

The Book to the Hebrews

Remember

1. The purpose of the book is to encourage despondent, weak believers suffering ostracism and denunciation from the Jewish communities, not to drift away from all that they gained in Christ.
2. The argument to sustain the writer's purpose is something like this. What we have in Jesus, the superiority of what the Hebrew Scriptures anticipated, has been revealed to us in our Lord's first coming as through a glass darkly, and guaranteed most fully when He returns. The writer accomplishes his aim by comparing Christ in three ways: to angels who mediated the Law, to Moses who inscribed the communication of angels, and to the priesthood that mediated redemption that would come in the Son.

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- I. The Argument of the Book: The Pre-eminence of Christ in His Person and Work, 1:1-10:18
 - A. The Superiority of the Son to the Angels, 1:1-2:18
 1. Because of His Status: the exalted Son), 1:1-4
 2. Because of the witness of Holy Scripture, 1:5-14

Parenthesis: Warning against drifting, 2:1-4

(The path to glory is the way of suffering.)

The "a" before salvation (v. 3) as opposed to "the," tells us that the emphasis is upon the experience of salvation, not the fact of salvation.

3. Because of the accomplishments of the Son, 2:5-18

(Proof from His role; Jesus is the "true man")

The point of this passage is that mankind was made to rule over God's creation (Gen. 1:26-27) but has failed due to the fall (Mankind's first representative, Adam, proved a failure). Jesus, our representative, the Second Adam, "the True Man," has won back for humanity the right to rule and will do so with them some day. We will reign through Him! John Milton would remind us that "Paradise Lost," but "Paradise [is emerging and will be] Regained" through our grand representative.

Parenthesis: While we designate our species as human or humanity, I do not believe that we are human; we bare a blighted, twisted, often grotesque semblance to humanity (what we were in Adam). If we are human, Jesus was not because he was not subject to the ravages of sin that has distorted our faculties (mind, affections, will). In our final redemption, we will be human in the truest sense for the first time in our experience. Christ is our true humanity, He never failed, and someday we will be human.

The “for” provides a reason that emerges from what has been stated in 1:5-14. Jesus has a “better name (character)” than the angels and, for that reason, He has done what angels cannot do, restore the original design of our creation in eternity when we shall rule and reign with Him forever.

a. Sovereignty not extended to angels, v. 5

In a future day (“the world to come”), when God reigns over His creation completely, it will not be through angels; it will be through His Son, the one who fulfills the destiny of humanity in Himself. God appointed Adam to govern and care for His created world, not angels, and He will do so through the “Second Adam,” Jesus Christ.

b. Sovereignty extended originally to mankind, vv. 6-8b

The promise of rulership over the created realm was promised to mankind (Gen. 1:26-27); governance in physical realm belongs to humanity, not angels.

1) The rhetorical question, v. 6

Why is mankind important to God? What is it about him/her that makes them significant? The appointment of authority over the created realm was assigned to mankind (Gen. 1:26-27). Though frail, God gave mankind great privileges and dignity, expressed in duties. The significance of mankind is found in privilege, which is not accorded to angels.

2) The question answered, vv. 7-8a

The quotation is from Psalm 8:4-6; a text not considered predictive of the Messiah by the Jews yet clearly by the writer to the Hebrews.

Mankind was made to reign over creation, to protect it and use it, as God’s regent. It was meant to be the realm in which God would meet with His people, a holy place. Instead “in Adam,” a curse fell upon the creation and ourselves; we lost privilege, as well as incurred judgment.

3) The answer repeated, v. 8b

The “for” alerts us to the writer’s point in these verses. Four times in verse 8 is the word, “subjected” (three times denoting what was intended in creation and once what was not) showing the intent did not eventuate. Something happened to us that tumbled us from our exalted position of rulership.

c. Sovereignty forfeited by mankind, v. 8c

“But now” is one tragic contrast in our passage. What we were made to be and do, we have failed and have consequently lost our privilege, a privilege never given to angels. Thus, we have become dispossessed of privilege, though the angels still serve us (1:14). Mankind was meant to rule angels to help us do so; angels help us, but we do not rule!

d. Sovereignty restored in Jesus, v. 9

The contrastive “but now,” in context, is a great one for us. We have been granted a reprieve; our lost dignity and status have been restored in one who took our place. Though it was at the cost of His life to restore humanity, He did so and in Him mankind is once again “crowned with glory and honor,” through the one who for a brief time “was made a little

lower than the angels;" that is, He assumed human form and retrieved our destiny. He is true mankind. This verse awaits its fullest fulfillment in the eschaton, when His enemies shall be put under His feet and redemption comes to the earth and mankind in the "new earth."

4. The basis of the restoration of mankind of through the Son, vv. 10-13

The "for" of v. 10 provides the reason for the fact that Jesus has restored the right of mankind to rule over the creation by purchasing the right to do so through the extension of His mercies to us. It tells us how Jesus, true humanity, restored us to our once proud state (though only partially now and assuredly in the great day of our final redemption). Since mankind needs restoration, which no angel could accomplish, the one who could, would, and did is greater than the angels.

a. The qualification of Jesus to restore mankind, v. 10

The qualification for one to restore humanity was the death, one with a special fitness (the term is perhaps translated more clearly by "rightness"); this was the only way God could bring many "'sons' to glory (death being the consequence of our loss of status)." Jesus did not die for angels; they were not meant to rule over His creation. God ("Him") accomplished the restoration through the incarnation. He took our curse upon Himself ("through sufferings) and lifted it from us, restoring our dignity in Himself, our new head. Jesus is the "author (the words means leader, originator, or founder)" of our restoration.

What does "perfect" mean? How could Jesus be said to be perfected?
How could "perfect" admit addition?

The word literally means "complete?" God, the Father, completed the work of the Son by accepting it (propitiation means satisfaction, God declared Christ's work as fully sufficient to satisfy the just judgment that God should and must extend to us).

What is the "glory" that Jesus procured for us in the eschaton? The glory is the restoration of mankind's status; we will reign over creation as we were meant to do and did before Genesis 3.

b. The reality of Jesus' restoration of mankind, vv. 11-13

1) Stated, v. 11

This verse functions to show us a moral unity between the one who separates from evil ("sanctifies") and those who are separated from evil (the "sanctified"). Jesus (some translations have "Father" in italics, meaning the noun is supplied and is not in the text) made us clean by becoming unclean, becoming polluted with our transgressions, but He conquered them! Consequently, the sanctifier and the sanctified are one; we are "brothers."

2) Sustained, vv. 12-13

Where is the proof that Jesus and we are united as "brothers," in union with the "true man?" He cites three texts from the Hebrew Scriptures.

a) Psalm 22:1, v. 12

The basis for the assertion of “brotherhood” is the resurrection, his triumph. That event shows that Jesus triumphed over mankind’s failures and we in Him; that is, the psalmist predicts that Jesus will sing in the assembly of all the children of God in heaven! The psalm being quoted is called the “suffering servant psalm,” it begins with words quoted by Christ on the cross (“My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me”).

b) Isaiah 8:17, v. 13a

This verse tells us that Jesus, having won the victory for mankind, now waits for the time to arrive for its implementation; the Son fully trusts the Father for mankind’s restoration. Isaiah tells us that someday Jesus will sing to us celebrating our restoration to reign with Him. When Jesus reigns over all creation, we will reign with Him fulfilling our created destiny.

c) Isaiah 8:18, v.13b

This verse tells us that when He comes to rule over the creation, He will bring us with Him to reign. We will be restored to our original design in Christ.

4. The consequences of Jesus’ restoration of mankind, vv. 14-18

1) The conquest of the devil, v. 14

Jesus is the true representative of humanity in that He conquered death, the consequence of Adam’s failure. Human failure brought death; His death brought restoration of life and royal rule in Him over all creation (restoration from death came through a death). The devil no longer has control over the destiny of mankind; he has been rendered powerless or inoperative in this regard, though he is still depicted by Peter as “a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Pet 5:8). The devil’s victory is death, but Jesus conquered the devil and, in doing so, death itself.

What does it mean that Christ conquered the devil? The answer is that He aborted the end that the devil intended by tricking our original parents from the divine design for them. The word “destroyed” is more accurately translated “annulled.” This means that the demolition of mankind’s appointed status by the devil will not succeed forever.

2) The conquest of fear, v. 15

Jesus’ death delivered mankind from fear of death; fear is a debilitating form of slavery. Satan uses fear to execute and perpetuate his rule over us. We have been made to reign over creation, but we have been made to cringe in fear of it. Jesus ended our captivity to fear; if we are in Him, we no longer need to fear death!

3) The gift of a compassionate High Priest, vv. 16-18

If the fear of death no longer enslaves us in this life, there is also

something that we need to know about living now. We have today a merciful and tender high priest!

a) An established fact, v. 16

Jesus came, not to help angels (some angels did not fall, others are beyond hope), but to help us. Jesus never gave them the mandate to rule, but to serve those to whom the mandate was given, His “brethren.” He came to restore us to our once elevated dignity, the true seed of Abraham (all believers in every age are the children of Abraham through faith, of the same kind of faith as Abraham, a devoted clinging to the promises of God to His people). The help to angels that Christ extended is not to govern the world, but to assist us in doing so. Angels do not rule, but Jesus does and we will!!

What a wonderful truth; we are children of Abraham! Christ is the “seed,” the true Son of the patriarch to who the promise of redemption was given (Gen 12:1-3, 17:1-7). He is the redeemer of mankind and we are His prodigy (Gal 3:16).

b) An established reality, v. 17

Jesus came to help mankind (in context, the help is in the provision of redemption). He came to restore us! The means by which He accomplished this was by making satisfaction for our sins! He was both the offeror (in his priestly office) and the offering (in Himself), priest and redeemer combine in Him.

c) An established cause, v. 18a

He accomplished this through suffering in our place and for us.

d) An established consequence, v. 18b

Since He understands suffering, having so completely identified with humanity to redeem humanity, He can help us in our sufferings. We have a merciful and compassionate high priest that has triumphed in the resurrection. He has passed into the heavens! He can truly understand of longings, disappointments, needs, and fears.

Parenthesis: How can it be said that Christ was tempted as we might be, when he has not experienced what we have experienced? He may not have experienced the terror of raising children, paying college debt, or keeping a job, but he has entered into the spheres (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life) where temptation finds its human origin (solicitation to respond in attitude and action contrary to the character of God).

Applications

1. Angels are our servants. When we get to heaven, we will then only begin to grasp the protective mercies of God extended to us during our earthly sojourn. We are a protected people; protected not from the ravages of pain and evil but protected in

the intricate plan and will of God for us. This we embrace by faith because we live in a world that seems out of control.

2. The destiny of mankind is as our origins. We were created to rule over God's creation as His vice regents. However, a dreadful blighting has occurred through the foolish unfaithfulness of the head of our kind, Adam. The story does not end in Genesis 3, but in Revelation 21-22. Through the Second Adam (Romans 5) mankind's destiny has been restored. We will someday rule in and through Jesus, the head of our kind. Do you see your days through the lens of your destiny!
3. Jesus understands sorrow and pain and is, therefore, a sympathetic and compassion redeemer/mediator. There is no suffering greater than what He undertook for us. He knows loss, pain, loneliness, and rejection. We have someone we can talk to who is more than a listening ear; we have one who understands and can comfort us. Do you take the time to talk to the dearest of friends you will ever have?