



The preexistence of Christ, Part 3.

Defending the second-greatest glory of God's Son.

Doubting the preexistence of Christ is just so...*Athenian*.



Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, 16 for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him,

17 and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him. 18 And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first (Colossians 1:15-18).

The most exciting time for believers, in this life, is when we first discover truth and begin pursuing it. An entire new world opens up and the thrill is in the chase. It's not unlike the charge that a child gets (just look at the kid's face) when taking those first steps. Or when learning to read. I will always recall the joy of finally being able to grasp the messages on billboards. My mom would be driving and I'd be reading every single highway advertisement out loud ("Winston tastes good like a cigarette should!"), as proudly as though I'd just uncovered the secrets of alchemy.

Many of us can recall and describe in vivid detail that initial kick of discovering truths such as the salvation of all, the sovereignty of God, the eons, and the distinction between Peter's gospel and that of Paul. We ordered books, watched videos, listened to audios; we could almost hear puzzle pieces snapping into place in our brains. We couldn't get enough of it.

ITS AN ATHENIAN THING

What I have just described is the most exciting time in the life of a believer. Now, on to the most difficult time. The most difficult time is when God saturates us with the basics of faith and there are no more "big truths" out there to chase. The most difficult time is

when the thrill of the chase is over and there is “nothing to do” except endure and to grow in faith and in realization of these basics.

Holding fast to what one knows and refusing to entertain the latest “new truth” is what separates the stayers from those who abandon camp in search of virgin thrills. I’m not saying that we ever arrive at a place where we don’t discover some sparkling nuance belonging to a foundation of faith, but that the big-time game hunt for large, elusive, quarry is over. *That* thrill is gone. The honeymoon is kaput, and now we’re hunkered down for a long, possibly difficult marriage when nothing seems to be happening except racking up endurance points.

What we must guard against during this protracted haul is the temptation to blow with seductive winds, to swim uncharted seas in search of novelty. We imagine such a search to be spiritual, but it is not. It is a soulish quest for titillation. Awash in the mistaken disposition that foundational truth is dull and/or overused, we avail ourselves of the new, the exciting, and the so-called ground-breaking. We become like the Athenians of Paul’s day, described here by Luke in Acts 17:21—

Now all the Athenians, and the repatriated guests, had opportunity for nothing different than to be saying something or hearing something newer.

There is nothing shameful about learning the truth and staying with it. There is nothing boring about it; there is nothing sluggish, unprogressive or non-studious about maintaining a true course and turning neither to the left nor to the right. In fact, holding steadfastly to what one knows to be truth—discovered via properly translated Scripture—is a hallmark of maturity. It’s called being rooted and grounded in the faith. The opposite is to be blown about by every wind of teaching. This is the way of youth, not age. Here’s how Paul puts it in Ephesians 4:11-14—

And the same One gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these as prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers, toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, *that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching.*

TABLOID SCRIPTURALISM

I will admit to you that when I first saw the title of Aaron Welch’s article, my instinct was to call it ridiculous. (That’s what I did, and I still think it’s that.) This instinct was not the result of an emotional, knee-jerk reaction, but of thirty-one years intense, concordant Scriptural study. Aaron’s title was—“Was Jesus Christ alive before his life on earth began? (Part One).”

It smelled, to me, like a National Enquirer headline. It may as well have read, “Was Paul Black?” or “Was Jesus Christ A Woman?” It may as well have read, “Was Pilate a Member of the Illuminati?” or, “Was Judas Iscariot An Alien From the Planet Niburu?” Or, “Did Barrabas Kill Jesus From The Grassy Knoll?” I read Aaron’s title and I shook my head. The title smacked of conspiracy theory, right up there with the flat earth, George Bush bombing the World Trade Center, faked moon landings and Holocaust denial. In fact, I would not be surprised that those who doubt the preexistence of Christ fall for many if not all of these complicated, sensational, mind-twisting reality tweaks known as conspiracy theories. Anything to keep from getting bored, I guess. Anything to relieve the monotony of holding fast.

JERUSALEM
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ALL THE LATEST BUZZ! HOT TOPIC

WAS THE
APOSTLE PAUL
BLACK?

NEW EVIDENCE!
NEW INTERVIEWS!

PETER SAYS,
“HELL YES!!!”

THE BEST ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST!!

EXCLUSIVE!! Barabbas shot Jesus
from the grassy knoll!!!

I say this in light of the eight simply-worded, well-translated Scripture verses that I published two weeks ago (I have added an additional verse this week) that clearly prove to the non-sensation-seeking (and thus boring) saint that Jesus Christ was alive before His life on Earth began. (Are you stifling a yawn yet?) Here are the verses—

- ▶ “Before Abraham came into being, I am” (John 8:58)
- ▶ He had a glory with the Father before the world came to be (John 17:5)
- ▶ He would ascend to where He was formerly (John 6:62)
- ▶ All is created in Him, through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16)
- ▶ He is the Firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15)
- ▶ Apart from Him not even one thing came into being which has come into being (John 1:3)
- ▶ He made the eons (Hebrews 1:3)
- ▶ He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity (Philippians 2:7)
- ▶ He is “God’s Creative Original” (Revelation 3:14).

To deny the preexistence of Christ, in light of these verses, carries the distinct odor of chasing a “newer thing.” It’s so Athenian. And, in fact, some among us are Athenians indeed, for I hear word from Facebook (I never visit any Facebook page, not even my own) that some are saying things like, “I don’t believe this new teaching, but it’s interesting,” or, “I’m not sure about this, but I can’t wait for the next installment,” as though doubting something so heartbreakingly foundational as the preexistence of Christ is an entertaining game show, hosted by Aaron and Martin, with contestants and prizes and beer for the spectators. Anything to keep out of a rut. God forbid that we should ever repeat ourselves. (Hi, I’m Martin Zender. Welcome to downtown Dullsville.)

GAME OVER

Since I am such a great (and humble) writer, I have been accused, in my rebuttals of Aaron’s new teaching, of cultivating style over substance. Anyone buying into this should return the supposition for a refund and re-read the last two ZWTF’s, especially Volume 6, Issue 49. I’ve confronted Aaron on this topic with Scripture and logic. (But really, all I have to do is continue quoting the nine verses above and disappear into the shadows.) If my efforts have not “taken,” it’s not my fault. If people can read what I’ve written, and if people can read these nine verses and still say, “Hmm, interesting, but we want more evidence and

more argument,” well, it won’t keep *me* up at night. I’ve done my job. If Aaron’s battleship has been sent down to the briny deep with a couple dozen gaping holes in the hull (and it has), but he still imagines that it somehow rages onward upon the Seven Seas—armed and dangerous—well, it’s not *my* problem. At least it’s not anymore.

LET’S REVIEW

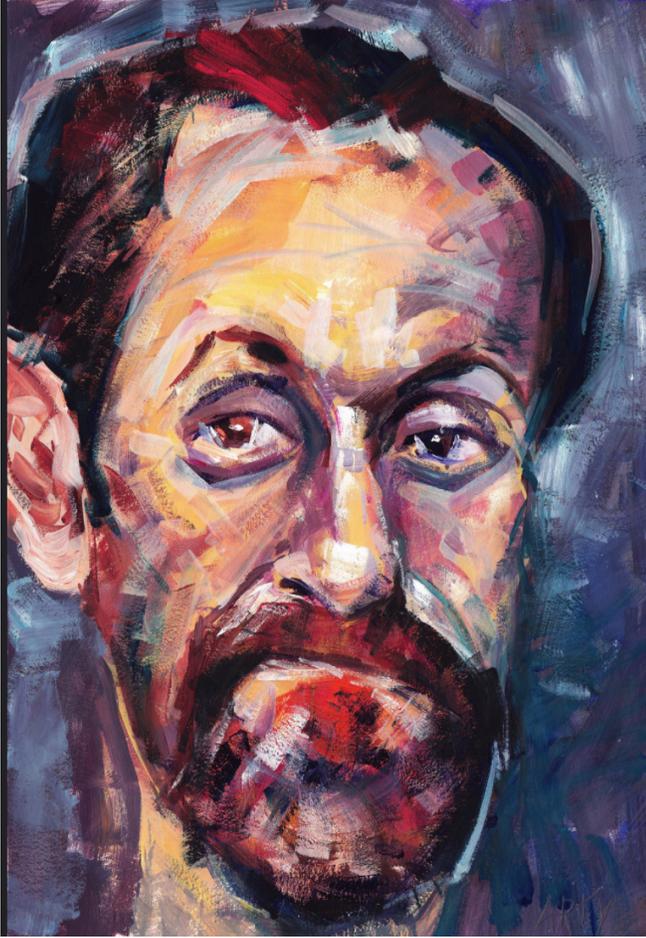
Let’s review what we learned in Volume 6, Issue 49—

- ▶ Similar wording or concepts do not a parallel identity make. To say that, just because we were foreknown by God and yet did not preexist our birth, that therefore Jesus Christ—also foreknown—did not preexist *His* birth, is like saying that because apples and oranges both have peels, that therefore apples are oranges.
- ▶ Simply because Jesus Christ and other humans are both “begotten,” does not prove that Jesus Christ is just like other humans and did not preexist His birth.
- ▶ Simply because Christ withholds the information, while on Earth, that all was created through Him, does not mean that all was *not* created through Him (Colossians 1:16). It only means that Jesus Christ withholds information.



- ▶ Simply because Jesus Christ sometimes plays dumb (on the road to Emmaus, for instance), certainly does not mean that He *is* dumb.
- ▶ Whenever God claims to have made the world “alone,” He speaks relatively, always in the context of distinguishing Himself from counter deities. The relative viewpoint never precludes the absolute viewpoint and the Scriptural fact that God created the world and everything in it through Christ.

And what did we learn *last* week? We learned that Jesus Christ’s “coming to be in the likeness of humanity”



“When Paul said ‘created’ in Colossians 1:16, he didn’t really mean ‘created.’”

and “being found in fashion as a human” necessarily occurred before His baptism in the Jordan River at age thirty (Aaron Welch insists that Christ became a human at this point and not before) because (*hello?*)—He was already in the likeness of humanity then and already in fashion as a human. The only time this could have happened, then, was if He preexisted His birth, because it was at His birth that He was found in fashion as a human and when He came to be in the likeness of humanity. He emptied Himself *in order to* become an Adamic human.

Is it hard making sense for a living? No, not really.

WHAT ABOUT COLOSSIANS THEN?

My opening verse from Colossians shows the nuts and bolts of how God works through Christ. Christ was God’s Creative Original (Revelation 3:14); He was the first Being created by God because God is absolutely invisible, inaudible and intangible and He required the creation of an Image in order to be grasped by sentient creatures yet to be created. Christ is the Image of the invisible God (2 Corinthians 4:4). Not only is all created in Him, but all has its cohesion in Him. In this context, “all” means “all”—it includes everything in the universe besides God, for it includes “that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). This fact is pounded home by the phrase, “He is before all,” and He is “the Firstborn of all creation.”

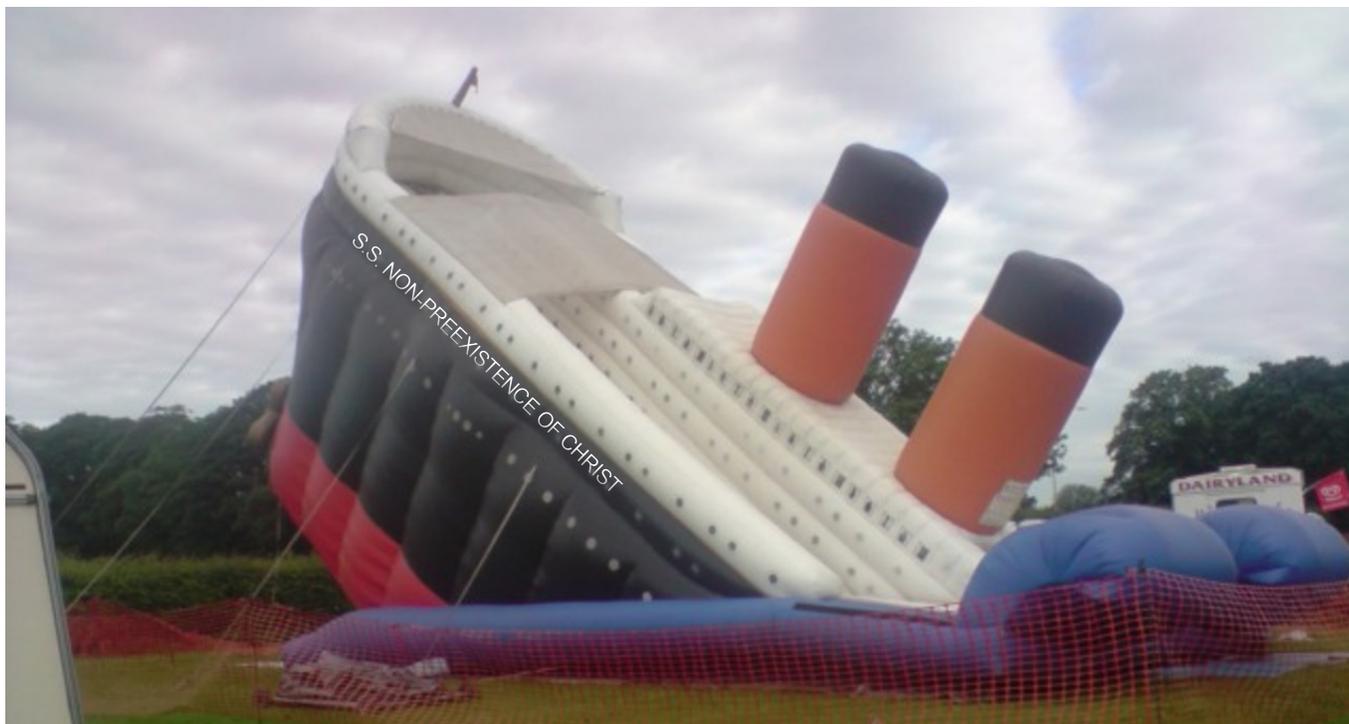
The title “Firstborn” could mean position rather than actual birth order, but here it speaks of both because “in Him is all created.”

“HERE’S WHAT PAUL *MEANT*”

None of this is good enough for Aaron, however. I wish it were, but it isn’t. He can’t accept Paul’s plain words, but feels compelled to tell us what Paul *meant* to say, because what Paul *did* say (as opposed to what Aaron says he *meant* to say) screws up Aaron’s “new truth” of the non pre-existence of Christ. Here’s what Aaron has to say about the Colossians passage, from the third part of his series, titled, “A consideration of passages thought to reveal the ‘preexistence of Christ’: Paul’s letters to the body of Christ”—

The “creating” that Paul had in view in v. 16 is not a reference to the event described in Genesis 1; rather, it refers to something that was presently occurring/ongoing when Paul wrote – namely, the upholding and preserving of creation by virtue of Christ’s authoritative declaration that it be so (cf. Heb. 1:3). Although everything in the universe has its ultimate origin in God (who originally brought everything into existence), everything in the universe remains or “stands” created by virtue of Christ’s God-given authority.

And so when Paul *said* “creating,” he didn’t really mean creating. (Good to know that!) It’s not a reference,



says Aaron, to creating. (Don't be tricked, my friends, by Paul's use of the word "creating," because it doesn't mean "creating.") Because what Paul *meant* to say, (as relayed to us by Aaron Welch) was not "for in Him all is created" but rather, "In Him [Paul is referring us to] something that was presently occurring/ongoing when Paul wrote—namely, the upholding and preserving of creation by virtue of Christ's God-given authority.

It is unfortunate that Aaron can't leave Paul alone to speak for himself. It is later, in verse 17, that Paul refers to what Aaron thinks he's referring to in verse 16. Paul does not refer to the same thing twice. In verse 17, he's describing the upholding of creation ("all has its cohesion in Him"), but in verse 16 (when Paul uses the word "created,") he is describing the creation itself, that is, the raw material that, in verse 17, is being upheld, sustained and carried on. Hebrews 1:3 (referenced by Aaron) simply supports Colossians 1:17 and speaks nothing of verse 16.

"STOP TELLING US WHAT PAUL
MEANT TO SAY."

A mature saint whom I've known for a long time and who has held to mature truth for many years (he's a really boring but faithful guy), complained to me about Aaron's articles, saying, "Paul tells us something very simple, in one or two sentences, but then Aaron comes along and spends

ten pages and a couple thousand words trying to tell us what Paul *meant* to say." After relaying this to me, my friend took several swallows of a strong whisky. I joined him.

I'M PLODDING ONWARD
IN ALL MY BORINGNESS,
BELIEVING PAUL

Ladies and gentlemen, this ends my comments upon this topic of the so-called non-preexistence of Christ. As I said in my first installment, it's ridiculous that we're even arguing about this. There are many things that we can argue about, but this ought not be one of them. I will no longer spend time defending this particular foundational truth against what I call Tabloid Scripturalism. Call me boring, unprogressive—I don't care. I prefer to think of myself as rooted and grounded in the truth. It's not that I don't find new sparkle and nuance in the old truths, but that I refuse to entertain sensational "new teachings" that look cockeyed at straightforward passages just to titillate the Athenians. I only go to Mars' Hill to correct the superstitions, not to learn something new from the latest sensationalist to line up at the podium. —MZ

NEXT UP: Romans, chapter 16.

Produced by Martin Zender/www.martinzender.com
© 2017 by Martin Zender/Published by Starke & Hartmann, Inc.
email: mzender@martinzender.com