

“A Little Lower Than Angels”

“But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). It has been observed that the Deity of Jesus is emphasized in chapter one of Hebrews while His humanity is shown in chapter two. The dual nature which Jesus possessed on earth came about because He, as Eternal God, took upon Himself flesh that He might die for His creature, man. John wrote, *“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God ... and the word because flesh and dwelt among us ...”* (Jn. 1:1, 14). Paul wrote, *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; he who was manifested in the flesh ...”* (1 Tim. 3:15a). The verse cited from Hebrew 2:9 speaks of Jesus who was made a little lower than angels.

This observation of the Hebrew writer follows his citations of a familiar section from Psalm eight. *“For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one has somewhere testified saying, ‘What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitedst him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet’* (2:6-8). The Psalm eight passage revels in awe of the lofty place God has placed man in His created works. The Hebrew writer adapts the passage, properly so, to Him who is the example of a perfect man.

It is interesting to note that the most frequent reference Jesus makes of Himself is the “Son of man.” He did not reject the designation “Son of God” when it was offered by others to Him and He clearly made the claim of Deity for Himself; but repeatedly He spoke of Himself as the “Son of man.” By illustration, the gospel of Matthew has no less than twenty-seven appearances in different verses where Jesus refers to Himself as the son of God. By such a reference He claims kinship with man.

Bolstering that claim, the Hebrew writer adds, *“For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause his is not ashamed to call them brethren”* (Heb. 2:11). When the writer says that both he that sanctifieth (Christ) and they that are sanctified (redeemed man) are all of one; he tells his readers that they are all of one humanity, thus he calls them brethren because of their kinship in the flesh and in the Lord. Further, citing Isaiah 8:17, *“Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me,”* Jesus is linked to His human kinship. Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also in like manner is a partaker of the same (2:14).

There was a heresy prevalent near the close of the first century which denied that Jesus had a fleshy body. These people were called "gnostics" in historical writings of that era and possible reference is made of these in the Revelation letters to Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira. There different false teachers are mentioned: the Nicolaitans, followers of Balaam and Jezebel (Rev. 2:6; 2:14, 15; 2:2). It was against such teaching that John wrote, *"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God ..."* (1 John 4:2f). *"... many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist"* (2 John 7). Possibly a remnant of this ancient heresy has surfaced in our age in the form of a nearly 1900 year old manuscript of book called "The gospel of Judas."

Jesus did come in the flesh, a manifestation of His humility and love. Because of that sacrifice, He was highly exalted by God. That exaltation will be the subject of our next article.

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