

Jesus Christ is the Same, Yesterday, Today and Forever

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2025

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to Hebrews 13, and we're going to think together on the text, verse 8, where we read the words, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Excuse me. Well, as we enter a new year, what a wonderful encouragement this verse is to the people of God.

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And it's helpful for us to think about him in terms of his steadfast love, of his mercy, of his grace, and of his power to provide for his people.

We're living in a time of uncertainty, we know, and we need all the encouragement we can get from the Lord. It's true, of course, that there are many in the world far worse off and exposed to danger than we are.

But nonetheless, as Job said long ago, man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upward. And we need hardly comment on it, but it's worth seeing, because we were singing about it there.

[1 : 34] Earth's surface changes too. Those of you who enjoy trees that somebody else has planted, and you acquire a good supply or a bad supply of leaves, depends on how you look at it, will know very well what it's like as the earth changes in the various seasons.

But let's be focused just on gloom and doom. We want to make it clear to ourselves that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the great constant in the life of his people.

And that is borne out by the words, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. And we want to fix our minds and hearts upon him as we consider three things that arise from the text.

The first thing I want to look at with you is that he is changeless in his divine person. And we were reading in Hebrews chapter 1, and particularly in verses 10 to 12, we find a quotation from Psalm 102, which we were singing, verses 25, 27.

It's there, a bit further on than we were singing. But it's all about him enduring. It's all about him changing not. We're told that he laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

[3 : 29] And, of course, that takes us back. You see what I'm doing? I'm looking at a reference in Hebrews connected with earlier in Psalm 102, and then looking at Genesis 1, because that's what it takes us back to.

It takes us back to the beginning of the yesterdays. And the yesterdays began when he spoke the creation into existence.

That's when time as we know it became a reality. That's when he began his creative work.

And although in Genesis 1, 1, you're told that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The opening epithet means that the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, was the Father's agent in creation.

And that becomes abundantly clear in the New Testament, and, in fact, in Hebrews 1 that we read there together. And so, with that understanding of it, we see that he created this massive universe and little planet Earth, too.

[4 : 57] And he furnished Earth with so much of what we still see and enjoy of plant life and veg and all the rest.

But, of course, as we look back, as it were, to the dawn of life on Earth, as we said there, this is the beginning in time of yesterday.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday. And so, you're looking back and tracing out, at least we'll try and do some of the events of the yesterdays in creation in the life of planet Earth.

And we all know that it was an inter-Trinitarian decision. Let us make man in our own image after our own likeness.

And God set about doing that from the dust of the Earth. And that's an important, humbling thing to remember.

[6 : 11] Dust we are, and to dust we'll return. And so, he did this, and he created Adam from the dust.

And he breathed into him the breath of life. And then, within the inter-Trinitarian decision-making, it's not good for man to be on his own.

And so, the creation of the woman from the rib of Adam, a deep sleep was upon him, and the woman was created, suitable for him, complimenting him, whatever he thinks, complimenting him.

I've got one or two smiles there from the ladies. And it's good to remember that. And so, Eve was made.

But we know the story was not as cozy as it could have been. God put them in the garden, not a small garden, but the area called Eden, and gave them things to do.

[7 : 25] But he gave them one restriction, I hope we all know it, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. For the day in which you eat it off, you will surely die.

But then, that old serpent, the devil, was around. And what did he do? He used God's word. But he tweaked it to suit his purpose.

You'll not surely die. Meaning, God wouldn't do that on you. He's created you. And he sowed the seed of doubt, hesitation, and motivation.

And she took it for fruit and ate. And gave it to her husband. And so, sin entered the world. And you know, just a wee aside here, at a practical level, when we're talking to people about salvation, don't be afraid to go back.

And because we need to get the picture right for people. How did, what's this sin? How did it come about? It's rooted in a yesterday of time.

[8 : 54] And all too soon, sin caused havoc. Wonderfully, God, the Son, the Son of God, had slaughtered animals and prepared skins to clothe their nakedness.

And that nakedness is not about just physical, it's spiritual and moral. sin affects us through and through.

And the story is downhill, isn't it? The days of Noah were so bad that one of the most profoundly difficult to understand sayings is found at that time.

It grieved the Lord that he had made man on the earth. We, we can't claim that.

We just record it. That's how bad it was. And of course, you know the story about the ark that was prepared over many decades and only eight were saved from the universal flood.

[10 : 25] But all the while we can say about that yesterday period, Jesus Christ was the same and the same in steadfast love, in mercy, in grace, and in power.

He didn't leave the whole story with a stroke through it and a deletion, double deletion. And we need to remind ourselves that that's the way it is.

It's still steadfast love, it's still mercy, it's still grace, it's still the power to do. But the fact of the matter is, God, and Kirk reminded us of this on Sunday evening, wrath can be applied.

God's not obliged to give you all the detail on the why. You work that out. But words that come to my mind here are from a hymn of old, there is a line by us unseen that crosses every path, the hidden boundary between God's patience and his wrath.

And we don't know where that is, but it's about the judgment of God, and he doesn't need to explain his judgment other than a line was crossed by the sinner.

[12 : 02] Now, of course, I wanted, if there was more time to do it, I'm just going to summarize. The Son of God appeared on earth and he spoke with these ancients.

Best known is his expression, the manach Yahweh, the servant of the Lord. The angel of the Lord misses the whole point.

It's a potential translation, but as we read there in Hebrews, and to which of the angels did he say? None of them.

And the word manach means messenger. We'll touch on the last Hebrew prophet in the Old Testament before we leave this, and that is Malachi.

And Malachi means my messenger. The suffix is a personal pronoun, my. Malachi, my messenger.

[13 : 15] And in a way, that is what the pre-incarnate Christ was. He was a messenger of the will of God to the people, and he appeared to his people.

You see it perhaps best in the way he dealt with Abraham. You read the chapters in the teens, or even go back to 12, when God called them out of out of the Chaldees, and promised to make him a great nation.

And later on, when he was a hundred, he still hadn't the offspring that was promised. And like the Lord and the way he operates, when it's all utterly hopeless, he acts, and he fulfills his word.

And that's what happened. Abraham and Sarah had a son, Yitzhak, laughter, because in their hearts they laughed, thought, this is not going to happen.

But it did, because God said it, and did it. And again and again, the messenger of the Lord appears, and he speaks to his people.

[14 : 41] And of course, he said so much to Abraham, because Abraham was a key figure, the father of the faithful, the father of believers, not only Jewish, but Gentiles too in time.

But then we've got to move on. and we mentioned Malachi, and we want to just remind ourselves that all the way through the history of Israel, you have God interacting with his people and promising to look after them.

history. And that's a very brief sketch of the yesterdays of history from the beginning, from the dawn of human history.

history. And it's good for us to explore these things for our spiritual benefit too. Well, Malachi closed off the ministry of the Hebrew prophets, and some of you will know there was a 400 year gap, a terrible gap of chaos in the world, in the then known world anyway, before there was a voice heard that the time for God's son to become man was near at hand.

And I want to look at that secondly, the changeless, divine, incarnate son. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today.

[16 : 23] So we move from yesterday, to today. And today encapsulates when he came to when he left this world as the ascended risen Lord.

And he himself emphasized the importance of today, today, today. I remember once in London doing outreach and spoke to a chap who was a student and we're speaking on the doorstep, we're going around doors and I mentioned to him, I quoted, today if you will hear his voice, hard and not yet hurt.

But he said, you could say that to me tomorrow. tomorrow. Yes, I said, but you're not promised tomorrow, today, if you will hear his voice.

And that's the way, that was true, that was the way, it left him speechless for a wee while. so I got my chance there, all the more. But that's the truth, the saviour himself emphasized the importance of the now of salvation, the day of salvation.

And of course, in the fullness of time, he came taking bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh in the miracle of the virgin conception and so on.

[18 : 01] And it's good for us to keep in mind this emphasis our saviour had, this today emphasis, the importance of it.

Now, some of us can look back a long time and we can say, I knew it, but I didn't do it. If you're like me, it was that way.

I knew it. It's not I didn't know, but I was brought up on it. But it was pushed to the side. And at the start of a new year, we want to remind ourselves, we may have unbelieving family, we may have friends, we may have relatives outside our immediate family circle who need to know the importance of hearing his voice.

And in a sense, today, if you will hear his voice in the Old Testament scriptures, is amplified by the Savior himself.

He told his own people that they were not recognizing the day of their visitation, particularly the leaders who knew better than they did.

[19 : 20] and they simply refused that it was necessary for him to suffer and die on the cross, not as the loser, but as the victor, and to offer that once unrepeatable sacrifice for sin.

through faith in him, we have new life in him. And his resurrection, of course, was such a vital part of the whole story, which, when he did rise, the authorities, the Jewish authorities, tried to stifle what was happening.

They were still against today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. The resurrection, let us ever remember, was real and true.

It happened, and it was the seal of his father's approval of his work. I want them to consider within this context, very briefly, the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was written.

Now, I'm saying that because I know very well the different opinions that are behind the scholarly commentaries.

[20 : 56] But I ask you, when you read it, you can't doubt but that it is to Hebrews. Hebrews. Not only has the name Hebrews appended to the book, to the letter, but everywhere it's about their history and what that was pointing to.

And the truth is in that context that this letter was written, there were many, many Jewish believers who were rejected by their families.

It still happens in the world today. I better not name names, but I know people who became followers who were Orthodox Jewish. And that was them.

Some would see the obituary in the newspaper. they lost their employment, they lost their security.

And that was happening to these folk. That's why the text we're looking at was slotted in here at this point. Because they were impoverished.

[22 : 15] If you go back to Hebrews 10, for example, you'll see there, I think it's Hebrews 10, 32, to about 39, somewhere there.

And it's about what they were dispossessed of and how they were persecuted for believing the truth in Jesus.

And we want to remember that there are many Christians today, not just Jewish, but Gentiles too, who are suffering all over the world, simply because they follow Jesus and they believe the gospel.

And we ought not to forget them as we head on in to this new year. You remember Paul himself encouraged people, Christians who had believed, Gentiles who had believed, to bring in funds, to collect funds, to send to the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea.

And sadly, in the world today, it's going on. The Lord's poor saints are Gentiles too, and many of them.

[23 : 40] But behind all this, God was working out his purpose. He was working the today of his people.

He was still steadfast in his love, in his mercy, in his grace, and in his power to supply their needs, even if it means other Christians have to do the job.

And it may be, for all I know, if there's only one person here who finds the financial constraints today pretty difficult, or some other threat that hangs over you.

I want to remind you under the Devon Bale, some Devon Bale folk out here, and I was quoting from William Cooper the last time I was with them, but there's a verse in God moves in a mysterious way as wonders to perform, and Cooper says, to the people of God in dark times, you fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy, and will break with blessing on your head.

Don't doubt it. So, moving on then to the last thing we're going to look at, and that is the changelessness of the divine incarnate son.

[25 : 25] we're told Jesus Christ the same yesterday, we looked at that briefly, today we looked at that, now we're thinking about the forever.

Hundreds of millions of the Lord's people are in glory, as spirits made perfect, their bodies, however they finished, are in the dust.

And, they are in glory, they behold the Lamb, wonderful it is. But see, in a sense, in a real sense, the best is yet to come, because the forever is really rooted in the resurrection, in the last day.

yes, it's true, they behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne, they worship there, but the forever brings us to the final state, the resurrection state of God's people.

Here, forever means forever, it means through everlasting ages. time as we know it, we'll not have clocks in heaven, in the final state, that's certain, because it's forever and ever.

[26 : 58] And, when you try, and maybe you have to get your head rounded, it just doesn't work, because we're so localized to a time, space, environment, and if we live our days out and we make it to a hundred or more, it's still very short.

Some of you will know this, who have been in the ministry. Many is a godly old saint, a woman, or a man, who was nearer a hundred than anything.

would say often to me, do you know, Mr. Cowie, it passed so quickly. It passed so quickly. And me, a young fellow then, it passed so quickly.

And that's the way. But forever means forever. The ages of the ages is what the original says. And we just say forever.

forever. And to bring this round to a conclusion, Paul himself dealt with the very subject of what happens at the resurrection because people were saying things that were way off target.

[28 : 23] You find it in 1 Thessalonians 4, remember, 14 to 18. and he's dealing with this because people were, Christians were grieving in a hopeless way.

they had lost sight of the apostolic emphasis that not only is death not the end for the Lord's people, they go in spirit to be with them, but better, they will be raised from the dead and fitted with a body that will not decay forever and ever.

Now, as to the science of that, we ain't got a clue, but we don't need to have a clue as long as he knows and he knows, and that's encouragement.

And I think we get an insight into this as we round it off, we get an insight into this when we think about the Lord himself, Jesus Christ, risen and exalted.

There were many things that he did in his resurrection state on earth. We haven't time to go in for them, I'm sure you've read them in the gospels, and the capacities are clearly a lot different.

[30 : 00] but the fact is, the Lord's people will have capacities then at the resurrection like his glorious body.

Towards the end of Philippians 3, you get it spot on, because Paul talks about us being transformed like unto his glorious body.

body. He doesn't stop short like unto his glorious body. When the dead are raised at Christ's return, they are fitted out with the resurrection body as their eyes.

They are clothed upon with immortality. and those who are alive are changed in the twinkling of an eye, and they must all meet the Lord in the air.

In that passage, I was referring to in Paul, in Thessalonians, and so we will forever be with the Lord.

[31 : 14] And what does he say? Comfort one another with these words. Even as you do. So, that's a bit of a thumbnail sketch on yesterday, today, and forever.

But I hope under God it will be of some use to you. And I think one of the things, and this is what I take to myself, I think, you see, the more we see what's coming, that the best is yet to come, it spurs us on to live our lives more and more for Christ.

You can't read the Apostle Paul, but you marvel at what he accomplished, what he did himself, how he impoverished himself.

sometimes we lose sight of what's staring us in the face, but he was so devoted to the Savior. Was he the loser?

Was he the loser? Not one bit, and neither would we be, if we are encouraged by what we've considered to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, changeless one.

[32 : 42] And maybe there's one person here today, you've not yet come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, let this be the now. Hear, and your soul shall live.

That's what the Bible says. That's what the Spirit says. Hear, and your soul shall live. Jesus still calls out today, if you will hear my voice.

Don't harden your heart. Come clean. Tell him of your folly and sin, and know that there's forgiveness with him, that he may be revered.

Amen.