

But We Do See Him
Hebrews 2:5–13
October 8, 2023

Whether or not you've spelunked, I bet you've heard that a cave is quite dark. And if you *have* ventured under the earth, you know the experience of putting your hand right in front of your face and still seeing nothing.

And whether or not we've ever been inside a cavern, it may be that we don't realize how massive many caves are. I mentioned hiking at Rock Island last week. A few miles down the street from there is Cumberland Caverns. That cave contains over 27 miles of passages.¹ Caves are dark. Many caves are huge. But that's not to say every passage is huge. I'd guess that scores of folks throughout history *first* experienced hints of claustrophobia while crawling through one.

I'm being careful not to be *too* frightening; but imagine being 2.5 miles inside a cave when a monsoon opens up outside, quickly filling all those dark, twisting, tight passages with water. Maybe you say, "I remember this story." In June of 2018, 12 boys on a soccer team in Thailand were in that very position. They couldn't swim out. They couldn't burrow out. The oxygen levels in the room were little by little decreasing. If they were going to escape this cavern full of water, they'd need not only an expert in spelunking, but an expert in scuba. Where does that Venn diagram overlap? And—to further compound the problem—eventually those boys would find out that their rescuer needed to be more than an expert in diving and caves.

The book of Hebrews details the glory of our salvation, but it does so—first—by detailing the glory of the One who saves. Our passage today will use His name for the first time. It will call Him the author of our salvation. And it will continue the case begun in chapter 1, that is, why He—and He alone—is able to rescue a humanity that could not save itself.

Borrowing from verse 9, each point will use the phrase, "We do see Him."

1. We Do See Him: Made Lower Than the Angels (vv. 5–9a)

Verse 5: **For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.** As mentioned last week, the book of Hebrews toggles back and forth between exposition and exhortation. Chapter 1 was full of exposition. And last week's passage was the first exhortation, the mildest of the warning passages, and quite brief. Because in verse 5 the author returns to the exposition begun in chapter 1, where he'd been contrasting angels and the Son in these terms: **But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?** (1:13)

To which of the angels did the Father quote Psalm 110? Not one. Why? 1:14 **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?** In case we've been *less* than convinced that Christ is better, chapter 1 ends by asserting that the angels *serve* those that will inherit salvation. On the other hand, Christ is the One that saves them. He's the Ruler to whom the Father spoke, saying, **Sit at my right hand.** The Son sat down (1:3).

But there's a forward-looking aspect to Psalm 110. He sits *until* all His enemies become a footstool (1:13). And it's with that *forward* look that the author continues in 2:5,² speaking of what the Father's done: **For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we**

¹ <https://cumberlandcaverns.com/about/>

² Gareth Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 126.

are speaking. The world He subjected to His Son—the *ultimate* victory Psalm 110 references—is in *one* sense, still a world to *come*.

I say, “in one sense,” because to grasp the argument of Hebrews, we have to hold certain truths in tension. The end of verse 8 captures it: **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.** Many call this the “now”³ and the “not yet” of the Kingdom of God. By “now,” they mean that the Kingdom is not *entirely* future. In *these* moments, Christ rules and reigns by His Spirit in His people. That’s the *now* of the Kingdom. However, have *all* His enemies bowed? Did we wake up in Revelation 22 today? No, we did not. That’s the *not yet* of the Kingdom.⁴

There’s a world to come, a world in which every jot and tittle of Psalm 110 will be fully realized. Again, as we’ve said prior, Hebrews concerns itself not *only* with your present but with your future. It’s forward-looking. And concerning that world to come, the Father did not subject *it* to angels.

To whom did He subject it? Well, there’s a one-word answer that our four-year olds could give. But the author wants us to see that the One before whom all things will bow became something, and did something, to make that future possible.

And he wants us to see that it was written about thousands of years before. Verse 6: **But one has testified somewhere, saying, “What is man, that you remember 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.”**

With that first clause—**one has testified somewhere**—it’s *not* that the author has forgotten where this quotation comes from, nor who wrote it. Instead, he’s continuing the emphasis of chapter 1: the primary speaker of Scripture is God Himself.⁵ That includes Psalm 8.

In its original context, Psalm 8 is a reflection on Genesis 1 and 2,⁶ a Psalm about the dignity of humanity.⁷ When the Psalmist considers the glory of creation, including the heavens above, he asks, **What is man, that you remember Him?** (v. 6). Why does the God that fashioned all *that* even spare a thought toward us?

Further, the Psalmist is lost in wonder because it’s not *merely* that God occasionally concerns Himself with us. According to Genesis 1 and 2, God commissioned humanity to rule over—to have dominion over—all of creation. So, while considering God’s majesty, he’s staggered by the fact that God would bestow weak and frail humanity with such dignity. Having been made a little lower than the angels, they’ve also been crowned with glory and honor. Though, yes, this is marred by sin—the Psalmist continues to wonder at it.⁸

Hebrews quotes Psalm 8 in verses 6–8. And, after doing so, the author is going to explain it. Maybe you ask, “Is this about Adam?” “Or is it about Christ?” As with many either/or questions,

³ Or the “already”

⁴ Another way we might say it is that the Kingdom has been inaugurated, but not yet fully realized/consummated.

⁵ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 944.

⁶ Dana Harris, *Hebrews*, EGGNT, 46.

⁷ Beale and Carson, 944.

⁸ Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC, 95.

the answer is not so simple. In one sense, it's both.⁹ The author seemingly *links* the original human being—and what *he* was intended to do—with the One that eventually did it.¹⁰

After quoting Psalm 8, the author begins his interpretation of it, still speaking concerning **the world to come** (v. 5). Verse 8b: **For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him.** As we've already noted, that's where Hebrews 1 finished. The Father spoke Psalm 110 to the Son, leaving nothing that is not subject to Him. That's true.

But the next clause is also true. **But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.** This is, again, the “now,” and the “not yet.” The Father subjected *all* things. But, we do *not yet* see it. For these suffering believers, *both* sentences rang true. Consider if the author had *only* said *this* to suffering believers, “We've triumphed!” “Our King Reigns!” While those are good things to say—things we say often—it may not be *all* we say. Because if that's *all* that he said, could they have been tempted to think, “Does he not see what surrounds me, what maligns me?”

The author's not under the impression that the new heavens have arrived.¹¹ Verse 8 holds both truths in tension. Verse 9 begins the solution—or resolution—to it. What do they, or *should* they, see: **But we do see Him . . .** Who is this? It's the One in whom God speaks. It's the One *by whom* all things were made and *to whom* all things are headed. The One we see is the fulfillment of Psalm 2, 102, 104, 2 Samuel 7, and on. He's the One that made purification of sins and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high (1:3).

We see *Him*. Though much of Hebrews thus far has been about the exaltation of the One we see, verse 9 introduces something else. And it's as vital as His exaltation. Verse 9: **But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels.**

Maybe now we're seeing more clearly why he quotes Psalm 8. It was not only to emphasize all things being subjected, but because—once again—the Father has subjected the world to One made lower than the angels. Genesis 2 and Psalm 8 both show us that God's intent was to rule over the created order in this way. Finally, in *Him*, the full dignity of humanity finds its ultimate expression.¹² The One through whom the world was made humbled Himself to become *lower* than what He was far superior to—the angels.

Because, as we'll soon see, to be our priest, our representative before a Holy God, He had to be made like His brethren in all things (2:17). I've not said His name yet in this sermon. Neither has the book of Hebrews. But, He has a name. The angels told us what it was in Matthew 1. Verse 9: **But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus.**

So, while we do not *yet* see everything subjected to Him, we do see *Him*, the One that became like us, the One who came among us, the One who came *for* us.

I briefly mentioned Louie Zamparini last week. He was a POW during WWII. Throughout the war, he flew on a B-24 bomber. Because of that, he knew that plane's capabilities, how far it could fly, etc. So, when his plane crashed and he was taken prisoner, he knew he was too far away to be rescued. The B-24 couldn't fly that far, attack, and make it back home.

Then one day, while Louie was a prisoner, he began seeing this Japanese graffiti all over the place that said, “B Niju Ku.” I'm going to read from Laura Hillenbrand's account: “Louie was standing in a group of POWs, when a siren began sounding. The guards . . . shooed the men into

⁹ For example, in verse 6 the first question, “What is man?” is followed by the second question, “What is the son of man?” Is this a reference to the title we hear so often in the Gospels—the Son of Man? That's not clear, but what is clear is that in Hebrews 1 the Father quotes Psalm 2: **You are My Son, today I have begotten you** (1:5). And it's also made plain—in the first few verses—that the Son the Father spoke to is the One in whom God speaks to us (1:3).

¹⁰ Harris, 47.

¹¹ In Hebrews 11 he'll remind these believers that they are not the first to suffer. We read this letter to be reminded that *we* aren't either.

¹² Beale and Carson, 947.

the barracks. . . . In the barracks, the men peered out the windows. Something was different; the guards were gaping at the sky as if, . . . ‘They were looking for the Messiah.’ Then there was a glint above, a finger pointing urgently, and a crush of POWs bolting for the door. Running into the compound with his face skyward, Louie saw a sliver of radiant white light high over Tokyo, contrails curling behind it like twisting spines. ‘Look, an American plane!’ someone shouted. The Japanese guards looked stricken . . . speaking to each other in high agitation. One phrase stood out: ‘B Niju Ku,’ which meant B-29. Louie, like all the POWs, had no idea what kind of plane this was. Then a POW who’d just been captured said that it was a new bomber called a B-29. A cheer rang out. Men began shouting, ‘B-29! B-29!’ . . . ‘It was not their Messiah,’ one soldier wrote, “but ours.” 99 feet long, 141 feet from wingtip to wingtip, almost 30 feet high at the tail, and weighing 120,000 pounds or more loaded, it dwarfed the famously huge B-24. Powered by four engines—each engine almost *twice* as powerful as each of those of the B-24—it could rocket across the sky at up to 358 miles per hour and carry giant bomb loads. A B-24 didn’t have a prayer of making it to Japan’s home islands and back. This plane could.”¹³

The tension of verse 8 is in that story. Zamparini and his comrades remained imprisoned. They hadn’t been delivered *yet*. But the resolution of verse 9 is also in that story. *Now* they knew that they could be reached. Did that affect these men while they remained on that island? Of course. The story goes on to describe how the men regularly looked to the skies, hoping to catch a glimpse of the bomber. On difficult days, the knowledge of the B-29 gave them hope.

Hebrews is concerned with our hope. The author speaks of the world to come. And in the world to come, all things will be under the feet of One made lower than the angels.¹⁴ He was what humanity was intended to be. When we couldn’t get to Him, He came to us. We’re to see Him, the One that became like us, the One who came among us, the One who came *for* us.

What’s in the foreground of your mind and heart? To whom do you look?

2. We Do See Him: Crowned with Glory (vv. 9b–10)

But not quite yet in this text. The crown is preceded by something else. As we’ve seen, though He was clearly superior, He was made *lower* than the angels. But the path to glory would take Him even lower. Verse 9: **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.**

In verse 9, two phrases from Psalm 8 are quoted: **lower than the angels** and **crowned with glory and honor**. But stuck *right in the middle* of those two phrases is the pivotal event which connects them. This is where His humiliation led, and what led to His exaltation.¹⁵ After what, or why, was He crowned? **Because of the suffering of death.**

Maybe this reminds you of Philippians 2 where we hear the same language of descent, of lowering. It starts lofty. Though He was in the form of God . . . He **emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross** (Phil. 2:6-8) The truths between these two passages could not be more parallel. He was made lower than the angels. Then He humbled Himself further, enduring the suffering of death.

When we encounter death in the Scriptures, it’s often helpful to be reminded *why* people die. Paul tells us that it’s the penalty for something humanity’s done. Sin brought death (Rom. 5). But how will Hebrews 7 describe the One made lower than the angels? He’s **holy, innocent, undefiled**

¹³ Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken*.

¹⁴ Harris, 50.

¹⁵ Harold Attridge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 73.

(Heb. 7:26). He didn't *earn* death. Those wages are ours. The death He died—the penalty He paid, in full—wasn't His own.

We see some of the purpose of His death in verse 9, **so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.** This is God's grace for you. He became human—was made lower than the angels—so that He might die in our place. In our kitchen, this hymn by Horatius Bonar can be read: "Upon a life I have not lived, upon a death I did not die, Another's life, Another's death, I stake my whole eternity."¹⁶ What sin, what effect of sin, continues to burden you? See the grace of God on your behalf. Know that you'll only see this grace if you see Him—holy, innocent, and undefiled—dying in the stead of sinners.

He put on flesh. He became truly human. And as truly human, the second Person of the Trinity tasted death for us. But, in both Philippians 2 and in Hebrews 2, we know that's *not* where He stayed.¹⁷ In Philippians 2, after **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross,** what does Paul say next? **For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name** (Phil. 2:6–9). In Hebrew 2, it is **because of the suffering of death** that the One made lower than the angels, was **crowned with glory and honor.**

Suffering preceded glory. In fact, suffering made glory possible. Verse 10 details this: **For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.**¹⁸ By putting Christ's sufferings in *that* context, that is, **for whom are all things, and through whom are all things,** Hebrews makes clear that those sufferings were squarely within the purposes of God. It was fitting. His sufferings were the means by which a particular goal was accomplished; they were the achievement of One who has power over all things.¹⁹

We're to see Him, who He is: made lower than the angels and crowned with glory. But we're also to see what He's done. And in the middle of that verse, we read what His sufferings accomplished. He—crowned with glory and honor—brought **many sons to glory.**

3. We Do See Him: Bringing Many Sons To Glory (vv. 10–13)

Verse 11 deepens the argument of verse 10²⁰: **For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified.** Who is He that sanctifies? Hear the prayer of John 17: **For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth** (John 17:19). He lived the life they should've lived. And then He gives His life to them. Verse 11 goes on, making clear that those who've been sanctified have been sanctified by the same source: **For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father.** What's the significance of that? It's explained by the next clause: **for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.**

The Son has brothers and sisters. Can you imagine how encouraging that truth would be to these Jewish Christians, tempted to turn back? The Son of God is *never* ashamed to call them family.

To show them this was *always* God's purpose, the author quotes their Scriptures once again. In fact, while previously the Father spoke *to* the Son using Old Testament passages, in verses 12 and 13 the Son *Himself* will speak three Old Testament passages. All three speak of His solidarity *with*

¹⁶ Horatius Bonar, *Christ For Us*.

¹⁷ O'Brien, 98-99.

¹⁸ Harris, 55.

¹⁹ O'Brien, 104.

²⁰ Harris, 56.

those for whom He died.²¹ Verse 12 quotes Psalm 22, as if the Son is speaking to the Father: **“I will proclaim Your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise.”** Did Jesus proclaim the Father? Absolutely. He—the exact representation of Him—manifested His name to them (John 17:6). The next two passages come from Isaiah 8. Verse 13: **And again, “I will put my trust in Him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children whom God has given me.”** The Son trusts the Father. Because He’s made us holy, so might we.

To bring all this together, let’s consider again what He’s called in verse 10: the **author of their salvation**. “Author” is a good translation of that word. Some translate it “founder.”²² Some translate it “source.”²³ The word is actually the combination of two smaller words, the first being the word for “first,” and the second being the word for “lead.” That’s why many like the translation, “pioneer.” It’s not *only* the word itself that points to that translation, it’s the context. Because what does He do? The pioneer of their salvation went first. From suffering to glory, from death to life, He led His people out, **bringing many sons to glory**.

Conclusion

Those twelve boys on that soccer team were stuck 2.5 miles inside a cavern of water for 17 days. In the early days, not even the Thai Navy Seals could get all the way to the boys.

But in what is a fascinating turn, those attempting to rescue those boys ended up flying in a number of middle-aged British men. They were not soldiers, but instead a fireman, an IT consultant, a retired veterinarian, and a few more. Why *those* men? Because each of them was obsessed with a particular hobby: cave diving.

Those men—with diving skills men half their age couldn’t match—ended up being the ones to reach the soccer team. But the question quickly became, “How can we get these young boys out?” Though 2.5 miles might not seem like a long distance, the swim was five to six hours long in tight, dark, terrifying passages of water. To highlight the danger, one of the Thai Navy Seals died swimming from one part of the cave to another. And some of the adults they attempted to swim out panicked in ways that would subvert the mission. This swim was something you trained for. The young boys couldn’t do it.

So, the team decided that the only way to get those boys out was to put them to sleep. And it just so happened that alongside the vet, the IT consultant, and the fireman, one of these expert cave divers was also an anesthesiologist. So, they went back in, and after they carefully gave the boys what they needed, they carried out—one by one—all 12 boys safely.

The boys couldn’t have delivered themselves. They couldn’t even get out following a leader. Instead, a pioneer that made the journey first, who knew the way, brought them out.

Do you see Him, made lower than the angels?
Do you see Him, suffering death for you, in your place?
Do you see Him, crowned with glory?
Do you see Him, delivering you?

²¹ Harris, 57.

²² ESV.

²³ HCSB.