

WHEN DID GOD'S SON COME INTO EXISTENCE?

Please consider the following key facts concerning Jesus in relation to literal pre-existence:

1. Relatively few Scriptures *seem to* indicate any **literal** pre-existence of Jesus.
2. The Hebrew Scriptures pointed forward to a future existence of the Son of God — Messiah.
3. The Jews believed in foreordination rather than literal pre-existence.
4. The Son of God came into existence at his begetting in Mary's womb.
5. The Son was exalted to pre-eminence only after his resurrection.
6. The Son did not speak prior to his recorded life.
7. No Bible text says that the Son goes **back** to the Father.

1. RELATIVELY FEW SCRIPTURES *SEEM TO* INDICATE ANY PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS

The vast majority of the Scriptures provide no support at all for a doctrine of literal “pre-existence.” For instance, from the entire Hebrew Scriptures only Genesis 1:26; Proverbs 8:22, 30 and Micah 5:2 have been advanced in any attempt at such proof. Yet in the Christian Greek Scriptures there is no hint of pre-existence in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John or Jude.

THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE SOURCES FOR PRE-EXISTENCE

The primary book used for *proof* of literal pre-existence is the gospel of John. Additionally, Philippians 2:6-8, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:10-12, 1 Corinthians 8:6, and Revelation 3:14 are viewed as evidence of the literal “pre-human existence” of Jesus. However, two important questions must be asked: 1) Are these “pre-existence” statements literal or *notional*? By *notional pre-existence* (also called *ideal pre-existence*) we mean that God predicted and promised the coming of the Messiah and that the Messiah was always in God's mind. 2) Have the texts which are supposed to teach literal pre-existence been correctly translated and correctly analysed?

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND ACTS MAKE NO MENTION OF PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE

- In spite of **Luke's** tracing of “*all things from the start with accuracy*” there is no mention throughout his gospel of Jesus having existed in another form prior to his birth:
 - “I [Luke] resolved also, because I have traced **all things from the start with accuracy**, to write them in logical order to you, most excellent Theophilus that you may **know fully** the certainty of the things that you have been taught orally” (**Luke 1:3, 4**).

If the idea of pre-human existence of Jesus were true, then from his own words, Luke could not possibly have left out this vital information for Theophilus to “**know fully**.” Luke firmly and plainly places the coming into existence of the Son of God at the time of his conception in Mary's womb (Luke 1:32, 35), as we shall see in the next section. What Luke describes is not any transformation of an existing person into subsequent human existence.

- The gospel of **Matthew** similarly gives no hint of a pre-human existence for Jesus. It too explains Jesus' conception as his time of coming into existence, i.e. his begetting (Matt. 1:18, 20).
- The Gospel of **Mark** does not deal with the conception and birth of Jesus at all, but begins with the events concerning his baptism. A thorough examination of this entire gospel reveals no hint of a pre-human existence for Jesus.
- The same applies to the entire book of **Acts**, Luke's second volume:
 - "The first account, O Theophilus, I composed about *all things Jesus started to do and to teach...*" (Acts 1:1).

Luke's reference back to his first account, which included the statements concerning the coming into existence of the Son of God (1:35), shows that the person Jesus **did and said nothing** prior to his birth. This fact is also expressed in Hebrews 1:2, a verse which shows that Jesus could not have had a pre-human existence. Also from Acts we must ask: Why did the only official meeting of the body of Christians, namely *the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15*, discuss the major issue of whether or not Gentile Christians should keep the Mosaic Law, and yet make no mention of what would be a revolutionary revelation — that the Messiah had previously been an archangel in heaven?

CONFIRMATION FROM LEADING SCHOLARS:

Raymond Brown was America's leading Catholic biblical theologian. In his *Birth of the Messiah* he stated that Matthew and Luke:

show no knowledge of Jesus' pre-existence; seemingly for them the **conception** was the becoming (begetting) of God's Son. (p. 31).

Distinguished Greek scholar F. C. Baur says: "The idea of pre-existence lies completely **outside the Synoptic [Matthew, Mark and Luke] sphere** of view."

Church History of the First Three centuries (p. 65.).

In the *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* Vol. 4, p. 576 Professor William Sanday of Oxford noted that:

...there is not a single reference in the Synoptic Gospels to Jesus having been the Son of God before his birth.

2. THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES POINTED FORWARD TO A FUTURE EXISTENCE OF THE SON OF GOD AS MESSIAH

Did any of the Hebrew Scriptures direct Jews of the first century to expect a Son of God i.e. Messiah, to be one who was already in existence and who had to give up conscious life as an Archangel or heavenly being? Please note the following Messianic prophecies:

- "And I **shall put** enmity...between your [*the serpent's*] seed and her [*the woman's*] **seed**" (Gen. 3:15) ("who is Christ" Gal. 3:16).

*This showed that Messiah was to be a descendant of the woman and by definition must be one who comes into existence **after the ancestor already exists**. Furthermore, enmity did not already exist between Messiah and the serpent's seed but was to be a future hostility.*

NOTE: All normal reading of this verse understands the reference here as concerning Eve and therefore womankind. There is no connection here with the idea of angels as producers of the seed.

- “...let me advise you what this people will do to your people afterward **in the end of the days**...The utterance of the one hearing the sayings of God...‘I shall see *him* [Messiah], but NOT NOW; I shall behold him but not near, *A star* will step forth **out of Jacob**, And a scepter will indeed arise **out of Israel**” (Num. 24:14-17).

This prophecy shows that Messiah comes “in the end of the days” and is to be a lineal descendant of Jacob. There is no hint of him existing from any time before that.

- “I will raise up a prophet **from among** their brothers like you [Moses]” (Deut. 18:18). *This was shown to be fulfilled in Acts 3:22, 7:37 and John 6:14.*

In none of these prophecies is there a hint of origination from angelic stock. But rather this ultimate prophet would originate from human stock:

- “And now Jehovah the one forming me **from the belly** (“*womb*” in all other translations) as a servant belonging to him, has said for me to bring back Jacob to him...” (Isaiah 49:5).

*The quotation of Isaiah 49:6 in Luke 2:32 shows this to be a prophecy concerning the Messiah. Also Psalm 22 is a prophecy concerning the Messiah as proved by its quotations in the gospels. So this verse strongly indicates that Messiah had God **as his God and Father only from his birth**. He could therefore not have been *the only-begotten son* before that time.*

- “**From the belly** of my mother you have been my God” (Ps. 22:10).

PROPHECIES OF FUTURE SONSHIP

- “A virgin **will be** with child and bear **a son**” (Isa. 7:14) *i.e. he becomes the Son in the future.*
- “There has been **a Son** given to us” (Isa. 9:6) (prophetic past tense, meaning “**will be given**”).
- “...your [David’s] seed...will establish his kingdom to time indefinite. I **shall become** his father, he **will become** my son” (2 Sam. 7:14-16).

This last prophecy is repeated in 1 Chronicles 17:13 and is applied in Hebrews 1:5 to Jesus. Furthermore, 2 Samuel 7:19 says it is “down to a distant future time.”

- “You are my Son; I **today**, I have become your father” (Ps. 2:7). (“Today I have **begotten** you” NASB, RSV.)

Necessarily, prior to the writing of this Psalm God’s Son did not exist. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and Acts 13:33 showing the fulfilment in Jesus.

NOTE: The translating of Acts 13:33 in the NWT and the KJV wrongly make the application of this to Jesus’ resurrection.

- “He himself calls out to me ‘You are my father, my God...I myself **shall place** him as **first born**, the most high of all the kings” (Ps. 89:26, 27).

All these statements are of a future *begetting* of God’s firstborn Son. The son is *promised* and not *pre-existent*. So if a son is alive before he is alive as a human person, this would lead to the impossible and unscriptural idea of a *passing through* the womb as taught by Justin Martyr as early as 150 A.D. and would, therefore, be an incarnation.

MESSIAH AS “**THE ROOT**” COMES FROM HUMAN STOCK

- “And there must go forth a **twig** out of **the stump of Jesse**; and out of his roots a **sprout** will be fruitful” (Isa. 11:1).

The fulfilment of Isaiah 11:1 is shown in **Revelation 22:16**: “I am **the root** and the offspring of David, and the bright morning star.” The REB renders it as: “I am the offspring of David, **the shoot growing from his stock...**”

As well as growing upwards a plant grows downwards to form the root. So Jesus as the stump, root or shoot is derived from the seed – in this case Jesse and later David. Jesus is always the descendant (offspring) of David throughout the Scriptures. He is never called the ancestor of David (although he does become David’s “lord” – Ps. 110:1). This is a case of letting the plain Scriptural language interpret the figurative language.

Just as the fully human Moses had not pre-existed, so too, the Messiah would be a person who was fully human and one promised to be God’s Son at a future time. He was the seed of humans – a woman, Abraham and David. The overshadowing of Mary by holy spirit did not change this seed from being human. If “the Son” already had existence completely independent of the genetic line of Jesse, then he would have only come through and not from the stump of Jesse. So he would then not truly be a descendant of David.

3. THE JEWS BELIEVED IN THINGS BEING FOREKNOWN/FOREORDAINED — NOT AS LITERALLY PRE-EXISTING

This means that God holds in mind a picture of what He intends to accomplish, how it will be accomplished and who will be involved; none of which things actually exist until their time. This is the Jewish way of thinking. The Greek word for pre-existence *pro-uparchon* is used in the Scriptures on only two occasions (Acts 8:9 and Luke 23:12), but never in relation to Jesus or any other entity. So there is no word for pre-human existence in the Scriptures.

THINGS FOREKNOWN/FOREORDAINED

- “God...calls the things that are not as though they are” (**Rom. 4:17**).

E.g. Jeremiah was foreknown but did not literally pre-exist (Jeremiah 1:5). Also see Romans 8:29; 9:2 3 and Ephesians 1:4. Additionally, hope and inheritance can be foreknown:

- “...**the hope** that is *laid up* for you in heaven” (**Col. 1:5** NASB).
- “...the unfading **inheritance**. It is *reserved* in the heavens for you” (**1 Peter 1:4**).

THE MESSIAH WAS FOREKNOWN

- “...this [man], as one delivered up by the *determined counsel* and **foreknowledge** of God...” (**Acts 2:23**) (“**predetermined plan**” NASB, “determined purpose” NKJ, “pre-arranged plan” NLT).
- “He [*Jesus*] was **foreknown** (“predestined” in REB and Moffatt) before the founding of the world but he was made manifest at the end of the times” (**1 Peter 1:20**).

Christians are similarly foreknown: “*The ones chosen according to the foreknowledge of God*” (1 Pet. 1:1, 2) and “*He chose us...before the founding of the world*” (Eph. 1:4). Yet Christians did not literally pre-exist. To foreknow is the supernatural ability to know someone before they exist as with Jeremiah 1:5. Also James Dunn comments that:

...in 1Peter 1:20 the key verb (“was made manifest”) is set in antithesis with ‘predestined’. That is to say that the contrast is not between pre-existence and incarnation, but between that which was predestined and that which was revealed...In

other words, Peter may well mean that what was made manifest was not so much Christ as what was predestined for Christ, God's eternal plan...

Christology in the Making, p.237.

THE LAMB WAS FOREKNOWN

➤ "...the scroll of life of the Lamb who was slaughtered, from the founding of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

Word for word: "book of the life of the lamb the one having been slaughtered from the throwing down of the world." *This is according to the syntax of the Greek text*. However, the Lamb was not literally slaughtered before the foundation of the world. Rather he was foreknown in God's mind. (Please note that there is no comma in the Greek as there is in the NWT).

4. THE **SON OF GOD** CAME INTO EXISTENCE AT HIS BEGETTING IN MARY'S WOMB

PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE CONTRADICTS LUKE

➤ "...**for that reason** (Gk *dio kai*) [*the creative miracle in Mary*] what is born will be called holy, **God's Son**" (Luke 1:35).

The Greek *dio kai* means "**precisely for that reason**." It does not mean 'for that reason **also**'. Protestant theologian Wolfhart Pannenburg states that:

In Luke the divine **Sonship is established by** the almighty activity of the divine **Spirit upon Mary** (Luke 1:35)... Jesus' divine Sonship is explicitly established by his miraculous birth...Jesus' **virgin birth** stands in an irreconcilable contradiction to the christology of the incarnation of a pre- existent Son of God.

Jesus God and Man (pp. 120, 143).

Adolf Harnack also notes that:

The miraculous genesis of Christ in the virgin and a real pre-existence of Christ are of course mutually exclusive. *History of Dogma* Vol. 1, p. 105.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SON OF GOD WAS CAUSED BY HOLY SPIRIT

Holy spirit at Jesus' conception was **the cause** of his becoming God's Son. Therefore Jesus was never God's Son at any time prior to his birth. Because Jesus *came into existence* as the Son of God when he was conceived in Mary's womb he could not have already been in existence as the Son of God! As Gabriel states:

➤ "This one **will be** great and **will be called Son** of the Most High" (Luke 1:32).

Matthew 5:9 and Luke 6:35 demonstrate that "will be called sons of God" means exactly the same as "**will be sons of the Most High**." In Luke 6:35 Christians "will be sons of the Most High" and yet they did not pre-exist. Furthermore, this one was going to be great. This means that if he had pre-existed his birth he certainly would not have been great. That goes completely against the idea of him having previously been an archangel or "a god."

PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE CONTRADICTS MATTHEW

1. The Kingdom Interlinear Translation (KIT), under its Greek text of Matthew chapter one, makes it clear that Jesus' very beginning or origin was when he was begotten by God in Mary's womb:

- “The book of the history (“**origin**” in KIT. Gk *geneseoos* from *genesis*) of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1).
- “...the birth (“**origin**” in KIT. Gk *geneseoos*) of Jesus Christ was...Mary...was found to be **pregnant** by holy spirit” (Matt. 1:18).

In his detailed birth narrative Matthew uses the word *genesis* in 1:1 and 1:18. In Bauer’s Greek-English Lexicon *genesis* is defined as: “One’s coming **into being** at a specific moment, birth.” Also “state of being - existence” and “of ancestry as point of origin.”

However, one’s actual origin — one’s genesis — implies the event of one’s coming into existence and so refers to the time of one’s conception in the womb and not to the event of one’s birth. According to all Greek-English lexicons the usual Greek word for “birth” is *gennesis* and not *genesis*, although this can also mean “birth.” However, “birth” is not the right meaning *in the context* of Matthew 1:18 because the next thing stated in verse 18 of Matthew’s account is that “Mary...was found to be **pregnant** by holy spirit.” So the word *genesis*, as used in 1:18, does not concern Jesus’ birth but his begetting i.e. his point of coming into existence — his *beginning*. So because the Greek of Matthew 1:18 has the word *genesis* and not *gennesis* it should never have been translated as “...the birth of Jesus Christ was ...” but as: “The **origin** of Jesus Christ was...” or “The **beginning** of Jesus Christ was...” Also Matthew 1:1 is best translated as “The book of the **origin**” of Jesus Christ...” or “The book of the **beginning** of Jesus Christ...” This shows that Jesus ‘originated’ in a line from Abraham, and so Darby’s translation reads: “**Book of the generation of Jesus Christ.**” In fact, Associate Professor of Religious Studies Dr. Bart Ehrman states that: “the earliest and best manuscripts agree in introducing the passage with the words: ‘The **beginning** of Jesus Christ happened this way.’ *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 75.

Also Dr Hagner in the *Word Biblical Commentary* understands that Matthew 1:18:

Picks up the *geneseoos*, ‘origin’ of 1:1 and suggests that the *Biblos geneseoos*, ‘record of origin,’ now reaches its goal.

So although Matthew 1:1 involves Jesus’ ancestry — his origin because of his line of descent from Abraham through David, yet logically it “reaches its goal” when Jesus comes into actual existence at the end of that line i.e. his begetting as stated in verse 20.

2. Furthermore, the Kingdom Interlinear Translation makes it clear that Jesus — the Son of God by his begetting by holy spirit in Mary’s womb according to Luke 1:35 — did not come into existence until he was ‘fathered,’ ‘generated,’ or ‘begotten’ by God in Mary.
 - “... for that which has been **begotten** (“**generated**” in KIT. Gk *gennethen* from *gennao*) in her is by holy spirit” (Matt. 1:20).

This Greek word *egennesen* (from *gennao*) meaning “fathered,” “was begotten,” or “generated” is used for the more than 40 individuals in Matthew’s genealogical list of Jesus’ ancestors who were ‘fathered’ i.e. brought into existence at conception. The rather dated word “begat,” as used in the KJV etc., gives the accurate meaning of *gennethen* but the New Jerusalem Bible expresses it accurately in modern terms as, for instance: “*Abraham fathered Isaac.*” Yet none of these 40 individuals had a pre-human existence. So also with reference to Jesus the word *gennethen* does not allow for any pre-human existence for him i.e. he did not exist as a person prior to his begetting in Mary’s womb. Matthew’s account in chapter one alone demonstrates that Jesus was not in existence at any time prior to his begetting by holy spirit.

Therefore, at no time do the Matthew or Luke accounts indicate that Jesus was only coming into existence *as a human*, as though he was first alive and then merely passed **through** Mary rather than originating in her as Matthew 1:20 states. If these two accounts given by Luke and Matthew under inspiration are taken seriously, they negate all attempts to give Jesus an origin before his conception, which is why Matthew and Luke appear first in the Christian Greek Scriptures. They state that God ‘fathered’ Jesus’ by miracle at that time and therefore that must, in all logic, be when Jesus became the Son of God. In fact, a person is what he is according to his origin and does not change from one species to another — not from angel to human.

MICAH 5:2

DOES NOT PROVE EXISTENCE BEFORE CREATION — BUT MESSIAH’S ORIGIN AS “ANCESTRY”

- “And you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, the one too little to get to be among the thousands of **Judah** from you there will come out to me the one who is to become **ruler in Israel**, whose **origin** (Heb. *motsaah*) is **from early times** (Heb. *mikedem*), from the **days of time indefinite** (Heb. *olahm*).”

This is usually quoted by JW’s and some Trinitarians in an attempt to negate the above information from Matthew 1:1, 1:18 and 1:20, and to show that Jesus existed before his begetting in Mary’s womb. Firstly it must be noted that the Hebrew word meanings are:

motsaah = “goings forth” or “origin”

mikedem = “from of old” (see Hebrew interlinear and most translations)

olahm = “ancient days” (see Hebrew interlinear, NAB, ESV, NRSV, ROTH, S&G, REB, and NIV).

The two terms *mikedem* and *olahm* are being used in Hebrew parallelism so that the NLT renders them as one thought: “*whose origins are from the distant past.*” There is here no meaning of eternity. So contrary to Trinitarianism there is no “eternal Son.” Also there is here no meaning of time prior to the Genesis creation. In fact, we find in Micah 7:20 a similar phrase to that used in 5:2 which points back only as far as the Hebrew forefathers, not to a time beyond the world’s creation:

- “...the loving-kindness given to *Abraham*, which you swore to our *forefathers* from **days of long ago** (Heb. *mikedem*)” (**Mic. 7:20**).
- “In that day I shall raise up the booth of *David* that is fallen...I shall build it up as in the **days of long ago** (Heb. *olahm*)” (**Amos 9:11**).

Olahm is used also with reference to Moses’ time as “days of old” (Isa. 63:11).

The New International Dictionary of OT Theology and Exegesis Vol. 3:347 states:

Micah 5:2 predicts the coming of a messianic king from Bethlehem, whose origin was ‘from old, from ancient times (*mime olahm*).’ Here the nom. phrase could well refer to the pristine days of the Davidic monarchy (as the reference to Bethlehem, David’s home town, suggests). It probably expresses the hope for the “new David” who would take control of the decrepit monarchy and restore Israel’s glory (cf. Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25). While it is tempting to see here a reference to the eternal pre-existence of the Messiah, no such an idea is found in biblical or postbiblical Jewish literature before the Similitudes of Enoch, 1st cent. BC to 1st AD (1Enoch 48:2-6)...[*And even there no pre-existence prior to birth, but prior to second coming*].

According to the *Anchor Bible Commentary* on Micah:

It describes the place from which something goes out, the place of sunrise, going out on a journey, a military campaign or **being born**. The latter connotation would make “mozaot” (goings forth), like “toledot” (generations), refer to David’s ancient lineage, preserved in the old genealogies (Ruth 4). The term “moza” can also refer to what goes forth from the mouth of God. This meaning would suggest that Micah is referring to the covenant guarantees that David’s line would endure forever, interpreted now as ancient predictions of a Davidic Messiah for the end time (Luke 1:32; 2Sam. 7 “I will be his father and he will be my son”, Psalm 89:35, which says that God will not modify that “moza” of His lips, “what has gone forth from my lips concerning David”). Ps. 2 promises David dominion to the ends of the earth Ps. 72 represents the fullest statement.

Also, *the New American Bible* study notes explain Micah 5:2 as a reference to the Messiah’s descent from the ancient Davidic dynasty:

The tiny city and clan of Bethlehem-Ephrathah, from which comes the ancient Davidic dynasty (whose *origin* is from old, from ancient times) with its messianic king, one who is to be ruler in Israel.

Additionally, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* says: “*origins*” in Micah 5:2 refers to his (*the Messiah’s*) descent from the ancient Davidic family. Further to the NLT rendering of Micah 5:2 Moffatt’s rendering captures the real sense here with: “*whose origin is of long descent.*” So **origin** in Micah 5:2 refers to Jesus’ line of descent which, for the Jewish readers of Matthew chapter one, goes back to Abraham. Various the Messiah is described as the son of David, the seed of Abraham, but also as the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). So the “goings forth” or “origin” of the Messiah as “the seed of the woman” refers to his lineal descent through Abraham and David. He would be a male heir to David and at the same time God’s Son (2 Sam. 7:14). Furthermore, it would include the prophecies concerning Messiah as coming through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and his being an Israelite (Num. 24:17-19). Nothing here indicates any pre-existent person.

ONE CANNOT HAVE TWO POINTS OF PERSONAL ORIGIN

If *origin* in Micah 5:2 referred to a pre-Bethlehem, real existence of the Son, it would be in contradiction of Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:32, 35 which give details of the *origin* of Jesus as his *begetting by holy spirit* to become God’s Son, i.e. his conception in Mary. Clearly **the context or the word ‘origin’ is different in Micah 5 than in Matthew 1:18**. The first refers to Messiah’s ancestry, while the latter refers to his personal coming into existence. In fact, referring to Micah 5:2, James Dunn, professor of divinity at Durham University, comments that the Hebrew does not suggest pre-existence. Cross-referencing shows that it likely was Micah 5:2 that the 1st century Jews had in mind, when they said:

- “Has not scripture said that the Christ is coming **from the offspring of David**, and **from Bethlehem** the village where David used to be?” (John 7:42).

Therefore, the Messiah, as the final descendant of the Davidic dynasty, is part of a dynasty that is ancient. This is what makes the Messiah’s origin ancient. In context it would be incorrect to assume that this meant that the Messiah existed before the world’s creation.

Similarly, in trying to assess who Jesus is:

- “Some of the crowd...began *saying*: ‘This is for certainty **the prophet**’. Others were saying: ‘This is **the Christ**’” (John 7:40, 41).

And when asked by Jesus:

- “‘Who are men saying the Son of Man is?’ They [*the disciples*] said: ‘Some say **John the Baptist**, others **Elijah**, still others **Jeremiah** or one of **the prophets**’”
(**Matt. 16:13, 14**).

And **John 1:49** gives Nathaniel’s recognition of Jesus as:

- “Rabbi, you are the **Son of God**, you are **king of Israel**.”

In no case does anyone suggest that Jesus was a pre-existent spirit.

THE SON WAS BEGOTTEN ONCE

- “That which was **begotten** (‘generated’ in KIT) in her” (**Matt. 1:20**).

Gennaō = to beget. The dictionary definition of *to beget* is **to originate, to cause to exist**. James Dunn comments in *Christology in the Making*:

begetting - the **coming into existence** of one who will be called and **will in fact be the Son of God**, not the translation of a pre-existent being to become the soul of a human baby or the metamorphosis of a divine being into a human foetus, p. 5.

Every single individual described in the Scriptures as having been literally begotten came into existence **only at the time of his/her conception**. It is incorrect to say that it **was only as a human** that Jesus was begotten at his conception. It is the person – the individual – who first came into existence at that time. It is illogical to propose that anyone could be begotten in essence twice!

SPIRITUAL OR LITERAL BEGETTING?

However, Christians are “born again,” that is, **spiritually begotten**:

- “...everyone **having been begotten** of God sins not, but the **one begotten** of God keeps him” (**1 John 5:18**). (Marshall’s Interlinear).
- “...anyone born of God does not practice committing sin, but **the One who was begotten of God** carefully watches over and protects him...” (**1 John 5:18**). (Amplified Bible. See also NAB, Darby, and Young).

The phrase “**having been begotten**” is in the *perfect tense* in the Greek text indicating an ongoing condition in the case of Christians i.e. spiritual begetting. However, the phrase “**the One who was begotten**” with reference to Jesus, is in the *orist tense* in the Greek and refers to a once only and never to be repeated event of the past – a physical begetting. Hence the begetting of Jesus occurred according to Matthew 1:20 and Luke 1:35 only on the one occasion when he was supernaturally conceived/begotten in Mary’s womb.

The KJV and NKJV terms “only-begotten of a father,” “only begotten Son,” and “only begotten Son of God” which occur in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9 all refer to Jesus’ uniqueness as a son and in particular the uniqueness of his virginal begetting in Mary and in having no human father. This means that Jesus, although fully human, is never to be viewed as a “mere man” – he is a uniquely generated human person. So because *begotten* means “brought into existence,” the idea of a transformation from one life form to another is logically excluded.

Note: The term *beget* is also occasionally used in Bible genealogies in a legal rather than biological sense.

NO EXISTENCE PRIOR TO BIRTH ACCORDING TO PAUL

The apostle Paul expresses Jesus' coming into existence in the same terms as do Matthew and Luke. As generally translated Paul states that:

- "...when the full limit of the time arrived, God sent forth *his Son*, who **came to be** (Gk *genomenon*) out of (*from*) a woman..." (**Gal. 4:4**).

However, because of the aorist participle in the Greek it is better rendered:

- "...when the full limit of the time arrived, God sent forth *his Son*, who **having come to be** (Gk *genomenon*) out of (*from*) a woman..."

The aorist participles in this verse show that the "sending" occurred **after** the birth of *God's Son*, and **not before** his birth i.e. the time when he came to be or exist. Indeed the Greek word *genomenon* is from the form **ginomai** and this is defined as: "To come into existence. To come into being through process of birth (Gal. 4:4)." (*Bauer's Lexicon*). This excludes the idea of one who came *through* Mary as would be the case with someone who had had a pre-human existence. If there was a pre-existence, then terms such as incarnation or transmigration or transmutation or transformation would be appropriate. But in the case of the Son of God, the Bible describes the beginning of a new person, exactly as prophesied in Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 just as Galatians 4:4 quite clearly shows that Jesus was the *Son of God* precisely because he had a mother as well as a Father.

PROPHECY OF FUTURE BEGETTING

- "You are my Son, **today** I have begotten you" (**Ps. 2:7** NASB).

According to Hebrews 1:5 and Acts 13:33 this prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus was born. However, there is a translation issue with Acts 13:33. The phrase "raised up" was mistranslated in the KJV and later in the NWT as "raised up *again*," or "resurrected." The literal translations and the NKJV and NIV have corrected this and F.F Bruce states with reference to Acts 13:33:

The promise of v.23, the fulfilment of which is described in v.33, has to do with the sending of the Messiah, **not his resurrection** (for which see v.34). Verse 34 adds "from the dead".

So we are obliged to differentiate the word *raise up* in verse 33 from *raise from the dead* in verse 34.

From the Septuagint we get the prophecy concerning Messiah's begetting when God says:

- "**From the womb** before the daystar I have **begotten** you" (**Ps. 109:3** LXX but **110:3** in the Masoretic).

Although the Masoretic text reads differently many Hebrew manuscripts have different vowel pointing that read as above. These include the Syriac Peshitta and the Hebrew text used by Origen (early church father). These may reflect a more accurate original text and show that the promised Messiah *comes into existence* (begotten) in a mother's womb.

JESUS' GENEALOGY

In the gospel of Matthew the genealogy of Jesus runs back through David to Abraham. The genealogical record given by Luke takes things even further back to Adam (Luke 3:38). Both Matthew and Luke had ample opportunity for mentioning a pre-existence if they had believed in a pre-human Son, but no such thing is described in their detailed accounts. Closely linked with Matthew's genealogical list is the statement that Jesus came into existence in Mary's womb (Matt. 1:20). The time and location of the origin of the Son of God are made

transparently clear. Luke also tells that the Son of God came into existence in Mary's womb. (Luke 1:32, 35) and throughout the synoptic gospels Jesus is called "Son of David," **he is never called or linked with Michael or any other spirit being**. An angelic identity for the Son of God is plainly excluded. If Jesus had really pre-existed *as Michael* i.e. the teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses, he could not by definition have been the lineal and biological descendant of David. To speak of a pre-*human* existence contradicts the Scriptures that show Jesus as coming into existence only at his conception in Mary. One cannot exist before one exists. Such an idea is illogical as is existence in another form.

5. THE SON WAS EXALTED TO PRE-EMINENCE ONLY AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

- "...he humbled himself and became *obedient as far as death*...**For this very reason** (Gk. *dio kai*) **also God exalted him to a superior position** and kindly gave him the name that is above every name (**Phil. 2:8, 9** NWT).

TRANSLATION ISSUES

The Greek word *kai* for "**also**" (or *and*) does not need to be translated separately because it is part of a Greek phrase which is correctly translated as "Therefore" (NRS, ESV, NIV, REB), "Because of this" (NAB), "And for this" (NJB), "That is why" (Barclay) or "For this reason" (NASB in Luke 1:35. *Dio kai* means "for this reason precisely" he will be the Son of God). Also the phrase "**to a superior position**" is ambiguous because it implies a *comparison* of two high positions. More accurately the word **highly** demonstrates the Greek as showing the *superlative*: "to the highest place" (NIV); "elevated him to the place of highest honor" (NLT). Hence both ESV and NRSV give:

- "**Therefore God has highly exalted him...**" (*Most other translations are similar.*) So Jesus attained that supreme position under God, which would have been impossible if he already had it.

JESUS WAS NOT IN HIS PRE-EMINENT POSITION PRIOR TO RESURRECTION

- "...the firstborn from the dead that he **might become** the one who is first (**'pre-eminent'** in *ESV and others*) in all things" (**Col. 1:18, 19**).
- "So he **has become** better than the angels, to the extent that he has **inherited** a name more excellent than theirs" (**Heb. 1:4**).

This was because "*he had made a purification for our sins.*" (verse 3). It does not say that he was being restored to some past inheritance i.e. **the number 2 position** in the universe; but, that he **is only now worthy of** such inheritance because he "*became obedient as far as death*" and "*had made a purification for our sins.*" He was given this position because:

- "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered" (**Heb. 5:8**).

Only after this learning process culminated in his becoming *obedient as far as death* did he become pre-eminent and gain his superlative position next to God (Ps. 110:1, where he is "my lord" (Heb. *adoni*) and certainly not a second God).

6. DID THE SON SPEAK PRIOR TO HIS RECORDED LIFE?

- “He [God] has **at the end** of these days *spoken* to us by means of a Son” (Heb. 1:2).

Jesus, the Son, became **God’s spokesman** only “*at the end of these days*” whereas God previously had used prophets and angels as His agents (Heb. 1:1, 2:2). If Jesus had been previously an archangel (*Michael*), then, as a messenger and as one “*standing in behalf of the sons of your people*” (Dan. 12:1) he most likely would have spoken for God prior to “*the end of these days.*” Yet in saying “*to which one of the angels did he [God] ever say: ‘You are my son...’*” Hebrews 1:5 shows that the Son was never an angel.

7. NO BIBLE TEXT SAYS THE SON GOES **BACK** TO THE FATHER

Jesus never says he will be returning to the Father as if he had been with Him previously, but says:

- “...and was going to God.” John 13:3
- “I am going my way to the Father.” John 14:12, 28; 16:28
- “I am going to the Father.” John 16:10, 17
- “I am ascending to my Father.” John 20:17

The Greek is clear on this and the NWT, NKJV, NRSV, Rotherham, and KJV are main versions that are correct for all these verses. The NIV and some others wrongly report Jesus as “going back” or returning to the Father.

MISUNDERSTOOD ISSUES

THE “SENDING” OF JESUS WAS HIS COMMISSIONING FROM BIRTH

The “sending” of Jesus was his commissioning from birth. All the prophets received a prophetic call and were sent. This had nothing to do with being alive before being born.

SENDING OF JEREMIAH

- “...before you proceeded to come forth from the womb I sanctified you. Prophet to the nations I made you ... to all those to whom I shall **send you** ... see I have **commissioned** you this day” (Jer. 1:5, 7, 10).

Sending did not mean that **Jeremiah** literally pre-existed and came down from heaven, but that he was commissioned at birth.

SENDING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- “There came a man...having been **sent forth** from God...his name was **John**” (John 1:6. Young’s Literal).

The sending forth of John did not mean that he literally pre-existed and came down from heaven. It was simply a commissioning by God.

SENDING OF THE DISCIPLES

- “Just as you **sent me forth** into the world, I also **sent them [the disciples] forth into the world**” (John 17:18).
- “Just as the Father has **sent me** forth, I also am **sending YOU**” (John 20:21).

The sending forth of the disciples in the same way as Jesus was “*sent forth into the world*” did not mean that they had pre-existed.

SENDING OF JESUS

➤ “God **sent forth** His Son, who came to be out of a woman.” Literally: “**having come to be out of woman**” (Gal. 4:4).

This last statement would be contradicted if the sending forth of the Son was from pre-existence. The “having come to be out of woman” qualifies the thought: “God **sent forth** His Son.”

- “...by **sending** His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3).
- “The Father has **sent forth** His Son as Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14).
- “God **sent forth** his only-begotten Son *into the world*” (1 John 4:9).

Rengstorf in *The Theological Dictionary of the NT* says:

Linguistically there is no support for the thesis that in Galatians 4:4 the *ex* in *exapostellien* indicates that prior to the sending, the one sent was in the presence of the one who sent him. (Vol. 1, p. 406).

JESUS WAS RAISED UP AND THEN SENT

➤ “To you first, God, **after raising up** his Servant, **sent him** forth...” (Acts 3:26).

So no pre-human being was raised up in heaven and then sent down to earth. The sending or commissioning came after Jesus was raised up at birth just as Jeremiah was raised up at the time of his birth to be a prophet.

WHAT ABOUT 1 TIMOTHY 3:16?

“...who was manifested in flesh” KIT. “He was revealed in flesh” NRSV.

James Dunn tells us that *manifested* (*ephanerothe*) simply means **appeared**:

without any implication of previous hiddenness (cp John 9:3; Rom 3:21; 2 Cor 3:3; 4:10; 5:10; 1 John 3:5,8), so that the context becomes of crucial importance in determining the intended meaning of the text ... In this case, there is no indication that the thought was intended to include a third stage of existence prior to appearance on earth...[that is] without any intention of implying a previous [pre-existent] hiddenness.

Christology in the Making, pp. 236-237.

Please also note John 9:3: “...that the works of God might be **manifested** in his case.” *These ‘works’ did not pre-exist literally.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:4: “THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST”

This is typology with reference to Christ accompanying Christians through life. The Christian experience is being read back into the experiences of the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt and their wilderness wanderings toward the Promised Land. Paul tells us twice that he is speaking in this passage “typically” (1 Cor. 10: 6, 11):

Passing through the red sea/cloud = Christian baptism.

The miraculous manna = Continuous supply of spiritual food.

Striking the rock (*tsur*) at **Rephidim** = Christ in the flesh smitten for sins of man.

The gushing out of water = The giving of holy spirit.

Striking the rock (*sela*) at **Kadesh** = Christ our High Priest not to be smitten twice but only to be addressed. Yet “they impale the Son of God afresh”

Water came out abundantly = The supplying of holy spirit.

The 2 rock incidents were at each end of the wanderings (Exodus 17 and Numbers 20). So Paul is in no way saying that Christ literally existed as a rock or that he existed in the time of the wilderness wanderings.

THE SON OF GOD (*NOT JUST A BODY*) WAS SACRIFICED

➤ “When he comes into the world he says...you prepared **a body** for me” (**Heb. 10:5**).

This body was not something that the Son was poured into! If such was the case then only the body was sacrificed. However, it is plain from the Scriptures that the Son himself died (Rom. 5:10). The Son of God was the sacrifice offered as God’s “lamb.”

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OF LEADING BIBLE SCHOLARS

In the 1950’s Pope Pius granted Catholic scholars significant freedom for a most in-depth examination of the Scriptures without fear of any heresy charges concerning what they discovered. At the same time a number of Church of England bishops and scholars convened meetings to discuss the issue of who Jesus really was. The Lutheran Church also became involved in the same investigations. The conclusions were startling for these Churches. Yet the authorities, Cardinals, etc. started to clamp down on the findings of these scholars, resulting in the excommunication or “sidelining” of some of the scholars. Happily these researchers wrote numerous books which have opened up the debate and which is still going on today. The following are only a few brief quotes from their extensive and detailed discussions of this question as to who Jesus is.

There is no indication that Jesus **thought or spoke of himself** as having pre-existed with God prior to his birth...A complete discontinuity between Jesus’ own self assertions and the subsequent claims made about him would constitute a fatal flaw...

Professor James Dunn - in *Christology in the making*, p. 254.

The christology of **Jewish Christianity**, which had been dominant for decades and knew of no pre-existence christology, was increasingly swept aside and was finally branded heretical. a christology today which heedlessly uses the dogmatic theme of ‘pre-existence’ and introduces it into the NT **foists on the NT** an idea which it does not contain in this form. Karl-Josef Kuschel in *Born before all time?* pp. 392-394.

Professor James Mackey asks:

what exactly, according to this term [pre-existence] pre-exists what else, and in what sense does it do so...the logical path to alleged pre-existence is a tortuous one.

The Christian Experience of God as Trinity, p. 51.

By Raymond C. Faircloth

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