

Hebrews 2:5-18: Hope and Help in the Son

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Abstract

This lecture examines Hebrews 2:5-18, focusing on the Christological application of Psalm 8 to Jesus' journey through suffering to glory as a model for believers. It highlights how the Son's incarnation and death serve as a means to liberate humanity from the fear of death and establish a profound solidarity with God's children. By examining Jesus as a merciful and faithful high priest, the study compares these themes with Jewish Second Temple messianic expectations, emphasizing Hebrews' innovative portrayal of Christ's self-sacrifice and heavenly intercession. Ultimately, the text offers pastoral comfort, urging believers to remain steadfast and run to the throne of grace during times of testing and temptation.

Outline

I. Introduction to Hebrews 2:5-18

- A. Continuation of Christological themes from Chapter 1
- B. Pastoral purpose: providing comfort, hope, and reassurance of honor for believers who have suffered social loss
- C. Central theme: Jesus' path through suffering to glory as the trail blazed for humanity's destiny

II. Christological Interpretation of Psalm 8:4-6 (Hebrews 2:5-9)

- A. Rationale for heeding the Son's word (Hebrews 2:5)
 - 1. Subjecting the "coming world" (the divine realm) to the Son, not angels
 - 2. Human response to the Son determines their place in this coming realm
- B. Comparison between traditional and Christological readings of Psalm 8
 - 1. Traditional context: celebration of humanity's role and mandate in creation
 - 2. Omission of the line "You set him over the works of your hands" by the author
 - 3. Christological entry point: the "Son of Man" as Jesus' self-designation
 - 4. Greek Septuagint translation of *brachys* as temporal ("for a little while lower") rather than spatial ("a little bit lower")
- C. Sequential stages of Jesus' narrative
 - 1. Temporary incarnation: being made lower than the angels

2. Exaltation and coronation: crowned with glory and honor after His death and ascension
3. Universal subjection: yet to be fully visible but assured (connecting Psalm 8 with Psalm 110:1)
4. Redemptive purpose: tasting death on behalf of everyone by the grace of God

III. Fittingness of a Suffering Messiah (Hebrews 2:10)

- A. Suffering as a necessary path to glory
- B. The concept of "perfecting" (teleiois) the leader of salvation
 1. Not correcting defects, but bringing to a destined developmental endpoint
 2. Parallels in ancient contexts: adult maturity, mystery religion initiation, and priestly ordination in Levitical law
 3. Jesus' perfection: His return in glory to the heavenly realm and installation as universal High Priest
- C. Pastoral implication: Believers' suffering is not distance from God but alignment with the Pioneer's path

IV. Solidarity of the Son with the "Many Sons and Daughters" (Hebrews 2:11-13)

- A. Shared origin: the sanctifier and the sanctified are "all from one" source
 1. Resonance with Stoic philosophy of universal brotherhood (e.g., Seneca, Aratus)
 2. Hebrews' unique emphasis: the exalted Son's voluntary solidarity with less exalted believers
- B. Scriptural evidence of Jesus owning His brothers and sisters
 1. Psalm 22:22: "I will announce your name to my brothers..."
 2. Isaiah 8:17: "I will be confident in him," interpreted as the Son's confidence in His followers
 3. Isaiah 8:18: "Look, here I am and the children whom God has given me"
- C. Reciprocal honor: Since the exalted Son is not ashamed of believers, they should feel no shame in associating with Him

V. Liberation from the Fear of Death (Hebrews 2:14-15)

- A. Sharing in "flesh and blood" to destroy the devil's power
- B. Philosophical and theological framework of liberation
 1. Philosophical concept of the fearless sage (e.g., Socrates' acceptance of death to free humanity from fear, Seneca, Epictetus)
 2. Jewish-Christian apocalyptic worldview: cosmic warfare between the Son and Satan
- C. Moral and pastoral significance: Freedom from fear removes external coercion and empowers loyalty amidst social reproach or loss

VI. Jesus as the Merciful and Faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:16-18)

- A. Helping the "seed of Abraham" (alluding to Isaiah 41:8-9) rather than angels
- B. Qualification for High Priesthood through shared suffering and temptation
- C. Roles of the High Priest
 - 1. Bridge builder (pontifex) and mediator between human and divine realms
 - 2. Broker of divine favor and access
 - 3. Making expiation (hilaskesthai) for the sins of the people
- D. Assurance of sympathy: Jesus has endured greater testing and stands ready to help those currently being tempted

VII. Historical Context of Priestly Messiah Expectations

- A. Crisis in the Zadokite line during the Seleucid period (Antiochus IV)
- B. Sectarian hopes in the Second Temple Period
 - 1. Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls): Expectation of a Messiah of Aaron alongside a Messiah of Israel
 - 2. Testament of Levi (Chapter 18): A future priest who has no successor, removes sin, opens paradise, and binds Belial
- C. Key similarities and innovations in Hebrews
 - 1. Commonalities: Appointed by God, reliable mediator, regarded as a son, eternal/no successor, removes sin, defeats Satan
 - 2. Distinct innovations in Hebrews: A heavenly high priest in the true divine sanctuary, active ongoing intercessory function, and self-sacrifice as a purification offering

VIII. Rhetorical Strategy and Modern Applications

- A. Keeping the gaze fixed on Jesus in all circumstances
- B. Renewed gratitude, loyalty, and steadfastness in the face of neighborly pressure
- C. Spiritual practice: running to the "throne of grace"
 - 1. Inviting Jesus into internal temptation (desires)
 - 2. Relying on Jesus during external testing (worldly pressures)
- D. Living as a liberated people
 - 1. Overcoming dysfunctional behaviors driven by the fear of death (greed, overachievement, obsessive control)
 - 2. Empowered by the resurrection hope to strive for God's values despite personal loss