

## Prayer

Defend Your people O Lord; defend them against those attacks of the evil one which shatter hopes and dreams. Enable the fellowship of the church to be sensitive to the needs of all who are vulnerable, for whatever reason; and empower those ministries within the 'body' which will give people real help in times of need. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Housing

All of us live somewhere, and people live in an amazing variety of homes. We also have widely different attitudes towards where we live, what we do, and how we look after our homes. We will pray this week for our own homes and for the theme of housing both in our own country and around the world. Pray today for your own home, and for all who are homeless.

## Meditation

Revelation is indefinable; a pure gift from the Almighty:

A touching of the heart by God which changes everything.

Some claim to have had revelations from the Lord:

Yet all they have seen is their own reflection in a mirror.

Some feel that revelation only happens to others:

And maintain a distance between and anything 'mystic'.

Some give the impression that they have constant visions;

Creating scepticism in others which does the church no favours.

Some believe that revelations of God were given in ages past;

And our job is to live by what has been revealed; nothing more.

Then, one day, the Almighty Lord of All reveals Himself to you;

Touches you and makes His presence known beyond your doubts.

And in a moment, revelation is no subject for discussion;

It is real; the Saviour of the World is present; no words can speak it.

What He shows to you is inexpressible, incredible and utterly important;

They are truths you need to know; His very gift of life, to you.

## Bible Study - Hebrews 2:5-9

<sup>5</sup> For He did not make the future of the world subject to these angels of which we are speaking; <sup>6</sup> it has definitely been said elsewhere by someone: 'What are mere people that You should bear them in mind, or who is the Son of Man that You should be concerned about Him?' <sup>7</sup> Yet for a while, You made Him lower than the angels and have crowned Him with glory and honour! <sup>8</sup> You have put everything under His feet' Now in this work of subjection, God has not left anything out. At the moment, we do not see everything in subjection to Him; <sup>9</sup> rather, we see Jesus, who was for a short while was made lower than the angels. He went through the suffering of death so that he would do this on behalf of everyone, and He is now crowned with glory and honour!

## Review

Here, the letter to the Hebrews boldly takes a famous quote from an Old Testament Psalm and uses it to explain the nature of what Jesus did in order to do His work of Salvation for all humanity. This is a powerful and yet highly contentious passage of Scripture, but it lies at the heart of the revelation of God to the early Christian Church, and it tells us very clearly what they thought of Jesus, and how they understood the passages of Scripture which they found to support what they knew. It is difficult for us to grasp the extraordinary importance of a clear and understanding of the saving work of Jesus to the early Christians. In the Acts of the Apostles,

we read page after page of testimony in which people's lives were turned upside down by God's work through the apostles and the Holy Spirit, as Jews and then Gentiles became Christians. The witness of the Spirit in their hearts was consuming, and they interpreted everything by the light of what they knew Christ had done for them.

If you read this passage of Scripture in other translations, you will find that many are somewhat different from the translation I have given above. Part of the reason for this is that verses 6,7 and 8 contain a quote from Psalm 8 verse 4; itself one of the most enigmatic (and very difficult to translate) phrases of Hebrew in the Bible. Much of the debate about this passage concerns the meaning of the 'son of man' in Psalm 8:4, which is reckoned by many scholars to be just another way of saying 'people'. Indeed, Psalm 8 appears to tell us in several ways that people, who are God's creation, are more important to Him than angels: but that is not what our passage in Hebrews takes from the Psalm.

Hebrews is exclusively interested in the figure and person of Jesus; and whatever we or anyone else may think about this, there is no question that the writer chose this text because as far as he was concerned, the Psalm was speaking prophetically about Jesus as the 'Son of Man'. There are indeed a number of different ways we can interpret Psalm 8:4, but it is crystal clear that Hebrews uses it to explain Jesus life and death. It was God's purpose to allow Him to be made 'lower than the angels', that is, to become a mere mortal, so that He might taste death and through His suffering, offer salvation for all. This is what Hebrews says, even though when you read Psalm 8, it appears to say something different about people and God.

This is due, of course, is the nature of revelation. When God does a powerful work in the human soul, He does this through Jesus, and in a way which is all-encompassing. In verse 8, Hebrews speaks of God not leaving 'anything out' in subjecting all things to Jesus. This means that Jesus is found in all things, relevant to all things and pertinent to every discussion of every passage of Scripture. The early Christians read the Old Testament with Jesus imprinted upon their minds, and as they read, the phrase 'son of man' lit up Psalm 8:4, bringing new meaning both to the Old Testament text, and to their understanding of faith. Hebrews does us a great service today by reminding us that the world we experience is not just muddling along according to various things people do in it for good or ill. It is not even subject to angelic powers or other spiritual forces (2:5). Ultimately it is subject to Jesus, and only when our hearts are opened to this truth will we see God's loving purposes revealed within it with the same power and glory referred to in this great passage of Scripture!

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Go to Psalm 8 and read through the whole Psalm. Discuss what is meant by verse 4 in the translations you have at your disposal.
2. Now check out what you have discovered against Hebrews 2:6,7,8. Discuss the differences.
3. Does it matter that there are apparent discrepancies between Old and New Testament quotes of the same passage?

## Discipleship

The all-consuming presence of Christ is the hallmark of Christian life. It is not possible for us to experience what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and not discover that despite the power and presence we have known, there are times when it does not feel as if Jesus is as present as at other times. This is only a problem if we become settled in a state of accepting an apparent distance between ourselves and the Lord. Whatever our feelings may be, Jesus is present, and He wants us to know this. Our task is to believe this and be expectant that He will always be there, whether we are fooled by our feelings or not!

## Final Prayer

Jesus, my Lord and my King; revitalise Your people. Come again in Pentecostal power to turn around the negativity and distress, the unhappiness and anger, which Satan has fomented amongst the Lord's people in almost every church and congregation. Satan, leave us alone! Jesus, show Yourself anew! Thank You God: AMEN