

## THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

Please read Roger Haight S.J., *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Orbis, 1999) for verification that the New Testament does not really teach that Jesus lived before he was born.

Orthodox Christianity holds that the pre-existent Jesus had no beginning for he was God. The Arians and the Jehovah's Witnesses hold that Jesus was not God and did exist before his conception but was the first being to be made.

Some cults deny that Jesus had a life before he was conceived in his mother's womb. The Christadelphians are the biggest.

They argue that verses (like John 6:38) in which Jesus says he came down from Heaven are figurative. Jesus said that the bread that the Hebrews ate in the desert which miraculously appeared on the ground came from Heaven which adds weight to the figurative interpretation. Came from Heaven means came from God. All things have come down from Heaven if all things have come from God (James 1:17). But Jesus' usage infers that he came from God in some unique way – that God sent him as the supreme revelation and likeness of God and not that he was in Heaven first.

Jesus asked God to glorify him with the glory he had with him before the creation of the world (John 17:5). Before the creation of the world is a figurative term for the timeless state. Strictly speaking there was no before because there was no time. Jesus was asking for the glory that is his in the timeless state. Jesus could have originated in his mother's womb and it would still be true that he is in eternity as long as he enters it sometime.

This kind of talk could be figurative for they all believed that God told Abraham that that he had made him the father of many nations before it happened. God talked as if it had happened already. Romans 4:17 remarked upon this.

When Luke said that Jesus increased in favour with God and in wisdom (2:52). The in favour with God bit indicates that Jesus was just a boy who had to grow in obedience the same as the rest of us. He had no life as an angel before his conception to give him a head start. He was just a boy who may have done stupid things through weakness but not necessarily malice and who developed obedience out of that weakness and struggle.

Jesus accepted the text of Psalm 2. This has God saying somebody was his son and telling him that he begat him the day he said it. Jesus said the psalm was about himself. It could be argued as follows: "The persons who first heard the Psalm would have understood it to have been saying that the king of Israel was being spiritually begotten by God that day. You can't beget a son you already have. Therefore Jesus was hinting that he was not pre-existent for he said he was begotten as God's son after becoming a man. He said he was the Son of God from his first moment of existence as a man. He was not before so he didn't exist. Had he existed before his birth he would have been God's son before he became man."

Some think that Jesus must have been spiritually begotten by God at his baptism for God calls him his son at his baptism in a way that parallels the declaration in the Psalm. The Psalm says, "You are my son." At the baptism God says, "You are my beloved son". The beloved is contained implicitly in the Psalm. If Jesus took thirty years to become the Son of God and to be spiritually begotten by him it implies that it was not likely that he had a life before he was born.

He certainly was never God if any of this is true for Christianity teaches that God the Son is the Son of the Father and that Jesus was God the Son incarnate. If the Son never became incarnate he would still be the Son of God.

There is a nice sort of hymn in Philippians. It says that though he was like God or in the form of God, Jesus did not act like a Lord or cling to equality with God. This is said to be a thing to be grasped. But he emptied himself to take the form of a servant to be born in the likeness of humankind. Does this really mean that Jesus was pre-existent? Perhaps God miraculously made Jesus conscious from his conception or later so that Jesus freely decided that he would be born in the likeness of other people and not as a glorious and supernatural being. The doctrine of the perfection of Jesus implies that he must have been supplied with the right wisdom to develop absolute holiness by a miracle at some stage before the age of seven or thereabouts when the power to sin manifests. Luke said that Jesus had to grow in wisdom so God did not settle for making him holy the easy way but gave him the wisdom to progress in it the hard way (Hebrews 5:8,9). When Jesus decided for holiness he emptied himself. The passage does not need the idea of pre-existence at all so it should be kept out of interpretations of the passage.

It is possible as this is a hymn it is not chronological. "Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped. He emptied himself taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men." It could mean that as Jesus was born in the likeness of men he took on the form of a servant which doesn't make it say that Jesus became a servant and emptied himself by being born. It's an emotional hymn. It is poetry. How literally could we take it?

You might write of someone holy that they took on conception and being conceived just to help others without meaning it seriously or literally.

Colossians 1:15-19 seems to assert that Jesus was pre-existent and lived even before the world was made. It says that Jesus existed in eternity and was before all things that were created. If you are eternal you are before all things in the sense that you were there before time began. This does not refute the notion that Jesus' existence began at his conception. If we will live forever and enter eternity or timelessness then the same as this text says about Jesus can be said about us.

Jude 4:5 mentions that Jesus is our only Lord and Master and then that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt. This seems to say that Jesus is God because he is the only Lord and to say it again by saying that he delivered the Israelites because the scriptures say God did this.

King Jesus is the only Lord because God has left it to him to tell us what he wants. God, however, is the only real Lord and boss because even Jesus had to do what he commands.

The Lord who brought Israel out of Egypt may not be Jesus. The Lord means God and was a title used for Jesus too.

The spiritual rock that sustained the Israelites in the desert was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). Jesus being an eternal timeless being since he rose could have been around to do this before he was created. But if Jesus atoned for sins or pacified God he could have been their rock, their saving rock, without being alive then.

Hebrews 10:5-7 is merely saying what was in Jesus' heart when he came into the world. It is not likely to be claiming that Jesus literally said God prepared him a body and that he has come to do God's will. Jesus said it in his attitude. When Jesus said that he has come he said it after he became man so don't suppose that the verse is saying he said them before that time.

Jesus is called the firstborn which is a title for the most important child not just the first. It does not imply that Jesus was the first to be created as the Jehovah's Witnesses say.

The Bible does not clearly say Jesus lived before he was born. It doesn't say he is God either.

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[www.gospelassemblyfree.com/facts/fathersonwayne.htm](http://www.gospelassemblyfree.com/facts/fathersonwayne.htm)

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