

The Preexistence of the Saints

The Elect Were With the Father in Heaven Before Becoming Flesh and Blood

The idea that we, the saints, existed in spirit before becoming incarnated as flesh and blood here on earth may be a startling claim in the minds of many. However, the Scriptures give strong indications that such is the case, and it is the purpose of this short paper to discuss the evidence.

Please be aware that the preexistence of people in spirit is in no way a support of the traditional idea of reincarnation. Reincarnation comes from the Latin and literally means “entering the flesh again.” According to Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com), it is the religious or philosophical concept that the soul or spirit, after biological death, can begin a new life in a new body. This doctrine is a central tenet of the Hindu religion. The Buddhist concept of rebirth is also often referred to as reincarnation, and is a belief that was held by such historic figures as Pythagorus, Plato, and Socrates, and it is also a common belief of various ancient and modern religions. It is found as well in many tribal societies around the world, in places such as east Asia, Siberia, South America, and Australia.

As you will learn in this article, the preexistence that is revealed in Scripture is a spirit reality, not a physical one. That removes this discussion from the realm of reincarnation, which supposes a person’s spirit previously inhabited another person or animal sometime in the past.

There is value for us as Christians to understand the truth about whether or not we, as God’s elect here on the earth, had some sort of preexistence as revealed in His word. This issue is not essential to understand, or believe, for salvation, but it is one more facet of the true, living God whom we worship and obey. The more we understand of Him and His great plan the better we should be able to see Him as He really is, in His greatness and goodness, the depths of whose wisdom and knowledge we have only begun to fathom.

Let the Scriptures Speak

Solomon wrote a remarkable statement in the Book of Ecclesiastes: “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Perhaps we have not thought carefully about this verse, but it indicates that the spirit, the “real person,” as it were, was once with God who is in heaven. Most of us understand that this “real person” that we are is indeed a spirit, for Paul so stated. He said that we can be “... absent from the body and present with the Lord. Therefore, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him” (II Corinthians 5:8-9, NKJV, here and throughout the article). He restated this thought in Philippians 1:23: “For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better”. The “real Paul” was his spirit, a spirit that inhabits a flesh and blood person and continues on “at rest” in the grave, until the resurrection (Job 14:13-14). Whether in the physical or spirit realm, the person was still Paul.

Hebrews 2:13-14 gives more strong evidence of the preexistence of the saints. I have added notes in parentheses below to identify who is being spoken of.

“And again: ‘Here am I [Yahweh, or Jesus Christ] and the children [the elect] whom God [the Father] has given Me [Jesus Christ; quoted from Isaiah 8:18]. Inasmuch then as the children [the elect] have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself [Jesus Christ] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.’”

This remarkable section of Scripture states that Jesus Christ became (partook of) flesh and blood

after He was a spirit; likewise, “the elect have also partaken of flesh and blood”. The parallel is obvious and clear. Both Jesus Christ and the elect have partaken of a physical existence, meaning they both had to preexist. What is particularly interesting in verse 14 is that the saints are mentioned first as having partaken, even before Christ is mentioned; just why Paul chose this order is unclear, but at the very least it emphasizes the reality that as Jesus preexisted, so do (did) the saints of the Most High. The analogy between Christ’s and the elect’s state is unmistakable.

Let us examine this matter in Hebrews 2 more closely. It is first of all assumed in this discussion that Jesus Christ did indeed preexist before his conception in the womb of Mary. Some do not agree that He preexisted, and there will be no attempt to address the issue exhaustively here. Rather, the reader is encouraged to read and study John 1:1-5 and 14, John 17:5 and 24, I Corinthians 10:1-4, Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 82:1-6, and Mark 2:5. I personally believe that the evidence conclusively points towards the preexistence of Jesus in the spirit realm, where He was with His Father. You can also read the article “Did Jesus Christ Preexist,” also by this author.

Back to Hebrews 2, Adam, from whom all of mankind has descended (Genesis 5 and 10; Acts 17:26), came directly as a “spirit germ” or template from God’s express image (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7), and was a Son of God (Luke 3:38). The elect, physically speaking, have come from Adam through generations of procreation, carrying his genes, which are exact copies of God’s spiritual form, for we have been made in His express image. Hebrews 1:2 states it this way: “... who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His [the Father’s] person” That reality in the flesh reflects the nature of Elohim in the spirit.

Using syllogistic reasoning, if A = God’s spirit germ that became Adam’s physical being (Adam was a son of God; Luke 3:38), shaped by his DNA, and B = Adam, then A = B; each is comprised of the same DNA that has passed from the spirit to the physical state. All people have descended from Adam’s DNA, and out of these descendants have come the elect. If the elect are C, then B = C, for we are all made in the same template as Adam (Acts 17:26). If A = B and B = C, then A = C; the elect, descendants of Adam, are equal to God in genetic makeup, taking on His image

of the original spiritual genetic code made physical.

Is it then too big a leap to surmise that if man’s DNA is equivalent to Elohim’s DNA, both could have had eternal spirit existence? I think not. Today’s human beings made in God’s image—as for Adam—is verified in James 3:9, where it says, “With it [the tongue] we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse man, who has been made in the similitude of God.”

Predestination Requires Preexistence

We are told in Romans 8:29-30, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30).

The Greek word for *predestined* is *proorizó*, meaning “to mark out beforehand, to determine before, to foreordain.” This same word is used in Ephesians 1:3-5 and 10-11.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He [The Father] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will ... that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him”

Just as Jesus Christ was marked out beforehand to be the Chosen One, the Savior of all mankind, the firstborn of many brethren—the One who excelled above His fellows (Psalm 45:6-7 and Hebrews 1:8-9)—so the elect have been called and justified, and were chosen “before the *foundation* [*katabole*, ‘a deposition, founding, or conception’] of the *world*

[*kosmos*, ‘the orderly arrangement of the world’].” There can be no doubt here that the elect of the Father were chosen before this world of ours was created, long before we were made flesh and blood. We preexisted our material bodies in some way, but who we were before we became physical is not spelled out explicitly in these scriptures. One thing that is sure according to these words in Romans 8 and Ephesians 1, however, is that we, the elect, were in due time to be holy and blameless, predestined to be “adopted” sons of the Father and brothers of Jesus Christ, made possible by Christ’s sacrifice for our sins through His shed blood on the stake ... the perfect One willingly sacrificed for the imperfect, sinful people that we are.

This truth concerning our preexistence in the spirit realm may place each of us as among the “fellows” as mentioned above in Psalm 45:6-7. If that is true, then Jesus would have known us all before He Himself took on physical life. We would have been brothers of Christ—all sons of the Father—in the spirit realm, which gives more sense to Jesus’ statement in John 10:4: “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

Further, we read in John 10:14 and 16,

“I am the good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd.”

Jesus stated that His sheep will “... hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27). Also, “The Lord knows those who are His...” (II Timothy 2:19).

It is very possible that David acknowledged his memory of the heavenly realm when he wrote Psalm 84:1-4.

“How lovely is Your tabernacle,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yea, even faints
For the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living
God.

Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the sparrow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young —
Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You.”

Whether David ever viewed heaven before he wrote this Psalm is a question that may never be answered in this age. In any case, it is clear from this song that the innermost perceptions of David understood that heaven is indeed beautiful and wonderful beyond comprehension, a perception that is impossible unless one’s “real person” — the spirit that preexisted in the heavenly realm — revealed that truth. One’s spirit cannot long and faint for the dwelling of the Eternal unless it has a reasonably clear perception of its reality. That realization can come from that spirit having been there in heaven to perceive it in its fullness and glory.

The Lawless Ones

Jesus Christ made plain that some of the people with whom He associated were of Satan’s spiritual lineage. Some were not even known to Him. They were not close to him, were of a lawless lineage, and did not carry the mark of the Eternal God. These individuals Christ claimed He never knew. “But He answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’” The “you” here is the other virgins who failed to bring enough oil (Matthew 25:12).

Others, He stated, “... do not believe, because you [the unbelieving Jews] are not of My sheep, as I said to you” (John 10:26). The unbelieving and wicked individuals, such as “...those on the left hand...,” He told, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” ... (Matthew 25:41). This verbal scourging did not mean that He had not know these wicked ones before, when He was a spirit, but rather the opposite appears to be true. The demons knew Jesus Christ, for they had lived in the heavenly realm before being cast down to earth (Revelation 12:4, 9), where they occupied the bodies and minds of those individuals who gave over their own will to spirit entities (Matthew 12:43-45). Mark 1:34 states, “Then He healed

many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him” (Mark 1:34).

Thus, both the righteous and the evil preexisting spirits are shown to have known Jesus Christ when He was a spirit in the heavenly realm. The Sons of God in the heavenly scene in Job 1:6 and 2:1 must have included both good and evil spirit beings, for Satan was there among them. Satan is here shown to be a son of God, not an angel as some have claimed.

Made a Little Lower Than the Angels

He read in Psalm 8:5, “You have made them [us human beings, in particular the firstfruits having His spirit] a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.” This statement is enlarged upon in Hebrews 2, where we read,

“But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9).

Just before these statements concerning Jesus Christ we read about mankind himself.

“But one has testified somewhere, saying, ‘What is man, that you remember him? or the son of man, that you are concerned about him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands; you have put all things in subjection under his feet’” (Hebrews 2:6-8).

Here we see that both Jesus and the saints are put on an equal plane in regard to their status as flesh and blood, both made “a little lower” than the spirit angels ... for angels, being spirit, though not having the power and majesty and potential as sons of God (Hebrews 1:4,13-14), in their glorified state are indeed more powerful than fleshly humans. We see Jesus “made lower than the angels,” just as we, the sons of God, have been made “a little while lower

than the angels.” Jesus preexisted his physical life (John 17:5, 18, 24, and other places), and to be parallel, as the grammatical construction requires in Hebrews 2:6-9, then the saints had to also have preexisted.

Why Flesh and Blood?

A question may arise as to why God made flesh and blood human beings in the first place. Why not just leave things be in the spirit realm and forget about the plan to populate the earth with humans and their rebellious, selfish nature. Why go to all the trouble?

The key to this answer is to understand the very character of Elohim and His government. That character cries out to us from throughout the creation, amongst the animals, birds, fish, reptiles, insects, microorganisms, and all living things. As far as we know, only in the physical realm can reproduction occur, whereas in the spirit realm it cannot. Spirits combine both male and female qualities in one super-being. Proof of this is seen in Genesis 2:18-23, where God separated the female essence from Adam during a “deep sleep,” and Eve, the female able to reproduce, was taken out of him. Before that operation Adam was both male and female. This ability to reproduce is inherent in God’s plan to multiply His own kind here on earth, and ultimately to populate other worlds and increase His government continually (Isaiah 9:6). We know that angels cannot marry, and are not given in marriage.

When some Sadducees challenged Jesus to explain who would be the husband of the wife who had married each of seven brothers, Jesus explained,

“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30).

The *New Living Translation* puts it this way: “For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven.” There is no marriage among spirit beings because they are male-female super-beings, as it were, and do not procreate. That procreation occurs in the physical realm.

God's elect and Jesus Christ were, are, and will be Sons of God ... and since God is eternal spirit, so His Sons are eternal and spirit. Recall that the reality of man is spirit, and with God's spirit in man he has eternal spirit. This does not conflict with the contention that, while the Creator wills that all will ultimately be saved (I Timothy 2:4), yet He does not force anyone to accept Him and the sacrifice of the Son to cover their sins. Sin brings death (Romans 5:12), and without that perfect sacrifice to remove that sin there can be no eternal life. "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Thus, we have indications that some of God's created beings will be so incorrigibly wicked that they will refuse to repent of their sins, and be destroyed. To remedy this irredeemable rebellion, there is the lake of fire where Satan and the demons will be destroyed, be burned up, and will no longer exist (Revelation 20:10, 15; Matthew 25:41; Ezekiel 28:18).

As a closely related aside, consider that it is very likely that as spiritual sons such as Jesus Christ and the saints grow in the spirit realm, they will become spiritual Fathers some day. The analogy in the world in which we live is that physical sons grow in stature and maturity to become physical fathers themselves. The analogies between the physical and spiritual realm are unmistakable, placed in the material world for the saints to view as a true depiction of spiritual realities, like the depiction of heavenly realities within the Tabernacle in the Wilderness (Hebrews 8:1-6). The created world, of which we are a part, is also a depiction of heavenly realities. The reality of Jesus Christ to become a Father is alluded to in Isaiah 9:6:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Here Jesus Christ is prophesied to be called "the everlasting Father!" Note also Matthew 5:45, which states, "... for He [the Father] makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good" This statement implies that the sun of this solar system is indeed the Father's, but does this mean that other solar systems in the universe will belong to others of equivalent

character to our Father? Without in any way limiting the power and authority of our heavenly Father, who will always be our Father and the One who, with Jesus Christ, made us — to whom we owe everything that we are or ever will be — I believe this to be the case.

Note also Isaiah 14:12-14, where Lucifer tried to ascend above the stars (spirits) of God [Hebrew el, "any deity"]. He wanted to "... be like the most High" in a forcible way, but failed to recognize that God's government operates by love and service, not by "lording it over" others (Matthew 20:25-28). To "... be like the Most High" indicates that Lucifer knew one could become like the Father, but he failed to practice God's character.

Authority is given to His created beings, made in His image, as the Father wills. There is no other conduit to achieving the redemption He can give. I believe redeemed mankind will be given the ability to create an ecosphere, animals, birds, fish, people, and other creatures upon planets elsewhere to multiply the realm of the righteous ... for how else could there be endless increase of His government and peace (Isaiah 9:7)? These are things to think about.

Further Evidence of Preexistence

Let us examine another set of scriptures that confirm what we already know about our preexistence. Romans 9:10-13 states,

"And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger;' as it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'"

Here we see that even at conception the Eternal knew who would be the chosen seed to carry through His plan, which He emphasized in Romans 9:22-23,

"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of

wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews [Israelites] only, but also of the gentiles?”

We see here another instance where Paul is bringing us back to the period before the foundation of the earth when we — or rather our spirit, the “real person” that later was to become flesh — existed as prepared vessels for the calling He has given us in this latter time. We are told in John 6:44 that no man can come to Christ unless the Father, who sent Christ from the spirit realm draws (calls) him; that person will be raised up in the last day of this age, at the resurrection. This leads to the strong assertion that, just as we know that Jeremiah was a chosen vessel of God from the womb (Jeremiah 1:5), and as was John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), so have all of God’s elect who would eventually receive His spirit been chosen from before the foundation of the earth. What an incredible truth to behold!

An Amazing Past, and An Incredible Future

We cannot be absolutely certain that we, as God’s elect, preexisted, as did Jesus Christ, but I have shown in this article that there is a strong case that indeed we did. As Hebrews 2:14 states, we became flesh and blood just as Jesus Christ became flesh and

blood, except His sire was the Father directly (Luke 1:35); for the rest of us, our lineage is traced through Adam. Because His Father was the Ancient of Days, those flawless genetics, and an awesomely righteous spiritual component, enabled Him to withstand the rigors of life amongst people in a sin-sick world. Yet, He withstood all of those temptations and therefore could serve as the perfect sacrifice, pictured by the many Old Testament sacrifices (Hebrews 4:15).

Who we were before we became flesh and blood can only be hypothesized at this point. Were we some of the “fellows” that were with the Father and Jesus, as mentioned in Psalm 45:7? Were we amongst the individuals who lived in a pre-Flood civilization and sinned, not accepting Christ’s forgiveness but, because the Creator wills that none be lost even in that society, has placed those spirits within some of us in this latter age? If this is the case, then we have a sort of reincarnation occurring. Some have taught that our spirits came from the third of the angels who were followers of Satan (Revelation 12:3-4), but that is not plausible because we are not angels but sons of God.

We need to wait until the resurrection to know just who we were “before the foundation of the world,” and ask the Father this question. He knows, and He will tell us. In the meantime, let us revel in the reality of our calling and make it sure. Let us rejoice in the fellowship of one another, study His word diligently, and pray without ceasing. Our future and its greatness is far beyond what we can possibly imagine. Stay the course, and endure to the end!