

Hebrews 5 Lonsdale Square

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the significance of Christ's high priesthood and its relationship to the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and faith in the face of apostasy.

Scripture: Psalm 110:4, Matthew 7:22-23, John 14:16-17, Galatians 3:5, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 6:10, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 12:2, 1 John 2:1

Topics: "Apostasy", "Christ's Priesthood"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the role of Christ as High Priest, emphasizing that while He performed priestly duties, His work on the cross was foundational rather than intercessory. He explains that the high priest on the Day of Atonement represented the people, and Christ's role as both victim and priest was fulfilled at the cross. Darby clarifies that the priesthood of Christ is distinct from the Jewish priesthood, as He is a living priest in the order of Melchisedec, and that believers have a perfected conscience through His sacrifice. He warns against the dangers of apostasy and the importance of recognizing the Holy Spirit's presence in the church today.

Transcript

Verse 2 is as to priests "taken from among men," but the Irvingites took all this, and applied it to Christ.

It is not strictly priestly work, though it is what the high priest did. In the end of Hebrews 2 you get Christ making reconciliation, and, in that sense, He was High Priest on the cross. It was not intercession there, but it laid the foundation of all subsequent priesthood.

On the day of atonement, the high priest stood, not as priest between man and God, but as representing the whole people.

Ques. Would the scapegoat come in, as in resurrection afterwards?

No, certainly not. The second bird in Leviticus 14 was more in resurrection.

On the day of atonement the high priest did everything, carrying in incense, and then the blood within the veil. Nobody could go in but himself, and he did all the work; but he was not there as a go-between, which a priest is, but as a representative. It was not, therefore, properly priestly work, though he did it.

The people stood on the ground of this day of atonement throughout the year.

Ques. What are the "gifts" in our first verse?

Gifts were not for sins; they were the firstfruits and all kinds of things.

Ques. How far could you speak of Christ as High Priest on the cross?

Only as in the end of chapter 2. But Christ confessing my sins on His own head, is not as priest but as substitute. It is a mere expression to say He confessed them, but He stood there under them. I said "confessing" because the high priest of old did so.

Ques. When do you connect the calling of God a high priest, with Christ?

It is "saluted." Calling there means just as you would salute a king, "Long live the king!"

22 Ques. When do you put the moment of His appointment?

It was really on the cross that He first acted in a high-priestly character.

As to the question of time, you get two steps; though first, in Psalm 110, you have testimony as to His appointment.

He becomes a man to be able to take that place, and then it is, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." You must carry this thought with you in Hebrews that the order according to which He is addressed is not the order according to which He is exercising His priesthood now. His order is that of Melchisedec, but His priestly service is after the analogy of Aaron. He is a priest on the throne in the order He belongs to, and, as long as I get Him a living Man, He is a living priest.

Ques. What of the second Psalm?

There you get the counsels of God as to Christ. At the same time the kings stand up, and for the moment, it was - one can hardly say, frustrated, and yet in a certain sense it was so. But "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision."

In Psalm 110 it is, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Afterwards, when He says, "Sit at my right hand," you have the person glorified. This Man, who was going to be the priest, is the Son of God; He did not glorify Himself, but God did so who said to Him, in Psalm 2, "Thou art my Son."

Nathaniel owns Him, Son of God and King of Israel, in these characters of Psalm 2. Psalm 8 goes beyond what we are now speaking of.

Ques. Was He not glorified on the day of His baptism?

Yes, in a certain way, and publicly so.

The Jews could have no confidence in a person who was not called of God; and this was not lacking in the One whom the Spirit of God was now presenting to them.

Ques. What was the moment of the official calling or saluting?

He was a competent Person in His incarnation, but His baptism was His public inauguration. He could not enter upon His functions until He had something to offer, and He did not actually take His place as a priest before. And now, having passed through the heavens up to the third heavens, He is as Aaron.

23 Ques. Is that the force of rending the veil?

Not His going through it, but His opening the way into the holiest. The blow that fell on Him rent the veil, but that is quite a different thing.

On the cross, He is victim as well as priest. He dies; and then the great day of atonement is carried out. He is now priest at God's right hand, just as Aaron went in, only He has not yet come out again.

After His baptism, He goes through the processes that try Him; "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

And then He becomes both victim and also priest.

Ques. Does Psalm 110 only apply to Him in resurrection?

Yes, and also when He comes back again.

Ques. But Psalm 110 commences with His going up?

No, clearly not. That is what we see in Hebrews: "We Have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." The Melchisedec priesthood is not yet come. He is sitting upon His Father's throne, not upon His own throne.

Ques. Then we are instructed by Aaron as to what a priest is?

Yes. Melchisedec is of a different character. In Genesis 14 it is blessing up and blessing down, after triumph. But bearing us through the wilderness is not Melchisedec at all.

Ques. Yet that comes nearest home to us now?

Of course it does. He is not viewed here as priest for our sins, except, as we have seen, to make reconciliation for them (Heb. 2:17), and that work is finished.

Ques. I have heard some expressions such as, He ever lives to plead His blood?

Well; I don't know.

I have nothing to do with a bad conscience in Hebrews. I have a conscience perfected for ever, and so no more conscience of sins.

And so I can't have a priest for my sins in Hebrews; I have for my infirmities, but not for my sins. The work He has done on the cross has perfected me for ever. But in the evangelical world the habit is to have a priest for my sins, and to go to a priest - Christ - to get to God. I get an absolutely perfect conscience as regards my sins, so He cannot be pleading in that respect. The question is, can I come into the holiest?

24 In 1 John 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," it is a question not of imputation, but of communion. If I let sin in to my mind, communion is interrupted, and then

it is not that I go to the Advocate, but the Advocate goes for me. That is for the restoration of the soul to communion which has been interrupted as the consequence of sin; but in Hebrews I have nothing to do with that; here I want grace in time of need.

Ques. But is there, then, restoration of communion the moment I have sinned?

No, indeed, there is not. Take Peter's case. The Lord, after His resurrection, goes to the root of the mischief with him, and says, "Lovest thou me more than these?" There is no practical restoration to communion with God, until I have judged the sin, and confessed it. But then it is advocacy for that, and not the priesthood.

Ques. What would you say were infirmities, as distinguished from sins?

Well, even Christ could say, "Reproach hath broken my heart," and could look for someone to have compassion, and He can now, be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. That is very distinct from sins. In Hebrews 12 it says that He "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." Am I to shrink back as Peter did?

Ques. That would be sin, would it not?

It turned into sin, for he cursed and swore he did not know the Lord, when he did.

Ques. Would sorrow for sin committed in time past come under Christ's priesthood?

In one sense He sympathises with you in this. He delights at any rate to see godly sorrow. The troubles and trials He went through in the path of obedience fitted Christ to be a priest. We have to learn to be obedient, and what obedience is; but Christ was always obedient, and He learned what it is in the place of obedience. Christ was not like Jewish priests, compassed with infirmity while a priest, but He learned the lesson while here, and now uses it in favour of us while He is there. Such a high priest became us because we belong there; therefore He has to be a priest there, yet knowing everything here.

I want a high priest where I go in, worshipping, and so now Christ has gone into the true holy place in heaven. But the fact is, I find the difficulties are down here; in spirit I go into the holy of holies, but I want the help of the high priest, in my walk down here, as well as His maintenance there, where, in spirit, I enter.

25 Ques. Why does it say "eternal salvation"?

You find that word in Hebrews in contrast with what Jews had. The Lord has been thoroughly consecrated; He has got His anointing, and is completely fitted for His priesthood, and therefore it is eternal salvation.

Ques. But we are not seated in the heavens in Hebrews?

Just so, we only go in as worshippers. Viewed as seated in Christ in the heavens we don't want a priest. But down here we do. Now Christ has learned the difficulties, and I am to walk in the path where they are, while He helps me.

Ques. There is a parenthesis to the end of verse 10 in chapter 6?

Yes, He is anxious to take the Hebrews out of the earthly things into the heavenly things.

It is "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," i.e., the doctrinal beginning of Christ. A godly Jew might have had all that he names, but he says, 'I can't go back to that; it is all true, and had its place in the Jewish system, but I cannot go back to it'; though they were in danger of doing so. But if you have what Christianity gives you, you can't fall back on Judaism.

"It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, etc." The nation had crucified the Lord, but they were guilty of that when they had only the doctrine of the beginning of Christ; but now, after they have got all that Christianity has brought, if they reject that, then they have crucified Him individually; just the very thing they were guilty of nationally; and there remains no other gospel for them.

There were two gospels, the one which, so far as it went, the Jews had before Christ rose, and that which was announced when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven and revealed the powers of the world to come. Well, then, the apostle says, if a man gives up all that, there is no other gospel. Such an one is not converted. The illustration in the verses 7 and 8 shews us that. Verses 9 and 10 are a contrast; the moment I get the fruits of life I know life is there.

Ques. Why does he say, "Renew them again"?

They had been professedly brought in before and might have been speaking with the tongues of men and of angels.

26 Ques. Indeed!!?

Yes, the apostle says so in 1 Corinthians 13, that is why I quoted it; they had been brought into the presence of the whole power of the Holy Ghost.

Ques. Would it apply to any in christendom now?

Well, many in christendom hardly own the Holy Ghost; they have more John Baptist's teaching and truth. In this passage it is the Holy Ghost, and what is showered down from heaven; while in chapter 10 it is the same reasoning as regards sacrifice. If you are not converted by all this immense blessing, there is nothing else for you except judgment. The danger of falling back was there, though God keeps His own.

Ques. Is it anything like "anon with joy receiveth it"?

Perhaps so; but that is a bad sign, unless consciences have been reached before. The passage here speaks of the sin of apostasy; they confess the thing and then turn away.

Ques. "Sin wilfully"?

Just so. It is doing it deliberately. It is the giving up Christ and going back to Judaism.

Ques. Is it a present professing of Christianity and then going into infidelity?

Only you must see if such an one is snared by the devil.

Again, there is power to be thought of, and the way in which I preach the gospel to such a person. Paul could say, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," but I could not say that, because I could not say that I preach it so.

You may, too, get the understanding convinced, and the affections moved, but nothing done at all. Man's understanding was convinced at the end of John 2, but it was merely a rational conviction that God must be with Christ. Not one of them went to Christ, for there was no divine life.

Ques. What of those in John 12?

I don't know. It says many believed on Him, but at the same time they did not confess Him, though they got their minds convinced.

Ques. Are not these in Hebrews 6 in the place of Cain?

The great thing is, I have got Christianity which has brought the Holy Ghost. He is come, and these professors have been made partakers of it like Balaam; or like the many who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" But He shall say He never knew them.

27 People have forgotten that the Holy Ghost is come. All recognition of Him is so utterly gone. To my mind, the very principle of "the clergy" involves that; and if you look at 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, you will find you have now to watch that you do not mistake a demon for the Holy Ghost. "False apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness."

In Galatians 3:5, Paul speaks of him "that ministereth to you the Spirit." Ask any ordinary person what ministering the Spirit is, and he does not know what you mean by it. But to the Galatians who in their minds were falling from grace, he could say, "How did you get the Holy Ghost?"

Ques. Was not the receiving of the Holy Ghost in the Galatians deeper than an outward thing?

I have no doubt it was really, for he says, "I have confidence in you through the Lord"; but they were going on so badly, that he did not know what to make of them.

Ques. You would make the gift of the Holy Ghost distinct from the gifts given by Him?

Of course.

Ques. What is the difference between 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4?

In 1 Corinthians 12 you have gifts in power, and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, so that in the case of the gift of a tongue, one may have to hold his tongue. That is power.

In Ephesians I get Christ going on high, and carrying the church on to the end; it is no question of the Spirit and power, but of Christ caring for His own body. A person having a gift is a very different thing from its exercise. People were not used as mere machines.

There is a difference, too, between a revelation and my spiritual apprehension of the mind of Christ in what is already revealed.

28 The doctrine of Irvingism was that the Holy Ghost had come back again. But the Lord said, "that he may abide with you for ever." None of their apostles ever got the gifts. Gifts of healing I think nothing of, because if we had the faith, they would be seen now. I have seen them at Plymouth.

Ques. Is "salvation" in verse 9 future? (Heb. 6.)

In one sense salvation is future, for there is a waiting for "salvation ready to be revealed," and yet you have salvation; it is so with eternal life, and even justification, for Paul says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law "that refers to the display of it all.

Here he is speaking of the things that accompany salvation.

Ques. Would you say more about a person being led by the Spirit in power to speak or not?

What we see here is, that a man may be a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and yet not be saved. Remember, the most glorious prophecy that you can find in Scripture was uttered by Balaam, the wickedest man that ever was. But a divine person come down from heaven with power is what people don't believe.

Ques. Would Christ give power to anyone now to cast out devils?

I think the church ought always to be able to turn a devil out.

Ques. Do you think persons are ever possessed in that way now?

Yes.

Ques. What is the manifestation of it?

That is a question of discerning of spirits; I believe I have seen it; but that is a question of my discernment.

Ques. Do you think any believer may have power to turn a devil out?

We ought to have.

{*Prince - of the Agapemone - once said he could do nothing at all while brethren were in the town.}

{*Henry James Prince (1811-1899) founder of the Agapemonites, a small sect.}

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