

## Teen Lesson 4: In the Beginning

*Read through this lesson and look up the highlighted scripture references as you come to them. Some support the text, but others are part of the lesson and you'll need to read them before reading the text that follows. This will enable you to "prove all things" and will add greatly to your understanding.*

In our last two lessons we talked about building a friendship with God. I hope it's something you have thought about and even begun to do. 😊 In this lesson we're going to begin a study about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. But we're not going to start with His birth! Instead, we're going to search the scriptures to see if we can find out anything about His life before He became a human being. You might be surprised at what we discover once we've put all the pieces of the puzzle together.

We'll begin our search by going right back to the beginning in **Genesis 1:1**. This verse tells us that *in the beginning* God created the heavens and the earth. But I wonder if you know that there is another passage of scripture which talks about a time even BEFORE this. We find it in John's Gospel in the New Testament.

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2, NKJ throughout).**

Obviously God had to exist before He created the universe. But these verses show us that He was not alone - someone called *the Word* was with Him. But who was this Word? You can find out by reading **John 1:14**. (See also **Revelation 19:11-16**, which describes the returning Jesus Christ.)

### Jesus Christ and the Word

These scriptures tell us quite clearly that *the Word* was the Being who became Jesus Christ. He existed in the very beginning with God! And, as John 1:1-2 shows us, He was not only *with God*, He *was God*!

You may be wondering how He could be with God and *be* God at the same time. Well, this is one of those things that our human minds can't totally comprehend! However, when the New Testament talks about God, it uses the language or analogy of "family"<sup>1</sup> and perhaps that's the simplest way for us to understand how both God (the Father) and Jesus Christ can be God.

Just as a human family is ONE family made up of several members, so, in some way, the entity that is "God" is composed of God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. And

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<sup>1</sup> God is the Father and Jesus Christ is His Son - that's a family relationship (see Matthew 11:25-27; Mark 1:1; John 1:14; John 5:17-20; Ephesians 3:14-15; Hebrews 1:1-9). Furthermore, the Bible reveals that God is creating a "family" and that His Plan is to make us part of that family. More information about this can be found in "The Holy Days and God's Plan" lesson in the Holy Day series.

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in that way, God is like a "family". It's not a perfect analogy, however, because the members in a human family are *individual* people, and the Bible is very clear that, although God and Christ are both spirit or "God Beings"<sup>2</sup> - there is only ONE God (see **Deuteronomy 4:35; Deuteronomy 6:4**). Christ Himself confirmed this (see **Mark 12:29**) and also explained that He *and* His Father are ONE (**John 10:27-30; John 17:11, 21-22**; see also **1 Corinthians 8:4-6** in this context). Like I said, this is hard for us as human beings to understand - now - but some day we will.

But, back to our story! We've just seen that *the Word* was the Being who became Jesus Christ and that He existed with God the Father before all things were created. Two more passages of scripture that show this are **John 17:5** and **Philippians 2:5-8**. However, there is more to the story than this! And we have to go back to John 1 to find out what it is.

**All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made (John 1:3).**

### The Word - Christ - Created Everything

So, not only did Christ exist in the beginning with God, but all things were created by (or through) Him! Let's look at some other scriptures that prove this:

**Ephesians 3:9**

**Colossians 1:15-16**

**Hebrews 1:1-2**

If you read **Hebrews 1:3**, along with **Colossians 1:17**, they reveal something very important: Christ holds everything together! The continued existence of our physical universe depends on the fact that Christ is holding it together. If He didn't, it would cease to exist!

This reminds me of a note I once read in a commentary.<sup>3</sup> It explained that the Greek word for "Word" in John 1:1 is *logos*. In the Hebrew *logos* is translated as "*davar*" which means word, thing or matter. So someone once suggested that another way of reading John 1:1 is: "In the beginning was the Real Thing". I like that! It reminds me of the Coca-Cola ad that most of you have probably heard (you know, "Coke is the real thing"), but what this is saying (and it links in with Colossians 1:17) is that *Jesus Christ* is the *reality* behind everything.

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<sup>2</sup> See Mark 16:19; Colossians 3:1 & Hebrews 1:1-8, which explain that Christ now sits at the "right hand of God" - a clear indication that there are two beings in the "Godhead".

<sup>3</sup> Jewish New Testament Commentary by David H. Stern - note 1a on John 1:1.

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OK - so far we've established two things about the life of Christ before He came to this earth as a human being: 1) He existed in the beginning with God and 2) everything was created by Him.

But is that the end of His story until His physical birth as Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary? Or does the Bible tell us any more about His life in the intervening years? The answer is that yes, it does.

### Jesus Christ and the God of the Old Testament

The Bible reveals that the Word or "Being" who became Jesus Christ was also the God of the Old Testament. In order to put the pieces of this puzzle together, we need to read some scriptures that tell us something about God.

**John 1:18**

**John 5:37**

**John 6:46**

**1 Timothy 6:15-16**

These verses make it very clear that NO ONE has ever seen God *the Father*. Yet throughout the Old Testament we read that God appeared to a number of people! (See for example, **Genesis 17:1**; **Genesis 18:1** and **Exodus 3:4-6**.) But if no one has seen God the Father, then who was this "God" who appeared to these men? God gives us the answer Himself in **Exodus 3:13-14**.

**Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they say to me, 'What is His name' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

So, this God calls Himself "I AM". But who was He? To find out we need to look at something Christ told the Jews in **John 8:56-58**.

**"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."**

Isn't it interesting that Jesus used the same words here to refer to Himself as God used in Exodus? When the Jews heard what Jesus said, they picked up rocks to stone Him (verse 59) because they realised the implications of what He was saying. Jesus was calling Himself the "I AM" - saying that He was God - and to them that was blasphemy and worthy of the death penalty (see **Leviticus 24:16**).

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Now read **Deuteronomy 32:3-4** (*NIV or NKJ*) to find out how Moses describes the God who appeared to him and who led the Israelites out of Egypt.

He calls Him "the Rock"! And this adds another piece to our puzzle, because **1 Corinthians 10:1-4** explains WHO this Rock is. Read it and see!

So, the God who appeared to Moses and who was with the Israelites in the Wilderness was Jesus Christ! When we put together everything that we've learned so far, it seems very clear that the Being who was the Word, and who later became Jesus Christ as a human being, was the same God who talked to and appeared to men in Old Testament times.

This is important to understand because many people think that the God of the Old Testament was a harsh and vengeful God who gave people a strict code of law to live by. And they believe that Jesus Christ came to do away with that law and usher in the age of "love". But nothing could be further from the truth. The same God "Being" has always dealt with men and women down through the ages. He gave the Ten Commandments, which are all about love toward God and love toward others, and He came as a human being several thousand years later to magnify this law of love - to show how to keep it in its fullness, which involves thought and intent, as well as deed (see **Matthew 5:17-48**).

Knowing that the Being who became Jesus Christ was also the God of the Old Testament drastically changes the way we view the Bible. We now understand that the Old Testament is just as relevant to the way we live our lives as the New Testament - something that many Christians don't understand at all.

### Jesus Christ and Melchizedek

We discover another clue about Christ's life before He became human in the story of Melchizedek (**Genesis 14:14-20**).

As we've seen from this account, Melchizedek was a High Priest of God, and Abraham tithed to him. The only other place in the Old Testament where Melchizedek is mentioned is in Psalms 110:4. You don't need to turn to it though, because it is also quoted in the verses where Melchizedek is mentioned in the New Testament - and that's what I'd like you to read next.

**Hebrews 5:5-10** - So God declared Christ to be High Priest in the priestly order of Melchizedek.

**Hebrews 6:19-20**

**Hebrews 7:1-3**

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Some interesting things are said about Melchizedek aren't they? Some of the words used to describe him cannot apply to any human being: He didn't have a mother or father; He had no genealogy - no ancestors or descendants; AND He continues as a priest FOREVER. He was also called the King of righteousness and the King of peace.

So who was Melchizedek? Well, it's interesting to compare these verses about him with Jesus Christ. In **Isaiah 9:6** *Christ* is called the Prince of Peace. He is described as *righteous* in **Psalm 92:15; Psalm 129:4; Psalm 145:17; 1 John 2:1, 28-29; 1 John 3:7**, etc - and when He returns as King He will judge and make war in *righteousness* (**Revelation 19:11**). So I think we can safely assume that Christ can also be described as the King of Righteousness! And, just like Melchizedek, He remains a priest forever. So there are strong indications that Melchizedek was not a human being, but the God Being who later became Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

In this lesson we have discovered much about Christ's pre-existent life. We have learned that the Being who became Jesus Christ existed in the beginning with God. We have seen that He was the Creator of everything that exists. And we have discovered that He was the God of the Old Testament and almost certainly the High Priest called Melchizedek.

In the next lesson we begin a study of Christ's life as a human being. But before you read that lesson, you might want to spend a little time reading the following passages of scripture. If you read a little every day, it will give you the opportunity to spend some time each day building your friendship with God! And if you tick off each passage of scripture as you read it, it will also give you a great feeling of satisfaction.☺

#### A. Examples where God appeared as a man in the Old Testament

Genesis 18

Genesis 32:25-33

Joshua 5:13 - Joshua 6:5

Judges 6:11-24

Judges 13:2-23

#### B. The birth of Christ

Matthew 1:1 - Matthew 2:23

And if you want to read more before beginning the next lesson, read the parallel account in Luke 1:1 - Luke 2:40.