

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 9, Systematics, Preexistence

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 9, Systematics, Preexistence.

Let us pray, asking the Lord's blessing.

Gracious Father, we thank you for your word and its teachings. Illumine us so that we might understand your message concerning your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we pray in his holy name. Amen.

We have explored, not extensively, but hopefully sufficiently, as we move to actual systematics, the patristic Christology, and then modern Christology. We're ready to actually begin a systematic summary based upon exegesis, or at least exposition, which is based upon exegesis of the biblical text. Summarizing one more time the categories that we will use, pre-existence, the existence of Jesus' humanity began in Bethlehem, but the life of the Eternal Son did not begin in Bethlehem.

As a matter of fact, it never had a beginning. Incarnation is the miracle of the Eternal Son taking himself not a human being but a true human body and soul so that henceforth, forever, going forward; he is the God-Man. The virgin birth more accurately termed the virginal conception of our Lord, means his conception was supernatural by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who was truly his mother, but Jesus had no human father.

The deity of Christ means he is truly God, as the Chalcedonian definition said. His humanity means he was truly man, consubstantial with us concerning his humanity. He's truly God, consubstantial with the Father concerning his deity.

He became truly a human being, consubstantial with us pertaining to his humanity. He's one person, not two, as Nestorianism taught, and not a blend of the two, a composite that's neither God nor man, as Monophysitism or Eutychianism taught. The two states' doctrine will also get to the Lord willing, and that is the way to distinguish Jesus on earth in the first century and Jesus in heaven now.

It's the same God-Man, but he went through two chronological phases or state or conditions, two chronological phases and corresponding conditions, the state of humiliation ending in his death and burial, his state of exaltation beginning with his resurrection and culminating in his second coming, at which time he will subdue all things to himself. We begin with the pre-existence of Christ. What is pre-existence? It means Jesus of Nazareth.

That was not well said because the name Jesus pertains to his humanity. In a sense, if we talk about the eternity of Jesus, it's not incorrect; it's just not the best nomenclature to use. Both Joseph and Mary were told to name him Jesus, so it's not really true to talk about the eternal, it's not really accurate to talk about the second person of the trinity as Jesus.

He is the Son, the Word, the Light, but he existed before he became a human being. This is his pre-existence. I want to address a question before we get to the biblical proofs of the pre-existence of the Son.

Is it correct to speak of the pre-existence of the Father and or the Holy Spirit? When I asked this question in class, many times students said yes, and what they meant was that the Father and the Spirit are also eternal with the Son; they're co-eternal, and that is true. All three persons of the Godhead are eternal, but not all three but all three persons do not have a pre-existence. To have a pre-existence implies a subsequent existence, and only the Son became incarnate.

You could say the Father and the Spirit have the same existence always, and the Son experienced a change in his mode of existence from being the pre-incarnate Son, he became in the incarnation and forever the incarnate Son. So, pre-existence is a Christological category only. It does not pertain to the Father or the Son, and yet, I want to be very clear: the Doctrine of the Trinity says there's one God, and the one God consists of three eternal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and these three are never separate, but they're distinct.

We distinguish the persons, and we don't confuse them. furthermore, they mutually indwell one another, and I'm not really teaching the Doctrine of the Trinity right now, so back to the matter at hand. How can we prove the pre-existence of the Son? Does the Bible teach the pre-existence of the Son? The answer is yes—two ways to show this.

The second way is the New Testament outright teaches his pre-existence, describing things like creation to him. Since the Son is the Father's agent in creation, obviously, he existed before he became a man, but the first proof is the appearance of the pre-incarnate Son in the Old Testament. At times, God appears in the Old Testament.

He manifests himself to human senses, especially sight. These are called theophanies, especially visible, sometimes to other senses too, but especially visible appearances of the invisible God. Some theophanies are Christophanies.

There's a hermeneutical problem as to how that works out, and I haven't solved the problem. I'm not sure, as some are that every theophany is a Christophany. I'm not sure, but I am sure where the New Testament labels an Old Testament theophany a

Christophany, an appearance, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son, that's a Christophany.

So, if I show appearances of the pre-incarnate Son in the Old Testament, they prove Christ's pre-existence. Let's start with John 12 and verse 40. I'm going to do an extensive exposition of the prologue to the Gospel of John, John 1, 1 through 18, Lord willing, when we work with the Incarnation later today, later in this series of lectures.

John is a marvelous book. It's a literary and theological masterpiece, different than the Synoptics, complementary to them, and perhaps we could use the words deeper and more theological than the Synoptics, which are equally the words of God, no question about that. In John 12, after summarizing the majority response to Jesus in his earthly ministry, a German scholar called the Gospels their presentation is of the death and resurrection of Jesus with long preambles.

There's some truth to that, and John more than the others, because beginning with chapter 13, Jesus closes the door on the world, and from 13 to 21, it's just Jesus and his disciples, and you could say that's the preparation and the teaching concerning his death and resurrection. They are, here we go, death and resurrection narratives with long preambles. John splits down the middle, 12 chapters before his death and resurrection, and then 13 to 21, preparation and teaching concerning his death and resurrection, the very deeds themselves, and so forth.

John tells us in chapter 20:30, and 31, the purpose of his Gospel. There were many other miracles that Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, and many other signs are one of John's favorite words for those miracles that are not written in this book. These signs are written in John 20:30, and 31, saying that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that you might have life in his name.

John deliberately parallels John 12:37, with 20:30, and 31. John 12:37, I really, I got it reversed, of course. He parallels John 20:30, and 31, the purpose statement, with this summary response to Jesus' signs and sayings in the first 12 chapters of the Gospel of John, given in chapter 12 in verse 37.

Though he had done so many signs before them, the world, especially the Jews, the Jewish people, still did not believe in him. 20:30, and 31 echo this with the mention of signs and with mention of faith, and yet they're so radically different. Although the purpose is to glorify the Son, speaking of his signs and sermons so that people might believe in him as the Christ, the Son of God, and have eternal life, sadly, the majority of responses in the first 12 chapters are summarized this way.

Though he had done so many signs before them, there was not insufficient evidence. Saying it positively, there was sufficient evidence as to the identity of the Son incarnate. Nevertheless, they still did not believe in him.

So that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled, and he quotes Isaiah 53, Lord who has believed what we heard from, what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed. Therefore, they could not believe it. For again, Isaiah said, he has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them. The verse we're very interested in is 41.

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. My own take on this is that John gives us a chiasm. Regular parallelism follows the pattern of A, B, A, B, or A, B, C, A, B, C. You can have as many members as you want, but it is orderly.

The pattern repeats: A, B, C, D, A, B, C, D. Inverted parallelism or chiasm reverses the second member, hence A, B, C, C, B, A, or in this case, A, B, B, A. A is the quote of Isaiah 53 in verse 38. B is the quote from Isaiah 6 in verse 40. B prime is 41a.

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory. He's telling us where Isaiah saw the glory of God, and it is in the same place that he just quoted Isaiah 6. So, a quotation from Isaiah 53, a quotation from Isaiah 6, where he says, Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory, Isaiah 6, and spoke concerning him, also pertains to Isaiah 6, but also to Isaiah 53. So, A, Isaiah 53, B, Isaiah 6, B prime, Isaiah 6, A prime, Isaiah 53.

All this is to say that in the context here, Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him, verse 42. Nevertheless, many authorities believed in him. Excuse me.

John 12. I believe that ESV has it exactly right. These things said Isaiah because he saw his glory and spoke concerning him.

Nevertheless, many of the rulers believed in him, surely talking about Jesus at that point, but because of the Pharisees, they were not confessing him in order that they may not be actually put out of the synagogue, an early form of excommunication. John identifies the person whose glory Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6 with Jesus, whom some of the rulers believed in. We turn to Isaiah 6. In case you're getting lost, we're demonstrating the pre-existence of the incarnate son by showing his appearances in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 6, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings.

With two, he covered his face; with two, he covered his feet; and with two, he flew. And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. It's Yahweh, Sabaoth.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts, the Lord of hosts.

The glory of which the seraphim sang is the glory of Yahweh. And John says Yahweh, in this context, is the pre-incarnate son. John would tell us we should call him the pre-incarnate word, light, son.

Christian theology calls him the second person of the Trinity. That is, our Lord's humanity began in the virgin's womb in Bethlehem in the first century. It did not exist before.

Contrary to some, it seems to me, strange ideas, even of good people, the pre-existent humanity of Christ. No, no, no. But the person of the incarnation is not a man.

The person is the Son. Continuity of personhood is not provided by Jesus' humanity. Continuity of personhood is provided exactly by the identity of the Son.

He was the pre-incarnate Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit for all eternity in heaven, and the pre-incarnate Son became the incarnate Son. He's the same person. He doesn't take a man to himself, and God does not come and fill a man powerfully or uniquely.

The Son takes to himself a human nature, that which constitutes human beings, namely a human body and a human soul. He does so supernaturally as he is conceived; his humanity is conceived, excuse me, in Mary's womb, in which humanity never exists apart from union with his divine nature in her womb. Personhood, the Son, pre-incarnate, incarnate.

In the pre-incarnate appearances of the Son, we learn that he pre-existed. He was a divine being before he became a divine human being. He was God before he became the God-man for us and our salvation, as the creeds say.

One more example. In John 8, it's similar to Matthew 23, where Jesus excoriates the Jewish leaders. Why is he so hard on them? Why does he bless them? Because he cares for them.

He engages in controversy theology, if you will. He ruffles their feathers. He confronts them.

Oh, it was not. That was not the easy way for him. The easy way would have been to go along with the plan, their plan, to not ruffle their feathers. Are you kidding me? He alienates them.

He stirs them up. He gets their attention big time by healing deliberately on Saturday and exposing their hypocrisies left and right. He cannot stand their adding to the Word of God and to their disobeying the Word of God, especially in the heart.

So, what's the outcome of all of this? I'm always astonished by Acts 6:7. This is a brief aside before we get to John 8, where he blasts the sons of Abraham, literally, in a fleshly way and calls them the sons of the devil. John 6:7, and the Word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

The Levites, the very Jewish leaders he opposed again and again and again, who finally conspired to kill him. His controversy theology, his exposition, exposing of their hypocrisies, his challenging their misunderstandings of the law, and his condemning them for refusing to believe in him as the Messiah. God used to good effect to save many of them.

That is an amazing thing to see. John 8, he is blasting away. Oh, my word, it is so strong that interpreters can't handle some of them.

Already starting in chapter 2, almost 100 times, depending upon a textual variant, 99 or 100 times John mentions the word believe. In a handful of those times, he teaches a doctrine of partial, false, or inadequate faith. I like to say inadequate because it embraces the other inadequacies.

And here, in verse 30 of chapter 8, as he was saying these things, many believed in him. Now, the way to understand John's false doctrine of false faith is not from the vocabulary. It's exactly the same words that he uses to speak of faith.

Receiving Christ, believing in Christ, usually he says it that way, those kinds of things. It's the context. And if he only had verse 30, I'd say that means true faith, right? But look at 31.

So, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, I don't know, normal hermeneutics to me says you follow 30 with 31, and it looks like he's talking about those people, right? Looks like it. If you abide in my word, you're truly my disciples; you know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They said, whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on, time out.

Free? We are the offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it you say we will become free? Are they forgetting the Romans? I don't get that part. But I suppose they're speaking spiritually.

It's given the benefit of the doubt. Oh, my word, Jesus just lets them have it. And it's not my purpose to exegete this whole passage, but if you were really Abraham's children, as you claim in verse 39, you would do what he does, what he did.

Instead, you are liars and murderers. He continues to stick their finger in the socket of electricity. Why is he doing that? To stir them up, to make them, to confront them with who he is and his miracles and his messages that they might be saved.

They are not fine as they are. It's why, how are they liars? Because they reject him, who brings the truth from God. How are they murderers? Because they hate him in their hearts, and he knows it.

Ultimately, hatred will issue forth in his crucifixion. Your father is not Abraham. You are sons of the devil.

Wow. Verses 44 and following. But because I tell you the truth, verse 45, you do not believe me.

They're so committed to the lie they can't accept the truth. Which of you convicts me of sin? I would recommend that none of us would say that to our enemies. Because, of course, people who know us well could convict us of sin, but not Jesus.

I tell you the truth. Why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

They get really mad. They call him a Samaritan and a demon-possessed man. And on he goes.

He claims that the person who believes in him will live forever, which they misunderstand. Misunderstandings are a huge part of the gospel of John. If he shows his main doctrine of sin is unbelief, and part of that is misunderstanding.

The Father glorifies me. You dishonor me. I honor the Father.

Verse 56. Your father, Abraham, admits that they are of Abraham's bloodline. In that sense, they are his descendants.

They're his sons, right? But they're not his sons spiritually. They're sons of their father, the devil, whose actions they imitate. Your father, Abraham, rejoiced that he would see my day.

He saw it and was glad. The Jews just explode. You are not yet 50 years old, and you have seen Abraham.

Here we go. Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. So they picked up stones to throw at him.

But Jesus himself just hit himself and went out of the temple. Half the time, he hides himself, showing his human responsibility. The other half the time, he walks right into the middle of trouble in the father's will, and it says no one laid a hand on him because his time had not yet come.

Both are true. D. A. Carson's marvelous book, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility, Biblical Perspectives and Tension*. Carson wanted to entitle it Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility in the Gospel of John.

The publishers knew they would sell more books if they didn't include that prepositional phrase. But *Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility, Biblical Perspectives, and Tension* did for me what Carson's books have often done. It articulated what I knew to be true from studying the Bible, even if I couldn't articulate it well.

And among other things, he says, if we thought the incarnation of the Son of God was going to solve the sovereignty, responsibility, dilemma, tension, antinomy, paradox, mystery, we are wrong. It exacerbates it because the Son is God. Chapter 5, he gives life to whomever he wants.

As the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, so the Son gives life to whomever he wants. That's God. Oh, but he's also a man.

In chapter 4, he sits down by the well because he's tired. He's not, Calvin correctly says, he's not play-acting. He was a human being, never only a human being, but the God-man there. His humanity is paramount.

And John says of the whole person; there's no other humanity than that which belongs to the God-man. He says of the person of Christ, he was tired and sat down by Jacob's well. And so Jesus and the fourth Gospel telling us about Jesus' ways and words and signs doesn't solve the divine sovereignty, human responsibility, tension.

It's not solvable. God is sovereign. And when it's Jesus' time to go do something and get into trouble, no one laid a hand on him because his appointed time to die and return to the Father and rise and return to the Father had not yet come.

But when he is to exert human responsibility, he does it as we see in 7:1. After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

What's he doing? If God is sovereign, can we do anything we want? Can we walk out in the middle of the highway? That's called tempting God. You get run over by a tractor-trailer. It's foolish.

Jesus didn't tempt God. He knew they were after him. So, he didn't go there.

If he always was attuned and obedient to the Father's will, as we'll see later on, we'll argue later on. He has all his divine powers. He doesn't give them up.

What he gives up is the independent use of them. I used to think this was once and for all. But now I think it was once and for all.

And every day of his life, he yielded to the Father and never used those powers out of the Father's will. Was it the Father's will sometimes for the Son to use divine power? Yes, it was. And to say otherwise is a modified practical kenosis that even some respected and rightly so Christian teachers, especially philosophers, are espousing today.

See Steve Willem's response to them, his kind and firm response that they are wrong. Other times, it is the Father's will for the Son not to use his divine powers but rather to respond as the God-man. The person responds to the devil in the wilderness, not by blasting him the kingdom come, but by quoting from Deuteronomy three times, rebuking the evil one from the word of God as the God-man.

Can we perfectly sort all these things out? We cannot. Remember, the two great mysteries are the threeness and oneness of God the Trinity and the two natures of the person of Christ. Before Abraham was born, I am.

It used to be thought Jesus was referring to Exodus 3:14, the great I am statement. The consensus of Johannine scholarship, that is, the study of the gospel of John, is now that he's referring to the I am statements in the latter part of Isaiah. I agree with this conclusion. Isaiah 45, for example, verse 5, I am the Lord, and there is no other.

Besides me, there is no God. Verse 6, I'm just reading parts of these verses, I am the Lord and there is no other. I form light and create darkness.

I am the Lord who does all these things. Verse 18, I the Lord speak the truth. I declare what is right.

Verse 22, turn to me and be saved. How gracious of God. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, we have these kinds of things.

Revelation 22 has a number of these appeals to the people, to come to me, the appeal of Jesus, the appeal of the Father, and by the Spirit is mentioned in that context too. The Spirit says, come, turn to me and be saved, Isaiah 45:22, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is no other.

By myself, I have sworn, from my mouth, that a word that shall not return has gone out in righteousness. To me, Yahweh says, every knee shall bow. To me, by ellipsis, it's implied that every tongue shall swear allegiance.

If that sounds familiar, it should. Paul quotes it in Philippians 2, and we'll be back there later on when we discuss the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, especially the two states teaching. This is another appearance.

Jesus is claiming, I should say, to be the I am of Isaiah's prophecy. Before Abraham was born, I am. He's the one who spoke those statements.

That is, he was pre-incarnate. Not only do Old Testament statements and appearances of God in the Old Testament as the Son, that is, Christophanies, not only do they show Christ's pre-existence, the New Testament itself teaches his pre-existence. John 1:1 to 3, "in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

This one, who in verse 14 becomes flesh, takes to himself a true human nature, becomes a human being, was with God in the beginning, before he became flesh. That is, he existed pre-, he pre-existed his incarnation. We see it in verses 9 and 10.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world and so forth. The light existed before it came into the world to shine on people in darkness.

That is ignorance of God and sin. And then 15 is explicit. John bore witness about him and cried out; this was he of whom I said, he who comes after I ranks before me because he was before me.

John is, as a German New Testament scholar said, a river in which a child can wade. It's so simple. Beginning Greek students just rejoice.

They can read this. They can read it. Hebrews, not so much.

Acts, John, it's so simple. It's wonderful.

And yet it is, the same scholar said, John is like a river in which a child can wade, and an elephant can swim. The meaning is there are deep things. There are things that are difficult to understand.

And this is not so difficult to understand as it sounds like gobbledygook. John bears witness concerning him; I'm translating and has cried out, saying, this was the one of whom I said, the one who comes after I had become before me because he was before me. What? As a matter of fact, the ESV understands that middle idiom well.

The one who comes after me ranks before me. He has exceeded me in rank is exactly the idea because he was before me. What's John talking about? The one who comes after me.

Elizabeth was expecting six months before Mary. John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus, according to human reckoning. Oh, the son is much older than John.

So, John, the forerunner, could say he who comes after me by six months. And they both presumably began their earthly ministries at 30, according to Jewish custom. John also had a six-month head start.

He has become before me. He has outranked me, outstripped me because he was before me in time. John is sort of oblique, and there is a little bit of elephant water here.

He is confessing the pre-existence of the Messiah. That is, before this man whom John baptizes, he might be revealed to Israel as the son of God and Christ. Before he became a man, he existed.

He gives us no more details, but make no mistake about it. God spoke through John. It's rather remarkable to me how John the Baptist was received as a prophet.

For her ears between the testaments, no prophets. I would expect somebody claiming to be a prophet would do some signs, wouldn't you? How in the world would people believe him? Is it Luke 4? The spirit enables John to preach the word of God. Oh, the hot word of God came out of this guy's mouth.

They knew it was the word of God because it was the word of God. And the word of God is self-attesting. Later on, perhaps it's at the end of chapter 10, we read that John did no miracles.

He did no signs, but everything he said about this man, Jesus, was true. That's right. The very end of John 10.

John did no signs. Are you kidding me? No, I'm not kidding you. It was wise of God to have John do no signs.

For example, although he did no signs, we know for a fact that there was a second-century John the Baptist sect, an aberrant cult. That followed John. Good grief.

I don't know what more he could do. Already in chapter one, I am not the Christ. I'm not the prophet.

Chapter three, he must increase. I must decrease when his disciples follow Jesus. That's good.

That's exactly what's supposed to happen. Go follow him. Good grief.

So, it wasn't John's fault, and it wasn't God's fault. Can you imagine if John did some miracles? The John the Baptist cult would be all over the place. But I'm just astonished how in the world people believe this guy with no accreditation with signs.

I'll tell you what, and if you heard him, you would have believed him too. Not only did he have this get up like Isaiah on in the strange diet, but man, the word of God came out of his mouth like a fire. And he promised fire for those who don't repent.

He was not impressed with Jewish heritage either. God can make sons of Abraham from these trees. Good grief. John is incredible.

The New Testament also teaches the preexistence of the son of God. Briefly, we see it in Philippians 2 in the great Christological passage.

We're going to be revisiting these passages frequently, but only in great depth one time. This is the great tech classical text for the two states doctrine, state of humiliation, state of exaltation. That's when we'll work with it in great detail.

But for now, Philippians two six, verse five, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. This great Christological passage is an exemplary passage. Its chief purpose in this context is as an example.

We know from chapter four that two key women workers in the church were at odds. In chapter one, John has already been promoting unity. And here he, a couple of verses before, condemned selfish ambition and conceit and joined counting others more important than yourselves.

In fact, think the way Jesus did. His message in the verses that follow, especially in the state of humiliation, is this. Jesus counted the Philippian believers and all the elect more important than himself.

We weren't more important than himself, but that's how he counted us because he died for us. And he didn't look out only for his own personal interests, you better believe it, but for our interests there to have his attitude. Who is he? Have this mind among yourselves.

Think in this manner, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, although he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. We cannot understand the words form of God, morphe that, unless we see them used over against the form of a slave, morphe doula, from doulos, the from theos. John is putting these two phrases in what linguists call paradigmatic relations.

They antagonize and inform each other. The one who existed in the very appearance of God took to himself the very appearance, and in both cases, it doesn't mean docetism, appearance, and not reality; it means outward appearance reflecting inward reality of not only a man, not only a human being, but a slave. Does God become a slave? What kind of religion is this? It's a grace religion, and my goodness, Euodia and Syntyche are in tears when this is being read, because they were not counting one another more important than themselves.

They were not looking out for the interests of others, and they have the whole church, although Paul commends them in chapter four as key women and workers with him in the gospel. He humbles them by presenting Jesus, by presenting the son's humiliation or humbling, he who existed in the form of God before he became a man, which is expressed first of all, about three times, first of all in these words, by taking the form of a servant. That is, he pre-existed.

It's the same in Colossians 1. Another great Christological passage. I cannot rate them and say which is the greatest. They're all great.

They each have, they're each embedded in their contexts, whether or not any of them had some existence beforehand. This one is commonly thought to have previous existence as a hymn, which may well be, but I'll tell you what: it fits in its context beautifully, and our point right now is it affirms the pre-existence of the eternal son. Does it prove his eternity? No, but who pre-exists? God.

So, it implies the deity of Christ, although that's not even our point yet. The deity of Christ is so clearly taught in the New Testament that to deny it is just inexcusable. I am sorry.

Members of the cult known as the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses, leaders in the Watchtower headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, with their bad translation, whose presupposition is Jesus isn't God, that bad translation still teaches his deity. Especially based on Hebrews 1, people have come and talk about struggling, reluctantly, strugglingly. Is that a word? Come to faith in Jesus, whom they had, who had two strikes against him in their translation, in their teachings, because the Bible teaches his deity so powerfully. Praise the Lord for his grace in that way, even using defective, Christ-donoring translations.

Can you imagine a judgment of those translators leading millions of people to hell? Whoa to them. Colossians 1, 15, and 16, here Paul shows Christ is supreme over creation, because he created it. He's the Father's agent and over the church because he created it too.

As the firstborn from the dead, he's the creator, the re-creator of the church, the people of God. Christ is the image, Colossians 1:15, of the invisible God. He's the invisible God made visible in the incarnation.

He's the firstborn of all creation. What does that mean? The words that follow tell us that because or for him, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth. Boy, that reminds me of the first of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1 has a great impact on John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1. It undergirds these great Christological New Testament passages. By him, all things were created in heavens and earth, all things visible and invisible. Can you think of a third category? That's all there is.

The things you see, and then the angelic realm is mentioned because of the words that follow. All things were created through him and for him. If the Son, excuse me, is God's agent in creation, guess what? He existed before he became Jesus of Nazareth.

He is pre-existent. Hebrews 1, likewise, verses 2 and 10. At two ends of this beautiful, not quite the final end, but toward it. Near the beginning and near the end, as a sort of inclusio, inclusion, which my students taught me to call bookends, so people might understand what it means. We have verses 1, 2. In these last days, God has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things. Jesus is going to be the end because through whom also he created the world.

He's the end, and he's the beginning. Through the Son, that's the proper title for him in Hebrews and it is a divine title. We already see it there in verse 2. Through the Son, God created the world.

If we look carefully at these passages, the Father's being the first person is taught because John and Paul and the author of the Hebrews use prepositions, through, by, to communicate the Son's agency. The Son is the Father's agent in creation. Already in Genesis 1, it looks like the Spirit is involved as well, and perhaps Irenaeus had it right, calling the Son and the Spirit the two hands of God.

That's exactly what he meant. He accurately reflected the Bible's teaching. He made the worlds.

He pre-existed. 110, quoting the Psalm, O Lord, you Lord, it is striking. In verse 9, the Son has a God.

God, your God, that is the Son, a human being who has a God. In verse 10, he is God. I'm sorry, verse 8. Your throne, O God.

The Son is called God in 8. He has a God in 9, and he's called Lord in the highest sense, Creator Lord in 10. You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning and the heavens are the work of your hands. Do I kind of see heavens and earth here again? Yes, and the Psalm is reflecting back on, you guessed it, Genesis 1:1, quoting Psalm 102.

You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning. The heavens are the work of your hands. Therefore, Christian theologians can accurately say and deduce he pre-existed.

He was the Father's agent in creation. He is the Creator God. For all these reasons, the church has correctly confessed, oh, it wasn't simple.

And I should have said from the very beginning that the church's worship preceded the church's understanding. They sang hymns to Jesus. Colossians and Ephesians talk like that.

Already, the very earliest Christian writers say they gathered together and sang a hymn to Jesus. What does that mean? Remember, Arius and others said we didn't worship him when they denied his deity. The early Christians, by their actions, preceded their understandings.

They were treating him as God. They believed in him for salvation. They were baptized in his name, too.

And they were joined to him spiritually in the Lord's Supper. In all these ways, the church's practice preceded the church's full understanding. Full understanding? Do we fully understand the incarnation? No.

But we understand it a lot better because of those early Christians and their descendants and the Fathers working those things out together, corporately, communally in those councils to which they had bequeathed to us accurate doctrines concerning the person of Christ, including his preexistence. In our next lecture, we move to the wonderful teaching of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 9, Systematics, Preexistence.