



Zarah & Pharez



Part 14

Questions & Answers

An examination of the subject of reincarnation raises an even more fundamental question, and that is,

** Is the message of sonship built upon the doctrine of the Preexistence of spirits (or souls)?*

This, of course, would be another of those questions which would depend upon who you asked. There are those who definitely do believe that Preexistence is a crucial part of the message of sonship, and have protracted some very complex ideological suppositions from it. Many of those who do so rarely ever teach or preach without somehow incorporating it into, or at least alluding to it in their theme. There are others who also believe in it, but who place a lesser amount of emphasis upon it. Those of this number usually only mention it in passing, and then only occasionally. On the other side of the coin, there are those who feel that sonship does not require Preexistence to be factored in at all, in order to properly convey its message. They may or may not personally believe in it, but the way they see it, the message of sonship stands on its own in the Scriptures, and so they declare it entirely on those grounds. And finally, there are those who reject the teaching of Preexistence altogether, who hold instead to another theory regarding the origin of the human spirit.

Given the wide variety of viewpoints on this issue, it would be difficult to offer a general response. However, while we may not be able to arrive at a consensus on the issue, we can illumine certain strengths and weaknesses in the debate.

One question that is to be asked is: where did the doctrine of Preexistence originate? After consulting a number of resources on the subject, the general opinion among the most reliable authorities is that its precise origin remains obscure. While it is found in many of the ancient religions of the world, it would be difficult to know exactly how much influence one religious group had upon another, or which one had it first. However, in some cases, we can follow its course of development, and reasonably determine the degree to which it prevailed.

Over the course of church history, four basic theories regarding the spirit's origin have emerged. These theories are known as Preexistence, Creationism, Traducianism and Materialism.

To briefly define these theories, we could say that

Preexistence is basically the belief that the spirit existed as a conscious entity prior to its union with the physical body.

Direct Creationism is the belief that the spirit is created either 1) at the moment of conception, or 2) at sometime during the time of the formation of the embryo. Creationism promotes the idea that the spirit is uniquely and individually created in the womb as a direct result of God, and, in each and every case, is a fresh act of creation, producing something that never existed before.

Traducianism (from the Latin *traducere*, meaning to transmit) is the belief that the spirit of the child is basically an *indirect* act of creation, or the result of second causes. It's said to be the by-product of the spirits of its parents, in much the same way that the child's body is produced from their union. According to this theory, God originally created one spirit in the beginning (when He breathed the Breath of Life into Adam's nostrils), and from that one spirit all spirits have come forth. In other words, Adam's spirit was the fountainhead of all human spirits.

Materialism also promotes the idea that the spirit is generated by the parents, but it differs from Traducianism by teaching that the spirit is just an extension of the body, or that it is simply another of its parts. What this ultimately means is that the spirit has no existence apart from the body, and so, when the body sleeps in death, the spirit does likewise. (This is the view generally held by Jehovah's Witnesses, and is also known as "soul sleep.")

It might also be noted that the theory of Preexistence serves as a boarding house for three distinct views. One view holds that while the spirit preexisted its experience in mortal woof, it is nevertheless the product of a creative act of God, and, as such, had a beginning at some point in time (most who embrace this view believe that all spirits were created simultaneously, on the sixth day of creation. Others believe that all spirits were created simultaneously, but at an undetermined point *prior to* the foundation of the world). Another view is that the spirit came as a result of a *procreated* (or generated) act, which makes it the direct offspring of God, the actual spirit-child begotten through a divine union in heaven (again, a division exists among those who lean in this direction. One group believes that this "union" occurred *within the being of God*, i.e. between God the Father and the Holy Spirit, who, to them, is the Mother-figure in the Godhead. Another group believes that God the Father had intercourse with a female deity or deities, and this act produced spiritual offspring. The Mormons, or Latter-Day Saints, are undoubtedly the most recognizable group to promote this view.) A third view holds that the individual spirit of man is neither created or procreated, but is instead *an emanation* of the Universal Spirit of God. This theory of the spirit's origin is often described like that of a divine spark from the Eternal Flame (the Quakers are generally recognized for their belief in the divine spark theory). We'll talk more about this as we go along. But those who hold to the Procreation theory, as well as those who believe in the theory of Emanation, can be said to share a common bond. Both believe that the spirit of man is produced from the very substance of God (Latin, *Ex Deo*), which, of course, would make it divine.

During the time of the Gospels, differing ideas were being circulated in and around Jerusalem. While most authorities agree that Creationism was the predominant view of Jewish theologians at the time, they were certainly not strangers to the concept of Preexistence. Several of the

surrounding cultures had long since been steeped in the belief, which meant that the Jews themselves had no alternative but to come into contact with it as they interacted with their neighbors. In fact, some feel that evidence for Preexistence can be found in Jewish writings, such as the Talmud and the Midrash (and certainly later, in the Kabbala). (The Kabbalistic belief is that all spirits were created at the same time in the beginning, and were entirely satisfied to exist as they were. They were thought to be internally complete, having both male and female qualities within themselves [androgynous]. As a result of sin, however, they were forced to endure embodiment, where they were segregated into one or the other gender. But within each spirit is the desire to reunify with its counterpart, and to become whole again.) But regardless of whether or not the doctrine of Preexistence found a measurable amount of acceptance by the Jewish community at large, the idea of it was clearly available to anyone who chose to embrace it.

What was the position of the early church? Well, all four groups (Preexistents, Creationists, Traducianists and Materialists) claim, to a greater or lesser degree, to have evidence for their beliefs in the New Testament. Therefore, all of them would say that their particular view was the one commonly held by first-century believers. Since no specific proclamation was made by church leaders regarding the topic of the spirit's origin until sometime later, the answer to that question would naturally be subject to debate. However, here are some facts that deserve consideration.

The first direct acknowledgement of this issue in church literature was made by the great apologist of the faith, Irenaeus (ca. 125-202). Even though Irenaeus' ministry occupied the latter part of the second century, it still might be said that he was linked to the apostolic era, by virtue of the fact that he had been under the tutelage of the apostle John's disciple, Polycarp of Smyrna. Irenaeus was best known for his rebuttals against Gnosticism, and his treatise, *Against Heresies*, was specifically written in response to its errors. As we have mentioned in previous writings, Gnostic teachers had developed a complex cosmic worldview involving what they called "the aeons of the Pleroma" (the "aeons" were said to be divine spiritual entities who comprised the "Pleroma," or the fullness of the Godhead). In the development of that theology, they included details regarding the preexistent state of the aeons. Their broad, panoramic vision of history past also put forth the idea that the pure, spiritual essence of all things had originally emanated from the substance of the Unknown or Unmanifest Deity (but had fallen, and become ensnared in the realm of base materiality and illusion). It was around this "gnosis" or special revelation that everything else in their belief system was built; and it was growing exponentially, both in quantity and popularity. Therefore, before it grew any further, Irenaeus felt the need to publicly denounce it as being a damnable heresy, because of the inevitable conclusions to which it led (polytheism and pantheism). He argued against it from the position of Creationism, and warned the church against speculating about what might have happened prior to the creation of the world.

In the following generation, Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160-230) coupled Irenaeus' efforts by arguing against the speculative teachings of the Gnostics. He rigorously opposed their doctrine of Emanation, insisting instead that God created the world and all things therein (including the spirits of men) by simply speaking them into existence, without having to work from any preexisting substance in order to do so (this doctrine is known as "Ex Nihilo," that is, "out of nothing.") While the logical mind would contend that you can't make something from nothing, their position was that God is not bound by the laws which apply to nature, seeing that He is the Creator of them. With Him, all things are possible, including the ability to bring forth the material universe when

there was yet nothing from which to make it. However, while this was later accepted as being the official church position, it would be difficult to say that it had been discussed to any great length by the founding apostles. We can only state with any degree of assurance that Creationism was doctrinally set forth as early as the second century, and that it was the first openly defended view of the early Christian era

The first of the early church leaders to present a differing view of the spirit's background was Origen (ca. 185-254). As head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, he was highly respected for his scholarly achievements. He produced the first comprehensive work of Christian dogmatics. He provided the church with extensive commentaries, as well as textual and exegetical studies of the scriptures. He also helped to establish certain orthodox truths using the allegorical method of biblical interpretation. With all of these accomplishments, his contribution to the establishment of New Testament theology cannot be overstated. He is recognized to this day as being one of the most productive, imaginative and intellectual figures in the history of Christianity. And yet, it was his imaginative interpretations, and the liberties he took with them, that eventually led to charges of heresy against him.

Like the apologists who preceded him, Origen spoke out against antagonistic theologies, and viewed them as being detrimental to sound doctrine. His opposition to the teachings of one pagan philosopher in particular can be seen in his writing, entitled, *Against Celsus*. However, the most famous, and controversial, of Origen's writings is his work on systematic theology: *De Principiis* ("On First Principles"). One of the chief guiding principles put forth in the book is "nothing which is at variance with the tradition of the apostles and of the church is to be accepted as true." But some felt that Origen violated his own principle in the course of his writing. For instance, Tertullian had previously written, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, or the Stoa with the Porch of Solomon?" By that, he meant that the philosophical ideas of the Greeks and Stoics ought not be mingled with those of Christianity. And yet, there is reason to believe that Origen attempted to incorporate aspects of Neoplatonism and Stoicism with the Christian faith in his writing of *De Principiis*. There was no denying that Aristo-Platonic philosophy had had a profound influence on his thinking regarding Preexistence.

What was Plato's theory? Well, to put it in a nutshell, he theorized that ideas are not mere conceptualizations of the mind, but are living, conscious entities which exist in an intelligible universe of Divine Mind. These entities were thought to be the essence of life in all things, and precede their visible manifestations. According to Plato, the material world in time and space is naught but the realization of those ideas which have become adorned in substance, and which have evolved more completely over the course of world history. But prior to the time when the initial realization occurred, conscious intelligences preexisted in an ideal world. There are other ideas involved with his theory, such as the metempsychosis of spirits (reincarnation), but this is the gist of it.

Plato's student, Aristotle, took a slightly different approach in his philosophy. Rather than believing in an ideal world which was anterior to the actual, he taught that the material world was itself eternal, and that it ran parallel to the world of forms (what Plato called ideas, Aristotle referred to as forms). According to his worldview, all things, whether animate or inanimate, are comprised of matter and form. Therefore, nothing could have existed apart from this vital union.

Origen adapted different aspects of both Plato's and Aristotle's theories to fit within the Christian paradigm. He opined that the sun, the moon and the stars must be rational beings, and that they must possess spirits, since the Lord gave commandments to them to rule over the day and the night. He further reasoned that, since there is no respect of persons with God, and since there are varying ranks or degrees of governing authority within the terrestrial and celestial realms, it must be that those who hold these positions of authority earned the right to do so in a previous state, when they existed in pure spirit form.

To lend support for his theory, he suggested that there were two separate acts of creation recorded in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis. The first creation was spiritual, while the second one was material.

In the first creation, spirits (or minds, as he sometimes referred to them) existed for a singular purpose, and that was, the constant and uninterrupted contemplation of God. However, because these spirits had free will, as well as the ability to think independently on their own, some became bored with their station, and strayed from the purpose for which they were intended. Consequently, this straying of mind, or distraction of thought is what constituted the fall. These spirits had fallen from that high place of divine contemplation and closeness to God, and had, as a result, grown cold (*psukhesthai*) and distant. All of this led to the second creation, the material creation, as recorded in chapter 2.

(It is here that some feel that Origen's theory shows traces of Stoicism. The Stoics believed that God originally crafted the universe from fire (*pur tekhnikon*), and that the material universe came into being as a result of the outward expansion and cooling off of this primordial substance. While Origen avoided the materialism to which Stoic philosophy leads, it seems that he may have borrowed his analogy of a "cooling down" process in creation. The main difference is that his application of coldness had to do with the moral and ethical state of spirits, which in turn *led to* the material creation, while theirs pertained to a substantive composition from the start.)

Origen backed up his contention of a preexistent state by pointing out that the word translated as foundation (Gr. *katabolê*) in the New Testament term, "*the foundation of the world*," actually means, "*to cast downwards*." While this is an accurate rendering of the word, most theologians understand the fall to refer to an intra-cosmic event that happened *after* the creation of the world, and one which ultimately had a profound effect upon its state of being. But Origen took it to mean something which happened *before* its creation... in fact, he viewed it as an event that actually caused the natural world to come into being. Because of this cataclysmic event in the spiritual creation, and its subsequent casting down into the earthly creation, God was compelled to provide bodies ("garments of skin") for the spirits which had fallen. Those who strayed farthest from their thinking on God were given the cold and coarse bodies of demons, while others received either the ethereal bodies of angels, the flesh and blood bodies of humans or the circular celestial bodies of the planets or the stars. Based on this ideological model, then, Origen concluded that the forms in which we presently exist, and the circumstances in which we find ourselves in this life are based on actions which were committed in a preexistent state.

Origen held a distinct perspective on the purpose of both the cosmos and our incarnation, which

went counter to the varying viewpoints in and around Alexandria. Unlike the Gnostics, who viewed the material realm (including our bodies) as being a place wherein spirits are unjustly imprisoned; and, unlike the Platonists, who believed that the world is but a shadow of the intelligible realm of Divine Mind; he believed that the cosmos, as well as the physical bodies within it, were mercifully created by God to accommodate fallen spirits, and to provide opportunities for their learning and eventual restoration. In other words, he believed that, rather than teaching that the realm of materiality is *a prison house*, or that it is a place of petty insignificance in the grand scheme of things, it should be thought of as *a school house*, perfectly suited to educate us in the ways and works of God. All of God's efforts are designed toward that end.

(While we're discussing Origen's views on incarnation, we'd like to take the opportunity to clear up what we believe has been a common misconception. Because of his belief in Preexistence, and the restorative process through which our spirits pass while in the body, some have suggested that he also taught Reincarnation. This was the opinion held, not only by some of his greatest admirers, but also by a number of his most fierce critics [Peter of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, Epiphanius of Salamis, Theophilus, bishop of Jerusalem, Jerome, and the Emperor Justinian, to name the more notable ones]. But this is the result of taking certain statements of Origen's out of their proper context [the context of Preexistence], and viewing them in an improper way [even some of his followers, the Origenites, were guilty of doing this]. It is true that he could sometimes say things in ways that were mystifyingly vague and uncertain. This, in turn, left certain of his teachings open to the discretion of the reader. But, for us, he could not have made himself any clearer than when he wrote, "*We think that those views are by no means to be accepted which some people most unnecessarily advance and support, to the effect that rational souls can reach such a pitch of abasement that they forget their rational nature and high dignity and sink into the bodies of irrational beasts, either large or small*" ---de Principiis, Bk. I, ch. viii, sec.3. So, despite claims to the contrary, no hard evidence has turned up in his writings which suggest that he ever embraced the doctrine of Reincarnation.)

Like Aristotle, Origen believed in an eternal universe. But he differed from him, in that he did not believe that it had always existed as matter. Its eternal quality was tethered to its spiritual existence, the state in which it was first created. However, this notion of an eternal creation has a major problem built into it, which Origen and others may well have overlooked. You see, when we speak of a creation, be it spiritual or material, we are speaking of an act. And every act, or action, must necessarily have a beginning and an ending, otherwise, it would not qualify as an act. Therefore, to speak of an eternal creation would be to utter an oxymoron, that is to say, a nonsensical expression. It can not be eternal and still be a creation at the same time. The same is true regarding another term which he coined, which was used *not only* in reference to Jesus, but to all those who are in Christ. That term was the "Eternally Begotten." However, to be begotten of God refers to an act; and every act must have its starting point, else it fails to measure up to its meaning as a word. That being said, one cannot attach the quality of eternity to the performance of an act, without causing a great deal of confusion. This is precisely what Origen did, in his effort to explain a mystery about which the Scriptures say little.

While some of this information might seem impertinent to our theme, our purpose in presenting it at this time is not merely to point out some of the peculiarities in Origen's worldview, or to show

how basically speculative they were (there are other doctrinal positions he took which were both sure and steadfast). But on this issue, Origen himself conceded, “*for it will seem an easy matter to make the assertion on conjectural grounds, while it is more difficult to establish it by the testimony of Scripture.*” And so we have his own admission that his views on the Preexistence of spirits were easier to support from a conjectural, philosophical standpoint, and harder to prove from a theological one. Our point, however, is that, given the opposition that he encountered in the third century (and afterward) over this doctrine, it is highly unlikely that this was the view held by the first century church.

This brings us the most important question of all, and that is: what do the Scriptures themselves teach regarding the subject of Preexistence? Does the doctrine stand up under fair analysis? If we may, we'd like to honestly and respectfully examine the grounds upon which it relies, and to state whether or not we find it necessary to include it in our presentation of sonship. We'll begin by looking at some of the most commonly cited verses in regard to it.

EPHESIANS 1:3-5, 11

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as **He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: **having predestinated us unto the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, **being predestinated according to the purpose of Him** who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will... “*

This passage is often used as the entry point in the presentation of the doctrine of Preexistence. It's said that these verses declare in no uncertain terms who we are, what we have in Christ, as well as when and where we received it. Prior to the time when the world was founded, God willed, and was well pleased that we should be His children. Not only that, but He chose us, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings which are in heavenly places. All this was done in accordance with His grand purpose, which He is progressively working out in the realm of time and space. We know of few who would disagree with that. Nevertheless, the reasoning is that, in order for us to have been blessed in heavenly places, in order for us to have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and in order for us to have obtained an inheritance as God's children, we had to have existed as individual, conscious entities who found actual residence in the heavens.

We would agree that, clearly, a form of preexistence is evident from this passage. However, there are two possible senses in which preexistence may be referred. These could be referred to as *the actual* and *the ideal*. *Actual Preexistence* would have to do with the type which we have been discussing, i.e. that which possesses previous existence in the realm of reality. On the other hand, *Ideal Preexistence* speaks of that which is *foreknown* in the mind of God before it has any being. In other words, its existence was not one in actuality, but one in the realm of God's mind, in the form of divine foreknowledge. This is an important distinction, and one to which we will refer often.

After carefully and earnestly perusing the words and wording of the above cited text, we find nothing there that requires us to read an actual preexistence into it. As we see it, the simplest, and most direct explanation is that we were foreknown by God before He ever created us, and that His glorious destiny for us has been planned from the very beginning. There is no straining involved in this interpretation, and nothing that requires us to go beyond that which is written.

JEREMIAH 1:4-5

Another verse which is said to embody the idea of Preexistence is Jeremiah 1:4-5. What does it say?

“Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctioned thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

According to the argument, God was telling the prophet that before his physical body was formed in his mother’s belly, his spirit had previously existed, and had been known in an intimate and personal way by the Lord. This is thought to be shown by the use of the Hebrew word translated as “knew” (*yada*). It’s said that *yada* speaks of an intimate knowledge or relationship between two or more parties, such as the way in which Adam knew (*yada*) his wife Eve (Gen. 4:1). This type of close, personal knowledge would, of course, require a state of awareness from all parties involved. Therefore, it’s thought that Jeremiah’s spirit would have had to have preexisted his body, in order for the Lord to have known him in such an intimate way. The second part of the verse is directly connected with the first, showing that while the prophet was in the gestation period, he was sanctioned and ordained for his earthly calling by the Lord. This in utero ordination is likewise said to require some level of consciousness by Jeremiah, in order for these acts to transpire.

This reading presumes at least a few things. The first thing is that the word *yada* always suggests an intimate relationship between individuals. It is true that, in certain cases in Scripture, it does carry that idea. These cases are simple enough to identify from their contexts. However, *yada* is a very general word in the Hebrew language, and is used in the Old Testament to describe anything from a basic knowledge about a person, place or thing, to a more intimate knowledge between living, rational beings. Even a cursory review of its use in Scripture will reveal this. But there is nothing in this particular verse that justifies interpreting its use of *yada* in a way other than the general sense. After all, our verse simply says that the Lord knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb. It does *not* say that Jeremiah was capable of knowing the Lord at this time. Therefore, to insist that God had an intimate personal relationship with Jeremiah’s spirit based on the employment of the word *yada* would be to ignore its various applications, and to disclose a predisposed inclination toward a particular view.

A second presumption has to do with that which is referred to as being “formed” in the belly. It is true that the body goes through its formative stages while in the womb. After its initial conception, the embryo develops from an almost indistinguishable life form to that which is undeniably

human. So it could rightly and properly be said that the body is formed within the womb. But within that developing body is another formation which no ultrasound can possibly detect, even though it is every bit as real. “*The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him*” (Zech. 12:1). Just how this “formation-within-a-formation” occurs is a profound mystery, to be sure. Ecclesiastes 11:5 makes that abundantly clear: “*As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, or how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God Who maketh all.*” But while we may not be able to comprehend precisely how this wondrous event takes place, we can know that both body and spirit go through a formative process within the womb.

Why is it important to make a note of this? Because, if it is true that God forms man’s spirit within him (and not outside of him), then that would at the very least suggest that the prior state of any preexistent spirit (were one to exist) would be one “without form and void;” that is to say, one wherein the spirit was undeveloped and lacking in formation (this, of course, would undermine the theory of mature, reasoning spirits in the spirit world, who make informed choices regarding their future incarnations). Not only that, but it could potentially date the origin of the human spirit to a period sometime *after* physical conception takes place. (For, one might reason, how could the spirit of man be formed within him, unless there was first a “him” within which the spirit could be formed?) Therefore, it’s important for us to take this into account when we think on these verses, and as we weigh alternative views regarding them.

We have heard one argument that might be used as a response to this; and that is, that, while God may have said that the spirit of man is *formed* within him, this does not necessarily mean that this is where man’s spirit was originally created or made (hairs are split between the meanings of the words *created*, *formed* and *made*). If there is a significant difference to be made between these words, and if they are not just synonyms of one another, then, indeed, this does leave open the *possibility* of an anterior state of the spirit, a state which predates its presence in the womb. But that still wouldn’t change the fact that its state would be considered as being, according to God’s own definition, *unformed*. And who’s to say that an unformed spirit possesses consciousness, or the power of communication?

There’s no denying the Lord said that He knew Jeremiah *before* his formation began. But the question remains, just *how long before* it did He know him? We’ve just considered the possibility that this could mean *prior to formation*, but sometime *after conception* (some might contend that formation begins immediately after conception occurs, so there is not necessarily a time period which exists between the two events. However, even if we were merely viewing these events from the perspective of an orderly sequence, this would still suggest the passage of time, miniscule though it might be. This being the case, the possibility remains a valid one). But are we limited to that possibility alone? Might Jeremiah have existed in some sense prior to his conception in his mother’s womb? And might he have dwelt in an identifiable state before he had any sense of being in this world? There is one scripture which does indicate that just such an existence might be possible. That scripture, of course, would be Hebrews 7:9-10.

“*And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*”

We won't go into the details surrounding the text, but, according to the writer of Hebrews, when Abraham met Melchisedec, and gave tithes to him, Levi was considered to be a participant in that act, even though he had not yet been born. The reason for this is because, though he was absent in body, he was *seminally present* in Abraham; and this genetic presence made him a partaker of his father's deeds. The interesting thing about this is, Levi was specifically mentioned by name, even while he was still part and parcel of his father's genetic composition. That being said, therefore, the question may be asked, *where was Levi prior to his conception?* The simplest answer, according to the verses under consideration, is that he was in the loins of his father. His existence can be pinpointed to a specific location which is clearly stated, and in no uncertain terms. A follow-up question would be, *was Levi a conscious entity while he was in his father's loins?* The answer to that should go without saying. How then can we explain the fact that Levi was identified by name, if it is true that he did not at that time possess some level of consciousness wherewith to know himself and other supposed entities around him? We remain open to debate about this, but the only answer we can deem even remotely plausible is that he who went by the name of Levi existed solely in the foreknowledge of God prior to his formation.

(We've not heard it yet, but we can anticipate someone suggesting that the difference between Levi and Jeremiah is that, while reference is made to the *physical* side of Levi's being, the reference to Jeremiah is to his spirit. We suppose that this might be a possibility. But, since the verses that we're considering give no indication of this, we would have to say that its suggestion would be, at best, purely speculative.)

As for us, it only seems logical that what was true of Levi was likewise true of Jeremiah (and everyone else, for that matter). If Levi did not possess the capacity of knowing while he was in his father's loins, we have no reason to believe that Jeremiah did, either.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 does say, "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*" Therefore, we can all agree that the body has one point of origin, while the spirit has another. It would certainly be helpful if we knew exactly when the spirit of man was given. But, since the Scriptures are silent on this, we have no way of knowing.

In our closing remarks on Jeremiah 1:4-5, we'd like to say this.

There are those among us who claim that certain memories from preexistent times are being restored to the saints, and that such are a part of our spiritual inheritance (memories, such as those thought to be made when we were sanctioned and ordained to our particular callings, or those when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, in Job 38). These memories were thought to have been lost as our spirits passed through "a veil of forgetfulness," a veil that is believed to exist between the spirit world and the natural (an idea which is of Platonic, rather than of Semitic origin. In a myth told toward the end of Plato's *Republic*, he has Er saying that the spirits of men drink from the waters of forgetfulness as they proceed from one incarnation to the next). Therefore, in order for the restitution of all things to be complete, the saints must recover the memories from their premortal period, when they were disembodied spirits waiting on the formation and preparation of their "earth suits." However, it is enough for us to know that, while we may not have personally known the Lord from time immemorial, He has always been

mindful of us. The psalmist David obviously shared these sentiments when he said, *“I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”* (Psa. 139:14-16). While he candidly admitted that, *“such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it”* (verse 6), he nevertheless rejoiced in the fact that God knew everything there was to know about him prior to, as well as following his birth; and that His thoughts toward him were both precious and innumerable, surpassing even the number of the grains of sand (verses 17-18). The knowledge that he was foreknown in the mind of his Maker completely satisfied his mind, and provided him with a wonderful sense of security that God would lead him in the way everlasting. Now, isn't that an attitude that's worthy of emulation?

In our next segment, we'll resume our examination of the doctrine of Preexistence in Scripture, starting with Job 38:4-7. We hope that you'll rejoin us, as we look into this most interesting subject.

To be continued...

If you, or someone you know, would like to be added to our mailing list, simply write to:

GOOD SEED PUBLICATIONS
c/o Terry & Tykie Crisp
672 Goodman Rd.
Dawson, Ga. USA 39842

Email us at: TCrisp4448@aol.com

Visit our website at: www.goodseedpublications.com