

Text: Heb 2.5-8

We've recently been working on the exhortation to pay close attention to the revelation of the Son. The Lord lays this on us because of the superior nature of the Son, of the heavy weight of the message, the sure sources of the word, and the divine confirmation through many signs.

Our passage today is going to change directions but extend the same theme: we need to pay attention to the Son.

The rest of Heb 2 shows us the importance of the Son not in his identity (ch. 1) but in his activity, especially in his coming to earth as a man.

- Earlier, I put emphasis on the deity of the Son
- Now I will emphasize the humanity of the Son

The humanity of the Son may confuse the argument somewhat.

- It is easier to see how the exalted and glorious Son of God is superior to angels.
- It follows easily that we should pay attention to such a one.

Yet, someone says, wasn't he a man? Didn't he die? How is that better than angels? How important can his message be?

If someone was thinking that they could relax their commitment to Christianity, perhaps they could point to the weakness arguing that a dead man was the Lord.

That possible objection becomes the focus of the argument as we "turn a page" in the argument of Hebrews.

Read Heb 2.5-9

Now you see our author specifically name Jesus in v. 9, but we aren't going to get there today. That will have to wait until our next message, in two weeks.

Today our subject is:

The Devastation of the Fall

The devastation of the fall meant we needed rescue by the Son of God. We are going to look at that devastation in today's message.

Proposition: The failure of all men made rescue by the Son of God the only hope for men.

I. The place of the fall (and redemption) (5)

A. Locating the passage: “for”

1. The word “for” is a pointing word
 - a. It usually explains a reason for something
 - b. It always points somewhere (to a preceding passage)
 - c. This time, the place it is pointing is ambiguous
2. The options
 - a. It could point to “the word spoken” (2.2-4)
 - b. It could point to “we must pay attention” (2.1)
 - c. It could point to “they are not all ministering spirits” (1.14)
 - d. It could point back to the whole argument of ch. 1 (the son is superior to the angels)

Many commentators seem to make it option 4, I think it works better pointing to 2.1, this is the second reason you need to pay attention.

B. Identifying the “world to come”

1. The word is “economy” — the inhabited world
2. We saw the same word in 1.6

Heb 1.6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the **world**, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”

- a. In that passage, the exaltation of the Son is in view, he entered the world of heaven
 - b. In this passage, a future world is in view: a world not subjected to angels
3. This “world to come” is the same subject “concerning which we are speaking” — *i.e.*, the prominent position of the Son

The implication is that the Son will rule that world, but we won’t get there just yet.

C. A comment on the rule of angels

1. Some commentators think that the angels have dominion over the present world, waiting for the coming world
2. A complicated argument for this, based on possible Jewish misinterpretation of Dt 32.8
3. I don't agree with this, though several commentators mention it — I like what Westcott says:

“It is not said that ‘the present world’ was subject to angels; but at the same time the writer of the Epistle may well have recalled the belief which found expression in the LXX.”¹

4. Rationale: understanding the meaning of Ps 8 (quoted in our passage)

II. The expectation of creation (and confusion) (6-8a)

A. The observations of the Psalmist (see Ps 8.4-6)

1. Compare Ps 8.4-6 with Heb 2.6-8
2. The Jews didn't take Ps 8 as a messianic Psalm, but it is cited several times in the NT in connection with the Messiah
3. The subject of the Psalm: the glory of God and his grace in granting men dominion over the earth
4. It is said that the Psalm is a meditation on Gen 1.26-28

B. The marvel of creation: Man (Adam), God's masterpiece

1. The psalm acknowledges man's weakness [read whole psalm]
 - a. What is man? Why do you think of him?
 - b. You made man less than angels
2. Yet, despite lesser power, you gave man greater dominion
 - a. Crowned with glory and honor
 - b. Appointed him over the works of your hands
 - c. Put *all things* in subjection under his feet

¹ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 41.

1) This is the phrase from Ps 8 most often quoted in the NT, referring to Christ

2) But in the Psalm, it isn't *directly* referring to Christ, it is thinking about *Adam*

d. The Psalm has an additional (unquoted) phrase: "You make him to rule over the works of Your hands"

3. Note the words of Genesis 1.26

let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth

4. And Gen 1.28

rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth

C. God made man with the expectation of rule over all things

1. The author of Heb comments, agreeing with the expectation:

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him

2. This expectation is emphatic: "nothing is unsubjected" — a negative adverb with a negative adjective

D. But confusion: who is under discussion?

1. He didn't subject to angels the world to come (clearly that belongs to Christ)

2. In fact, he subjected the present world to man ... didn't he?

3. If by "man" in Ps 8 and Heb 2.6-8, he means Christ, then all is plain

4. But Christ not named until v. 9, with some repetitions

5. Psalm 8 is thinking about man in creation, not Christ, but Adam

We are in confusion... until we consider the last phrase

III. The bitter condition of man (and devastation) (8b)

A. The present reality of man in creation

We do not yet see all things subjected to him

1. The fact is, Adam fell, and was expelled from the Garden
2. In the fall, Adam no longer ruled, but became a laborer
3. Through history, man, in keeping with the creation mandate, tries to rule

a. Empires rise: and fall

1) In the dim and distant past

- a) Ugarites
- b) Sumerians
- c) Hittites

Hints and ruins of others, their ambitions left as nothing but dust in archaeological digs

2) The mighty Egyptian empire

- a) Defeated by the Assyrians
- b) Fell to the Babylonians
- c) Succumbed to the Greeks
- d) Overtaken by the Romans

3) The waves of Biblical empires

- a) Assyrians fell to
- b) The Babylonians who fell to
- c) The Medes and Persians who fell to
- d) The Greeks, who fell apart
- e) And all subsumed under the Romans, who collapsed on top of themselves

There are more attempts, the Caliphate, the kings of the Middle Ages, the Popes, the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin ... all in dust.

b. Men have built civilizations, beautiful cities, magnificent gardens

- 1) Recently listened to a podcase about the hanging gardens of Babylon – all dust

- 2) The great cities and accomplishments of all empires, unable to sustain themselves
- 3) Our modern cities: full of might and technical prowess

If the Lord tarries, what will come of them?

We do not yet see all things subjected to him

4. What about our own attempts to rule our world?

a. Men have trouble ruling in their own homes

- 1) They are inconsistent
- 2) Their subjects are rebellious

We do not yet see all things subjected to him

b. Think of how little children try to rule their lives

- 1) They don't get their way, they yell and scream
- 2) As they get older they learn to manipulate
- 3) Or they lie and deceive — thinking then can gain control

We do not yet see all things subjected to him

B. The picture we have painted

1. We have a world God created
2. We are here, as created to rule
3. We are in devastation: nothing turns out (ultimately) as expected, every man's attempt to rule life ends in dust and disaster

Conclusion:

Proposition: The failure of all men made rescue by the Son of God the only hope for men.

We do not yet see all things subjected to him

We are looking for him!

Before the incarnation, all men looked for him. The Jews looked for him, they wanted a Messiah to set things right, and to **rule**! Yet he didn't come, the first time, to rule... we needed something else first. We needed redemption.

All men are failures because all men are sinners. Their first need is a Saviour, after that they need a king.