

Thoughts on Hebrews

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon 'Thoughts on Hebrews' delves into the profound implications of Christ's incarnation, suffering, and glory as the Redeemer of humanity.

Scripture: Hebrews 1:4, Hebrews 2:9

Topics: "The Humanity of Christ", "Redemption and Glory"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the profound mystery of the Messiah as presented in Hebrews, emphasizing that Jesus, though made lower than the angels, took on human suffering to redeem mankind and restore creation. He highlights the dual nature of Christ as both the Sanctifier and the sanctified, uniting believers with Him in glory as joint heirs. Darby explains that through His suffering and death, Jesus not only confronted the ruin brought by sin but also fulfilled God's purpose of bringing many sons to glory. The sermon underscores the significance of Christ's humanity and His role as a merciful High Priest, who fully identifies with our struggles. Ultimately, Darby calls for a deeper understanding of the divine revelation of Christ's sufferings and glory, which is essential for grasping the fullness of God's plan for humanity.

Transcript

It is quite evident how the mysterious character of Messiah is brought out in the beginning of Hebrews, with details therefrom afterwards. It connects at the end of its subject no doubt with the Jews, but only at its end as a complementary part bringing in the millennium. But it is not the Church, but headship over all things with, at best, joint heirs and glory. It is Messiah in His Person, but Messiah glorified. There is a habitable earth to come, but that has been put in subjection to man, and Man takes a heavenly seat and wider sphere. The Son's title, as by inheritance having a more excellent Name, and Creator, I do not enter on here; that is wonderfully brought out in Hebrews 1. But in Hebrews 2 it is Man. Man was made a little lower than the angels (these were a separate creation) but the head of all things in the scene he was set in, the scene where all God's ways are displayed, where the angels learn them, as we read. Nor can there, we may boldly say, be two crosses. Well! man fell, and went down to death, below any creature; for it was its ruin, whereas the lowest was good in its place, and set to be there. And the whole creation under heaven was brought down with him, came down together out of its links and order with God. And, besides, Satan acquired dominion over man, and the creation in general as belonging to him, in death by it. All came down in ruin as a creation, and death the sign of it, and Satan was set up.

Now we see, so is the fact, Jesus made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, coming down to be able to die (though their Creator, and far above them). And as all things had been put under man in purpose, a purpose not even yet fulfilled, and man had brought down the whole creation into ruin, himself sinking into death, death was the point where the Redeemer as Man must meet the case to redeem, and, not exactly restore, but meet the ruin in its lowest and central point where the head of the first creation had got, and so bring about the purpose of Man's headship to God's glory, such as no mere creature indeed could have done. Hence I judge *huper pantos* (for everything) is "thing" not "man" here. He could not say *panton* (all things) in this sense, for it was not individual cases, if the creation was taken in; nor was it *tou pantos* (of everything) as a whole, but in the most abstract form "everything." It could not have been restored as a whole, without restoring it as it was, and the work went far beyond that. But the case was to be met as to everything, and it was. He went down where man went in bringing in the ruin, suffered death for "everything," looked as the centre of the ruin in its head.

379 But this brings in another point; there were persons to be saved, sons to be brought to glory - such was in the purpose. And it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things (ruined as they now are) in bringing sons to glory, guilty with, and heirs of him who was the centre of the ruin and guilty in it, in bringing such to glory that He who set Himself as the Head of salvation should, for the majesty of Him for whom and by whom all things are, pass through that which was involved in that majesty in respect of the mediate cause of the ruin, and the responsible cause. For, though He atoned (and that comes afterwards) He associated Himself with them as far as God's glory and their glorifying was concerned. Sinless, and above all the evil, He took all its consequences on Him in suffering even to death. It became God so to deal with Him, He having taken that place. He was brought to the place of glory He was to have as Son of man (with those brought to glory as sons too in grace), through the sufferings. The glory of God demanded that He might be there, bringing withal the many sons with Him. "Bringing" (*agagonta*) seems most naturally to ally itself with "the leader" (*archegon*) than to stand between "Him" (*auto*) and "make perfect" (*teletosai*). It scarcely affects the point I am upon. For Christ and those He sanctified were all of one, were one set, Man, and men brought (by grace) into the same glory with Him; all were "of one," one sort, not a stranger to them, delivering them as He, suppose, might angels by power if needed, or God any creature, but all one set, all men, and to be glorified together, though One sanctified and the others were sanctified by Him. ; But they were all one set to be thus His "partakers" (*metochoi*), for here it goes into the way of their getting to be so, in a time yet to come. The "of one" (*ex henos*) is as abstract as possible. They were in the same nature and condition, when raised to their new place. It is not the state of the nation; for when He said: "My brethren," He was risen (and He never did before) and they were not, but they were all taken to be one with Him, owned as His brethren. Hence, as the children had flesh and blood, He took it. He associates Himself completely with them though, and that He might be in its full effect, He was the Sanctifier, and they the sanctified; compare John 17:17, 19; the result when gone to glory, in 2 Corinthians 3.

380 Now we have had man in purpose over all the works of God's hands - man fallen, and the creation connected with him sunk down, he having gone down to death. We have seen Jesus, "made a little lower than the angels," taking a man's place that He might die, now crowned with honour and glory. He came down and took this place that He might taste what was the ultima ratio of creation-ruin, and its centre's, i.e., man's place as taking his place in it, but He was withal bringing many sons to glory. And God, for whom all things are, must bring the Captain of their salvation into His glory and perfect place through sufferings. This was in the necessity of God's glory, seeing He was bringing such to glory. Here it is God's majesty, not atonement. If Christ put Himself at the head of such, He must go through what became the

glory of Him to whom in glory He was bringing them, and walk the path through which His taking up their cause led Him, as required by the glory of God. For He did not help them by an outstretched hand from on high, but of one with them. Not that He was subject to it Himself; it was "Takes hold of" (epilambanetai). He, the Sanctifier, above it all, becomes a Man to enter into it all, that He may be able to enter into it all, and pass through the deep suffering that became God's glory in it. It was no subjection to it, or He could not have done so; but going through sufferings as became God's glory, because He, in the accomplishment of this glorious purpose, He and the co-heirs were to be "of one."

Now I get to the effect of His work - a second point. He takes the flesh and blood that through death He might destroy Satan's power, his power might be rendered void, deliver the individuals who, as of this creation, dreaded this central witness of ruin, and their ruin as belonging to it itself, the end of what they were. Next, He took it so as to know all the sorrows of those He became High Priest for withal, making propitiation for the sins of the people. (Here it reaches over to what is Jewish in its terms.) Having made this propitiation, having Himself suffered being tempted, He is able to succour those tempted. All this latter part refers to Jewish thoughts naturally, but does not in effect leave out Gentiles, save the expression, "the sins of the people," more particularly shows the branches reaching over the wall of the heavenly calling to future Jewish hopes. "Thy Name unto my brethren" were literally those who had been with Him in His lifetime, but whom He had not called so till then; John 20 and Psalm 22. Yet we come in as sons. "I and the children" again, the Remnant from Isaiah 8 and "I will put my trust in him" from the same, but in the rejection of Israel as a body, as Psalm 22, involved their full rejection of Him. Yet in both, the Remnant specifically owned, only Psalm 22, on atonement and as sons.

381 In Isaiah 8 as a testimony to both houses of Israel, He waiting when Jehovah hid His face from them, so "The seed of Abraham," yet we are it as in Christ. But the position of Christ is very solemnly, though mysteriously, brought out here, how really He was a Man, and to go through the sufferings which led to glory; holy sufferings, but which it became God to make Him pass through to perfect Him in the place of purpose - and for us now in the place of service. It was connected not only with the sons, though that it was, but as taking a place in connection with those by whom, as regards their place as men, their race, the first creation had been brought into the bondage of corruption and ruin in man's death. This passes then into His association with the sons, or theirs rather with Him, for they were being brought to glory, yet such that He took their nature in order to be able to die, and therewith suffer, and be tempted, and so pass into glory with the sons, they like Him as He had been made like unto them in all things, and taken their cup of sorrow, so as to be a merciful High Priest as well as die for them. It is not only their connection with the Remnant of Israel, that they might be connected with Him in glory, but in reference to God's glory, as He for whom all things were, and, as to death, to take up the creation for the purpose of God in righteousness and power, i.e., in redemption, and so under glory, and the sons in the glory. These are the two parts. How the Psalms (Psalms 3-8, showing the two) take up this is evident, only these taking the end of the subject connected with the Jewish Remnant, to begin with, and showing His interest and glory; here taking up His Person, and only bringing them in by the bye as a subsequent collateral event, which had to be made good, yet maintaining the glory of His Person, and mystery of His position all through.

When we get a glimpse of these associations, how it makes us see how little we know, how we have just the ends of some threads, and how it makes one subject to Scripture which came from the mind which knew the whole, and which is a divine revelation, and a revelation to us! What is of, and becomes God, but which is for and becomes us! Christ as Life was the Light of men. But we see it as parts and glimpses of an immense system, but which in the nature of our knowledge we know only in part. I see a ruined

creation, I see an exalted Christ, I see man in death, I see Christ become a Man to taste it "for" (huper). I see many sons bringing to glory, and He who created all things, when I look down, not ashamed to call them brethren. He is a Man too, yet He who sanctifies, and they sanctified to be with Him in the glory, so that they were to be all "of one." He is made perfect in this place, and, to this, must pass through sufferings as became God's majesty. What a scene of counsels and ways beyond our thought! Yet the objects of our thoughts as taught of God. There are things "which it is not allowed man to utter." But these are for us when in the body. And I feel more than ever that we must hold fast the truth of Christ's sufferings as an integral part of the truth revealed of what He is, because we are ignorant, and because it is mysterious, and no man knows the Son but the Father. Therefore we must hold very fast what is revealed, for what is revealed is perfect truth for us; though only knowing it in part, if we leave out, in the way of rejecting any of it, all becomes false, for none then is divinely co-ordinated for us. And that it is, as we have it, though it be only knowing in part. It is perfect as a communication by the divine Spirit, not perfect as God knows, nor having anything to do with man's knowledge, but perfect as a communication by the Spirit of God to us for us. So Christ, no one knows Him but the Father, yet He is the perfect revelation of God and the Father, and exactly to man. "The Life was the Light of men," specifically so - a reciprocal proposition. God in His own counsels in glory could not have been that, man would have been incapable of it. Where was mercy, grace, condescension, pardon, righteousness, love to man as shown in Christ, yea in death? Yet God Himself was perfectly revealed. He that had seen Christ had seen the Father - He had declared God. And so instrumentally with the word. But then I must take it as given to us, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

382 I do not complain of the translation: "All of one." It is just right, and the effort to make it precise in that form only makes it false, because it is meant to be abstract. It is not "of God" simply, nor "of sinful man." It is when sanctified, they who are, and He who sanctifies all belong to and are one set, as I have said. It is not in the word "who are sanctified" this is - that only declares the class. I speak of the fact. But it is not by being sanctified they are "of one" - for He sanctifies. And to have this complete association, the sanctifying Son of God took their nature. It could not be without that; yet it was not with the unsanctified ones He was ex henos (of one). It must be Man to say "of one," yet men as men were not "of one" with Him. It is the fact when He can call them "brethren," "children"; when He was a Man, and they were by grace associated with Him, He being a Man, they were all "of one."

383 The question is: "What is Man?" Then comes purpose, and they are brought and associated with Him in the place of purpose, i.e., all men who are brought into this place. He could treat them as such as soon as He was risen, and they were so though in the earthly vessel. Nay, in a certain sense, He could when He was on earth though prospectively, but He was revealing the matter to them, and the Name in which they were afterwards to stand, but it was the heirs of glory He took up to be "of one" with Him; and "of one" is as true now He is in glory as ever, only all is not fully accomplished in the "sanctified." But the "of one" is of infinite value and blessing. But it makes me reject more earnestly than ever His being by birth in the distance they were. It destroys the whole idea, though, without being born as Man, He could not have taken this place, as we have seen.

Note further, they are thus at once, consequently, viewed as "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," for they were sons, brethren bringing to glory. It is not the Church this; that sits in Him, and is His Body, or the habitation of God by the Spirit, but the sons bringing to glory with Him who is crowned with glory. But note verses 6-13 lay the foundation; the application to our state is a practical consequence, for the suffering heirs down here (and so is the order in chapters 1 and 2:1-4) and this while owning the place

of heirs in Hebrews 3:1, is what is pursued as the subject of the Book. They are in the wilderness, on the road. The priesthood (referring to heaven) begins Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 5:5 is the character of glory which fitted Him (genethenai) as regards God (verse 6, office), verse 7 is what fits humanly for us; verse 8, referring to verse 5, and showing the character of the sufferings, contradictory of the personal individual place as born in this world, His own relationship. Yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and was heard as fearing in holy feeling in the suffering, and crying for Himself, and so was made perfect in His place, for a High Priest became us who was higher than the heavens. The calling is carried all through, but the doctrine is for our actual state, and the brethren, sons bringing to glory, are connected with the super-heavenly place. We are associated with Him there, separate from Him here. A Priest separate from sinners was needed, for we were called out from among them; higher than the heavens, because we have, ourselves, to say to God there, as associated with Him.

384 The first thought is man as such - that being that God had already created. "Lord, what is man?" If Christ therefore undertook this counsel of God, He must take up this being. Yet the purpose was, in itself, before the world, and before the fall, the state "One made a little lower than the angels." And, further, Christ, as Son, had a title over all that He had created. All things were created by Him and for Him, but the counsel was to give this dominion to Man. It was to be held by Man, but in this counsel He was going to associate joint-heirs. The first man had been placed over this world in creation, and in the image of God, responsible; and that was not to result in nothing, but indeed in an immense moral development of good and evil, and of grace in redemption. "What is man?" is man abstractedly, but man considered as already made, and made with certain views on God's part. All these elements come into Christ's work here. He was to be Heir in His own title. It was to be in glory and over all He created. It was to be as Man, and though in the Son yet man whom God had created taken up; not in a simply new race which left the old one wholly and simply out of the question. But man was in sin, and that could not be in glory. It must be One whose holiness was inseparable from Himself, One the Object of God's delight, yet to walk in man's place perfectly (learning obedience) and to have no present rejection which should shut Him out (which could not be, seeing He was the Son, yet keeping His commandments, and so abiding in His love) and yet take up the whole case of man, and suffer so as to make good God's glory in that place, never without losing His place of Son in favour (atonement, when made sin, and as made sin only excepted) yet never so glorifying God, and in fact so accepted as there: "Therefore doth my Father love me."

385 But as Man, and not yet in atonement, He took up the seed of Abraham, the heirs of promise, and it became God to bring Him into the place of glory and perfection through sufferings. For He was really Man, and because, though in a new estate, He puts man into the glory, Object of God's counsels Himself, a Second Adam, but taking up the heirs in the first race, we get this great and wondrous truth: "The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one." And therefore He took flesh and blood, because the children God had given Him had it, to die, intercede, associate them with Himself, but in the condition which He was to take as Man in the glory, but to take according to the purpose of God in man. Hence, to have, as Man, man with Him in it, "All of one," He, the Sanctifier Son ran all through it. The Son was Creator (chap. 1); He was Son born in this world, "That Holy Thing," having flesh and blood, Son all through, and revealing the Father's Name to those He had given Him. Yet it was through redemption, in which He was alone, He could bring them in, propitiation made, His own perfect work to glorify God, putting away their sins (and to put away sin). Then He treats them as sons in His own place (John 20) and Sonship took its place in glory as Man, and we - wondrous, unspeakable grace! - with Him. For without this, the Corn of wheat would have remained alone, whatever its personal glory and tide, even by obedience. This makes all the second and fifth chapters plain, and so full of deep and heart-reaching instruction. He suffered

being tempted. He learned obedience, was made perfect, i.e., as to His place in glory (ever perfect, though exercised and in exercises) made perfect through sufferings. Oh! it is a blessed thought.

A few more words on Hebrews 2. The thing first contemplated is the habitable earth to come being subject to men, as taking the place of angels. That is the first thought. This He founds on Psalm 8, involving, in the purpose of the Spirit, universal supremacy, but as made a little lower than the angels. This He connects with the Person of Christ made so for the suffering of death, so that Man glorified in power is thought of, and then this is brought down, by the Incarnation for the purpose of death, to Christ entering into the place needed, not only to bring them out of it, but for their complete association in glory finally, but by a more true and complete association that He was a real Man and, entering into their sorrows and place, though perfect in it, suffered for God's glory in it - and in such sort took the place, bringing us into the same with Him as Man and men, that we are all "of one." It is man in contrast with angels, but Christ the Key to the place they are in. But how truly and blessedly "of one" is true, without any new doctrine, is every moment more plain and more real to my soul. The Lord and we are all men, but we men partakers of the divine nature, and in that state "of one"; only He the Sanctifier, and we the sanctified. So He owns us as brethren, and it is in manhood that He is said to be, and the sanctified "of one." It is neither Godhead nor manhood which is the "one" (hen). But He became a Man that we might be all "of one" - hence, go through what stood on that path, for the glory of God.

386 In chapter 2 we get three motives for the sufferings of Christ, taken as a whole. It became Him, the glory of God, seeing whose cause He had undertaken; His association in grace with the sons He was bringing to glory - to sympathise and deliver; thirdly, making reconciliation. The first, verse 10; the second, verses 11-15; the third, verses 15-18. But the three are closely interwoven.

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