

Christ the True Human Bringing His Brothers to True Humanity: An Exegesis of Hebrews 2:5–9

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Abstract

Reading Hebrews 2:5–9 prompts the interpreter to ask two critical questions: to whom does the author apply the quotation of Psalm 8, and—if the answer is Christ—why does he consider it appropriate to apply this Psalm to Christ? Arguably, applying the quotation directly to Christ emanates from a faithful exegesis of Psalm 8. Thus providing indirect support that the New Testament rightly interprets Old Testament texts. This further implies that the author of Hebrews finds in Christ a second Adam figure, which has implications for both his own person and ministry and for the mode by which he ‘brings many sons to glory.’ He is the eschatological ruler, humbled, exalted, obeyed, and pioneering ruler over all things. The original hearers were to entrust themselves to God, despite the world’s chaotic appearance, and to listen closely to the voice of God speaking in Jesus. As such, this section forms just one peg in the larger argument of Hebrews, which urges all listeners not to depart from Jesus for any reason.

Keywords: True Humanity; Christ’s humanity; Eschatological Adam; Epistle to the Hebrews; Angels; Psalm 8

Introduction

Hebrews is the New Testament book that most extensively expounds the Old Testament. In particular, several specific texts form the skeleton upon which the flesh of the letter hangs.¹ The first of these quotations, namely Psalm 8:5–7[4–6 English versification] in Hebrews 2:6–

1 R. T. France, “The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor,” *Tyndale Bulletin*, 47, no. 2 (1996): 259, identifies six texts (Ps 8:5–7[4–6] in 2:5–18; Ps 95:7–11 in 3:6–4:13; Ps 110:4 in 5:5–7:28; Jer 31:31–34 in 8:1–10:28; Hab 2:3–4 in 10:32–12:3; Prov 3:11–12 in 12:4–13) as well as the Mount Sinai theme as forming the framework of the letter.



8,² contributes to the author's developing argument that Christ is superior to angels. In this article, I will address the truths about Christ based on this psalm and the implications for believers of all ages. However, before turning to the author's teaching, I will address two preliminary questions that vex many interpreters. First, to whom does the author primarily see the psalm applying, and second, on what basis does he view it as being fulfilled by Christ when a superficial reading of the psalm does not suggest it as Messianic?

Quotation as Christological

The first question to address at the outset of an interpretation of Hebrews 2:5–9 is: “To whom do Hebrews apply Psalm 8?” Interpreters have divided opinions on this question. Some favour an anthropological understanding—whereby Psalm 8 is applied generally to humanity, and those favouring a Christological reading—whereby Psalm 8 is applied directly to Christ.³ Nevertheless, there are several reasons (outlined below) why it is appropriate to conclude that Hebrews understands Psalm 8 as referring to Christ directly and not merely derivatively.

Proposition Statement

First, the proposition statement in Hebrews 2:5 (‘For it was not to angels...’) is rhetorically similar to 1:5 (‘For to which of the angels...’) and 1:13 (‘And to which of the angels...’). In both 1:5 and 1:13, the Son (ὁ υἱός) is implied to fulfil a quoted psalm (Psalms 2:7 and 110:1, respectively), in contrast with the angels. The rhetorical similarity thus suggests that 2:5 is also intended to push the hearer to conclude that it is *the Son* to whom the coming world is subjected rather than angels. This inference is perhaps further reinforced by the fact that the quotation which follows also identifies its subject as ‘son of man’ (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου).⁴

It has been noted that 2:5 is even more closely similar to 2:16 (‘For surely it is not angels...’). As a result, Ellingworth suggests that 2:16 supplies the positive referent of 2:5: the offspring of Abraham.⁵ However, this is unlikely for two reasons. First, Hebrews is

2 Although several passages are quoted in chapter 1, they form a *catena* and are not explained at all.

3 Craig L. Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship Between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2:6 and 2:9 and the Implications for English Translation,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel Driver, Trevor Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 88–99, argues for the anthropological interpretation; George H. Guthrie and Russell D. Quinn, “A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4–6 in Hebrews 2:5–9,” *JETS* 49, no. 2 (2006): 235–246, defend the Christological view. It should be noted that most commentators, regardless of what conclusion they arrive at on this question, agree that Christ enables humanity to fulfil Psalm 8.

4 Caution should be applied to this argument, given: (a) that son is modified by the genitive ἀνθρώπου and (b) that Hebrews does not comment on the term ‘son of man.’ Nevertheless, it is plausible that the author, reading the psalm in Greek translation, naturally made a connection from υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου to Jesus.

5 Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 143.



intended to be heard;⁶ thus, the hearer is likely expected to infer the referent of 2:5 before reaching 2:16. Hence, the natural referent to supply is one already mentioned, i.e., the Son—especially given the ongoing contrast between the Son and angels. Second, the contrast in 2:5 differs from 2:16 despite the similar construction. In the former, God is the subject, granting rule, but in the latter, the Son is the subject, giving help. We see below that 2:10–18 shows how Jesus brings his people to share the rule he has rightly attained. Thus, humanity *will* rule over the coming world, but only through Christ first doing so.⁷

Reference to Previous Context

Second, referring to the coming world (τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν), the author clarifies by adding, ‘concerning which we are speaking’ (περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν). The present tense here likely indicates an ongoing activity.⁸ Thus, the eschatological world is not a new subject. The most explicit connection is in 1:6, which shares the term οἰκουμένη (world) with 2:5.⁹ In the former verse, the firstborn (i.e., the Son) is brought into the world, and angels are called to worship him. Although οἰκουμένη typically refers to the inhabited world in NT writings, Jipp and Caneday have argued cogently that, in this context, it has special eschatological significance.¹⁰ Also, the context of chapter 1 is the eschatological exaltation of the Son to an inheritance beyond that of angels (1:4), in line with the usage of οἰκουμένη in the LXX of the Psalter, where it contrasts with ἡ γῆ.¹¹ Particularly important is Psalm 95:9–10 (MT 96:9–10): “Let all the earth (ἡ γῆ) tremble (σαλευθήτω) before him...for he has established the world (τὴν οἰκουμένην) so that it shall not be moved (οὐ σαλευθήσεται).”¹² Thus, the present world, which can be shaken, is ἡ γῆ, but the eschatological world, which cannot, is ἡ οἰκουμένη. The

6 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, WBC 47A (Dallas: Word, 1991), lxxiv.

7 It is worth observing that throughout chapter 2, the Father deals directly with the Son but only deals with the offspring of Abraham through the Son. Thus, Jesus is the founder of salvation (v. 10), the sanctifier (v. 11), the deliverer (v. 15), the helper (v. 16), and the priest (v. 17).

8 Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 147.

9 Blomberg, “But We See Jesus,” 92–93, ignores this and fails to do justice to the phrase ‘the coming world’ by suggesting that Adam and Eve were given rule over a coming world which “is only just beginning to open up to them.” This also ignores the almost universally eschatological use of participle forms of μέλλω in Hebrews.

10 Joshua W. Jipp, “The Son’s Entrance into the Heavenly World: The Soteriological Necessity of the Scriptural Catena in Hebrews 1.5–14,” *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 557–575; Ardel B. Caneday, “The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son: The Οἰκουμένη of Hebrews 1.6 and the Son’s Enthronement,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel Driver, Trevor Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 28–39; Kenneth L. Schenck, “A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 3 (2001): 478, also notes that other commonplace words (e.g. πατήρ and πόλις) are also given a particular eschatological nuance in Hebrews that is absent elsewhere in the NT.

11 Lane, *Hebrews*, 45–46.

12 This text probably influenced the author’s interpretation of Haggai 2:6 at 12:26–27. See J. Ross Wagner, “The Use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:5–9” (MA, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1994), 80–81.



meaning of 1:6, then, is that the Son has attained an exalted position over the new creation, which is further defined in the other quotations in Chapter 1. If this is the interpretation the hearers would have drawn from Chapter 1, they would naturally have concluded that the proper referent of the proposition statement in 2:5 is the Son.

Connection with Psalm 110

Third, the quotation of Psalm 8 here is juxtaposed with that of Psalm 110 (at 1:13), albeit separated by a brief hortatory section (2:1–4). The latter psalm is interpreted Christologically. Naturally, these psalms would be read in light of one another since both allude to feet under which enemies and all creation, respectively, are/will be subject (Ps 110:1; 8:6). Indeed, the word ποδῶν is part of the vocabulary which ties the exposition of 2:5ff with that of 1:5–14.¹³ The juxtaposition of these two psalms interpreted Christologically is a common feature of the New Testament.¹⁴ This usage likely influenced the author of Hebrews—but even if he arrived at it independently, it remains probable that the Christological understanding of Psalm 110 should govern the interpretation of Hebrews 2:5ff.

Flow of Thought

Fourth, the conjunction δέ in 2:6 is likely used in an adversative sense.¹⁵ This could have two possible forces: either an anticipated objection to the proposition of 2:5 (‘However’)¹⁶ or the ‘antithetical affirmative,’ i.e., the identification of the one to whom the negative proposition statement positively *does* apply (‘Rather’).¹⁷ However, elsewhere, where the author uses οὐ...δέ¹⁸ or οὐ...ἀλλά¹⁹ constructions to indicate the antithetical affirmative, he unambiguously states the positive counterpart. As he does not do this here, he is more likely introducing a potential objection to the assertion—already inferred by hearers—that the coming world is subject to the Son. The author anticipates his hearers will note that the Son

13 George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 72 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 97, refers to the technique of *distant hookwords*. According to him, sections of exposition that are separated by a hortatory section, are connected by shared vocabulary.

14 Note especially 1 Corinthians 15:25–27 and Ephesians 1:20–22.

15 Sebastian Fuhrmann, “The Son, the Angels, and the Odd: Psalm 8 in Hebrews 1 and 2,” in *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*, ed. Dirk J. Human and Gert J. Steyn (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 90.

16 Ibid, 90, prefers this. Fuhrmann argues that διαμαρτύρομαι should be construed to mean ‘protest,’ but this meaning is unattested in the NT. The typical meaning—to testify—could equally fit this option, though.

17 Franz Delitzsch, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978), 103–104, prefers this option.

18 2:8–9; 4:13, 15; 6:12; 7:3; 9:12; 10:5; 10:26–27.

19 2:16; 5:4–5; 7:16; 9:24; 10:25; 11:13; 12:18–22; 13:14.



was a human being and therefore lower than the ‘angels’ (according to Psalm 8)²⁰ and thus question how he can be said to be exalted above them in stature.

However, the quotation the author cites contains a potential objection and refutation. He was made lower than the angels but has been crowned with glory and honour and given dominion over all things God has made. The author uses these statements to demonstrate the higher status of the Son. Thus, in his exposition of the quotation, the author first explains that Son’s exaltation shows that all things are subject to him and thus that he is—right now—exalted above the angels. Following this, he explains the necessity of his incarnation, which demanded that he become, for a time, lower than the angels—namely, that this alone enabled him to become one with humanity and, therefore, to bring ultimate blessing to humanity (unlike angels). Thus, the quotation and interpretation have a chiastic structure, with the outer limbs giving an objection and its refutation, while the inner limbs give a proof and its explanation:

<i>Proposition:</i>	Christ exalted over angels in the eschatological world	(v. 5)
<i>Objection:</i>	Christ (as man) lower than the angels	(vv. 6–7a)
<i>Proof:</i>	All things subject to the exalted Christ	(vv. 7b–8a)
<i>Explanation:</i>	All things truly subject to Christ, despite appearances	(vv. 8b–9c)
<i>Refutation:</i>	Christ’s incarnation necessary for man’s salvation	(v. 9) ²¹

This structure of thought only makes sense if the author applies his quotation to the Son from the start. It has been argued that only with the explicit naming of Jesus in 2:9 (‘but we see...Jesus’) does the author turn his focus from humanity to Jesus.²² However, this is a misreading of the author’s thoughts. Despite appearances, he is proving that all things are subject to the Son in answer to another anticipated objection: based on their experience of persecution, things would not appear to be subject to the Son. Thus, he contrasts not those to whom the world is subject with him to whom it is, but the appearance that things are not

20 The translation of אֱלֹהִים (‘God’ or ‘gods’) in the Masoretic Text of Psalm 8:6 as ἀγγέλους (‘angels’) in the Septuagint translation appropriated by the author of Hebrews has elicited much discussion. Several clues suggest that אֱלֹהִים here probably does not refer to YHWH. First, the close proximity in status between man and אֱלֹהִים contrasts with the huge gulf that the OT presupposes between humanity and YHWH. Second, throughout Book 1 of the psalter, God is referred to as YHWH rather than אֱלֹהִים, making it quite plausible that the reference to אֱלֹהִים here is otherwise. Third, the rest of the psalm addresses YHWH in the second person, so the third person reference here is most likely to a different being(s). The translation by ἀγγέλους rather than θεοὺς likely arises out of a desire to avoid the appearance of polytheism (c.f. Ps 97:7; 138:1).

21 The explanation and refutation are partially overlapping.

22 e.g. Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Wed. G. van Soest, 1961), 105.



subject to Christ with the reality that they are since he has been exalted. His hearers, knowing him to be exalted, can be assured that he is fulfilling the entirety of Psalm 8.

Justifying the Christological Application of the Psalm

The question of how Psalm 8 applies to Christ is a thorny one. It has been argued that the phrase ‘son of man’ (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in 2:6) led the author to apply this psalm to Jesus, who regularly referred to himself in this way.²³ Although this might be the case, the author mentions this phrase neither in his exposition nor elsewhere.²⁴ Furthermore, ‘son of man’ is synonymous with ‘man’ in the preceding colon,²⁵ a word with no clear messianic connection.²⁶ It is thus unlikely that ‘son of man’ drew the author into a Messianic interpretation.

It has also been suggested that the author’s interpretation was made possible using the LXX translation of Psalm 8. After all, the psalm connects with the context of Hebrews through the word ἀγγέλους (angels; Heb 2:7), which translates אֲמֹלִים (Ps 8:6[5]), a word typically used of God.²⁷ The psalmist is likely referring to those divine beings who belong to the divine council (c.f. Ps 82:1). Although these beings are closer to God than humans at present, they remain creatures and not divine in any true sense of the word. The word ‘angels’ may bring to mind a false picture of these highly exalted beings for the modern reader,²⁸ but the concept of angels held by Hebrews 1 surely fits what Psalm 8 intends here.

Similarly, commentators have argued that without βραχύ τι (a little; Heb 2:7), it would be impossible to apply the psalm to Christ since the psalm would imply that Christ is permanently of a lower status than angels.²⁹ This Greek phrase, which translates זעז, can indeed bear a temporal weight (i.e., for a little while).³⁰ However, like זעז it much more commonly has a qualitative interpretation (i.e., a little bit). Furthermore, while it is possible

23 Brevard S. Childs, “Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon,” *Interpretation* 23, no. 1 (1969): 25.

24 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 88. Moreover, it is not even included in the quotations of Psalm 8 elsewhere in the NT, which are all given Christological application.

25 Psalm 8:5b[4b] clearly echoes verse 5a[4a] in synonymous parallelism.

26 Given the author’s willingness to omit an entire line of the psalm (see below), it seems likely that if he was relying on the term ‘son of man’ to infer the Messianic connection, he would have omitted the reference to ‘man.’

27 Childs, “Psalm 8 in the Christian Canon.”

28 However, it is surely a better translation than θεός, given the theological confusion that would have caused in an increasingly Hellenising milieu.

29 Childs, “Psalm 8 in the Christian Canon”; James W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 62. This assumes that Psalm 8 says, “You made him a little lower than...” but that Hebrews interprets the LXX as saying, “You made him for a little [while] lower than...”

30 זעז itself can also bear this meaning.



to construe the interpretation of Hebrews as giving βαρχύ τι a temporal bent, the author's argument makes sense even if the qualitative meaning is understood.

Thus, it seems that the author of Hebrews does not rely on either an atomistic interpretation of one phrase or a translation that biased him to a Christological reading.³¹ For several reasons, I suggest that the psalm bears the weight of a Messianic interpretation. First, Psalm 8 acknowledges the impact of the rebellion in Genesis 3, yet never mentions how this impacts man's status. That the psalmist is not idealistically meditating on creation is implied by including foes, an enemy, and an avenger (v. 3[2]).³² Although the enemies are God's—and it may thus refer only to his angelic opponents—this would belie the psalm's canonical setting. Again, the vocabulary is shared by Psalms 7 and 9/10,³³ where the psalmist speaks of his own enemies in each case. These enemies meet their end through a reversal of fortunes (Pss 7:16–17[15–16]; 9:16–17[15–16]); reversal and stilling of enemies are also key themes in Psalm 8.³⁴ This hints at the relevance of reading these psalms together, and when doing so, it becomes implausible that David would have ignored the fall.³⁵ Yet the testimony of Scripture is that neither crown, glory, nor honour (verse 6[5]) can be ascribed to one under God's judgement.³⁶ Similarly, he who does not walk in David's ways shall not rule (verse 7[6]) but be plucked up.³⁷ Given that these attributes predicated on man are all taken away in judgement, the psalmist is unlikely referring to a fallen man in his natural state.³⁸

Second, although it is not less than a meditation on the creation of humanity, Psalm 8 is more; it combines concepts from creation with vocabulary more indebted to the Davidic covenant. Indeed, the terminology in Psalm 8 that is not predicated to a fallen man is predicated to the Davidic house. כִּבּוֹד (crown, cognate with עָטַר, to crown; v. 6[5]),

31 See Albert Pietersma, "Text-Production and Text-Reception: Psalm 8 in Greek," in *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten*, WUNT 219 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 487–501, for a discussion of translation issues in Psalm 8. Although the translation is not in all places straightforwardly literal, it does not bias the reader towards a Messianic interpretation.

32 צוֹרֵר, אֵיב, and מִתְנַקֵּם, respectively. On the unity of the psalm, see the structures of C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 42, and Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 126, which make plausible proposals as to how the entire composition fits together.

33 c.f. Hubert J. Keener, "A Canonical Exegesis of the Eighth Psalm: YHWH's Maintenance of the Created Order through Divine Reversal" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2010), 83–84.

34 Keener, "A Canonical Exegesis of Psalm 8," 89.

35 This impression is further enhanced when one recognises that the five psalms preceding, and the five psalms following, Psalm 8, are all laments or have lament elements.

36 c.f. Is 28:3; Lam 5:16; Ezek 21:31[26] for loss of crown; Hos 4:7; 10:5; Hab 2:16 for loss of glory; Lam 1:6 for loss of honour. Granted that all of these texts are later than the psalm if it was written by David, this does not mean that he would not have held to the same concepts.

37 2 Ch 7:17–20; Ezek 19:14. Many other texts speak of unrighteous rulers being replaced (e.g. Lam 5:8).

38 In other words, the psalm's referent appears to have either avoided or risen above the status of fallenness.



(glory), and *הָדָר* (honour; both in v. 6[5]) are all found in the strongly Davidic Psalm 21 (verses 4[3] and 6[5]).³⁹ The verb *מָשַׁל* (Qal to rule/Hiphil to grant rule to; v. 7[6]) is widely associated with Davidic rulers, rather than the commission of Genesis 1:28,⁴⁰ even though this colon is the clearest echo of Genesis 1 in the psalm. *תַּחַת-רַגְלָיו* (under his feet; v. 7[6]) is not mirrored in an explicitly Davidic context,⁴¹ but Psalm 110:1 is conceptually similar. The phrase may convey a Messianic connotation derived from Genesis 3:15.⁴² This vocabulary is absent from Genesis 1, suggesting that the description of the man of Psalm 8 owes its substance more to Davidic texts than creation texts.⁴³

Third, the author of Hebrews, contrary to modern commentators on Psalm 8, did not see the two cola of verse 6[5] as synonymous parallelism. In 2:9, he asserts that two stages of Jesus' ministry have been seen, one corresponding to Psalm 8:6a[5a] (made lower than the angels), the other to Psalm 8:6b[5b] (crowned with glory and honour).⁴⁴ Thus, he sees a historical progression from lowly to exalted Christ. This is quite natural since the Old Testament neither predicates honour, glory, crowning, or rule of angels nor the subjection of creation to them.⁴⁵ Thus, the picture of man presented from Psalm 8:6b[5b] onwards presents someone who seems to be above, not beneath, angels in status. However, if this is correct, Psalm 8 does not describe what man permanently is through creation, but—at most—what he may one day become.⁴⁶

To summarise, while Psalm 8 is rooted in God's creation of man, as narrated in Genesis 1–2, it describes man in exalted terms that not only do not apply to humanity due to judgement but also bear closer resemblance with Davidic texts than creation texts. The creation certainly indicates a central role for humanity in God's purposes, which cannot be thwarted. But importantly, the psalmist recognised that fallen humanity could not fulfill this

39 The closest NT echo of this language is found in 1 Peter 5:4, where the *δόξης στέφανον* (crown of glory) is assigned to faithful leaders, not to all of humanity. The means of this crowning is not stated, but presumably it is through their relationship with the chief Shepherd.

40 Genesis 1:28 uses the verbs *כָּבַשׁ* (to subdue) and *הָרָה* (to have dominion).

41 It is used of Israel/the faithful in Psalm 47:4[3] and Malachi 3:21[4:3].

42 Although the word foot is absent and there is no explicit indication that the serpent's head is crushed by the foot of the woman's seed, the crushing of the heel would be an appropriate retaliation if the serpent attempted to bite the foot that was crushing it. This appears to be Paul's understanding; see Romans 16:20.

43 Even if the author worked purely from the LXX and knew no Hebrew, the observations outlined in this and the previous paragraph could still have been made, though *τιμὴ* (honour) is not used in Psalm 21:5 LXX.

44 While both verbs are perfect participles, it is appropriate to see a temporal distinction, since his crowning is causally dependent upon Jesus' suffering of death, which followed his becoming lower than the angels. That he is not still lower than the angels is evident from the exaltation ascribed to him in Hebrews 1 (see above).

45 Notwithstanding Deuteronomy 32:8 LXX, which is a questionable translation.

46 G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 37, 262, reads the psalm this way; c.f. also Douglas J. Green, "Psalm 8: What Is Israel's King that You Remember Him?" (unpublished paper), <http://files1.wts.edu/uploads/pdf/articles/psalm8-green.pdf> (accessed 23/12/2022).



role. Moreover, verse 6[5] indicates that only a man exalted above angels could truly fulfil this role, implying that only the true Davidic Son could fulfil the psalm. This explains why Psalm 8 exudes praise despite being surrounded by so much wickedness and oppression: it looks forward to one who will dispel all unrighteousness, confident that God *will* accomplish humanity's purpose through him.⁴⁷ He will thus be a new Adamic figure.

In what follows, we will expand each point in the proposed structure according to what it reveals about the rule of Christ.

Christ the Eschatological Ruler (v. 5)

First, the author alerts the readers that Christ rules the eschatological world. It is probably correct to correlate the use of a participle form of μέλλω with such uses elsewhere in Hebrews.⁴⁸ In particular, it should be associated with the coming inheritance of salvation (1:14), coming age (αἰών; 6:5), and coming city (πόλις; 13:14). Concerning the coming salvation, it is notable that angels serve those who are to attain to this, but Jesus himself is supreme over it. This partially explains how 2:5ff serves as the ground (note the conjunction γάρ) for 2:1–4. The hearers must pay closer attention to Jesus than the law because he has a more elevated role than the angels who mediated the law, so his words are of prime importance in inheriting salvation. Thus, the author later says that Jesus is “the source of eternal salvation to all who *obey* him” (5:9, emphasis added). Moreover, as he has attained supremacy in the eschatological world, if human beings are to reach this exalted position, they must follow the pioneer (ἀρχηγός; 2:10) and forerunner (πρόδρομος; 6:20) of salvation rather than angels, who know not the pathway to this salvation. After all, angels have either never fallen and experienced no temptation and cannot help those who do (c.f. 2:18), or they have fallen and have no redemption plan (c.f. 2:16). Only the Son, who has experienced human weakness but still achieved glory, can lead on the pathway to glory; thus he must be heeded above all others.

Again, the coming world is the coming age, whose powers are already bleeding into this age (6:5). Christ appeared at the end of the ages (9:26), indicating that the coming age was dawning in him. Active participants in the church⁴⁹ can taste the powers (δυνάμεις) of

47 Indeed, canonically Psalm 8 grounds the praise promised in Psalm 7 and given in Psalm 9–10. It gives a reason to hope that the enemy will indeed meet his end in a dramatic reversal (see above), for when creation is ruled by the righteous, everlasting Son of David, wickedness will surely be eradicated and justice prevail.

48 1:14; 6:5; 8:5; 10:1; 10:27; 11:20; 13:14. Except 8:5, all have an eschatological force. 10:1 may or may not be eschatological in the traditional sense of the word, but it is eschatological from an OT perspective.

49 Whatever the spiritual status of the referents of 6:4–6, it cannot be doubted that they are part of a community of faith.



the coming age, in part through the powers (δυνάμεις) of all kinds by which God vindicates the message concerning his Son (2:4). Such powers include the miracles of healing and provision retold in the Gospels and Acts. Thus, the coming world over which the Son rules will be one of spiritual power (c.f. 1 Cor. 15:43), with the fullness of health and abundance—a perfect kingdom, partly experienced now by those who trust in Christ.

Similarly, the coming world is the same as the coming city (13:14), which should be equated with the city to which Abraham looked (11:10), the heavenly country for which saints of old longed (11:16). This longing enabled them to shirk the things of this world, just as the hearers are expected to bear reproach for Jesus' sake by looking to it (13:13–14). After all, it is a city of perfection, designed and built by God and presided over by the Son. But again, they have already proleptically come to that city (12:22), beginning to experience what they will one day fully enjoy because they already have forgiveness of sins (12:24).

Thus, the fact that Jesus is the eschatological ruler indicates that his people must listen to his direction. Moreover, they can be strengthened now to live faithful lives because of both the partial experience of and the anticipation of the fullness of the coming world.

Christ the Humbled Ruler (vv. 6–7a)

Second, the author acknowledges that Christ is a humbled ruler. As we have argued, verse 6 introduces a potential objection to the comfort and strength that would arise from embracing verse 5. How can it be argued that the coming world—including angels—has been subjected to the Son if he is lower than angels?

Caird has argued that the author of Hebrews has no place for a concept of pre-existence.⁵⁰ Likewise, Hurst insists that the Christology of Hebrews 1–2 does not describe a previously elevated figure being humbled but a human figure achieving exaltation.⁵¹ These conclusions are reached in part through the assumption that Psalm 8 refers to the destiny of all humanity. While there is some merit to these ideas—given that the focus of the quotations in chapter 1 is the exaltation of the Son—there remains doubt as to the central thesis. It is difficult to see how Hebrews could view the Son as involved in creation (Heb 1:2) if it simultaneously does not acknowledge his pre-incarnate existence. Schenck may be right to assert that the rhetorical force of the quotation of Psalm 102:25–27 (1:10–12) is to

50 G. B. Caird, “Son by Appointment,” in *The New Testament Age*, ed. William C. Weinrich, vol. I (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 75–76.

51 Lincoln Hurst, “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2,” in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament. Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. Lincoln Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 163.



demonstrate the permanence of Christ's lordship,⁵² but it, too, requires the pre-incarnate existence of the Son. After all, his lordship is predicated upon his creation, and its permanence is rooted in the fact that he existed before creation, and thus, he will remain when it ends.⁵³ Indeed, in applying this psalm (addressed to YHWH) to the Son, he identifies the Son with God.⁵⁴ Although nothing is said of the nature of the Son's pre-incarnate existence, it is surely right to infer that he enjoyed an exalted status of glory alongside the Father.⁵⁵

Thus, the Son, in humility, took on humanity. He left behind great honour for the shame of crucifixion (12:2) and eternal blessedness for the suffering of death (2:9). More germane to the author's point here, he left behind the rule of angels (the works of his hands) to take a position below them. He did this precisely to anticipate a later point because it was needed for his people to attain salvation. Indeed, "He was obliged to (ὤφειλεν) to be made like unto (ὁμοιωθῆναι) the brothers according to everything (κατὰ πάντα), in order to be a merciful and faithful high priest" (2:17). In other words, the merciful character of his priesthood depends on his incarnation which enables him to have sympathy for those facing temptation (2:18; 4:15). Moreover, faithfulness must be tested in the context of real suffering and temptation, and thus it is precisely by his incarnation that he can render to God a faithfulness that makes him perfect and enables him to be the source of salvation (2:17; 5:8–9). So far from being a hindrance to seeing Jesus as exalted above the angels, his humility makes Jesus more valuable to us than the angels.

Thus, the fact that Jesus is a humbled ruler is a source of hope that he understands human struggles and can, therefore, help his followers to obedience more complete than that attained under the former covenant and that he can offer a sacrifice that brings true forgiveness (c.f. 10:3). This demonstrates his commitment to the salvation of his people,

52 Schenck, "Celebration of the Enthroned Son," 475. He goes on to indicate that "the author only considered Christ to be the creator of the world in a figurative way" (476).

53 Victor S. Y. Rhee, "The Role of Chiasm for Understanding Christology in Hebrews 1:1–14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* ,131, no. 2 (2012): 352–354, is likely right to argue that both this and the preceding quotation focus on permanence. However, he wrongly infers that the emphasis is thus on the pre-incarnate existence of the Son. It is his permanence into the future that provides the contrast with the angels.

54 This explains why the Son can be identified as the radiance of God's glory (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης) and the representation of his nature (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως).

55 Albeit that there were still greater vistas both of glory that could be attained upon his inheritance of a higher name (c.f. 1:4) and of joy that could be found in his sharing of himself with his people (c.f. 12:2).



given the cost to himself, which offers an example for his followers to be willing to give up much in order to bring salvation to others.⁵⁶

Christ the Exalted Ruler (vv. 7b–8a)

As noted, the portion of the psalm quoted here describes an exalted state, which goes beyond the state of Adam at creation. However, one thing that is striking about the quotation within these verses is that one colon (and you appointed him over the works of your [i.e. God's] hands; και κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου) of the psalm is omitted. This omission is almost certainly original⁵⁷ and deliberate.⁵⁸

The author has put forward several hypotheses to explain this editorial activity. Thomas suggests that the phrase was omitted to avoid a contradiction with the earlier assertion that creation was by Son's hands (1:10).⁵⁹ Steyn notes that 'the work of your hands' (1:10) refers to the heavens. Thus, if that author were to use the same phrase here, it would suggest that the heavens have been subjected to Christ, which Steyn regards as impossible since the Son is currently under the angels.⁶⁰ These theories both present the author as atomistically interpreting Scripture and as hiding evidence that would contradict his point. Moreover, Steyn's suggestion neglects the fact that the author sees a gap between the humility of the Son and his exaltation. Since this colon belongs to the exalted phase of his ministry, there is no inconsistency in his reigning over the angelic realm.

Boyd builds upon 1:10, arguing that 'the work of your hands' refers to the perishable creation. Thus, the colon would not help demonstrate the subjection of the eschatological world to the Son.⁶¹ This still assumes that the author is more concerned about the wording of a phrase than its meaning. However, the author would surely have understood this colon as being in synonymous parallelism with the following colon, and thus 'the work of your hands'

56 Of course, Christ's followers only announce salvation, rather than enacting it, but this comparison is implicit in Colossians 1:24.

57 Gert J. Steyn, "Some Observations About the Vorlage of Ps 8:5–7 in Heb 2:6–8," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 24, no. 2 (2003): 504–505. It is very likely that the existence of the line in some Hebrews manuscripts is a result of scribal reinsertion to match the LXX. C.f. A. H. Cadwallader, "The Correction of the Text of Hebrews towards the LXX," *Novum Testamentum* 34, no. 3 (1992): 280.

58 Although it is not impossible that he is quoting from memory and omitted the line in error, this is unlikely because: (a) there is no evidence that he typically quoted from memory (c.f. J. C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 26 [1980]: 367–368); (b) the vague introductory statement ("one has testified somewhere") does not indicate that the quotation is from memory, but rather points to the author's reticence to name human authors of Scripture (except in 4:7 where Davidic authorship is used to make a chronological point); and (c) the quotation reproduces the wording of the LXX of Psalm 8 accurately and it is rather implausible that he could achieve such precision and yet miss an entire line.

59 K. J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 11 (1965): 306.

60 Steyn, "Some Observations on the Vorlage," 505.

61 Rick Boyd, "The Use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews," in *Listen, Understand, Obey: Essays in Honor of Gareth Lee Cockerill*, ed. Caleb T. Friedeman (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 9.



as parallel to ‘everything’ which *has* been put under the Son’s feet, which the author does not omit. Once again, the theory suggests that the author is distorting the evidence by including only a line that would naturally be interpreted more expansively.

I would suggest that the reason for the omission can be found by observing each part of the psalm that is not quoted:

- The crafting of the heavens and the lights that rule them (Ps 8:4[3]; c.f. Gen 1:1, 14–18) is not included, even though it introduces the quoted portion.
- The verse under question, alluding to Genesis 1:28, is omitted.
- The listing of creatures, derived from Genesis 1 and 2, is not included, though it completes the quoted portion.

In other words, the author seems to have deliberately omitted the portions of the psalm that most clearly allude to the creation account. Thus, the author avoids those portions of the psalm that may distract his audience from the psalm’s eschatological goal. This does not give a new meaning to the text but brings out its inherent meaning more clearly (see above). The author of Hebrews shifts it from being a text which looks both backwards and forwards on a typological arc to focus on the forward-looking aspect, which is now fulfilled in the Son. Hence, Christ is not only crowned with glory and honour, but is exalted to a position of rule over the eschatological world, having exceeded the glory of the first man, Adam. As such, this portion of the quotation proves the proposition of verse 5.

By speaking of Christ as exalted, Hebrews indicates that he is not only *the* true man but that, as such, he has attained the position intended for man, ruling not just this world but the eschatological world. This emphasises God’s faithfulness and commitment to his purposes; he is so dedicated to his purposes that he sends his Son to fulfil this role.

Christ the Obeyed Ruler (vv. 8b–9c)

With verse 8b, the author begins his own exposition of his quoted text. However, he treats it in reverse order:⁶² he first deals with Psalm 8:7b[6b]⁶³ before moving back to Psalm 8:6b[5b].⁶⁴ The lexical range of ἀνυπότακτος (v. 8b) includes ‘disobedient,’⁶⁵ but here, the root ὑποτάσσω (to subject) is the author’s theme word, and thus it should be understood to mean ‘unsubdued.’⁶⁶ Thus, the articular infinitive phrase, “In subjecting all things to him,”

62 Hence the chiastic structure outlined above.

63 ὑποτάξαι τὰ πάντα (v. 8b) echoes πάντα ὑπέταξας.

64 δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον (v. 9c) echoes δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας.

65 It is parallel with ἄνομος (lawless) in 1 Timothy 1:9.

66 Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, Anchor Bible 36 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 216.



parallels the phrase, “he left nothing unsubjected to him.” The force of this assertion is to indicate that nothing is excluded from this dominion.

Two objections may be raised. Firstly, it could be argued that this is an atomistic understanding of πάντα (everything). The psalmist expands on all things by listing creatures over which humanity was given dominion in Genesis 1. How can this psalm be used to ascribe dominion over the eschatological world? It is far from clear from a surface reading that Psalm 8 endorses the understanding of everything that the Hebrews have taken.⁶⁷ However, the psalm does not give a comprehensive unpacking of all things. Rather, the psalmist conveys in expanding circles—from domestic animals with whom humans regularly interact to fish in the chaotic seas which Israel avoided—man’s intended dominion over everything in this world. Thus, if he is brought into another world, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he would rule over that world in its totality.⁶⁸

The author raises the second potential objection, i.e., that this assertion is contradicted by experienced reality.⁶⁹ He combines ὁράω (to see) with language echoing the psalm (τὰ πάντα ὑποτεταγμένα). To their eyes, it was unclear that the psalm was fulfilled in Christ since many things appeared to be rebelling against him.⁷⁰ The author acknowledges the force of this objection by implying that there will be a change in this experienced reality: οὐπω indicates a coming reversal of what they see. Nevertheless, he builds confidence that Christ is presently reigning by pointing out what they could see, namely Jesus *crowned* with glory and honour (2:9b). This answers the objection because it naturally follows that if he has fulfilled Psalm 8:6b[5b], then his fulfilment of Psalm 8:7b[6b] cannot be doubted.

It is not entirely clear from this passage alone whether the author views the subjection of all things to Christ as a present or future reality. However, chapter 1 indicates that this subjection occurred at his exaltation (see above). Moreover, the verbs of observation suggest that the contrast is not between a present reality and a future one but between an apparent reality and a true one.⁷¹ All things may not appear to be subjected to Christ, but based on

67 Robert Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York, NY: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), 43, in particular, raises this objection.

68 Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 106–109.

69 That νῦν should be understood to have a temporal, rather than logical, force here is probable, given that it is modified by οὐπω (not yet). Contra F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT 58 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 75.

70 The persecution that Christ’s followers have faced (10:32–34) and are perhaps in imminent danger of facing (12:3ff.) would certainly tempt one to believe that he is not currently enthroned.

71 Even the temporal contrast that is implied is between a present state when it appears that all things are not subject to Christ, even though they actually are, and a future reality when appearances will truly reflect reality.



what they *do* see, Jesus humbled and exalted as per Psalm 8; the hearers can know that all things *are* subjected to him. Thus, the author helps his hearers walk by faith in God's word rather than what they see.⁷² This aligns with the psalm's intent, as it exudes confidence that God's purpose for humanity will be fulfilled despite appearances.

That this is so is further emphasised by the other temporal usage of *vñv* in the letter. In 9:24, Christ has entered (*εἰσῆλθεν*) heaven so that in the present time, he might appear before God on our behalf (*ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*). This is likely a reference to his priestly intercession (c.f. 7:25, which also uses *ὑπὲρ*) since this is the part of his ministry carried out in God's presence. That this ministry is on the author's mind in chapter 2 is made more plausible by the fact that crowning (*στεφανόω*; 2:9b) describes the coronation of the high priest (Exod 28:6 LXX).⁷³ Further, the collocation honour and glory (*τιμὴ καὶ δόξα*; 2:9b) is used in the description of priestly garments (Exod 28:2, 40 LXX).⁷⁴ Hence, Christ's fulfilment of Psalm 8 is paralleled in his high priestly role. This may explain the unexpected appearance of the priesthood theme at 2:17. The fact that he had to become lower than the angels in order to suffer death and thus be exalted (2:9b–c) is matched by the fact that he had to become fully human in order to be a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17). This suggests that Christ's rule is linked with his priestly intercession, which is designed to 'save [his people] to the uttermost' (7:25). Thus, his complete salvation of his people (c.f. 3:14), not his overcoming of his enemies (which is yet future; 10:13), is the evidence that Christ is ruling now.⁷⁵

Christ, being an obeyed ruler, comforts his people in this world. It means that nothing, however hostile the source may be, comes to them apart from his command and that all that does oppose them ultimately serves his purposes for them, that they would hold fast to the end. This demands that they walk by faith, not sight because what is seen is often opposed to his rule. This accords with the experience of former saints, who did not see God's promises fulfilled but 'died in faith, not having received the things promised' (11:13).

Christ the Pioneering Ruler (v. 9)

It has been observed that the logical flow of verse 9 should be understood as a chiasm:

72 Robert L. Brawley, "Discursive Structure and the Unseen in Hebrews 2:8 and 11:1: A Neglected Aspect of the Context," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 55, no. 1 (1993): 81–98, rightly points out that 2:8 is a key part of the context of 11:1 and its definition of faith as the conviction of 'things not seen.' C.f. Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), 87.

73 Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 155.

74 Wagner, "Use of Psalm 8," 118.

75 Thus, the persecution that comes from enemies (12:3–4) can be co-opted into God's purposes of disciplining his children (12:5–11). Christ's authority is not used at present to quell opposition, but it uses that opposition in his purposes, foremost of which is the salvation of his people.



a However, we do see the one lowered a little more than the angels—Jesus—
b because of the suffering of death
b' crowned with glory and honour,
a' so that by the grace of God he might taste death on behalf of
everyone.⁷⁶

Thus, Christ's incarnation was necessary that he might taste death (a-a'), whereas his crowning resulted from his suffering of death (b-b'). Both references to his death refer to his crucifixion,⁷⁷ but whereas suffering death (τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου) emphasises his perfection through death (c.f. 5:8–9), tasting death (γεύσεται θάνατον) evokes the bitterness of it.⁷⁸

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse 2:10–18 in detail, this paragraph is vital for comprehending how the author understands the suffering of death.⁷⁹ Three observations are of particular relevance:

First, Jesus' suffering perfected him for the role that he was to take of leading his people into the eschatological glory he has attained (2:10). The phrase 'bringing...to glory' (εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα; 2:10c) evokes 1:6, in which the Son has been brought into the eschatological world (εἰσαγάγη...εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην)⁸⁰ and 2:9, in which he is crowned with glory (δόξη...ἐστεφανωμένον).⁸¹ Thus, the Son's people are being brought to share his state of glory and rule over the coming world. Jesus not only fulfils Psalm 8 but also fits his people to fulfil it through suffering.

Second, the necessity of his suffering is clarified in 2:17–18. Jesus had to be made like his brothers (c.f. 2:9a) to become a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17). The reason his incarnation fitted him for this role is that suffering through temptation enables him to help (βοηθῶ) his brothers who face temptation (2:18; c.f. 4:15). Temptation is the one thing that

76 Hughes, *Hebrews*, 90. Translation mine.

77 Hughes, *Hebrews*, 91–92; contra R. B. Jamieson, *Jesus' Death and Heavenly Offering in Hebrews*, SNTSMS 172 (Cambridge: CUP, 2019), 105–106, who regards the tasting of death (a') as something that happened at Christ's exaltation ("Jesus was exalted *in order to* taste death for everyone"), since it is only through exaltation that his death becomes salvifically effective. However, this breaks the logic of the ὅπως (so that) clause (a'), which indicates that the verbal action follows that of the clause it modifies. In other words, tasting death (not its being rendered effective) is the purpose for another action and temporally comes after it. Within the context of this verse, this action can only be Jesus being made human (clause a).

78 Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, New Testament Library 58 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 92.

79 Excluding 2:9, the single paragraph 2:10–18 includes three out of the eight uses of θάνατος (death) in the entire letter and two out of the six uses of either πάθημα (suffering) or πάσχω (to suffer). Also, the conjunction γάρ indicates that the author intends in this paragraph to indicate just exactly how Jesus' death enables him to fulfil the psalm's purpose.

80 These are the only two uses of the root ἄγω in the entire document. Caneday, "Eschatological World Subject to the Son," 36, notes this echo.

81 Three out of the seven uses of δόξα in the letter come in 2:7–10.



could prevent them from attaining to the exaltation to which they are called (c.f. 3:12–19). However, since he has known temptation, he can equip them to overcome it and reach glory.

Third, his incarnation was needed so that he could die and overcome the power of death (2:14–15). The devil had formerly held the children in slavery, in contrast to the authority and dominion they were intended to have.⁸² This slavery was enforced through fear of death, probably meaning the fear of judgement after death (9:27), which enables the devil to keep believers doing his will.⁸³ However, Christ's death dealt with the judgement due to sins and freed his people from this fear to serve God out of gratitude.⁸⁴ Thus, when the devil is stripped of his accusations against the saints, he has no power over them, and they can escape the temptations and attain glory.

These three observations explain why the death of Christ was necessary for Psalm 8 to be fulfilled: God's purpose was not just for the psalm to be fulfilled in the Perfect Man but in all of his people, and they could not attain this status without the propitiatory death of Christ. He is not only what Adam should have been ethically but also what he was positionally: by being in him, people are imputed with his obedience. These threads illustrate how Jesus is the ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας (founder or pioneer of salvation; 2:10). He pioneered the path to eschatological glory and prepared the way that would bring his people to join him there.

For Jesus to be a pioneering ruler engenders a confident assurance in his people that he knows what they face and will never abandon them until he has enabled them to reach the same position to which he has been exalted. Therefore, he is supremely qualified to ensure they will attain true humanity. Moreover, it fills them with anticipation for the day when all things will be restored to their rightful place, and man will rule rightly.

Conclusion

In his first exposition of an Old Testament quotation, the author of Hebrews sets forth Christ as he who meets his hearers' needs. Ostensibly, the comparison he makes between Christ and the angels shows him to be a superior agent to deliver God's word (i.e. prophet) to us, which is a valid application of this text. However, he is much more: the groundwork is laid here for

82 Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 106.

83 Either we try to avoid judgement by doing good and neglecting the righteousness of God given as a gift (c.f. Rom 9:30ff.) or we try to convince ourselves we will be alright and simply persevere in sin. Either way, we are doing exactly what the devil would desire.

84 That Christ's work on his people's behalf is the grounds of renewed life is seen both in the use of Jeremiah 31:31–34 in 8:8–12, where the forgiveness of verse 12 grounds the other blessings of the new covenant, and in the fact that his purification is to enable them to serve the living God (9:14).



seeing him as the king who rules all things to save us to the uttermost; the foundation is set for seeing him as the priest whose death brings us before his Father's throne.⁸⁵ Perhaps there is a hint here that the new covenant's superiority over the former covenant is found in the fact that all three covenantal offices—prophet, priest, and king—are united in him.⁸⁶ There are indications that Christ's kingly ministry of keeping his people safe is carried out through his priestly intercession. He orders everything for his people's good by presenting the merits of his offering before the Father. If so, it may be that his priestly ministry also transforms his prophetic ministry of delivering God's Word to us. Since he knows our temptation, he can deliver a word to our hearts to help us when we face temptation. Moreover, he *is* God's Word to us (1:2); in that sense, he gives us an example of how we can obey even through temptation (c.f. 12:2ff.).

Hebrews 2 also shows us the Father and Son's united resolve that the divine purpose will be fulfilled, irrespective of the cost. The Father has sent forth the true human and forms more true humans through him.⁸⁷ The price paid for this is both a motivation to obey faithfully and an encouragement that God *will* accomplish his will, perfecting his creation. Although this world may sometimes seem dark to those who follow Jesus, he is working all things to bring his people into conformity with his desires for them. This does, however, take faith to see. It, in a sense, is the whole point of Hebrews: calling the hearers to believe that Jesus is altogether superior over anything available under the former covenant and thus that he will deliver every promise of God, even though it is far from obvious that this is the case. Today's church, labouring wearily in a groaning world, awaiting a Saviour who seems so far away, needs this message!

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85 In this sense, he is the true heir of Adam, who also had prophetic, priestly, and kingly roles.

86 The comparison between covenants only becomes explicit later in the letter, but it underlies all of the comparisons even in the early chapters.

87 Again, this makes Christ the heir of Adam, since his faithfulness is determinative for who his people are destined to become.



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