

**Text:** Hebrews 13:8-9

**Title:** The Unchanging Jesus

**Truth:** Jesus Christ is the unchanging foundation of the Christian faith.

**Date/Location:** Sunday February 26, 2012 at FBC

## Introduction

There is seemingly no connection from verse 7 to 8, and then from verse 8 to 9. Let's think about the verses and see if that is really the case.

## Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, v. 8

### 1. Theological truth – immutability (nature, not action)

- a. He did not change from angel to man to son; just as God was never a man on another planet
- b. He did not change as to his nature when he took on human flesh
- b. Immutability is forever: past (creation, pre-existence, work of salvation); present (session interceding for us); future (promises, glorification)

### 2. Implications of Christ's Immutability

- a. His action of providing salvation is still trustworthy.
- b. His promises and priesthood are still operational.

### 3. Personal confession

- a. There is a connection to the previous verse and the church leaders who had died – their confession and their teaching about Jesus.
- b. Relative to the audience reading the letter for the first time, this is their same confession. Old leaders have passed away; Jesus is still there, still the same. Jesus means their faith hasn't changed even if their human church leaders have changed.
- c. Relative to us - we believe the same confession.

### 4. Stability of Doctrine

- a. Relative to the next verse, the ever-sameness of Christ means that Christian teaching has an essential stability in that it does not change over the years—because Christianity is about Christ. If he doesn't change, neither does the teaching about Him.
- b. There are no new innovations. There may be helpful clarifications around the edges, but we must believe what the Hebrews believed.

**Do not be carried away with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them, v. 9**

1. Note first the text and translation of *carry away* rather than *carry about* (Eph. 4:14). The majority text and so-called critical text (NAS, NIV, ESV) agree against the few TR (KJV, NKJV) manuscripts that the right word means to take something *away* from a position, in this case to be carried away from the truth and misled.
  - a. The fear is that a person might be swallowed up into false teaching and be swept away from persevering faith in Jesus Christ.
  - b. Faith that continues is the only true kind of faith (Heb. 3:14, Matthew 13:21-22).
2. The issue is teachings – not two different types “various” and “strange” but one type, “all sorts of strange” teachings. The fact is that there is a multitude of ways that religious teaching can go wrong. Strange means not just weird but unfamiliar because it is unknown from the apostolic teaching of Jesus. There are a million ways to be crooked:
  - a. Mormon teaching that Jesus and Satan are brothers, and we are brothers with them.
  - b. Prosperity gospel, when Bible promises tribulation.
  - c. Various groups that teach no Hell or no afterlife for those who are unsaved, when the Bible is very clear on that.
  - d. The teaching of oneness Pentecostals such as T. D. Jakes that God is *not* Triune.
  - e. Open theist teaching that God does not exhaustively know the future.
  - f. Any works-based salvation idea is one type of *strange* teaching.
  - g. Evolution is another one, when the Bible is very clear about God’s direct creation of everything in six days. Some people today are teaching that Adam and Eve came out of a race of pre-existing hominids and God may have given them a soul, or “demarcated” them as the first man and woman. Should we think this matter is insignificant, note Hebrews 11:3 and how Biblical faith holds to the teaching of creation.
  - h. The false teaching that you can buy your way out of sin’s punishment.

3. Heart established by grace = inward strengthening of the person
  - a. By grace means by God's grace; by God's help
  - b. Your commitment to Jesus Christ is brought about first by God's grace, through faith, and it is strengthened by the same means, God's grace.
  - c. Our spiritual inner person cannot be strengthened by food or other outward things. We need God's work.
  - d. We certainly cannot be strengthened or established by being occupied with all sorts of irreligious things.
4. But there is an entire class of false teaching has to do with legalistic requirements about food.
  - a. Cannot eat this or that food (Muslims and pork; Jews and pork, among many other things; Hindus and meat, cow is holy to them).
  - b. Cannot eat this or that food *at some particular time* (Catholics and Lent, Muslims and Ramadan).
  - c. The problematic teaching for the Hebrews was probably Jewish-based. It may have had a root in Psalm 104:15, which says that bread strengthens man's heart. This refers to man's heart in terms of his physical life and strength. Of course food is needed for that, but food does not solve the sin problem. In fact, food can be itself a sin problem (gluttony, lack of self control).
  - d. Granted, the Jews were properly concerned about food under the Law of Moses back in the Old Testament times. But that law is not operative today. It was phased out by the coming of Christ, who came to fulfill the law.
  - e. 1 Timothy 4:1-5. But the last days will be full of food-objectors.
5. These regulations do *nothing* to profit their adherents.
  - a. Profit is concerned with spiritual benefit, transformation, helping overcome sin.
  - b. Food is an external matter. Jesus taught His hearers that it does not have the negative effect of defiling a person (Mark 7:14-23). Neither does food have the positive effect of conveying grace to our spirits/hearts.
  - c. The law never could bring out perfection, as it is weak and unprofitable (7:18).

- d. Christianity has never been about these kinds of laws. Certainly it is not primarily concerned with them, nor do such laws help in our battle against sin in the flesh, the devil, and the world.
- e. Colossians 2:16, 23. Food does not operate on a level that helps our spiritual problems.
- f. Caution: This does not permit you to gobble up everything in sight, because we also have a responsibility to exercise good stewardship over our bodies, the temples of the Holy Spirit.

## **Conclusion**

So...because Jesus is unchanging, He provides the unchanging foundation for what we teach, what we believe, and what we profess with our mouths. Our salvation is the same as that which the Hebrew believers experienced. Our faith is the same as that of the believers of old, like Abraham and Moses and King David.

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