

## John 17:5

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (NIV)

1. There is no question that Jesus “existed” before the world began. But did he exist literally as a person or in God’s foreknowledge, “in the mind of God?” Both Christ and the corporate be in the Body of Christ, the Church, existed in God’s foreknowledge before being alive. Christ was the “*logos*,” the “plan” of God from the beginning, and he became flesh only when he was conceived. It is Trinitarian bias that causes people to read an actual physical existence into this verse rather than a figurative existence in the mind of God. When 2 Timothy 1:9 says that each Christian was given grace “before the beginning of time,” no one tries to prove that we were actually alive with God back then. Everyone acknowledges that we were “in the mind of God,” *i.e.*, in God’s foreknowledge. The same is true of Jesus Christ. His glory was “with the Father” before the world began, and in John 17:5 he prayed that it would come into manifestation.

2. Jesus was praying that he would have the glory the Old Testament foretold, which had been in the mind of God, the Father, since before the world began, and would come into concretion. Trinitarians, however, teach that Jesus was praying about glory he had with God many years before his birth, and they assert that this proves he had access to the mind and memory of his “God nature.” However, if, as a man, Jesus “remembered” being in glory with the Father before the world began, then he would have known he was God in every sense. He would not have thought of himself as a “man” at all. If he knew he was God, he would not and could not have been “tempted in every way just as we are” because nothing he encountered would have been a “real” temptation to him. He would have had no fear and no thought of failure. There is no real sense in which Scripture could actually say he was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17) because he would not have been like us at all. Furthermore, Scripture says that Jesus “grew” in knowledge and wisdom. That would not really be true if Christ had access to some type of God-nature with infinite knowledge and wisdom.

We believe that John 17:5 is a great example of a verse that demonstrates the need for clear thinking concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. The verse can clearly be interpreted in a way that is honest and biblically sound, and shows that Christ was a man, but was in the foreknowledge of God as God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. It can also be used the way Trinitarians use it: to prove the Trinity. However, when it is used that way it reveals a Christ that we as Christians cannot truly identify with. We do not have a God-nature to help us when we are tempted or are in trouble or lack knowledge or wisdom. The Bible says that Christ can “sympathize with our weakness” because he was “tempted in every way, *just as we are*” (Heb. 4:15). The thrust of that verse is very straightforward. *Because* Christ was just like we are, *and* was tempted in every way that we are, he can sympathize with us. However, if he was not “just as we are,” then he would not be able to sympathize with us. We assert that making Christ a God-man makes it impossible to really identify with him.

3. Jesus' prayer in John 17 sets a wonderful example for us as Christians. He poured out his heart to his Father, "the only true God" (John 17:3), and prayed that the prophecies of the Old Testament about him would be fulfilled.

4. For Christ's relation to the Plan of God, see notes on John 1:1. For more on Christ in God's foreknowledge, see the note on John 8:58.

*Racovian Catechism*, pp. 144-146  
Snedeker, pp. 424 and 425

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