

Hebrews - It Was Fitting

Introduction

The point of chapter 1 was, Jesus was not an angel. He is worshipped by angels.

Then we get a warning about drifting from Him and how keeping our eyes on Him keeps us from drift.

Hebrews is written to drifting churches. It is written to Christians that have become ho-hum about their salvation. Devotion and prayer and worship have become common, ordinary, habits that do not cut beneath the surface of their hearts.

Now the author of Hebrews shifts gears abruptly in verse 5 and he is going to begin fleshing out what exactly this “great salvation” is. He is going to continue fixing our eyes on Jesus so that we do not drift into destruction.

As we look at Him, we get pulled out of drift and back into alignment with Christ.

He begins by focussing on the humanity of Jesus, without taking His divinity out of view.

“It Has Been Testified Somewhere” - Psalm 8

The author of Hebrews is about to quote a significant portion of Psalm 8, so before we read Hebrews, let's read Psalm 8 together.

READ Psalm 8

What's happening in that Psalm is David is looking at the stars and it causes him to ponder the fact that mankind is so small and insignificant, yet God exalted man to be just lower than the angels.

God made man to rule over everything on the earth.

There is a problem here, if you're honest. When you look around, do you see everything in creation subject to your dominion? I sure don't.

READ Hebrews 2:5-8

The author quotes Psalm 8 as his primary text from which he is going to expound in the coming section.

These are some difficult verses to read. The difficulty is in the pronouns “he” and “him”. Do they refer to Jesus or to the him of Psalm 8 - mankind?

AND if the Psalm isn't the author of Hebrews shoehorning Jesus into the text?

The problem, of course, is that the Psalmist isn't talking about the Messiah. He is specifically talking about mankind in general as he sits under the stars and ponders the paradox of our smallness and our status.

If Hebrews did not exist and you came to me and said that in Psalm 8 “man” is Jesus, I’d correct you. I would tell you that you are shoehorning Jesus into the text when it’s clear that Jesus is the one that’s “mindful of man” and not the other way around.

Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man and so in that way Jesus kind of co-ops Psalm 8 for Himself. The problem there is that the Hebrew phrase “son of man” also just means “all of humankind” and most scholars agree that in Psalm 8 that is exactly what the Psalmist is saying.

So what we are left with in that theory is that maybe Jesus was shoehorning Himself into the text? I just don’t think that’s happening here, at least not in that way. *It’s too simplistic to just say, “Hebrews says it’s about Jesus, so that’s that.” I don’t think it’s necessary to do that and I’ll try to show you why.*

There is a more natural, simpler reading of the text that I think works much better.

I think a better reading is as follows:

The he/him of verse 8 is, on the surface of things, referring to the man of Psalm 8 - mankind in general.

We were given dominion over the earth at Creation, but we gave that up when sin entered the world. Now we are in many ways under the thumb of death. We can do so many things, but we cannot beat death.

When I look around, I don’t see everything under my feet. I see a mixed bag. There’s a lot of triumph and victory. And there’s a lot of death and struggle. It’s a mix of both.

This accurately describes the human condition. Made by God to have dominion, we gave that up at the fall.

BUT then there’s verse 9

READ Hebrews 2:9

What we do see is Jesus, FULLY HUMAN, having dominion over all things, including death. *So while I may not see all things in subjection under my feet right now, I do see Jesus all things in subjection under Christ’s feet. He has done it. Not only that, but He has done it in my place and in the coming age I will see the same victory.*

So that’s how I read it. Verse 8 is referring to the mankind of Psalm 8, verse 9 is about Jesus IN HIS HUMANITY DOING WHAT WE WERE MADE TO DO, namely taking dominion.

BTW, if you have the NIV version you will see that they agree with how I’m reading it.

The NIV says, “In putting everything under **them**, God left nothing that is not subject to **them**. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to **them**.”

The Ambiguity is OK

I think the ambiguity of verse 8 is ok. *In fact, it’s even intentional.*

Is verse 8 referring to mankind or Jesus? In a sense, it’s both?

The focal point of this entire section is the humanity of Jesus alongside His divinity. Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person. **In this way, Jesus fits into BOTH interpretations of that verse.** In fact, if you think about it, the

ambiguity of the verse allows you to see Jesus in it without shoehorning Him into the text in a way that compromises the logic of words.

In other words, if VERSE 8 explicitly said it was about Jesus then we would say “But Psalm 8 isn’t about Jesus, it’s about humanity. That doesn’t make sense.” But since it isn’t clear we can say that Jesus is in it right along side us. Jesus is right there with the rest of humanity, except in verse 9 Jesus rises above the sea of humanity and accomplishes what we could not.

So, in my view, the author of Hebrews is saying that in Psalm 8 Jesus shows up BOTH as the majestic Creator who is mindful of little, tiny mankind as well as fully one of little, tiny mankind.

It Was Fitting

Verse 10 has more fun with pronouns so take a breath...

READ Hebrews 2:10

“He” is God the Father

“The founder” is Jesus

“It is fitting”

“Fitting”? That’s not a word I would have used. Fitting means that it was appropriate, right, sensible, the best way. It fits. It makes sense.

This is more than simply saying “God can do whatever He wants”. This is saying that it makes good sense to the author of Hebrews that God would do this redemptive work through suffering. He is saying that it was good and right that Jesus suffered.

What are some ways in which it is fitting that Christ would be perfected through suffering?

1- Suffering Perfected our Founder

This phrasing throws everyone at first. It takes some thought because we know that Jesus was sinless. The book of Hebrews itself makes that assertion over and over. Something else is going on here.

READ Hebrews 5:8-9 - this is the same line of thinking with an extra clue thrown in that will help us.

So here we have a concrete example of one way that Jesus was “made perfect through suffering”, namely by learning obedience.

Must you disobey in order to learn obedience? Is it possible to learn obedience without disobeying first?

YES! It’s hard to imagine, but it is possible. Jesus did it. **Jesus learned obedience perfectly.**

To put it another way, Jesus moved from untested obedience to tested obedience. Jesus moved from unproven perfection to proven perfection. Jesus did not sin, but He was tempted. He never disobeyed, but His obedience was tested.

So our Lord's obedience is not some kind of obedience where He pulls His divinity card and cuts in line. There are no smoke and mirrors here. Jesus' obedience was tested all the way down to His core. He didn't cut any corners or bypass any aspect of His suffering because of His divinity.

He knows what you suffer. He knows the taste of it. He knows what it's like to be in the middle of an ordeal where it seems like it will break you if it lasts much longer.

AND SO HIS SUFFERING WAS FITTING.

2- Jesus Becomes Our Brother

So that Jesus could be our brother, not just Savior and Lord (our brotherhood with Christ is formed around the connection between His suffering and ours)

READ Hebrews 2:10-14

We and Jesus both exist to bring glory to the Father (verse 10)

Because we have the same Dad now, we are brothers and sisters with Him. And (verse 14) because He is our brother, He chose to share in the suffering of humanity. Jesus so identifies with us as our brother that He enters into our suffering as well.

How much of a brother would He be if we all suffered, but He pulled rank when it came His turn?

AND SO HIS SUFFERING WAS FITTING.

3- Suffering Well Glorifies God

Verse 10 tells us that all things exist for the Father. We and Jesus and creation exist for the glory of God.

Is there anything that brings greater glory to God than one of His children suffering with joy instead of bitterness?

READ Heb. 12:1-2 -- His suffering (and obedience in suffering) shows how glorious the Father is. If Jesus had not suffered with joy, the Father would not have been seen as glorious.

Suffering reveals what your greatest treasure is. When Jesus suffered, He did it in a way that demonstrated that there was someone greater than Him. He suffered like someone who understood that He exists for the glory of God.

AND SO HIS SUFFERING WAS FITTING.

4- Suffering temptation made Him like us

so that He could help us by representing us as our High Priest.

Jesus had to be like us in order to pay for our sin. Being like us included suffering the shame of temptation.

First, this tells us that temptation is a kind of suffering. We need to acknowledge that. So much shame gets attached to temptation that we often don't realize the suffering that it brings.

Second, Jesus was tempted in every way that you can be. He knew the lures of the Enemy and the flesh.

This is hard to get your head around, but its worth trying. Try really hard to imagine what it would be like to be Jesus before he became a man. Imagine what it was like for temptation to not be able to touch you. Imagine what it would be like to not have a sin nature, to not suffer the shame of being tempted to think and do sinful things. Imagine literally being above it all.

Then imagine what it would have been like to leap out of that state and into this world and in this flesh with the Enemy at your heels.

This is what Jesus endured so that He could fully enter in to brotherhood with you and I.

Closing

So, when you look around and you don't see all things in subjection to you. When the world feels like a frustrating game of cosmic whack-a-mole where no problem seems to stay solved, look to Jesus.

He's the "local boy made good". He's one of us. The Creator made Himself one of His creation. And He did it without losing one bit of His divinity.

And not only that, but now with all His great strength and might, He is carrying you to the Father. He is carrying you with Him into glory. He has won for you the birthright that you sold in your sin. You will see a day when all things are under your feet, even death.

Jesus is why there is hope. Jesus is our hope.