

BUT WE SEE JESUS...
Hebrews 1:5-2:9

Life in a fallen, sinful world can be very difficult. Every year has its difficult moments, but the past couple of years seem like they've been a little more so. *Culturally*, we've seen relativism – the idea that everything is theory and there's no absolute truth or morality – cross lines we've never dreamed it would cross using terms like gender fluidity. *Politically*, we've seen tyranny rearing its ugly, not letting a crisis go to waste. Covid is real bug, but it's been exaggerated and used to lord people. *Prophetically*, we look at the globalism and the rhetoric in the world's leaders and it's not difficult to see things are lining up for the end times. I think we're getting a taste of the Braxton hicks birth pangs that are coming upon the world.

Personally, many of us wrestling with *physical* pain. Maybe it's constant or recurring health issues, chronic pain that won't go away. With little kids in the home, I feel like we're on a constant 2-week rotation of runny noses this time of year. *Emotionally*, we wrestle with broken relationships, broken dreams, lack of purpose, loss of loved ones. *Spiritually*, we battle the sin nature with old habits and addictions. These are the conditions a fallen, **sin cursed world**. There's a lot of things in this world we just can't change. As one man said, *"Our many hospitals, doctors, medicines, pesticides, insurance companies, fire and police departments, and funeral homes – all bear testimony to the cursed earth."*

And my question this morning is, *"Is this world and the conditions we're experiencing, all there is? Is this really as good as it gets? And where do you look for hope?"* That's sort of what we want to answer today as we study Hebrews 2, looking at **reasons for the incarnation** – how the person and work of Christ speaks hope to our condition in this fallen world.

Remember the context though. The audience is Jewish believers (Hebrews) who are through persecution and threats, tempted to go back to living under the old Judaic system (the Law of Moses, the temple, the priesthood, etc.). So the writer of Hebrews is demonstrating that Christ is superior in every way.

Theme: Christ is superior (better)

He is better in every way. To turn from (lit., **drift**) Him is to turn to something inferior. So far, the writer has demonstrated Christ's **superiority over the prophets** and as we come to chapter 2, is in the middle of demonstrating His **superiority to angels**. The Judaizers trying to get Christians to come back to Judaism were trying to demonstrate the superiority of the Law by saying it was given, or mediated through angels on Mt. Sinai and Christ was *"just a man."* So the author is demonstrating **His humanity is ultimately not a sign of inferiority**. The argument has already been made that the Father has never called any of the angels His Son (1:5), the angels worship the Son (1:6), the Son is actually referenced as the eternal God (1:13), angels serve the Son and men who inherit salvation (1:7, 14). Angels are ministering spirits to the Son and to believers (v. 14).

Hebrews 2:1-4, “For this reason we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels [the Law of Moses] proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at first spoken through the Lord it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

Emphasis: God has spoken and is speaking. Are we paying attention?

So the emphasis in Hebrews is on listening to God as though God has spoken to us in Christ and is still speaking in the present. *Today, don't harden your hearts. Today, listen to His voice* (3:7, 15). Jesus wasn't just another man. He was God in the flesh. ***If a covenant delivered by angels is so binding, how much more a covenant delivered by God Himself?*** Don't **drift away** from Him. That word reminds us of a ship that cuts free of its anchor and is now letting the wind carry it into peril. To drift away from the Son would bring consequences.

If a non-believer **rejects** the Son, the inescapable punishment is eternity in hell. It's amazing to think that if you're an unbeliever, this world is the best you will ever have it. When you die, it gets indescribably worse. But as believers, this world is the worst we will ever have it. But even as believers, and I think that's who the warning is written too, neglecting salvation would bring divine discipline – a major theme in Hebrews. As believers, our eternal security is never in question, but He will get on us if we aren't walking with Him in unconfessed sin, not paying attention to the Word, to prayer, or gathering with His people (Heb. 10:25). And you can read in your devotional about a man named Robert Robinson who wrote *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*. He drifted from the Lord for a time and the Lord's hand was heavy on him. A young gal reminded him that those “streams of mercy” are still flowing for him.

Notice though those apostolic **signs and wonders** were also done among them once but were not anymore. “*Was confirmed to us... by them* [apostles]...” The language is really helpful. I think it rules out Paul as the author. But also, God was not solving all their problems with miracles still. Rather, the signs and wonders confirmed the message of salvation in Christ so that they would have an anchor in Him when difficult times came. The point is, **in our most difficult moments**, instead of letting our emotions or circumstance or what's not true guide us, or always expecting some miraculous divine bailout, we need to **anchor ourselves down to Christ and believe**. Don't drift away... Get anchored. Stand firm in faith (13:22).

Exhortation: When difficulties come, anchor to Christ in faith.

Verse 5 says, “*For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying,...*” By the way, that's not saying he forgot the passage reference or human author; he just wants the focus to be on God's voice. In all the **Scriptural citations** in Hebrews, **no human author is mentioned by name** because he wants to

emphasize God is the one speaking right now through it. That's why there's **no author**. I think it's intentional on the writer's part not to give a formal introduction. God is speaking!

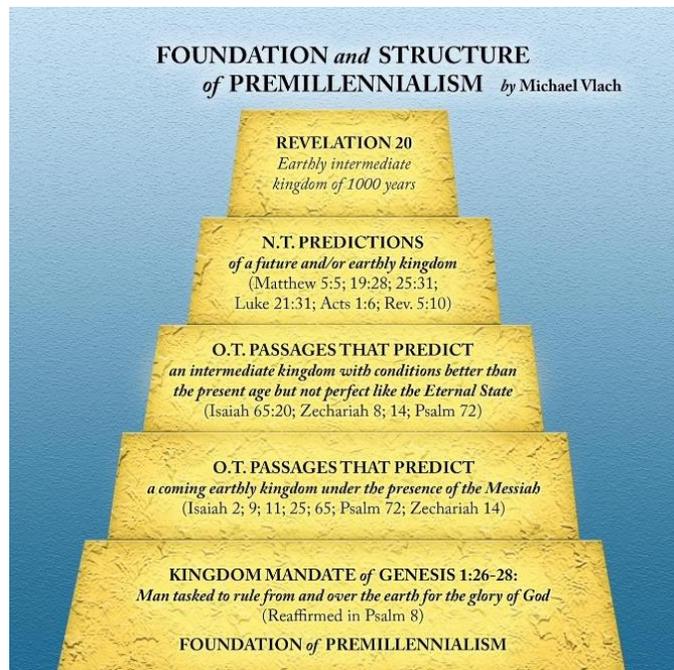
“WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU ARE MINDFUL OF HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.” 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. But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all thing, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through suffering. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, “I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.” And again, “I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.” And again, “BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

There's a lot of deep theology here but I want to try and condense it into **3 reasons for the incarnation that speak to our worldly conditions**. Most of our time will be spend on this first.

2nd Reason for the Incarnation To restore man positionally. (2:5-9)

ⁱⁱThe author quotes Psalm 8 which ponders how God originally placed man over the work of His creation. In Genesis 1, **God made man in His image with the function of ruling over His creation on His behalf as a Theocratic Administrator**. God has a *universal* kingdom in heaven that always rules over all, but man was chosen to head up God's *theocratic* (mediatorial) kingdom on earth. Most kingdom confusion would be resolved if we remembered that. Remember Genesis 1:26-30? *“Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and...birds of the sky and...cattle and over all the earth... fill the earth, and subdue it.”*



The **psalmist** is pondering how God created man to rule, saying, *“Who is man, that you should entrust him with such an honorable and glorious position?”* But the **Hebrews author** is using this

psalm to remind us of that **originally intended function, or position, of man** and pointing them to **Christ as the one who restores that position**. God appointed man to have rule over the earth, however, because Satan came along in the form of a creature, and deceived man – Adam, listening to Satan (in the form of a snake creature) rather than listening to God. **Satan usurped authority** there in that moment and the world was plunged into sin.

Now, man does just about *anything but rule* today. **1) Nature rules over us**. We fight and battle nature for our survival by the sweat of our brow. The laws of nature wear down our bodies. There are natural disasters out of our control just like in Kentucky recently. The world rules us! **2) Sin nature rules over us**. Man lost mastery of himself.ⁱⁱⁱ We're slaves to sin and only by the divine nature of the Spirit are we set free from its dominion over us. **3) Fallen angels have been ruling over man and his world**. Satan is "*prince of this world*" & "*the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*" (Luke 4:5-8; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19). Contrary to the illusion that we're in the kingdom age now and Satan is bound, Ephesians 6:12 says we struggle against the spiritual forces of wickedness. Peter says Satan roams like a lion looking for someone to devour. We still pray "*Thy Kingdom Come*" and "*deliver us from evil*". Fallen angels have more influence over man's world than you and I know.

So man, created as the pinnacle of God's creation, has lost his glory and crown. He has lost the function of his existence on earth. But **the story of the Bible from start to finish is how this office of man comes to be restored through Christ, the Last Adam, who took on flesh to undo the works of Satan and restore man and the theocratic kingdom rule of God on earth**. In the end (Rev. 18-20), the kingdom does come and His brethren (believers) rule and reigns with Him (Rev. 2:26-29; 3:21; 5:9-10; 20:6), even over the angels. 1 Cor. 6:3 says we will judge the angels. So **man's fall is only temporary**. The angels are temporarily superior to man because Christ has become a man to be our **kinsman redeemer and restore us**.

Andy Woods, in *The Coming Kingdom*, writes, "*Just as God sought to rule over the First Adam, who in turn ruled over creation on God's behalf, this very structure will be restored. God the Father will rule over the Last Adam Jesus Christ, who, in turn, will govern the earth on God the Father's behalf*"^{iv} (Ps. 2:6-9; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14). We call this "*world to come*" the **Messianic Millennial Kingdom**. "Millennium" derived from the Bible's statement that it will last **1,000 years** (Rev. 20). The ultimate hope of the gospel is everlasting life on the New Heaven and New Earth, but **the Millennial Kingdom is this earth's final chapter** when Christ rules from on the Davidic throne (Rev. 20). It won't be ruled by angels but by Christ and His redeemed brethren (Rev. 2:26-29; 20:6). After that, a perfect eternal state in the New Heaven and Earth (Rev. 21-22).

In the Messianic Kingdom, Christ rules from Jerusalem with a rod of iron over those who have survived the Great Tribulation period (believing Gentiles & believing remnant Israel). He rules in **righteousness**, resulting in peace and quiet (Isaiah 32:17; Zech. 14). No more power-struggle politics! Jesus rules in perfect **justice**. Israel dwells **safely** at the center of the world (Zech. 8:23; Is. 2:2-3). Isaiah 2:4 says, "*He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.*" You know where that verse is inscribed? Outside the United Nations building in New York. Don't put your hope in the UN to bring world peace. They'll bring the opposite. Only Christ can bring this world

peace because it requires a victorious God-Man to overthrow Satan’s current rule on earth and that’s exactly what He does through the tribulation. He opens the six-sealed scroll (Rev. 4:4-5) which is the title deed to the earth and starts pouring out His wrath. At the end of that period, the kingdom finally comes and is established (Matt. 25:31-34; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 19, 20)

During that time period Satan and other demons are bound (Rev. 20:1-3). The **curse will be lifted**, bringing antediluvian (pre-Flood) **longevity of life** (see Gen. 5; Is. 65:20). There is **prosperity** in every way – the sower overtakes the reaper (Amos 9:13). No thorns or thistles anymore. The **animal world is restored to peace** – the vegetarian lion and the lamb lie down together (Is. 11:6-9; 65:17-25). Infants can play by the viper’s den and not get hurt. The **deserts become fertile & salt water becomes fresh** (Ezek. 47). It’s a world we only dream about!

The signs and wonders of Jesus and the apostles demonstrated that He is able to usher in this kingdom. Hebrews 6:5 calls the **signs and wonders** “*the powers of the age to come.*” They were a taste of what is going to be commonplace when Christ returns. John in his gospel highlighted specific miracles that Jesus did which spoke of His ability to usher in the kingdom:^v

MILLENNIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST’S MIRACLES		
MIRACLE	SIGNIFICANCE	PROPHECY
Water to wine (John 2:1-11)	Joy, gladness; New Covenant	Isaiah 9:3,4; 12:3-6
The 5,000 fed (Matthew 14:15-21)	Prosperity, abundance	Isaiah 30:23-24; 35:1-7
Walks on water (Matthew 14:26)	Environmental change/ Power over natural law	Isaiah 30; 41
Catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11)	Abundance, authority over the animal world	Isaiah 11:6-8
Storm stilled (Matthew 8:23-27)	Control of elements	Isaiah 11:9; 65:25
The blind healed (Matthew 9:27-31)	No physical or spiritual blindness	Isaiah 35:5
Raising the dead (Matthew 9:18-26)	Longevity; no death for the believer	Isaiah 65:20

These miracles aren’t just to amaze us, but to demonstrate His ability to bring the kingdom promised and longed for. It’s important to have the MK in mind because this life is preparation for service in this glorious kingdom (Rev. 2:18-29). How we live now matters. Every Christmas we sing a song out of context called, “*Joy to the world!*” It’s about the 2nd coming, not the 1st.

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
 Let earth receive her King...
 And Heaven and nature sing...
(Why is nature singing? She’s been set free from the curse! See Rom. 8:20-22)
 Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!...
 No more let sins and sorrows grow,
 Nor thorns infest the ground;

He comes to make His blessings flow
 Far as the curse is found...
 And makes the nations prove
 The glories of His righteousness,
 And wonders of His love..." (see Zech. 14)

Alva J. McClain, one of the greatest teachers on the kingdom of God in the last century, said, "In the Premillennial view of the coming Kingdom becomes the consummating link between history and the eternal order, thus guarding the Church from either illusion or despair as regards the present life."^{vi} **Illusion** being, Satan's bound and miracles are commonplace. **Despair** being, there is no hope now or ever. This is as good as it gets. His kingdom is coming but notice **verse 8: not yet**. Not yet do we see all things subject to Christ or man's function restored.

**3rd Reason for the Incarnation
 To restore man spiritually. (v. 9)**

This is from **verse 9**: It says Jesus came into the world in order that by the grace of God "He might taste death for everyone." And He didn't just nibble on it, He swallowed it, dying for everyone's sins. We could sum this up by saying there is no Easter without Christmas – no cross without the cradle. Because Jesus became a man, He was able to die for us a death that brings glory and honor. The cross allows for the lifting of the curse. **Man cannot be restored to his position without his spiritual problem of sin being dealt with**. Notice He did it through **suffering (singular) in verse 9**. This singular act of suffering on the cross paid for the sins of mankind – not angels (see Heb. 2:16). As eternal God, He provided an eternally effective sacrifice for sin. Revelation 1:5-6 says, "He has released us from our sins by His blood." However, just like in the Old Covenant, the blood is only applied to the account of someone who believes.

Hebrews 10:13-14 outlines the differences between the OT sacrifice and Christ's sacrifice:

Sacrifices under the Law (10:1-4)	Sacrifice of Christ (10:5-18)
Reminders of sin	Removal of sin
Repeated constantly	Once for all time
Anticipation	Fulfillment
Shadows	Substance
Blood of animals	Blood of Christ
Involuntary	Voluntary

Hebrews **9:13-14** says, "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of flesh, how much more blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (see also 1 Peter 1:19). Lord willing, we'll talk more next week about how He was perfected and is the author of our salvation.

We've seen how Jesus can restore man's **position** and **spiritual condition**, but what about our physical condition? These bodies that wear out?

4th Reason for the Incarnation
To restore man physically. (vv. 10-13)

He partook of the flesh and blood **to bring many sons to glory**. I understand that as a reference to resurrected glory – a whole & complete salvation. We will receive resurrected, glorified bodies just as He has a glorified, resurrected body (Rom. 8:29-30; 1 John 3:2). We will be made one with Christ in resurrection. There is **no resurrection without the incarnation**. A key cross reference here would be Romans 8:29-30, “*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*” Paul was laying out the four phases of salvation and because our future glorification in Christ is so certain, he speaks of it in past tense.

Think about this: Christ took on flesh forever. He became like one of us forever. One man said that for us to do what He did would be comparable to us becoming skunks! But look at **verse 11: He is not ashamed to call us His brethren**. I mean, He should be, but He’s not. It reminds me of a father who is proud of his son or daughter, always telling people, even complete strangers about how proud they are of them. He’s not ashamed to call us His brethren and therefore, we shouldn’t be ashamed to call Him our Savior. Hebrew says we are His **brethren in flesh and faith** (v.11-12)

In sum, let’s reconsider our conditions in this world again. It’s a mess. It’s difficult – just like it was for the original audience. Things are “**not yet**” as they should be. There are many things we can’t change. However, as verse 9 says, “**But we see Jesus...**” He is sufficient. He is enough. He’ll restore our positionally, spiritually, and physically. He meets our real and deepest needs. *Are we looking to Him? Are we listening to Him? Are we anchored to Him?* Anything else we look to for hope or meaning are ultimately inferior and there isn’t anything that we are going to go through that God hasn’t spoken to in His Son. He is the anchor we need in a turbulent world.

ⁱ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Hebrews* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 57.

ⁱⁱ Michael Vlack, Photo from *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God*.

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur, 56.

^{iv} Andy Woods, *The Coming Kingdom* (Duluth, Minnesota: Grace Gospel Press, 2016), loc 866.

^v Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2014), 244.

^{vi} Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books: 1959), xii.