

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] In your scripture sheet, we are beginning with a rather appropriate verse at the top of chapter 13, which is verse 8 on the sheet that you may have. And it is simply Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever.

And needless to say, he is really what everything is all about. I've often made the statement, and I would reinforce it, that it doesn't make any difference what you are right about, if you are wrong about Jesus Christ.

Who he is, why he came, who sent him, what he did, and why it matters. If you're wrong about that, it doesn't make any difference what you're right about, because that is the premier offsetting issue about everything.

And there is a verse that I'd just like to share with you from the Revelation. Revelation, and it is in chapter 19 and verse 10, when the Apostle John is talking, and he says in verse 10, And I fell at his feet to worship him.

And he said to me, Do not do that. That is, he was going to bow down to an angel, and he said, Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus.

[1 : 32] Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And here, John was so intrigued and overawed by the presence of this angelic being, he was prepared to just drop at his knees, thinking perhaps that this was a deity.

And the angel reminds him, Don't do that. Because I too am a created being. I am a creature. And we worship and serve the creator and the creator only.

This has been man's great downfall from the beginning. And it started way back in Genesis 3. It is elaborated somewhat upon by Paul in Romans chapter 1, when he talks about men who worshiped and served the creature more than the creator.

That is precisely what Eve did when she disobeyed the Lord. Because Satan, in the person of the serpent, communicated with her and succeeded in convincing her.

He lied to her, of course. He was a deceiver. But he convinced her that his word was more authoritative than the word she had already heard. And what she did was she turned the truth of God into a lie.

[3 : 05] And man has been off and running to the races ever since. And that's what we tend to do. We see this going on today in major ways all across the country. And all across the world, for that matter.

And when John expresses here what the Spirit of God has revealed to him, he says that the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.

And as you begin reading the Scriptures all the way back in Genesis chapter 3, where we read God speaking to Eve, and he tells her right after the fall that the seed, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.

But before he does, the serpent is going to inflict a wound. And it talks about striking him at his heel. And that, we believe, was fulfilled in the death of Christ upon the cross.

But it was not a continuing or a mortal wound in that God raised him from the dead three days later. The time is coming when the head of Satan will be crushed with a great finality.

[4 : 17] And that, of course, is speaking of a final death blow. Because a striking on the heel is one thing, but the crushing of the head is another. And it has an area of finality to it.

So this is what and who Jesus Christ is really all about. He is going to be that ultimate seed or offspring of a woman.

But I'm sure that when Eve heard that, she had no idea that it would be 4,000 years before it was fulfilled, when Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

And you know, all the way from that Genesis 3.15 passage, all the way through the Old Testament, the theme, the recurring scarlet thread that runs all the way through, is redemption.

And it focuses upon the Redeemer, the one who is going to make it happen. And this is what John is talking about when he says, the testimony of Jesus.

[5 : 18] And that simply means who and what Jesus Christ is all about. The story of Jesus. Who he is, why he came, what he did, why it matters.

The story of Jesus is the essence, or the nature, or the character, or the spirit of prophecy. Another way of saying, it all focuses on him.

This is what enabled him to say, that he is, and he repeats this in the Revelation, that he, I am the Alpha and Omega.

Those are the two principal letters, or the beginning and ending letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega. And we would translate that in English and say, I am the A to Z. That's the equivalent. And of course, he is everything in between. And for him, to make a statement like that, men have to decide, on which side they come down.

[6 : 21] Because you cannot have, you cannot have, a loving, caring Savior, who is a deceiver, and an egomaniac, who makes statements about himself, seemingly to just inflate his own ego, you cannot have a Savior like that, if that's what he is.

And when he makes these statements, I am the light of the world. I am the bread of life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. Fellas, it's got to be one way or the other.

He is or he isn't, and there is nothing in between. So, as Josh McDowell pointed out years ago in his book, that Jesus Christ is either the Lord, he is a liar, or he is a lunatic.

And you've got to take one of the three. You cannot leave it untouched. There is only one of those that is true. If he is a lunatic, then he really wasn't the Son of God, but he thought he was, and he was laboring under delusions of grandeur, and he succeeded in bilking and convincing a lot of people that he was the Messiah when in fact he wasn't.

Or, he was deliberately lying, and he knew it. Well, in either case, you've got an unworthy one who does not qualify as a Savior.

[7 : 49] And the only alternative, of course, is the one which Christians have embraced from the first century, and that is simply that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be. Nothing more, nothing less.

And that's wrapped up again in a different way in verse 8. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. You have to assign eternity to a being who qualifies for that.

And if he doesn't qualify for that, then he's a phony. He's not worthy of your admiration, your worship, and he certainly isn't worth dying for. Because that's exactly what the case would portray. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And this, of course, speaks of his being, the character, who he was, and there are ways in which he manifested himself differently.

We've seen his manifestation in a pre-incarnate form. In the Old Testament, these are called these Christophanies, where Christ actually appeared physically, bodily, to Old Testament characters, long before he would be made flesh as a human being, and be born in Bethlehem.

[9 : 01] So, we've got his appearance in the Old Testament, as far back as Genesis, and frankly, I believe that's who it was that walked, and talked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, the Christophany.

And he is the same in his character, and in his essence, and in his makeup. He is the unchanging God. And I would entertain any questions that you may have, or any comments that you'd like to make in connection with that.

Quite a verse. Quite a verse. And by the way, let me inject this as well. Some folks, and I'm sure they mean well, I would not question their sincerity at all, they are of the opinion, that because this is true of Christ, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, that his methodology, never changes.

And some link his methodology, with his person. And I think that is a grievous mistake, that's going to lead to all kinds of confusion. I do not believe that there is any question, that God has, at numerous times, and ways in the past, altered, changed, the way he relates to humanity, not because he has changed, but because man has changed, and the circumstances demand a different approach.

And God, in his grace and wisdom, provides that different approach, whatever it may be. And perhaps, the most sterling example of that, is the contrast that we see, between the Old Testament, and present day.

[10:39] If you know anything at all, about the Old Testament, and I'm sure you fellas do, you will know that the very heartbeat, of the Old Testament, centers upon, sacrifice, substitution.

That's why, animal sacrifice, was instituted in Israel, actually even before Israel, became a nation, it goes all the way back. But, that principle, of sacrifice, is so, ingrained in Judaism, that it just became, part and parcel, of their way of thinking.

It was emphasized, every year, on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, a high priest went in, and offered sacrifice, for the people, the sins of the nation, were covered for another year, etc. That was God's methodology, in dealing with Israel, at that time.

But, he's not doing that now. Has God changed? No, of course not. He is the eternal God. But, the way that he approaches man, and the requirements that he has of man, do change.

Those things are altered, as you move on through the Bible, and actually, we'll see later, changes, even within the New Testament, that take place. Joe, do you have a comment? The very next verse. You're getting, the very next verse, 9, shows that change.

[11:55] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So, be not be carried about, with divers, verse 9. Be not carried about, with divers, which is an old English word, that simply means, many or frequent, and strange doctrines.

And, fellas, these are, these are always coming, on the scene. I don't care, what generation you live in, from the time of beginning, there are always, strange new doctrines, that are surfacing.

And, they always compete, for the truth, or against the truth. And, we are to be built up, in the most holy faith. And, when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, and he says that, God has given us, this information, that we, be, no, longer, children, tossed, to and fro, by every wind, of doctrine, that comes along.

And, the nature, of a child, the nature, of a child, is their tendency, to believe, what they're told. Because, they don't have enough, experience, and years behind them, to develop, a sense of discernment.

So, they tend to take seriously, whatever someone tells them, especially if it's a person, in authority. And, the scriptures, are given, of course, as a corrective to that, because, the tendency is, for people to, pick up on some, new strange doctrine, that often has, some kind of appeal, and boy, let me tell you, you know as well as I do, the religious hucksters, that are out there, on television, and in radio sometimes, and, and I don't want to take away, anything from, those that are, legitimate, and doing a real, ministry for God.

[13:37] But, there are plenty of phonies, out there. And, with almost, everyone, in fact, I don't know of an exception. With the phony preachers, out there, I don't know of an exception.

But, what they are, always after, money. And, they are telling you, you don't have enough faith, for this, or that, or whatever, you know, but, send your money to them, and they will put you, ah, well, let's, let's move on.

Let's move on. Be carried about, with divers, and strange doctrines. Or, it is a good thing, that the heart, be established, with grace, or confirmed, with grace, made stable, by grace.

Rain says, that with gratitude, should the heart, be getting, confirmed. And, Williams translates it, for the heart, to be strengthened, by God's, spiritual strength.

And, the word, that is used, here, for, for heart, of course, is, is the word, cardia. And, it, it, literally, has two meanings, and almost, in fact, in the Bible, it never means, the blood pump, and the chest, but it means, the essence, and the character, the nature of your being, the core of your being.

[14:50] And, this is to be, strengthened, by grace. And, once you have, a firm, handle, on the doctrine, of grace, that, provides, the basis, for security, for relaxation, for enjoyment, for service, for appreciation, for gratitude, all of these things, come from a heart, that is established, by grace.

Because, you realize, the source of it, is found in God himself. And, that's, that's our basis, for security. So, hearts strengthened, by grace, not with meats, not with food, and, Montgomery, translates it, and not by regulations, regarding food, not on the rules, of diet.

Now, Philip surrenders it. And, Taylor says, not from ceremonial rules, about eating certain foods.

Now, what this does, of course, this ties in, with the principle, of the Jewish diet, the kosher diet, you know, maintaining certain foods, and abstaining from certain foods.

And, when Peter, when Peter saw that great vision, let down from heaven, three times, in which were all manner, of four-footed beasts, clean, and unclean.

And, he was told in this vision, rise, Peter, kill, and eat. Peter said, no, I'm going to do that. I've never eaten anything, that was unclean. And, remember, the voice and the vision said, that which God hath cleansed, call thou not unclean.

[16:27] And, what he was saying there, is that, the Jewish sacrificial system, and, the food regulation, is passe.

That's gone. That's history. And, I remember dealing with this, just recently, on the current session, of Christianity Today, that I'm working on. And, what this amounts to, it's a rather striking thing, to realize it, but what this amounts to, is that, Judaism, I'm talking about, the religion of Judaism, is defunct.

It is not applicable. It is not in existence. And, people say, well, what are you talking about? There are still Jews today. Oh, yes. I'm not saying that, I'm not saying that, Jews, or Jewish people, are defunct.

I'm saying, the religion of Judaism, is defunct. That required, animal sacrifice, keeping the Sabbath, kosher diet, all of those things, they are passe.

And, as best as I can understand it, when that occurred, was when Jesus died on the cross, said, it is finished, and the veil, and the temple, was torn in two, from the top to the bottom.

[17:45] Joe? That's making your point, that he's dealing with people, humans different now.

Absolutely. He's dealing with them different. He's the same, but he's dealing with people different.

And, I think it's interesting, too, that he installed grace to us, before he destroyed the temple.

Oh, yeah. The temple was destroyed, 70 years later, so he gave us this alternative, way of getting to him, getting his blessings, instead of going through priests, and the temple, and sacrifice. He waited, destroyed that temple, after he gave us grace.

Yeah. Yep. Yep. And, you know, there's a verse in Hosea, I think it is chapter 2, that talks about, the children of Israel, are going to dwell, many days, without a priesthood, without a temple, without a sacrifice, without ephod, without any of those things.

And, that's exactly where they are now. And, as Joe pointed out, that's when God allowed the temple to be destroyed in 70 AD. That was about 40 years after the crucifixion of Christ.

And, when that happened, the holy place was gone, and the Ark of the Covenant, we still don't know where that is, or what's happened to it. All of the systems of worship, all gone.

[19:05] The priesthood, everything else. And, this is, this is, came to, came to light when we were in Israel in 1990. And, we had an opportunity to meet with some, with some Jewish rabbis to, they, they agreed to answer our questions.

And, I remember the question I asked, I said, well, since, since animal sacrifice was such an interesting, integral part, of Judaism, how is it that Jews are able to worship today, when you have no temple, and no sacrifice, and no altar, and no basis for it?

And, he, smiled kind of sheepishly, and said, well, we, we pray. We pray. I said, okay, thank you.

But, you know, that's a really very poor substitute, for meeting the requirements, that were installed under Judaism, which, the very essence of which, was the death of the innocent for the guilty, the animal sacrifice, and that's all gone.

And, they don't do that anymore. Now, he says, they pray. Today, of course, you will find, our Jewish friends, really divided over this.

The vast majority of Jews today, if they are observant at all, they are referred to as Reformed Jews.

[20:27] We, we have a, a Jewish, a Jewish synagogue, here in Springfield, in North Limestone.

And, it is, it is a Reformed synagogue, which is what most are throughout the world.

But, there are, Jewish synagogues, that are referred to as Orthodox, and they still, observe the diet, and they, keep Sabbath, and so on.

And, but in reality, they don't need to. Now, you can't convince them of that, of course, because, they still, are trying to operate under the law of Moses, and they believe that they are, and they do not work on the Sabbath, and so on.

And, they observe that, but, but the point is, with the death of Christ, that became the one, final, complete sacrifice, to end all sacrifices, everything regarding that Judaism, and the requirements, is like I said, it's defunct.

It is passé. And, the Jews today, who still observe the law of Moses, and everything that goes with it, are doing so, I'm sure, very sincerely, I don't question that a bit, very sincerely, very seriously, but, they are doing it, out of tradition, not out of the divine requirement, because the divine requirement, isn't there any longer.

[21 : 51] And, today, if a Jewish person, wants to come, to God, he has to come, the same way, a Gentile does, that is, through, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, I know, and have met, several people, seed of Abraham, Jewish people, who refer to themselves, as a completed Jew, because they have come to faith, in Yeshua HaMashiach, as their Messiah, and they do not consider themselves, converted Jews, they are still Jews.

And, they will always be a Jew. And, if you are a Gentile, you could go, and, go through the ritual, and become, a proselyte, to Judaism, and join the local synagogue.

But, you would still, be, a Gentile. That is not going to change. And, so it is with the Jews. And, this is where a lot of confusion, comes in, and makes it difficult, in communicating the gospel, to Jewish people, because, they think, that to embrace, Jesus, the Christian, Savior, and God, would be to betray, their own, Jewishness.

And, they need to understand, that a Jew, will always be, a Jew. That is never going to change.

And, Jesus, was a Jew.

[23 : 17] Yes. You mentioned that, Orthodox, fellow, who said, he said, we pray. But, their prayers are no good. They don't have any, prayer communication with God. That is true. They don't have any, intercessor up there for them.

They don't, he won't accept them. They are in sin, until they accept Christ. You know, they got no connection, you are not, you are not on praying ground, until, you have, a mediator.

That's right. And, there is one God, and one mediator, between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus. I think that's, 1 Timothy 2, 5, or, in that neighborhood.

So, you need a mediator, and, many people, many people are praying, throughout the world. But, they are not on praying ground, until, and unless, they are, in Christ.

And, that's why we, pray, and we include our prayers, in Christ's name. In the name of Christ.

Because, that becomes, the basis, for our confidence, and our authority, for approaching God.

[24 : 22] we come, to God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and, in the Holy Spirit. That's the formula, for the New Testament. So, he is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

We are not to be carried about, with divers, and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing, that the heart, be established, with grace, not, with meats, dietary regulations, and all of that nonsense. Which have not, profited them, that have been occupied, therein. We have an altar. We Christians, have an altar. Weymouth renders it.

Norley says, ours is, a spiritual altar. And, there is a, dramatic difference there. Well, what is a spiritual altar? Well, we know what a physical altar is.

It's made out of material. But, a spiritual altar, isn't made out of material. And, it's kind of hard to wrap your brain around, something that is not physical. But, that's exactly what it is.

[25 : 29] And, in essence, fellas, that's what we are. We, become so, occupied, with our body. Because, we can see it, and feel it, and touch it, and everything else.

And, I just wonder, what would happen, if Christian people, became, far more concerned, and interested, in their, immaterial part, their spirit, as opposed to the body.

It would make a, considerable revolution. Because, the spiritual, is just, as real, as the physical. But, we tend to lose sight of it, because, we lose sight of it.

We don't see it. You know. And, that's, but, we've got that, that's where our altar is. It is a spiritual altar. Whereof, they have no right, to eat, which serve the tabernacle.

And, this of course, is, the priesthood, and the Judaism, that goes along with it. For the bodies, verse 11, for the bodies, of those beasts, whose blood, is brought, into the sanctuary, by the high priest, for sin, are burned, without the camp.

[26 : 44] This was, the, end result, of these animals, that were offered, in sacrifice. And, without the camp, of course, refers to, the holy place, where the slain, took place.

And, then, he goes on, and makes the application, the illustration, wherefore, Jesus also, that he might, sanctify the people, and the word, sanctify, means set apart, that he might, set apart, or particularize, the people, with his, own blood, suffered, without the gate.

What gate is he talking about? He's talking about, the gate of Jerusalem. Because, it was not, it was not permissible, for anyone, to be executed, inside the city, of Jerusalem, or, to be buried, inside the city, of Jerusalem, had to be, outside, the city walls.

And, Jesus was taken, and crucified, outside, the gate, outside, the city walls, of Jerusalem. And, this is exactly, what he's talking about here.

Suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, as a result of that, unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach.

[28 : 03] See, when Jesus, was taken, physically, forcibly, outside Jerusalem, made to carry his cross, that, was an act, to the Jewish mind, that was an act, of supreme, shame, ignominy, embarrassment, every negative emotion, and thing, that you could think about it.

And, the point, that the writer, of Hebrews, is making here, is listen, when you come on board, with Jesus Christ, and you cast your lot, with him, you need to understand something.

You, are potentially, exposing yourself, to the same kind of shame, and the same kind of ridicule, and the same kind of rejection, because you identify, with him.

Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to pay that price? That's the theme, of this particular passage, right here. Mark, Yes. On that same night, Paul went to the Thessalonians, or the, yeah, the Thessalonians first, because they were really, really being persecuted.

Yeah. Yeah. The Thessalonians were, and that's one of, his first letter, I think, was to the Thessalonians, because he's trying to, rebuild them up, and let them know, you know, right. Stay there, stick the ground.

[29 : 24] And he was also telling them, hey, that's par for the course. Yeah. Don't be shocked. Yeah. Don't be surprised. If rejection, and persecution, comes your way, remember, the Lord said, even before he was crucified, that the world hates you, it hated me first.

And don't be amazed, if the world hates you, because the world has hated me. And when you identify with Jesus Christ, especially if you are in a hostile environment, like some places in the world right now, if you identify publicly with Jesus Christ, you have just painted a big bullseye, right on your back.

And you need to understand that. So, that's par for the course. And, the hymn writer put it very well, when he said, about, am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb?

And should I blush to speak His name? Should I look for beds of comfort, while others sailed through bloody seas?

Are we expecting a smooth ride? No opposition? Of course not. There is a price to be paid, for identifying with Jesus Christ. And, fellas, that might be underway, in becoming more and more of a reality, here in our beloved USA.

[30 : 54] Why? Because, Christianity, actually, spiritual truth in general, is becoming less and less acceptable, and Christianity in particular, is becoming less and less acceptable, and largely it has to do, with Christians, insisting, on the exclusivity, of Jesus Christ.

And that will get you, into a lot of trouble. You can take a public forum, and you can speak in broad, general terms, about God. You won't raise a whole lot of ire, except from committed atheists.

But most people can go along with that. But the moment you define that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, then you can expect some sparks to fly. And that's to be expected.

That's not, that's not out of the ordinary. That's the norm. So, we ought to accept that. Bearing His reproach. For there, for here, verse 14, for here, have we no continuing city, no permanent city, no lasting city, no permanent home, no fixed resting place.

Why is that? Because, like the songwriter says, this world is not our home. We're just a passing through. And treasures are left. Will you, that's a passing through.

[32 : 16] Do you agree with that? So, I'm sorry.