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'YOU HAVE MADE HIM A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS'

This statement is found in Psalm 8:5, and it is quoted in the New Testament in Hebrews 2:7. Exactly what does this statement mean? And does the statement in Psalm 8:5 have the same meaning as the statement in Hebrews 2:7? The answers to these questions may surprise you.

In this article we'll first examine the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5. When we have completed our examination of that verse, then we'll also examine Hebrews 2:7. But before we look at the Hebrew text of this verse, let's first of all notice an ambiguity in the English text of the statement "You have made him a little lower than the angels".

TWO POSSIBLE MEANINGS OF THIS STATEMENT

There are two possible ways to read the English statement "You have made him a little lower". They depend on how we view the word "lower" in this expression. However, we need to recognize that only one of these two ways is going to be compatible with the actual Hebrew text.

OPTION #1:

We could view "lower" as an independent adjective, i.e. the comparative form of "low". There would have to be a specific word for "lower" or for "a little lower" in the Hebrew text to justify this option. And in that case the expression "You have made him" takes on the meaning of "You CREATED him", and the focus of this verse is then on the actual creation process of man. The meaning of the first part of this verse then is: You CREATED man a little lower than the angels.

OPTION #2:

We could view "lower" as a part of the verb "to make lower", meaning "to decrease". In this case there is no adjective meaning "lower" in either the Hebrew text or in the English translation to qualify the expression "You have made him", because the complete expression is "You have made him lower". In this case the meaning of "made" in the expression "You have made" is NOT "created"; in this context the meaning of "made" is something like "APPOINTED" or "ESTABLISHED" or "DECREED". The focus of this expression is then NOT on the creation process of man, but on THE STATUS which God decreed (or appointed or established) for man, that status being "a little lower than the status of the angels".

Do you see the distinction between these two ways of reading this English text? The first one focuses on the creation process of man. The way we would understand this is to say: well, man was created physical and angels were created as spirit beings; and therefore man is "lower" than the angels. Isn't that self-evident?

The second way of reading this English text focuses on a specific status that God decreed for man. In this case the creation of man is accepted as a given, and the status assigned to this part of God's creation (i.e. to mankind) is the real focus of this statement. The way we would understand this is to say: within the context of His whole creation God decreed one specific status for immortal angels, and a slightly lower status for mortal man.

While there are these two possibilities for reading the English text, only one of them is actually supported

by the Hebrew text. And the way to establish which of these two meanings (they certainly overlap, but they have a different focus) is intended in Psalm 8:5 is quite easy. IF the first option is the intended meaning, THEN the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5 should contain an adjective that means "lower" or "a little lower", and it should ALSO contain a verb that includes "to create" within its meaning.

But IF the second option is the intended meaning, THEN the Hebrew text must NOT contain an adjective for "lower" or "a little lower". And furthermore, the Hebrew text should not contain a verb that means "to create" or "to make".

So a look at the Hebrew text should sort out this particular issue for us.

THE HEBREW TEXT FOR PSALM 8:5

Here is the transliterated Hebrew text for this verse:

> "Vatechasreyhu me'at meyElohim vekabod vehadar teatreyhu."

The Hebrew prefix "va" or "ve" (used three times in the above text) is the conjunction for "and". The Hebrew suffix "hu" (used twice in the above text) represents the pronoun "him". The Hebrew prefix "mey" above represents the "mem prefix" which means "from" or "because of" or "than". The Hebrew prefix "te" (used twice in the above text) is a piel imperfect prefix for a verb.

Omitting the prefixes and the suffixes, the six above Hebrew words in their dictionary forms are as follows:

- chacer = a verb which means: to lack, to decrease, to make low;

- me'at = a noun which is here used as an adverb, meaning: little, few, small;

- Elohim = this word means: GOD;

- kabod = a noun that means: glory, honor, splendor;

- hadar = a noun that means: the glory of a king;

- atar= a verb that means: to crown.

[COMMENT: Gesenius in his Hebrew-Chaldee Dictionary presents Psalm 8:5 (which is Psalm 8:6 in the JPS) as an example of me'at being used as an adverb.]

We can immediately see that the Hebrew text does NOT contain a word for "angels", that instead it actually contains the word for "God".

A literal translation of the complete Hebrew text thus reads:

> "And him You made lower a little from (or than) God and with honor and the glory of a king You have crowned him."

Changing the word order to be more appropriate in English we get:

> "And You have made him a little lower than God, and You have crowned him with the glory of a king and with honor."

This is basically the same as the KJV translation, except that it now correctly reads "God" instead of "the angels".

So note!

Even before we deal with the question regarding how we are to read the statement "You have made him a little lower", we need to recognize that in the KJV we also have a mistranslation in this verse (i.e. "the angels" should correctly read "God").

Later we will examine Hebrews 2:7, where Paul did use the Greek word for "angels". But at this point we need to clearly establish what is meant here in Psalm 8:5 before we even consider Hebrews 2:7, because Psalm 8 came first, and the Book of Hebrews only came later! It is a mistake to attempt to understand Psalm 8:5 in terms of Hebrews 2:7, which is what the KJV has done. Rather, after establishing the correct meaning of Psalm 8:5, we can then examine Hebrews 2:7 in its own context.

Thus our questions above have been changed as follows.

Now the ambiguity of the statement "You have made him a little lower THAN GOD" is: Does this statement mean "You have CREATED man a little lower than God"? Or does this statement mean "You have APPOINTED for man A STATUS that is a little lower than God's status"? The questions are the same, but the comparison is now to God rather than to angels.

While the correct comparison in Psalm 8:5 is with God and not with angels, the way to sort out the ambiguity is the same as before. So let's examine the rest of the Hebrew text. Here is what we have.

1) There is no Hebrew word in the text that means "lower"! Rather, there is only a verb that means "to make low" or "to decrease".

2) There is no verb in the Hebrew text that means "to make" or "to create". Specifically, the Hebrew verb "chacer" means "to lack" or "to decrease" or "to make low". This verb does NOT refer to any creation process! Rather, this verb refers to appointing or decreeing a status or a position that is low. There is no focus on "creating" anything. The verb "make" in the expression "to make low" is nothing more than an auxiliary verb; in this context "make" has no independent meaning of its own.

3) The Hebrew word "me'at" qualifies THE VERB "chacer", thereby modifying the meaning of "chacer" from "to make low" to now mean "to make a little low", or, since this is part of a comparative statement, "to make a little lower". Note that on its own the word "me'at" has nothing whatsoever to do with "low" or "lower". So without the verb "chacer" already meaning "to make low" we would not get the meaning of "to make lower" from this word "me'at" alone.

These points mean that when David wrote Psalm 8:5 he was NOT trying to say that God had "CREATED" man a little lower than God. Rather, David was making the point that God had "DECREED" or "APPOINTED" for man A STATUS that is a little lower than God's status.

The Hebrew text of this verse excludes "Option #1" as a possible meaning of the expression "You have made him a little lower than God", and it agrees with "Option #2" laid out above.

Thus the question is: exactly what did David mean when he said: "You have appointed for man A STATUS that is A LITTLE LOWER THAN GOD"? Surely we can all recognize that at present we are all VASTLY "lower than God"! So what was David really saying?

WHAT ABOUT "MADE FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER"?

In explaining Hebrews 2:7 Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to say that here "a little lower" really means "FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER".

The point regarding this statement is as follows:

What Mr. Armstrong said is correct when applied to Hebrews 2:7, as we will later see. But even though Hebrews 2:7 is a quotation from Psalm 8:5, in actual fact Psalm 8:5 expresses a different thought from what Hebrews 2:7 expresses. In Psalm 8:5 David was saying something completely different from what Paul said in Hebrews 2:7. Paul APPLIED David's statement from Psalm 8:5 to different circumstances than the ones David was speaking about in that psalm.

So Mr. Armstrong's statement regarding "for a little while" is correct for Hebrews 2:7, as we'll see; but it is NOT correct when applied to Psalm 8:5. And since Mr. Armstrong invariably referred to Hebrews 2:7 when speaking about this subject, because he wanted to continue the quotation to verse 9 or 10, his explanation was fine. But had he applied this same explanation to Psalm 8:5, then it would have been incorrect.

The point is that, in contrast to the Greek text of Hebrews 2:7, here in the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5 NONE of the Hebrew words mean or state or imply the idea of "for a little while"! The concept of "for a little while" is not at all present in the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5. Therefore this explanation is simply not an option for Psalm 8:5.

Now when we replace the incorrect words "the angels" with the correct word "God", then it is immediately apparent that "for a little while" is totally inappropriate. It would always be wrong to say that God made man "FOR A LITTLE WHILE lower than God", because man will ALWAYS be "lower" than God the Father and Jesus Christ! The words "for a little while" are patently wrong when "Elohim" in this verse is correctly translated as "God" rather than as "the angels".

Mr. Armstrong's explanation does not apply to Psalm 8:5; his explanation needs to be restricted to Hebrews 2:7.

Thus neither the whole Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5 nor a correct translation of the word "Elohim" in this verse allows for translating this verse to read "for a little while lower".

So let's focus on Psalm 8:5 for the time being.

THE WORD "Elohim" IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Because of Hebrews 2:7 there are those people who will argue that here in Psalm 8:5 the word "Elohim" really MUST mean "angels". But that is not true! Here are the facts so you can reach your own judgment on this matter.

1) The word "Elohim" is used in 325 different verses in the Book of Psalms. In 324 of those verses it is ALWAYS translated either as "God" (in reference to the true God) or as "gods" (in reference to both false gods and also to the potential destiny of mankind).

2) There is no indication anywhere in the Old Testament that "Elohim" would EVER be an appropriate designation for angels. It is WRONG to refer to angels as "Elohim"!

3) It is only because they neither understood what this verse REALLY says, nor did they like what it seemed to say, that the Jews chose to translate the word "Elohim" in this particular verse, and here only, as "the angels". That was clearly wrong.

4) The Greek LXX, the Latin Vulgate, Wycliffe, the Matthews' Bible, the Bishops Bible, the KJV and many subsequent translations followed this Jewish custom of translating "Elohim" in Psalm 8:5 as "angels".

5) The Hebrew word for "angel" is "malak". This word is used in 8 different verses in the Book of Psalms (Psalm 34:7; Psalm 35:5; Psalm 35:6; Psalm 78:49; Psalm 91:11; Psalm 103:20; Psalm 104:4; Psalm 148:2), and in these 8 verses it is always translated as "angel/s". The meaning of this word is very well known, that meaning being "messenger". But God is not a messenger; God is the One who ORIGINATES a message that OTHERS then convey to human beings.

6) All of the writers of the psalms knew the clear distinction between "Elohim" and "malak". Hebrews 1:14 identifies angels as "ministering spirits", which statement effectively excludes angels from being "Elohim". "Elohim" does not refer to "ministering spirits".

7) Now consider David, the man who wrote this verse, and who in fact wrote most of those 325 verses in Psalms that contain the word "Elohim". Did HE know what "Elohim" means? He surely did. Did David use the word "Elohim" to identify the true God? Certainly! Did David use the word "malak" when he wanted to refer to angels? Certainly. See the 8 references above. Would it EVER have occurred to David to use the word "Elohim" when he really wanted to refer to "malak" (i.e. to angels)? CERTAINLY NOT! That would be like saying that YOU would consider using the word "God" when you really mean "an angel". Would you dare to write about an angel as "God"? I hope not! So WHY would David possibly not have used the word "malak" when he wanted to speak about angels? This whole idea of "Elohim" possibly meaning "angels" is preposterous.

When we try to see this from the perspective of David, the man who wrote this Psalm, then there is simply no way that David would have dared to use the word "Elohim" when he wanted to refer to angels. His respect for God would not have allowed him to make such an association. So when David wrote "Elohim" he really meant "God"! There is no other verse anywhere in the Old Testament that would even remotely justify using "Elohim" in reference to angels.

8) There are MANY translations that have recognized this mistake, that in this verse David was drawing a comparison between man and God, and not a comparison between man and angels. The following translations have all rendered this verse as "LITTLE LESS THAN GOD" or as "LITTLE LOWER THAN GOD" or as "LACK A LITTLE FROM GOD":

- 1560 Geneva Bible

- Calvin Bible

- ASV

- RV

- ERV

- NAS

- RSV

- NRSV

- JAY GREEN'S LITERAL TRANSLATION

- WEB

- MKJV

YOUNG'S LITERAL TRANSLATION reads "lack a little of Godhead". MOFFATT's TRANSLATION reads "little less than divine". I have also found Afrikaans translations (1953) and German translations (Luther) and Dutch translations (Leidse Vertaling) that translate "Elohim" in this verse as referring to God and not to angels.

The point is that it is really well-known that the word "Elohim" does NOT mean "angels", that it really means "God". And in the KJV we are dealing with a mistranslation.

To make this quite clear:

> IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT HEBREWS 2 MAY SAY, IT IS CLEAR THAT IN PSALM 8:5 DAVID USED THE WORD "ELOHIM" TO MEAN "GOD" AND NOT "ANGELS"!

So now let's examine what David was really saying in this verse.

THE MEANING OF PSALM 8:5

Let's pick up the context of this psalm. In verse 3 David speaks about the night sky, looking at the moon and at all the stars that were visible.

Looking at the vastness of God's creation prompted David to ask: just how does mankind fit into this picture? WHY did God create us human beings? WHAT are His purposes for us? WHY does God even interact with man ("that You visit him", verse 4)? The expression "that You visit him" clearly looks beyond the creation of man; it really takes for granted man's creation as a past event.

> We might summarize David's questions as asking "WHAT IS THE HUMAN POTENTIAL?", rather than asking "HOW was man created?".

In verses 5-6 David then answers this question. These two verses go together! Note! Verse 5 refers to the exact same time as does verse 6! It is a mistake to think that verse 5 refers to man's creation and that verse 6 then addresses man's future destiny!

The key to a correct understanding of verse 5 is to recognize that BOTH VERSES speak about man's destiny! DON'T CONFUSE PSALM 8 WITH HEBREWS 2!

When Paul quoted these verses in Hebrews 2, Paul approached this subject from A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE than did David in writing Psalm 8. Paul's perspective in Hebrews 2 includes THE PRESENT TIME! That is why Paul states:

> "BUT NOW we see NOT YET all things put under him." (Hebrews 2:8)

That is a very legitimate perspective. But that is NOT the perspective from which David wrote Psalm 8. David said nothing at all about "but now ... not yet"! David wrote this psalm from the perspective of focusing on man's destiny TO THE EXCLUSION OF THE HERE AND NOW! The here and now was simply not David's concern in the answer to the questions he had posed.

Read Psalm 8 carefully!

Look, David's questions in verse 4 have nothing to do with the past or with the present. Thus the answers David provides in verses 5-6 likewise have nothing to do with the past (i.e. this is not a statement about HOW God created mankind) or with the present (i.e. this is also not a statement about man's PRESENT status in relation to either God or to angels).

The questions David asked are focused exclusively on the future, on man's destiny. And so the answers in verses 5-6 are likewise focused exclusively on the future. Don't be confused by Paul's application of

these verses in Hebrews to the present time.

The key to a correct understanding of Psalm 8:5 is to recognize that BOTH verses 5 and 6 focus EXCLUSIVELY ON THE FUTURE! The past does not in any way enter the picture. In verse 4 David had accepted man's creation as a fait accompli. David is not concerned with asking: what happened back then? David's question is: what lies ahead for man?

So here is the point to understand:

VERSE 5 STATES MAN'S FUTURE STATUS IN RELATION TO GOD!

Here is what verses 5-6 mean in plain language:

> "You have decreed man's future status to be A LITTLE LOWER than the status of God the Father and of Jesus Christ. But while that future status will be a little lower than God the Father and Jesus Christ, it will NEVERTHELESS include the glory and splendor that rightfully belongs to kings, because this status You have reserved for man includes having dominion over all things. And those in the first resurrection will have the status of kings and priests (Rev. 5:10)."

That is what David is speaking about in Psalm 8:5-6. Forget about man's present circumstances because man's present circumstances are VASTLY LOWER than "Elohim"! For that matter, man's present circumstances are also vastly lower than the angels. We need to recognize that in a comparison between the PRESENT status of man and God or angels, there is a VAST difference between man and angels, let alone between man and God. It is not true that man is currently only "a little lower" than the angels; currently we are vastly lower than the angels. Compared to any spirit beings (i.e. compared to God or to angels) we human beings currently have enormous limitations.

Consider the following point.

When David said "what is man that You are mindful of him", David was ALREADY acknowledging that man in his present state is really quite insignificant. The way David worded this question tells us this perspective. So starting out with man's insignificant status within the present picture means that the statement "You made him a little lower than Elohim" CANNOT POSSIBLY BE A REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT STATE!

Can you understand this?

Any living being that is only "a little lower than Elohim" cannot possibly be referred to as "insignificant". The status of only "A LITTLE LOWER than Elohim" is an enormously exalted status, and it is incompatible with the perspective from which the questions in verse 4 are asked, because verse 4 implies current insignificance for man in the greater picture of things.

In view of the perspective of the questions in verse 4, the only possibility for the statement in verse 5 (i.e. "You made him a little lower than Elohim") is that this statement is focused exclusively on the potential future.

David was creating a contrast. In verse 4 David took for granted that man's PRESENT status is insignificant. In verse 5 David contrasted this with man's potential FUTURE status of being ONLY "a little lower than Elohim", and being crowned with glory and honor, and being given dominion.

David understood that God created man with the intention that EVENTUALLY man would be only "a little lower than Elohim". That has been God's intention all along.

Consider how the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 explained the three steps by which God builds the Family of God. There Paul wrote:

> "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But **every man in his own order**: Christ the firstfruits; **afterward** they that are Christ's at his coming. **Then** *cometh* the end (the end ones), when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." (1Corinthians 15:22-24)

In verse 27 Paul continued to explain that God the Father Himself will always remain above Jesus Christ in His position of authority. The three steps by which God's Family is going to be built are separated by periods of time between them. These periods between the three steps ensure that those in Step #2 will be "a little lower" than the One who comprises Step #1; and those in Step #3 will likewise be "a little lower" than those who are in Step #2. Put another way, in addition to God the Father Himself, there will be three levels within the Family of God, in agreement with the three steps Paul listed in the verses above.

Step #1 is: Jesus Christ, the first of the firstfruits.

Step #2 is: about 2000 years later all those in the first resurrection.

Step #3 is: about an additional 1100 years later all those from the millennium together with those from the second resurrection.

It is God the Father who is building HIS Family. So God the Father is unquestionably in supreme control, and on a level above everyone else. Jesus Christ freely acknowledged that "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

Now Jesus Christ is on the SAME LEVEL as God the Father, as far as THE TYPE OF BEING is concerned (i.e. also "Elohim"). But while Jesus Christ has the same status as the Father in the above sense, Jesus Christ has A LOWER STATUS when it comes to AUTHORITY AND POWER within the structure of the Family God the Father is building. Christ is the firstborn Son of God the Father. Within a family structure a son always has a lower status than the father of that family. And Jesus Christ's status is a little lower than the status of God the Father, even though both Beings are "God".

Not all "Gods" will be equal in every sense!

Now those in the first resurrection (i.e. Step #2) will be ON THE SAME LEVEL as Jesus Christ, as far as THE TYPE OF BEING is concerned (i.e. also "Elohim"). But while we in the first resurrection will have the same status as Jesus Christ in the above sense (i.e. we will ALSO be Sons of God even as Jesus Christ is the Son of God), we will have A LOWER STATUS than Jesus Christ when it comes to AUTHORITY AND POWER within the structure of the Family of God. We will NEVER be Jesus Christ's equals in every respect! The 2000 year gap between Step #1 and Step #2 ensures that Jesus Christ will ALWAYS have the highest possible position amongst all the sons and daughters of God.

Likewise, those from the millennium and from the 100-year period (i.e. Step #3) will be ON THE SAME LEVEL as those in the first resurrection (i.e. Step #2), as far as THE TYPE OF BEING is concerned (i.e. also "Elohim"). But while they will have the same status in the above sense as those in the first resurrection, those from the millennium and from the 100-year period will have A LOWER STATUS than those in the first resurrection when it comes to AUTHORITY AND POWER within the structure of God's Family. That is why the first resurrection is called "a better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35). The approximately 1100 year gap between Step #2 and Step #3 ensures that those in the first resurrection will always be "a little higher" than those who become a part of the Family at the later date.

The Family God the Father is building is NOT A DEMOCRACY! Not all sons and daughters will have the same amount of power and authority within the Family. The children of God will NOT all have equal votes! There will be different levels of authority and power within the Family.

IN ONE SENSE God the Father and Jesus Christ and those in the first resurrection and those from the millennium and from the 100-year period will ALL BE ON THE SAME LEVEL! And that level is that ALL the above-listed will be "God"; all are (i.e. God the Father and Jesus Christ) or will become (i.e. all the others) "Elohim".

But when it comes to power and authority within that Family, then there will ALWAYS be FOUR very distinct levels: first and highest level = God the Father; second level = Jesus Christ; third level = all those in the first resurrection; fourth level = "the end ones" of 1 Corinthians 15:24. Within these four levels no one on one specific level will ever be equal in power and authority to someone else who is on a higher level. This is guaranteed by the way God the Father is building His Family.

Now let's get back to Psalm 8:5.

At the time David wrote this psalm there were ONLY TWO Elohim in existence: God the Father and Jesus Christ (i.e. level one and level two). In speaking about man's potential David simply lumped these two levels together, though Psalm 110:1 shows that David also understood that God the Father is on a higher level in power and authority than Jesus Christ. In speaking about man's future potential there really was no need for David to accentuate any differences between God the Father and Jesus Christ.

So note the following:

In Psalm 8:5 David pointed out that man's potential is to eventually be only A LITTLE LOWER than the two Elohim that already existed at that point in time, God the Father and Jesus Christ. David understood that it is man's destiny to eventually become God, as is implied in the next verse (verse 6). And that is why both, those in the first resurrection and also those from the millennium and from the second resurrection, will all be only "a little lower" than God the Father and Jesus Christ. All will be THE SAME as far as the type of being is concerned, but A LITTLE LOWER when it comes to power and authority.

That is what David was speaking about in Psalm 8:5, man's potential status within God's Family.

Now before we examine Hebrews 2 let's look at the question of "sharing thrones".

WHAT ABOUT "SHARED THRONES"?

Consider Revelation 3:21.

> "To him that overcometh will I grant TO SIT WITH ME IN MY THRONE, even as I also overcame, and AM SET DOWN WITH MY FATHER IN HIS THRONE."

Here Jesus Christ is saying two distinct things:

1) Jesus Christ invites all those who will be in the first resurrection to sit with Him on His throne.

2) God the Father invited Jesus Christ to sit with Him on His, the Father's throne.

Does this make everyone in the Family of God equal in power? What do these two statements actually mean?

First of all, let's realize that this is speaking in symbolical terms. It is not a case of God the Father and

Jesus Christ both simultaneously trying to sit on a throne that was made for one person to sit on. Likewise, this is certainly not speaking about 144,000 individuals from the first resurrection all simultaneously trying to sit on the one throne that was made for Jesus Christ. This statement has a symbolical meaning, which we'll look at in a moment.

But notice that while Christ invites those in the first resurrection to sit with Him on HIS throne, those in the first resurrection are NOT invited to sit on the Father's throne! It is ONLY JESUS CHRIST who is invited to sit with the Father on the Father's throne.

Next, this invitation to sit on the throne with someone on one level higher is presented as a reward for overcoming! That is significant! It means that "overcoming" in some way qualifies individuals to make a positive contribution on a higher level.

In and by itself there is nothing special about "sitting" somewhere, be that on a throne or be that anywhere else. It is what that "sitting on a throne" represents that is important. And what that sitting on a throne represents is RULING and JUDGING.

So when God the Father invited Jesus Christ to sit with the Father on the Father's throne, it means that God the Father has invited Jesus Christ TO PROVIDE MAJOR INPUT for the decisions God the Father will make, and for the way God the Father will rule. It means that God the Father may DELEGATE certain major decisions to Jesus Christ, and then fully endorse those decisions. But God the Father nevertheless will ALWAYS REMAIN IN CHARGE! And Jesus Christ will always acknowledge the Father's supremacy. There is no attempt on the part of Jesus Christ to claim equal authority to the Father.

Now note! It is Jesus Christ's "overcoming" that gives God the Father that absolute confidence that Jesus Christ will always do everything the way He, Jesus Christ, is convinced the Father would like to see it done. It is the overcoming that gives the Father the assurance that Jesus Christ's attitude in John 6:38 is something that is permanently ingrained in the person of Jesus Christ. That attitude is:

> "For I came down from heaven, not TO DO mine own will, but THE WILL OF HIM THAT SENT ME." (John 6:38)

So God the Father and Jesus Christ aren't literally going to sit on the same seat. The throne of God the Father will always remain the throne of God the Father. But because Jesus Christ overcame, therefore the Father has raised Jesus Christ to the status of "co-ruler", even while God the Father continues to remain supreme.

Likewise, when Jesus Christ invites those in the first resurrection to sit with Him on His throne, it means that Jesus Christ is inviting MAJOR INPUT for all the decisions Jesus Christ will have to make, and for the way Jesus Christ will rule. It means that Jesus Christ may also delegate certain major decisions to individuals in the first resurrection, and then fully endorse the decisions those individuals end up making. But Jesus Christ will nevertheless remain in a position of higher authority than anyone and everyone who is in the first resurrection. And those in the first resurrection will always acknowledge that higher status for Jesus Christ within the God Family. It is the working relationship of Jesus Christ being the Husband, and those in the first resurrection being the Wife, those who will comprise "a help meet for Him" (see Genesis 2:18), that is represented by Jesus Christ's invitation to this group to sit with Him on His throne.

And just like above, it is the overcoming that gives Jesus Christ that absolute confidence that everyone in the first resurrection will always, without fail, do everything the way they are convinced God the Father and Jesus Christ would like to see things done. They all have the same attitude that Jesus Christ expressed in John 6:38 above. The expression "these are they which follow the Lamb WHITHERSOEVER HE GOES" (Revelation 14:4) expresses the identical sentiment as John 6:38 ("to do

the will of Him that sent Me").

Don't mistake the gracious extension of favor by the One on a higher level to those on the next level down as those on the lower level somehow "becoming equal" to those on the higher level. That is simply not the case, and that will never be the case.

No matter how much God the Father may allow Jesus Christ "to also sit on the Father's throne", God the Father will ALWAYS remain in supreme authority over all, including over Jesus Christ. But there will never ever be an occasion when God the Father will have to "pull rank" in order to get Jesus Christ's cooperation. It is absolutely certain that Jesus Christ will always, without fail, willingly and joyfully submit to the Father's will. It is that absolute joyful submission to the Father's will, which submission was proved by Jesus Christ's overcoming, that enables the Father to invite Jesus Christ to co-rule with the Father.

Likewise, no matter how much Jesus Christ may allow all those in the first resurrection "to also sit on Christ's throne", Jesus Christ will ALWAYS remain in a position of power and authority that will be higher than for anyone in the first resurrection. When you correctly understand this, you should be able to see how foolish it is for anyone today to refer to Jesus Christ as "OUR elder Brother", because that statement diminishes THE AUTHORITY Jesus Christ will ALWAYS have over all those in the first resurrection! Beware of foolish familiarity! Consider that neither James nor Jude, both of whom were half-brothers to Jesus Christ, dared to refer to Jesus Christ as "our elder Brother"; they referred to themselves as "the slaves of Jesus Christ". That is the correct perspective.

All those in the first resurrection will always willingly and joyfully submit to Jesus Christ's authority over them, and there will never be an occasion when Jesus Christ will have to "pull rank" on anyone in the first resurrection. And it is our overcoming in this present age that enables Jesus Christ to invite all those in the first resurrection to co-rule with Him in all the responsibilities God the Father will delegate to Jesus Christ.

God the Father is building a Family that is going to be PERFECT IN EVERY WAY! There will never be a need by anyone "to pull rank" on someone else in the Family. The cooperation and expected submission will be willing and joyful and spontaneous. Solomon wrote: "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which having NO GUIDE, OVERSEER OR RULER, provides her meat in the summer ..." (Proverbs 6:6-8). God created ants, and God created the way ants spontaneously cooperate towards a common goal, with a total disregard for individual personal well-being.

Unlike with ants, within the Family of God there will in fact be those in positions of authority (from God the Father on down), but the cooperation and the willing selfless service by those on a lower level of authority will be just as spontaneous as it is amongst the ants. That is one of the lessons we are supposed to learn from the ants, to cooperate willingly and selflessly and joyfully for the common good of the whole Family.

So don't read "democracy" into Revelation 3:21. God is building into His Family different levels of power and authority, which every member of the Family will joyfully accept.

Now we can look at Hebrews 2:7.

HEBREWS 2:7

This verse reads:

> "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: (Hebrews 2:7)

While in English this text looks pretty well identical to the text of Psalm 8:5, there are in fact TWO differences when the GREEK text of Hebrews 2:7 is compared to the HEBREW text of Psalm 8:5.

First of all, where the Hebrew text very clearly reads "GOD" (i.e. "Elohim"), the Greek text equally clearly reads "ANGELS" (i.e. Greek "aggelos").

Secondly, while there is no way to get the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5 to read "for a little while lower", there is not only a possibility to read the Greek text as "FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER"; this reading is in fact the intended meaning in this Greek text as we have it. Mr. Armstrong had it right as far as Hebrews 2:7 is concerned.

The Greek adjective "brachus", translated as "little" in this verse, is used 7 times in the New Testament. Here are these 7 occurrences: Luke 22:58; John 6:7; Acts 5:34; 27:28; Hebrews 2:7; 2:9; 13:22. And this word can mean "for a little while"!

To be clear:

In Psalm 8:5 the Hebrew noun "me'at" is used as an adverb, and it means "little". But "me'at" does NOT include within its meaning the possibility of "for a little while". Therefore "for a little while" is not an option for translating Psalm 8:5. However, the Greek adjective "brachus" readily includes the option of "for a little while" within its range of possible meanings. So while the Greek word "brachus" and the Hebrew word "me'at" agree in some of their meanings, the Greek word "brachus" also has AN ADDED MEANING that is not included in the Hebrew word "me'at".

So why do we have these differences?

The Jews did not understand that it is God's plan to create a Family of God, in which human beings will eventually become sons and daughters of God. To religious Jews the statement "You made man a LITTLE lower than GOD" sounded like blasphemy; they didn't even dare to correctly PRONOUNCE the Hebrew word "YHVH". So to avoid any possible blasphemy the Jews INTERPRETED the word "Elohim" in Psalm 8:5 to read "the angels", somewhat like saying the word "Adonai" whenever the Hebrew text reads "YHVH". This interpretation as "angels" was wrong, but it was well-established. This is seen from the Greek LXX text of the Old Testament.

The Greek LXX text of Psalm 8:5, translated into English, basically reads:

"You made him A LITTLE LESS THAN ANGELS, You have crowned him with glory and honor."

This LXX text reflects how Jewish religious leaders, and thus Jewish society in general, viewed this verse.

Now Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews to THE JEWS IN THE CHURCH. By the 60's A.D. it was the Jews who had come into the Church that were in danger of leaving their first love (cf. Revelation 2:4); they apparently felt that Jesus Christ had let them down because He had not yet returned to set up His kingdom (something they had expected to happen in their lifetime), when they had been willing to work so hard and to make such enormous sacrifices. Their dissatisfaction was directed at Jesus Christ Himself.

In the mid to late 60's Paul recognized this trend and therefore wrote Hebrews to exhort these Jews to not leave Jesus Christ, their first love, the One whose life and ministry was still a part of living memory (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6). The whole Book of Hebrews can be summarized by the statement: DON'T LEAVE JESUS CHRIST, YOUR FIRST LOVE!

It is not surprising therefore that, outside of the gospels, Hebrews tells us far more about Jesus Christ than any other book in the New Testament. The whole Book of Hebrews is about the person of Jesus Christ, and His position within God's plan.

As far as the whole New Testament is concerned: the historical evidence is that at least 25 of the 27 books were originally written in Greek, and that is the Greek text we have. Historical evidence suggests the possibility that PERHAPS two books were originally written in the HEBREW language. Those two books are Matthew's Gospel and Hebrews! If that was the case, then in all likelihood Matthew himself later translated his own gospel into Greek, the text we have today.

As far as Hebrews is concerned, IF Paul originally wrote this book in Hebrew, THEN he would most likely have quoted the correct text of Psalm 8:5, and the above-mentioned two differences would disappear. But IF Paul originally wrote this book in Hebrew, THEN it also raises the question as to WHO translated it into Greek?

It is likely that Paul had eye problems and it is known that he used scribes to do much of his writing for him, somewhat like Jeremiah dictating his book to Baruch (see Jeremiah 36:4). It is also known that Luke spent a lot of time with Paul. What is not known is whether Luke understood Aramaic and / or Hebrew. IF Luke, a non-Jew, understood Hebrew, it is unlikely that he would have had a high degree of proficiency in Hebrew. And for a student it is certainly far easier to read an existing Hebrew text than it is to compose a Hebrew text oneself. In other words, while it might still have been extremely difficult for Luke to perhaps compose a text in the Hebrew language, he might have had sufficient ability to read a Hebrew text and to grasp the basic general meaning of that text. Thus PERHAPS Luke had enough basic understanding of Hebrew "to get by", without necessarily understanding the finer details and technicalities of the language?

Anyway, IF Paul originally wrote Hebrews in the Hebrew language, then EITHER he himself later translated it, OR Paul dictated a translation to someone else to write down, OR someone else translated it without Paul being present while the translation was being made.

Late during his second imprisonment Paul wrote to Timothy: "ONLY LUKE IS WITH ME" (2 Timothy 4:11). Two verses later Paul said: "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you, AND THE BOOKS, BUT ESPECIALLY THE PARCHMENTS" (2 Timothy 4:13). It seems that Paul realized that he did not have much time left, and that he wanted to edit some of his own writings. At that point Luke was the only faithful friend present with Paul. So IF the Epistle to the Hebrews was originally written in the Hebrew language, perhaps Paul asked Luke to write it in the Greek language? If Luke had some rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew, Paul may not have been present for every moment that the translation was being made? Or Paul may have been put to death before this letter was translated into Greek?

It is likely that Luke was familiar with some of the Greek translations of the Old Testament that already existed. In that case Luke would have understood Psalm 8:5 to read something like "You made him a little less than angels", since that was the dominant understanding of this verse in Jewish society. So IF Luke is responsible for the Greek language version of this letter, he may have provided such a translation for the Greek text of this verse? So Luke could have readily used the Greek words "brachus" and "aggelos" in this translation?

Now I personally do NOT believe that this is the case! I don't believe that Luke provided the Greek text for the Book of Hebrews. But I have presented the above reasoning to illustrate how easy it is for people to make a fairly plausible case for a particular scenario. While the above scenario may perhaps "be possible", I believe it is unlikely to be correct.

I believe that PAUL HIMSELF originally wrote (or dictated) this letter in Greek. Or, alternatively, Paul himself was fully responsible for the translation into Greek, and thus for the use of the words "aggelos" and "brachus" in this verse. So now let's examine this from the perspective of Paul himself DELIBERATELY using the words "aggelos" and "bachus" in this verse. This deliberate alteration of the meaning of two words from the Hebrew text becomes clear when we correctly understand what Paul is really doing in this verse.

In the opening sentence of this book Paul focuses on the extremely high position that Jesus Christ has within God's plan. In 23 of the approximately 300 verses of the whole Book of Hebrews Paul mentions either "Jesus" or "Christ" or both names in the same verse. In an additional 8 verses (Hebrews 1:2; 1:5; 1:8; 5:8; 6:6; 7:3; 7:28; 10:29) Paul refers to Jesus Christ as the "Son" of God. So one out of every approximately 10 verses in Hebrews refers to Jesus or to Christ or to the Son of God. The focus of this book is clearly on Jesus Christ.

To convince the Jews in the Church of Jesus Christ's high position, Paul starts with the following line of reasoning:

1) As a spirit being Jesus Christ is vastly higher than the angels (chapter 1).

2) As a lawgiver Jesus Christ is vastly higher than Moses (chapter 3).

3) As a High Priest Jesus Christ is vastly higher than Aaron (chapter 5).

In the rest of the book Paul expands on and expounds on the priesthood of Jesus Christ, generously sprinkling his account with very stern warnings about the unpardonable sin, which those who are in danger of leaving their first love are also in danger of committing. Here we need not concern ourselves with the rest of the Book of Hebrews.

But notice the line of reasoning about angels, lawgivers and priests. Paul elaborates on each one to some degree. Paul knew he was writing to "a somewhat hostile audience", people who were in the process of becoming offended at Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 11:6, etc.). Paul was also aware of the Jewish bias against the correct meaning of Psalm 8:5; it was something he himself had been exposed to in his days as a Pharisee.

THE CORRECT MEANING OF HEBREWS 2:7

Now let's notice the following things:

When DAVID wrote Psalm 8, David was NOT thinking of Jesus Christ as the focus of his statements! David was asking questions about man in general. David wanted to focus on man's potential, including his (David's) own potential future. Psalm 8 was NOT written about Jesus Christ!

HOWEVER, the Apostle Paul recognized the powerful meaning inherent in the words of Psalm 8. And with his focus on Jesus Christ throughout the whole Book of Hebrews Paul wanted TO APPLY PSALM 8 SPECIFICALLY TO JESUS CHRIST!

Applying statements made about man's potential in general to Jesus Christ specifically REQUIRED PAUL TO MODIFY THOSE STATEMENTS TO SOME DEGREE. And with slight modifications those statements could apply to Jesus Christ.

Can you follow?

In Psalm 8:5 David was speaking about man's FUTURE potential, which is to be only a little lower than the two Gods that already exist (God the Father and Jesus Christ).

But in Hebrews Paul wanted to speak about the greatness of Jesus Christ. And Paul also wanted to include man's future potential in the overall picture he was presenting to the Hebrews.

Statements made about man in general don't necessarily apply to Jesus Christ. They may need to be modified in order to be valid for Jesus Christ. For example, the statement "You made man a little lower than Elohim" is NOT TRUE when applied to Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ was already one of the two "Elohim" David had in mind when he wrote Psalm 8:5.

Now in Hebrews 2:5 Paul stated that he wanted to speak about "the world to come", the future. In verse 6 Paul then quoted the question David had posed in Psalm 8:4 ("what is man that You are mindful of him?").

Now let's compare Hebrews 2:7 with Hebrews 2:9.

Hebrews 2:7 reads:

> "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:"

The Greek text for the words in capital letters is "elattosas brachu ti par aggelous". This verse speaks about man in general, which could perhaps include Jesus Christ.

And Hebrews 2:9 reads:

> "But we see Jesus, who WAS MADE A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

The Greek text for the words in capital letters is "brachu ti par aggelous elattomenon". This verse speaks exclusively and specifically about Jesus Christ.

While the verb form differs between these two Greek statements, these statements are basically identical in meaning. In BOTH verses "made a little lower" should read "MADE FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER"! That is a recognized meaning of "brachus".

Hebrews 2:9 reveals WHY Paul changed "made a little lower" from the Hebrew text into "made for a little while lower" in his Greek quotation of this text. The "little while" is used by Paul to refer to Jesus Christ's physical lifetime. In order to experience death IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT FOR A LITTLE WHILE (i.e. for 33.5 years) JESUS CHRIST WOULD BE A MORTAL BEING, WHICH IS CLEARLY "LOWER" THAN THE ANGELS!

Note! David's focus in Psalm 8:5 was on man's future status being only a little lower than the two Elohim that existed at that point in time. Angels didn't enter the picture in David's thinking one way or the other. Therefore in applying David's statement to Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul had to create A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FOCUS! In applying this statement (Hebrews 2:9) to Jesus Christ, Paul wanted to focus on THE PRESENT, rather than on the future. So Paul had THREE LEVELS in mind: highest level = God, middle level = angels, lowest level = mortal human beings. And the point Paul used his modified version of Psalm 8:5 to make is: FOR A LITTLE WHILE Jesus Christ, who had been on the highest level accepted a status on the level that is "LOWER THAN THE ANGELS", meaning therefore "on the human level".

By changing "little" into "a little while" Paul also changed "made a little lower" into plain "made lower", without any implications of "little" in the lower status or condition. Actually mortality is vastly lower than immortality. Thus FOR A LITTLE WHILE Jesus Christ was considerably lower than the angels, who cannot die. See also Philippians 2:7 regarding Christ being "made lower for a little while".

David's statement "You have made him a little lower than ELOHIM" refers to THE FUTURE that lies ahead for mankind.

Paul's statement "You made him for a little while lower than THE ANGELS" refers to THE PAST AND THE PRESENT. It refers to the past when applied to Jesus Christ who has already completed that process (verse 9); and it refers to the present when applied to all those who are called by God to be in the first resurrection, and who are still alive.

BUT THIS SPECIFIC STATEMENT BY PAUL DOES NOT REFER TO THE FUTURE! It is Paul's subsequent statements ("crowned with glory and honor", etc.) that focus on the future. But the statement we are examining is about the present status.

Because Paul wanted to apply this quotation to Jesus Christ's life as a human being, THEREFORE he was forced to change "Elohim" into "angels", something that happened to agree with the wrong Jewish understanding of this verse anyway. Applied to Jesus Christ it would not have made sense for Paul to say that Jesus Christ "was made for a little while lower than GOD (i.e. Elohim)". Christ had been Elohim all along before He ever became a human being.

To make this plain:

In order to apply this quotation to Jesus Christ specifically, Paul did two things to his quotation of the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5. First he changed the focus from "made a little lower" to "made lower for a little while". That resulted in a short-term focus on the here and now, instead of a focus on the future. And secondly he changed the comparison of status from one between man and God to one between man and angels. That took God out of the comparison, since "the man" Paul wanted to apply this verse to had been God for all past eternity already. "For a little while lower than the angels" was Paul's way of saying "for a little while an existence as a human being". Paul's desire to retain an alignment to Psalm 8:5 dictated this roundabout way of referring to Jesus Christ's human existence.

Within the context of Paul's reasoning in this Book of Hebrews these verses are still a part of showing that compared to angels Jesus Christ has a far higher status, even if FOR A LITTLE WHILE Christ may have lived as a human being, a status that is lower than the status of the angels.

While verse 9 is speaking EXCLUSIVELY about Jesus Christ, verse 7 can also apply to Jesus Christ, but not to the exclusion of other human beings. Verse 7 applies to Jesus Christ and to all mankind, unlike verse 9 which is limited to Jesus Christ.

So Paul completely changed the focus of the statement in Psalm 8:5 in order to highlight the suffering Jesus Christ had endured, which suffering was essential TO MAKE POSSIBLE for mankind the future that is THE REAL FOCUS of Psalm 8:5.

Paul ADAPTED a quotation from Psalm 8:5 in order to apply it to different circumstances than those that David had in mind when he wrote that psalm. That is exactly the same thing we do in our sermons all the time: we quote Scriptures and ADAPT their applications to the specific circumstances WE wish to address in our sermons. The only requirement for making such adaptations of Scriptures to OUR specific subjects is that our adaptations are right and true, i.e. that we do not misapply the Scriptures to say things that are in fact wrong.

In modifying the quotation from Psalm 8:5 the Apostle Paul was simply "RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH" (2 Timothy 2:15). The application Paul made for this quotation is true! That's the important thing! Whether or not that application also conveys the same thought that David had when he wrote Psalm 8 is neither here nor there. The important thing is that all the statements are TRUE!

So:

IT IS TRUE that God appointed a (yet future) status for man that will be only a little lower than the status of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, the only two "Elohim" that existed when David wrote Psalm 8.

IT IS TRUE that in order to die for our sins Jesus Christ for a little while (His life as a mortal man) accepted a status that is lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:9).

IT IS TRUE that for a little while (the physical life-time) human beings are also lower than angels (Hebrews 2:7).

At the start of this article I talked about "Option #1" and "Option #2" for understanding the statement "You have made him a little lower". Now we should be able to see that in Psalm 8:5 David was speaking about "Option #2", but in Hebrews 2:7 Paul was really focusing on "Option #1". And Paul achieved that changed focus by replacing the word for "God" with the word for "the angels", and by replacing the concept of "a LITTLE lower" with the concept of "LOWER for a LITTLE WHILE". And both statements are true.

If a modified application of some or other Scripture expresses something that is TRUE, then it is perfectly acceptable to present such a modification in order to support something that is true! The first criterion for anything we are to think about is "whatsoever things are TRUE" (Philippians 4:8). This is something we do in almost every single sermon we give: we state a biblical principle and then adapt the application of that principle from the original application to whatever application we happen to have in mind when we give that sermon. And that is what Paul did in Hebrews 2.

So in conclusion:

In Psalm 8:5 David was speaking about man's future potential to be only a little lower than God the Father and Jesus Christ. In highlighting Jesus Christ's exalted position in God's overall plan, the Apostle Paul adapted David's statement to show that, in order to suffer death for our sins, Jesus Christ was willing for a short time to accept a status that is lower than the angels, when previously His status had been far higher than the angels. Paul's adapted statement is just as true as is David's original statement. But it would be a mistake to try to impose the meaning of Paul's adapted statement onto David's original statement. And that is the mistake we are faced with in the flawed KJV translation of Psalm 8:5.

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