

"BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM."

The spotless purity, the marked intellectual superiority, the humble dignity, the meek gentleness, the bold and uncompromising justice, 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, and of heavenly origin, saying. "I came down from heaven." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (John 6:38,51.) 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 8:53,36-58.

There is no mistake about that expression. Since his humanity resulted from the 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, and could remember his former glory. "I AM" expresses his continuous existence, and identifies Jesus of Nazareth with the "only begotten" and "first born of all creation." The Jews did not believe this wonderful truth, and took up stones to stone him. Our Lord's teachings only convinced the meek, and only such he expected to receive them. – 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 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 we learn that the right hand position, before his advent to earth, was not so exalted as his present position at Jehovah's right hand, since it is expressly stated that because of his humiliation and obedience even unto death "God hath highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9) and given him additional honors and glory.

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 the higher plane before he was sent) to redeem men. – John 3:12-17.

*The oldest and most authentic Greek MSS., (Sinaitic and Vatican) *omit*, with evident propriety, the words "*which is in heaven*" after this text.

If Jesus had been conceived and born in the usual way, that is, in sin, even as others, we must believe, either that he was an imposter 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, since in him was no sin, as not only the apostles and prophets but even his enemies have testified, we mark his words when again we hear him say, "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." – Matt. 11:27.

Strange language! Did not the disciples know Jesus? Yes, as a man they knew him, but they did not understand the secret of his wonderful being – his pre-human 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 his intimate knowledge of the Father here claimed? We find answer in the Scriptures we have just considered. But we also find further testimony.

Turning to Prov. 8:22-30, we find that this same Jesus whom Isaiah calls "The Wonderful, Counselor," 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, [R1059 : page 7] 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.*"

This scripture together with John 1:1-18 not only shows his intimate acquaintance with Jehovah and knowledge of his plans, but exhibits him as his honored agent in their accomplishment. [R1060 : page 7]

When we consider the length of time that must have elapsed during the creation of the material universe and that our Lord was the "beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14) before angels as well as before man, and Jehovah's agent in the creation of angels as well as men, 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 in John 3:31,32. "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthy 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, his intimate and long acquaintance with the Father, begetting faith in the Father's promises, which enabled him, as a perfect man, 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 while he will bear their iniquities." – Isa. 53:11.

O that all 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 the 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 Word, will know him, until his glory and power shall be revealed, so that all flesh may see it together.

Very soon, we know, 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 Scriptures before us, we cannot 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."

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 it was not in giving these that he became poor. He did not become poor in wisdom or grace for us. But both 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 – born "from the womb of the morning," as the Psalmist expresses it (110:3), – all other creations being through him, as Jehovah's agent, or representative; as we read: "To us there is 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 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.

Our Lord's pre-human condition, we have thus seen, was one of mighty power, as the chief of all Jehovah's creation, and his agent in all subsequent creations. He was the *first* and the *last* direct creation of Jehovah. Hence with the proper conception of the meaning of the word *God*, as used in the Scriptures, namely, a mighty, a powerful being (See, Nov. '87 TOWER), we see the propriety of applying the name God (which in Scripture is applied to angels and to some great men) to this great being, who was and is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, of Jehovah's creation.

And so we find our Lord mentioned by this title, God, in John 1:1-18. –

"In the beginning [not at Jehovah's beginning, for he had no beginning, but in the beginning of his creation] was the Word [one of our Lord's titles – Rev. 19:13], and the Word was with *the** God [Jehovah] and the Word was *a* God. The same was, *in the beginning* [of creation – himself the first creation], with *the** God. All things were made by him [the Word] and without him [aside from him as the direct instrumentality] was not anything made that was made. In the same was life, and the life was the light of men. ...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....The Word was *made flesh* [previously of a spirit nature our Lord was made flesh *i.e.*, he underwent a change of nature – for the purpose of giving

our ransom price; for since by a *man* came death by a *man* also "the resurrection of the dead" must come about. 1 Cor. 15:21] and dwelt among us, and we beheld his dignity [of character], the majesty as of the only begotten of the Father – full of grace and truth."

**The Greek emphasizes the word here rendered God.*

How beautifully simple is the truth; how different from the confusion of error. Yet, strange to say, some poor souls are so used to believing errors, called holy mysteries, that they fear that anything reasonable is error.

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