

Inside the Lines
P.O. Box 1261
Fort Mill, South Carolina 29716

JESUS
His Preexistence Lesson 1
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Something for You to Study

The most important teaching of the Bible centers about the Lord Jesus Christ—who He is and what He does. In studying about Him, it is necessary to go back beyond the usual beginning of the natural human life. The Bible is the only authentic source book for a biography of Jesus Christ. Any material found elsewhere is purely imaginary unless it is based on the biblical account. The gospels are the record of the life of Christ on earth: Matthew and Luke begin with His birth in Bethlehem; Mark begins his account with the start of Jesus' public ministry when He was about thirty years of age, and the gospel of John emphasizes particularly the fact of the eternity of Christ, that is, His preexistence. The term means exactly what it says: *pre-* (before) *exist* (to be)—Christ lived before He lived on earth. We know this because it is stated in the Bible. Many places in both the Old and New Testaments speak of His preexistence. Micah 5:2 tells the place where He would be born and then speaks of His having been "from of old, from everlasting." Isaiah gives his experience when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." Isaiah lived seven hundred years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, but John referred to this event and said that Isaiah was speaking of Christ (John 12:41).

John 1:1-2 says positively, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." This is a conclusive statement of Christ's preexistence. He was not only with God, but He was God from before the creation of the world. He is a member of the Trinity, equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Himself made the clear claim to His preexistence in His prayer in John 17:5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me ... with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He said to the Jewish leaders, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Abraham's life is recorded in Genesis 11-25. Historically he lived about 2000 years before Christ. Yet, in using the particular verb tenses that He did, Jesus was saying that He had lived before His birth into the world, since He was before Abraham. The Jews recognized that He was claiming to be eternal, which was a claim to be God.

In Hebrews 13:8, Jesus is described as "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He is eternal. This is the point at which there must be a clear understanding about the preexistence of Christ. If He is not eternal—that is, if He did not preexist—then He came into being at a certain fixed time in history. If this were true. He could not be God, for a god who is not eternal cannot possibly be God. On the human side, Jesus had a beginning; He was born in Bethlehem. Isaiah 9:6 says, "Unto us a child is

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born." On the divine side, Christ had no beginning; He was the son given (Isaiah 9:6), who existed from all eternity.

OLD TESTAMENT EVIDENCE

Scripture shows that Christ's existence was distinct and personal throughout the Old Testament age. Appearances in the Old Testament, called theophanies, are evidence that Christ existed prior to His birth in Bethlehem. A theophany is an appearance of Christ in the form of a man or an angel. "It is safe to assume that every visible manifestation of God in bodily form in the Old Testament is to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ."* The principal ones are: (1) as the "angel of the LORD" to Hagar in Genesis 16:7-13; 21:17-19; to Abraham in Genesis 22:11-18; to Moses in Exodus 3:2; to Gideon in Judges 6; to Samson's parents in Judges 13; (2) as a man to Abraham in Genesis 18:1; to Jacob in Genesis 32:24-32. The "angel of the LORD" does not appear in the New Testament, for He became the incarnate Christ.

NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCE

There are clear statements that in His preexistence Christ was active. *In creation.* John 1:3 says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 2:10 reveal that everything, including the unseen principalities and powers as well as the visible universe, were not only made by Him but for Him.

As controller. Hebrews 1:3 says that it is Christ who is "upholding all things by the word of his power." When Christ lived on the earth, He had control over the elements of nature. He could command a storm to stop (Mark 4:39), walk on water (John 6:19-20), multiply bread (John 6), and raise the dead (John 11). Since only God has such power and God—to be God—must be eternal, it follows that Jesus Christ is God and therefore existed from eternity.

In salvation. Many Scriptures speak of God's purpose to redeem mankind. They begin with the first general reference in Genesis 3:15 of one who would come to "bruise" Satan and go on to more specific prophecies, such as the one in Isaiah 9:6-7, to the coming of Christ in the New Testament. God's purpose to send a Redeemer was clear through the ages from the creation to the incarnation. But Ephesians 1:4 adds the further revelation that this purpose was from "before the foundation of the world" and that it was "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:11). Further, God's grace was "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). Since the divine plan of salvation was settled before the foundation of the world and was centered in Jesus Christ, we have added proof of His preexistence.

Any denial of this truth must be a denial of Scripture as the inerrant Word of God. This would also be a denial of God who is the author of Scripture. An acceptance of Jesus Christ must rest upon the basis of His preexistence.

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A Further Word

The means by which the infinite God was able to reveal Himself to finite, sinful men involved the humble stooping down of the divine majesty. An entity of our universe of discourse was chosen to represent an element of God's. Revelation makes sacramental use of our universe in order that genuine communication might take place. Revelation thus enters into the human orbit *authentically*, clothing itself in the linguistic and cultural garb of that time. . . . Mankind is enmeshed in the finite and the contingent, and cannot look on the face of God. It is imperative that revelation be cosmically mediated that we might receive it. In the face of Jesus Christ, the divinely accredited Emissary, we can see the reflected glory of God (Heb 1:3).

Notes

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Find Out for Yourself

Name _____

1. What is the significance of Jesus' use of the present tense in His statement "Before Abraham was, I am"?
2. Why did He not say, "Before Abraham was, I was"? _____
3. How does the fact that Jesus is God prove His preexistence?
4. Read Isaiah 42:8. What is the significance of God's words, "My glory will I not give to another" in relation to Christ's prayer in John 17:5? _____
5. What does the use of the pronouns *us* and *our* in Genesis 1:26 and Isaiah 6:8 indicate about the person of God? _____
- 5a. How does this relate to Christ's preexistence?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. What words refer to Christ's preexistence?
7. List in the correct time order the three appearances of Christ given in Hebrews 9:24-28
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Check Your Memory

1. The word *preexistence* means _____.
2. _____ is the Old Testament reference to Christ's birthplace.
3. Abraham lived about _____ years before Christ was born on earth.
4. Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament are called _____.

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5. Genesis 1:26 and John 1:1-3 speak of Christ's part in_____.
6. Matthew and Luke record Christ's _____;
7. Mark begins with His _____.
8. John tells of His_____.
7. God's plan of salvation was fixed before the _____.



Scripture memorization

(write it on the back page three times)

1 Tim 1:17

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

(KJV)