

The Curse, the Cross, and the Crown Hebrews 2:5-9

Introduction

The author of Hebrews has been making the case that Jesus Christ is supreme. For that reason, we must hold fast to Him as our highest treasure, unshaken no matter what opposition we face or what affliction we bear. First, He is superior even to angels because He is God the Son, not a created being. But the next reason Hebrews gives for His superiority to angels may surprise us. *Christ is superior to angels not just because of His deity, but because of His humanity.* How could that be? The answer is rooted in creation itself. The beginning speaks of human dignity and human destiny. It's easy to forget both in a broken world marred by sin and full of broken people. But the redemption Jesus Christ has accomplished recovers what we lost as members of a fallen race. We are created in God's image, and as such have a divine purpose and destiny. No one but Jesus Christ could recover that for us. Hence His exaltation, and stunningly, ours—if we are joined to Him as His people.

Verses 5-9 capture for us this epic story of redemption. It's fitting that our study of this passage falls on a day we're celebrating the Lord's table, which speaks of belonging, of deep cost, and of future glory.

Hebrews 2:5-9

⁵ For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶ It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷ You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

1. Created: Privileged Dignity
2. Cursed: Unfulfilled Destiny
3. Crowned: Recovered Glory

1. Created: Privileged Dignity

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feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

The author of Hebrews is well-versed in the Scripture and knows exactly where the passage is from which he quotes, but his emphasis is on these words coming from God. We find them in Psalm 8, a Psalm of David.

Psalm 8:3-5

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Think how many nights David would have gazed on a star-filled sky as a young shepherd, as a fugitive on the run from King Saul, as a warrior on the eve of battle, as a king standing on the battlements recalling all the dangers, toils, and snares through which God brought him. *The vast night sky makes us realize how small and weak we are, how little we know, how brief our earthly journey.* Even to imagine that the God who created it all would take notice of us seems presumptuous at best. To know He does is overwhelming. Whether you are David living a thousand years before Christ came to earth or yourself, living 2000 years after Jesus came.

What gives David the confidence that God has crowned man with glory and honor? It's not just the Davidic covenant, but something much further back. Listen to what he goes on to say in Psalm 8 and you will hear echoes of Eden.

Psalm 8:6-8

⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

Genesis 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We commonly call this passage the creation mandate. It teaches that as those made in God's image, male and female, we have been given dominion over the earth. To accomplish that male and female image-bearers must work together to be fruitful and multiply through procreation, to fill the earth, to subdue it and have dominion over it. Adam and Eve were only two people. They could not manage the whole earth—that's why God planted a garden paradise for them to work. But through their offspring they were to take care of the whole earth.

This passage is rich with significance. It underscores the high value and dignity of every human being, male and female, with all their genetic distinctions. It marks the beginning of marriage and the family, of the sanctity of sexual relationship between man and wife. It sets the importance of men and women working together to fulfill God's purposes. It gives responsibility to human beings to care well for the earth and its resources, to develop its potential, to harness its resources for good.

God did not give this authority and responsibility to angels, but to humans, even though angels in many ways have more power and freedom than do humans. Angels are spirit beings. They can work in both the

physical and spiritual worlds. They stand before the presence of God in heaven. They serve the purposes of God on earth, ministering to those who will inherit salvation. Their power extends far beyond natural human power. And they are not subject to death. In these ways man is a little lower than angels. And when applied to Christ, for a little while, He descended from His divine throne to take up a status below the angels as a human being, subject even to death.

It's profitable every day for you to keep your created status in mind. *You are made in God's image. You have dignity. You have worth. You have purpose. Whatever gifts, abilities, and opportunities you possess God gave you to develop and use for His glory and for the good of others.* Take seriously your corner of creation and cultivate it, make it fruitful, manage it. It belongs to God, but He has given it to you for a time to manage well.

If you are male, your maleness is written into the genetic code of every cell of your body, including your brain. Don't imagine yourself to be other than male. No therapy or surgery or psychological manipulation can make you female. Be the man God created you to be. Gentle. Strong. Courageous. Reliable. Loving. A safe haven, cherishing and honoring your wife, teaching and protecting your children. Neither abusive nor passive. Married or not,

your interaction with others should bear these qualities.

If you are female, your femaleness is written into the genetic code of every cell of your body, including your brain. Don't imagine yourself to be other than female, and thus dishonor females as somehow inferior. No therapy or surgery or psychological manipulation can make you male. Be the woman God created you to be. Helpful, wise, kind, industrious, affectionate, with a quiet spirit under control because of your awe for the Lord, reverencing your husband, working together to join your abilities with his to rear your children and manage the earth. Married or not, your interaction with others should bear these qualities.

If you can sing, sing to His praise. If you can create, engage your head and hands to create beauty and design. If you are good with numbers, use them to multiply blessings on others. Good with words? Hone your skills to communicate truth and grace. If you can run, run strong. If you can organize, organize. If you can build, build.

In our culture we waste a lot of time—which is what life is made of—so we waste a lot of life, neglecting our gifts and merely passing the time entertaining ourselves to death, opening our minds to all kinds of toxic

influences, wasting hour upon hour, day upon day, ultimately years of lives in worthless pursuits. You were created for more. Go for it. Be what God made you to be and do what God made you to do.
Created: Privileged Dignity.

Trying to figure out your path of life?
Start with God and what He wove into your being. Let His creative work in you lead you to your work for Him.

2. Cursed: Unfulfilled Destiny

^{8b} At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Instead so often, the creation we are supposed to subdue towers over us, and careens out of control. We are vulnerable to disease, to natural disasters, and to death. Harnessing the earth and managing it well is a battle that wears us out. Instead of fruitfulness, thorns and thistles. Every accomplishment demands sweat and fatigue. Plagued by discouragement, disillusionment, and doubt. Gifts abused and misdirected. Identities twisted. Responsibilities abused. Work ignored or perverted. And the harm of our failures pervasive.

With all the residue of good that still exists in all God created, there is so much that is

twisted, marred, and blighted. A daily reminder of the paradise we lost.

We were created in God's image, yet how many have convinced themselves God does not even exist.

We were created to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever, but our bent is to fight Him or ignore Him, to try to usurp His place and in so doing to lose the source of our own dignity as His vice-regents—our very reason for existence. If the King makes you an officer in His Kingdom, you lose everything if you get rid of the King.

There's just no getting around how much is broken in our world and in us. Not if we're honest. We tend to bounce back and forth between idealism and pessimism, between hopeful innovating and cynical blame shifting, with no real answers as to why there's still so much that's good and why no matter how hard we try, there's still so much that's bad.

Did you notice that the text uses the words "not yet"?

We know things are not right . . . yet.
That tells us that someday they will be.
But how?

In a sin-cursed world perfect dominion over the earth seems like an impossible dream.

But that's why Jesus came as the God-man. To make what seems impossibly broken whole again. To recover forever what seems irretrievably lost. He will fulfill perfectly what man was created to do, and in so doing will bring us along to participate.

“Not yet”—keeps us from the temporary idealism of thinking we can achieve complete satisfaction in this life, and keeps us from the cynical disillusionment that allows what's wrong to strip away our sense of hope, of purpose, and of joy.

3. Crowned: Recovered Glory

⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Because so God's grace toward us—His unmerited favor—Jesus participated in our humiliation.

Jesus lived the perfect life we could not achieve.

Jesus suffered for us the death we deserved because of our sin.

Jesus tasted death for everyone, so that whoever puts faith in him will not have to do so. As the infinite God, his death was sufficient for all and efficient for all who trust Him to save them.

Hebrews 2:14-15

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

John 11:23-27

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" **27** She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

As many funerals as we've experienced even in recent weeks, it surely seems like we are having to taste a lot of death lately. Physical death, yes. But it's not permanent, however it seems. And it's not eternal like spiritual death is.

In fact, for the believer, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5). When we depart, we are

immediately with Christ, which is better by far than even fruitful living here (Philippians 1). We are among the saints made perfect in the heavenly city (Hebrews 12). In that sense, we never die. Last breath here, next breath in heaven. Close our eyes on our deathbed, and open them in the capital city of the universe.

Jesus has recovered the crown not just for Himself, King of kings, and Lord of lords, but for His people, a new humanity, born again, transformed, made perfect. But the path to the crown was by way of the cross. We are

Romans 8:17

Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him.

No wonder He told his disciples,
Matthew 16:24-25

²⁴ . . . "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

2 Timothy 1:8-10

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our

works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Do not lose heart my brothers and sisters— Jesus has tasted death for us and has drained the cup dry. It no longer can hold us. Just as He conquered death by rising from the tomb, He will destroy our enemy death forever. The cross work is done. Sins purged. Death no longer has a claim on us. We are alive forevermore.

Conclusion

This is the communion of the saints with their Lord. His table, His kingdom, one day face to face.

1. Created: Privileged Dignity
2. Cursed: Unfulfilled Destiny
3. Crowned: Recovered Glory

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does it surprise you that Christ's superiority is tied not just to His deity but also to His humanity?
2. How does the fact that Jesus is not only a great God but also a great Savior

- through His cross work help you appreciate why He as the unique God-man deserves the highest exaltation?
3. What experiences of God's creation have caused you to stand in awe of both God's power and God's care for human beings in ways similar to what David expresses in Psalm 8?
 4. What are some ways we show toward ourselves and others that we understand every human being is created in God's image?
 5. Genesis makes a point of underscoring that God made both male and female in His image and blessed both together. What qualities does the Bible call godly men to display? What qualities does the Bible call godly women to display? What are ways they should work together?
 6. What are ways you can cultivate yourself and your part of the creation in keeping with the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28?
 7. How does the phrase "not yet" (v. 8) help your perspective on both the good and bad you experience in this life?
 8. What does knowing Christ has recovered the crown not just for Himself but for His people who will reign with Him in fulfillment of the creation mandate do for your outlook and your efforts?