might be able to take up the problem of the ruin brought into God’s world by the Fall. He wanted to present to His Father a world in which He could once more delight, not one defiled by sin and shadowed by death as that into which He entered.

“The world to come” will be very different, even as He willed it. Verse 5 says that we speak now of that world. We love to speak of it. Faith walks in the light of it, and overcomes the present because it is sure of the future order, when the once humbled Son of Man, according to the counsels of God, will be in complete control.

When He is thus seen, His brethren, of whose flesh and blood He partook, whose path He trod, whose trials He endured, will be in that same glory with Him. He is bringing them into it, educating them for it. Although they are still in the making as unfinished articles even now **“he is not ashamed to call them brethren”** (vv. 11, 12, 17). He delights to call them His **“sons,”** His **“children”** (vv. 10, 13). He comes into their midst when they assemble in His name to sing the Father’s praise, just as He will lead their praises in the glory by and by (Cf. Matthew 18:20; Revelation 1:13). Indeed, did not the Lord Jesus manifest unto us the Father’s name (John 17:6)?

As they are being exercised in a life of trust, to walk by faith and not by sight, to refuse the visible for the unseen and eternal, He also would go that way, saying, **“I will put my trust in him”** (v. 13).

Thus in His life of trust He was made like unto His brethren.

How He glorified this life of poverty, dependent on divine supplies! When He multiplied the loaves and fishes, it was in faith. He did not ask the Father to fill a great storehouse with bread and fish. Five barley loaves and two small fishes in His hands, and no more! Each handing of them to the disciples for them to pass on to the multitude was in faith, believing that there would be still the humble provision which He had placed into the Father's mighty hands for His benediction. He took them afresh, with each act of giving, out of the Father's hands. So it was with Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. They had never more than a handful of flour each day, sufficient only for the next meal, till the famine ended.

Christ "**suffered being tempted.**" What a profound mystery! I take it that the very holiness and immaculate purity of the humanity of our Lord caused the suffering. There was no sin in Him to sympathize with the evil suggestion. His holy nature was only pained by it. What agonies He must have suffered thus! The idea of entering into temptation would be loathsome to us also, if we allowed His Spirit to rule in our hearts. But alas! We often secretly delight in the evil which grace delivers us from committing. What moral glory in the silent suffering of Him who shrank from every contact, even in thought, with that which was displeasing to God!

4. *Four Old Testament prophecies of the perfect humanity of the Son of Man*

Now turn again to the four Old Testament prophecies quoted in Hebrews 2, in order to prove the perfect humanity of our Lord:

<i>The Prophecy</i>	<i>The Quotation in Hebrews 2</i>	<i>Proofs of Christ's Humanity</i>
a. Psalm 8:4-6	verses 6-8	Jesus ". . . a little [time] lower than the angels "
b. Psalm 22:22	verse 12	Jesus " in the midst " of His brethren
c. Isaiah 8:17 (cf. Psalm 16:8-11; 40:7, 8)	verse 13a	Jesus' trust in His Father—a human experience
d. Isaiah 8:18	verse 13b	His identification with His children

A careful study of these four prophecies will yield rich reward; for our purpose here we mention only a few highlights as they have to do with our lesson.

The inscription of Psalm 8 tells us that David was the human author of this Messianic prophecy. There is doubtless a double reference in verses 3-8:

(1) to the dominion which God gave to Adam, only part of which fallen man retains;

(2) primarily a reference to the dominion which is Christ's, as Hebrews 2:6-9 abundantly proves. (Cf. also Psalm 8:2 with Matthew 21:16).

Psalm 22:1-21 is a graphic prophecy of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, quoted freely in the four Gospels (Cf. Psalm 22:1 with Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:6-8 with Matthew 27:39-44; Psalm 22:13-17 with the crucifixion scene; 2:18 with Matthew 27:35 and related passages).

However, verses 22-31 of Psalm 22 speak of our Lord's resurrection and coming kingdom. Seen in its setting, verse 22, our second quotation in Hebrews 2, becomes all the more wonderful.

Because He became one with His brethren, because He died and lives forevermore—only because of Calvary and the empty tomb—can our Lord sing praise unto His Father in the midst of His brethren!

The third quotation, from Isaiah 8:17, concerning the implicit trust of the Son of Man in His Father in heaven, hardly needs further comment here. As we read on in Hebrews, we find our Lord's humanity evidenced also by His prayers (5:7). Trust and prayer go hand in hand; both are human experiences; and both were abundantly manifested in our Lord's life on earth.

The fourth Old Testament passage quoted in Hebrews 2 had an immediate, historical reference to the history of Israel, and a major, prophetic application to Christ and His children.

Isaiah's two sons were "**for signs and for wonders in Israel**" (Isaiah 8:18); for by the very meaning of their names God was teaching His people some searching lessons. "**Maher-shalal-hash-baz**" means "*haste ye, haste ye to the spoil,*" and was prophetic of the captivity; whereas "**Shear-jashub**" means "*a remnant shall return,*" and was "**a sign**" of the return of the faithful remnant to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah (See Isaiah 8:18; cf. 7:3; 8:1-22).

Thus the immediate, historical reference of Isaiah 8:18 was long ago fulfilled; but, according to Hebrews 2:13, the chief reference is to Christ in His identification with His redeemed children—the Church, which is His Body, now being formed to the praise of His glory. Can it be said of us who belong to the family of God that we are "**for signs**"—for a testimony to His grace? We are called to be His witnesses in a godless world.

"We See Jesus . . . Crowned With Glory and Honor"

2:9

On Calvary the Lord of glory wore a crown of thorns, the very symbol of the curse, for there were no thorns in Eden. Now, by faith "**we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor.**" And when we shall see "**all things in subjection under his feet,**" we shall also see Him crowned with "**many crowns**" (Revelation 19:12). As the "**one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**" (I Timothy 2:5), He is seated on the right hand of the Father, praying for His brethren, even as He waits for that coming day when all His enemies shall become His footstool.

He is the Man Christ Jesus; but He is also the One "**for whom are all things, and by whom are all things**" (2:10)—Heir and Creator; for the Son of God of chapter 1 is the Son of Man of chapter 2. And because He is the God-Man, He is our Great High Priest:

- “**Merciful**” (v. 17)
- “**Faithful**” (v. 17)
- “**Able**” (v. 18)

Moreover, the service He renders is all-sufficient:

1. He has made propitiation “**for the sins of the people**” (v. 17).
2. “**He is able to succor them that are tempted**” (v. 18).

Do you see how this passage in Hebrews 2:17, 18 brings to a climax the argument thus far, introducing specifically for the first time the chief point of the epistle?

May we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, our Lord, now crowned with glory and honor—all-wise, all-powerful, all-sufficient, full of grace and truth! Then worry and fear will give place to thanksgiving and trust “*in the light of His glory and grace.*”

Assignment for Exam 2

1. Set aside an appointed time each day for Bible reading, prayer and praise.
2. Study the Old Testament references and general content of the four quotations in Hebrews 2.
3. Do you see the relationship between Hebrews 1 and 2?
4. When you have made Lesson 2 a part of your very thinking, take Exam 2.

CHAPTER TWO

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE MOODY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL FOR GRADING OF YOUR EXAMS – IF YOU WISH TO COMPLETE THEM, CONSIDER THEM AS AN OPEN BOOK EXAM

1. In the right-hand margin write “True” or “False” after each of the following statements. (20 points)

EXAMPLE:

The gospel of the Son of God is greater than the law of Moses. TRUE

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. “The world [or age] to come” will be ruled by angels. | _____ |
| b. This is the age of public display in God’s program. | _____ |
| c. In Christ’s kingdom His sons will share His throne. | _____ |
| d. Christ became Man in order to teach man self-improvement. | _____ |
| e. Christ gave up His humanity when He returned to heaven. | _____ |
| f. It is quite possible to separate the Lord’s humanity from His deity. | _____ |
| g. “Jesus” means “Saviour.” | _____ |

- h. In order to become Man, Christ was made a little lower than the angels.** _____
- i. “Bring to nought” means “destroy.”** _____
- j. “The word spoken by angels” was the law.** _____

In your own words, or in scriptural language, list the three statements which follow this question of Hebrews 2:3a, emphasizing the greatness of the gospel, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (6 points)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

In the blank space write the letter of the correct answer, (18 points’ EXAMPLE:

In the Epistle to the Hebrews there are

- (a) 13 chapters**
- (b) 6 chapters**
- (c) 20 chapters**
- (d) 10 chapters** _____

(1) Hebrews 2:1-4 speaks of the danger of neglecting

- (a) Christian duties**
- (b) gifts**
- (c) salvation**
- (d) church loyalty** _____

(2) The double reference in Psalm 8:4-6 applies to

- (a) David and Christ**
- (b) Adam and David**
- (c) Christ and Adam**
- (d) Adam and future generations**
- (e) David and future generations** _____

4. Match each Scripture reference in column 1 with the statement in column 2 by placing the correct letter from column 1 in the proper blank in column 2. (10 points)

Column 1	Column 2
<p>a. Hebrews 2:8 b. Hebrews 2:18 c. Hebrews 2:14 d. Hebrews 2:6 e. Hebrews 2:10 f. Hebrews 2:9 g. Hebrews 2:17 h. Hebrews 2:11</p>	<p>(1) Christ was made lower than angels for the suffering of death (2) Christ took upon Him flesh and blood (3) Christ became Man in order to be a faithful High Priest (4) Christ was made “perfect through suffering” (5) All things shall be in subjection to Christ</p>

Show how the following Old Testament prophecies, quoted in Hebrews 2, foretold the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus, enabling Him to become our compassionate Great High Priest. (8 points)

a. Psalm 8:4-6 _____

b. Psalm 22:22 _____

c. Isaiah 8:17 _____

d. Isaiah 8:18 _____

6. Summarize briefly the threefold teaching of Scripture regarding sanctification as outlined in this lesson. (9 points)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

7. Name the two ways in which verses 17 and 18 of chapter 2 prove that our Great High Priest’s ministry is all-sufficient for our needs. (10 points)

a. _____

b. _____

c. What three words used in these verses describe our Lord in His Priestly ministry?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

8. Explain the statement in chapter 2 of Hebrews which tells us that the Author of our salvation was made “perfect through sufferings.” (9 points)

9. Select a verse from Hebrews 2 and write it out from memory, giving the appropriate reference. (Use the King James Version for memory work in this course.) (10 points)

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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