

(what He can do) and the actual expressions of that power (what He does do). That is to say, the assertion that there are some things in the purpose and plan of God which He has not yet done but will do (e.g., created the new heavens and the new earth) does not conflict with the doctrine of immutability, since in this case a distinction is made between the infinite, unchanging perfection of God's attributes, and the ongoing, unfolding, changing expression of those attributes in actions.

These considerations bring us to the threshold of the problem in the "becoming" aspect of the incarnation. And here we must once again make the distinction between God's nature and God's experience, as well as the distinction between the physics concept of time (duration measured by physical change) and time in God's self experience (a unidirectional continuum of experience, including before and after relationships in sequential order). The Son of God, viewed not as static but as dynamic, experienced the "before" of His preincarnate state of glory, and then experienced the "after" of His incarnate state of humiliation. But more than this: the Son of God, who was a divine Person from all eternity, became what He had never been before -- a real human being. Although the former change (from glory to humiliation) may be spoken of as "a mere change in outward circumstances" (although this interpretation may be challenged as inadequate to the implications of Phil. 2:7), the latter change involves the Person of the Son of God. He (the Person!) became (began to be what He was not before) man!

But what does this do to the Son of God's immutability? The answer to this question is that the Son of God changed and yet did not change. He changed by becoming man; He did not change by remaining God. That is, this is a change, not by subtraction of His divine attributes, but by addition of human attributes. Thus, in one sense the Son of God was immutable in His incarnation in that He was fully God; and in another sense the Son of God changed in His incarnation by taking into union with His Person a true human nature.

And what do these considerations do to Heb. 13:8 -- "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yes and forever?" They enable us to see that this scripture does not deny the change from the Son of God's preincarnate state of glory to His incarnate state of humiliation, or from His incarnate state of humiliation to His incarnate state of exaltation; nor does this scripture deny the change from the single nature quality of the Person of God preceding the incarnation to the dual nature quality of the Person of the Son of God following the incarnation. However, admitting these changes (as we must), we are left with the question of the meaning of this scripture.

It would seem that the difficulty in the verse is with the "yesterday". Does this refer to eternity past or to the recent historical past? Lenski opts for the latter. He says:

Jesus Christ, yesterday and today the same, and for the eons, i.e., for eternity. Jesus Christ, changeless, Immutable! Here there is the person and the office. "Yesterday" = when he was