

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon Title: Who is Lower and Who is Higher? Hebrews 2:5–9

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**INTRODUCTION:** This is a complicated scripture, but I'm going to break it down into three main points for clarity:

1. Man is the capstone of God's creation.
2. The fall of man affected man's abilities.
3. Jesus regained what was lost by the curse.

**ILLUSTRATION:** In Missouri this week a little girl was sent home from school with the following note from a substitute teacher: "Dr. and Mrs. Puckett, The cafeteria reported to me that Alia's lunch today included four chocolate bars, a bag of marshmallows, Ritz crackers, and a pickle. Please see that she packs a proper lunch tomorrow."

The letter then ends with a curt demand—"Parent signature requested." The Pucketts wrote back, "Request declined."

Her dad said, "What she actually had was four pieces of ham, some pickles, four marshmallows in a Ziploc bag, and then she had three very small pieces of chocolate, of which she ate one for lunch, and then she also gave her brother and another friend one at an after school program."

The question is: which side of the story do you believe? Whose interpretation of the events do you believe? Do you believe the school cafeteria staff, who really had no business nosing a lunch brought from home (in my opinion)? Or, do you believe the parent? By now, the food is gone, so no one knows the exact truth, although probably everyone sides with the father.

**APPLICATION:** Now, how we interpret the Bible affects our theology. I believe the original writings had one meaning. And today, at times, and in many cases, that

one meaning is difficult to discern. This is where interpretation and teaching comes in.

In Hebrews, as well as many other books of the Bible, good people may find themselves parting ways over interpretation.

I stirred some conversation with my statement that in the creative order, man is above angels. Several of you pointed out a scripture or two to me. I gave my explanation of this a couple of Wednesday nights ago, but because I am teaching through Hebrews, this matter has come up again in today's message.

As I told you before, in the day in which Hebrews was written, there were a lot of stories about angels. There was a view of the rank and order of angels, which was not in the scripture. These beliefs had crept into the everyday beliefs of many Jews, so there was this idea that perhaps angels were superior to Jesus.

### **First, MAN IS THE CAPSTONE OF GOD'S CREATION.**

Let's pick up in Chapter 2, verses 5 through 8.

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 2:5-8 <sup>5</sup> *It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.* <sup>6</sup> *But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?"* <sup>7</sup> *You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor* <sup>8</sup> *and put everything under their feet."*

This scripture quotes David, who summed it up in Psalms 8—Man is the capstone of God's creation.

**EXPLANATION:** This Psalm was a song. It was a hymn. It was sacred music. It had a melody. I wonder what it sounded like?

In scripture, when the phrase or title *Son of Man* is believed to be about Jesus, it is capitalized, such as in the Book of Daniel. There are numerous places where there is a lower case *son of man*, which does not mean Jesus. For example, there are numerous instances in the Book of Ezekiel.

But, in this case, *son of man* is not believed to be a prophecy about Jesus but a song about God's creation—man.

A long time ago, I read Psalm 8 and wondered what it meant. Let's remember Genesis says, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness* (Genesis 1:26). He did not create man in the likeness of angels, nor did he create angels in the likeness of himself.

The word in the Hebrew for God is *Elohim*, which is a plural word. We interpret this as being the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This interesting Hebrew word can be translated several ways, including the word *angels*.

Several translations say “God” instead of “angels.” It's my belief after a lot of study on this matter the correct translation is “God.” There are reasons some translators say “angels,” and to them I have to say, “Missed it by that much.” [☺ Maxwell Smart from the 1960s TV comedy *Get Smart*.] There is a lot of detail behind what I just said, and I debated whether to bring it out in this message. But, I decided not to because some would track with me, and others would scratch their heads.

A literal translation from the Hebrew sounds something like this: “And cause him to lack a little of Godhead, And with honor and majesty compass him.”

If angels are between God and man in the spiritual order of things, then this would make angels the mediator—the go between—between man and God. The mediator between God and people is Jesus. Jesus did not come to save angels. He came to save people.

But, look at it this way, also. When Jesus was on earth he was fully man. Jesus was fully human, born of a woman, while he was on earth. He got hungry and thirsty. He got tired and slept. He laughed and cried. He was tempted, although he did not fall into temptation. God entered his creation through a woman as a child—a human child.

If man is inferior to angels, it would mean that while Jesus was a man on this earth, he was inferior to angels.

It is theologically impossible for Jesus to be inferior to the angels.

I know this parts ways with what many of you always believed and with what some Bible teachers teach.

I want all you to study this scripture and wrestle with it like I have!

## **Second, THE FALL OF MAN AFFECTED MAN’S ABILITIES.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 2: 8 [Second part of verse 8] *In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.*

**EXPLANATION:** I believe the writer uses “them” to mean people and not Jesus, because in verse 9 Jesus is specifically mentioned.

**SCRIPTURE:** In Genesis 1:28, before the fall of mankind, the Bible says, <sup>28</sup>*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

This was the original plan of God, but Adam and Eve sinned, and sin entered the world. In Genesis 3, I believe, God cursed the earth and people.

Because of Adam’s and Eve’s sin, the curse overpowered the earth and limited God’s original plan for men and women.

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 2:8 [last part of verse 8] <sup>8</sup>*Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.*

**EXPLANATION:** Today, man does not rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every creature which moves on the ground. We may have some impact with it, but not total dominion. In fact we cannot even envision a world like this at all.

## **Third, JESUS REGAINED WHAT WAS LOST BY THE CURSE.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 2:9 [first part of verse 9] <sup>9</sup>*But we do see Jesus,*

## Jesus regained what was taken from man: dominion of nature and fellowship with God.

- Jesus had dominion over the fish of the sea.
  - Matthew 17, Jesus told Peter to go fishing, catch a fish, and find a coin which he could use to pay tax.
  - Luke 5, and John 21, Jesus told the disciples to cast their net on the other side of the boat, and they caught so much fish the boat began to sink.
- Jesus had dominion over the birds.
  - Luke 22, the rooster crowed just as Peter denied knowing Jesus for the third time, just like he predicted.
- Jesus had dominion over the animals.
  - Mark 1, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness with wild animals.
  - Mark 11, Jesus told his disciples to go to the town ahead of them, and they would find a colt no one had ever ridden tied up. He told them to untie the colt and bring it to him.

So, what we see is that Jesus had dominion over nature just like the first Adam was supposed to have. Jesus is the second and last Adam, according to 2 Corinthians 15—regaining what man lost because of his sin.

## Jesus also regained fellowship with God for mankind.

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 2:9 [Let's continue in verse 9] *<sup>9</sup>But we do see Jesus who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

**EXPLANATION:** There we have that phrase again: *made a little lower than the angels*. But, this time the writer does not include man along with Jesus nor does he quote Psalm 8 or any other Old Testament passage. The writer is using his own words. The Greek word here is actually “angels” (angelous ἀγγέλους) with no reference to any other word. We do not have the option to say, “Right here the author quoted the Old Testament where the Hebrew word for ‘God’ was used.” He actually meant “angels.” What does this mean? Let's continue.

*Made a little lower* - The Greek word for “lower” is ἐλαττωμένον ἡλαττωμένον. This particular use of the word means to “to be made less or inferior: in dignity,” [Source: <http://biblehub.com/greek/1642.htm>].

As Jesus hung on the cross dying in agony, he cried out *My God, My God why have you forsaken me?* And, at this time, God’s back was turned, and the human side of Jesus felt all the suffering and pain of the crucifixion. Yes, Jesus was made lower than the angels, and he was made lower than all creation, while he took upon him the sins of the world. But, look at what the scripture says—“*for a little while*” (Hebrews 2:9).

And now, today he is seated at the right hand of the throne of God crowned with glory and honor.

## **CONCLUSION:**

- Man is the capstone of God’s creation.
- The fall of man affected man’s abilities.
- Jesus regained what was lost by the curse.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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