

## CHRISTOLOGY (4)

Obviously, if Jesus Christ came into existence at His birth, He cannot possibly be eternal God.

One of the major attributes of God is the attribute of eternity. Dr. John Walvoord writes: "One of the most crucial problems in approaching the study of the person and work of Jesus Christ is the question of His existence from all eternity past as the second Person of the Trinity. It was this issue which aroused the immediate antagonism of the Jews when Christ said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). His listeners immediately understood that Christ was claiming to be eternal and thereby was asserting Himself to be God. As Stauffer points out, this "I am" is the climax of a series of affirmations in John 8 beginning with "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The Jews accordingly took up stones to stone Him, which was the prescribed penalty for blasphemy" (John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, p. 22).

Great harm is done to the Person of Jesus Christ when it is stressed that Christ's birthday was on Christmas. As we shall see from Scripture, His entrance into the world as a human being was certainly a monumental event; however, that was not His birth date of existence. Christ has always existed throughout all of time. He has no birth date. He is God! There were times in history before Christ was born a baby, when He appeared as a human. What we will discover is that Christ's birth in Bethlehem was the moment in time that He decided to take on human form, forever.

There are many passages of Scripture which specifically prove that Jesus Christ always existed and is God:

1. John 1:1-2 - These verses not only declare that Jesus Christ is co-equal with God the Father in time, but that He is God. It is clear that the One who "became flesh" was God from all eternity (John 1:14).
2. Micah 5:2 - The One who would be ruler of Israel would be born in Bethlehem and He eternally existed. His "goings forth from long ago, from the days of eternity." This One is none other than Jesus Christ (Luke 2:4-7).
3. John 8:58 - It is clear that Christ is claiming to be God and from the Jewish response in verse 59, they fully understood His claim.
4. Col. 1:16-17 - Here are two of the most powerful verses about Jesus Christ being God in all of the Bible. It is clearly stated that Jesus Christ created all things and that He is "before" all things. If Jesus Christ existed before all things and created all things, He is not created, but He is the Creator.

It is very important to point out that the relative pronouns "whom" (v. 14), and "He" (v. 15) have as their antecedent the noun "son" of verse 13. Simply stated, this passage presents irrefutable grammatical evidence that Jesus Christ is God from all eternity.

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5. Rev. 1:8 - It is clear that the Person speaking to John is making a very powerful claim about Himself—He is the totality of everything, including written revelation and all activity (1:13).
6. Isaiah 9:6 - It is clearly stated that a child would be born who would have descriptive titles like “mighty God” and “eternal Father.” Clearly these titles described God.

In evaluating these passages, it is very clear that Jesus Christ is God from all eternity and He had no beginning. He always existed as God. As Mr. Miles stated—“Pre-existence does not merely mean that Jesus Christ existed before His incarnation. Russellites (Jehovah’s Witness) claim to believe that. It means that He never had a beginning. All Scripture that affirms Christ’s deity likewise affirms His pre-existence. God is from all eternity. If Christ is God, the same is true of Him” (Doctrine Notes, p. 1).

To deny the pre-existence doctrine is to tamper with the doctrine of the Trinity, Christ’s deity, Christ’s position and Christ’s truthfulness. Pre-existence is a doctrine worth knowing and defending.

Now there are certain passages which have been used by many in an attempt to lessen the significance of Jesus Christ, particularly as it relates to His pre-existence:

1. Col. 1:15 - The phrase “first-born of all creation” has been falsely interpreted to mean that this proves that Jesus Christ as a created being, specifically the first being created. This heretical interpretation comes from a failure to “rightly divide” what has been written, specifically by pulling one clause entirely out of its context.

The first clause of the verse clearly states Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God.” Verse 16, which begins with a conjunction “for,” gives a reason or explanation as to why Christ is the very image of God—He created all things. The clause that is grammatically between these two ideas (“image of the invisible God” and “by Him all things were created”) is the statement “first born of all creation.” Taken in its context, the only interpretation that can be true is that Jesus Christ gave birth to all creation. He was the originator of all things. He created all things. Jesus Christ was the author of all creation. He gave birth and life to all things. He is the first cause of everything born.

A simple observation of the context makes it totally clear that this has nothing to do with the fact that He was created, but rather that He created all things. Christ is the first cause of all creation. All things were created by Him and for Him (1:16). Dr. Chafer said it well when He said that the title “first-born” is a title which does not mean that He was “...the first created thing, but the antecedent to all things as well as the cause of them” (Vol. 5, p. 12).

To sum up the matter, we believe that the statement that Christ was the first-born of all creation means that Jesus Christ was the Creator and cause of everything created. It is clear evidence that He is God.

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2. John 1:14, 18 - Here is a high and holy designation concerning Jesus Christ—"only begotten from the Father" or "only begotten of God." Dr. Chafer writes: "This, one of the highest of titles ever employed, bears an indication of the eternal relationship existing between the Father and the Son" (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

This phrase means that Jesus Christ is the only Person born who is part of the Godhead. Jesus Christ is the only Person ever born into this world who is totally unique in His position, purpose and relationship to God the Father. He is the only Person fully human and fully God. This is the only Person who is uniquely related to and part of the Godhead. Jesus Christ stands completely alone in His relationship to God the Father. There will never be another person who holds Christ's position and purpose. Jesus Christ is the only Person who can claim equality with God the Father (John 10:30).

There have been two main theological errors and heresies concerning this title:

- 1) Some suggest Jesus Christ is really God and therefore not really the Son of God, thus leading to Tritheism—the belief in three God's.
- 2) Some suggest Jesus Christ is a son who had a beginning; therefore, He is not eternal God.

When one reads the context of these verses—John 1:1-18, there is absolutely no doubt or confusion that this phrase is one not designed to lessen the Person of Christ, but to establish that He is the only Person to ever live on this earth who was part of the Godhead.

3) Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5 - This title "first-born from/of/out/ of the dead" means that Jesus Christ is the first to be raised to everlasting life.

There were several people raised from the dead: the widow's son (Lk. 7:11-15); Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:49-55); Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44). The major difference between these resurrections and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is this—the widow's son, Jairus' daughter and Lazarus each had to face death again, whereas Jesus Christ was raised never to face death again. Simply stated, Jesus Christ was the first to be raised to everlasting life.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer well concluded: "A consideration of these designations cannot but impress the devout mind with the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ existed as God from all eternity, and that He will so exist throughout eternity to come" (Vol. 5, p. 12).

**QUESTION #5** – What did Jesus Christ do prior to His birth?

Once Christ chose to take on human form, we may trace His words and work because the Gospel writers give us great detail as to what He was doing. But a critical question of Christology, that truly establishes who Christ is, is one of His activity prior to His incarnation. What was Jesus doing, as the second Person of the Trinity, prior to His human birth? Several passages give us answers to this question:

1. He was involved in creation. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2