

Text: Heb 2.5-9

Why do people become “fans” of sports stars or various public performers?

What attracts them?

A skilled athlete has great physical ability. He can throw a ball farther, more accurately, and under pressure than anyone else. Or he scores more goals than others, sometimes he scores them more spectacularly than others.

He is highly skilled. His abilities manifest his glory. The rest of us can only wish to have such skill, and we are attracted to those who can hone their bodies and their instincts to such physical perfection. They dominate in their field, and gain a following.

Public performers — musicians or actors and such — can display great skill. I am listening to an audio recording of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. The “voice actor” doing the reading is Andy Serkis, who did the voice for the character of Gollum in the movies. Serkis is an amazing reader, as he voices the various characters in the books, you would swear there was more than one actor doing the reading. He is highly skilled, with his skills earning him high praise from others, not just me.

The thing that attracts followers for public figures is the *glory* on display as they fulfill the creation mandate in a small measure:

- Perfect control of one’s own body (for the athlete)
- Skill in acting or singing or speaking (for the public performer)

Now suppose you are pointed away from “hero worship” of such people and told you ought to find the most degraded person in our society to take as your hero, as your “dominator,” as your “king.”

Would that make sense to you?

The readers of Hebrews were wavering about their Christian commitment. They were under pressure, perhaps, and they were wondering whether it might not be a good idea to pull back from following Christ.

Today we return to the passage we began two weeks ago, but now we will see, instead of *The Devastation of the Fall*,

The Glory of the Incarnation

Read Heb 2.5-9

Proposition: The remarkable thing about Jesus is that he is the King full of glory whom we should follow, though his first coming ended in seeming failure.

I. The failure of man

Of necessity, we need to go back and get the gist of last week's message.

A. The background of Psalm 8

1. David was meditating on the creation mandate (Gen 1.26-28)
2. God created man to have dominion over all things
3. David celebrates that dominion with a song of praise (note of incredulity)
 - a. David sees "dominion" as a privilege
 - b. David lives "post-fall"
 - 1) Man as a sinner
 - 2) Man as mortal
 - 3) Man, nevertheless, privileged with dominion
4. The overall sense of Ps 8 is "wonder" and "gratitude"

B. The ambiguity of our text

1. David spoke about mankind; our author speaks of Jesus, but not, at first, directly (5)
 - a. "For" – this text is a further reason (connected to 2.1, "pay attention... for..." — compare 2.2)
 - b. The Father did not subject the world to come to angels
 - 1) The world to come = the coming economy, the new dispensation
 - 2) Jesus is exalted into this world [ascension, session] (1.6)
 - c. It is this coming dispensation (economy/world) that we are speaking about
 - d. But notice that Jesus isn't named in v. 5, not until v. 9

2. In the Psalm, David meant mankind in general as granted dominion by God (6-8a)
 - a. Our author leaves it ambiguous – still no mention of Jesus
 - If he stopped with v. 8, where would we be?
 - b. We would be trapped in human failure
 - 1) Man given dominion over all things
 - 2) Yet, “we do not yet see all things subjected to him”

This gives rise to all sorts of problems in human history, including striving, fighting, wars, family breakdown and even personal psychological problems: perfectionism and OCD.

BTW, most of us have given up on the instinct for dominion, at least over any major portion of the world, or even of our life.

But almost all of us have some area of life where we seek to have perfect control (and may succeed enough to make us content).

3. At this point, where “we do not yet see,” we are occupied with the present dispensation
 - a. In this dispensation, men attempt to rule
 - b. Yet in this dispensation, men fail

The words “the world to come” (5) and “not yet” (8) imply future success. Human dominion of the world to come is God’s plan.

How will we see such success?

II. The humiliation of Jesus (9a)

A. We do see Him in his temporary humiliation

1. What does “little while lower” mean?

a. The terms in v. 9, “a little while” are very close to those in v. 7

1) Verse 7: “you made him lower, lesser from the angels” [note: “little while” is interpretive]

2) Verse 9: “but the one lesser from the angels having been made lower we are seeing”

b. The change from active verb: ‘you made him’ to perfect passive participle ‘having been made’ implies a “little while” or temporary lowering

c. The translators import the “little while” from v. 9 into v. 7

d. The implication of v. 9: the humiliation is temporary

2. We are talking about Jesus in the whole of Hebrews, and his superiority

a. Jesus is the one exalted to the very high position (chapter 1)

b. Jesus is the one to whom the world to come will be subject (5, by implication)

c. Jesus is the one we now see, though for a little while, he was made lower than the angels (9)

B. The way we contemplate him — “namely, Jesus” — is in his humiliation (*i.e.*, his incarnation)

1. Compare Philippians 2.6-8

a. Jesus existed in the form of God

b. Jesus emptied himself (of glory) and became a man

1) In itself: humiliation

2) In status: “a little lower than angels”

c. Jesus humbled himself even so far as to experience death

2. His humiliation forms an objection

“Some of the original Jewish readers of Hebrews felt inclined to abandon the Christian faith because of Jesus’ humanity and, even more, His death.”¹

- a. This objection isn’t stated in the text, but the implication of Hebrews is the readers were drawing back from their profession
 - b. The teaching of our passage points out that Christ’s place “a little lower” than the angels was temporary
- ## 3. His humiliation is contrasted with man’s failure (8) — “but we see Him...” (9)
- a. The citation of Ps 8 highlights the failure of mankind in general
 - b. It also points to the fact that no man has all things under his dominion ... yet
 - c. “But...” But the humiliation of Jesus is temporary
 - 1) The little while of the lower status than angels is now past
 - 2) The world to come is yet future

So where is Jesus now?

III. The glory of the Son, Jesus Christ (9b)

A. Jesus is “crowned with glory and honour”

1. Seen in chapter 1:
 - a. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand (1.3)
 - b. “having become as much better than angels” (1.4)
 - c. To him, the father said, “You are my Son” (1.5)
 - d. To him, the father said, “let all the angels worship him” (1.6)
 - e. To him, the father said, “your throne is forever and ever” (1.8)

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Heb 2.5.

- f. To him, the father said, “You LORD, ... laid the foundation of the earth...” (1.10ff.)
 - g. To him, the father said, “Sit at my right hand”
2. His glory brought about by his humiliation: “because of the suffering of death” (2.9)
- a. The very thing that seems his weakest point is the cause of his greatest glory
 - b. God crowned mankind with glory and honour: David (see 2.7) — this by decree
 - c. God crowned Jesus with glory and honour for his work, his deepest humiliation became the ground of his glory
- B. The glory of Jesus is for a purpose: the substitutionary atonement
1. Jesus participated in the most degrading effect of the fall: death
“‘Tasting’ death is an idiom meaning to experience death fully. It is an emphatic expression for dying.”²
 2. The death was “on behalf of” everyone
 - a. The death stands in for the death of every person ever born or ever will be born
 - b. He took part in death to become *the penalty* that Adam brought into the world
 - c. His purpose was to remove the penalty of death for everyone (in potential)
We know that this is only “in potential” since the Bible clearly shows that many will not receive any benefit from his death.
 3. His death was “by the grace of God” — not something anyone earned, it is a gift

² David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 211.

4. Rather than being a cause for concern, “maybe we shouldn’t follow Jesus,” it is the reason *most of all* that we *must* follow Jesus

Conclusion:

Proposition: The remarkable thing about Jesus is that he is the King full of glory who we should follow, even though he seemed to fail in his first coming.

His humiliation is the ground of his glorification.

His incarnation made possible this glorification

This glorification guarantees his dominion: He is to rule the world to come, and he has conquered death for every man.

Do you believe in him?