

DOCTRINE OF CHRIST — His Nature

The Pre-Existence Of Jesus Christ

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MEMORY VERSES

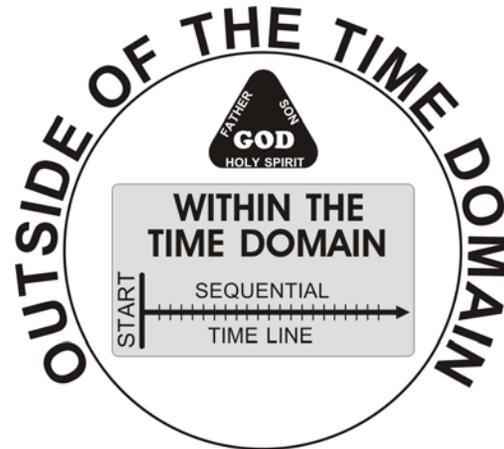
- **John 17:5** — “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”



Doctrine of Christ — His Nature

INTRODUCTION — The Pre-Existence of Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ did not come into existence when He was born of the virgin Mary. That was His Incarnation (coming into flesh). God, the Eternal Son, existed before His physical birth in Bethlehem. He existed before time. We will see that the *Logos* (Greek meaning the “Word”) always existed. The *Logos* is Jesus Christ (Jn.1:1,14). The *Logos* created everything that is created (Jn.1:1-3). This creation included time itself. Because the Logos exists outside of time, He can create time. One cannot create time or a dimension if He is within the limits of that domain.



In the Old Testament Jesus Christ was the focus of attention through, for example, the Angel of the LORD and the many models that prefigure His character and ministry. In the New Testament Jesus Christ continues to be the focus of attention. The doctrine of Christ’s pre-existence is not from theological speculation. Pre-existence does not necessarily imply eternity, but eternity does imply pre-existence. Pre-existence in this study of Christ does include the reality of His eternity. It is important to understand who Christ is before we can establish what He has done for us. Christ’s pre-existence is personal, not merely ideological. His deity is eternal, but His earthly life began at a point in time.

THE ETERNAL SON COMPARED WITH JESUS OF NAZARETH

TRUE: The man we call Jesus of Nazareth pre-existed His earthly life — as God

- » TRUE: [Before His Incarnation (birth) Christ existed as the *Eternal Son*]
- TRUE: (God the Eternal Son always existed)

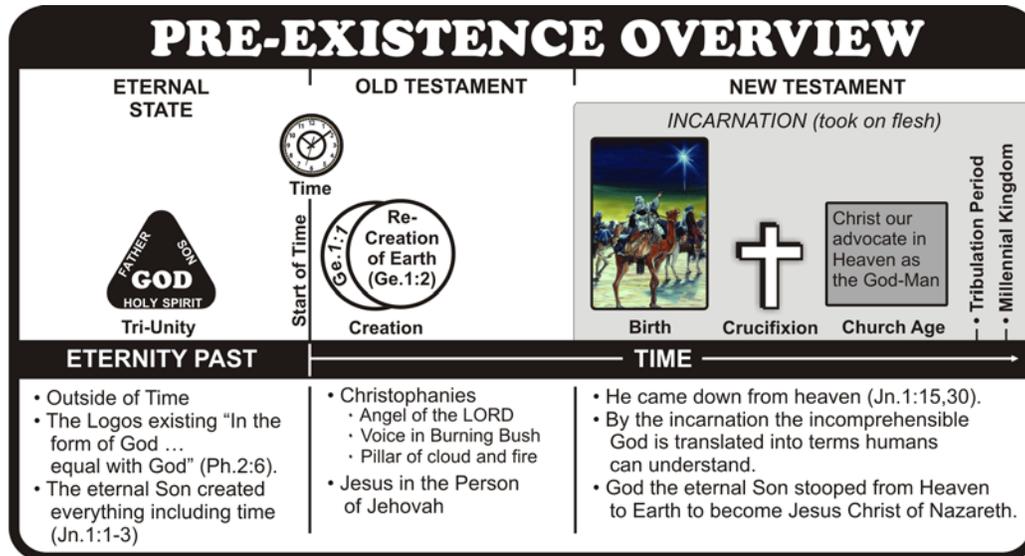
FALSE: The man we call Jesus of Nazareth pre-existed His earthly life — as Man

- » TRUE: [After His Incarnation (birth) Christ existed as the *God-Man*]
- TRUE: (Jesus, as a man, did not exist before His birth)



God has not abandoned man in his sin, nor merely sent an agent (as a repairman) to perform the fix. He came Himself by entering into our circumstances in order to redeem us.

At the birth of Christ (Incarnation) He took on flesh. As God, He was pure spirit. As a result of the incarnation, Jesus Christ continues to be man. This appears to be the case even into eternity future.



Biblical Texts

The pre-existence of Jesus Christ is taught in many forms in Scripture. We have the many examples of Christ appearing in the Old Testament as the Angel of the LORD. Then we have many passages that directly teach His pre-existence. Also we have passages that indirectly allude to His pre-existence. The Word teaches that Christ is “from everlasting,” that He came down from heaven, that He shared glory with God the Father, as well as other passages that directly teach Christ’s pre-existence. We will examine some of these key passages.

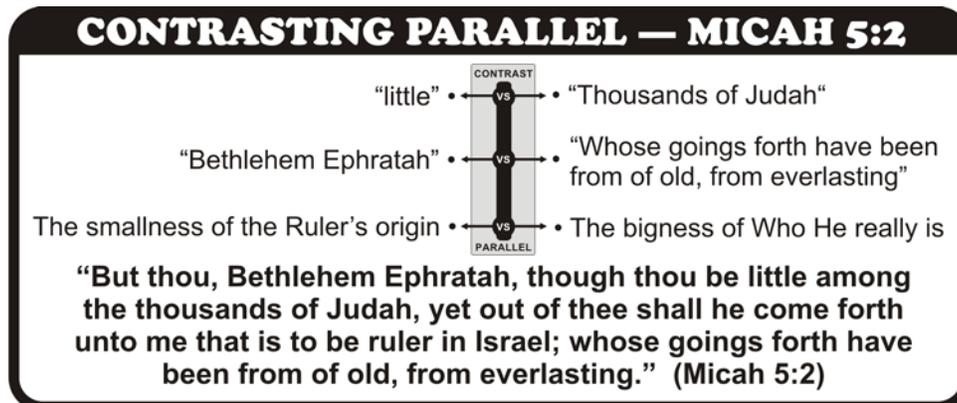
Micah 5:2 [“Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”]

Micah 5:2 is one of the clearest prophecies in the Hebrew Old Testament for identifying the Messiah. It pinpoints the exact location of the Messiah’s birth, as well as His character. The last phrase, “from everlasting” (Hebrew, *miymey ‘olam*), teaches that the Messiah is actually God. This phrase is used in five other passages (Is.63:9,11; Am.9:11; Mi.7:14; Ml.3:4) and translated, “days of old.” However, this verse is distinct from these passages. All these passages are in the context of the Messiah’s reign. Yet this passage uses an emphatic repetition construction. In Hebrew there is no superlative construction available to express ideas like “biggest”, “best”, “fastest”, etc. Because of this they employ a repetition of related ideas and words to add meaning that is often beyond the mere denotation of the words used.



The word *'olam* when describing past events usually describes events outside the memory or life time of those written to. However, it does not have to mean a “limitless past.” It simply refers to a time long before the immediate knowledge of those living. It also carries with it the idea of continuing in duration. In this context *'olam* at least goes back to creation. When we consider this passage in the light of other Messianic texts (e.g., Je.23:5-6), the translation of *miymey 'olam* as “everlasting” describing the coming Ruler is certain. The emphatic addition of “from of old” (Hebrew, *miqqedem*) piled on with “everlasting” (Hebrew, *'olam*), does more than make “everlasting” legitimate, it demands it.

There is another emphatic structure in this verse. The structure for “little” (smallness of the Ruler’s origin) in the first clause is in contrasting parallel to the “bigness” of who He really is.



John 1:1-4, 14 [“In the beginning was the Word”]

This passage is conclusive that the “Word,” who is Jesus Christ (v.14), pre-existed His human birth. It expresses the thought of eternal existence by use of the imperfect tense with the thought of eternal present. That is, He is, not merely was in existence before: (1) He created all things, and (2) He not only was with God, but He was God. In short, He who ever is, never began to be. Three times the imperfect of *eimi*, translated “was” is used. It conveys no idea of origin for God or for the Logos. It simply conveys continuous existence. A different verb *egeneto*, translated “became” appears in verse 14 referring to Christ’s Incarnation.



He is taken out of the category of creatures because He Himself is the Creator of all that is (v.3). John teaches that the Word not only is God's coeternal fellow, but the eternal God's self.

John 1:15, 30 [“He was before me”]

John the Baptist twice asserts of Christ that “he was before me” (Jn.1:15,30). John indicates a time relationship here, even though he was older (6 months) than Jesus Christ in human terms (Lk.1:36). John is not stating that Christ is by divine appointment higher in rank and dignity than he. That is obvious. If John meant Christ was higher in rank he would have said, “He is before me” and not “he was (3rd person sing of *eimi*) before me.” What John is saying is that in point of time, Jesus Christ preceded him.

John 6:33,38,41,50,51,58,62 [He came down from heaven]

In John chapter 6 Christ declares seven times that “He came down from heaven.” Jesus asks this question to a grumbling crowd, “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” (Jn.6:62). He anticipates a literal ascension which was fulfilled in Acts 1:10. Christ is describing His existence in Heaven, outside of time, before He took on flesh.

JOHN CHAPTER 6

CHRIST, THE BREAD, CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN



1. Christ is the bread that came down from heaven (v.33).
2. Christ came down from heaven to do the Father's will (v.38).
3. The Jews murmur because Christ said He was the bread that came down from heaven (v.41).
4. Christ is the bread that came down that He invites man to eat (v.50).*
5. Christ is the bread that came down from heaven that gives everlasting life (v.51).
6. Christ is the bread that came down from heaven which is better than the manna (v.58).
7. Christ Who came down from heaven predicts His ascension back to heaven (v.62).

* John 6:63 tells us that Christ's words here are spiritual. He is not saying we need to literally eat His flesh to receive everlasting life. The meaning here is to believe what Christ says about Himself.

John 8:58 [“Before Abraham was, I am”]

Christ emphatically claims to exist before His human birth. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn.8:58). This phrase “I AM”, is attached with the inexpressible name, Jehovah. The Jews recognize by this statement that Christ is associating Himself with and as Jehovah. They believed they were obligated to stone Him to death for blasphemy (Le.24:16; Jn.10:33). When they preceded to do that He supernaturally disappeared from their midst. In context Jesus proposes Himself to His countrymen as their long awaited Messiah. He said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Jn.8:56). But they would not consider His supernatural pre-existence to Abraham. They chose to consider His words with merely a human understanding. They refused to acknowledge Christ's signature of uncreated and continual existence. The Jews could not pretend to misunderstand Him. Jesus expressed the reality to be their Messiah and their very God in one. Then He proved it by supernaturally leaving the temple, “going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (Jn.8:59).



John 17:5 [“...Glory which I had with Thee before the world was”]

Jesus prays to the Father and says, “ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (Jn.17:5). This unqualified declaration that Christ shared personally and rightfully in the glory that belongs only to Deity before the world was highlights that He existed before the incarnation. Jesus speaks here concerning the things that belong to His eternal relationship within the Godhead. He continues this thought in verse 24.

Some propose here that Christ merely shared in the glory in that He existed only in the eternal councils of God. This would mean that He did not actually exist except in the mind of God. If this was true, then Christ's prayer would be that He would go back to His non-existent state in the mind of God. And that He would have no expectation of attaining actual glory.

Philippians 2:6 [“Form of God...Equal with God”]

Paul speaks concerning Christ's deity saying, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Ph.2:6). This passage teaches that Christ, before His incarnation, existed in the form of God. Paul does not merely say “He was God”. By saying, “Who, being in the form of God”, Paul employees wording which emphasizes our Lord's possession and quality as God. “Form” is a precise thing. “The form of God” is the sum characteristic which makes up what we know or call “God”. Paul declares in the most express manner possible, Christ to be all that God is. Paul is saying that Christ possesses the whole or fullness of attributes which makes God. Paul does not merely want us to know that Christ is God. He wants his readers to rest in the richness and fulness of Christ as God.

Paul does not speak of Christ's being in a past mode, but in the present tense as “being” or subsisting “in the form of God” now. He tells us who and what Christ is for us, so we can appreciate the things He has done for us.

Christ's life assumes an unselfish purpose. He voluntarily lived His life to fulfill His unselfish purpose.

Secondary Passages Implying Christ's Pre-Existence

Jn.1:14; 3:13; 8:23; 17:14, 18; Ph.2:8; Cl.1:15-17; He.2:14



Summary

He explicitly identifies himself with Jehovah on various occasions.



QUESTIONS

1. Is the Eternal Son the same as saying Jesus of Nazareth?
2. Does the Old Testament teach the eternal nature of Israel's Messiah (Mi.5:2)?
3. Is the Logos (Word) also known as Jesus Christ (Jn.1:1,14)?
4. Does Jesus associate Himself with the voice of the Burning Bush (Jn.8:58; Ex.3:2)?
5. Did Jesus Christ Share glory with God the Father in eternity past (Jn.17:5)?