

Text: Heb. 13:8

Title: "Jesus Christ in Hebrews: Yesterday, Today, and Forever"

Time: 11/3/2013 pm

Place: NBBC

Intro: David Martin Lloyd-Jones ministered in a day in which many sermons were put into print, similar to the way they are available today online at websites like sermonsaudio.com. We are a bit behind our times, I guess, in that we have started putting sermon notes into print in bulletins of weeks past so that if a Sunday is missed, you need not do without the truth of the message that God laid on your pastor's heart for the morning you missed.

I include on those notes, as you may have noticed, a word of caution that Lloyd-Jones cites from George Whitefield, one of the greatest preachers of all time, about the effort to put sermons into print. Lloyd-Jones writes in his book *Preachers and Preaching*, "A man came — I think it was actually in Philadelphia — on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction — the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.'

"To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters." I believe that to be true in regard to recorded sermons as well. There is a work of God present in the gathering of the

saints to hear the word of God in person that cannot be reproduced in print or online. It is an exchange between the Spirit-filled preacher and the Spirit-enabled listener that can only be experienced in the local assembly the Bible calls *church*.

But I do believe that I have found the one exception to Whitefield's rule, a sermon in print that still has all the thunder and lightning it ever did. It is a sermon that was never preached, only written, and it came from a pen endowed with the miraculous authoritative power of inspiration. It is a sermon that is the very word of God. It is the Book of Hebrews.

Note that the author calls his work a word of exhortation put into writing (Heb. 13:22-23). He mentions that it was brief. I did a little experiment in light of this infallible doctrine, that the Book of Hebrews is a brief word of exhortation, and developed an estimate that reading the book of Hebrews out loud at one sitting in a way intelligible to others listening would take about 50 minutes. So here we have on the basis of infallible authority that a 50 minute sermon is a brief sermon. I found that very helpful.

Perhaps more helpful, however, is contemplation about the great theological message of the sermon of the Book of Hebrews. It is, of course, centered on Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us by a Son (Heb. 1:1-2a, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in a Son").

That Son is immutable (Heb. 1:11-12, "They [the heavens and the earth] will perish, but You remain; and they will all become old like a garment. And like a mantle You will roll

them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.”).

And that immutability has an aspect that is past, present, and future, which brings us to our text this evening: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Those three aspects of the immutability of Jesus Christ do a wonderful job capturing for us the Christology of this inspired sermon, and we are going to use that to organize our thoughts about this important theological theme of this Epistle.

I. Jesus Christ and yesterday – He is the pre-existent Son of God.

Illustration: Science has a difficult time describing origins. I noticed this on a recent trip with my boys to the Museum of Science in Boston. We saw a presentation on moons in our solar system that was truly a wonderfully informative exhibition of the handiwork of our powerful God. The only trouble was, those who developed the presentation had no idea that this is what they were doing.

Instead, when they spoke of the origins of what we see out there, they always resorted to natural process rather than the supernatural work of the Creator. My boys and I noticed a bit of circularity in their reasoning. As they struggled to explain the origin of our planet’s moon, they began with trillions of little particles that coalesced to form it.

Then later, as they struggled to explain the origin of Saturn’s rings made up of trillions of little particles, they began with a moon that was shredded by the planet’s gravity into all those particles. It was clear to me that moons and rings were not the only things going around in circles

that afternoon. Circular reasoning was being used to describe the origin of what we see out there.

Application: As the preexistent Son of God, Jesus Christ does not have to guess about how the origin of the universe happened. He saw it; He was there; He actually did it (Heb. 1:2c, *world = ages*; 10-13).

Just as He is the one who will roll up creation like a garment one day, so also is He the one who upholds it now by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). He can do that because He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature (v. 3).

He is worshipped by the angels of God (v. 6), and He is addressed as God by God the Father as He sits on His throne (v. 8). He possesses the power of indestructible life (7:16). To become a man the indestructible, preexistent Son of God had to be made a little lower than the angels (2:9), and unlike any other man there was a time He partook of flesh and blood, for He did not begin with it (2:14). He came into the world to receive a body prepared for Him (10:5-9).

And what all this means for you and me this evening is that unlike Moses or any other man we might esteem, the preexistent Son of God has been counted worthy of more glory, just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house (3:3).

Have we come to honor and glorify the builder of the house this evening? Do we see the nature of the Son we claim to know and love, that He is preexisting, that He is eternal, that He is the glorious Creator, and that He is worthy of our honor?

The author will admonish us regarding this Son, "Let us have grace by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and fear; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29). Are we in awe of the preexistent Son of God this evening? Do we worship Him faithfully with reverence and fear?

II. Jesus Christ and today - He is the obedient Son of God (Heb. 5:8-9).

Application: *Today* is what we call the transition between yesterday and tomorrow. As we think of the presentation of the Son of God in Hebrews, we can think of a transition period that Jesus Christ went through that marks the difference between His preexistent past and His eternal future. *Today* was the time that the Son of God became obedient. The passage we just read speaks of this. We read that although he was a Son, He became obedient, and this obedience perfected Him in an importance sense in preparation for what lay ahead.

Illustration: It always concerns me when people fail to see the importance of meeting a set of qualifications for a given task they desire to do. My daughter wants to drive, but she understands that the State of New Hampshire is not going to allow that until a certain set of qualifications have been met.

We are not to lay hands suddenly on a man who claims to be called to the ministry, for we must first ensure that a certain set of qualifications have been met. Whether it is an overconfident teenager driving a car or a proud novice trying to lead a congregation, situations like these are perilous to the well-being of others.

Application: Notice that our passage indicates that even the preexistent Son of God had to meet a certain set of qualifications before God was willing to make Him the source of eternal salvation, our Great High Priest. This is the sense in which he had to be perfected.

We saw already that God the Son had to become the God-man. We read of His prayers and his tears in Gethsemane in v. 7, of His sinless resistance to temptation in 4:15, of His sacrificial death outside the camp in 13:12. He was made lower than the angels for that specific purpose, that He might taste death for every man. He is the author of our salvation, perfected and qualified to be that through His sufferings, so that we too may be God's sons and that He might not be ashamed to call us brothers. He has come to the aid of those enslaved to sin and under the fear of death by making propitiation for their sins (2:17).

And so we must believe and trust Him for salvation, and we must be faithful and not go back. We must "see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" (12:15). We must consider well the question the author asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (2:3).

III. Jesus Christ and forever – He is the exalted Son of God (Heb. 1:3b-4).

Application: The high-priestly ministry of Christ is one of the great themes of the Book of Hebrews. The author uses the term *priest* 14 times and *high priest* 17 times, far more than any other book of the New Testament. The book is the only one that calls Jesus Christ the high priest.

His is a priesthood that is better than the priesthods of Aaron and the Levites. In fact, everything about Christ, the great high priest is better: in Christ we have a better Mediator (1:4); a better priesthood (7:7); a better sacrifice (9:23); better things accompanying salvation (6:9); better promises (8:6); a better hope (7:19); a better possession (10:34); a better resurrection (11:35); better provisions (11:40); a better country (11:16); and better blood (12:24).

The priesthood of Christ is simply the “more excellent ministry” (8:6). Our priest is a king-priest, after the order of Melchizedek, the king of peace and the king of righteousness. Receiving His peace and His righteousness from His priestly ministry is simply as good as it gets.

And since we have a great high priest, we can come boldly before the throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help in time of need (4:14-16). Do we do that? We have a king-priest. He sympathizes with our weaknesses. He offers mercy and grace to help in time of need. Do we come Him in prayer? Do we draw near?

This priest-king is soon to return (9:28). The new covenant promises to Israel will be fulfilled. And in the meantime we have to live in faithfulness, looking to Him and for Him, who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

Conclusion: And so the author says, “bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.” He has written to us of the preexistence, the obedience, and the exalted priesthood of God’s Son, our Savior. May we be faithful in obeying this exhortation as the richly blessed readers of this word about the Son of God’s yesterday, His today, and His forever. To do so is to glorify and worship Him as

our preexistent God, to trust Him as our obedient Savior, and to come to Him in prayer as our great high priest.

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*Preachers and Preaching*