



## Basic Bible Course

by *Ira Y. Rice, Jr.*

# The NATURE, PRE-EXISTENCE & ETERNAL PURPOSE of Our Lord JESUS CHRIST



## Lesson Seven

**INTRODUCTION:** Every generation of mankind, from the 1st century A.D. onwards, has been puzzled how to explain the coming into the world, extraordinary life, marvelous deeds, brilliant wisdom and terribly tragic death of Jesus Christ. Some have said He was just another man, albeit a singularly distinguished one. Others that He was a prophet—or even John the Baptist, raised from the dead! Others that He was the SON OF GOD, hence, as such, Himself GOD!

That these explanations cannot ALL be correct is self-evident. Let us see what the BIBLE has to say about it.

In our previous study of the life, preaching and baptism of John the Baptist, we found that John's coming into the world was to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. We learned that at least two Old Testament prophets—Isaiah and Malachi—had foretold the advent of John in this capacity.

We learned that when John and Jesus both were being carried in the wombs of their respective mothers, when Mary, the mother of Jesus, came to visit Elisabeth, the mother of John, John leaped in Elisabeth's womb for joy.

Later, when he had grown to manhood, John came preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3). Deprecating himself, John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is MIGHTIER THAN I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11). John bore witness of Jesus, saying, "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh AFTER me is preferred BEFORE me: for he was before me...for he WAS before me" (John 1:15, 30). "He must INCREASE, but I *must* DECREASE" (John 3:30).

How is it even possible that Jesus Christ, who was born some six months AFTER John could yet be BEFORE John? To understand this we must consider...

### I. THE NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST.

*NOTE: Those who think of Jesus as being ONLY HUMAN, stumble at the claims made for Him by the Bible.*

A. The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as being MORE THAN MAN.

1. Jesus Himself claimed to the ONE WITH GOD.
  - a. In John 10:30, Jesus said, "I and *my* Father are ONE."
  - b. Again, in John 14:10-11, He declared, "I *am* IN THE FATHER, and the FATHER IN ME."
  - c. Yet again, in His great intercessory prayer, Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*" (John 17:11).
  - d. In that same prayer, Jesus prayed further, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be ONE; as THOU, FATHER, *ART* IN ME, and I IN THEE, that they also may be ONE IN US:

that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be ONE, even as WE ARE ONE” (John 17:20-22).

2. EQUAL WITH GOD.
  - a. The apostle Paul, in Philippians 2:5-11, exhorts, “Let this MIND be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS: Who, being in the FORM OF GOD, thought it not robbery to be EQUAL WITH GOD: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore GOD also hath HIGHLY EXALTED HIM, and given him a name which is ABOVE EVERY NAME: That at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of *things* IN HEAVEN, and *things* IN EARTH, and *things* UNDER THE EARTH; And *that* EVERY TONGUE SHOULD CONFESS that JESUS CHRIST *IS* LORD, to the glory of God the Father.”
  - b. Jesus’ own admission of His equality with God upset the Jews. As we read in John 5:17-18, “But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that GOD was his FATHER, making himself EQUAL WITH GOD.”
3. EXISTING AS GOD.
  - a. The writer of Hebrews records God, the Father, as saying unto Jesus, His Son, “Thy throne, O GOD, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore GOD, *even* THY GOD, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness ABOVE THY FELLOWS” (Hebrews 1:8-9).
  - b. The apostle John also describes Jesus as BEING God, also as being “WITH GOD” (John 1:1-2), which further emphasizes that although the “Godhead” is ONE in PURPOSE it is nonetheless PLURAL in PERSON.
  - c. The apostle Paul says of Jesus, “For in him dwelleth all the FULNESS of the GOD-HEAD bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

## II. THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

**NOTE: Having already established Jesus as being 1) ONE with God, 2) EQUAL with God, and 3) existing AS GOD, we should now begin to understand that his EXISTENCE did not BEGIN with His BIRTH through Mary into this world. He has ALWAYS EXISTED—from eternity! Hence:**

- A. John the Baptist said of Jesus, “He IS before me because he WAS before me” (John 1:15, 30).
- B. Jesus existed even BEFORE ABRAHAM, who lived some 2,000 years before John the Baptist!
  1. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM” (John 8:58).
- C. Jesus declared He existed BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN.
  1. “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee BEFORE THE WORLD WAS” (John 17:5).
  2. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD” (John 17:24).
- D. The WORLDS and ALL THINGS were made *by* Jesus; hence He existed BEFORE all things.
  1. “ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM; and WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE” (John 1:3).
  2. The apostle Paul wrote, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all

- men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in GOD, who CREATED ALL THINGS BY JESUS CHRIST” (Ephesians 3:8-9).
3. “For **BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: ALL THINGS WERE CREATED **by HIM**, AND **for HIM**: And he is **BEFORE ALL THINGS**, and **BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST**” (Colossians 1:16-17).
  4. “GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his** Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom** also HE MADE THE WORLDS” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

**NOTE: Seeing that God, the Father (ONE PERSON) made the worlds and all things by God, the Son (ANOTHER PERSON), this helps us to understand the use of the plural “US” and “OUR” in Moses’ account of creation: 1) “Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness” (Genesis 1:26). And again, 2) in Genesis 3:22, “the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of US, to know good and evil.”**

- E. Jesus (referred to as “the Word” in John 1) is described as:
  1. “In the BEGINNING” (verse 1).
  2. “In the BEGINNING WITH GOD” (verse 2).
- F. Micah prophesied about the one to be born in Bethlehem (Jesus) that his “goings forth *have been* from OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING” (Micah 5:2).
- G. Jesus thus having existed FROM ETERNITY, we can, therefore, understand what Hebrews 13:8 means, wherein it says, “JESUS CHRIST the same YESTERDAY, TODAY and FOR EVER.”

### III. GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST.

(NOTE: Seeing that Jesus Christ, as God the Son, was equal and coexistent with God the Father, many are perplexed as to WHY He was ever sent into the world at all. Let us see.)

- A. Just after creating man, the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “**Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die**” (Genesis 2:16-17).
- B. In Genesis 3:1-19, Moses gives the account of how the Devil, Satan, in the form of a serpent, beguiled Eve so that she “TOOK OF THE FRUIT THEREOF, AND DID EAT, AND GAVE ALSO TO HER HUSBAND [ADAM] WITH HER; AND HE DID EAT.”
  1. This was the *FIRST TRANSGRESSION* of God’s will to man in the history of the world.
    - a. Thus SIN came into the world, “**FOR SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW**” (1 John 3:4).
  2. “**And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return**” (Genesis 3:13-19).

3. **“Wherefore...by one man [Adam] SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, and DEATH BY SIN; and so DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN...” (Romans 5:12).**
  - a. **“Until the law (given on Sinai) sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law” (verses 13).**
  - b. **“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression...” (verses 14).**
- C. Man’s SIN, thus, had SEPARATED BETWEEN HIM AND GOD (Isaiah 59:1-2).
  1. He was driven from the garden (Genesis 3:22-24).
  2. Man offered sacrifices, but they could not take away sin.
    - a. **“But in those *sacrifices* there is a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. For *IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND OF GOATS SHOULD TAKE AWAY SINS*” (Hebrews 10:3-4).**
- D. To RECONCILE MAN UNTO HIMSELF, God sent His Son (Jesus) as an ATONEMENT for man’s sin.
  1. **“For God so loved the world, that he GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON” (John 3:16).**
  2. **“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST DIED FOR US. Much more then, being now JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, we shall be SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM. For if, when we were enemies, we were RECONCILED TO GOD by the DEATH of his Son, much more, being RECONCILED, we shall be SAVED by his LIFE. And not only *so*, but we also JOY IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom we have now received the ATONEMENT” (Romans 5:8-11).**
- E. Thus the coming of Jesus Christ was according to God’s ETERNAL PURPOSE.
  1. **“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Ephesians 3:11-12).**