

October 4, 2015 – Hebrews 2:1-13 (OT: Genesis 2:18-25 Gospel: Mark 10:2-16)

You Have a Brother in the Highest Place of All, Crowned with Glory and Honor

It is good to “have friends in high places.” If you know an important person, he or she can often help you get what you want. For example, a friend who works at Disney World can get you into the parks at cost. A friend or relative that works for a company usually can get you one of their products at a discount, if not for free. If you know someone in a position of authority, you might be able to drop their name to get out of a difficult situation: “my brother is the attorney general, so you better not mess with me!”

As helpful as friends or relatives may be because of their position, you have a brother who has much greater authority, who is in the highest place of all: Jesus, the Christ. He is crowned with glory and honor and has been set over all creation. He has done far more for you than any friend or relative could ever do.

The first chapter of Hebrews details how Jesus, the Son of God, is so much greater than the angels. He is the “*heir of all things*” (Hebrews 1:2). It is for this reason that our text tell us that “*we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away*” (v. 1). The things we have heard tell us of the great salvation we have through Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, angels were very popular. Many books came out that talked about them. I don’t know if they are as much of a focus today as they were then, but our text warns us not to make angels more important than Jesus. “*For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels*” (v. 5). Rather God subjects the world to His Son, Jesus, and to us. Chapter 1 ends by telling us that angels are “*all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation*” (Hebrews 1:14). They are sent out to serve you, the heirs of the salvation provided through God’s Son.

Part of the problem comes from the term “angel” itself. Neither Greek nor Hebrew has a separate word for what we call an “angel” – a heavenly, spiritual being created by God. The word used in both the Old Testament and New Testament simply means “messenger”. The word “angel” is actually a transliteration of the Greek word *angelos* ἄγγελος. This is not to say there are no heavenly messengers – there are – but by inventing a special word, we perhaps give angels a prominence that may not always be appropriate.

For example, in our text we have a contrast between “*the word spoken through angels*” (v. 2) and that “*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*” (v. 3). Because we do not translate the word “angels” as “messengers”, we loose some of the contrast. It seems obvious to us that “*the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward*” (v. 2), because we think of them as higher, heavenly beings. Of course we would listen to what an angel has to say. But if we translate the word literally, it gives us an even greater contrast: “*For if the word spoken through messengers proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord...*” (vv. 2-3). The contrast is between the Lord and His messengers.

The word spoken through messengers was the law of God (see Acts 7:51, Galatians 3:19). This law was binding, even though it was “delivered by messenger”, with “*every transgression and disobedience receiving a just reward*”. How much more important, then, is the salvation revealed directly by the Lord Himself! If the word of the messengers carried weight, how much more the word delivered by the One who sent them.

This great salvation “*was confirmed to us by those who heard Him*”. It was confirmed by the apostles who heard Jesus speak while He walked this earth. And God bore witness “*both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will*” (v. 4). This refers not only to the signs, wonders and miracles that Jesus performed. These confirmed His message and shows us that He truly was God-made-flesh, who came to bring us salvation. But it also refers to the miracles done by the hands of the apostles by the power of God. These signs and wonders confirmed the message that they spoke and wrote for us – that it indeed is the word of God.

The message of the great salvation that we have is that Jesus “*was made a little lower than the angels*” (v. 9); He became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). Although He was God, He became man “*for the suffering of death*”, so that He, “*by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone*” (v. 9). Jesus became man to fulfill the law by living a life of perfect obedience to “*the word spoken through angels*” – something neither you nor I have done. We all have sinned and transgressed this word and have been disobedient in thought, word, and deed. The just reward that we each deserve is death.

But Jesus took on our flesh and blood not only to perfectly obey the law, but to suffer and die, so that your transgressions and disobedience are forgiven and you no longer need to fear death (Hebrews 2:15). Jesus has tasted death for you. He died in your place, taking the just reward your sins deserve.

Jesus not only tasted death for you, but rose again from the dead and is now “*crowned with glory and honor*” (v. 7, 9). He has been set over all creation (v.7). He is “*the captain of [your] salvation*” (v. 10). He is the author and founder of it. This salvation is given to you “*by the grace of God*” – as a free gift, unearned and undeserved (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Through Jesus’ sufferings your salvation is complete and perfect, provided by the Lord God Himself “*for whom are all things and by whom are all things*”. It is no wonder that our text asks the question: “*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*” (v. 3). Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no one else given to us by whom we can be saved (see Acts 4:12) except Jesus Christ.

The great news here, however, does not end with the salvation from sin and death that Jesus brings you. Jesus also sanctifies you and sets you apart. He makes you holy. And we read here that “*both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (v. 11).

Because Jesus shared in your flesh and blood (see Hebrews 2:14), He now calls you His brother/sister. Jesus says “*I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You...I will put My trust in Him...Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.*” (vv. 12-13). Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, you have been adopted by God. As Paul wrote to the Galatians: “*you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26). Again, that word “sons” does not exclude women, but focuses on your adoption as *heir* to God’s kingdom. This is explained in Romans where we read: “*and if [we are] children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*” (Romans 8:16). So Jesus is your brother and co-heir – talk about having a brother in a high place!

Our text quotes from Psalm 8:4-6: “*What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor; And set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*” But to whom do these verses refer?

Verse 9 says, “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor*”, so Psalm 8 does refer to Jesus. But it also refers to us as

well! Verse 10 tells us that through Jesus' sufferings and death we are brought to glory as God's children. We were created "*a little lower than angels*" but through Christ, God crowns us with glory and honor (see Romans 2:10, 8:16, 29-30; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them over the works of His hands. He told them, "*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*" (Genesis 1:28).

The glory that will be revealed in us when Jesus returns has not been fully made known, but it far out-weighs anything we may face here (see Romans 8:18, 1 John 3:2, 2 Corinthians 4:17). We have read in Ephesians that we have been raised with Jesus and are seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), and God has put all things under His feet (v. 8, Ephesians 1:22, 1 Corinthians 15:27). When you inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34), you will share in the rule of Christ, as Paul wrote to Timothy: "*This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him*" (2 Timothy 2:11).

God "*has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels*" (v. 5), but to His Son, and to us as Jesus' co-heirs and His brothers and sisters whom He has brought to glory by His death and resurrection. We do not yet see all things put under our feet (v. 8), but we will when we finally enter into the glory Christ has obtained for us.

For you have a Brother in the highest place of all. He humbled Himself and became man to taste death for you. And he was raised from the dead and crowned with glory and honor to bring you to glory with Him. So pay close attention to what you have heard and trust in the great salvation your brother Jesus has given you. Amen.

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