

JUST WHO IS CHRIST?

What does the Bible really say?

Part One - Christ: The Eternal Creator-God

Born in Bethlehem and placed in a manger, Jesus of Nazareth grew up in humble surroundings indeed. He lived as a pauper, was followed by a rag-tag band of mostly uneducated Galileans, and finally died a humiliating and agonising death on a Roman cross.

Yet this man is one whom millions worship over 2000 years later. Each week we come together to remember him - not as a memory but as a living, resurrected Being!

In the Bible, Christ is presented to us as the 'Son of God' (his position in the Godhead), the 'Son of man' (describing his humanity), and, amazingly, as the eternal God Himself!

All three aspects of our Lord will be covered in this short series but In this first message we're going to examine Christ's claim to God-

head in the light of his eternal nature and his role as Creator.

Now some of you may be asking: 'What's the point of a series such as this? Most of us already believe that Christ is God. After all, it's one of the central tenets of the Christian faith!'

I agree, but are we fully equipped to defend this truth from Scripture? There are many out there who scoff at the notion that Christ is God. Even in Christ's day the prevailing notion was that he was either Jeremiah, John the Baptist or Elijah ([Matthew 16:14](#)). And today, a common objection to Christ's God-head (Deity) is based on the fact that there is only one God and that everywhere in the N.T. Christ is called the 'Son of God'. So the conclusion is drawn that Christ, however powerful he may be, is either a created being or at most, inferior to the one, true God.

Now in one sense it's true, as Robert Anderson has rightly pointed out, that Christ ultimately needs no defence. Nevertheless, God jealously guards the truth of His Son and it's

both natural and required of disciples that they defend their Lord!

1 Peter 3:15 “...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..”

So this series is designed to equip you and me to better defend (and even increase) our faith. May the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts and minds as we begin!

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

The first thing that all true believers would agree on, is that God is eternal - having no beginning or end. The Old Testament attests strongly to this truth:

Psalm 90:2 “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting (olam) to everlasting (olam) you are God.”

Isaiah 40:28, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God (El Olam), the Creator of the ends of the earth.”

The term **'everlasting'** is a translation of the Hebrew word **'olam'** which means **'eternity'** /**'time out of mind'**/ **'always'**. And **'olam'** applies equally to the past as it does to the future! It describes a Being who not only existed before the time-stream (as we understand it) but who had no beginning in any sense whatsoever!

It's different with all created beings. The angels, whether or not they existed before the material creation (and **Job 38:7** suggests that they did), are still merely created beings (**Hebrews 1:7,14**). Satan himself is certainly no eternally pre-existing being. Twice in **Ezekiel 28:11-19**, (a passage which seems to be in direct reference to Satan), his status as a created being (a cherub) is stressed (**vv 13,15**). In fact, this is the very thing that appears to have made his rebellion against God such a horrifying act of hubris - precipitating the once-glorious cherub's summary expulsion from heaven!

So was Christ merely a created being - maybe on a par with the unfallen Lucifer (his 'brother' as some suggest)?

Such a notion is flatly contradicted by Scripture! In reference to the angels, it's clear that they are, like Lucifer, also merely created beings! We don't know for sure when they were brought into being (in relation to the creation of the material universe) but the one certain fact is that they *were* created. It's further shown in Scripture that, far from being a powerful angel (an 'aeon' - as the Gnostics suggested) it was Christ himself who created all the angels:

Colossians 1:16: "For in him [i.e. Christ] **all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities (i.e. angelic beings - see **Ephesians 6:12**).**

Imagine that! Christ created every spiritual being - including the Devil himself (in his unfallen state of course!). Yet many (such as the Zoroastrians) conceive the 'struggle'

between 'Good' and 'Evil' as being a titanic battle between equal and opposite forces!

But let's be clear about this: there certainly is warfare between 'good' and 'evil' (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-17) and it will rage until Christ returns to the earth (Revelation 19:15) and even beyond (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Revelation 20:7-8) but there is only one God! He is supreme over all, His Sovereign Will is always done (Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 43:13) and His purposes always fulfilled (Romans 8:28,30; Ephesians 1:11).

But to return to our theme: although now immortal (as is every spiritual creation), the angels cannot be properly described as eternal, timeless beings. And in fact the angels are commanded to worship Christ (Hebrews 1:6) - an honour reserved for God alone (especially in view of His role as Creator)!

But when we consider the person of Christ, it's another matter entirely! So what does the Bible tell us about him?

One of the things explicitly presented in John's gospel is that Christ enjoyed a prior existence in Heaven before his incarnation (**John 6:38**). But far more than this - we find at the very beginning of John's letter that Christ was (and is) an eternal Being, enjoying a timeless existence (an 'eternal pre-existence').

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The 'Word' existed "**In the beginning**". This is a phrase of Hebrew origin which typically means: '*before anything existed*'; '*before the world was created*'. As such, it serves as an equivalent to the word 'olam' (as we previously discussed). Now we know that the expression '**the Word**' is in reference to Christ because **verse 14** goes on to say: "**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**"

So what we learn here, then, is that Christ, the 'Word' (here explicitly called 'God'), existed **'in the beginning'** (i.e. 'before creation'). In **Colossians 1:17**, the apostle Paul brings out the same thought when he says of our Lord: **"He is before all things"**.

If this is so, then Christ, the Son of God, must have existed before both the spiritual world and the material world as we know them! He must then pre-date **Genesis 1:1**, which says that **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."**

The Old Testament also explicitly tells us that Christ came from eternity - i.e. from a state of timelessness before creation. If we go to **Micah 5:2** in the O.T., this is what we read:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

This passage tells us that, emerging from Bethlehem, will come a king (a clear reference

to Christ himself) and notice what it says about this king:

“whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

The word ‘origins’ here is the Hebrew word ‘mowtsaáh’. It doesn't mean ‘origin’ in the sense of a ‘beginning’ but more properly means ‘a place from which one goes out’ (therefore translated in the KJV as ‘goings forth’.) And we’ve already come across the expression **‘ancient times’**: it’s that same Hebrew word ‘olam’ used to describe the eternal nature of God Himself ([Psalm 90:2](#); [Isaiah 40:28](#)). As we saw before, it signifies ‘eternity’/ ‘time out of mind’/ ‘always’.

Now read in the prophet Isaiah, who God pronounces Himself to be:

[Isaiah 43:10-13a](#) **“Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. [11] I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior. [12] I have revealed and saved and proclaimed---I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses, ” declares**

the Lord, “that I am God. [13] Yes, and from ancient days I am he.”

A very interesting passage! God has revealed Himself in Christ ([John 1:1.14,18](#)) He is the only saviour ([Luke 19:10](#)) and He is the one who proclaimed salvation and freedom ([Luke 4:18](#); [1 Peter 2:9](#)).

So what does this tell us about Christ?

These passages certainly suggest an existential identity shared by God and Christ. Now compare the following two verses as they clearly identify the God of the Old Testament with the Christ of the New.

[Isaiah 44:6](#) “This is what the Lord says--- Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God” (See also [Isaiah 48:12](#)).

There is no ambiguity here: God is not only Israel's King (clearly identifying Him with Christ) but He is the “**first and ...the last**” - the original pre-existing cause of all things and the eternally-existing One). And in case any

other should lay claim to such attributes, God stresses the fact that He is absolutely unique - only He can be described as such (“**apart from me there is no God**”).

Now when we turn to [Revelation 22:13](#), we find that Christ, (whom we know is himself Israel’s King) says exactly the same thing about himself:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”.

God is Israel’s King and Christ is Israel’s King. God is eternal and Christ is eternal. What other conclusion can we draw but that the Christ of the New Testament is indeed the God of the Old?

But let’s go further:

In the New Testament, the Spirit of God explains the eternity of Christ’s existence in terms that we can understand. He tells us in [Hebrews 13:8](#) that “**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**”, while in [Revelation 1:4](#), Christ is described as “**he who**

is, and who was, and who is to come". Going further, we find in the book of Hebrews, a passage that majestically portrays the eternal nature of Christ's existence. Addressing our Lord, the writer says this:

"They [the heavens] will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. [12] You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end" (Hebrews 1:11-12)

A passage such as this, clearly points to the fact that Christ came from eternity and that he will remain eternally the same. But is there specific Biblical evidence that he actually had no beginning - something that would compel us to recognise him as God Himself?

Yes there is - and for that we must turn to an incredible claim that our Lord himself made to an unbelieving group of Jews. He said this:

"Very truly I tell you,before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8:58).

Now Abraham lived 2000 years before Christ's birth in Bethlehem and here Christ is saying that he existed before Abraham. But notice something very striking! He doesn't say (as you'd expect) something like: "Before Abraham was born, I existed". Instead he says: **"...before Abraham was, I AM"**.

Uttered by a mere man, this would have been a ludicrous (and blasphemous) statement! If Christ were a created, angelic being (no matter how exalted) a simple past (imperfect) tense (i.e. 'I was') would have sufficed! Instead, Christ was laying a claim to Deity, describing himself in terms of a timelessness that could only apply to God Himself!

This is not speculation! In fact this term **"I AM"** is a title used by God alone to describe Himself! Remember when Yahweh appeared to Moses and introduced Himself in exactly the same way?

Exodus 3:14 "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you'".

Think about the significance of this expression: **“I AM”**. When used retrospectively (describing an existence in the past), it supersedes (and excludes) all notion of time! It can only apply to one who is not a part of the time-stream and who never came into being! He is the ‘firstborn’ (the ‘beginning’ / ‘first cause’) of all creation (**Colossians 1:15-16**) but he himself had no beginning! This is true ‘omnipresence’ and can only be applied to God Himself (**Isaiah 44:6**).

We find this concept further alluded to in the **Hebrews 7:3** description of King Melchizadek (a type of Christ) where it says that **“..Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.”**

Not that King Melchizadek himself was eternal, but because there was no record of his birth and no account of where he went, he serves as a physical analogy of the eternal being of the Son of God:

“without beginning of days.....resembling the Son of God...”

It's an astounding concept! It can't be referring to Christ's humanity (he was born in Bethlehem) but must be a description of the One who came down from heaven ([John 6:38](#)). This is where our finite understanding fails! We can imagine something (or some-one) having no end - but no beginning??

Scripture gives many other evidences of our Lord's eternal pre-existence, but let's pass on to our second 'Divine' characteristic that can also be seen in Christ:

CHRIST THE DIVINE CREATOR

The very first verse of the Bible opens the Divine revelation to man with these words: **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** ([Genesis 1:1](#))

Now the term 'creation' can be used in many ways. An artist can 'create' a masterpiece on canvas; a composer can 'create' a beautiful melody; a scientist can even 'create' a life-form in a laboratory. Used in this way, the word create actually describes the re-ordering

(manipulation) of existing matter so as to produce something unique in sound, appearance or function. Notice that all the creation myths of ancient mythology describe the 'god' (or 'gods') as working with already-existing 'matter'. Nobody has ever been capable of bringing something out of literally nothing (one of the objections to the theory of evolution).

And yet Scripture tells us that this is precisely what the Almighty God has done in His unique work of original creation. Listen to how Paul describes it in [Romans 4:17](#),

“He [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed---the God who gives life to the dead and *calls into being things that were not.*” (italics mine)

To my mind, if the 'Big Bang' theory has any relevance, it's because it could arguably be used to describe the explosively creative power of God's mighty word when He called the universe into existence ([Genesis 1:3,6](#) etc).

So in **Isaiah 40:28**, God claims that He is the “**Creator of the ends of the earth.**” and in **Isaiah 40:25-26** we read these words:

“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. [26] Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

The ability to create (in the full sense of the word) is the singular attribute that first sets God apart from His creation and entitles Him to man’s praise and worship (**Psalm 19:1**). Indeed, a recognition and acknowledgement (or otherwise) of God’s creative power was (and perhaps still is, in some parts of the unreached, pagan world) one of the criteria by which the Bible says that man is judged. Take the following passage for example:

Romans 1:20 “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities---his eternal power and divine nature---have been clearly

seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

As we said above, God’s creative ability forms the basis of the creation’s praise and worship. The following passage records the words of the elders as they lay down their crowns before the throne:

Revelation 4:11, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

This point is most crucial. Creative ability is unique to God alone! It brings Him glory and He vows never to share this glory:

Isaiah 42:8, “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

Now we’ve already seen some of the evidence confirming that Christ is a truly eternal being. We’ve already discussed how that attribute belongs to God alone - in itself pointing strongly to the conclusion that Christ is God.

But we need to go further: if Christ is God and God alone created the universe, it follows that Christ must be this Creator. Is this what the Bible teaches?

Absolutely. We've already read [John 1:1](#) in connection with Christ's eternal pre-existence as the 'Word' but now read what it goes on to say about him:

[John 1:3](#) “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

This verse in itself not only indicates that Christ is the creator but stresses the fact that, like the God of Abraham ([Romans 4:17](#) above) this act of creation was the genuine act of bringing 'something out of nothing'.

“...without him nothing was made that has been made.”

We'll again quote from the first chapter of [Colossians](#): “For in him [i.e. Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or

powers or rulers or authorities” (Colossians 1:16).

And several more times in the New Testament we find that Christ is described as the One who created the universe. Consider the words of **Hebrews 1:2** - “[God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.”

I have heard some concede that Christ may well have been uncreated - and even the one who created all things - but nevertheless maintain that he was simply the instrument used by God - and, as such, inferior to the One, True God! They will seize upon the expression: ‘through him’ (di’autoû) in order to justify this assertion.

The fallacy of this position becomes evident when we compare the following three statements - two from the Old Testament and the other from the New. The first two are clearly in reference to God - and the third is addressed to Christ, the Son:

Psalm 45:6 “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.”

Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

And now in reference to Christ, we read:

Hebrews 1:8-10 “But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdomHe also says, “In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.”

Consider the amazing parallelism here! God and Christ have a throne that lasts for ever and ever (and only God can sit upon the everlasting throne). Both rule over a kingdom characterised by justice. And here’s the ‘kicker’: in each case, ‘creation’ is said to be a personal, direct act: “**the work of his hands [God]** and “**the work of your hands [Christ]**”

If Christ is not synonymous with God Himself, then the above statements cannot both be true!

(And far from being an instrument used by God, Christ is here addressed as 'God').

There seems to be no way of avoiding the obvious conclusion. Particularly when we find that God cites his unique creative ability as being the attribute that defies comparison and that stamps Him as being God! Remember God's words that we read earlier in Isaiah?

Isaiah 40:25-26 "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. [26] Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."

So it's this very creative ability (as we saw at the beginning) that brings God glory and a glory that He won't share with others (**Isaiah 42:8**). If God did use Christ (as a separate

Being) to perform the act of creation, then only two possibilities are left to us:

Either

- (i) Christ would have possessed the same creative ability as God Himself (in which case we would have to own him as God)**

Or

- (ii) As a mere instrument, Christ would have no more claim to worship or glory than believers now have as members of Christ's body! Yet, as we'll see in the next message, - he is both worshipped and glorified!**

In any event, why would God, who can bring about all creation with a word, have worked through another agency or surrogate? That would seem unlikely at best! Surely the simplest, most direct explanation (Occam's Razor) is that Christ himself is God!

So let's be real here! This isn't a matter of just a theological difference between believers (like aspects of prophecy, speaking in tongues, Calvinism v Arminianism and so forth). If

Christ isn't God, then, by worshipping him, tens of millions of 'christians' have been guilty of both blasphemy and idolatry! God won't share His glory with another - nor His praise with idols (Isaiah 42:8). And Christ Himself, in receiving worship and claiming Godhead would have been, in the words of C.S. Lewis, either a 'lunatic' or a 'liar'.

To lend further weight to the case for Christ's Divinity, let's note one final power that he exercises in creation. Scientists even today are unable to explain the force (or forces) holding the physical universe together. But the Bible says that Christ himself is the One doing just this! According to Colossians 1:17, "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." This remarkable claim is supported by Hebrews 1:3 which states that Christ is "sustaining all things by his powerful word."

Very strange indeed if God had essentially abdicated all responsibility to a surrogate in regard to those very things for which we recognise Him as God!

So Christ is the Creator God and yet God created all things 'through Christ'. And yet there is only one God! How does all this make sense?

This can only be understood and accepted when we understand and accept the truth of the 'Trinity' which is clearly implied throughout the whole of Scripture (see next message).

Briefly, the doctrine of the 'Trinity' tells us that the Father is God, Christ is God and the Holy Spirit is God - yet there is only one God! Three individual Beings subsumed in One!

Certainly the concept of the 'Trinity', is the only one that makes sense of the above (otherwise hopelessly contradictory) verses. It's admittedly inaccessible to human logic but if we do accept its truth, then we can understand the use of the phrase "**through whom**" in the above verses dealing with creation.

The point being made is not that God used a second, other Being to create all things, but

that the One who created all things was, in fact, the second Person in the triune God - the Lord Jesus Christ. These verses are telling us that the second Person of the Godhead, the perfect human being living in the disciples' midst, was, as God, directly involved in the process of creation ([John 1:3](#)). and was not only *personally* active in bringing the material universe into being ([Hebrews 1:10](#)) but was (and is today) responsible for holding the whole thing together!

But in conclusion, let me point out the most wonderful miracle of all!

Although the first creation, this present world, has been marred by sin which has excluded mankind from God's presence, the Creator God has become the Saviour God! The Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, has also brought a spiritual creation into being ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). More than merely giving us life in this material creation, he has also become the source of spiritual life for all who put their trust in him. Having having paid the penalty for our sin on the cross and having risen from the dead on the third day, he now offers

eternal life to all who receive him as their Saviour ([John 1:12](#)) God promises this new life as a free gift if we are willing to accept it!

1 John 5:11-12 “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

In the second part of this message, we'll continue with what else the Bible has to say about the Deity of Christ (e.g. Christ the 'image' of God, the 'forgiver of sin', the 'receiver of worship' etc).

But right now, how can we possibly acknowledge Christ as anyone other (and less) than God Himself (the second person in the triune 'Elohim')? Are we not obliged to defend his name, to give him the glory due to God and to bow before him in love and humility?

To say, as Thomas said, so long ago:

“My Lord and my God” ([John 20:28](#)).

May God bless His Word to each one of us!
Amen