

The Fidelity of Our Lord in the Past, Present, and Future (Heb. 13.8)
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Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Introduction

Our text for today's communion remembering, Hebrews 13.8 seems isolated and out of place: **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** It just drops into the passage with no transition cues or grammatical connectives (there is no and, but, therefore, or because at the beginning or end of the verse). Nevertheless, the idea of disconnectedness is as far from the truth as it can be. At first, it may seem abrupt, but its presence in the fabric of the paragraph is not like a patch; the paragraph is seamless and verse 8 has a fitting place within it.

Moreover, the apparent disjointedness serves a great purpose. It raises the level of our reflection by making us search for the way this claim about Christ relates to the immediate flow of thought. That is, you have to ponder the teaching about Jesus Christ in the book and bring that to bear here in this context in relation to the following things working backwards: pastoral leadership (13.7-9), money matters (13.5-6), marriage (13.4), brotherly love (13.1-3), worship (12.25-29), and running the path of peace-making holiness (12.1-24) by faith (10.39-11.1-40).

These applications that lead up to our text (13.8) are central in *regular* preaching and it is important to see the connection of each application to the person and work of Christ. However, the accent changes when we come to this text in *communion* preaching. In the context of communion, the applications are no longer central; they do not disappear altogether, but they become secondary. In communion, our goal is to concentrate in a distinct way on the Lord Jesus to fulfill His command: "**do this in remembrance of me**" (Lk.22.19). Covenant remembering of Jesus covers detailed content and takes time for meaningful meditation. It is an opportunity for the heads of the family of faith (pastors) to explain the meaning of the Christian Passover meal with peculiar focus on Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore, our goal for this time of meditation is to emphasize the teaching about our Lord in the book of Hebrews using 13.8 as a prism. When sunlight passes through a prism, the result is a band of colors on a continuum. Similarly, we get a series of rich and colorful ideas when the light of the book of Hebrews passes through this text. By analogy, the sunlight is the book of Hebrews, the prism is the faithfulness of Christ, and the spectrum it yields has three main colors: His faithfulness yesterday, His faithfulness today, and His faithfulness forever, or the fidelity of our Lord in the past, present, and future.

You may want to track the readings; so, I will try to cite the references and give you time to turn to them.

1A. The faithfulness of our Lord in the Past

All that Jesus did in His life on earth was done in obedience to the Father. **Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,** ² **who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.** ³ **For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses- as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.** ⁴ **(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)** ⁵ **Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later,** ⁶ **but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope** (3.1-6). His faithfulness includes His very coming into the world because He existed, remarkably, before He was born. Therefore, His obedience as a Son was covenant obedience, which has its roots in the covenant family from eternity past: **Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family** (*NIB*, 2.11a) **and so he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters** (*NET*, 2.11b) ¹² **saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."** ¹³ **And again, "I will put my trust in him."**

And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." ¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same. . . ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (*ESV*, 2. 12-14, 17-18). In the *pactum salutis* (the eternal covenant of salvation), the triune God agreed to form a redeemed and sanctified family in union with Christ as *the* Son in a family of children. The Son of God was faithful to this agreement and that is why He became incarnate: because the children the Father gave to Him share in flesh and blood He partook of the same flesh and blood (2.14) in order to be like His brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (2.17). "Making propitiation for our sins" means that Jesus, God the Son incarnate, endured the punishment of our sins and satisfied the just wrath of God against us because of them. On the cross, Jesus secured and guaranteed our salvation.

Accordingly, He was faithful during the time of His humiliation on earth by learning obedience though suffering: ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (5.7-10). Remarkably, He was obedient unto death on the cross and thus He suffered in death. This fact has to pierce our hearts to think of it, that *He suffered in the death He died*: ⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, [now] crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone [of His covenant children]. ¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering (2.9-10). He suffered unspeakably in His death in the place of His covenant children, in your place and mine if we are among those who trust the one who promised and the one who is trustworthy. He was faithful in His entire work on earth, faithful to the eternal covenant of redemption for the brothers and sisters that the Father gave to Him to redeem. This is a way to summarize the entire life of Christ in one word: faithful. He is our devoted, loyal, reliable, dependable, and trustworthy priest; for short, He is our faithful high priest. He did the work assigned to Him on our behalf; He did it all faithfully in the full capacity of a priest as mediator between us and God by both offering sacrifice and offering Himself as the sacrifice *par excellence*. By His faithfulness yesterday, He accomplished redemption once and for all.

2A. The faithfulness of our Lord in the Present

How does the book of Hebrews speak to the Lord's work for us in the present? It presents Him as the Sabbath king who speaks the words of Psalm 95 regarding Sabbath rest as His rest (4.14-15). Presupposing His resurrection-exaltation as Sabbath king, the writer tells us that He is now in the heavenly sanctuary to continue His priestly service there for us: **we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God** (4.14). As the guarantor of a better covenant (7.22), there is nothing to prevent Him from continuing in His priesthood, not even death, which ended the work of OT priests: **this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever."** ²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (7.21-25). Because Jesus is such a fitting high priest, His work is finished. He secured eternal redemption (9.12; 13.20) for His people and He continues to make sure that that redemption is completely applied to all the members of His family by eternal covenant (He saves to the uttermost, through all times and circumstances, 7.25). He sees to it by His continual intercession by which He applies all the fruits and benefits of His saving death: ²⁶**For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a**

high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. ¹ Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven (7.26-8.1). What a wonder to hear these words in our ears: **we...have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.** How marvelous to feast on these words with our eyes: “on our behalf”: **For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (9.24).** He is everything that sinners need to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. He is the same in His faithfulness today as He was faithfully the same yesterday. This brings us to the faithfulness of our Lord in the future.

3A. The faithfulness of our Lord in the Future

Each time we come to communion we are different; our circumstances in life are different. For some of you, the last two months (since our last communion service) have brought huge changes in your lives. So, you understand why people say, “One thing we can be sure of and bank on...nothing stays the same.” Ah, but Jesus is the same. He stays the same. He abides faithful to His covenant work and faithful to the promises that flow from it.

Moreover, He is our priest *forever* after the order of Melchizedek, serving us as incarnate Son in the power of an indestructible life: ¹⁵ **This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (7.15-17).**

There is permanence to His intercession on our behalf. He did the work and He sees to its application. He makes sure that His covenant family receives “all the things” (Rom. 8.32) that He obtained for them on the cross.

No charge against us sticks now; no accusation will ever find a resting place to our harm because He is faithful. His faithfulness means eternal life for us. Hence we have an anchor in a sure word of promise confirmed by the addition of an oath: **people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (6.16-18).** How do we have this guarantee as a steadfast anchor of the soul in a way that transcends the promise to Abraham that is in view in 16-18? The writer tells us. We have this guarantee, refuge, and strong encouragement in a better way in a better and eternal covenant because Jesus passed through the heavens as a forerunner on our behalf **into the inner place behind the curtain: ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (6.19-20).** “Here we have a firm foundation, here we have the refuge of the lost; Christ is the rock of our salvation, His, the name of which we boast, lamb of God for sinners wounded sacrifice to cancel guilt, none shall ever be confounded who on Him their hope have built.”

Conclusion

The band of colors that we get by meditating on the book of Hebrews with 13.8 as a prism is like a tree in the fall that is green, rust, and red at the same time; there is a beauty that captures our eye. Here, the eye of our hearts is captivated by the beautiful thoughts of His faithfulness in the past, in the present, and in the future. That is one reason to sing the Hymn *Fairest Lord Jesus*. That is the kind of Hymn to sing to the Lord Jesus in your private devotions

and then to bring that devotion here in public devotion to Him because He was and is and will continue to be covenantally devoted to the Father on your behalf. In preparing this message last week, I could not help but break out in song to the Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise, I hope that you will find that joy in these remembrances from yesterday, and raise your voice in song to Him here in the present, and sing His praises at home in the future in this coming week.

This gives us solid motivation and stable encouragement: we have the rock solid Savior who gave us the gospel by His preaching and by passing it forward to us through those who heard Him and through pastors of the time between, past and present (2.3, **a great salvation...was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard**). He was faithful in preaching the gospel, in living the gospel, in making the gospel firm and secure. He is faithful in keeping it firm and sure. And He will remain the same in His faithfulness forever because He is a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek and because He serves as our intercessor in the power of an indestructible Spirit-given-resurrection-life.

What then shall we say to these things?

I need Him. I own Him as my very own. I own His family as my family.

Jesus, I rest in the joy of "what thou art." More love to Thee O Christ, more love to Thee!