



Jesus Christ Before His Birth

BRAD JERSAK

Is it proper to say that the Word was not Jesus Christ until His birth? This is a crucial and difficult question. We need to think from an eternal perspective rather than human timelines. When we speak of the Triune God, it is as toddlers with blunt crayons trying to capture mysteries above any human paygrade. But let's give it a go.

First, there is no end of theological landmines when dealing with Christology. The early church puzzled over Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" for centuries. They discovered that unless we follow John's insistence that "Jesus IS the Christ," we inevitably compromise either Jesus' deity, his humanity or his unity as one Person. The trick to staying on track is to *always start with the One Person, our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Second, the One Person we start with is always Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. We don't start with a "pre-incarnate Christ" who is not Jesus Christ and then becomes "Jesus," as if his life were just one episode in the life of the eternal Word. This is to see things from a temporal standpoint as if words like "before" or "until" could apply to the eternal Word.

Yes, from a human perspective, you can imagine Abraham saying, "Jesus is not yet born." But from Jesus Christ's perspective, "Before Abraham was, I AM." So, Christ does not come from "before." He comes from "above" and "above" is still a metaphor—"above" is not a "place" but indicates that there has never been a "time" *in eternity* when Christ was divisible from Jesus *in time*.

This is why the apostles would even say that *Jesus Christ* is the Creator of all things.

This is why Revelation speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

This is why Paul calls *Jesus Christ* the image of God, in whose divine-human image Adam was created! Along very similar lines, theologian and teacher John Behr puts it this way:

Creation came through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not through the "preincarnate Word" who later becomes Jesus Christ. That's mythology.

Just to put it in a very precise nutshell, just stop and think about this historic confession: "Jesus Christ was born outside of time from the Father, inside of time from the mother."

We tend to want to make it quasi-temporal—"the Word was born from the Father and then, later on, born from Mary."

Rather, this is our fundamental confession: **Jesus Christ IS God the Word and Jesus Christ IS become man.**

So we always START with the crucified and risen One. That's our entry point into God the Son and in fact, the very nature of God. Let's boil all of this down to one statement, derived from John 1:

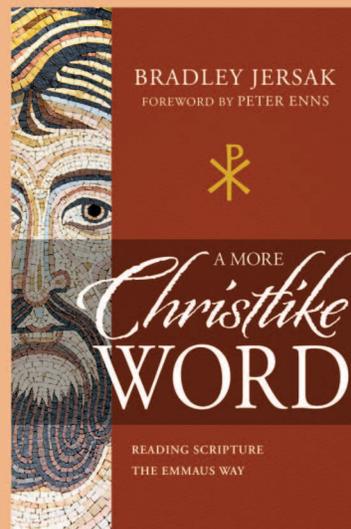
**God's One and Only Lamb,
crucified and risen—**

**this Word who speaks all into being,
this Light who shines on all and in all,
this Life who breathes life into all,
this One unveils God as**

Our All-merciful, All-embracing Abba.

For this reason, I would not distinguish Jesus from the Christ. Those who do tend to unwittingly undermine the necessity, reality, and eternity of the Incarnation. Always start with Jesus Christ, then say whatever we need to about his deity or humanity, remembering the two are indivisible in the mystery of this one glorious Person. □

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