

"BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM."

The spotless purity, the marked intellectual superiority, the humble dignity, the meek gentleness, the bold and uncompromising sense of right, linked with benevolence and untiring self-sacrifice, marked Jesus as a man peculiar and separate from all other men. In his day "he taught as one having authority," and men said, "Never man spake like this man." Whatever others may think or say of him, he claimed to be the sent of God, saying, (John 6:38), "I came down from heaven." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (verse 51.) The Jews disbelieved this claim, and said, "How can this be?" And many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" (verse 60.)

"When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" But "from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him" (verses 61-66), because of this claim of heavenly origin and pre-human existence.

Again, we find him before the Pharisees declaring the same truth, saying, "I know whence I came and whither I go....I am from above, I am not of this world;...I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me....It is my Father that honoreth me, and if I should say I know him not I shall be a liar" (John 8:14,23,42,54,55). Then said the Pharisees, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham?" Jesus answered, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? [Abraham had been dead two thousand years.] Jesus said

unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM." (John 8:53,56-58).

There is no mistake about that expression. The Son of God had not yet tasted death; the birth of the human was only a transference of the life-principle from spiritual to human conditions; the being, the individuality, was the same. Jesus as a man recognized himself as the same being – the Son of God. (See "Food for Thinking Christians," chap. "Narrow Way to Life.") "I AM" expresses his continuous existence, and identifies Jesus of Nazareth with the "only begotten" and "first-born of all creation." Did the Jews believe this wonderful truth? No, they took up stones to stone him. Jesus' teachings only convinced the meek. ("The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek." – Isa. 61:1.)

Referring again to the saying of Jesus (John 6:62), "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" and comparing it with Mark's statement (chap. 16:19), "He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God," we can only conclude that before his advent to earth he occupied the right hand (or chief position) on the heavenly or spiritual plane; not the Father's position, but the chief position at the Father's right hand – right hand signifying the chief place of favor and power. But the right hand position before his advent to earth was not so exalted as his present position at the right hand of Jehovah; for because of his humiliation and obedience even unto death "God hath highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9), and given additional honors and glory; and those honors shall magnify and multiply with the revolving ages.

Again, Jesus had been explaining the truth to Nicodemus, but Nicodemus was slow to believe, and Jesus by way of reproof remarked, "If I have told you earthly things and ye believed not, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" Then he intimates that no one else could teach him those heavenly things; for "No man

hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man",* consequently no one else knew the heavenly things. Then Jesus proceeded to explain that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son" (a son on that higher plane before he was sent) to redeem men (John 3:12-17).

If Jesus had been conceived and born in the usual way, that is, in sin, even as others, we must conclude either that he was an impostor who sought to delude his followers into thinking him some great one, or else conclude with the Jews that he had a devil and was mad (insane). But in him was neither guile (deceit) nor any other sin. Therefore, with confidence, we mark and weigh his words when again we hear him say (Matt. 11:27), "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Strange language! Did not the disciples know Jesus as a man? Yes, but as we have seen, they understood not the secret of his wonderful being – his pre-human **[R446 : page 6]** glory and the mystery of his incarnation. Jesus was just beginning to reveal himself to them as they were able to receive the truth. And he had yet many things to tell them which they were not then able to bear, but which the promised Spirit through the Word has since made plain. Whence that intimate knowledge of the Father which he here claimed? We find answer in the texts we have just considered. But look again and we shall find further testimony. (The same knowledge is alluded to by the Prophet Isaiah, chap. 53:11, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.")

Turning to Prov. 8:22-30, we find that this same Jesus whom Isaiah calls "The Wonderful, Counsellor," etc. (the same being, though known by many names,) Solomon speaks of as Wisdom personified, saying: "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his

way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Would any inquire – of whom born? Let the Psalmist answer, "From the womb of the morning" (Psa. 110:3).

In what perfect accord is this with the statements of John 1:1-18, (See Dec. issue "Consider him" – read it) which not only shows his intimate acquaintance with Jehovah and knowledge of his plans, but exhibits him as his honored agent in their accomplishment.

When we consider the length of time that must have elapsed during the creation of the material universe (See art. "The Creative Week," in a former issue – read) we may have some idea of our Lord's intimate and long acquaintance with Jehovah and his plans. No marvel, then, that Jesus said, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son." And again, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee but I have known thee." (John 17:25.)

The key to his knowledge of heavenly things is furnished us in John 3:31,32. "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth." No wonder that some said, "Whence hath this man this

wisdom." It was his knowledge of heavenly things, as well as his faith in the Father's promise, which enabled him to overcome the world and present an acceptable sacrifice for our sins. As it was written, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."

"O that all of God's dear children would be more earnest in studying the Scriptures, for, said Jesus, "These are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.) As we are able to bear it, the glories of Father and Son, and our promised glory through them, will be made very clear to us. "He (the Son) was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not," and still does not know him. Only those who humbly walk by faith in the light of the sure word will know him, until his glory and power shall be revealed, so that all flesh may see it together.

Very soon we know that his power shall be universally felt, and the Psalmist intimates that his power, displayed in restoring and perfecting all things, will at least equal his power, as Jehovah's agent, in creating them. "Thou hast the dew (freshness, vigor) of thy youth." (Psa. 110:3.)

With all this united testimony of the Holy Scriptures before us, What child of God could longer doubt the pre-human existence and glory of our blessed Lord, or the sincerity of his own prayer, "Father, glorify thou me with the glory I had with thee before the world was?"

In no other way can we understand how "He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. 8:9.) As a man he had none of this world's goods. True, he was rich in wisdom, grace and understanding; but did giving these make him poor? Did he become poor in wisdom or grace for us? By no means. No, Jesus and the Apostles tell us of the glory he had with the Father before the world was. There was the wealth which he left

– humbling himself and taking the form of a servant, etc., (Phil. 2:7) that we through that real poverty might become rich.

In no other way can we understand Jesus to be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, as he claims in his revelation to John, (Rev. 1:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13) than as the Scriptures harmoniously teach, that as Jehovah's agent he is the beginner and finisher of the wondrous plan, though not its author. In a word, he was the only direct creation of Jehovah, all other creations being through him as his agent or representative; as we read: "To us there is but one God – the Father – of whom are all things and we in him: and one Lord – Jesus Christ – by whom are all things and we by him." (1 Cor. 8:6.)

"He is the first-born of every creature; [born before all creation] for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones 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. And [he is also the first to partake of the divine nature,] he is the head of the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead – that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. 1:15-18.)

Bride of the Lamb, here view your Lord,
His glory's veiled to other eyes than thine;
For other ears – came not the word;
They'll know, when in his glory thou shalt shine.

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