

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER

One of the most elementary, as well as most important, principles of Bible study is, “comparing spiritual with spiritual.” If Christians would obey this principle, they would not be so easily carried about with divers and strange doctrines. Think for a moment of this expression, “carried about.” Poor untaught Christians in these perilous times! How many of them are being carried about with divers and strange doctrines. God’s teachers are to keep Christians from being “tossed to and fro, from being carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Ephesians 4:14. You know how the strong wind can toss an object to and fro and carry it about. Just so poor untaught Christians are tossed and carried by the sleight of clever men and women, into heresy and fanaticism.

It is significant that the exhortation of the Holy Spirit, “be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines,” found in Hebrews 13:9, immediately follows the statement, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever.” Surely this is one text that is being used over and over to lead sincere Christians, as well as many unsaved religious people, into some very strange doctrines. This is done by the sleight of cunning men who give an erroneous interpretation and a fanciful application of this verse of Scripture. Surely these are the days when false prophets are deceiving even the very elect.

Let us apply the elementary and important principle to which we referred. Applying it to the wonderful truth contained in Hebrews 13:8. And let us begin where this principle should begin, by examining the statement, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever,” in the light of other verses found in the same Hebrew Epistle:

Hebrews 2:9 . . . “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 death should taste death for every man.”

Hebrews 2:16 . . . “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.”

Now, note very carefully that Jesus Christ was made lower than the angels; and that He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Who is the Jesus Christ of yesterday? Yesterday must take us back in the history of Jesus Christ beyond the day that He was made of a woman in the little town of Bethlehem; yea, way back before Adam was made in the image of God. Christ is eternal, the beginning and the ending. Christ always was. As the eternal Christ He was not made. He was in the beginning with God. He was with God. He was God. He is before all things and by Him all things consist. He was made lower than the angels centuries and ages after He created the first angel. Therefore, we must admit that there is a sense in which the eternal Christ was never made and again a sense in which He was made. He made all things before He Himself was made. As the eternal Creator, He is the self-existent, uncreated One. If Jesus Christ was in the beginning, if He existed before He was made; then we must admit that a great change took place when He was made. A change suggests a difference. This difference should be considered when we examine the statement, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever.”

Now, let us carefully examine the statement, “He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” This took place at the time He was made. Before He was made He had not taken on Him the seed of Abraham. He had no human body then. Here then is the great mystery. Nearly 1900 years

after the death of Abraham, Jesus was born of Mary who was a descendant of Abraham. And yet about thirty years after Jesus Christ took on Him the seed of Abraham, He said to those who claimed also to be Abraham's seed, "Before Abraham was I am." John 8:58. Now, explain this seeming contradiction. The Son of God took on Him the seed of Abraham years after Abraham died and yet He existed long before Abraham was. Does not that teach us that Jesus Christ was the same and yet He was not the same? He voluntarily took a different form for the specific purpose of tasting death for every man. It behooved Him to suffer and to be raised from the dead. He was found in fashion as a man that He might be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But before He took upon Him the form of a servant for, this purpose, He was in the form of God. Philippians 2:5 to 8. What a change! What a difference! In order to compare spiritual with spiritual, this difference should be read into Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever." This principle will keep us from being tossed to and fro, from being carried about with the strange doctrines in these days of apostasy, when sound doctrine is found only in spots.

Here is another very interesting Scripture with light on our subject:

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Galatians 4:4.

When was Jesus Christ made of a woman? When did the Word become flesh and dwell among us? When the fullness of the time was come. Now, remember time was not reckoned in the eternal ages when the Only Begotten was in the bosom of the Father, sharing His eternal Divine glory. Before the world was, Christ was. The fullness of time was reckoned from the time God made that first promise of the Redeemer, about 4,000 years before Christ was made under the law, of a woman. "The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Read Genesis 3:14 and 15. This is the first promise of the coming Deliverer. In the third chapter of the last of the Old Testament prophecies we read one of the last promises of the One who was to come, "The Lord Whom ye seek shall suddenly appear in His holy temple." Malachi 3:1. Between the third of Genesis and the third of Malachi there are many promises of the Coming One who was to be the Lord in the form of the Seed of the woman, both God and man. He existed as God before He was made of a woman. He was made of a woman, when Israel dwelt under the Law dispensation. As the eternal One He gave to Israel the Law nearly 1,500 years before He was made under that same Law. As the invisible Lord He dealt with Israel under the Law nearly fifteen centuries before He was made under the Law, born of a woman as the King of Israel. Surely He was the King of Israel in the flesh in a different manner than He was their King while He was God in heaven. And any student of the Word of God should know that the Lord did not deal with Abel, Noah, Abraham and others, before the Law was added, like He did with Israel after the Law was given through Moses. Likewise any student of the Word should know that Christians today are not where Israel was, under the Law, for we are not under the Law, and therefore Christ is not dealing with members of His Church today as He dealt with Israel under the Law. Therefore, it is obvious that the dealings of Christ differ with different people in different dispensations, and therefore, Jesus Christ is not the same yesterday, and today and forever, as to His dealings with His people. When the Lord gave the Law at Mount Sinai, there was a most important change. When Christ died on the cross, there was another most important change, although that change was not fully appreciated or understood for some years after it took place, even by the apostles of Christ. Moreover, there are thousands of Christians today who neither appreciate nor understand the great change that took place at Calvary. II Corinthians 3:11 to 18. Romans 6:14.

If Jesus Christ was made under the Law, lived under the Law, and died under the law, and if the members of His Church today are not under the Law, then is it not apparent to even the most superficial student of the Word of God that Jesus of Nazareth did not live in the same dispensation as do the Christians today? Therefore must we not recognize that the Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, and today and forever, is not ministering to the members of His Body in Heaven as He ministered unto the Jews while He was under the Law here on earth? What believer today would be told to go show himself to the priest and take an offering as Moses commanded? Matthew 8:2. Where now is Moses' seat referred to by Christ? Matthew 23:1 to 3. Here is another verse of Scripture to compare with Hebrews 13:8.

Romans 15:8 . . . "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."

This verse does not say that Jesus Christ is a minister of the circumcision. He was. We want to emphasize the word "was." In the Church of Jesus Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. There was a time when the question asked in Romans 3:1, "What profit is there in circumcision," might have been answered as it is answered in the next verse, "Much in every way." Jesus Christ made of a woman, who was a Jew, was circumcised and worshipped while on earth with the circumcision, He said, "We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, which constituted the circumcision. Matthew 10:5 and Matthew 15:24. Remember that the twelve apostles were ministers to Jews before and after the death of Jesus Christ. For less than four years was Jesus Christ a minister of the circumcision. Before that time He was in Spirit form in heaven. He came down from heaven, not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. The Second Man is from heaven. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. He was despised and rejected of men. Above His cross they wrote, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." That same King of the Jews is now the Head of the Church, which is His Body. But He is not now what He once was, namely, the minister of the circumcision; therefore, there is a sense in which Jesus Christ is not the same yesterday and today and forever. So Jesus Christ does change. And there is to be another change, when He comes again to be received by His ancient people Israel. He will then again be the minister of the circumcision, but not as He was at His first advent. This leads us to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is the same eternal unchangeable Lord as to His essential Deity, but changing in form for different ministries. Therefore we see that the study of the statement, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever," is a dispensational study.

Any religious theory taught on the grounds that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever, without the recognition of the dispensational changes, may cause even Christians to be carried about or tossed to and fro with divers and strange doctrines. This will cause the mixture of Law and Grace that will frustrate the grace of God, or it will produce a perverted message by the mixture of Kingdom of Heaven and Body truth that will subvert the soul. Thousands are making this blunder today. The risen Lord has spoken to the Church through Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.

To say that Jesus Christ was the same when He was in the form of God, before His incarnation, as He was when He was Jesus of Nazareth a Man approved of God by miracles is so obviously untrue that it is not worthy of a second thought. To say that Jesus Christ, now in heaven, is the same in His relation to the members of His Body as He was in His relation to the Jews while He was Jesus of Nazareth is likewise untrue and absurd. therefore He is not the same yesterday and today and forever. The Lord's message and program for the Gentile members of His body is not the same as presented to Israel through Peter on the day of Pentecost.

The understanding of three other verses of Scripture should safeguard any Christian against any erroneous interpretation of the statement, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever."

First. I Peter 1:11 . . . "The Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

Second. II Corinthians 5:19 . . . "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Third. Colossians 1:27 . . . "This mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory."

First. The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament Prophets before Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh.

Second. For a few years, during the days of the earthly ministry of Christ, God was in Christ

Third. Now Christ is in the believer.

First. While the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament Prophets, Christ was in the form of God. He was not then a man.

Second. God spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets and then He spake in His Son. Hebrews 1:1 and 2. When God was in Christ, Christ was both God and man and the works that Christ did were to bear witness that the Father had sent Him. John 5:36. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you (men of Israel) by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." Acts 2:22. This was a witness by miracles. A Divine Man among Jews. The Jews require a sign. I Corinthians 1:22. God proved that this Man was Divine, by miracles and wonders and signs:'

The greatest of all miracles was the resurrection of this Divine-Man, who proved his statement, "I have power to lay down my life; and I have power to take it up again." John 10:17 to 19. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Acts 4:33. These apostles said to the Jews: "Let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:36. The unanswerable proof of this was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies . . . Far above all principallity, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Ephesians 1:20 to 22. This Lord and Christ at God's right hand is the Man Christ Jesus. But God needs not to prove Him by miracles and wonders and signs. Every effort to demonstrate the Deity of Jesus Christ within the realm of natural science by an attempt to duplicate or perpetuate the signs of Christ and His apostles will only bring reproach upon His name and often peril to the souls of those who are deceived. No one can walk on the water or calm the storms or feed the multitudes with a handful of bread.

Before we consider the Third Scripture, "Christ in the Gentile the hope of glory," let us summarize for a moment by considering the three-fold state of Christ to which we have referred. You answer this question for yourself, "What is the difference between Jesus Christ as He now is in heaven with His Father and as He was before His incarnation?" Surely a great difference; a great change. Then He is not the same yesterday and today and forever. Again what is the difference between Jesus Christ as He was on earth and as He now is in heaven? He has the same body, and yet a different body. He is not now engaged in doing what He did here on earth. A

great change, a real difference. Then He is not ever the same. And we might ask, how will He appear when He returns to take David's throne?

Third. "Christ in you." What a difference between Christ in the Gentile and Jesus of Nazareth a man in the midst of the Jews approved by God with miracles. "Christ in you" is miracle enough. The great miracle of regeneration is the greatest of all miracles; for it means something more than temporary relief from physical pain; it means eternal life in a body like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer on this earth, though conscious of this mystery, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is conscious of a body of humiliation, subject to the same pains and aches that afflict the body of the sinner who is in the world having no hope of glory. Disease and death are no respecters of persons. Saint and sinner alike reach death through disease.

Again the Lord Jesus Christ is not now ruling the earth with a rod of iron; but He most assuredly will do that very thing when He comes back to this earth. This will be another change in the dealings of Christ with humanity. Before that change the bodies of the Lord's saints will be changed like unto the glorious body of the risen Christ.

In conclusion we would ask that you kindly read II Corinthians 5:16 and dwell with emphasis on the word, "henceforth." "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

Study the statement, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever," in the light of II Corinthians 5:16, and no doubt the new light will safeguard you against divers and strange doctrines, and you will learn that with the revelation of the mystery, "Christ in you," sign miracles waned and passed out of the program of God and have had no part in the program of God since the authority of the Church on earth passed out of the hands of the Jews into the hands of the Gentiles. The human connecting link in this transition was Timothy, who was part Jew and part Gentile, who was at first circumcised because of the Jews; but with the death of Paul was not to carry on sign miracles of the apostles; for he himself was told to take a material remedy for his oft sicknesses. I Timothy 5:23. Certainly then faithful Timothy made no attempt to perpetuate the sign miracles of Christ and His apostles to prove that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

In the message which follows we shall deal with the question, "Is healing of the body in the atonement?" There are thousands of religious people who say that healing of the body was in the atonement in the Apostolic Church, and as Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever; therefore this healing must still be in the atonement. These atonement healing teachers state that any one who has sufficient faith can look to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the healing of a physical disease just the same as they can look for the saving of the soul. One of the Lord's servants has said, "I can dismiss this with one short statement and that is, that if this were true, incorruptibility would be available for the believer without the return of the Lord."

There is no Scripture instructing a sinner to pray to God for salvation, in connection with the gospel of grace revealed by Christ to Paul for the Gentile. One hundred percent of those who look to the sacrifice of Christ for salvation have their souls saved, saved forever. They shall never again die spiritually. Then if healing of the body is in the Atonement, one can look to the Cross and be immediately healed forever, without praying for healing. The majority of those who look to Christ for healing are not healed. To be sure, if a believer is raised up from sickness in answer to the prayer of faith, the answered prayer is on the grounds of the shed blood of the Son of God. But the very same person may die the next month or next year with the same disease or some other disease. Every believer has eternal life; but only the return of the Lord will keep

any believer from suffering physical death. Therefore, to say that healing is in the atonement as the salvation of the soul is in the atonement is altogether absurd.

Christ bare our sins in His own body on the tree. This word translated “bare” is by no means the same word used in Matthew 8:17: “Himself took our infirmities, and bare sicknesses.” There are more than fifty Scriptures that Christ died for our sins; but not one that He died for our sickness. Bearing sickness while He was offering Himself as King to Israel, His earthly people, is altogether different from bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. The word used in Matthew 8:17 is the word used in several other verses, such as Romans 15:1 . . . “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.”

The “sign” healings of Christ and His apostles were the signs of apostles. II Corinthians 12:12 and John 5:36 and Hebrews 2:3 and 4. To certain ones in the days of the apostles were given by the Holy Spirit certain gifts: “To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.” I Corinthians 12:9. It is one thing for a faithful saint to pray earnestly to the Lord for healing in this age; but it was quite a different thing for a certain saint to exercise his gift of healing during the days of the apostles. This gift cannot be found in the Church today. Neither can the sign healings or other miracles of the apostles be found among Church members today. But many of God’s children are restored to health in answer to prayer.

We have already seen that Scripture must be studied in the light of other Scriptures. This is true concerning James 5:15 . . . “The prayer of faith shall save the sick.” The word here translated sick is “kamno” and is not used elsewhere. It means to grow tired and faint from toil. The writer of this epistle was a minister of the circumcision. Galatians 2:9. He addressed this epistle to the Jews. James 1:1. His own statement is, “My sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.” Acts 15:19, Acts 21:25. Trouble not Gentile disciples of Christ with the ceremonies belonging to Jews. This would include anointing with oil.

Every child of God will resort to fervent prayer in the time of sickness or any trouble, and should be faithful in prayer for other saints who are sick. Some saints are raised up from sickness, some linger months and years, some die suddenly. Some of the most faithful and consecrated saints remain sick in spite of continual prayer. The prayer of faith does not always save the sick. Many saints are raised to health and strength by faithful physicians. But every saint should be willing to say, “Though our outward man perish (rot thoroughly), yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” II Corinthians 4:16

Christians pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” and then go out to earn it by the sweat of the brow. They should pray for health and exercise the same common sense and use every scientific and helpful material agency that the Lord has placed at their disposal.

If the miraculous sign healings of Jesus Christ are to be perpetuated or duplicated because He is the same yesterday and today and forever, then there is no Scriptural authority for limiting the bodily healing to Christians. The Lord Jesus Christ healed the bodies of those who did not even know who He was. John 5:13. John 9:35 and 36. With one or two exceptions those who were healed by Christ and His apostles were not the disciples of Christ before they were healed and so far as we know, the majority of them never became His disciples after they were healed. Moreover these sign healings were general; there was no hit and miss proposition such as we find in healing circles today. Matthew 8:16, Matthew 9:35. Luke 4:40, Acts 5:16. “ALL” “EVERY ONE.”

Carefully read the twelfth chapter of Acts and explain why faithful James was killed and faithful Peter was spared. Note the element of unbelief in the hearts of those early Christians. They prayed many hours for Peter’s deliverance. God delivered him. But note these three

remarks: "Thou art mad." The Greek is, "Thou art raving as a maniac." In other words, after they had prayed for Peter's deliverance and he was delivered and Rhoda told these earnest praying saints that God had answered their prayers, they said, "You are crazy." Again they said, "It is his angel . . ." They saw him for themselves and then what? "They were astonished." Acts 12:15 to 18. And yet certain prophets and healers tell us today about the great faith of the early Church in contrast with our little faith which is responsible for the lack of miracles among Christians today. But why did James die and Peter live? Why do some faithful saints die today after many earnest prayers for their recovery?

"Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Romans 8:23. If the redemption of the body is for the believer today, then the day of redemption spoken of in Ephesians 1:14 and Ephesians 4:30 has already taken place and the resurrection is passed. But the sanitariums, sick chambers and cemeteries witness that this is not true. Until the Lord Jesus shall return for His own to change these bodies of humiliation, no variety of religious cosmetics can make a "cosmos" out of the "chaos" body of any believer. Therefore we shall continue to groan within ourselves and until the Redeemer comes with the day of redemption the death rate of both saints and sinners shall continue to be one apiece.