

# Pre-Mortal Existence: A Restored Doctrine

Biblical Evidence, Early Christian Belief, and the LDS Understanding

## BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

### Jeremiah 1:5 — Known Before Birth

"Before I formed thee in the belly I **knew thee**; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I **sanctified thee**, and I ordained thee a prophet."

**Key words:** Knew, sanctified, ordained — all require a *person* to act upon, not mere foreknowledge of a future abstraction.

### Job 38:4-7 — Sons of God at Creation

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... When the morning stars sang together, and all the **sons of God shouted for joy?**"

Why would angels shout for joy at creation of an earth they'd never inhabit? Makes sense if these were spirits who would live here.

### Ecclesiastes 12:7 — Spirit "Returns"

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the **spirit shall return unto God** who gave it."

Hebrew *shub* = "to turn back." You can only **return** to somewhere you've been before.

### Hebrews 12:9 — Father of Spirits

"We have had **fathers of our flesh**... shall we not much rather be subject to the **Father of spirits?**"

Clear distinction: earthly fathers = bodies; God = Father of our spirits. Implies spirits existed before bodies.

### John 9:2 — Sin Before Birth?

Disciples asked: "**Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?**"

The question only makes sense if they believed in pre-existence. Jesus didn't correct this assumption — only said the blindness wasn't from sin.

## Additional Passages

- **Acts 17:28-29:** "We are his offspring" — divine parentage
- **Numbers 16:22:** "God of the spirits of all flesh"
- **Zechariah 12:1:** God "formeth the spirit of man within him"

## EARLY CHRISTIAN BELIEF

**Pre-existence was NOT invented by Joseph Smith. It was taught by prominent early church fathers for centuries.**

### Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)

**Most influential early theologian on this doctrine.**

"God could not be viewed as 'no respecter of persons' without such a premortal existence. If the differences of men on earth were not related in some way to our premortal condition, then God could be viewed as arbitrary, capricious, and unjust."

### Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD)

Applied Jeremiah 1:5 universally: "We were known to God as faithful **before the foundation of the world.**"

### Justin Martyr (100-165 AD)

Held views compatible with pre-existence. The doctrine was a legitimate theological option for the first 500 years of Christianity.

## THE 553 AD CONDEMNATION

**Second Council of Constantinople** condemned pre-existence — but this proves:

- **The doctrine was widely held** (you don't condemn what no one believes)
- **500+ years after Christ** — long after apostolic era
- **Politically motivated** — Emperor Justinian called it; Pope Vigilius initially opposed

**LDS View: This condemnation occurred during the Great Apostasy. A council without prophetic authority cannot definitively determine truth.**

## RESPONDING TO OBJECTIONS

### Protestant Objection: "Just Foreknowledge"

**Claim:** God only *foreknew* us, not that we actually existed.

#### Response:

- Why such personal language? "I knew thee," "sanctified thee"
- How can you "return" (Eccl 12:7) to somewhere you've never been?
- How is God "Father of spirits" if spirits don't pre-exist?
- Sanctification requires something present to sanctify

### Protestant Objection: "Condemned as Heresy"

**Claim:** Church councils condemned it, so it's false.

#### Response:

- Protestants reject many council decisions (transubstantiation, etc.)
- If you believe in *sola scriptura*, councils are irrelevant
- The condemnation came 500 years after Christ
- Scripture can be read to support pre-existence

### Catholic Objection: "Origen Was Wrong"

**Claim:** Origen taught other heresies, so pre-existence is false.

#### Response:

- Origen was revered for centuries — condemned 300 years after death
- Pre-existence was held by multiple church fathers, not just Origen
- Sacred Tradition *included* pre-existence for 500 years
- Some scholars argue Origen never even used "pre-existence of souls"

## LDS DOCTRINE

### Key Beliefs:

- We are **literal spirit children** of Heavenly Parents
- We **lived with God** before this life
- A **council** was held; Christ chosen as Savior; Lucifer rebelled
- We **chose** to come to earth, knowing trials ahead
- A **veil of forgetfulness** covers our pre-mortal memories

## LDS Scriptures

Reference	Teaching
Abraham 3:22-23	Noble spirits chosen as leaders before birth
D&C 93:29	"Man was also in the beginning with God"
D&C 138:53-56	Spirits received "first lessons" before birth
Alma 13:3	Priests "called and prepared from foundation of world"

## WHY IT MAKES SENSE

**Problem of Evil:** Why are people born into such different circumstances?

**Without pre-existence:** God appears arbitrary, even cruel.

**With pre-existence:** Mortality is one stage of eternal existence.

**Divine Love:** Why does God love us?

**Without pre-existence:** Creator appreciates creation.

**With pre-existence:** Father loves His children eternally.

**Human Worth:** Why are humans valuable?

**Without pre-existence:** Accidents of evolution or arbitrary creation.

**With pre-existence:** Eternal beings with divine potential.

## SUMMARY

Source	Evidence
Jeremiah 1:5	Known, sanctified, ordained before birth
Job 38:7	Sons of God at creation
Eccl 12:7	Spirit "returns" to God
Heb 12:9	God = "Father of spirits"
John 9:2	Disciples assumed pre-birth sin possible
Origen	Taught pre-existence (185-254 AD)
Clement	"Known to God before foundation of world"

### The Bottom Line:

- ✓ Biblical support exists
- ✓ Early Christians believed it
- ✓ Condemnation came 500+ years later
- ✓ Restoration brought it back

"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" — Jeremiah 1:5