

I. **THE ETERNAL GLORY OF CHRIST--“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born [came into being], I AM”** (John 1:1; 8:58).

DOCTRINE: *“The Lord Jesus Christ existed from eternity, as a distinct Person in the Godhead; that previous to His assumption of our nature, He dwelt in a state of divine and ineffable glory, the fountain of life, light, and happiness to all celestial intelligences; receiving in return, the tribute of their adoring homage and supreme affection”* (Winslow, 3-4).

A. **The Pre-Existence of Christ: His “Original” Glory**

“And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (John 17:5)

Statements of the Doctrine: *The person of Christ has existed from all eternity. He existed before the creation of all things, and before His birth as a man in Bethlehem. His existence as a man was continuous with His earlier existence as a heavenly (divine) being . . . The Word who dwelt among us is the same as the Word who was with God. The Christ who is found in form as a man is the very one who previously existed in the form of God. The Christ who lives in poverty is the One who, previously, was rich* (Macleod, 45, 63).

“Before His incarnation, the Son of God was in intimate communion of glory and blessedness with the Father” (John Dagg, 203).

The doctrine clearly implies that originally Christ was not like us; that He came to be like us only by voluntarily sharing our life; that, as the particular individual He was, He existed before creation; and that His existence as a man was continuous with His earlier existence as a heavenly being (Macleod, 45).

Importance. This truth is inseparably connected to the truth of His deity, and a part of it. *If He was not preexistent, He cannot be God, and if He is not God, He cannot be Creator and Redeemer* (Sanders, 7; see further note in this section).

Epitomizing Text: John 17:5. Jesus Christ, as our blessed High Priest, in anticipation of His offering up Himself on behalf of those whom the Father has given Him, offers up this great prayer to the Father. In it His own self-consciousness of His pre-existence is manifest. *“Father, my earthly work being now finished, I ask to be restored to that heavenly glory which in an unspeakable manner I had with Thee, as One of the co-equal and undivided Trinity, long before this world existed. The period of my humiliation and self-imposed weakness being accomplished, let Me once more share Thy glory, and sit with Thee on Thy throne as I did before My incarnation”* (Ryle, 200). The Lord Jesus petitions that the Father would glorify Him. He seeks this glorification already having glorified the Father through His earthly ministry in carrying out the work the Father had given Him to do, which will include His dying on the Cross. In this prayer the doctrine of our Lord’s pre-existence “shines through . . . unambiguously.”

1. **The NATURE of this Original Glory.**

- He seeks to be glorified with the Father with *a particular glory*--that glory He had with the Father before the world was. Before the world was, Jesus had glory with the Father. It is this glory which He seeks as He enters into the final and climactic stage of His earthly

ministry. This glory is tied to His suffering on the Cross. *“The mercy for which He prays is, a manifestation of that divine glory [and majesty] which, as essentially one with the Father, He possessed before the world was . . . a return to that condition of glory (in the presence of the Father) which He possessed before the world existed”* (Winslow, 15; cf. Owen, 343; Hend., 351). He seeks to be re-established into that place (**“together with Thyselself”**) of prior prominence and glory. It was not new glory He sought but an “original” glory which, since His incarnation, had been veiled and covered.

- That Jesus had glory before the world was is expressly declared in our text. It was a constantly *possessed glory*. Our text literally reads, *“the glory which I was having.”* It was a glory which He constantly possessed. There was not a time when He did not possess glory. It was a glory He had before the world came into being. It was a *“prehistoric” glory*, pre-incarnate glory, primeval glory--eternal glory. What Dagg calls His “original” glory. By this prayer the Lord Christ declares His own pre-existence before there was ever a world.
- It was a *personal glory*. It was a glory which He had **“with”** the Father, not *“from”* Him. It was a co-ordinate and not a subordinate glory. It was an equal glory, a *shared glory*, a united glory. It was not a derived glory or a communicated glory. It was essential glory, undiminished glory, glory as **“the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father”** (Jn. 1:18).

[We may note the special relation in which Jesus addresses God, i.e., as Father. He does this conscious that He is the Son of God, the eternal Son of God. It is important to realize that this Sonship does not imply inferiority but identity and position. Nor does it mean a derived existence (Dagg, 204). This was the understanding which the Jews had of the term in the days of our Lord (cf. Jn. 5:18; 10:33,36; 19:7; Shelton, 30). He is all-glorious as the eternal Son of God. His coming into the world was not to be the Son of God, but as the Son of God. Herein is the love of God seen, not in creating a Son in the incarnation, but sending the eternal Son of His eternal love and delight to be incarnated and sacrificed for sinners.]

- It was a *perfect glory*. As being a glory with the Father it was therefore a *divine glory*. It is nothing less that *“the glory of the Godhead, the eternal, divine glory that extends back into all eternity.”* It is uncreated glory. Uncommunicated glory. Unlimited glory, Unending glory. Some of this glory “shined” out during the days of His humiliation, but for the most part was eclipsed. In Isaiah 6 the prophet describes a vision he had of the Lord **“sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.”** It is a vision of the King of glory in glory, surrounded by angelic beings calling out, **“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”** Yet John tells us in 12:41 that what Isaiah saw was Christ’s glory!

2. **The SCRIPTURAL WITNESS to this Original Glory.** Here we have a “cumulative witness.”

- *New Testament Witness:*

From John’s Gospel:

John 1:1-3. This preexistence is described in John 1:1-3. The eternity of this pre-existence is declared in words almost identical to what are found in Genesis 1:1, **“In the beginning was [not “became”] the Word.”** This pre-existence was with the Father, in the presence of the Father. **“[A]nd the Word was with God.”** That means a distinct pre-existence, a

manifest distinction (though not division) between the person of Christ and the person of the Father. “[A]nd the Word was God.” That means a **divine** pre-existence, not as a created or a delegated God, but clearly, truly, essentially, absolutely and in the highest and best sense, “**God over all, blessed forever**” (Rom. 9:5). All other existence depends on Him (vv. 3-4; cf. also Col. 1:16-17). This pre-existence was in a state of glory with the Father. He has the singular glory of always having been, when nothing else was.

John 1:15. The testimony of John the Baptizer.

John 3:13. The Son of Man is present on earth only because He has come down from heaven (compare 6:62, vv. 33, 38, 41, 50, 51). The ascension does not mean access to a new and unknown kind of existence, but a return to what the Lord had known before. The Lord’s own consciousness of His preexistence (John 13:3; 16:27-28; 17:5)

John 8:57-58. Existence prior to that of Abraham. Existence superior to that of Abraham. Existence of a different character.

There is little room to doubt that John’s gospel teaches the pre-existence of Christ, and traces it back to His own self-consciousness.

From the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew-Mark-Luke). The concern of these gospel accounts is more with Christ’s deeds and words than in making propositions about Him. Yet there is a four-fold evidence supporting His preexistence:

(1) the use of the title “Lord” (Mk. 1:2-3). Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1 and as the One for whom the way must be prepared in Isaiah 40:3.

(2) the implications of the claim He makes that “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15). Christ Himself is the kingdom. The kingdom has come because the King has come, and that King is Yahweh (the LORD).

(3) Jesus’ use of the title “Son of Man” as His preferred title (cp. Daniel 7:13ff. where the “Son of Man” appears as a royal, superhuman and divine figure; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10); and

(4) the clear assumptions of the parable of the talents (Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-11; Lk. 20:9-19, which emphasize the greatness of the rejected One).

From the Pauline Epistles:

Romans 8:3, 32. “*Whatever the precise meaning of not sparing and delivering, one thing is clear: there was a very special relationship between the Father and the Son. He was His own Son, so precious that if He did not withhold Him, then, a fortiori, He would withhold nothing*” (see John 3:16!)

1 Corinthians 10:4, 9.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (strongly implied). He “being rich, for your sake became poor.”

Galatians 4:4. That the Son is “sent” implies His pre-existence. “*Christ was God’s Son*

before His mission and was dispatched as God's delegate and representative" (Macleod, 54).

Philippians 2:5-7.

Colossians 1:15-17. "He *is* before all things." Continuous existence. "He *is before* all things." Priority of existence. "He is . . . the first-born [*prototokos*, not *protoktistos* (which means "first-created")] of all creation." Superiority of existence. This is not a "first of a kind" word, but a "first in rank" word, indicating preeminence (cp. Ps. 89:27; Ex. 4:22).

From Hebrews:

Hebrews 1:1ff., 10.

Hebrews 2:9. Clearly His natural or original status was not "lower" than the angels.

Hebrews 7:3. Melchizedek is patterned after Christ, which pattern includes "having neither beginning of days nor end of life."

Hebrews 10:5.

Revelation:

Revelation 1:8 with 22:12-13, 16. The reference to "Alpha and . . . Omega"—first and last—imply most strongly that there is nothing before and nothing after.

- ***The Old Testament Witness:*** The Old Testament (Personal) Appearances.

He appears as the "Angel of the LORD":

Genesis 16:7; 21:17; 22:11, 15-16; 31:11-13; 32:30.

Exodus 3:1-2.

Numbers 22:22, 26.

Judges 13:2-3, 15-18 (cp. Isa. 9:6; 28:29).

Malachi 3:1.

There is *differentiation from God* and yet there is *identity with God* (Reymond, 212).

His appearances were only temporary and for a limited purpose (Sanders, 11).

The "Angel of the LORD" never appears after the birth of Christ. Matthew 1:20; 2:19; Acts 5:19; 12:7, 23 all refer to an angel of the Lord, but not to the Angel of the Lord. The OT Angel of the Lord demanded worship, but all the other angels forbid it in their case (compare Exodus 3:1-5 with Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9). It is instructive to note that angels were often messengers sent on behalf of God.

He appears under the name "the LORD":

Genesis 18:1, 2, 22 (cf. 19:1).

Joshua 6:2 (cp. 5:13-15).

Isaiah 6:1-5 (cf. John 12:39-41). The prophet Isaiah clearly saw the pre-incarnate glory of Christ.

In relation to the Father Christ is the “Angel of the LORD” in the OT and the Son of God in the NT. There is a functional emphasis in both cases of One who is “sent.”

Does He appear again in Daniel 3:25, in the fiery furnace? [Application: Christ is in the “fire” with His people.]

Other Possible OT Allusions to Pre-existence:

Proverbs 8.

Isaiah 9:6.

Micah 5:2.

Of course, all of the Old Testaments allusions and prophecies which identify the Messiah as a divine person imply pre-existence.

3. **The THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT for this Original Glory.**

- ***The post-existence of Christ.*** If we affirm His eternal existence after His death and resurrection, why can we not affirm His eternal existence before His conception and birth?
- ***The deity of Christ.*** This we will examine more fully in the next section. Pre-existence is really dependent upon His deity and is overshadowed by it. The greater truth of His deity contains the “lesser” truth of His pre-existence. A divine person could not but be pre-existent.

The Relationship of Preexistence and Deity. Pre-existence does not of itself necessarily establish Christ’s deity. Arius (and his followers, the Arians and modern day Jehovah’s Witnesses) did not deny His pre-existence before His birth, but declared that there was a time when He did not exist (“*there was when he was not*”)! They held that the Father created Him out of nothing as a heavenly being who existed before the creation and is greater than all the creation, but not equal to the Father. He is “similar to the Father,” but not of the “same nature” as the Father. This is similar to the “Colossian heresy” which thought of Christ as existing before human birth but still as being created at some point in time--creature, therefore not essentially divine.

Nevertheless it is true that the idea of pre-existence has become associated with the idea of deity. “. . . [F]or all practical purposes proof of His preexistence has been accepted by theologians as evidence of His eternity. Since the Arian controversy in the fourth century there has been no successful denial of His eternity which has not also denied His preexistence . . . The evidence for the eternity of Christ is therefore linked intrinsically with His deity” (Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 25-26).

- ### 4. **The BLESSED CONDITION of this Original Glory—“He was rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).**
- Now it must be a wonderful glory, for He seeks its restoration upon the completion of His earthly work. A return to this condition of glory is part of that joy which was set before Him for which He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). What did the Lord Christ enjoy from all eternity in this original state of glory? There is surely much mystery in this, but we may be sure, that the Son of God “*was glorious and happy eternally*” (Dagg, 204). “*Before His incarnation,*

yea, even before the foundation of the world, the Son of God was in intimate communion of glory and blessedness with the Father” (Dagg, 203). His was a five-fold condition of blessedness.

- a. ***An Undistracted Intimacy.*** He enjoyed an undistracted intimacy with the Father. As the Second Person of the Godhead the Lord enjoyed unbroken, conscious fellowship with the First Person of the Godhead. John says in 1:18 that He is “**in the bosom of the Father.**” This tender description denotes the most affectionate and close relation between them. How unspeakable it is that He should be willing to deprive Himself of such a blessedness, that He would be willing to part with the most blessed company for us! “**My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?**”
- b. ***An Undisturbed Felicity.*** Also, He enjoyed undisturbed felicity (happiness and joy). In such uninterrupted communion with the Father there was a perfect and full happiness and tranquility in the presence of whom is “**fullness of joy**” and “**pleasures forever**” (Ps. 16:11). Many consider that the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 8 is but an anticipation or figure of Him who is the wisdom of God, even Jesus Christ. There in verse 30 we read, “**I was beside Him . . . And I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.**” He was not exposed to trial or temptation. Yea, adoration and affection was His permanent portion. There he was unmolested and most comfortable. He was unlimited and unhindered. He was not subject to reproach or shame or pain or wrath or death. There was no unbelief. There was no spittle or taunts or scorn. There was no bitter cup to drink.
- c. ***An Undiminished Excellency.*** Third, he possessed an undiminished excellence. Not a ray of His divine attributes was hidden or veiled. He dwelt in unrestrained and unlimited splendor. All His perfections were in perfect prominence. All His holiness and goodness and love and power and wisdom burned at full flame. No veil covered His glory. No flesh muted or masked it. All this contrasted to His earthly sojourn where He had no “**stately form or majesty**” that any should take a second look.
- d. ***An Unparalleled Prosperity.*** Fourth, he enjoyed an unparalleled prosperity. He was subject to no lack or want or deprivation. His glorious pre-existence is succinctly summed up by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “**He was rich.**” But His entire incarnation may be summed up in the word that immediately follows, “**He became poor.**” He had no place to lay His head (Mt. 8:20). This all for our sake!
- e. ***An Unrivaled Eminency.*** Fifth, he enjoyed an unrivaled authority. He was above all and adored by all. It must have been a regal glory. He was subject to no one. And was under no infirmities or weakness. He dwelt as the very King of glory. As very God He was absolutely free and under no necessities.

Applications of this Original Glory. Can we not believe that what He prayed for He received? Was He not glorified by the resurrection from the dead by which He was “**declared the Son of God with power**” (Rom. 1:4)? Was He not glorified in His ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33)? Was He not “*[visibly and] publicly reinstated in the honor, dignity, and glory which He voluntarily laid aside when He assumed our nature*” (Winslow, 15)? Now, what applications can be made from this word?

Consider what is the greatness of Jesus Christ and what is therefore His worthiness to be worshipped and adored for what He is in Himself and not simply for what He has done. You

cannot think too much or too highly of Jesus Christ. Consider how wrong it is to think of Him as less than God. This is to dishonor Him. How wrong it is not to give Him glory who has possessed eternal glory. And this is not a trivial matter. **“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him”** (Jn. 5:23). It is folly of highest order not to give Christ glory, honor, and praise. To this pre-existent, ever-existent One we owe our own being. **“[I]n Him all things hold together”** (Col. 1:17). If He was eternally the delight of the Father, how much more should He be our delight.

Consider what is the greatness of the love of Christ for sinners that He should not hold cling to the privileges and prerogatives and pleasures of this glory, but humble Himself, leaving His manifested majesty behind, as it were; that He should leave such glory behind and have it veiled in the likeness of our sinful flesh, that we may behold His glory and enjoy it forever. It was no small thing, but a matter of eternal import that He left so dear a state for so sinful a people. How this magnifies His grace and love (2 Cor. 8:9)! His love is as eternal as His being. Which of us, dwelling in infinite comfort, would be willing to put it off to endure infinite wrath? Who has ever left what Christ left, to receive what Christ received? Who has ever loved like Christ has loved? If Christ was willing to leave glory for our sakes, shall we not be ready to leave all on this earth for His? Can we not imitate Peter and the apostles, **“Lord, we have left all things to follow You”**?

Consider what is the great privilege of the redeemed to one day behold this glory of Christ by sight forever and ever. This is the Lord’s own desire for His own (John 17:24)!

Now this is what we are to believe, for so the Scriptures of God who cannot lie reveal it: Christ is pre-existent, yea self-existent.