

Hebrews 2:1-9      “We See Jesus”  
Deuteronomy 17  
Psalm 8

January 10, 2021

Deuteronomy 17 tells us that those who transgressed the covenant of the LORD  
were to be put to death.

In Hebrews 2, the NT tells us that “every transgression or disobedience” in the Law of Moses  
“received a just retribution.”

We often have this idea that the OT was stricter than the NT –  
but Hebrews disagrees.

Hebrews says that if laws like Dt 17 was the case in the OT,  
“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”

The difference has to do with enforcement.  
Dt 17 calls on the elders, the judges, and the priests to execute the presumptuous.  
In the NT, we don’t do that.

Because the *promised king* of Dt 17 is now sitting at the right hand of God.

We also sing about this in Psalm 8 –  
a Psalm that tells of how all things have been subjected to the Son of Man.

Sing Psalm 8  
Read Hebrews 2

Are you familiar with Amelia Bedelia?  
Amelia Bedelia takes everything *very literally*.  
If you tell her to put out the lights,  
she will take all the lamps in the house and put them outside on the porch.

If you tell Amelia Bedelia “pay close attention to the roast in the oven” –  
she will watch intently and pay very close attention –  
as the roast dries out!  
She will marvel as it slowly turns into leather –  
and she will wonder why no one told her to take it out of the oven  
when it was done!

So perhaps it is worth noting that when the opening line of Hebrews 2 says:

**1. Hold Fast to What You Have Heard (2:1-4)**

*Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*

The language here is actually *hold fast*.

Hebrews understands that you will either hold fast or drift away.

These are both nautical terms.

A ship that is not anchored will tend to drift away with the current.

You need to be well-anchored to the hope of your salvation.

“Hold fast to what we have heard”

“Pay attention” works, in one respect, but it suggests that our problem is primarily intellectual.

If only you can focus your mind a little better, then you’ll get it!

No.

Hebrews tells us that you already know what you need to know.

You have already heard the message.

Now you need to hold fast to it.

You have heard the apostolic preaching,  
so don’t let go!

Hebrews has reminded you of this message already in chapter 1:

God has spoken his final message in his Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus has died in order to make purification for sin,

and so he has inherited the name of Son through his resurrection from the dead.

Sure, there were lots of “sons” of God (Noah, Abraham, Israel, David...),

just as there were lots of different times and different ways  
that God spoke to our fathers.

But now, in these last days, God has spoken to us in his Son.

Hebrews will go through the OT and demonstrate that Jesus—the Son—

is greater than all of those various ways that God used in the past.

We saw in chapter 1 that the Son is greater than the angels because of his resurrection—

his inheritance as Son of God demonstrates his superiority,

because he is the heir of all things.

Hebrews 1-2 forms a single unit.

Chapter 1:5-14 expounded from scripture the opening statement of who Jesus is,

the exhortation here in 2:1-4 functions as the centerpiece,

while 2:5-18 provides a second exposition demonstrating another reason

why the Son is superior to the angels.

So the comparison to angels is still the focus of chapter 2.

In the last line of chapter 1,

we heard that angels are ministering spirits,  
sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.

And so therefore, because angels are ministering spirits sent out to serve for our sakes,  
we must hold fast to what we have heard.

**a. The Message of the Angels (v2-3a)**

*<sup>2</sup> For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*

If the angels are only servants—and the message proclaimed by servants was binding,  
then how much more is the message proclaimed by the Son!

What was the message declared by angels?

This is the Law of Moses.

Last week we read Deuteronomy 32.

Dt 33:2 says that God came to Sinai with thousands of his holy ones—  
which the LXX took to mean angels.

In other words, the message declared by angles refers to the Mosaic law.

God spoke to our fathers in various times and various ways—  
through angels.

They were God's messengers in bringing the law to Moses.

But if the Mosaic law was valid, and every transgression or disobedience was judged justly,  
how much more the message declared by the Son.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

The Mosaic Covenant was the declaration of a great salvation—  
the salvation from slavery in Egypt—  
God was establishing his kingdom! –  
God would dwell with his people!

The Exodus was great –  
but this is a greater salvation!

Why is it a greater salvation?

I think sometimes this becomes too obvious to us.

But given how easy it is to “drift away” and take it for granted,  
let me remind you!

This is a greater salvation because of how great the messenger is!

(Read 3b)

**b. The Message of the Lord and His Apostles (v3b-4)**

*It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,*

Just briefly, note that the author of Hebrews  
does not put himself in the category of “those who heard,”  
which suggests that the author was not himself an apostle.

We don’t know who wrote the book of Hebrews –  
but this line “attested to us by those who heard”  
strongly suggests that the author was not himself an eyewitness to Jesus.

Why, then, is Hebrews included in the canon?

Apostolic authorship is not necessary–  
(after all, we believe that John Mark wrote Mark –  
and Luke wrote Luke and Acts –  
and neither of them were apostles!).

What makes a book “canonical” is that it must contain the apostolic teaching,  
and through all the ages of the church,  
the church has recognized the apostolic teaching in this epistle–  
even though we do not know the author.

There are lots of books throughout history that are *consistent* with the apostolic teaching.  
But even that way of putting it

“consistent with the apostles’ teaching” –  
means that you are testing a book *by* the apostles’ teaching.

But Hebrews has been recognized *as* the apostles’ teaching.

The early church saw in Hebrews, this *is* what the apostles taught us.

God has spoken in his Son – the Lord – and also through his apostles;  
therefore we must pay attention—we must hold fast to this message.

(v4)

*<sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

Notice also that God himself bore witness to the message.

The signs and wonders and various miracles that were performed at that time  
testified to the message that they proclaimed.

These were God’s own testimony, demonstrations of his power.

Every religion can point to signs and wonders,  
so signs and wonders by themselves  
do not prove the truth of the message.

The Book of Revelation makes clear that Satan is able to perform signs and wonders.

Signs and wonders – by themselves – simply tell you that  
“someone powerful is here.”

Signs and wonders are not “proofs”, they are “witnesses.”  
They are *signs*—pointing beyond themselves.

The book of Acts describes the sorts of signs and wonders that Hebrews speaks of.  
But Hebrews does not go into detail about these “gifts of the Holy Spirit,”  
and so neither will we at this time.

Because Hebrews’ point is to draw our attention to the messenger.

The reason why you hold fast to this message  
is because you see the messenger.

You might think that having inherited a name superior to the angels,  
that Hebrews would emphasize the glory of the Son still more.

And he starts off that way:

(Read v5)

## **2. Because We See Jesus (2:5-9)**

### **a. The Economy to Come Belongs to Jesus (v5)**

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

Verse 5 connects back to 1:5-14 and forward through 2:18.

Having established the superiority of the Son to the angels,  
he now has to explain why the Son was made lower than the angels for a time.  
If the Son is the creator of all things—  
why does Psalm 8 talk about him as lower than the angels?

And the reason is because the angels had been given charge over the administration of this age.

When Hebrews says “it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come”  
this is again the word *oikoumenen*—not *cosmos*.

He is not saying that angels ruled the *cosmos*,  
but that angels were charged with the stewardship of this age.

The *oikonomos* is the steward – the one who governs.

The *oikoumene* is the realm that is governed by the steward.

In the first century, the idea of *oikoumene* is the “inhabited world” –  
which in Roman parlance meant the Roman empire.  
(Barbarian land was not included in the *oikoumene*).

Because the *oikoumene* is the realm that is governed by the steward.

And in the background here is Adam’s stewardship.

Adam was created in the image of God – to be the son of God –  
the vicegerent, the ruler of all the earth.

But Adam forfeited his stewardship at Eden.  
This is why the angels administered the Mosaic Covenant,  
but now, in Jesus, humanity is restored to his rightful place.

And that is the point of the quotation from Psalm 8.

**b. The Testimony of Psalm 8 (v6-8a)**

<sup>6</sup> *It has been testified somewhere,  
“What is man, that you are mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?”*  
<sup>7</sup> *You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned him with glory and honor,<sup>[a]</sup>*  
<sup>8</sup> *putting everything in subjection under his feet.”*

Psalm 8 speaks of the glory of God revealed in the heavens,  
and declared by babes and infants.

David speaks of the glory of the heavens and he wonders,  
“What is man that you are mindful of him?  
And the son of man that you care for him?”

There is a lot of Genesis 1-2 language in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8 was reflecting on creation.

God had given all things into the hand of a creature –  
a creature who stood lower than the heavenly beings (elohim).  
In other words, a creature was given rule over God’s creation.

But Psalm 8 is not just talking about creation!

The purpose of the revelation of God’s glory is to “still the enemy and the avenger.”  
The dominion of the son of man is seen in Psalm 8  
to be the dominion of the son of David.

David rejoices because the kingdom of God has been reestablished in his seed.  
God’s promise to Abraham was that in him all nations would be blessed–  
the curse of Adam would be reversed through his seed.

David sees that it is in the new Adam–the new man–that God will do this,  
and so he sings of this “son of man” who is crowned with glory and honor.

Psalm 8 says that “you made him lower than “elohim” (in Hebrew).

Elohim can either mean “God,” “gods,” “heavenly beings,” or “angels”  
LXX translated this as angels.

And the NT follows the LXX.

But its worth noting that for Psalm 8,  
being made a little lower than elohim appears to be an exaltation!  
“You have made him a little lower than the elohim,  
and crowned him with glory and honor.”

In that context, it is the glory of man that he is “almost” equal to the elohim.

But Hebrews turns this around and quotes this as

“You made him *for a little while* lower than the angels.”

Hebrews understands that Psalm 8 applies to Jesus in a unique way.

When David was speaking, he was marveling that God would raise a man to be a little lower than the “Elohim” (the heavenly beings).

But Hebrews realizes who this man is!!

This man – Jesus – is no one less than the eternal Son of God himself.

And so David’s words take on a new meaning!

The eternal Son of God has identified himself with mankind,  
and thus become a little lower than the angels,  
because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!  
His destiny was to be crowned with glory and honor.

Hebrews draws on this and says, “look, what David spoke of has come to pass in Jesus.”

David spoke of the subjection of everything under his feet.

And Hebrews says, Look! this has indeed happened in the Son.

### **c. Crowned with Glory and Honor Because of the Suffering of Death (v8b-9)**

*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup> But 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.*

The word *upotasso* (to submit or subject) is used 5 times in verses 5-9.

This is the main theme of these verses:

the whole point of this is that all things *are* subject to the Son,  
even if *at present* we do not see it.

“Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control (literally, he left nothing unsubjected to him).”

But Hebrews understands: here is where you are going to have trouble with Psalm 8!

Psalm 8 puts it in the order of humiliation, crowning with glory and honor,  
and then putting everything in subjection to him.

But Hebrews starts with the final triumph.

God has put everything in subjection to Jesus.

But we don’t see that.

**You do not see the final triumph—not yet**

**But you see him—exalted through his humiliation.**

And here in 2:9, Hebrews uses “Jesus” for the first time.

The name is used only eight times in the whole book of Hebrews,  
and in every instance it is highlighted by some unusual grammar.

The ESV does a great job of translating verse 9.

The grammar here is really strange – even for Greek!

And the ESV uses slightly awkward English  
in order to communicate what the Greek is doing!

That “namely Jesus” in the middle of the sentence kind of comes out of nowhere!

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...

The net effect of this strange grammar  
is to highlight the central point: “we see Jesus.”

There are a lot of things we don’t see:

We *don’t see* the subjection of all things to the Son of God.  
Not yet.

We *don’t see* everything being made right.  
Not by a long shot.

What do we see?

We see Jesus.

At this point you may just about have had enough of me!

Pastor, how do we see Jesus?

How do you see Jesus?

If we don’t see the subjection of all things to Jesus,  
then how do you see him?

If we don’t see him sitting on the throne over all the earth,  
then how do you see Jesus?

You see him “because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.”

You see him in the gospel—  
the gospel, after all, is not “how do I get saved.”  
The gospel is, what Jesus has done for the salvation of his people.



This is the main point of Hebrews:

we must hold fast to our hope because we do not yet see Jesus in his final triumph.  
God has exalted him in his ascension to his right hand.

God has crowned him with glory and honor.

And if you do not yet see the subjection of all things to Jesus,  
hold fast to the message that you have heard –  
because you will see it!

He is crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering death,  
so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

All things could only be subjected  
to one who suffered death for all.

This is all setting up the main theme of the book:

Jesus is the Son whose sonship qualifies him to be a fitting high priest –  
the priest who is also the sacrifice.

So Hebrews 1 speaks of the Son exalted over the angels through his resurrection,  
and Hebrews 2 speaks of the Son exalted over the angels through his suffering.

The glory of the Son is not merely seen in his sharing eternal glory with the Father,  
it is also seen in his being made lower than the angels.  
Because the only path to glory is through the cross.

He is crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death,  
so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

I *know* that you are suffering.

You have gone through all sorts of misery and affliction in the last year.  
It doesn't take psychic powers for me to say that –  
it just means that I am a fellow-sufferer.

But in my own power, the best I can do for you is to say,  
“there, there, it'll be all right!”

To which, you would rightly reply:

“Ha! Everybody dies – you can't tell me “it'll be all right!””

But we see Jesus.

He is the one who sympathizes with us in our weakness –  
and can do something about it!  
Because *he* has passed *through* death.

Some seem to think that this means that Jesus suffered and died so that we don't have to.

But that is not what the Bible teaches.

Rather, as we'll see next week – we, like him, are made perfect through suffering.

To use Paul's phrase,

“these light momentary afflictions are preparing for us  
an eternal weight of glory!” (2 Cor)

The Christian does not rejoice in suffering for its own sake!

No! the Christian rejoices in suffering because we see in the cross

how we are being conformed to the likeness of the one we love –

the one who first loved us! – and still delights to call us his brothers and sisters.