

# God Had a Son before Mary Did

*The Significance of the Revelation of the Son*

John D. Clark, Sr.

## Preface

In 2007, I became acquainted with a group of sincere believers who taught that, other than in the mind of God, the Son of God did not exist until the birth of Jesus. They rejected the notion that in the beginning, the Son of God existed as a person alongside the Father, and inasmuch as the Bible exhorts us to “prove all things”, I carefully considered their teaching. I read a couple of their books and even traveled with some friends to visit a leading proponent of that doctrine. We all came to love that brother and his wife, and we still honor them as we honor everyone who believes in Christ Jesus our Lord. Unfortunately, I could not make their doctrine agree with the Bible’s teaching concerning the Father and the Son, for I could not deny the Bible’s clear teaching that from the beginning, the Son of God existed with the Father in heaven as a fully rational being. Nevertheless, I still “rejoice in hope” that God will someday bring us and all His people together in “the unity of the faith”.

My brief association with that group of believers prompted me to conduct a Bible study with my congregation on the subject of the Father and the Son. This book is the result of that study.

## Introduction

Three truths serve as the foundation for everything revealed about God in the New Testament. When understood, they reshape our perception of the Divine. The first truth is that from the beginning, God kept His Son a secret from all creatures, both in heaven and on earth (Col. 1:26), and so, no one knew that God was really a Father until the Son was revealed. The second truth is that God hid all true wisdom and knowledge within His Son (Col. 2:3), so that no one could truly know God before He revealed His Son. The third truth is that the Son was not revealed while he walked on earth in the person of Jesus; he began to be revealed only after he ascended into heaven and the Spirit was poured out on Jesus' followers. It is as Paul said: "No one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God" (1Cor. 2:11). The Spirit alone reveals the Son (Jn. 16:13), and through the Son alone is the Father revealed. Jesus said, "No one knows the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son may choose to reveal Him (Mt. 11:27b).

The revelation of the Son was the revelation of God as He really is. It revealed, first of all, that God is a God of relationships, for in the beginning, out of all the possibilities available to Him, God chose to create Someone to love, and He loved that Someone so dearly that He gave him all power in heaven and earth. The Son was God's first and only creation, the beginning and the end of His creative work (Rev. 3:14; 22:13). Everything else was then created by the Son that He loved (Jn. 1:3). The revelation of the Son's existence also teaches us that the Son was created with God's kind of life, the holy Spirit, and that only with that kind of life can anyone ever know either God or His Son.

The revelation of the Son compels us to consider difficult questions such as this: If all wisdom and knowledge was hidden in the Son until the Spirit came, then what did the righteous who lived before Pentecost, including Jesus' disciples, know about God before they received the Spirit? Or this: If the Son was hidden even from heavenly beings, then who did Satan think Jesus was when he

met him in the wilderness Temptation? These questions, and many others like them, we will answer. My hope is that you will experience the power and light with which my congregation and I were blessed as we pursued the knowledge of God contained in this fundamental New Testament revelation: God had a Son with Him in heaven long before Mary had a son born to her in Bethlehem.

## Part 1

“In the Beginning,  
the Word Was There”

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## Chapter 1

### “He Was before I Was”

In the beginning, the Word was there, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:1–2

### The Beginning and the End

The truth that John was attempting to convey in the opening lines of his gospel is also the essential point of this book, and of the gospel itself, namely, that *God had a Son with Him in glory from before the beginning of the world*. For His own wise purposes, God kept the existence of His Son secret until “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4). Then, when God’s appointed time came, His revealing of the Son became the foundation for a new and everlasting covenant between God and man.

We are all familiar with the lovely way John 1:1 is translated in the King James Version: “In the beginning was the Word.” That simple translation is accurate; however, it does not quite communicate the revelation John was declaring. Literally, the Greek text says, “In the beginning, the Word was being.” Other possible translations include the following: “In the beginning, the Word existed,” or even, “In the beginning, the Word already was.” John’s point was that the Son existed before anything else did. The Son was not merely there at the beginning; he was there before the beginning began.

In the book of Revelation, the Son referred to his pre-existence with the Father when he said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13). He also

told us what he was the beginning of, when he called himself “the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). In other words, the Son was “the first and the last, the beginning and the end” of the Father’s creative work, which means that the Father created the Son, and then the Son created everything else, just as John said: “All things were created through him, and without him was nothing created that was created” (Jn. 1:3).

The following scriptures, written by New Testament men of God, proclaimed the astonishing and thrilling revelation that from the beginning, there had been a Son in heaven with God, a Son who had been God’s agent in creating all things:

#### Colossians 1

15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature,
16. for by him were all things created, things in the heavens and things on earth, things visible and things invisible; whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities, all things were created through him and for him,
17. and he is before all things, and all things are held together by him.

#### Hebrews 1

1. After God spoke in many and various ways to the fathers in olden times by the prophets, He spoke to us in these last days by a Son,
2. whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

#### Hebrews 1 (quoting Pss. 45:6–7 and 102:25)

8. To the Son, *God said*, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.
9. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore, God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your fellows.”
10. And [still to the Son], “You, Lord, in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.”

Throughout the New Testament, we are alerted when a writer's meaning differs from what he appears to be saying (e.g., Mt. 24:15; 1Cor. 10:15; Gal. 4:24), but never did a New Testament writer alert his readers that he was speaking figuratively when he declared the Son's pre-existence and creative work. They all spoke consistently of the Son as living in heaven with the Father from before the foundation of the world. Not once does any biblical writer veer from that simple, clear course. All of them would have agreed wholeheartedly with what John meant when he wrote, "In the beginning, the Word was there."

"Us"

The Father and the Son are the "us" of Genesis 1:26, as well as of Genesis 3:22 and 11:7. In Genesis 1:26, when God said, "Let us make mankind in our image", He was not speaking to angels. To create is not a function of angels; they are messengers only, as is indicated by the fact that in both Hebrew and Greek, the word for "angel" means "messenger". Sometimes, "angel" refers to heavenly messengers, such as the messengers Jacob saw in a vision (Gen. 28:12) or Gabriel, who spoke to Daniel, Zacharias, and Mary (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Lk. 1:19, 26–27). But "angel" can also refer to human messengers, such as the servants Jacob sent to meet Esau (Gen. 32:3), or the two messengers whom John the Baptist sent to Jesus (Lk. 7:19, 24), or even John the Baptist himself (Mt. 11:10). Whether heavenly or earthly, then, angels are just messengers, and they are never said to have participated to any degree in the act of creation. The notion that it was to angels that God said "Let us make mankind"<sup>1</sup> is simply indefensible.

To create what God wanted created was the Son's function in creation. When the Father said, "Let us make mankind", He was speaking to His Son, who then created man according to God's expressed will. God had said, "Let us make", and so, the Son made.

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Hemphill, *To God Be the Glory: Examining the Bible View of God* (Joelton, TN: Trumpet Call Books, 2006), 43.

### Where He Was Before

While on earth, the Son of God spoke openly about having been with the Father in glory before he came to live among us:

John 16

28. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.

John 6

61. Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Does this offend you?”

62. Then, what if you see the Son of man ascending to where he was before?”

Strict logic would lead us to conclude that if in the beginning, the Son was merely “the first creative thought in the mind of God,”<sup>2</sup> then for him to “ascend to where he was before” would mean that when the Son ascended back to heaven, he returned into his Father’s head! That is an absurd conclusion, of course, and nobody teaches such a thing. However, it is a conclusion which logic demands if the Son was only a thought in the mind of God before he came to earth.

Before returning to the Father, the Son prayed that He would restore to him the glory that he had before the world began: “Jesus lifted his eyes toward heaven and said, ‘Father, glorify me to be at your side, with the glory I used to have with you before the universe existed’” (Jn. 17:1a, 5).

Before this universe existed, the Son lived in happy, open glory with the Father (Prov. 8:22–31); it was only when rational beings were created that God hid him. The Son prayed for the glory he used to have because he knew it was time for him not to be hidden any longer; however, if the Son had not lived in open glory previously, then this prayer to do so again would make no sense.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 43.

### “Sent From”

During the time of the Old Testament kings, God sent Amos from a Judean village called Tekoah to the idolatrous sanctuary at Bethel to prophesy against the apostate northern tribes (Amos 1:1; 7:15). But the thing that made it possible for Amos to be sent *from* Tekoah was that he existed in Tekoah before he was sent. At another time, God sent Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel (2Kgs. 2:2), and again, it was possible for Elijah to be sent *from* Gilgal only because Elijah existed in Gilgal before God sent him. Neither Amos nor Elijah came into existence when they arrived in Bethel. So it was with the Son. He did not come into existence when he arrived on earth. He existed in heaven before he was sent to earth, and that made it possible for him to be sent *from* heaven.

Dozens of times in the gospel of John alone, the Son of God testified that God had sent him from heaven, and even more specifically, that he had been sent “*down* from heaven” (e.g., Jn. 6:41). Nothing like that was ever said about any man sent by God, and no other man of God ever spoke of himself as being sent down from heaven the way Jesus did. Nor did any man of God, when his time came to die, claim that after his death he would be returning to heaven, where he was before. No man had such a testimony because no man had ever lived in heaven with the Father before the Father sent him. But the Son did. And one reason the Son was able to reveal the Father as no one else ever could (Jn. 1:18) is that prior to coming to earth, he had been with the Father since before the foundation of the world.

### Why the Son Is the Greatest

When John the Baptist prophesied to the Jews that someone mightier than he was coming, he was speaking by the unction of the Spirit of God. He could not have known the meaning of his own words when he first saw Jesus and proclaimed, “Behold! The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29). John had no knowledge of the Son of God, much less of the Son’s future crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven to make an eternal sacrifice for the sins of the entire human race. Nor did John understand the prophetic words that came from his own lips

when he said, “After me comes the one who is greater than I, for he was before I was” (Jn. 1:15, 30).

In saying, “He was before I was,” John could not have been speaking of Mary’s son, for John was born about six months before Mary bore Jesus (Lk. 1:26–36). So, if John had been speaking of physical age, John would have said, “I was before he was,” but because God’s Son existed first, the Spirit moved John to say the opposite. Like all the prophets who spoke of the Son before he came (1Pet. 1:10–12), John did not understand what he said; even seeing Jesus face to face did not reveal to John the meaning of his words. The truth would be revealed only by the Spirit when it came (Jn. 16:13), and the Spirit was not yet given (Jn. 7:39).

*The central revelation of the New Testament is that God really is a Father and that He was a Father before the world began.* This means that God had a Son a long, long time before Mary did. It also means that the Son is “Lord of all” (Acts 10:36) because he existed before everything and everybody (except, of course, the Father who created him). John had it right. The Messiah is the greatest of all creatures because he was the first of all creatures. Those who teach that God had a Son only when Mary gave birth to Jesus will admit that Satan existed before Jesus was born. That being so, and if John the Baptist’s standard for preeminence holds true (that is, whoever exists first is greater), then Satan would have to be considered greater than the Son of God, which is obviously not the case.

After the Spirit came, other men of God would proclaim that the Son is greatest of all because he existed before all, but unlike John and the old prophets, these men understood what they were saying. They wittingly taught what the prophets had ignorantly proclaimed:

#### Colossians 1

17. He is before all things, and all things are held together by him.
18. He is also the head of the body, the Assembly *of God*; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in everything, he might be preeminent.

### Why the Son Is *Not* the Greatest

As has been mentioned, the Son of God declared himself to be the first of all that God created: “To the messenger of the Assembly in Laodicea, write: ‘The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, says these things’” (Rev. 3:14).

With that declaration, we are offered two bedrock truths of the New Testament. The first is that the Son of God was the first thing created. The second is that the Father is greater than the Son because He existed before the Son did. Both the Oneness and the Trinity doctrines contradict these truths. The former claims that the Father and the Son are one and the same being, and the latter claims that the Father and His Son are co-equal and co-eternal. But Jesus knew nothing of such doctrines. He said that his life had been given to him by the Father (Jn. 5:26), and he also said that the Father was greater than he (Jn. 14:28). The gospel preached by the apostles took both those facts for granted.

Paul saw no problem at all in the Son falling down before the Father – something impossible for the Son to do if he were the same person as the Father, and something illogical for the Son to do if he were his Father’s equal:

1Corinthians 15 (referring to Ps. 8:6)

27. He [the Father] has subdued all things under his [the Son’s] feet. But when it says, “all things are subdued”, it is obvious that He who subdued all things under him is an exception.

28. And when all things are subdued under him, then will the Son himself submit to Him who subdued all things under him, that God might be all things to all people.

When the Son said, “The Father and I are one”<sup>3</sup> (Jn. 10:30), he did not mean that he and the Father are the same person; he meant that they are in such spiritual harmony that nobody can have one without the other. This is made obvious when Jesus went on to pray that those who believe in him might be one *as he and the*

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<sup>3</sup> Here, the Greek word for “one” is neuter, not masculine (cf. Jn. 17:11, 21–22). When God is referred to as one *person* (Mt. 19:17; Gal. 3:20), the Greek word for “one” is masculine.

*Father are one* (Jn. 17:22). Obviously, we who believe cannot become the same person, but we can be one in spirit. We can be, as are the Father and Son, “like-minded” (2Cor. 13:11), “perfectly united”, “speaking the same thing”, with “no divisions” among us (1Cor. 1:10), “thinking the same thing” and “having the same love” for one another (Phip. 2:2).

### “Why Call Me Good?”

The unity of the Father and the Son does not imply equality of the Father and the Son any more than the unity of believers and Christ implies equality of believers with Christ. Christ is greater than believers, and the Father is greater than the Son. And because the Father is greater than the Son (Jn. 14:28), the Son feared and obeyed the Father (Heb. 5:7; Jn. 15:10). Jesus has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28:18), but the Father, who gave it to him, remains the one true God to whom the Son bows (1Cor. 15:28). When Hebrews says that the Son is the one “through whom He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:2), the “He” in that verse is the Father. The Son was God’s agent in creation, but the Father is the Creator, as Jesus himself said (Mk. 10:6; 13:19).<sup>4</sup>

When a certain young man excitedly greeted Jesus with the words “Good teacher!” Jesus replied, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except One, *that is*, God” (Mt. 19:17). Jesus trusted in the righteousness of God alone and put no confidence in human righteousness, including his own. Though the Son is the greatest of all creatures and Lord over all creation, he considers himself to be but a servant of the Father (Isa. 49:4–5), and that is in accord with the Father’s frequent reference to the Son as His servant (e.g., Isa. 42:1; 49:1–3, 6). When the Son came to live among us, he still possessed the power with which he was created; at his word, raging storms instantly became calm (Mk. 4:37–39) and the dead were brought back to life (e.g., Jn. 11:43–44). But

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<sup>4</sup> The one who commands an act to be performed is the one responsible for it. For example, Solomon is said to have offered burnt offerings (2Chron. 1:6), but only God’s priests could do that (Num. 4:5–15). The priests were the people’s agents for making sacrifice, but those who brought the sacrifice were given credit for having made it. Just so, the Father commanded the Son to create all things, and He is credited with it, even though the Son did the actual work.

the Son dignified his majesty and power by being faithful to the One who gave him majesty and power. He loved and revered his Father, and he always did what pleased Him (Heb. 5:7; Jn. 8:29), completely without sin (Heb. 4:15).

At the same time, the Son keenly felt the foolishness and sinfulness of the fleshly nature he had taken on. Psalm 69 is quoted twice in the New Testament as a prophecy of the sinless Son of God (Jn. 2:17; Rom. 15:3), and yet, within that psalm, we hear the Son crying out, “O God, you know my foolishness, and my offenses are not hidden from you” (Ps. 69:5). We would not expect such a confession from the holy Son of God because we know that he was not foolish and that he “committed no sin” (1Pet. 2:22). But part of the Son’s becoming one of us is that he experienced the shame of the foolishness and sinfulness of our fallen nature.

The same kind of confession from the sinless Lamb of God is found in Psalm 41. At the Last Supper, the Son quoted what he had spoken through David in that psalm a thousand years before, explaining that it was a prophecy of his betrayal (Jn. 13:18b; Ps. 41:9). Yet, in verse 4 from the same psalm, we hear the Son pleading with God, “O LORD, have mercy on me! Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you!”

Our natural response to this is to ask, “How could this prayer have belonged to the sinless Son of God?” The only reasonable answer is that the Son of God really did become one of us. He really did take on the corrupt nature of man, and he really was “tempted in every way that we are” (Heb. 4:15). He really felt the desperate sinfulness of the fleshly nature that he took on, and he earnestly prayed for deliverance from its power. For the Son to feel the shame of our sinfulness and to cry out to God for mercy was only a consequence of his taking on himself a fleshly body with its desperately sinful nature. In sum, when God’s Son, “who knew no sin, was made sin for us” (2Cor. 5:21), the awful feelings of guilt and shame came with it.

### His Own Thoughts in Heaven

The verses below, from Hebrews 2, reveal thoughts, words, and deeds that belonged to the Son *before he came to earth*. They show that the Word who was with God in the beginning was a

thinking, feeling, speaking being who loved both his Father and us and who desired to heal the breach between us and his Father which our sins had caused, regardless of what it cost him personally. The author, quoting Old Testament scriptures, tells us that the Son, *while still in heaven*, thought on us with great affection and spoke of us to the Father:

#### Hebrews 2

11. Both he who sanctifies [i.e., the Son] and those who are sanctified [those who believe in the Son] are all of One [the Father], for which reason, he [the Son] is not ashamed to call them brothers,
12. saying [in Psalm 22:22], “I [the Son] will declare your [the Father’s] name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation will I sing you praise.”
- 13b. And again [in Isaiah 8:18], “Behold, I and the children whom GOD has given me!”

The indispensable basis of the scriptures quoted here is that the Son was alive in heaven with the Father, with his own feelings and thoughts, *before he took on a human body*. In verses 12 and 13, above, the Son is the speaker, and his words communicate no embarrassment at the thought of one day having us as brothers and sisters because we all would be sanctified by the same Father (Jn. 10:36; Jude 1:1). Clearly, the Son in heaven was looking forward to that day – this day! – when others would be sons of God with him.

#### The Son and His Earthly Temple

In Hebrews 10:5, the man of God wrote, “When coming into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifice and offering have not pleased you, but a body you have prepared for me.’” This verse shows us that when the Son of God came into the world, he was aware that the Father had prepared an earthly body for him. That body became the “temple” in which the Son lived from the time he came to earth until that temple was crucified. Then, when his temple died, the Son, still very much alive, left it for a few days to go to the heart of the earth to preach to the spirits imprisoned there (Mt. 12:40; 1Pet. 3:19). Three days later, he ascended from the heart of the earth, re-

entered his crucified temple, and walked out of the tomb, just as he had said he would do:

John 2

19. Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I’ll raise it up.”
20. Then said the Jews, “For forty-six years was this temple under construction, and you will raise it up in three days?”
21. But he was talking about the temple of his body.

The following prophecy, quoted in the book of Hebrews, shows that *as he was coming into the world*, the Son was talking to the Father. This tells us that *when the Son was leaving heaven*, he was aware of what was taking place; otherwise, he could not have been talking to his Father about it. And not only was the Son aware of what he was doing, but he was also committed to his Father’s purpose for doing it:

Hebrews 10 (cf. Ps. 40:6–8a)

5. When coming into the world, he said, “Sacrifice and offering have not pleased you, but a body you have prepared for me.
6. In whole burnt offerings and such for sin, you have taken no pleasure.
7. Then I said, ‘Behold, I go (in a roll of a book it is written of me) to do your will, O God!’”

Since the Son was speaking of his purpose for leaving one place and going to another *as it was happening*, it is obvious that when he came to earth, he had full knowledge of where he had come from and where he was going. Just the fact that the Son knew *anything* at that moment tells us something significant about him, for if when he came, the Son knew that he was coming, and if when he came, he knew his Father’s purpose for sending him, then when he came, he was already a living being with a mind of his own. And if he had a mind, then he was much more than a mere thought within the mind of God.

In the prophecy from Psalm 40, just quoted by the author of Hebrews, the Son added this: “I delight to do your will, O my God,

for your law is in my heart” (Ps. 40:8). So, *as he was entering into the world*, the Son was joyfully determined to do the Father’s will because love for God’s law was already in his heart. And if that simple statement is true, then the Son already had a heart as well as a mind when he left heaven; otherwise, there would have been no heart in the Son into which God could have put that love for His law.

Love for the Father and doing His will consumed the Son when he was on his way to earth because it had always consumed him, and it continued to consume him after he was sent to earth (Ps. 69:9a; fulfilled in Jn. 2:13–17). There has never been a moment when the Son was lukewarm about pleasing the Father. To do the Father’s will was so important to the Son that he considered it essential to his life, just as food is essential to human life:

John 4

31b. His disciples kept asking him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

32. But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about.”

33. At this, the disciples began saying to one another, “Has anybody brought him something to eat?”

34. Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work.”

*To do the will of the Father was the Son’s entire purpose for coming to earth.* He spoke of it when he was leaving heaven, and he spoke of it repeatedly while he was here, warning his followers that the only people he considered to be his family are those who do the will of God as he did (Mt. 12:48–50). The Son absolutely loved his Father and was absolutely devoted to Him before, during, and after he came to earth.

### The Father Spoke, Too

The love that the Father feels for the Son and that the Son feels for the Father is profound. John’s famous statement “God is love” (1Jn. 4:8, 16) sprang from the revelation that the first thing the Father created was someone to love. We can see how very much the Father and the Son enjoy each other’s company in such verses as Proverbs 8:30, where the Son describes their life together before

the world began: “I was at His side, like a master workman, daily His great delight, always laughing in His presence.” And that being the case, it must have grieved the Father deeply to send His Son away from Him.

When the Son left his happy home in glory to come to this cruel world to suffer and die, his devotion to the Father was revealed in his parting words: “I go to do your will, O God!” But the deep emotions which filled the Father’s heart were revealed when He responded with parting words of His own. Both Mark and Luke tell us that at that painful moment, “a voice from heaven came, saying, ‘You are my beloved Son; in you, I am well pleased’” (Lk. 3:22b). The story of the gospel is a story of love, not just God’s love for fallen man but also, and primarily, the deep, abiding love that exists between God and His Son.

We should also note that the Father speaking to the Son when he left heaven shows us that the Son was a fully conscious being when he came into the world; had he not been, the Father would not have been talking to him. Surely, when the Father said, “You are my beloved Son,” He was speaking to someone who was really there, someone whom He dearly loved, not just to a good idea that was in His head. Otherwise, He would only have been talking to Himself.

### Suddenly

The difference in Old Testament prophecies between “Lord” and “LORD” is that “Lord” often refers to the Son and “LORD” refers to the Father, Jehovah.<sup>5</sup> This is seen in Malachi’s prophecy of the day the Son would come from heaven and enter into the temple which the Father had prepared for him: “The Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Behold, he is coming, says the LORD of Hosts” (Mal. 3:1b).

Inasmuch as Malachi said that when the Messiah came to his earthly temple, he would come “suddenly”, the virgin Mary could not have been the temple that God prepared for His Son. It took about nine months for the baby Jesus to be formed within Mary,

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 110:1, to which Jesus referred in Matthew 22:41–45, is a famous and undeniable example of this.

and no one would call that sudden – least of all Mary. If, however, the Son of God suddenly came from heaven (in the form of a dove) and entered his temple when the son of Mary was baptized in the Jordan River, then “Jesus” is the name of the earthly temple that the Father prepared for His Son. All four gospels record the moment:

Matthew 3 (cf. Mk. 1:9–11; Lk. 3:21–22; Jn. 1:32–33)

16. And after he was baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descending and coming upon him.

### Found as a Man

The difference between the pre-baptism Jesus and the post-baptism Jesus was extraordinary, and it was extraordinary because the extraordinary Son of God now occupied the ordinary human temple that Mary had borne for God. The Son had transferred his life out of his heavenly body into the earthly body that his Father had prepared for him! Paul described this event as the Son “emptying himself”, or “divesting himself”,<sup>6</sup> and taking on a human body:

### Philippians 2

6. [The Son,] existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped after.
7. Instead, he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, made in the likeness of men.
8. And being found as a man in appearance, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death – the death of a cross.

That last verse emphasizes the fact that once the Son had come into the world, he was “found as a man”; he was not found as a fertilized egg in Mary’s womb. The child that Mary bore was created in her womb by God, and so, Jesus was physically God’s son. But

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<sup>6</sup> That is, he left his spiritual body in heaven empty and entered into a natural, fleshly body on earth, thus laying aside his heavenly comforts and privileges.

the Son of God through whom God “made the worlds” did not spend nine months as a fetus in Mary’s womb.

Paul refers to Christ as a second Adam (1Cor. 15:45–47). One reason that analogy is appropriate is that the Son of God began his life on earth as a fully formed man, just as the first Adam did, and he began his earthly life when he took upon himself the fully grown, earthly body of a man – Jesus.

### Taking Us On

#### Hebrews 2

14. Inasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise partook of these, so that by means of death, he might destroy the one who held the power of death, that is, the Accuser<sup>7</sup>,
15. and set free those who through fear of death were subject to bondage their whole lives.
16. (For he certainly did not take on himself *the form* of angels, but took *that* of the seed of Abraham.)

Now, if the Son of God *took on* man’s nature, then *on what* did he take it? There can be no answer to that question if God had no Son before Mary did. If the Son did not exist until Mary conceived and bore her child, then the Son could not have “taken on” man’s nature because people who don’t exist can’t take on anything. But Hebrews 2:16, above, tells us that the Son of God took the nature of man *on himself*, which means that the Son had a “himself” on which to take the nature of man, which, in turn, tells us that the Son of God *was himself* before he was a man.

The hidden Son of God could not die for our sins in heaven because up there, he was living in the incorruptible spiritual body given to him by his Father when He created him. He had to come down and take on a mortal human body in order to “taste of death” for us (Heb. 2:9). The Son of God was created immortal, like his

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<sup>7</sup> “Devil” is the name usually employed here, but that name carries so much mythological baggage that it should be used sparingly. The Greek word for “Devil” is best translated “Accuser” or “Slanderer”, as biblical scholars since at least Lactantius (circa 240–320) have been known to do (e.g., *The Divine Institutes* II.ix). Cf. footnote 168.

Father (cf. Heb. 7:3). He was also created as the “king of righteousness” (Heb. 7:2), and “in the way of righteousness is life; yea, in that pathway there is no death” (Prov. 12:28). To die, he had to come live as a man on earth.

### “He Is with Me”

More happened at the Jordan River than the Son coming as a dove to his temple, for as we are told several times, the Son was in the Father, and the Father was in him (Jn. 10:38; Jn. 14:10–11; 17:21a). Therefore, when the Son came, the Father came with him, in spirit. Near the end of his earthly life, the Son told the disciples that the Spirit was *with* them but would soon be *in* them (Jn. 14:17), and he promised that when that happened, both he and the Father would dwell within them, too: “If anyone loves me, he’ll obey my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14:23). This precious promise, that the Father and the Son would come dwell within believers, is the thing that moved Jesus to pray his earnest prayer that the Father would bless all those who believed in him with the same sweet unity that he and his Father had always known:

#### John 17

- 20. I am not asking for these alone, but also for those who believe in me through their word,
- 21. that they all might be one,<sup>8</sup> just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be one in us, so that the world might believe that you sent me.
- 22. And the glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they might be one, just as we are one:
- 23a. I in them, and you in me, so that they might be perfected in unity.

Jesus’ prayer began to be answered when the disciples received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. From that day on, the disciples dwelt in the Father and in the Son, spiritually speaking, and the Father and the Son dwelt in them.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. footnote 4.

The holy Spirit *is* the Father, minus His celestial body. It is also the Son, minus his celestial body, for the Spirit is the Father's life, which He shared with His Son. When Jesus said, "He who sent me is with me" (Jn. 8:29), the people probably looked around to try to find the man who sent him. But Jesus was referring to the Father who was living, by the Spirit, within him, and at that time, no one could understand what he meant because no one but Jesus knew what it meant to have God living within.

Jesus' declaration of the Father being in him and he in the Father was neither a Trinitarian nor a Oneness confession. The Father is in His Son because He shared His life with the Son, and the Son is in the Father because he shares his Father's life. It is the same with all who believe in Jesus and receive the Father's kind of life; He is in them, and they are in Him (cf. Jn. 17:21–22). It was Jesus' greatest desire, indeed, his very purpose for suffering and dying, to make it possible for him and his Father to dwell within those who believe, and for those who believe to be in him and his Father. Jesus promised his wondering disciples that when that glorious day came, they would no longer be in the dark about what he was saying: "On that day, you'll know for yourselves that I'm in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (Jn. 14:20).

These were mysterious words, to be sure, impossible for the disciples to comprehend at the time they were spoken. However, after the Spirit came, they began to understand what it meant to be "in Christ" and for Christ to be in them.

### The People's Confusion: Two Sons

Everyone who was acquainted with Mary's son knew where he came from:

Matthew 13

54. When he came to his hometown, he taught them in their synagogue, and they were astonished and said, "Where'd he get this wisdom and miracles?"
55. Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56. And his sisters, aren't they all with us? So, where'd he get all these things?"

The Jews of Jesus' time had been taught that when the Messiah appeared, no one would know where he came from, and since they knew where Mary's son came from, they were certain that Jesus could not be the Messiah: "We know where this man's from, but when the Messiah comes, nobody will know where he's from" (Jn. 7:27). And in the very next verse, the Son of God admitted to the people that they knew where his temple came from: "You know me, and you also know where I'm from" (Jn. 7:28a). However, everyone became confused when God's Son spoke of *his* homeland, where he had lived from the beginning with the Father:

John 6

32. Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I tell you, Moses didn't give you that bread from heaven, but my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven.

33. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34. Then they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

35a. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life."

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41. Then the Jews started grumbling about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

42. And they kept saying, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? So, how does he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Every time the Son spoke of coming from God in heaven instead of from Mary in Nazareth, his words provoked turmoil:

John 7

28b. "I haven't come on my own, but the One who sent me is true; Him you do not know.

29. I know Him because I am from Him, and He sent me."

30a. Then they tried to seize him.

It is little wonder that even Jesus' relatives thought he had gone insane: "And when his kinsmen heard of it, they came out to take him, for they were saying, 'He's lost his mind'" (Mk. 3:21).

Persecution notwithstanding, the Son of God never stopped testifying that he came from heaven instead of from Nazareth and from God instead of from Mary, which completely bewildered those who had heard him say previously, "You know me, and you also know where I am from":

John 8

14b. Jesus answered them and said, . . . "You don't know where I come from or where I'm going.

. . .

17. Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true.

18. I'm one who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness of me."

19. Then they began to say to him, "Where is your father?" Jesus answered, "You don't know me or my Father; if you had known me, you would have known my Father, too."

So, according to Jesus' own words, the people knew him and his Father, and they did not know him and his Father; and they knew where he came from, and they did not know where he came from. So, what can we say about this, except that the people were confused and that they were not confused? They knew what they thought, but what they thought they knew was right only when speaking of Mary's son. Of God's Son, they knew nothing.

Jesus understood their predicament. And he loved them.

