

CHRISTOLOGY (6)

2. John 1:14, 18 - Here is a high and holy designation concerning Jesus Christ—"only begotten from the Father" or "only begotten of God." Dr. Chafer writes: "This, one of the highest of titles ever employed, bears an indication of the eternal relationship existing between the Father and the Son" (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

This phrase means that Jesus Christ is the only Person born who is part of the Godhead. Jesus Christ is the only Person ever born into this world who is totally unique in His position, purpose and relationship to God the Father. He is the only Person fully human and fully God. This is the only Person who is uniquely related to and part of the Godhead. Jesus Christ stands completely alone in His relationship to God the Father. There will never be another person who holds Christ's position and purpose. Jesus Christ is the only Person who can claim equality with God the Father (John 10:30).

There have been two main theological errors and heresies concerning this title:

- 1) Some suggest Jesus Christ is really God and therefore not really the Son of God, thus leading to Tritheism—the belief in three God's.
- 2) Some suggest Jesus Christ is a son who had a beginning; therefore, He is not eternal God.

When one reads the context of these verses—John 1:1-18, there is absolutely no doubt or confusion that this phrase is one not designed to lessen the Person of Christ, but to establish that He is the only Person to ever live on this earth who was part of the Godhead.

3) Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5 - This title "first-born from/of/out/ of the dead" means that Jesus Christ is the first to be raised to everlasting life.

There were several people raised from the dead: the widow's son (Lk. 7:11-15); Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:49-55); Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44). The major difference between these resurrections and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is this—the widow's son, Jairus' daughter and Lazarus each had to face death again, whereas Jesus Christ was raised never to face death again. Simply stated, Jesus Christ was the first to be raised to everlasting life.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer well concluded: "A consideration of these designations cannot but impress the devout mind with the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ existed as God from all eternity, and that He will so exist throughout eternity to come" (Vol. 5, p. 12).

QUESTION #5 – What did Jesus Christ do prior to His birth?

Once Christ chose to take on human form, we may trace His words and work because the Gospel writers give us great detail as to what He was doing. But a critical question of Christology, that truly establishes who Christ is, is one of His activity prior to His incarnation. What was Jesus doing, as the second Person of the Trinity, prior to His human birth? Several passages give us answers to this question:

1. He was involved in creation. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2

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2. He was involved in governing . Colossians 1:17

This means Christ was involved in governing all things, seen and unseen, things of nature and history. In fact this work of Divine governmental providence and preservation over all things continues to be one of His key activities. Dr. Walvoord writes: "...the Son of God is specifically active in the work of God in providence." In fact, there will come a day when every creature will be under the "immediate authority of Christ." Ultimately, every creature will individually acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Sovereign God. "The work of the Son of God did not begin when He died on the cross or when He ministered to men in His public ministry as recorded in the Gospels, but is an essential ingredient in all the work of God throughout the pages of human history" (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 50-51).

3. He appeared as a Theophany .

A theophany is an appearance of God in some bodily, tangible form prior to the incarnation. A theophany is an O.T. appearance of Jesus Christ as God.

Dr. Walvoord accurately observed—"Usually they (theophanies) are limited to appearances of Christ in the form of man or angel while other forms of appearance, such as Shekinah, are not considered normal theophanies. The principle theophany of the Old Testament is the Angel of Jehovah..." (Walvoord, pp. 51-52).

Theophanies are extremely important to Jesus Christ for three reasons:

- 1) It proves Jesus Christ is God .
- 2) It proves Jesus Christ is the visible manifestation of God.
- 3) It proves Jesus Christ pre-existed and did not begin at His birth.

By far the most frequent O.T. manifestation of God is Jesus Christ appearing as "the angel of the LORD (Jehovah)." In many passages Christ is identified as "the angel of the LORD." In some passages He is identified as "the angel" or "the angel of God." Dr. Walvoord gives good counsel as to how to determine which is a normal angel and which is an O.T. appearance of Jesus Christ—"In general, the context determines whether this is specifically a reference to the Angel of Jehovah" (*Ibid.*, p. 52).

There are several passages which clearly establish and prove that "the angel of Jehovah" or "the angel of the LORD" is an appearance of God, Himself.

- 1) Gen. 16:9-13 - Hagar knows exactly who is comforting her—"God."
- 2) Gen. 22:11-18 - There is no distinction in Abraham's mind between the Angel and God.
- 3) Gen. 32:24-30 - Jacob wrestled with God—but Hosea says it was "the Angel" (Hos. 12:4).
- 4) Ex. 3:2-6, 14 - The angel of the LORD was God and Moses knew it. This was a truth that Stephen expounded before his execution (Acts 7:30-35).
- 5) Judges 2:1-4 - The angel of the LORD is synonymous with Jehovah who takes total credit and responsibility for difficulties of the nation Israel.
- 6) Judges 6:11-24 - Gideon equated seeing the angel of Jehovah as seeing God and so did the angel.

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- 7) Judges 13:3-22 - By the reaction of Manoah and his wife, both equated the angel of Jehovah as being Jehovah, Himself.
- 8) Zech. 1:12-13, 20 - This is a very important passage because it clearly proves that the angel of Jehovah is God (v. 20). It also shows that He had communication with another member of the Godhead (1:12-13). What is happening is that God the Son is speaking with God the Father during the O.T. period, several hundred years prior to His incarnation. This, as Duane Lindsey writes, "...supports a distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and contributes to the implicit doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, pp. 1150-1551).

There is no question that these passages establish that the angel of the LORD was the LORD. Since the Godhead is one God, comprised of three Persons, it is not too difficult to determine which Person this is:

1. Jesus Christ is the full, visible manifestation of the invisible God (John 14:9; Col. 1:15-19). It is logical to assume that He is the same in the O.T.
2. After the birth of Jesus Christ, the angel of Jehovah never appears in Scripture again. Luke 2:9 should read "an angel of the Lord" as in the NASV and NIV, not "the angel of the Lord."
3. A direct statement of Jesus Christ plus a consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit makes it possible to logically conclude that the angel of Jehovah must be an O.T. appearance of Jesus Christ.

In John 1:18, Christ makes the statement that no man has seen God the Father at any time, but that man has seen the Son. It is clear from our previous passages that these people knew they had seen God, so one member of the Godhead must be the "Angel of the LORD." This verse in John helps us determine who visibly appears from the Godhead—the Son. It cannot be the Holy Spirit, because one cannot see the Holy Spirit, only the results of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:8). Therefore, the only logical explanation is this must be Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity.

As the Angel of the LORD, Christ was involved in several important ministries in the O.T.:

1. He was involved in giving instruction. Gen. 16:9
2. He was involved in giving prophecy. Gen. 16:10-12; 22:16-18; Judges 6:14
3. He was involved in establishing Israel. Gen. 22:16-18; 32:28; Zech. 1:16-17
4. He was involved in giving instruction to Israel. Ex. 3:14
5. He was involved in protecting Israel. Ex. 14:19; 23:20-23; II Kings 19:35
6. He was involved in punishing Israel. I Chron. 21:1-27; Zech. 1:12
7. He was involved in refreshing and strengthening people. I Kings 19:4-8
8. He was involved in leading Israel. Judges 2:1