

## **HEBS 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever**

*[Chelmsford New Year's Day 2012]*

For Christians this is one of the greatest texts of the Bible

It is the sort of text that you would find in many old church buildings written in red and gold gothic letters in a great arch over the pulpit.

It's the kind of text the many churches at the beginning of the year issue on a motto card.

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

*Jesus Christ is always the same, yesterday, today, and forever* (JB Phillips)

Peterson: *Jesus doesn't change – yesterday, today, tomorrow; he's always totally him self*

But is it so grand a text? "**Jesus Christ is the same**"?

How less attractively packaged could the Christian Gospel be?

- To sell anything today one has to proclaim that it is "new". You may have used the same brand of washing powder or of toothpaste for years - but I guarantee that the advertisers claim that it has changed - it is "new", it is "improved", it now contains formula "x", "y" or "z".
- For something to be the "same" it to be behind the times. So the cars we drive and the clothes we wear constantly have to change. Every year there are new models - new colours - new fashions.

Our text however seems to belong to another world. **Jesus Christ is the same?**

- It is tantamount to declaring that the Christian message is obsolete - that it is no more relevant to modern society than the warming pan our grandparents used to use. Why today we have central heating and electric blankets.
- It implies that the Christian faith has not kept up with the growth of modern knowledge - who, for instance would wish their teeth to be treated as teeth were treated 100 years ago or more? I don't like the drill and I don't like injections, but give them me any day rather than the primitive methods of days gone by
- It suggests that the Christian faith is dull – I love sausages and mash, especially when accompanied by a decent English mustard, but everyday? No thank you! Variety is the spice of life.

And yet maybe we are not being fair in our comparison.

In some respects would that some things were the same!

- Would that workmanship today was as it once used to be. As it is quality has gone out of the window. There is a world of a difference between, say, a Chippendale chair and a chair from IKEA.
- Would that things would last as once they did. In the old days you might buy a bed for life, but now some say you need a new bed every ten years
- Would that the £ today was as it once used to be. When I was 12 years old there were 12 Swiss Francs to the £ - today a £1 will buy less than 1 ½ Swiss francs (1.45 to the pound at the moment) - our money no longer has the same worth

Now, if we think along these lines, then it is of no small importance that Jesus is the same. For if Jesus is the same, then this means that what Jesus offers has not been debased by time. Though the £ may fall and friends may fail, Jesus is the is the same. In other words, Jesus can be relied upon - he alone is dependable. He is the one person in this world we can well and truly bank upon.

How often we vote for a particular political party, only to discover that the party fails to fulfil its pledges. But Jesus is the same - he keeps his word – he never goes back on his promises. If he has said that he will be with us, then you can bet your bottom dollar that he will be there.

Or let's look at this text within the context of a New Year:

Who knows what the next 12 months will bring?

What changes will we experience?

What disappointments or problems will we encounter?

But if Jesus is the same, then this means that he offers security and stability amidst all the uncertainties and insecurities of life.

We can rely upon Jesus – because Jesus never changes – he is always the same.

As we begin a New Year, let us praise God that **Jesus is the same – yesterday, today, forever!**