

The Preexistence of Christ **a brief overview of Chapter 40 of Basic Theology – Charles C. Ryrie**

“The doctrine (*speaking of Christology*) can be organized more or less chronologically. A study of the preincarnate Christ comes first. This would be followed by a section on Christ in His humiliation, i.e., during His earthly life.” Charles Ryrie

I. The Preexistence of the Preincarnate Christ

A. The Meaning of Preexistence – This means that Jesus existed before His birth in Bethlehem. He did not come into being at conception. But He laid aside His glory and became a man. Phil. 2:6-8

B. The Evidence for Preexistence

1. His heavenly origin – John 3:13, 31 In the last days of Jesus He would often speak of being sent from and returning to His Father. John 17 is full of these thoughts. v. 3, 5, 8, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, 25; 2 Cor. 8:9
2. His work as Creator - Gen. 1:26; John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2 If Christ was part of creating the world, then He naturally existed before the world!
3. His relationship with God – John 10:30; 17:5; Phil. 2:6 Jesus claimed the same nature/characteristics as His Father even before the world began. This would include eternity.
4. His attributes – Col. 2:9 Jesus claimed full Deity. This was a great point of contention with the Religious Leaders of His day. In Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity! John often used the word “glory” to describe God’s attributes. John 1:14; 2:11; 11:14; 12:23 John 17:22 God’s attributes given to us!
5. His relationship to John the Baptist – John 1:15, 30 John the Baptist was born before Jesus, yet he said that Jesus existed before him. Col. 1:17

II. The Eternality of the Preincarnate Christ

A. The Meaning of Eternality – Don’t just think that Jesus existed before His birth or even before Creation. His existence did not have a start sometime before creation. Several cults have this thinking. Realize, Jesus existed always, eternally! He was the Son of God and existed along with the Father and Holy Spirit!

B. The Evidence for Eternality

1. His relationship with God – Heb. 1:3 Heb. 13:8 “the express image of his person” – other translations have - “*He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God’s] nature*”, “*He is a perfect copy of God’s nature*” The eternity of God is one of the characteristics shared by the Trinity!

2. His attributes – Micah 5:2; Hab. 1:12; John 8:58 “I Am” – refers to eternity; John 1:1 Here John says, Jesus is God! Jesus possessed the same attributes as God and this would include eternity.

III. The Activity of the Preincarnate Christ

A. His Activity as Creator - John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2

1. The extent of it – Jesus had the power and was involved in creating “all” things!
2. The purpose of it – “all things were created by him, and for him:” Col. 1:16 This tells us that all was created by Christ and for His purposes. Just as a person might plan and build a building or piece of furniture, it is done so with a specific purpose and for the use of the builder.
3. The continuation of it – “by him all things consist.” Col. 1:17 Christ now sustains His creation. This shows His presence and activity in the world!

B. His Activity as Angel

1. His identity as Angel of Yahweh – In the Old Testament Jesus appeared as the Angel of the Lord some 15 times. This was Christ appearing to man. He will speak as God, identifies Himself with God, and claims to exercise the prerogatives of God. These appearances end after the incarnation as He walked among man. After the ascension, Jesus will appear to man (Paul, John).
Gen. 22:10-14; Ex. 3:2-6
2. His ministries as Angel of Yahweh – In these appearances Jesus would:
 - Be a messenger
 - Be a guide and protector of Israel
 - Be an instrument of judgement on Israel
 - Be an encouragement to Elijah

*“Though our Lord was not inactive in His preincarnate state,
His greatest works necessitated the Incarnation.
Nevertheless, He stands magnificent in His person as the eternal God,
but, as it were, in the shadows,
waiting the spotlight of the Incarnation to reveal His glory and grace.”
(John 1:17; Titus 2:11) Ryrie*

The Preexistence of Christ

John 1:1-18 – The prologue to the Gospel of John

“The life of the Lord Jesus did not begin,
as does the life of all other persons, at the time of birth.”

The purpose of John in these verses is to lay the foundation that Jesus Christ is wholly God, wholly man.
The common error of man and religions is minimizing or rejecting this fact!
But it is FOUNDATIONAL to salvation, the belief in the person and the work of Christ.

John’s purpose for writing is stated at the end of his book – John 20:31

This must be kept in mind as you study the book of John. John’s purpose is to bring the reader to a
understanding that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ), God’s Son, and that knowledge bringing them to salvation!

I. John’s facts concerning Jesus Christ’s relationship with the Father. v. 1-2

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” John 1:1-2

“the Word”- Old Testament concept – Scribes would not write the word for God. They felt they were unworthy of even penning it. Instead, they would write down “the Word” which was their way of saying “God”. Jews reading John’s reference to “the Word” understood he was speaking of God and in this case the Christ.

Words are tools of communication. They describe beauty, feelings, needs; give knowledge and insight. Jesus revealed God to us. What a wonderful name for Jesus, He was the Word about God, Light, Life; all things.

“with God”- Jesus had a personal relationship with God in heaven. Jesus spoke of coming from God often. John 3:13; 6:38, 51, 57

“was God”- Christ was deity. I John 5:20 “true God, and eternal.” v. 2 Jesus was always present with God. Other translations put it: “From the beginning the Word was with God.” “He was with God in the beginning...” “He was there in the beginning with God.” “He abode, at the beginning of time, with God.”

II. John’s facts concerning Jesus Christ’s relationship to creation. v. 3

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:3

“All things were made by him;”- This is Christ’s office and position – The Creator! Ps. 33:6

- Nothing was made without Him and He holds all things together even today! Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2

- Gen. 1:26 “Let us...” All English translations have the plural form of “us”. Many capitalized the word. This speaks directly of the Godhead. Father/Son/Holy Spirit
- The creation reveals characteristic of the Creator. Ps. 19:1; Rom 1:2 power, glory, majesty, greatness, control, intelligence

III. John’s facts concerning Jesus Christ’s relationship to men. v 4-5

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” John 1:4-5

“In him was life ;” – Christ is our total source of life. All life stems from Him both physical and spiritual! This will be a theme of John throughout the book.

“the light of men.” – “light” = knowledge of God “darkness” = ignorance of God

This is a consistent theme and usage of these words in the New Testament.

Luke 1:78-79; John 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:46

Jesus came to dispel ignorance and reveal God. v. 18; John 14:8-9

“the light shineth in darkness ;”- People are ignorant of God without knowledge. Creation does reveal God but the perfect knowledge is found in the life and words of Christ Jesus. He reveals to us who God is. Rom. 1:18-23

Read and compare I John 1:1-7.

IV. John introduces the reader to John the Baptist – “forerunner” of Jesus. v. 6-9

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:6-9

John the Baptist was prophesied in the Old Testament. (Is. 40:3; Mal. 3:1) John came before Jesus to prepare the nation of Israel for the coming of the One who would reveal God to them. John’s testimony of who Jesus was is found in John 1:29-34 – “Lamb of God”, “preferred”, “Son of God” An overview of John’s ministry and message is found in Matt. 3:1-12.

John was not the Light, Jesus was, but was to tell of the Light!

V. John’s outline of Jesus’ ministry. v. 10-13

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:10-13

1. Christ the Creator – “the world was made by him.”
2. Christ the Incarnate - “He was in the world,” This is a theological term meaning “God in human form” “God-man”
3. Christ the Redeemer - “received him...become the sons of God,” This is the purpose of Jesus becoming man! Buying us back from sin – redeeming.
 - “his own – “nations”- Ps. 2:6-9; “Israel”- 2 Sam. 7:16 We are all “his own”. He came for us all. We see this in verse 10, “world” is mentioned three times! Jesus came to the Jews and the whole world! Jesus was rejected by the Jews and the whole world! Isaiah 53:3 tells us he would be “rejected of men”. Jesus commissioned His followers to the world! Jesus “came unto his own”!
 - “received him not”- Many reject Him. Religion and so-called religious people reject Him. They cling to their religious systems and traditions and not to Christ. This happened in Jesus’ day. They rejected his deity. They rejected his offering for sin. Many left Jesus when he made plain who He was and why He came to earth.
 - “sons of God”- A better translation would be “children of God”. We are “children of God’ not by birth like a Jews or most American citizens. But born again by the will of God. This happens by “believing on his name.” v. 12 We must believe in His deity and work of an offering for sin!

VI. John describes the characteristics of the Word. v. 14-17

“And the Word was made 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 bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:14-17

“the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,”- “incarnate” God became flesh. The One who is the eternal Son of the eternal God and who took to Himself true humanity in order that He might do His Father’s will in the world. John 6:38-40

“we beheld his glory”- John saw Christ’s wonderful, glorious works and heard Christ’s words of truth. Christ was sinless, perfect, all-knowing. Peter gives testimony in 2 Peter 1:16-18.

- perfect teacher His words were all true! His methods and knowledge were perfect.
- perfect example We can follow His example; it was always good. 1 Pet. 2:21
- perfect sacrifice His death on the cross totally paid for our sins. Col. 1:15-22

“full of grace and truth.” – “full” – filled up with grace and truth This “grace and truth” is

a characteristic of the Father. v. 18 He is all truth, not lies. He is all wonderful and perfect, not sin or sadness.

VII. John gives to us the work of Christ's coming. v. 18

“No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” John 1:18

“he hath declared him.” – The eternal Son of the eternal God, who created all things, declares to us God the Father. Those who receive Him will become the “children of God”!

Believer's Application:

1. Why did God create the world?

Simply put, God created the world to reveal His glory! What is glory mean? – His character.

Ps. 19:1-3; Is. 6:3; 40:28; Rom. 1:20-23 - Specifically, the creation of the world reveals His Power and Deity.

God's thoughts and ways are so much greater than ours. He is absolutely superior in every way.

*Then man's sin broke the fellowship God had intended
and desired to enjoy with us.*

Why did God send Jesus into the world?

Simply put, God sent Jesus to the world to reveal His glory!

Eph. 2:1-8 – mercy, love, grace, kindness – many translations add goodness with kindness

Eph. 1:3-7 – this was the eternal plan of God to reveal His grace through Jesus v. 5-6

Rom. 9:22-24 – start at v. 18 - make known the riches of His glory, mercy

Finish with John 1:14-18

v. 14 -“beheld his glory” – “full of grace and truth,”

v. 16 – we received, given to us, “fullness” of grace heaped on grace!

v. 18 – Jesus truly reveals the wonderful character of the Godhead!

What a great God we serve! His character calls for our submission, trust and faith in Him!

2. Have we come from darkness to light? Do we have a true knowledge of Christ? Have we believed in Him as deity and Savior? Let's take a look at John 6. It gives the account of followers of Jesus coming to a point of decision concerning true belief in Him. These people were listening and observing Christ, but their desire for a Messiah was only for their temporal comfort. Observe the progression throughout the chapter. We must all come to a point of decision about Christ! Will you put your trust in Christ and His work for you?