

• *The Lord Jesus – our great and sympathetic high priest*

1. God shows great concern for the human race

• *Inheritance for us not the angels*

• *Our present inferiority to angels is only temporary*

• *Psalm 8*

• *God's ultimate plan for the human race*

2. God's plan for the human race involved his putting men and women to the test

3. The reward for obedience was to be crowned with glory and honour

There are two sides to the work and character of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen his greatness ^{☐1}. Now our writer balances what he said in Hebrews chapter 1 with a section dealing with the sympathy of Christ ^{☐2}. We are still within a main section ^{☐3} but there is a new unit of thought.

1. **God shows great concern for the human race.** It really is quite incredible that God should love us more than he loves the planet, more than the animals and birds, more than the sun and the stars, even more than he loves the angels. Our writer explains the greatness of the gospel as his great kindness to the human race. ⁵*For God did not place the world to come, about which we are speaking, under the authority of angels.* Throughout the whole of this letter the constant concern is 'inheritance' or (as he expresses it here) 'the world to come'. The Christian is pressing on to 'inheritance' or 'the world to come', the reward that will come with the glorification of his body. Our 'promised land' is our final inheritance in 'the world to come'. Jesus the Son of God is the heir of the universe ^{☐1}. His people inherit it with him. They hope for a greater homeland, a heavenly city ^{☐2}. One might think that this world to come, the future world of glory to which God is bringing his people, is for angels. Angels seem to be so much greater than men and women. Many first-century Jews thought it would be wonderful to praise God's glory among the angels but that they themselves would be junior to the angels. Our writer says 'No!' The angels will be junior to human beings! Our present inferiority to the angels is only temporary. He quotes Psalm 8 as his way of developing the point.

⁶*But someone has testified somewhere
What is a human being that you should remember him,
what is a mere mortal that you should visit him?*

⁷*You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you crowned him with glory and honour,*

⁸*and you put all things under his feet.*

The eighth psalm celebrates God's goodness to man (vv. 3–5; partly quoted in Hebrews 2:6–7) and humanity's lordship over creation (vv. 6–8, partly quoted in Hebrews 2:8a). The lines that are quoted in Hebrews 2:6–8a deal with the way in which God created man and what is God's plan for the ultimate destiny of the human race.

2. **God had a plan for the human race, but it involved his putting men and women under test.** He wanted men and women to pass the test of obedience. He put them 'for a little while' lower than the angels. As we can see in Genesis 2, God put the human race under a request for obedience. The phrase 'a little' (both in Hebrew and in Greek) may refer to extent ('to a little extent') or time ('for a little while'). Both in the psalm and in Hebrews it is the time-reference that fits the argument. God's plan was to put the human race 'for a little while' lower than the angels. The human race was temporarily put in a low position until it had risen to glory as a reward for obedience.

3. **The reward for obedience was to be crowned with glory and honour.** If men and women had obeyed God it would have led to their getting promoted to a high level of prestige above the angels. But the human race fell and, instead of ascending to glory, they declined into spiritual death. God gave men and women an area of responsibility. He wanted humankind to achieve total lordship over the earth. Everything was to come under his control. Nothing was to rule over him except God.

☐1 1:1–14

☐2 2:5–18

☐3 1:1–2:18

☐1 1:2b

☐2 11:14, 16

• *Humankind given total lordship over the earth*

• *God is concerned for the human race –*

• *He does not forget*

4. God's concern is amazingly gracious

• *Amazing to us*

• *Amazing to the psalmist*

• *Amazing to the angels*

Everything was to be controlled by him except God. Our writer is only talking about the human race. He is not at this point saying anything about Jesus, who is mentioned only in verse 9a.

God is kind to every member of the human race. He remembers them and visits them. Each of us must apply the thought to our own lives. God has a plan for my life. In company with every member of the human race there is something that God wants to do with and through me. As we shall see, it is a destiny that can only be fulfilled through Jesus.

God is concerned for the human race. God keeps the human race in his mind. Men and women often are forgetful of other people. We forget each other, and we forget God, but God does not forget us. It is not only his own people that are on God's mind. He notices everyone. He provides man's environment. He sets the earth on its foundations. He controls the oceans. He sustains the creatures of planet earth, making arrangements for the wild donkeys to quench their thirst, the birds of the air to be fed, the lilies of the field to be clothed. He provides for man's food. He makes plants for man to cultivate, wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine. The God of the Bible is close to us. He is active in nature, in history. 'His eyes watch the nations' ¹.

4. God's concern is amazingly gracious. The psalmist was amazed that God should take such trouble with someone who was so weak and undeserving. Why should God take so much trouble with us? The angels are strong, but we are weak. Why should God love us and have plans to put us even above the angels? There is nothing about our spirituality that can attract God's love. Men and women fell as soon as they were created. Even the most perfect man could not stand up to the serpent. What reason can we find for God's loving the human race so much? We can give no reason at all. His love for the human race is entirely from his own will, entirely his own decision. He is good; his love endures for ever. It amazed the psalmist, and it amazes us when we think about it. God goes on and on remembering us. He is a faithful Creator ¹. It is amazing that he should create us, amazing that he should watch over us. It is more amazing still that he consider us and send a Saviour, yet more amazing that the Saviour should be his own Son, and yet more amazing still that his love for the entire human race should take his Son to death, and what can we say to his death upon the cross? Even the angels are amazed.

*'Tis mercy all... let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

¹ Psalm 66:7

¹ 1 Peter 4:19



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