

## **“Jesus Christ Is The Same ...”**

This statement from Hebrews 13:8 is one of the book’s more familiar passages. It is also often used, albeit, improperly, to prove points it was not intended to prove. Our Pentecostal friends are particularly fond of it, using it to “prove” that Jesus works miracles today just as He did in the first century, for after all, He is the same, yesterday, today, yea and forever!

However, to conclude that “since Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever and he worked many miracles yesterday, therefore he is working miracles today” a major problem must be overcome. Jesus is the same yesterday today and forever. He made man from the dust of the earth in the beginning, therefore we must conclude He makes man in the same way today! This latter conclusion is obviously false, but no more so than the conclusion that because Jesus worked miracles in the first century, He must work miracles today. While this “use” of Hebrews 13:8 is most familiar, a whole rostrum of propositions awaits the same kind of treatment. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He required animal sacrifices of Abraham, “therefore ...”. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He caused the walls of Jericho to fall by Israel marching around them for seven days, “therefore ...”. Jesus is the same yesterday today and forever. He only allowed sons of Aaron to be His priests, “therefore ...”. All these illustrations of the argument show it falls short of the conclusion people press upon it. Still, there is a truth that the passage teaches. What is it?

To universally press Hebrews 13:8 to “prove” that Jesus does anything today He did yesterday is a glaring example of lifting a passage from its context. How much error is spawned today by that woeful mistake. If the “soil” in which the statement is found is examined, then the truth of the statement will be abundantly evident. What is the context from which this verse is taken?

The writer has written of the promise made long ages ago to God’s faithful children. The first is a quotation from Deuteronomy 31:6: *“I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee.”* The second is a citation from Psalms 118:6: *“The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What shall man do unto me?”* Both these passages from the Old Testament are quoted in Hebrews 13:5-6, and have a direct bearing upon the writer’s assurance that *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yea and forever.”*

Consider the implication of Deuteronomy 31:6: *“I will in no wise fail thee ...”* This verse was cited to urge that Hebrews be *“free from the love of money, content with such things as ye have ...”* Why should one be free from the

love of money and content with what he has? The answer is God's promise: *"I will in no wise fail thee ..."*, thus the wondrous promise, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yea and forever."* He didn't fail or forsake Israel. He won't fail or forsake His children now. He is the same, yesterday, and today, yea forever.

Now look at the Psalms passage: *"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall men do unto me?"* This passage is followed by the writer's appeal: *"Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith"* (Heb. 13:7). Whoever these men were that *"had the rule over"* these Hebrews is not revealed. Was it former, but now deceased elders? Was it the apostles who began their work in their midst and continued it, ultimately to martyrdom or dispersion? Either conclusion is possible. But while the identity of the men is uncertain, two things are evident: their rule was past and their faith was something worthy of imitation! Had they been grievously persecuted? Martyred? Lived to a ripe old age? We do not know. But one thing is known! Their faith was rich and during their life God's promise was certain and true. *"The Lord is my helper. I shall not fear. What shall man do unto me?"* Jesus stood by and sustained them who had had rule over the Hebrews. He would stand by and sustain these beleaguered Hebrews addressed by the writer. *"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today, yea and forever!"*

Jim McDonald