

# The Unchanging Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] The same yesterday, today and forever. Generally speaking, my friends, sameness is considered to be dull and quite uninteresting.

Men, by and large, they like what is novel, what is new and exciting. I know that it is more clearly seen than in the ongoing demand for change and variation in different fields of life, in fashion, in entertainment, in sport, even in eating habits.

It is in every avenue of human life there is this desire for change and for variation. And the rapidity with which society itself has changed over the past two decades is quite staggering and this pace shows no sign in its theme of slackening.

When Paul, the apostle, when he came to Athens, you remember, with the gospel of the grace of God, a very interesting comment is made in Acts chapter 17, verse 21, on the attitude of the Athenians to things in general.

Namely, for all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

[ 1 : 30 ] Novelty. For this novel and perhaps sensational interest in them enormously. It was something that greatly attracted them. And yet when the apostle proclaimed the most sensational tidings of all, the gospel of the grace of God, they brushed it aside as being quite unworthy of their consideration.

Now then, we are not for a moment advocating dullness or dreariness in the presentation of the gospel message. We cannot for a moment imagine that there was anything dull or unattractive about the way in which Paul presented that gospel to the Athenian people.

But we are bound to say this, that the very glory of the gospel message is that it remains essentially the same. In the midst of the changing passions and desires among men and women, in the nature of the case, change is of course inevitable in this world.

It is part of the pattern of life and part of the pattern of man's own being. And this is what makes heaven's message, I think, so grand and so exciting.

I am Jehovah. We read in the Old Testament in the book of Malachi, I am Jehovah. I change not. I am here in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever.

[ 3 : 02 ] We know that some well-meaning Christian people down the centuries, conscious of the sameness of the gospel and the sameness of Christ and the Christian message, I'm sure to remedy this by the introduction of various gimmicks and innovations in the hope that this would make their message more universally acceptable and more palatable perhaps to their fellow men.

But as often as not, such efforts have proved self-defeating and counterproductive gimmickry and an attractive presentation of the content of the gospel are two very different things.

And a clear distinction should be made between those things. Now, the words that we are presented with here are challenging and exciting.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. And I want to make one or two comments on these words. The first principle, head, I want to leave with you is that the past is unintelligible apart from the fact that Jesus Christ was.

The past is unintelligible apart from the fact that Jesus Christ was. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday. We all like to penetrate into the past, do we not?

[ 4 : 26 ] We find in our own day that there is a great fascination in people searching out their roots, going to their roots and knowing their roots.

And so there is tremendous natural fascination among people who are delving into the past and knowing what the past has to tell them, what they can learn about the past.

And remember that Christ and his gospel are not only firmly rooted in history, but firmly rooted in prehistory.

And this, of course, is what makes it so unique, what makes the person of Jesus Christ so unique, that he is rooted in prehistory. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday.

For one thing, we know that he was before all events. He was there before time. Then I was with him.

[ 5 : 28 ] We read in the book of Proverbs, the Old Testament, and we cannot but conclude that it is a reference to the Father and the Son, God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then I was by him, as one brought up with him. I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.

These words are used after these other words are spoken. I was set up from everlasting. Then I was with him, as one brought up along with him.

He was before all things. And again, we have this doctrine. We have it brought before us in the New Testament. And he was before all things. He was before the creation.

He was there from before the beginning of things, as we know them in our world. He was before the beginning of events. But then, too, we have to say that he was in the beginning of events, when things were made, when God resolved to create the world.

[ 6 : 40 ] John the Apostle, in his first letter, for instance, he gives us some light. In his gospel, he gives us some light on this, in the very opening word of the gospel.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. All things were created by him.

And without him was not anything made that was made. The title, of course, word is used specifically by John and by no one else.

And it's generally accepted that he is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. For in that chapter, he goes on to teach about him and about his work in the world.

And Paul, again in Colossians, he speaks the same language, but he tells us that by him all things were created. So not only was he before the beginning of events, but he was in the beginning of events.

[ 7 : 46 ] And then too, we have to assert that he was at the end, if we can put it this way, he was at the end of the first beginning.

By that I mean that when man rebelled against heaven, when the first covenant had Adam rebelled against heaven and went his own way and did his own thing, when it would seem as if the hope of mankind died, in that act of rebellion.

We find that he was there, God was there, because when we speak of Jesus Christ and when we speak of God, we are speaking of the one God, the one indivisible God.

When that happened, we read in Genesis, that God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. And God called to Adam and said, Where art thou? He was still there.

He hadn't withdrawn himself from the realm of human behaviour. He was still interested in what went on in human activity.

[ 8 : 54 ] He looked down and he saw all that was happening. That didn't cause him to turn in upon himself and to retreat from the world of man.

And so we are not only to assert that he was before the beginning and that he was in the beginning, but that he was also at the very end of that first beginning that ended so catastrophically.

And I think also we can say that he was the focal point of a new beginning. That seems clearly to be suggested to us by what God says to Adam in the book of Genesis.

When he speaks of the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent. This reference has always been taken by evangelical and conservative scholars to refer to the coming Messiah.

The coming of Messiah, the seed of the woman, into the world. And this would be his specific activity, his specific work. He would bruise Satan's head. He would destroy his works.

[ 10 : 08 ] The enemy, the devil who had been successful in man's fall, would himself be overthrown at length.

And so deliverance would come through the Messiah to the human race. Now this, I believe, is the fundamental kitchen of the word of God that Jesus Christ was yesterday.

And we firmly believe that the past is quite unintelligible. No matter how intelligent men, otherwise intelligent men, try to explain the past to us.

We are persuaded that the past is totally and completely unintelligible apart from the fact that God was, that Jesus Christ was.

This is the hope and this is the confidence of the Church of God, the people of God, in every age. And we cannot give any intelligible account of the past apart from this.

[ 11 : 17 ] Jesus Christ, the same yesterday. That then is our first principle here, that the past is unintelligible apart from the fact that Jesus Christ was.

My second principle here simply that the present is meaningless apart from the fact that Jesus Christ is.

Jesus Christ, the same today. You see, in spite of the feelings of gloom and mere despair which may be gripping the hearts of men, and we haven't far to seek, we haven't far to look, to see how gloom and mere despair is gripping the hearts of men in view of the events of past weeks in Russia. The events of recent months in America when their mission failed to space in such a disastrous way.

We cannot help but see the gloom and despair that is gripping the hearts of men and women generally. What is going to happen? What is going to happen to the rest? Yes. But it's natural that such thoughts would be prominent in men's minds.

[ 12 : 33 ] Certainly none of us know what God will permit in his own wisdom and goodness. But we are perfectly, absolutely persuaded of this. That God will not give over his world to be destroyed by the hands of men.

The present is meaningless. Indeed it is despairing apart from this fact that God is, that Jesus Christ is the same.

We have to assert in the basis of scripture in his connection that Jesus Christ is the sovereign head of the nations. He is the sovereign head of the nations of this world.

God has given to him the nations of this world to be his possession. And on the basis of this his church and his people are to go forth to disciple the nations in his name and by his authority go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Because he is after all the head of the nations he disposes of all things in accordance with his good pleasure. We may be mystified. We may be overwhelmed by the inscrutable happenings of life, the events of providence.

[ 13 : 51 ] But yet we can never afford to lose the sight of this. That Jesus Christ is the sovereign head of the nations. And one day the nations of this world will become the nations of our God and of his Christ.

Is Jesus Christ the same today? But not only is the sovereign head of the nations but as scripture asserts he is also the alone king over his church.

I have him, we sang together in Psalm 2, I have set him, I appointed him to be king over Zion. I have made him my king over my own church.

And he exercises this authority. He exercises this office of kingship in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

In past times men have sought to dispose him of his kingship. In this age there are very many in our own society who would seek to do likewise to remove as they used to say the crown rights of Jesus Christ from his own house.

[ 15 : 14 ] And there are many with whom we rub shoulders day by day who deny outrightly that he is king in any fear of life. But let God be true and every man a liar.

Jesus Christ the same today. He is the sovereign head of the nations, the alone king over his own church. And in this connection we have to remind ourselves that he is the one mediator, the one saviour between men and God, between God and men.

Again we are here crossing swords with probably the majority of people in society. You know yourself I didn't elaborate on it.

That people will teach as they do that there are many different ways to God. We are all going by the same route, by different routes into the same focal point.

We are using different means and different methods and different religions, different expressions of our manhood and womanhood to get to God. But eventually we will all get there in different ways by different routes.

[ 16 : 31 ] that is not the teaching of God's word. However, however, we may reject this or feel aggrieved about it, yet it has to be asserted there is one mediator between God and men, the man

Christ Jesus.

There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. our authority in asserting this is and must be God's own word and to say otherwise is to show utter disloyalty to the word that God has left in our possession to be a lamp unto all feet and a light and to all paths. Jesus Christ the same and no amount of arguing by men in high or low station will make any difference to this truth that he is the same today in that connection as he was yesterday.

The one mediator between God and men. and in this connection we are also to assert that he is the sole intercessor with God the Father because he has been raised to that position of honour by the Father himself.

Him the Father have exalted to his own right hand to be a priest and a saviour. We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities but one who is in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

[ 18 : 15 ] And on this basis we are to come with boldness to a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. So then the present is meaningless it is despairing apart from the fact that Jesus Christ is.

Jesus Christ is at the very centre of human life however powerfully men may deny this reality this is the truth of God just of the past is unintelligible apart from him so the present is meaningless if men will dispose of him.

The third principle ahead in this connection I want to leave with you is simply that the future is unrelieved gloom apart from the fact that Jesus Christ will be.

If Jesus Christ has no part in the future well there is no future but again here the word of God corrects us in our thinking if our thinking is wrong for it says that Jesus Christ is the same forever the same tomorrow and all the tomorrows that will follow the days to come we have to remind ourselves that he will continue to be the director of world events.

I think there's a particular relevance in our own day when so many as we said a moment ago when so many tend to the utmost of gloom and almost despair with regard to the world the direction which the world is going.

[ 20 : 02 ] One understands perfectly why men should feel in that way why they should feel so overwhelmed so overwhelmed the world they imagine stands on the very brink of disaster and that disaster may welcome any moment.

Well that is very true if there is no supernatural omnipotent director of world events and this is where Christian people have to be firm in their faith with regard to the events of the world.

all those events are divine events they are unfolding as divine events God permits disasters to happen and he works his own purposes through these events and he seeks to show men that the reins of government are firmly held in his hand.

There have been over the past history of mankind there have been those who endeavored to throw the world upside down and to bring men everywhere into submission to themselves and God in his own time he pushed them gently to one side because he was directing the affairs of the world.

And then too we have to remember that he is the consummator that Jesus Christ is the consummator of the world history. He is the one who will at length bring it to a close as scripture so eloquently points out to us.

[ 21 : 48 ] He is the one who will call on the world to come to an end when his time comes. And in this connection we have also to remind ourselves that Jesus Christ is the judge of the human race will be the judge of the human race and will call the human race to come into his presence.

The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son and we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that we may receive according as we have done in the body whether it be good or whether it be bad.

And we also remind ourselves that Jesus Christ will be the object of the saints adoration throughout eternity. It is not only in the gospel dispensation as we enjoy the blessings and the privileges and the favors of gospel messages that we adore him that we worship him that we witness him that we witness for him but also in the eternity that lies before us we shall every eye shall see him and every believing heart will adore him forever and ever unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and made us kings and priests unto our God to him be glory and majesty dominion and power both now and forever.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. now let's say in a word what are the practical implications for ourselves in these words?

What lessons are we to draw from this statement of scripture which we are bound to accept and to believe and to act upon?

[ 23 : 50 ] How can we relate this to our own ongoing Christian lives? Well I think there are two matters emphasised for us here in the context with regard to these words.

The first is that we are to remember those engaged in the administration of God's word. Remember them who have the rule over you who have spoken unto you the word of God whose faith follows considering the end of their conversation.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever and I take that remembering of them to be especially and particularly a prayerful remembrance.

Those whom God has commissioned to bring the word of God the message of the gospel to you you are to remember them prayerfully if a preacher of the word were asked in what way can your people best remember you in what way can they best bear your burden with you are immediately in answer by praying by bearing my burden with me at God's throne remember them who have the rule over you who speak unto you the word of life.

This is a practical ongoing duty for God's people with regard to those who are engaged in administrating the word of life to them.

[ 25 : 27 ] And then of course the other practical matter that comes before us here is to consider the essence of the message they proclaim insofar as that message is scriptural and if the basis of that message is Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever then it is strictly scriptural and so the duty of every Christian believer is to consider the essence of that message Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever and it's their duty to consider it for different reasons so that they will be more for one thing more deeply devoted to the person of Jesus Christ but you and I will be more deeply devoted to the person of Jesus Christ we can never never become too deeply devoted to the glorious person of the

Son of God we see before us one who loved us everlastingly and the more we learn of him from his own word the more we should be devoted to him for all that he is in himself for all that he has done in his own person Christ loved the church he gave himself for it his love is something that is ongoing in relation to the life of the world and the life of the Christian believer as well and so his interest remains constant and remains the same in every time and in every age and as we are given as we engage in his duty to consider the end of the preacher's conversation that is Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever we are to do this so that we will be more deeply devoted to his glorious person and we have to do it also so that we will be more zealously committed to his cause and to his gospel we cannot be too deeply committed to the gospel of Jesus

Christ to witnessing to his gospel to showing our zeal in different ways and seeking to bring the influence of that gospel to bear upon others with whom we come into contact in the course we are to be zealous in seeking to promote that gospel and project it by all the means in our power and only as we consider increasingly the message that is proclaimed can we do this we are also to do it so that we are more firmly established in the word of Christ more fully persuaded of the authority of that word that God has given it to us so that our faith may be strong in the face of the many things that militate against our faith in the world in which we live this only as we are increasingly and more firmly established in that word and in the authority which that word brings to us that we can project the kind of witness that

Jesus Christ wants us to project in the life in the world in which we dwell and so my dear believing people go forth with this conviction that you have a Lord and Master who is the same the same yesterday the same today the same forever the Lord whom you serve is the Lord whom your Father served before you it is the Lord whom our children will serve after us it is the Lord and Master whom we will adore and worship forever and ever in that glory which he has prepared for all those who love him and who will be with him in heaven Amen and may he add his blessing to our meditation together in this world shall we pray O Lord our God we give thee thanks that we come before a God who is the same a God who has not changed in any way who will not change at this time and who will not change tomorrow we can be assured as we go forward that thou wilt meet us and meet with thy people tomorrow when they are faced with their own different perplexities and the instrutable providences of life and so do thou strengthen and fortify your faith in the knowledge of this and may we go on from strength to strength until we at last appear before thee in Zion go with

us from thine house now remain in our midst throughout the day and presence thyself with us and with all thy people again as they gather in the evening to worship thee we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen