

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Lesson 5
Christ's Rule Is Superior to Angels
Hebrews 2:5-9

Angel's were very important in biblical times and very much a part of most people's thinking. Jews and Greeks, alike, gave a high place to angels in their views of life. Jews saw angels as mediators of the Mosaic Law and concluded that angels were the best mediators between God and man. The ancient pagan world looked also to angels as mediators. Angels were demigods of the Roman and Greek pantheon.

The writer of Hebrews argues that no angel could ever qualify to be the mediator because any work that an angel might perform is inferior to the supreme works of Jesus Christ. Christ is superior to angels because His work is superior.

In Hebrews 1:5-14, the author of Hebrews has shown that Christ was a superior person to angels and now he continues to argue that Christ does superior work to angels. His point is that Christ is the sovereign ruler of the angels.

THE FUTURE RULE OF CHRIST (2:5)

“For...” -- This is important because it connects the argument up with Hebrews 1:5-14 where Christ is shown to be a superior person to angels.

“For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.” -- This verse teaches that Christ is the sovereign ruler over the world to come. What is the “world to come?” Some think this refers to the eternal state of new heavens and new earth, but I, personally, think it refers to the millennial reign of Christ. The word “world” means “inhabited world” and seems unlikely to refer to the eternal state. Christ, through His Son-ship, His death for sin, His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the right hand of the Father, has been appointed heir over this earth. Christ will one day have a glorious kingdom on earth, ruled over in righteousness and peace. Christ, Himself, taught this earthly kingdom which will come to earth after the second advent of Christ.

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration (earthly kingdom) when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel’” (Matt. 19:28-30).

God, the Father, gives His kingdom to whom He pleases, and He has not given His kingdom to angels but to Christ. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, has been given the right to rule in the future kingdom. Christ is the sovereign ruler of the future Millennial kingdom and is superior to angels who are but servants of God. No angel has ever been given the right to rule in God's kingdom.

Note carefully that it is just not God who will rule over this earth, but also One who is truly a man. Jesus Christ was truly a man as well as being God. The Jew would then reason, "How is it that one who is a man has a right to rule?" This would be a great puzzlement to the Jewish mind who thought that angels should rule before any man was given the right to rule.

THE FUTILITY OF THE FIRST ADAM (2:6-8)

"But one has testified somewhere, saying, 'WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU REMEMBEREST HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT THOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?'" --

Verses six through eight are a quote from Psalm 8, and they are quoted to show why a man has a right to rule in the future kingdom. The author is going to prove to these Jewish readers that it was God's original purpose to rule through man.

Some have taken this quote to refer directly to Christ, Himself, believing that Psalm 8 is totally a Messianic Psalm. It is debatable as to whether Psalm 8 is Messianic and we know the Jews took it as a reference to man, not Messiah. This psalm actually shows the positional dignity of man in the original creation.

The Psalmist and the writer of Hebrews, by quotation, are asking the questions: Where is man's place in this world? What is God's purpose for man?

"THOU HAST MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; THOU HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; THOU HAST PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET" -- The author now goes back to the original creation to show why a man has the right to rule, and to show God's original purpose for man.

"And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'"
(Genesis 1:27-28).

God's destiny for man is to rule in time and in eternity, but God certainly created man to have dominion over this earth. Adam, or man, was given the right to rule. All of nature was subjected to man so he ruled over the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field and every aspect of his environment.

Adam's authority, however, was a derived authority. Man was to rule as he subjected himself to God. Man was to be the means by which the invisible God became visible to God's creatures. He was to be a manifestation of God's life and rule to all creation. As long as man was subject to the dominion of God within him, he would be able to exercise authority over the world. Only when he accepted God's dominion could he exercise dominion.

When was man made a little lower than the angels? From the time man was created up to the time of the earthly kingdom to be established at the Second Advent, but there is a time coming

when man will judge angels. ***“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?”*** (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

Lest we lose the argument of the author, we should restate that Christ, as a man, has a right to rule because it was God’s original purpose that men (Adam) should rule over this earth. God never intended for angels to rule, but His purpose is that man should rule.

“For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.” -- Here we see the futility of man’s existence. God’s original purpose for man was very high, but anyone can see that at this very hour man does not have all the environment in subjection to him. Man attempts to exercise his dominion, but he can no longer do it adequately. What has happened? Has God failed? God cannot fail any of His purposes, but man failed. Adam and Eve sinned and lost their original position before God. God’s promised sovereignty for man over the earth was lost in the Fall. Man’s right to rule was lost and Satan gained the advantage, becoming the god of this world. ***“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*** (2 Cor. 4:3-4). The human race is plagued with loss of dominion and power because all men sinned in Adam as their representative head. Man has a great destiny but does not realize his destiny because of sin. Sin has separated him from God’s original purpose of dominion over the earth.

Even though man is totally depraved, he still has traces of the original creation within him. He desires to conquer and rule his environment. He must climb the highest mountain, cross the most treacherous seas, soar the skies about him, because he was originally made to rule. But, in every attempt to rule he is frustrated and feels a sense of futility because sin has so corrupted his whole being.

Sin causes man to destroy rather than rule in his environment. Sinful man attempts to gain his sovereignty through war rather than peace. He cruelly rules over the beasts of the field. He corrupts his environment by pollution. He tyrannically tries to dominate people by politics, prejudice and social injustice. Man’s best efforts at peace and social equity end in futility and frustration because man is sinful.

If we go back into the ancient writings of men, we will find that men were wrestling with the same moral problems that we are wrestling with today. We have made wonderful advancements in technology, but have made absolutely zero progress when it comes to moral relationships. Why? Man has lost his relationship to God and cannot exercise his dominion aright. The Fall of man is the only adequate explanation for this. Since the Fall, man has been characterized by futility. Everything man does is a dead end street; he is utterly unable to carry things through to a successful conclusion. Even in the individual life, this is true. How many have realized the dreams and ideals they began with? Who can say, “I have done all that I wanted to do; I have been all that I wanted to be?”

Has God changed His purpose? Has God’s plan for man been frustrated because of sin?

Absolutely not! God's purpose shall stand! The ultimate fulfillment of this purpose is to be found in His Son, Jesus Christ.

THE FULFILLMENT BY THE LAST ADAM (2:9)

“But we do see Him (Jesus)...” -- Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose for man to rule and to reign. Jesus Christ is man's only hope. With the eye of faith, God's elect see Jesus already crowned with glory and honor and ruling over this world. Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, has come to recapture man's lost destiny. What man lost in the Fall, Christ has regained through His death and resurrection.

The answer to man's futility is not to be found in man, but in Jesus Christ, God's Son. The “we” are true believers who see Christ through faith and not by actual eyesight. Faith is the key that opens the spiritual kingdom to true believers.

“...who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death...” -- In order for Christ to regain man's lost paradise and to fulfill God's purpose for man, Christ, the second person of the Trinity, took upon Himself a human nature and became man. Yet He was a man without sin. He took on flesh and blood; He entered into the human race to become part of it. Christ identified Himself with man that man might realize his destiny.

In taking on a human nature, Christ, for a little while (from His birth to His exaltation) was made a little lower than the angels. As God, Christ always ruled angels, but in his humanity, as the Mediator, He was made lower than the angels. What wonderment! Christ, the Creator and Lord of angels, who had been worshipped by them before His incarnation, should be made lower than they. And all for one purpose, that He might redeem men from sin.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And, being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

Christ had to suffer death. Why? It is death that keeps man from realizing his dreams of dominion. Death is the result of sin and man cannot be restored to his original state and rule until the sin and death problems are solved forever. Death is separation and uselessness. All men die physically, which keeps them from realizing their destiny in this life. However, death begins before one dies. Death is also spiritual, and in that sense means useless, waste, futility. Death pervades all of man's life and the death of the body is the final culmination. Death is seen in boredom, emptiness, frustration, depression, anxiety, worry, fear, despair and defeat. These things, plus disease, are sure signs of man's physical death, which is sure to come. Shakespeare aptly described man's futility with life when he said,

“Life's but ... a tale told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing.”

“...crowned with glory and honor...” -- Even though Christ was put to death as a man, God crowned Him with glory and honor through His death, resurrection and ascension. Through death and resurrection, Christ restored the glory and honor that rightfully belongs to man.

“...that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one.” -- The very purpose of Christ’s death was that He might taste death for men. Only by the Son tasting death could the Father bring other sons to Himself. Only through Christ tasting death could the sons of men be delivered from the ruins of the Fall. God’s design in making His Son lower than the angels was that Christ might become the Redeemer of God’s people. **“And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins”** (Matt. 1:21). Jesus Christ literally tasted death that men might not have to face death. No human being can conceive or imagine what happened when the Lord Jesus was made sin for us.

“He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1).

Christ, in his death, purchased a new spiritual race who give allegiance to Christ and who will realize God’s ultimate destiny for man. Those for whom Christ died shall have the forgiveness of sins and shall reign with Christ in time and eternity.

It says that Christ “tasted death.” What does this mean? When we taste something we sample it. The tasting is merely a pledge, assurance or a guarantee of more to come. Christ, in his death, is a pledge and a guarantee that all who have been redeemed by Christ shall be with Him in His kingdom.

When it says Christ tasted death for “every one,” does it mean all men of all time? Some have been very dogmatic that this verse teaches that Christ’s death was a substitution for the whole world, for they reason that His death must be as wide as man’s curse for sin. But, if Christ substituted for the whole world, then the whole world would be saved. This actually says Christ tasted death for “every,” and the word “one” is not in the original Greek although “every” is masculine in gender. The context must determine who the “every” are, and the context is clear that the “every” are God’s elect, or all those who are true believers in Christ. They are called **“heirs of salvation”** (1:14), **“many sons”** (2:10), **“the sanctified”** (2:11) and **“brethren”** (2:11). Christ’s death is effective only for those who believe that Christ died for them. You may rest assured that every one for whom Christ tasted death shall, themselves, never do so, and they, alone, shall fulfill God’s ultimate destiny for man because they are related to Jesus Christ by faith.

Christ tasted death for God’s people purely by the grace of God. God’s grace does not have to be as wide as the curse of man or it would not be grace. If all were saved, grace would be weakened and meaningless. Grace does not save all, but it does, most certainly, save some! If any person is saved, it is purely by the grace of God, for no child of Adam deserves anything from God but damnation.

CONCLUSION

Saved

Christ is superior to angels because He is sovereign and He shall rule and reign over this earth in the Millennial kingdom. But, Christian, you, too, shall reign with Christ. ***“And thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth”*** (Rev. 5:10). Not only shall we reign with Christ, but we shall rule over the angels in God’s kingdom. ***“Do you not know that we shall judge angels?”*** (1 Cor. 6:3). What a destiny God’s redeemed have! What a glorious time when Christ comes in His second advent to establish His kingdom! Life is not futility for the Christian life is a preparation ground for when we actually do reign with Christ in the future. Even now, as we grow in grace, we are progressively having the image we lost in Adam restored to us in Christ.

As redeemed men and women, we can experience the real meaning of life and we can begin to rule on this earth. We most certainly will experience physical death (unless we are alive when Christ returns for His Church), but we will never experience spiritual death. The symptoms of death can be progressively defeated in our experience as we walk by faith and obedience. We, as redeemed people, may experience traces of futility, boredom, depression, worry and frustration, but, by faithful obedience, we can step by step defeat these things because we are in Christ.

Unsaved

You who are not Christians, is your life one of futility, despair, frustration and anxiety? Your problem is sin and there is no deliverance from sin apart from Christ. Sin is bringing you death, both spiritually and physically. Christ is the only answer to sin and death. Christ went through the suffering of death that men might be saved and live. Did Christ die for you? You will never know until you bow your will and trust Jesus Christ as Lord of your life and Savior for your sin. Only Christ, the Last Adam, can deliver you from the futility of sin and death that is experienced by every son or daughter of the first Adam.