

Who is Jesus Christ?

NOT A PRE-EXISTENT BEING
BUT SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOKLET

Jehovah's Witnesses and others claim that Jesus Christ existed before he was born! This is a strange statement to make concerning anybody; it is particularly illogical, but is made regarding the Lord Jesus because of the perfection of character he exhibited, and because of certain statements of the Bible that people find difficult to understand unless they uphold the teaching of pre-existence.

The Bible, however, does not support this doctrine.

Despite the perfection of his character, the Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, 2000 years ago, and possessed a nature common to all mankind. He did not corporeally exist before then, but was born for the purpose of the redemption of those of the human race who accept the invitation of God and of Christ to seek the salvation offered through him (Matthew 11:28-30).

Moreover, the Bible teaches that a proper understanding of the Father and the Son is essential to salvation. Christ declared: **"This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent"** (John 17:3). Only by a correct understanding of the true relationship between the Father and the Son is it possible to comprehend God's purpose for salvation.

HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

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DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION OF THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD; AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.

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Who Is Jesus Christ?



As a member of the human race, and certainly not a pre-existent angel, Jesus Christ exhibited the way to salvation. He was strengthened of God to gain the victory over sinful flesh, and thereby demonstrated the way in which a person can rise above sin and death. This is only possible by the strength available from God through Christ as found in His Word the Bible (Philippians 4:13), and the forgiveness of sins granted through acceptance of him in baptism (Acts 2:38). The Bible teaches "the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

We state this question in the present tense, because though Jesus Christ was crucified 2,000 years ago at the agitation of a Jewish mob and the maladministration of Gentile power, he lives today! And the fact that he lives is of the greatest significance to mankind.

Paul, a one time inveterate opponent of Christianity, who was converted into its greatest advocate by the incontestable evidence of the Lord's resurrection (1Corinthians 15:10), explained it thus: "*God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He raised him from the dead*" (Acts 17:31).

To judge the world is to rule it. Paul thus taught that the living Christ is the assurance of God that He will send Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom on earth (Acts 1:11; 3:19-20). Christ is coming to change the present conditions, and reign as king.

Confusion Concerning Christ

But who is Jesus Christ? Eternal life is bound up in the answer to this question, as he declared: *"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3). Put the question to the Jews, and they reply that he was the son of Joseph and Mary, and that he lived and died in Judea 2,000 years ago. Ask it of most clergymen, and they will state the he is the second person of a triune God. Others, whilst rejecting the Trinitarian concept as unscriptural and illogical, teach that he pre-existed. Thus endless controversy has continued; even those who admit that he lives, violently disagree as to who he is.

We can ignore the evidence of his own disciples, who knew him. They were not liars, fools, mystics, or charlatans. They comprised practical fishermen like Peter, hard-headed businessmen like Matthew, even sceptics like Thomas. Such men were not prepared to be misled by a rumour, but demanded concrete proof of the resurrection of Christ (John 20:24-29). We believe them, and reject the unbelieving attitude of Jews and atheists.

We not only set aside the sceptical attitude of Jews and atheists; but we also repudiate the doctrine of the Trinity. The concept of three Gods who are but one God is illogical and unscriptural. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but is a title manufactured to serve the cause of theology. On the other hand, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is subordinate to God, thus: *"There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus (1Timothy 2:5). "One God, the Father... and one Lord Jesus Christ" (1Corinthians 8:6). "When all things shall be subdued unto him [i.e. Jesus Christ], then shall the Son also be subject unto Him [i.e. God] that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1Corinthians 15:28).*

If Christ be subject to God at the moment of his greatest triumph it is clearly obvious that he is not co-eternal with his Father as Trinitarians claim.

Did Jesus Pre-exist?

Although such a question, if asked of any other person, would be treated with the ridicule it deserves, it is seriously claimed by some that the Lord existed before he was born!

Yet the Bible clearly shows that Jesus had no existence prior to his birth in Bethlehem, 2,000 years ago. He was born of the virgin Mary, by the overshadowing power of God (Luke 1:30-35), and thus was both son of God and son of man.

From his mother, he derived the nature common to all mankind, but from his Father he inherited the ability to develop spiritual dispositions that strengthened him to conquer his sinful physical nature, and reveal divine characteristics (1Timothy 3:16). He was executed as a criminal, but, in fact, never sinned, and therefore God's justice demanded his resurrection (Acts 2:24). He was raised to immortality, and ascended into heaven, where he awaits the time to return and set up his reign on earth (Acts 3:19-23; Daniel 2:44).

Nowhere is it suggested that he existed before his birth.

**"The genealogy of Jesus Christ
the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" — Matthew 1:1**

If Jesus lived in some physical form before Abraham and David, he could not be their son, and if that were the case the statement is false. We believe that the statement is true, and all Scripture agrees therewith. Consider the record of his early childhood: "*Jesus INCREASED in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man*" (Luke 2:52). How can these words possibly apply to a pre-existent angel, or the second person of a Triune God? Could such a one *increase* in wisdom and *in favour with God*? Assuming the impossible were true, and Jesus pre-existed as an angel, on what grounds could it be said that he increased in favour with God merely because in his new physical state he grew from a baby to a youth?

If Jesus pre-existed, he must have divested himself of all previous identity, lost all his former knowledge, power and standing with God, and had to establish this all again! What for? What did it accomplish? Is such belief logical? We shall show it is both illogical and unscriptural!

It is normal for a child to "develop in wisdom and stature," but where Jesus differed from all others, was in his divine conception, and his exceptional partiality for spiritual things. This he inherited from his unique Father. The Father, who is from everlasting, revealed Himself in His son (2Corinthians 5:19; Isaiah 11:2-3; John 12:49), born of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:32-34). Therefore Jesus could say with the perfect truth "before Abraham was I am" for he was in the purpose of God, as "God manifest in the flesh" (1Timothy 3:16), when the first man, Adam, sinned and brought disgrace on all God's creation.

The only sense in which it can be taught with truth that there was anything pre-existent about Jesus is in relation to God who was manifested in him. In all that he did and said, there was revealed the impress of his divine origin, and the influence of God's spirit which

was given him "without measure" (John 3:34). He is "the only begotten son" of God (John 3:16), whom "God made strong for Himself (Psalm 80:17), in order that His ways might be revealed unto men.

The emphasis of Scripture is on Christ's begetting, and not his supposed pre-existence. The circumstances of his conception and birth are revealed in Luke 1.

The Thread of Evidence Throughout the Bible

Throughout the Old Testament the birth of Christ is promised; throughout the New Testament the person of Christ is described.

He was the "seed of the woman" promised from the beginning, to destroy the law of sin and death which was the product of the misleading influence of the serpent in the beginning (Genesis 3:15). The New Testament comments: "*When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*" (Galatians 4:4).

These words do not describe a pre-existent Christ. If Christ pre-existed, how could he be described as the "seed of the woman?" Abraham taught: "*In thy seed shall all nations be blessed*" (Genesis 22:18). Paul commented: "*And that SEED is Christ*" (Galatians 3:16).

Would Abraham imagine that his seed (son) existed before he did? Of course not! Where is there any evidence in Genesis that Jesus was then living in any form? There is none!

Moses, Israel's law-giver and leader, who typified the coming Law-giver and Leader (Jesus Christ) told the Jewish nation: "*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken* (Deuteronomy 18:5). Can these words of Moses above apply to a pre-existent angel? Can such an one be truthfully described as "raised up from the midst of thee," "of thy brethren, like unto me [Moses]"?

In the New Testament, Peter quoted these very words and applied them to Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22; 7:37); and Paul taught: "*Therefore it behoved him [Jesus Christ] to be made like unto his brethren...*" (Hebrews 2:17).

Only a false theory could possibly make those words apply to a pre-existent angel.

Jesus was the son of David, and David was told: "*When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son...*"

(2Samuel 7:12-14). The prophecy relates to Christ, as the New Testament comment upon it makes abundantly clear (see Luke 1:32-33; Hebrews 1:5), and with that established, note well the future tense used in relation to him. God says: **I will be his Father**” he **“shall be My son.”** If Jesus were already in existence, should not God have said: **“I am his Father,”** **“he is My son?”** Mary was told: **“He shall be [not is!] great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end”** (Luke 1:32-33). These words of the angel Gabriel state that Jesus **“shall be called the Son of the Highest,”** and he **shall** reign on the throne of **“his father David.”** Can these expressions apply to a pre-existent angelic being?

Consider also the preaching of the apostles. Did they proclaim belief in a pre-existent angel who had assumed human form? They did not. Listen to Peter’s preaching: **“David... being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne”** (Acts 2:30).

Who did David believe would sit upon his throne? An angel, already in existence? No: he believed that his descendant would reign there, one described a **“the fruit of his loins.”** The child born of Mary was a descendant of David, not a pre-existent angel assuming human form!

Isaiah declared: **“A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel”** (Isaiah 7:14). This prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:23), whom Peter described as **“a man approved of God... by miracles and wonders which God did by him”** (Acts 2:22). Thus, God revealed Himself in a man of His providing who became the pattern for all those who would approach unto Him in hope of eternal life. God does not expect that those people will attain unto the perfection they behold in the Son, but He does require of them that they build into their lives some of the divine characteristics revealed in the Son, for such qualities are worthy of perpetuation in bodies of incorruptible glory in the Age to come (1Corinthians 15:53-57).

The theory that sets forth Jesus as a pre-existent angel, destroys this pattern and mystifies and distorts the beautiful doctrine of God-manifestation in **“the man Christ Jesus.”** Moreover, the Lord taught that a correct understanding of the relationship of the Father and the

Son is essential to salvation (John 17:3).

Is Not Christ The Firstborn?

At this point the reader might become a little impatient, and desire to press upon our attention Bible references that seem to give some support to the pre-existence theory.

We are not ignorant of those passages, but claim that none of them are relevant to the theory if they are properly interpreted. It is unfortunately true, however, as the Bible itself states, that some take passages of Scripture that are "hard to be understood" which some "wrest them unto their own destruction" (2Peter 3:16).

One such reference is Colossians 1:15. It describes Jesus Christ as "*the firstborn of every creature,*" and some have advanced this in support of the pre-existence theory. If Jesus is firstborn, he must have existed before all others, they claim.

But does not that set Scripture against Scripture? If he is literally "firstborn" in the sense implied by the theory, how can the Bible claim that he is the "son of Abraham and David" (Matthew 1:1)? And consider the statement itself "firstborn of every creature." Does not *birth* demand a mother? Who was the mother who gave birth to a pre-existent Jesus before all other creatures?

These difficulties are solved, and the passage simply and beautifully explained, when the Bible doctrine of "firstborn" is understood. In the Bible, "firstborn" is a legal term, describing pre-eminence of position or status, though not necessarily of birth. There were special privileges granted the legal firstborn in a family. He represented his father, he acted as a priest, he received a double portion of the family inheritance (see Deuteronomy 21:17).

Moreover, the law of God provided that the eldest son of a family could forfeit his position as legal firstborn, if guilty of misconduct, or through inability to perform the necessary duties. He then could be supplanted by a younger son. Therefore, it was not necessary for Jesus to be the first of God's creation to be eligible for the position of legal firstborn.

For example, consider 1Chronicles 5:1, "*Reuben the firstborn of Israel... but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph, and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.*" Reuben's lewd conduct earned the rebuke of his father, who deposed him from his legal status of firstborn, and gave the position to a much younger son: Joseph.

Other examples could be multiplied. Ephraim was blessed as

firstborn by Jacob, even though he was younger than Manasseh his brother (Genesis 48:14-19), and God endorsed the appointment by describing Ephraim as "His firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:9). Jacob was given the birthright over his older brother Esau (Genesis 25:32-34). Simri was appointed to the position even though he was younger in years than his brethren (1Chronicles 26:10).

These examples (and they can be multiplied) clearly show that it was often the practice to appoint a younger son as legal firstborn in a family. In fact, this was so common that the Mosaic Law prohibited the elevation of a younger son to this position on the mere whim of his father, because of favouritism. It commanded: "*It shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated...*" (Deuteronomy 21:17). This prohibition shows that a legal firstborn could be a younger son, and therefore has a great bearing on the interpretation of Colossians 1:5.

The Bible refers to two notable "sons of God:" Adam and Christ (see Luke 3:38). The "first Adam" forfeited the right of inheritance, the position of firstborn of the human race, because of sin: but God raised up a younger Son (called in 1Corinthians 14:45 "the last Adam") whose complete obedience to the will of his Father proved him worthy of the pre-eminence. He was thus elevated to the position of firstborn of the human race, which means that he receives "a double portion of the inheritance," and that he acts as priest in the family of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is firstborn, not on the basis of longevity (which confers no merit) but by virtue of his moral excellence.

His elevation was predicted in the Old Testament. God declared concerning him: "*I will make him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth*" (Psalm 89:27). The use of the future tense in this prophecy shows that the Lord Jesus is not firstborn by birth but by divine appointment; otherwise God should have said, "He *is* My firstborn."

The resurrection of Jesus was the seal of the Father's approval of the Son (Romans 1:1-4). This constituted him the Firstborn. Paul wrote: "He is... the firstborn *from the dead*; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18), the "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). These expressions show conclusively that the apostle did not mean, by the use of the term, that Jesus pre-existed.

In fact, the followers of the Lord are also described as a "kind of firstfruits" to God (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4), and as "the

congregation of firstborns" (as is the literal Greek in Hebrews 12:23, see Diaglott). Therefore, if the title "firstborn" teaches the pre-existence of Christ, it must do so also in relation to his followers! All the privileges of the firstborn that rest on the Lord, apply to a lesser extent to his followers. They will receive a double portion of inheritance in the Age to come, even immortality (1Corinthians 15:52-54), and they will act as a royal-priesthood (Revelation 5:9-10) ministering to the mortal population that will remain (see Zechariah 14:16) during the period of Christ's impending millennial reign (Revelation 20:6.)

Did Christ Create The Heavens?

Some might remind us, however, that we have not disposed of all the difficulties contained in Colossians 1. For example, does it not reveal that Christ created all things? Paul taught: "*For by him [i.e., Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him*" (Colossians 1:16).

This seems conclusive evidence, for it appears to teach that the Lord Jesus created even heaven itself! But a close examination of the passage will reveal that it teaches too much if this interpretation is pressed, for it claims that he created all things "in heaven." That would include God Himself, to say nothing of the angels!

This, of course, is neither logical nor scriptural. What, then, does the verse mean? The Scriptures speak of heavens other than those which are above the earth. For example, the prophet Isaiah speaks of "new heavens and a new earth" to be manifested in the future, which he describes as representing "Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy" (Isaiah 65:17-18). The coming of the Lord Jesus will result in the formation of these *political* heavens. The rulers who will reign therein will be followers of the Lord Jesus, then made immortal, reigning "on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

Even now, a follower of the Lord is elevated into a position of privilege in relation to God and His Son, described as "the heavens in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3 — see margin). Paul thus taught: "*He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places [literally, the heavens] in Christ*" (Ephesians 2:6 — margin).

These "heavens" have been brought into existence through the work of Christ, and they are the precursors of the political "heavens" (ruling powers) to be manifested in the Age to come when he rules on

earth. In them are found gradations of authority, described as thrones, dominions and so forth; some of which were visible then, and some of which are yet to be manifested, and, therefore, are as yet invisible.

All will be Revealed in the Age to Come.

The term "heaven," therefore, often relates to a position of privilege or elevation. It is used to describe the present relationship of Christ's followers to the Father and the Son, as well as the authority they will wield in the kingdom that Christ will set up on earth in which they will exercise gradations of power (see Luke 19:17-19).

In Isaiah 65:17-18, cited above, the term "heavens" is used to describe the rulers or government of the Age to come, and the "earth" is used politically for the ruled, or the common people, as the prophet declares (see v. 18). The same interpretation is demanded by Colossians 1:16. The word in the Greek translated "by" is the preposition *en*. This is translated "because" in Matthew 26:33 and Mark 14:27, but is more commonly rendered "in." It signifies "in the sphere of" a person's influence or being. The Revised Standard Version and Revised Version translations of the Bible render Colossians 1:6 as "for *in* him were all things created." It cannot be said that the material creation was created "in Christ," and therefore the reference must be to a spiritual creation, as is further implied in v. 18.

Elsewhere, a person "in Christ" is described as a "new creature," or "new creation," as the expression should be rendered (2Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15), and the "things" that Christ is said to have created "in him" obviously is this "new creation" that the apostle had in mind. Christ is the beginning of this new creation of God (Revelation 3:14), leading the way for his disciples to follow (Philippians 3:21; 1John 3:1-2). What he is today, they can become at his coming.

To summarise, Colossians 1:16 does not teach the literal creation of the heavens and the earth by Jesus, because:

- Such a theory conflicts with the testimony of the Old Testament which teaches that God created.
- The heavens in question are described as "in Christ," which is only possible if they relate to spiritual things.
- Other expressions by the apostles align the "heavens" to positions of privilege in Christ.

So Paul concludes: "*He is before* [Greek: superior to] *all things, and by* [Greek: *en*, in] *him all things consist*" (Colossians 1:17). The Greek word translated "consist" is *sunistemi* and signifies to "stand, or

adhere together." Christ is the cohesive force of the new creation, and as such these words can be understood. But if the creation in question is interpreted to mean the literal creation of the physical heavens and earth then it would mean that Christ is the cohesive force of such. If that be the case, it should have disintegrated when he died!

Obviously the creation referred to is a spiritual one and not the literal heavens and earth "and all that in them is." This spiritual creation is found "in Christ."

The Bible teaches: "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [Greek: creation]; old things have passed away; behold all things are become new*" (2Corinthians 5:17). In relation to that "new creation" destined to become the ruling heavens, or government of the Age to come, Jesus Christ is the *Firstborn*. The Bible describes him as: "*The head of the body, the ecclesia; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence* (Colossians 1:18).

"I Am From Above" (John 8:23)

This is another statement often used to teach that Jesus was physically in heaven before he came down to earth 2,000 years ago. The context of the verse, however, shows that this interpretation is incorrect. Jesus declared to the Jews: "Ye are from beneath: I am from above;" then, in explanation, he continued: "Ye are of this world; I am not of this world" because God was his Father, and he manifested wisdom and characteristics that were divine.

A man who "loves the world" is "from beneath," or "earthy," but one who has "the love of the Father" dwelling in him is "from above" (1John 2:15). Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be "born from above" (John 3:3; margin) if he would inherit the kingdom of God. Such an one is begotten by the word of God (1Peter 1:23; 1John 3:9-10) by a "wisdom that descendeth from above" (James 3:15-18). The character that he will develop is one moulded by the Word of God that dwells in him (John 17:17), so that he can claim to be "from above," though he was never literally in heaven.

That is the sense in which Christ's words are to be understood. He was "not of this world" in the same sense as John exhorted believers to be "not of this world" (1John 2:15). The Christ-follower is expected to look beyond the earthly, material things of this world, to the glory yet to be revealed, and to become mentally and morally changed by an influence which is "from above."

Christ provided an example of this.

In following the pattern he set we demonstrate that we are motivated by higher consideration than those of mere flesh-likings; and that, in fact, we are "begotten from above" by a new life generated by the Word of Truth (1Peter 1:23).

"I Came Down From Heaven (John 6:38)

"*This is a hard saying, who can understand it?*" asked the disciples of the Lord when he proclaimed it (v. 60). It was followed by one even more difficult: "*What and if ye shall see the son of Man ascend up where he was before?*" So ridiculous did this sound to some of Jesus' disciples that they left him (v. 66). And that conclusively proves that they knew nothing of the theory of a pre-existent Christ. He certainly did not teach them that theory!

Moreover, consider the title that he used in the statement made. He spoke of himself as the "Son of Man," ascending up where he was before. Are those who teach a pre-existent Christ prepared to state that the "*Son of Man*" was previously in heaven? One would be compelled to do so if reliance is placed upon this statement to prove the pre-existence of Christ.

What did the Lord mean by these difficult sayings?

They appear at the end of a long controversial conversation with the Jews, based upon the giving of manna by Moses in the wilderness, and the circumstances of that miracle provide the key to their meaning. The manna is described as "bread from heaven" (John 6:32), and the Lord likened himself to anti-typical manna or "bread from heaven" (32-33). Does this description of manna as being "from heaven" mean that it was manufactured in heaven, at the dwelling place of God, and wafted down in a thick cloud every night through the illimitable spaces above to the wilderness below? Or did God send His spirit to earth, there to miraculously form it?

Undoubtedly the latter, as any reasonable person will concede.

That is the sense, also, in which we must understand the Lord's allusions to himself as coming from heaven. Consider the circumstances of his birth. The angel told his mother: "*The holy spirit shall come upon thee, the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35).

Jesus was "the only begotten Son of God," and therefore "from above." Paul taught that "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself*" (2Corinthians 5:19). Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, so that it can be said of him that he was "from above," as a child is

from his father, wherever he might be.

That this is the true meaning, is shown by the explanatory words of the Lord himself. To the confused disciples he declared: "*What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascended up where he was before? It is THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENETH; the flesh profiteth nothing* (John 6:62-63)

By His spirit, God brought about the conception and birth of Jesus, as a member of the human race strengthened to conquer sin through his divine parentage (see Psalm 80:17). The work thus begun was completed by his death and resurrection. Because he was perfect in character, the grave could not hold him (Acts 2:24), and he was raised again from the dead. His nature was changed from a body of flesh and blood to one of corporeal spirit, after which he ascended into heaven. The apostles saw him ascend, and were told that they would again see him at his second coming (see Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7), showing conclusively that a spirit-being has body and substance (1Corinthians 15:44-45). Thus, in the resurrected and glorified Lord, the Spirit, now manifested in a body of incorruptible glory, ascended where it was before, though in a different form. It descended as the power of the Father; it ascended as a Son of Man made immortal.

In The Beginning Was The Word (John 1)

John's Gospel commences with this statement, and continues to state that this word was with God and was God, and through it all things were made (vv. 1-4). And because the title, *Word of God*, is applied to the Lord Jesus in Revelation 19:13, it is claimed that these verses in John relate to a pre-existent Christ.

If this were so, however, it would make the Bible appear hopelessly contradictory, for such reference as "*I will be his Father, and He shall be My son;*" "*I will make him My firstborn;*" "*Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David*" are at variance with the teaching that represents Jesus as living before those words were spoken.

The Greek term translated "word" is *logos*. It signifies the outward form of inward thought or reason; or the spoken word as illustrative of thought, wisdom or doctrine.

The Bible teaching is that in the very beginning, God's purpose, wisdom or revelation was proclaimed through His Word. This Word was "with God" in that it came from Him; it "was God" inasmuch that it represented Him to mankind; and was the motive power of all that God did, for all was made with that in mind. In fact the Word, the *Logos* or Wisdom of God relates to the Gospel; therefore, the Bible

teaches: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:3-4).

A similar expression is used by Christ in Matthew 28:26, "This is my blood..." — that is, "this represents my blood." Again in Matthew 13:20, "the same is he..." similarly signifies "represents he." "That rock was Christ..." (1Corinthians 10:4), means that the "rock" represents Christ.

What the Bible teaches, therefore, is that in the beginning the wisdom and purpose of God, was proclaimed unto man in setting forth the way of salvation. That Word or *Logos* centred on Christ. In prophecy and type, as in the sacrifices under the Law, his coming was predicted, for he would be the one through whom sin and death could be conquered. The coming of the Lord gave reality to the hope of life. It was proclaimed or promised from the beginning in the Word or Doctrine of God, that the "seed of the woman," not a pre-existent Christ, would crush the serpent's head; thus conquer error, sin and death (Genesis 3:15).

That Word, Wisdom or Doctrine found its reality, substance, and confirmation in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:8). Therefore John taught: "The word was made (Greek: *ginomai*, "became") flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the **only begotten** of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The Word was made flesh, or "became" flesh, as it is expressed in the Greek, in the only **BEGOTTEN** of the Father (John 1:14). When did the begetting take place? When the Holy Spirit came upon Mary. By that means, the Declaration of divine wisdom found its substance and reality in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before his advent it was a mere Word or Promise, but when he was born it became a Person. Christ's disciples were able to "look upon" and "handle" the *Logos* of Life, or what previously was merely a doctrine or promise (1John 1:1). The person did not exist before the birth of the child Jesus; but the *Logos*, the promise and wisdom of God, always existed.

This is the teaching of John. It does away with the embarrassment of trying to explain that a pre-existent, immortal angel became a mortal embryo in the womb of a woman, as demanded by the theory of a pre-existent Jesus.

We acknowledge that "Word" is personalised as "him" in John 1:4, but that is a common Hebraism found throughout the Bible. Riches, Wisdom, Sin and other subjects are similarly treated.

Sometimes these are used to press the doctrine of pre-existence.

For example, on several occasions, Jehovah's Witnesses have drawn attention to such passages as Proverbs 8:22, and applied them to their notion of a pre-existent Jesus. The passage reads: "*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.*" The subject matter of the chapter is Wisdom which is personified; but, unfortunately for the doctrine of the pre-existent Son it is personified as a woman! "*She standeth, she crieth...*" (Proverbs 8:1-3).

**The Glory I Had With Thee Before The World Was
(John 17:5)**

This verse is also advanced to support the doctrine of a pre-existent Christ. Does the statement mean that Christ was personally with the Father from the very beginning? Or is it expressive of the fact that God, as a wise Architect (Hebrews 11:10), foresaw the glory of His completed plan?

The latter is without doubt!

This is shown beyond question by the use of similar expressions. Peter taught that the Lord was "*foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you*" (1Peter 1:20). That is the only sense in which it can be claimed that Christ pre-existed: he was foreordained, that is, he was in the mind and purpose of God from the beginning, and because what God determines shall be done, it will be accomplished without doubt, for "*God calleth those things which be not as though they were*" (Romans 4:17). Accordingly, John describes Christ as "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 13:8).

Was Jesus "slain from the foundation of the world?" Typically, Yes, in the sacrifices provided; but literally, No.

In like manner, God, who knows the end from the beginning, foresaw the glory of His Son and proclaimed it through the prophets. The ultimate elevation of Jesus was essential to the purpose of the Father from the very beginning.

Moreover, God has also provided for the ultimate glory of Christ's followers, so that the Lord prayed: "*The glory which Thou gavest me, I HAVE given them*" (John 17:22).

Do Christ's followers possess that glory now? They do not, they are merely "in hope" of it (see Romans 5:2).

How could Christ claim that he had then given it to them? Only in the sense that he has provisionally bestowed it, foreknowing that they to whom it is given in promise, will fulfil the conditions essential to them ultimately receiving it in fact.

Therefore, an accepted follower of the Lord will be able to claim from Christ at his coming, as Jesus prayed to the Father: "*Glorify thou me with the glory that I had [in promise] with thee before [this millennial] world began!*"

God foreknows His completed purpose, and knowing that He can and will bring it to consummation, is able to "call those things which be not as though they are" (Romans 4:17). Paul taught believers: "*God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, without blame before Him*" (Ephesians 1:4).

If John 17:5 proves the pre-existence of Jesus, Ephesians 1:4 must prove the pre-existence of all who are successful followers of him! However, what it does actually do is illustrate the foreknowledge of God.

The same language is used of other men whom God used in a special way. Of Jeremiah it is written: "*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations*" (Jeremiah 1:5). Does this prove the pre-existence of Jeremiah? If not, why should John 17:5 be used to teach the pre-existence of Jesus, and so be made to conflict with many other references which speak of him as the son of David born 2,000 years ago?

Similar language is used of Paul (Galatians 1:15) and others.

When Christ returns, his accepted followers will be granted a glory similar to that bestowed upon the Son. They will be "*conformed to the image of God's Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*" (Romans 8:29).

Your Responsibility

As the hope of eternal life is bound up in a correct understanding of the Father and Son (John 17:3); it is the responsibility of all to seek out the truth concerning these matters. It is very difficult to rid our minds of bias, but it is necessary if we would find the truth. Is it logical that an angel should become a baby, and be compelled to learn all over again those things that once he knew? What purpose is served by this?

No, the truth is simple, clear and logical. God created man "very good" (Genesis 1:31). He was not perfect, but he was not the sinful, death-doomed creature he is today. Sin marred the original "goodness" of man's nature, and brought him under the shadow of death (Genesis 3:19). Death is a negation of the divine purpose in creation, and hence God, to save man from his own folly, provided one of the human race, strengthened by divine conception and the outpouring of His Spirit

(see John 3:34), to overcome the lusts of the flesh, and render perfect obedience unto Him. A man of the human race was required for this (see Hebrews 2:14), and in the birth of Jesus such was provided. He died, to dramatise the fact that flesh of itself cannot render unto God that which is necessary for salvation: but his perfect obedience demanded his resurrection from the grave (Acts 2:24). He opened up the way of salvation for all, because God is prepared to forgive the sins of others, if they come unto Him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first steps to salvation are an understanding of the Gospel, the submitting to baptism in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), and a continued walk of consistency with the truths accepted. Christ is the ideal example of such a walk. But the doctrine of a pre-existent Christ who was originally of angelic nature destroys the power of his example. Moreover, the Bible teaches that "*the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*" (Romans 1:16).

From this it is obvious, reader, that your salvation is bound up in understanding the truth concerning Jesus Christ and his relationship to God (John 17:3), your recognition of your sinful, death-doomed state, by seeking the forgiveness of God through baptism into Christ, and with the strength derived from an understanding of the Word. Thus "by works meet for repentance" you will justify the bestowal of life eternal and an inheritance in God's kingdom to be set up on earth at Christ's coming (Daniel 2:44). The rewards of so doing are great, not only in this life, but in that which is to come. The plan of salvation is simply and clearly set forth by the Bible in the following terms: "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable, but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since BY MAN came death, BY MAN came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*" (1Corinthians 15:19-26).

Fulfilling Bible prophecy indicates the coming of Christ is near at hand. This is your day of opportunity. Do not let it go by unheeded.



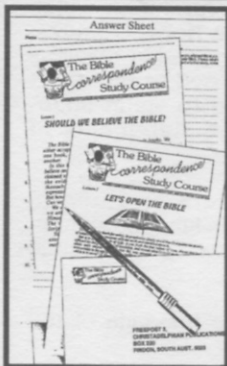
The Catholic Church

*Examined
Historically and
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if they speak not according to this
word, it is because there is no
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