

**Hebrews**



**Promises  
Faithfully  
Kept**

## Heb. 2:5-18 (CSB)

# The Condescension of Christ

Condescension is not a word we use all that often these days. Maybe you are not familiar with the word and thought I said condensation, but that would be even weirder to try to think about.

Or maybe you are familiar with the pejorative way it has been used within our lifetime. The term condescension is used negatively to speak of people in a higher position interacting with those of a lower position in order to mock or belittle them.

The denotive meaning of the word does not necessarily carry with it any snootiness. It simply refers to someone from a higher status stepping away from his rank or dignity in order to meet another of a lower status on his level.

In today's passage, the author is speaking to the original audience's temptation to disregard for Jesus because of his lowliness and suffering. They were neglecting the truth of the Son's kindness, grace, and love to meet us at our level in order to save us.

Paul addressed the Corinthians in a similar way when they considered dismissing other Christians when those other believers were suffering and in need. He appealed to the condescension of Christ when he wrote, "9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."

Charles Spurgeon applied this teaching to the heart motivations of the church. "[Are you tempted to disregard giving for the need of your fellow believers?] Remember Jesus; [consider] him look[ing] you in the face and say to you, "I gave myself for you, and do you withhold yourself from me? For if you do so, you know not my love in all its heights and depths and lengths and breadths."

The glorious Son did not have to give himself for you. He was not compelled to do so by any greater government nor any debt to humanity. The only wages we were owed were death and God's wrath. But the Son, at the calling of the Father, willingly and graciously took on humanity and died in our place in order to redeem us, give us new life, and make us inheritors of God's promises. This inheritance includes that we will reign as Jesus's vice-regents in the fully consummated kingdom.

Paul applied the condescension of Christ to the Corinthians when they were considering dismissing their brothers and sisters in Christ. The author of Hebrews refers to the condescension of Christ to say, "Jesus's temporary lowliness and suffering do not negate his glory. Instead it is the means by which he showed himself gracious and glorious for your benefit. Being all glorious, he became lowly and suffered, so that you who suffered under sin, might be lifted up in glory. If you disregard him and your need to persevere through trials for him, you do not realize the greatness of God's love and grace poured out through Christ."

**5 For he has not subjected to  
angels the world to come that  
we are talking about.**

**6 But someone somewhere has  
testified:  
What is man that you remember  
him,  
or the son of man that you care  
for him?**

**7 You made him lower than the  
angels  
for a short time;  
you crowned him with glory and  
honor**

**8 and subjected everything  
under his feet.**

**For in subjecting everything to  
him, he left nothing that is not  
subject to him. As it is, we do not  
yet see everything subjected to  
him.**

**9 But we do see Jesus—made lower than the angels for a short time so that by God’s grace he might taste death for everyone—crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death.**

**10 For in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was entirely appropriate that God—for whom and through whom all things exist—should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**

**11 For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,**

**12 saying:  
I will proclaim your name to my  
brothers and sisters;  
I will sing hymns to you in the  
congregation.**

**13 Again, I will trust in him. And  
again, Here I am with the  
children God gave me.**

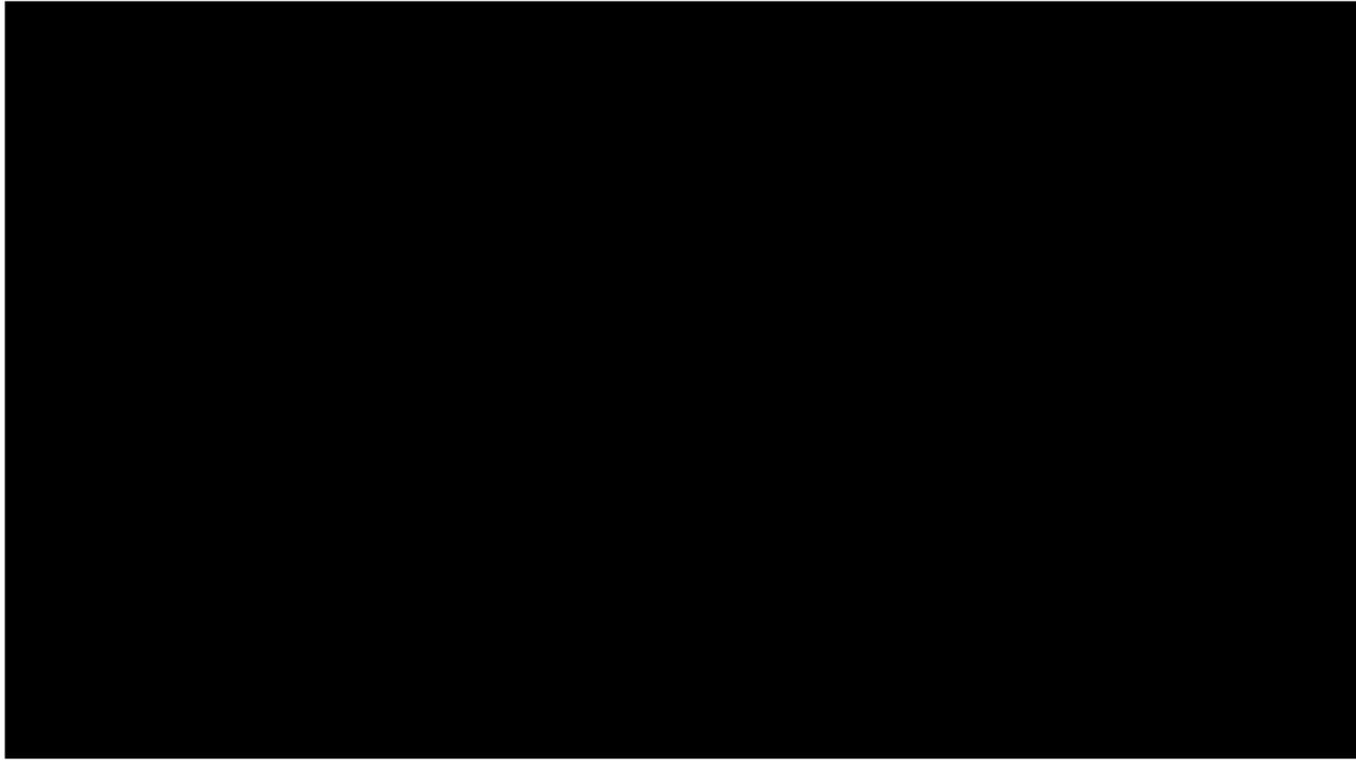
**14 Now since the children have  
flesh and blood in common, Jesus  
also shared in these, so that  
through his death he might  
destroy the one holding the power  
of death—that is, the devil—**

**15 and free those who were  
held in slavery all their lives by  
the fear of death.**

**16 For it is clear that he does not reach out to help angels, but to help Abraham's offspring.**

**17 Therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people.**

**18 For since he himself has  
suffered when he was tempted,  
he is able to help those who are  
tempted.**



Pray

# We can only see the real world by the lenses of Scripture, the gospel, and faith.

- 1) We can only see the real world by the lenses of Scripture, the gospel, and faith.

We are all interpreters, interpreting all the time. We do not know any uninterpreted facts. As soon as information reaches us by any of our senses, it passes through our interpretive lenses. Sin has distorted and depraved humanity so that we do not see the world rightly when given to our own devices. We must see by God's revealed Word revived by saving faith.

- Let's look at vv. 5 and 8 to see what question the author is driving at in the beginning of this passage (read 5&8)
- i. The Scriptures previously referenced in Chp. 1 and referenced from Ps. 8 point to the idea of everything being subjected under Jesus's feet, with the world to come being completely and fully submitted to him. But it doesn't always appear to our senses that Jesus reigns.
- ii. The questions that are driving this discussion goes along these lines: If Jesus is the Christ, and if the prophecies of the Christ's coming include him being recognized as king over all nations, then why do Christians still suffer? Or is he not really the Christ? As we noted last week, they thought they had support for their argument by means of the angels. The Jesus they knew about was human just like them. Aren't angels of greater power than humans? So is Jesus really the Christ?
- iii. Yes, he is the Christ. Yes, he is fully human as well as fully God. Yes, the Messiah's reign is supposed to bring about flourishing. And yes, he rules and reigns now. But your questions bring up deeper questions. When we do good and sound theology, it should bring up more questions than answers.
- iv. How does the Messiah's reign bring flourishing if it does not deal with sin? Didn't God call for man to rule and reign over creation, but also didn't man mess it all up with sin? How would God be just if he disregarded sin without someone suffering for it? Has God changed his purposes and plans since the beginning of time? These are questions the author is wanting them to ask and have them look to Scripture.
- v. What is the author getting at?
- b. The author of Hebrews is teaching us that our lives must be interpreted through the lens of the gospel by faith. Even our reading of the Old Testament needs to be read in light of the person of Christ Jesus and the gospel accomplished.

- We are tempted to think of our worlds as little, tiny circles orbiting around us. Even our coordinated efforts that we get passionate about are often about our preferences and not God's plans.
- c. We face temptation daily to base our interpretation of the world on our feelings and experiences.
  - i. Consider how hurt or anger drive us to justify sin
  - ii. Consider the utilitarian thought that drives us to do wickedness, as long as it is in the name of the greater good. Then we feel we can justify sin against some in order to achieve a temporary benefit for a larger group.
  - iii. If we do not come to God with our difficulties and instead try to handle them ourselves, we will be tempted to think that either Jesus does not reign now or that he is an incompetent Lord. So, we think, "We'll have to take things into our own hands because Jesus is not enough. After all, didn't he suffer at the hands of powerful people? What hope does he offer to us then?"
- d. Jesus's humanity and suffering do not disqualify him from glorious recognition as Lord over the heavens and earth but are the means by which he showed God as gracious and glorious.

**Jesus is the Second Adam who  
has fulfilled God's mission. He  
rules and reigns now.**

**One day everything will reflect  
this truth.**

2) a. We need to practice the first point to understand the second point. One of the principles of biblical interpretation is that you must seek to understand a text according to the intended meaning of the original human author. It never means less than what the original author intended. Still, the divine author ultimately behind all of Scripture may have intended more, but we must be extremely careful not to make connections that the NT apostolic authors do not lead us to make.

The author of Hebrews leads us to connect Jesus with Adam and creation, according to David's prophetic leading and according to Daniel's vision of the Son of Man, which is then declared in the Great Commission. Kevin Larson has been teaching a Sunday school on biblical theology, with a strong focus on doing biblical theology according to the story line of Scripture. If you are going to trace the story line of Scripture, you will need to know the beginning to see the threads God has woven into the tapestry of history and Scripture, which ultimately lead to Jesus.

b. First, let's start with the lead the author of Hebrews gives us

i. Ps. 8, in our passage parts vv. 4–6

4 what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet,

ii. The original author of Ps. 8 is David. It appears at first glance that he is reminiscing on Gen. 1's account of man being created in God's image and receiving a cultural mandate to have dominion over the inhabited world as God's vice-regents and to subdue, or shape it, so that the world's harmonious flourishing might appropriately reflect God's glory. The world was supposed to be subjected to humanity so that it flourished.

It all sounds well and good, right? The only problem is that David knew better than to think it all worked out that way. In many instances, man is either a harsh ruler over the creation or the creation rules over him. Yes, we have rights over the animals of the fields, but animals of the field are often frightened of Adam's descendants. Disasters happen. Mold, mildew, and algae still try to creep up to weaken and destroy our homes. People get sick and die. The creation is still good, as Ps. 8 declares, but it certainly has a chaotic bent to it as far as how we relate to it. Instead of only needing to work to shape it for further displays of glory, we work strenuously to get any produce or benefit from it.

So, when David writes about man having dominion over the creation and it being subjected to him, David was writing in light of how it was intended to be, even how we get glimpses and temporary reminders of such good design, such as when we look at the stars on a clear night or hear a baby giggle.

Some other hints make us aware that Ps. 8 was about more than just repeating Gen. 1 but anticipating a greater Adam. The Psalter is started with a focus on THE MAN, the BLESSED MAN, who does no wrong but in every way depends on God and His Word, who himself flourishes by depending on God and under whom everything flourishes. The call to obey God in every way is not beyond capability, but our wills rebel against God because of sin. So, while Psalm 1 should inspire us to want to follow God, we fall short of its ideal, we all do, except Jesus, who alone can be rightly described as that blessed man.

Psalm 1 and 2 seem to go together, as there was no editorial break between them in their original form. Psalm 2 is referenced often by the author of Hebrews as speaking to the royal status of the Son of God. The blessed man and the Son are one and the same.

iii. In the original language of Hebrew for Ps. 8, the word for little (as in little lower or for a little while) in v. 5 could refer to status, but the Greek LXX translators interpreted it with a word that more often refers to duration. Jesus's suffering in the Incarnation was temporary, but by that suffering He fulfilled what God had put before the first Adam, who failed.

iv. So the author of Hebrews uses all of this to point to the understanding that Adam could not fulfill the mandate God had given him. Adam's sin brought about God's judgment and man's depravity.

v. So, should we affirm the truthfulness of Ps. 8, even though we know that Adam sinned and fell short, ruining the creation instead of leading it in flourishing? Yes, it is Scripture, God has spoken it, and He has fulfilled it by means of a later man, a second Adam. Jesus fulfilled the mandate to rule and reign over all of creation and to fill it with worshipers who shape it for God's glory.

vi. Again, Paul is helpful in this regard. In both Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15, Adam and Jesus are compared and contrasted as two potential heads to humanity. One plunged the world into sin. The other took on the flood of God's wrath in order to save those who look to him.

vii. And it seems the author of Hebrews connects Ps. 8's reference to son of man with echoes of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7, the Son of Man is not mere man but the God-Man who is able to represent people and able to come into the very presence of God. He defeats the enemies of God's people, establishing his kingdom, and shares authority within the kingdom with his people.

So, here is context for Jesus's declaration after his resurrection: All authority in heaven and earth have been given to me. Jesus told his disciples and tells us, "I rule and reign now." Therefore, I will lead you in filling the world with true worshippers.

As the path he walked required suffering before glory, why should we expect any different until he returns? But he has given His Holy Spirit and the promises of a kingdom now inaugurated and brought us into a family, the family of God represented. The condescension of Christ is our basis for hope and our pattern to follow.

viii. He pays the price, wins the victory, and we get the benefits. He who was high and lifted up, came low to be with us, suffer and die for our sins, and rise again in order to raise us up with him. And so we are now rich in grace and glory, should be willing to be made low in identifying with Him. And one day we will see Christ exalted and everything properly submitting to Him.

Until then, we need to keep coming back to Scripture with eyes of faith and keep coming to our Saving God in dependent prayer in order to remember our benefits of knowing Jesus as Lord.

## **We reap the benefits of Christ being made low for us.**

3) We reap the benefits of Christ being made low for us.

You know what is wrong with prosperity gospel preachers? They are like J G Wentworth. They make temporary, lesser, and immediate treasures sound desirable, but you have to give up your inheritance, which is greater and lasting. We just can't have the fullness of our inheritance now. But it is better to have Jesus with little now than to have eternity without him. It helps to remember and count our blessings, and the author of Hebrews reminds us of great blessings we have in Christ so we walk by faith and not by looking at our circumstances.

a. We are adopted into the family of God as children.

We are loved and chosen by grace. We are not tools but family known by name, and even given a new name.

b. We are repurposed for God's glory.

Romans 9 mentions two kinds of vessels, those for wrath and those for glory. We are changed from vessels destined for wrath that reflect wrath into vessels destined for glory who reflect God's glory.

c. Jesus set the path for us to follow.

We don't have to reinvent the godly life. We see it displayed through the life of Jesus. As we follow closely after Him, we don't have to have it all figured out. We can just follow Him like little children by faith. We have a pace setter for life whom we can emulate.

e. We are no longer slaves to the fear of death; we get a kingdom.

Death is not an end of life for us; it is a door that God opens in His time for us to walk into His presence unhindered. For those who have rebelled, death should be something they fear, but for the Christian, death has lost its sting.

f. We get a mediator who can relate to our weakness and struggles.

People often feel intimidated by others with either greater capabilities, titles, or experiences. Even if they are for us, we may not feel like we can relate to them. But Jesus became one of us. Whatever weakness and battle we are exposed to, he was exposed to.

g. We get forgiveness and reconciliation.

Some of us have a tendency to downplay broken relationships. We act like we are okay with such brokenness, even as it further shatters us. But Jesus never had silence between He and the Father until He endured the Father's wrath for our sin in order to restore us to God. By him, we get forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored wholeness.

h. He gives the power and confidence to say no to temptation.

We will deal with this detail more later, but for now, we can point out Jesus never sinned, had every opportunity to do so, but never sinned. Not only does his sinless life and sacrifice secure our forgiveness, his life gives us the ability and confidence to say no to sin and yes to God.

The author references verses from Ps. 22 and Isaiah 8. By these references, he connects the Jesus's suffering and our suffering.

Both passages envision suffering and someone's response to it. In Ps. 22, the messianic figure suffers, even though he did no wrong, and by the end of his suffering, he is worshipping God in the presence of his brothers and sisters and is happy to call them as such. In Isaiah 8, those who claim to be the people of God are tested to see if they really know God or not. Those who cling to hope in him throughout their difficulties ultimately will rejoice in God, for they truly belong to Him. Those who do not cling to the Word of the Lord, have no light in them and will ultimately curse and reject God and His Word.

If you get the Son, you get everything else. If you reject the Son, you get nothing but God's wrath one day. It may look opposite for now, but consider Jesus. He who was on high condescended to rescue us. He suffered for a little while in order to achieve your salvation and has laid the foundation for his eternal kingdom, in which there is no more suffering or struggle. Will you choose temporary treasures at the cost of faith in Jesus? Or will you persevere in following Christ, even if it costs you all the world's fleeting pleasures?

Choose to cling to God's revealed Word and you will not regret persevering through the temporary suffering Jesus leads you through on the way home to glory.

