

1. His Preexistence

Adherents of certain religions believe that men exist somewhere before they are born on the earth. They wait somewhere, in a world of spirits, until the moment comes when each can be born in a physical body. Some think that the same person lives many times on the earth in a series of different bodies. This idea is called reincarnation. But it is an idea that does not appear anywhere in the Bible.

Christianity does not teach that a person exists in another world before being conceived in the body of his or her mother to be born nine months later. There is only one person that the Bible speaks of as having had such a previous existence, and that person is Jesus Christ.

BEFORE JOHN THE BAPTIST

In the gospel of Luke, chapter 1, we read that the angel Gabriel informed the elderly priest, Zacharias, that his wife, Elizabeth, who was barren, would give birth to a son. Zacharias was to name him John. We know him better as John the Baptist. He is the one who was to preach to the people of Israel to prepare them for the coming of Christ.

According to verse 36 of the same chapter, Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy when the same angel Gabriel presented himself to the virgin Mary to tell her that she would become pregnant by virtue of the Holy Spirit and would bring into the world a child who would be given the name Jesus, the one whose reign would have no end. When Mary received this news, she went to visit Elizabeth who was her relative. It is thus clear that John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus.

This is why certain words of John seem curious. In the gospel of John 1:29-30, we read, that John saw Jesus coming and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" Jesus was born before John the Baptist but God revealed to him that Jesus existed before him (Micah 5:2).

But John's declaration would not be too surprising for the Jews who knew their scriptures. You

see, about 700 years earlier, the prophet Micah had written this: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). The Jews knew that this passage spoke of the Christ who would come. When Jesus was born, men from the East arrived in Jerusalem. They asked:

"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judaea, for thus it is written by the prophet: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'"'" (Matthew 2:2-6)

So the Jews knew that this passage spoke of the Christ, whom they called the Messiah. But this passage tells us more than the name of the city where Jesus would be born. John was right to say that Jesus preceded him.

Before leaving this passage in Micah, let's point out a play on words. We know that the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language, and in Hebrew this verse twice uses a form of the same word "going forth." It says that Christ "goes forth" from Bethlehem, but adds that his "goings forth" date back to the days of eternity. The passage says nothing about a time when the Christ did not yet exist. It tells us that Jesus came out of Bethlehem to accomplish his mission, but that this was not his first time to "go forth." He was active from eternity.

JESUS AND ABRAHAM

Either the Jews had not understood this passage, which speaks clearly of the preexistence of Christ, or they simply did not want to admit that Jesus was the Christ. But they seem to understand when Jesus

tells them that he had seen their ancestor Abraham who had lived 2,000 years before their time. He said to them in John 8:56-59:

“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.’ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

In John 17, also, Jesus goes further than the simple fact of having known the patriarch Abraham personally. He said that he had been with God the Father before the world existed. Here is an excerpt from the prayer he offered the night he was arrested by his enemies: “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5).

JESUS AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Many passages in the Bible affirm that Jesus participated in the creation of all things. Colossians 1:16-17:

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

Jesus is the only man to have existed before his birth on the earth. Not only did Jesus exist before his birth down here, but he has always existed. But one day he became a man in order to save us. He glorified God in fulfilling his mission. After being humiliated, he was once more glorified.

CONCLUSION

In this series of lessons, we intend to talk more about Jesus, a person without equal. The Qur'an speaks often of Jesus (or Issa). He is called the Messiah, the son of Mary (or Miriam), the Apostle of God, the Spirit of God and the Word of God. But we draw mostly from the Gospel (or the Injeel), which contains more references to him than any other source. If you want to know more about his life, his teachings or his miracles, we encourage you to continue this study with us.