

Jesus Did Not Pre-Exist

"This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" -- John 17:3.

Who Is Jesus Christ?

We state this question in the present tense, because though Jesus Christ was crucified 1,900 years ago at the agitation of a Jewish mob and maladministration of Gentile power, he lives today.

And the fact that he lives is of the greatest significance to mankind.

Paul, the one time inveterate opponent of Christianity, who was converted into its greatest advocate by the incontestable evidence of the Lord's resurrection (1 Cor. 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 hath 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 present conditions, and to reign as king.

Confusion Concerning Christ

But who is Jesus Christ? Eternal life is bound up in the answer to this question, as the quotation at the head of this article shows. Put the question to Jews, and they reply that he was the son of Joseph and Mary, and that he lived and died in Judea 1900 years ago. Ask it of most clergymen, and they will state that 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 Jewish answer. The disciples were not liars, fools, mystics or charlatans. They comprised practical fishermen like Peter, hard-headed businessmen like Matthew, even skeptics like Thomas. Such men were not prepared to be misled by a rumor, 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 skeptical 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" (1 Tim. 2:5).

"One God, the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.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" (1 Cor. 15:28).

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 alleged of the Lord.

Yet the Bible clearly shows that Jesus had no existence prior to his birth in Bethlehem, 1900 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 latent spiritual proclivities that

strengthened him to conquer the flesh, and manifest divine qualities (1 Tim. 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.

Take, as example, the opening verse of the New Testament:

"The genealogy of Jesus Christ the SON of David, the SON of Abraham".

If Jesus lived in some form before Abraham and David, he was not their son, and 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 favor 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 favor 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 favor with God merely because in his new 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 unscriptural!

It is normal procedure for a child to "develop in wisdom and stature," but where Jesus differed from all before or since, was in

his Divine conception, and his exceptional predilection for spiritual things. This he inherited from his Father. The Father who is from everlasting became revealed in the Son (2 Cor. 5:19; Isa. 11:2-3; John 12:49), so that Jesus could say with perfect truth, "before Abraham was I am" for he was "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

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 manifest 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 "the Lord made strong for Himself" (Psalm 80:17), in order that His ways might be revealed unto men.

The Thread of Evidence Throughout The Bible

Throughout the Old Testament the promise of Christ is proclaimed; 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 misguiding influence of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). The New Testament comments:

"When the fulness 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" (Gal. 4:4).

If Christ pre-existed, how could he be described as the "seed of the woman?"

Abraham was 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).

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

Can the words of Moses above apply to a pre-existent angel? Could such a one be truthfully described as "raised up from the midst of thee," "of thy brethren, like unto Moses?"

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 (2 Sam. 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 clearly 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 one already in existence?

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).

Whom did David believe would sit upon his throne? An angel who was already in existence? No; he believed the one who would reign there would be "the fruit of his loins," that is, a descendant. The boy 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" (Isa. 7:14).

That 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).

In short, 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 such 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 that they see there revealed. By so doing, they develop a character

worthy of perpetuation in a body of incorruptible glory in the Age to come (1 Cor. 15:53-57).

The theory that sets forth Jesus as a pre-existent angel, however, destroys this pattern, and mystifies and distorts the beautiful doctrine of God-manifestation in the man Christ Jesus.

And remember 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 give support 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" and proceed to "wrest them unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

Such a 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 that demand a mother? Who was the mother who gave birth to him before all others?

These difficulties are solved, and the passage simply and beautifully explained, when the Bible doctrine of the "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).

But the law of God provided that the eldest son of a family could forfeit his position as legal firstborn, if guilty of misconduct or inability to perform the necessary duties, and be supplanted by a younger son. In other words, 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 1 Chronicles 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 (1 Chronicles 26:10).

These examples (and they could be multiplied) clearly show that it was often the practice for a younger son to be elevated to the position of 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 favoritism. 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 . . . " (Deut. 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 1:15.

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 1 Cor. 15:45 "the last Adam") whose complete obedience to the will of his Father proved him worthy of the preeminence. 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 by fact 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 appointment; otherwise God should have said, "He IS My firstborn."

The resurrection of Jesus was the seal of the Father's approval on the Son (Rom. 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" (Col 1:18), the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). [The followers of the Lord are also described as a "kind of firstfruits" to God (James 1:18; Rev. 14:4), and as "the congregation of firstborns" (Heb. 12:23 - Greek. 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 (1 Cor. 15:52-54), and they will act as a royal-priesthood (Rev. 5:9-10) in relation to the mortal population that will remain (see Zech. 14:16) during the period of Christ's millennial reign (Rev. 20:6).]

These expressions show conclusively that the apostle did not mean, by his use of the term, that Jesus pre-existed.

Did Christ Create The Heavens?

Some will 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" (Col. 1:16).

This seems conclusive evidence, for it appears to teach that the Lord Jesus created even heaven. 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!

That is obviously neither logical nor Scriptural. What, then, does the verse mean? The Scriptures speak of heavens other than those which are above. For example, the prophet Isaiah speaks of "new heavens and a new earth" to be manifested in the future, which he describes as "Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy" (Isa. 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" (Rev. 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" (Eph. 1: 3 -- see margin). Paul thus taught:

"He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places (the heavens) in Christ" (Ephesians 2:6 -- Margin).

These "heavens" have been brought into existence through Christ, and they are the precursors of the political "heavens" 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 that 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, the "heavens" constitute the rulers or government of the age to come, and the "earth" the ruled, or common people, as the prophet is careful to show (see v.18). The same interpretation is demanded for Colossians 1:16. The word in the Greek translated "by" is the preposition *en*. This is translated "because" in Matthew 26:33; Mark 14:27, but is more commonly rendered "in." It signifies "in the sphere of" a person's influence or being. The R.S.V. and Revised Version translations of the Bible render Colossians 1:16 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 the 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 (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), and as the "things" that Christ is said to have created are "in him" it is obviously this "new creation" that the Apostle has in mind. Christ is the beginning of this new creation of God (Rev. 3:14), leading the way to which his followers can attain (Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:1-2), for, what he is today they can become.

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

1. It conflicts with the testimony of the Old Testament which teaches that God created.
2. The heavens in question are "in Christ" which is only possible if they relate to spiritual things.
3. Other expressions by the Apostle 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" (Col. 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, we must acknowledge that Christ holds all that together. Why, then, did it not disintegrate when he died? Obviously this interpretation is wrong, and as the context clearly shows, was never intended by Paul, who was writing of a spiritual creation in Christ.

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

This statement is often used to teach that Jesus was in heaven before he came down to earth. 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." Christ was "from above" and "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 "earthly," but one who has "the love of the Father" dwelling in him is "from above" (1 John 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 a one is begotten by the word of God (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9-10), by a "wisdom that descendeth from above" (James 3:15-18). The character that he will develop is one molded by the Word 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" (1 John 2:15). The Christ-follower is expected to look beyond the earthy things of this world to the glory yet to be revealed, and to become mentally and morally changed by the influence which is "from above."

Christ provided an example of this.

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

"This is a hard saying, who can understand it?" asked the disciples (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.

Moreover, consider the title the Lord used. He described himself as "Son of Man."

Was the pre-existent one a Son of Man? Evidently he was if this reference is relied upon as proof of his supposed pre-existence.

What did the Lord mean by these difficult sayings?

They appear at the end of a long conversation with the Jews, based upon the giving of manna in the wilderness, and the circumstances 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" (vv. 32-33). Does this description mean that the manna 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, and there manufacture it?

Undoubtedly the latter, as any reasonable person will concede.

That is the sense, therefore, in which we must understand the Lord's allusions to himself. 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 unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). That which was in Christ (the Spirit) had come down from heaven, and tabernacling in the flesh of Jesus, ascended into heaven after his resurrection.

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 ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:62-63).

God, by His spirit, descended to earth to provide one of the human race capable of conquering sin (see Ps. 80:17), and having done so, He withdrew this one to heaven, having changed his nature from a body of flesh to one of spirit, for it should be clearly understood that a spirit being is corporeal (1 Cor. 15:44-45). Thus the Spirit ascended where it was before, though in a different form. It descended as the power of God; 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 goes on to state that this word was with God and was God, and made all things (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 already living.

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 and doctrine.

John is teaching that in the very beginning, God's purpose, wisdom or revelation had been in evidence. It was "with God" in that it emanated from him; it "was God" in that it represented Him to mankind [a similar expression is used by Christ in Matthew 26:28: "This is my blood" -- that is, this represents my blood. Again in Matthew 13:20: "the same is he" signifies the same, "represents he." "That rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4), it represented Christ];

and it became the motive power of all that God did, for all was made with it in mind, and it presented the hope of life to mankind (see John 1: 3-4).

What John is stating, therefore, is that in the very beginning there existed the wisdom or purpose of God, and that it was revealed unto men to provide a way of life.

What did it proclaim?

The coming of one who would overcome sin and give reality to the hope of life. The promise of this was stated from the beginning in the Word or Doctrine of God (e.g. Genesis 3:15).

This Word, Wisdom or Doctrine found its reality, its substance, its confirmation (Romans 15:8) in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; 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. 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 became manifested, it became a person.

The person did not exist before the birth of the child Jesus; but the promise and wisdom of God always existed.

That is the teaching of John. It does away with the embarrassment of teaching that an angel became an embryo in the womb of a woman, as demanded by the theory of a pre-existent Jesus.

We acknowledge that "Word" is personalized 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 preexistent son, it is personified as a woman: "She standeth, she crieth" etc. (Prov. 8:1-3).

"The Glory I Had with Thee Before The World was" -- John 17:5

Do these words mean that Christ was personally with the Father from the very beginning? or are they expressive of the fact that God, as a wise Architect (Hebrews 11:10), foresaw the glory of His completed plan?

The latter without doubt! This is shown beyond question because of the use of similar language in the same manner.

Thus Peter taught that the Lord was "foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifested in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20). John describes him as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 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 the Son and proclaimed it through the prophets. The ultimate glory of Jesus was in the mind and purpose of the Father from the very beginning.

He 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 his glory now? They do not, they are merely "in hope" of it (see Romans 5:2).

How can Christ then claim to have 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 to ultimately receive it in reality.

Thus, an accepted follower at Christ's coming could well speak to the Lord 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 the completed purpose, and knowing that He will bring it to consummation, is able to "call those things which be not as though they are" (Rom. 4:17). Paul taught:

"God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4).

If John 17:5 proves the pre-existence of Jesus, Ephesians 1:4 must prove the pre-existence of all who are followers of him!

The same language is used of other men whom God has 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 that 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 1900 years ago? Similar language is used of Paul (Gal. 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" (Rom. 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's spirit caused the birth of His son, and strengthened him in his daily pilgrimage towards victory over sin. By so doing there was revealed the means of victory for each one of us: divine help and strength (Phil. 4:13). A careful consideration of Scripture will show that the doctrine of pre-existence is both illogical and false.

We realize that this treatise is far from exhaustive, and that it but briefly touched upon the points at issue. Lack of space prevents us providing a more complete exposition, though we are prepared to do so by correspondence. Should there be any reference that you feel teaches the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus, please draw our attention to it that we might consider it with you.

As Christadelphians we believe that Christ's coming is very near, and it behooves all who are interested in their personal salvation to place themselves in such relationship with him that he will accept them at his coming. A sound understanding of the person and purpose of the Lord Jesus is essential to that end, and therefore we

would urge upon you to give your earnest attention to these matters.