

The Christ of the Centuries

Hebrews 13:8 HCSB Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Introduction

The larger context of this passage deals with issues of change.

The author had been saying that the Levitical priesthood of the Old Covenant had been in large part superseded by the atoning work of Christ. In our parlance it had been rendered “maleh”: fulfilled, accomplished, completed and no longer necessary.

He had gone to great lengths to demonstrate the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over the Levitical priesthood due to the simple fact that all those previous priests had sinned and, since “the wages of sin is death”, had died.

The eleventh chapter poignantly dealt with the multitudes that had come and gone; all demonstrating their faith but all dying without having the opportunity to see the Messiah for whom they had so patiently waited.

The church to whom the letter is initially addressed was persecuted. In the immediate context, he was speaking of the church’s spiritual leaders who had been martyred for the faith and it is within that historical context that the Spirit says in verse 7,

- **Hebrews 13:7 HCSB** Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.

These few chapters represent thousands of years of faithful believers, all striving to achieve d’vekut, all struggling to be holy and pleasing to their Lord; an unbroken chain of faith that extends through the annals of history; a testament to the fleeting nature of human life.

It is within this context that the author, with a sigh of relief, exhales “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

To the modern believer this comes as a tremendous source of relief. As the pace of human science and technology has increased, so it seems that our lives have sped up. Albert Einstein once said,

“The pace of scientific progress today is so fast that somebody might be declaring that a thing cannot be done altogether, when he is already interrupted by somebody else, who has just done that very thing.”

In the 100 years that have passed since his breakthrough scientific discoveries, the rate of scientific progress has even accelerated. Indeed, there are estimates that on an average our knowledge has doubled every 15 years— and not only recently, but since the 17th century. As a result of such exponential growth, 80 to 90 percent of all scientists who have ever lived are alive today.

As the prophet Daniel predicted around 536 BC, the end of time has been marked by people roaming about while knowledge increases.¹ The unfortunate thing is that the increase in knowledge has not been accompanied by a concomitant increase in wisdom. The knowledge has not brought peace but ever more complex, ethically entangled problems! Consider:

- The dilemmas brought by in vitro fertilization!
- Economic changes have altered perspectives on many issues in the allocation and distribution of medical care.
- Changes in the political scene and the increased participation of organized groups have altered the abortion debate.

¹ Daniel 12:4

- Advances in neonatal intensive care have created new complexities in issues surrounding death and dying.
- The problems surrounding abortion are intimately intertwined with those surrounding the care of the dying.
- Issues in genetics directly relate to those in organ transplants.
- The heroic measures to which doctors can avail themselves are now pushing the boundaries of what it means to be alive!

With the growing, fast-paced, dizzying nature of our post-modern lives laid before us, isn't the author's reminder of the unchanging nature of our King a delight? Isn't it a tremendous comfort and source of peace?

All is not changing; He abides!

All is not fleeting; Christ is the same!

What He did – He still does.

John tells us

- [John 1:1-4 HCSB](#) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was with God in the beginning. (3) All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. (4) Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men.

Moses tells us,

- [Genesis 2:7 HCSB](#) Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

The word “formed” is the Hebrew word “yatsar” and it literally means “to squeeze into shape.” Tell me, was it transcendent, omnipresent God the Father, whom no man has ever seen, who dwells in unapproachable light and is described as “invisible”², was it He who took the dust, squeezed it into shape and breathed life into it? Not likely.

Was it the Ruach' ha Kodesh, the Holy Spirit, whose nature is described as “not having flesh or bone”³, who molded that red dirt into the original golem? I don't think so.

It was Jesus the Son of God, the immanent aspect of the Godhead, the “image of the invisible God,”⁴ who literally shaped Adam into existence. It was not some distant, cold, and heartless act. It was proximate, intimate, down and dirty. It was an act of personal interest and affection.

- It was He who came walking in the Garden after Adam and Eve fell.
- It was He who first spoke to our father Abraham and turned him from a pagan goy into the original Jew.
- It was He who met Moses on Mount Sinai and ate with our noblemen.⁵
- It was His finger carving the commands on the tablets.
- It was Jesus who wrestled with Jacob.
- He met Joshua near Jericho with a sword in His hand identified Himself as the Commander of the Lord's army.
- He walked with the children of Israel in the fiery furnace.
- He walked the hills and valleys of Canaan, teaching us God's ways, feeding our hungry and healing our sick.

² 1 John 4:12; 1 Timothy 6:16; Colossians 1:15

³ Luke 24:39

⁴ Colossians 1:15

⁵ Exodus 24:11

The same Jesus who was willing to go to the cross for your sake is alive and well today. Through the centuries He was shown up again and again, healing, leading, caring; oftentimes terrifying us with His holiness.

Do you think that someone who showed up for thousands of years with both His external attributes and His message unchanged is about to change today? Jesus appeared on Mount Sinai and gave us Halakha, the religious law, around 1550 BC. He then showed up a millennium and a half later saying, "Don't think I came to abrogate that law". Do you think such a Person will have changed over the last 2,000 years?

The help that He gave all those faithful people listed in Hebrews chapter 11 is extended to you today. The Jesus who created the world, clothed our sinful bodies, provided a means to be justified before God under Halakha, extended the idea of whom we should love from a single person, to a family, to a tribe, to a nation, and finally to all the world – THAT JESUS STILL REIGNS!

He cannot be outgrown.

He cannot be suspended or superseded.

He cannot be left behind.

His resources will never be exhausted.

His glory cannot be obscured.

He is equal to our ever-growing and expanding needs.

What He taught - still applies.

All that enters into modern Christian thought and life is the natural and essential outgrowth of what He was and did and taught. The historic Christ is the touchstone of the Faith. Teachers will come and go; Jesus Christ remains.

Theological fads ebb and wane. Remember the huge ruckus that people made over the "Prayer of Jabez"? The doctrine of pretribulational rapture, popularly expressed in the writings of Tim LaHaye in the fictional series called "Left Behind" did not even exist as a true, accepted line of reasoning before the 18th century.

Yet, as these fads ebb and wane, the fundamental truth of the Gospel; of the Kingship of Christ; of the steadfast nature of His Church; of the core teachings of the Apostles remains strong and healthy.

This is why we are told to remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of our Lord and Savior given through our apostles.⁶ Let's turn there shall we? Turn to 2 Peter chapter 3.

- [2 Peter 3:2-9 HCSB](#) so that you can remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets, and the commandment of our Lord and Savior *given* through your apostles. (3) First, be aware of this: scoffers will come in the last days to scoff, following their own lusts, (4) saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation." (5) They willfully ignore this: long ago the heavens and the earth existed out of water and through water by the word of God. (6) Through these the world of that time perished when it was flooded by water. (7) But by the same word the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (8) Dear friends, don't let this one thing escape you: with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years like one day. (9) The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

⁶ 2 Peter 3:2

Peter says, make sure you remember the words of the prophets and the apostles because no matter how much people scoff, no matter how the world changes, the Lord's promises are sure – whether they be for our good or our ill. Skip down a few verses to:

- [2 Peter 3:17 HCSB](#) Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of the immoral and fall from your own stability.

The unchanging nature of the Messiah and the immutability of His Word should enable us to be stable. As the world changes and spins and transforms into all kinds of things around us, we are standing in the eye of the storm. We can be calm and sure of our faith because the Christ of today is the Christ of yesterday. Let time bring with it what it may, we are assured of His fidelity.

What He was – He will be again.

The Godhead existed through eternity past in splendid, transcendent isolation. At some point the Father said, "Let there be." The Holy Spirit empowered and the Son enacted the creation of the first immanent Being – Christ Himself in flesh and bone, transmuted from omnipresent glory to finitude. He was truly the "firstfruits"⁷ of the universe. As the power of the Holy Spirit continued flowing through Him the Son created all other things.⁸ Galaxies filled with stars, black holes and planets were strewn profligately across space. Angels, cherubs, and seraphim, strange and mysterious beasts came into being.

Have you ever wondered how the Devil could ever hope to beat God? Have you ever wondered if perhaps he were simply insane? I believe that Lucifer was one of the first creatures that Jesus created.⁹ I believe that when Lucifer first opened his eyes and saw Jesus in His immanent aspect, He made the same mistake that the rest of us did. John says

- [John 1:10 HCSB](#) He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him.

The Devil looked at Jesus and thought to himself "Hmm! I could do that! I could run things!"

- [Isaiah 14:13-14 HCSB](#) ..."I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the *gods'* assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. (14) I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

Isn't that what the Pharisees thought? Isn't that what Pilate thought? Didn't Pilate ask Jesus,

- [John 19:10 HCSB](#) ..."You're not talking to me? Don't You know that I have the authority to release You and the authority to crucify You?"

Jesus answered Pilate as He answers all usurpers of His authority. "You have no authority over Me at all."

This God/Man Jesus is the original King.

He holds the title de facto by reason of our creation.

He is our King because He is our God. He is our King because He was the original king of Salem, the king of Peace, the king of pre-historical Jerusalem.

He is our King because He bought us off the slave market of sin. He redeemed us and thus owns us twice over!

He was always meant to be our King.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23

⁸ John 1:3

⁹ Ezekiel 28:13

- **Philippians 2:9-11 HCSB** For this reason God also highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow--of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth-- (11) and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Note the conclusion Paul arrives at from this concept. The very next verse advises that we obediently work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

He has immortality in His hands.

He holds the keys to death and hell.

He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the End.

He holds all things and of Him, through Him, and to Him do all things exist.

He is God and as long as He exists, the future of the talmidim is secure.