

**CHAPTER 5**  
**The Epistle to the Hebrews**  
**The Suffering Son of Man (Hebrews 2:5-18)**  
by G. H. Lang

5. For not unto angels did he subject the world to come whereof we speak.
6. But one hath somewhere testified saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?
7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, And didst set him over the works of thy hands:
8. Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him.
9. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every *man*.
10. For it became him, of whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
11. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,
12. saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise.
13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.
14. Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, lie also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;
15. and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
16. For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham.
17. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Verse 5. *For not to angels did He subject the oikoumene the about to be, concerning which we speak* (i.e. which is our present subject).

I. **After the foregoing exhortation the “for” resumes** the chief subject from 1:14 but gives it a deeper meaning and ground.

i. Again the Writer defines clearly his subject. He is speaking (a) of things future, “about to be,” not of the present aspect of salvation; and (b) of the inhabited universe which is to be. See par. iii above (ch. 3). This widest meaning of oikoumene is evidently intended here, for the argument to be developed is that man is the destined ruler of the whole universe. Comp. 1 Cor. 3:21-23: “all things are yours.. . [the] kosmos”; either condition of existence in the kosmos, life or death; either period of time, present or future, which last idea is here expressed by the same term as in our passage “about to be” . . . “all things are yours.”

That the heavens are to pass under the rule of man is seen at 1 Cor. 6:2, 3: “Do you not know that the saints shall judge the kosmos?... Do you not know that the saints shall judge angels?” the inhabitants of the heavenly portion of the kosmos. Alas, that comparatively few Christians do know this; which is not surprising seeing that only a few teachers of the faith seem to know it with intelligence.

ii. The existing oikoumene is under the control of angels. At the summit of the things invisible to man there are thrones (Col. 1:16), and beneath these sovereign rulers are lower orders, lordships, principedoms and general authorities. These thrones had been seen in vision by Daniel (7:9 “thrones were placed”), and later they were shown more distinctly to John (Rev. 4:4). The subject has been greatly obscured by the twenty-four elders being regarded as men. In my *Revelation* on that place it is shown, I trust conclusively, that they are heavenly beings. The archangel has an army of subordinates (Rev. 12:7, “Michael and his angels”). Satan, the fallen cherub, likewise has subordinates: see the same ver. and ver. 9. This angelic rule extends to the earth, as Daniel exhibits at large (4:13, 23; the judgment scene of ch. 7:10, 13, 22; 12:1). See also 2 Chron. 18:12-22, and the *Revelation*.

iii. In the purpose of God the oikoumene of the future has not been put under the control of angels, but of men. This is a key thought, the resolving of many obscurities and perplexities which hinder believers from grasping the exact significance of the plans of God and the final and highest outcome of redemption. It is the key to some present enigmas also. At present God is not saving the human race entire and its affairs corporate, but is selecting from it the company that are to rule the universe, superseding the existing government. He is preparing for a complete reorganizing of His entire empire, and is giving to these future rulers the severe training which is indispensable to fitting them for such responsible duties and high dignities. The gospel has not failed, but is fulfilling the purpose God plainly announced, though not the end that many preachers have mistakenly proposed, namely, the conversion of the whole race. That general and most desirable betterment of this sin-cursed earth is in the plans of God, but falls for accomplishment in the next period of the divine program, not in this age. There is manifest wisdom in a great Leader first training a body of efficient subordinates before seeking to reorganize society at large.

As with this whole salvation, so with this branch of it, it was the Lord Jesus who first began to announce it. Of the servant who was faithful while his lord was from home Christ (Matt. 24:46, 47) said that, on his return, “he will set him over all that he hath,” even as it was said later, “all things are yours.” And again: “thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many things” (Matt. 25:21, 23); and again: “thou wast found faithful . . . have thou authority’s (Luke 19:17): and again: “ye have continued with Me in My trials, and I appoint unto you kingdom,” i.e. (as the absence of the article intimates) royal status and authority. “ye shall sit on thrones” (Luke 22:29-30). See also the promises to overcomers in the battles of the kingdom; especially Rev. 2:26, “to him will I give authority over the nations,” and 3:21, “He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne.”

**2. It is next shown that this destiny for man is foretold** in the Old Testament in Psalm 8: “Thou didst put all things in subjection under his (man’s) feet.” As usual, the Writer quotes from the LXX, whose rendering emphasizes the notion of subjection implied in the Hebrew “put under.” The psalm is based on Gen. 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion.” Man is made to rule; the whole universe is his realm. His lust for power is the degraded survival of this grant from God; but alas, as a corrupted being he seeks his destiny by tyranny and cruelty, and in the pursuit of this ambition he destroys his kingdom and himself. Moreover, his utmost endeavors fail of their goal; he can destroy but not improve his domains; nor can he thoroughly subdue his subjects, but beasts, birds, fishes, and creeping things defy and destroy him in turn, as he does them, and the forces of nature now serve, now blast him. Indeed, “we see not yet all things subjected” to man (ver. 8). In Gen. 1, Ps. 8, and Heb. 2 it is thus far man simply as man, not Messiah, that is in view; but our Writer widens the scope of the psalm to take the term “all things” in its fullest possible sense, that is, the universe entire. But though this subjection is not yet a fact, it is God’s grant and purpose, “For in that He subjected all things unto him [man], He left nothing that is not subject unto him” (man). Is, then, this original purpose of God to be frustrated? Is man for ever to be deceived by Satan and oppressed by the fear of death? (14, 15). By no means: for there is one Man in Whom this purpose of God is in process of fulfillment: “we behold Jesus crowned with glory and honour.” His name as man is chosen with design. In this Man the lost situation is recovered, and

“In Him the sons of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost.”

i. In the grading of the universe man was made a little lower than the angels: comp. 2 Pet. 2:11, angels “are greater in might and power” than man. Therefore to fulfil the purpose of God for man the Redeemer must become man. This He did. He took a truly human nature, partook of “blood and flesh”— the vital element, the seat of bodily life, the blood, being named first to emphasize that the humanity of our Lord was vitally human, and not (as the Docetic heresy afterward affirmed) only externally and

apparently human. Thus in divine grace “He took the form of a bondservant, becoming in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man” (Phil. 2:6-8). “Being originally in the form of God” He became what before He was not, a man, born of a woman. To deny this is to wreck the purpose of God for man, for only in His humanity can Christ fulfil that purpose. Nor can any other man do this, for through rebellion every other man has lost the dominion granted, nor is able to regain it, being unable either to expiate the guilt of his rebellion or to bring his nature into subjection to the will of God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

ii. Christ became man to do as man and for man what man cannot do for himself. The sinner’s condition includes a triple misery. (1) He is easily overcome by temptation. (2) Through thus yielding and sinning he lies under sentence of death. (3) He thus has the terror of a slave in relation to the executioner-in-chief of that sentence, the devil. The vast majority of mankind have always worshipped demons for fear that these should injure or destroy them, and in man in general there is an instinctive reluctance to die.

He who would deliver man must meet effectually this threefold state. This Christ did.

(1) Being truly man He submitted to the temptations and trials to which man is liable: “He hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart” (4:15). This experience caused Him suffering (ver. 18); He felt the severity of the temptations; the suffering was real, acute. Thus He understands our feelings, and now, in resurrection life, He is able to help us effectually, by sympathy, and by infusing into our enfeebled spirits His own moral energy, communicated by the Holy Spirit sent forth into our hearts.

(2) But more was needed than moral improvement, even a work that should make that improvement possible. Man must die as the legal penalty of his sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23): that is, the soul, the ego, must part from the body in which alone he can act on this earth, and the body must lose that animating principle, spirit, without which it will dissolve into dust. Thereupon the soul must descend to a distinct and altogether lower realm and state of existence. This bitter and humiliating experience, including banishment from God and endurance of His holy wrath, man’s Redeemer must accept as if He had personally incurred our penalty by personally committing our sins. This also Christ did: “Jehovah hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all”; “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”; “Who His own self bare our sins in His body on the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes ye were healed” (Isa. 53:6; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 2:24).

By thus canceling our guilt, as he who pays a debt thereby cancels it, Christ delivers from death those who by faith avail themselves of His sacrifice. This deliverance is available for all: “that He might deliver all them” that feared death: but

each must personally accept the Son of God and His atonement or not benefit by it (Gal. 3:22; "all . . . them that believe").

(3) Now he who cancels a debt by paying it thereby delivers the debtor from the hand of the bailiff, for he deprives the latter of legal right to touch the former debtor. That Satan, under authority from God and restraint by God, acts as the executioner of the penalties of the law, lesser and greater, Scripture shows. He acts personally, as in Job's case (Job 1 and 2); and see 1 Kings 22:21 "the spirit"); or he acts through subordinates (Ex. 12:23; 2 Sam. 24:16; 2 Kings 19:35; Acts 12:23; Rev. 9:11).

Of this power, as against the people of Christ, he has been deprived by Christ through His atoning death (Col. 2:13-15). At death the believer now commits his spirit to the Lord, as Stephen did (Acts 7:59); he "falls asleep" and this "through Jesus" (1Thess. 4:14), not through Satanic action, unless indeed he foolishly place himself again under Satan's authority by living in willful sin as formerly, when he served the Devil (1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30; 1 Tim. 1:20). And while believers do die, as to the body, and go to that paradise which is part of Hades, the world of the dead (Luke 23:43; Eph. 4:9), yet their Redeemer, in resurrection power, now holds the keys of that realm (Rev. 1:18), and its gates shall not prevail to detain them there when the moment comes that He shall call them thence to share His resurrection (Matt. 16:18).

Only one free from debts can meet the liabilities of another. The Saviour of sinners must be without sin. The Redeemer must have a nature free from sin and also be free in practice. These conditions demanded such a birth as (1) should preserve Him from inherited taint of sin and tendency to sin. Birth of a virgin mother by direct action of the Holy Spirit was an imperative necessity in order that He should be "holy" and "Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The absence of the article here implies that the humanity should share in His relation to God as Son. (2) His birth must cause Him to be truly human, and so be able to pass through all stages of human development —weakness, dependence, growth in body and mind (Luke 2:40), temptation, suffering, death; and (3) that He should be able to live without sinning; so that (4) He might be acceptable as substitute in law for sinners, the Lamb of God without blemish, and so fit for the altar of God (1 Pet. 1:18-21).

And not only fit to be the victim but also qualified to act as the officiating Priest to present the victim before God on behalf of men (9:14). For having been made "like unto His brethren" He can be at once merciful toward them and faithful toward God (2: 17). He is that competent Daysman, or umpire, for whom the suffering saint of a former age longed but saw only afar and by faith (Job 9:33; 19:25-27); but Whom the saint of today, by like faith, sees more nearly, a present acting Advocate at the throne of God, crowned with glory and honour. He is there as our Representative, yea, more, as our Forerunner who has opened the way for His followers, that through faith and long-patience they may run His race after Him and arrive where He is (6:20; 12:1, 2).

**3. This divine-human Redeemer and His whole life**—His experiences, death, resurrection, and ascension, are God’s true means of grace” for the fulfillment of His original and His standing purpose that man shall have universal dominion: “He is bringing many sons unto glory” (10). This clause must be analyzed, for it is another key statement as to the plans of God.

i. “Unto glory.” Upon this see above. Joseph, David, Daniel, Esther became more than subjects under their respective sovereigns. Each attained to rulership and glory. It is for such supreme honour that God is now training the coheirs of His Son (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:10-12).

ii. “Many sons unto glory.” A royal father may have a large family, but of these only a few may prove competent to rule in the kingdom and share its glory. It is of such that the term “son” is here used. This is an important Biblical use of the term “son,” implying a child who has grown up, who resembles the father in intelligence and character, and can cooperate in his affairs. This sense of the word affords yet another instance of teaching which “began to be spoken by the Lord” Jesus. His early discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, gives it. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God . . . Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; so that ye may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Matt. 5:9, 44, 45; and see Luke 6:35, 36). Here Christ spoke of disciples as already children of God, God was already their Father (“ your Father”), for these had believed on the Son and so were born of God (John 1:12, 13). It was for such so to act that they might “become sons” of their Father. The same meaning of “son” is applied by Christ to those who shall be accounted worthy of the first resurrection: “neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36).

This force of “son” is the basis of the discussion in Gal. 3 and 4 as to the essential difference in spiritual relationship to God of believers before and since Pentecost. So long as believers were under the law they were “children” (Gal. 4:3), though heirs by promise, and were themselves ruled by guardians and their property managed by stewards: but now that the life-principle of an obedient faith has been introduced by the coming of the Redeemer, those who intelligently receive Him do, by baptism, “put on Christ,”<sup>1</sup> and as He is God’s Son they also in Him thus become “sons of God” (Gal. 3:26; 4:4-7), and “because ye are sons God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” The number is large who believe on Christ as

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<sup>1</sup> This has no reference to regeneration, which is the renewing of the inward nature. To “put on” is an external act; here, the profession of a new, advanced status of sons, not merely children. Under the law, men of faith were regenerated. though baptism was not yet instituted; they became children of God. Under the gospel, baptism is the avowal of sonship.

Saviour but have no sense of sonship, nor experience of the Spirit of the Son crying, Father.

Of this the Old Testament usage of “son” is wholly confirmatory. The common word for “son” comes perhaps 4,500 times. Its usage Godward is as rare as its usage of the human relationship is frequent. Once it is applied to Messiah as in resurrection (Ps. 2:7). In eight places it is used of angels (Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 82:6; 89:6). Six times it describes what the saved of Israel will become when, at the advent of their Messiah, they shall pass from the state of children into that of sons, and the Galatian argument be realized in them (Isa. 43:6; 45:11; Jer. 3:14, 19, 22; 31:20). In only five places have we noticed it as used historically of Israelites of the past, and the histories show how utterly the majority failed to respond to the dignity open to them all in the purpose of God (Ex. 4:22; 2 Sam 7:14; Isa 1:2; Ezek. 16:21; Hos. 11:1).

The argument of Hebrews is based on the truth set forth in Galatians, and even as in the latter epistle believers were exhorted to value their exalted status, to stand fast in its freedom, and not to sink back into the former and legal condition, so are those here in view exhorted and warned to the same effect; for the same danger imperiled their reaching the final privileges open for attainment as sons of God. This will illuminate these arguments and warnings as we reach them.

**The burden of *Hebrews* is not the rescuing of sinners from hell, nor even the blessings of children in the vast family circle, but it is the bringing of sons unto glory.** Of old Israel did not reach the enjoyment of being God’s son, His firstborn son and heir (Ex. 4:22). In this Christians also may fail. In essence this teaching and warning are continued to the end of the Word of God, for on its last page but one it is said by Him that sitteth on the throne, and said of the time and scene of glory, “lie that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be God to him, and he shall be to Me son” (Rev. 21:7). This is something greatly greater than the blessing of the water of life promised immediately before to the thirsty (ver. 6). This latter is the initial gift of grace, the former is the final fruition of grace. The one requires no more than thirst and the faith to drink; the other demands faith that fights and conquers. It is to this latter and indispensable matter of conquest that Hebrews is directed.

Had this emphasis by the Writer himself upon what is his theme been generally recognized, most perhaps of what has been said upon his warnings would never have been written, and thus had controversy and confusion been much reduced.

#### **4. The Son Perfected by Suffering.**

i. Its Necessity. ii. Its Nature. A goal so noble being in view, and such measures being indispensable to reaching it, it became Him (the Father), for whose glory all things exist, and through Whose will and power all things came into existence,

to make the Author of the salvation of the many sons perfect through sufferings. Here again the word salvation is used in its third sense, as equivalent to being "brought unto glory."

The Son did not need to be made perfect in His relationship to the Father or in His moral character: these were eternally and inherently perfect. But had He remained as He originally was, on equality with God, never could He have become the Author of salvation or have brought many sons unto God and glory. The corn of wheat would have continued perfect in its kind but would have remained alone. But love to His Father constrained Him to become man, for that was the will of the Father (John 14:31); and love to us strengthened Him to suffer with and for us to save us. And having thus entered into our conditions, for Him, as for us, the way to glory lay through death and resurrection (John 12:23-28), for

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown":

and so "because of the sufferings of death we behold Jesus crowned with glory and honour." Comp. Isa. 53:12: "therefore"; Phil. 2:9: "wherefore"; Rev. 5:9: "Worthy art Thou . . . for Thou wast slain."

### **5. His Exaltation as Man assures Salvation for Man.**

By the grace of God Christ tasted death for every man. His exaltation gives effect to the purpose for which He died. Risen from the dead He is the Executor of His own will and testament (9:16, 17). The fourteen Romish Stations of The Cross end with His burial. It suits a system of priestcraft to leave Him there in the minds of its devotees. For were He still in the tomb no present salvation or present assurance of salvation were possible, and the priest can batten on the dread uncertainties of the souls that so think. Were Christ not risen it would be plain that His sacrifice had not been sufficient to discharge the claims of the law against the sins for which He assumed responsibility and died. As long as the criminal is in prison it is clear that the law is not satisfied. But His having been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father Himself, and rewarded with highest glory and honour in the Presence on high where no sin can be tolerated, is God's own witness to the sufficiency of His atoning death.

"He tasted death for every man"; and His ascension makes the mighty benefits of this available to faith. As the salvation and glory of man (not, in possibility, of other beings) is the subject in hand, it seems better to confine the words here to man, and not to extend their scope to others. Ch. 9:23; Rom. 8:18-25, and other scriptures show a wider blessing to flow from the cross. Here the truth stated is that given in, e.g. 1 Tim. 2:1-6, where the triple "all" of vers. 1, 4, 6 covers the whole of mankind. This is seen in 1

John 2:2 also, a statement equally definite and universal. Redemption is provided for all men: alas, that not all men avail themselves of it by repentance and faith.

6. vers. 11—13. **The Son and His Brethren.**

i. One Father. Having thus united Himself to mankind, and the believing of mankind to Himself, both He and they derive their nature and prospects from one Source, the Father and the Son therefore acknowledges them as brethren. They call Him (not Brother or Elder Brother; such terms lack elementary reverence, but) Teacher and Lord and own themselves His slaves: but He in grace calls them His brethren, and introduces them to, and empowers them for, that life of trust in the living Father which was and is the principle and power of His life of praise unto God.

ii. ver. 16. The Redeemer human, not angelic. Seeing that the end proposed concerned man, the Redeemer did not take hold of (ally Himself with; Green, *The Twofold New Testament*, in loco) angels, but of man. (The translation “doth not give help to angels” asserts more than is revealed, and is unwarranted). He must descend lower than to the angelic rank and sphere, for the creature He would raise was lower than angels, and to have shared their nature and experiences would not have fitted Him to save man. But now, in resurrection, He is the High Priest perfectly competent to fulfil the whole counsel of God, even to this its chief intent, the bringing many sons unto glory.

iii. vers. 12. And being brought there, their first and chief office will be praise, and the incitement to this will be their full appreciation of the Name of God, of what God Himself is as expressed in His name. And of the praise of that heavenly chorus the Son will be the Precentor. He closed His life in the flesh by leading His faithful followers in a song of praise, most probably in the words of Ps. 118, and then He went forth to die (Matt. 26:30). So blessedly full was His heart of filial trust in His Father that even when forsaken on the cross He was in the spirit of that word of prophecy, “But Thou art holy,” thus praising the character of His God. He will resume that praise in fellowship with the glorified before God on high in heaven, the native home of joy and worship.

We often sing

“Oh, that with yonder sacred throng  
We at His feet may fall,  
Join in the everlasting song,  
And crown Him Lord of all.”

Proper and blessed indeed it is to address and worship the Son (Matt. 28:17; Rev. 5:8-14); yet for the glorified saint the standing and service are higher. We are to stand around Him; and He in the midst of that most august of all congregations will lead

the praise beyond Himself (all-worthy as He is!) to His and our God and Father, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Even now the songs and prayers of this character are the highest, when His people meet with Him in the midst, and He brings them to God in heart-fellowship and spiritual worship. This is the sweetest foretaste of the realm and service to which the pilgrims of hope urge their way, by the grace of the High Priest whom we confess.

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