

What Was Jesus Doing Before Bethlehem?

December 4, 2022

Good morning! My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you. Today we begin our Christmas series called “Good News Of Great Joy.” This is a series where we will look at the significance of Jesus’ birth.

In this series, we will rotate pastors across campuses. I am teaching this morning. Next week, Pastor Jordan and I will switch campuses. I will be at the Spencer campus. Pastor Jordan will be here. The following week, Pastor Kris will preach here while pastor Stephen will preach in Spencer.

After that Christmas Eve is upon us. Christmas Eve is Saturday night. We will have one service at 5:30 PM. It will be a great service filled mostly with worship. I will give a shorter message. Since Christmas Eve is on Saturday night, and Sunday is on Christmas morning, we decided not to have a service on Christmas morning but to put all our energy into Christmas Eve. This will allow our church family and staff to be together on Christmas mornings. Pastor Jordan and I are putting together a brief Christmas morning devotional video for you to use with your family on Christmas Day as we celebrate Jesus’ birth.

This morning, I will teach on a topic that has captivated my interest. When I was a child, I wondered, “What was Jesus doing before Bethlehem?” Jesus shows up in Mary’s womb, and we celebrate Jesus’ birth at Christmas, but what was Jesus doing before that point?

I didn’t see Jesus in the Old Testament, so I pictured him as a player on the bench begging God the father for the opportunity to go in for a play. I thought

the first time Jesus stepped on the field was in Bethlehem. That isn't the way it happened. Jesus was busy in the Old Testament.

I have studied the question, "What was Jesus doing before Bethlehem?" for years. If I was to give you a comprehensive answer to that question, you would be here until Christmas. So this morning, I am only going to tell you about two of the things Jesus was doing before Bethlehem. They are little things. Jesus really wasn't busy at all in the Old Testament. Today we will see that Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all things in the universe.

Jesus is the creator of all things.

For the last few months, we studied David in 1 Samuel. As a young shepherd, he must have spent many nights under the open night sky as he slept with his sheep in the fields. I am sure he spent many nights lying on his back staring into the night sky, wondering about the God who created it all. One day, the Holy Spirit inspired him to pen the words which came to us in Psalm 19.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world... Psalm 19:1-4 (ESV)

David considered the magnificence of space as seen in the night sky to be a universal testimony to everyone everywhere about the glory and greatness of the God who created the universe. God's glory in space is visible to everyone. It is a message to everyone. Everybody gets the message that God is big, and we are small.

Does staring at the night sky leave you feeling small? Does it give you a sense of God's greatness?

Here is the problem. There are only about 4,000 stars visible to the human eye without a telescope. If we really want to comprehend the true number of stars in the sky above us, we need a giant telescope, the kind astronomers use today to see deep into space and see the stars that the naked eye miss.

Astronomers tell us that with today's telescopes we know there are 10 million billion billion stars shining on us in the night sky. That is 10^{25} . That is 1 with 25 zeros after it. The number of stars in the night sky is roughly equivalent to the number of grains of sand on the earth. If we counted the stars at the rate of 20 a second, it would only take us 100 million billion years to count all of them.

Those are just the stars we can see with our current telescopes. Only God knows about the stars beyond the strength of our current telescopes that we have yet to discover.

What is fascinating is that God knows precisely how many stars exist, and he named each one. Each star God built for a specific purpose.

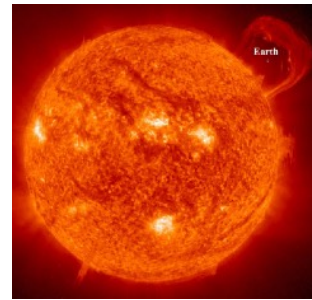
[He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.](#)
Psalm 147:4 (ESV)

In the same way that Adam in Genesis 2:20 named the animals based on their characteristics, God in his infinite wisdom named each star according to its particular characteristics. This means that despite the immense number of stars, God created each one for a particular purpose with unique attributes. God's purpose for each star will be revealed in God's good time.

We stand in awe at the number of stars in the heavens, how God knows each one, names each one, and has a purpose for each one. We must add to

our understanding not just the number of stars in the universe but also the vast expanse of space where God placed them.

Let's start with the sun. If we could bore a hole in the sun, we could put 1.2 million planets the size of the earth inside of it. Even then, we would still have enough room inside of the sun to add another 4.3 million planets the size of our moon. The sun is 865,000 miles in diameter and 93 million miles away. If you think our sun is big, the nearest star is Alpha Centauri. It is five times larger than our sun. The moon is only 211,453 miles away. If we wanted to walk to it, it would only take 27 years.



To understand the size of our solar system, we need to use the speed of light. A ray of light travels at 186,000 miles per second. That means a beam of light travels from the earth and reaches the moon in 1.5 seconds. If that same beam of light were to continue at 186,000 miles per second, it would reach Venus in 2 minutes and 18 seconds. If that same beam of light were to travel to Mars, it would take 4 minutes and 21 seconds to travel the 34 million miles to get there. Jupiter would be the next stop. Light from our planet takes 35 minutes to get there when traveling at 186,000 miles per second. A beam of light from earth takes 1 hour and 11 seconds for it to arrive at Saturn. There are still the planets of Uranus and Neptune that are even farther away. Then there is Pluto, which is 2.7 billion miles away. At that point, we still haven't left our solar system. The nearest star after our solar system is ten times further away from us than the boundaries of our solar system. The north star is 400 billion miles away. A beam

of light from the North Star takes 27.3 days to reach our planet. The star Betelgeuse is 880 quadrillion miles from us and has a diameter of 250 million miles, which is bigger than the size of the earth's orbit.

Where did all of this come from? God made it. The Bible gives us more specificity about how the universe came into being. While God the Father willed creation, it was Jesus before Bethlehem who made everything in creation out of nothing.

God made the earth the center of divine activity.

What is even more fascinating than the number of stars in the universe and the vast size of the universe, is that the Bible tells us that God chose our tiny planet, which is nothing more than a speck of dust compared to many others, to be the center of God's divine activity. The Bible tells us that the earth is the center of God's plan for salvation, not just our salvation, but salvation for the rest of the universe. On earth, the one who made the vast universe appeared. The one who made everything, chose to pour all of himself into a smaller vessel. The son of God, who made the universe, took on human flesh in Mary's womb. He chose to die on a Roman cross, not just to save us from our sin, but to enable the saving of creation itself from the effects of sin on the universe. All of the universe will ultimately be saved from the curse of sin by what Jesus did on this planet when he came. The Bible says that one day when Jesus returns, He will make a new heaven and new earth. That will be this vast universe and earth completely reformed and remade to be free from sin. Heaven and earth will be combined, and the throne of the God of the universe will be on this planet with all of those

who have trusted Christ dwelling with Christ and reigning under Christ. These are the cosmic implications of what Jesus did when he came.

One way to realize the centrality of the earth in God's plans is to look at the creation account in Genesis. To us, it reads a little weird. God created the earth in Genesis before he created the planets and the stars. Why did God create the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day of creation, not the first? One possible explanation is that God was emphasizing the earth and its supreme importance among all the astrological bodies in God's plan for the universe. In spite of the smallness of our planet, it is the unique theatre upon which God planned to carry out his great work of redemption not just for us but redemption that has cosmic ramifications.

The Bible tells us God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were all involved in the fashioning of creation. It is safe to say God the Father willed creation. God the son (Jesus before Bethlehem) carried out the making of all creation. The Holy Spirit was also involved in animating creation and providing life. Let's look at three passages in the New Testament that show us the role Jesus played when he fashioned everything before Bethlehem.

John 1:1-3, 14 - Jesus is the Word who created all things.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:1–3 (ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (ESV)

The apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John in our Bibles, was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He was known as the disciple that Jesus loved. Imagine

him walking next to Jesus after he came to the realization that the one he called his friend was the same one who fashioned the planets of the universe and named the stars. He must have stood in awe as he realized the man standing next to him fashioned the entire earth in front of him.

John was clear. He says, in the beginning, was the Word. He describes Jesus as the word. In case there was any doubt that Jesus is the word he was talking about, in verse 14, he removes that mystery by revealing that the word is Jesus. He says the word was with God at the beginning of all things. Jesus has always existed. He also says the word was distinct from God, yet the Word was God. So Jesus is God. He has always existed, but he is distinct from God the Father.

Then John describes Jesus' role in creation both positively and negatively to emphasize the comprehensiveness of Jesus' involvement in fashioning all things. All things were made through him. Without him, nothing was made that has been made.

First John speaks about Jesus fashioning the universe positively, "Through him all things were made." The word "through" in English is the Greek word *dia*. It means Jesus is the one who is the cause of all things and brought all things into existence. Jesus did not play a secondary or lesser role in creation. Jesus was not just a dull tool in the hand of God the Father, but God the Father willed for the existence of creation, and Jesus, utilizing his own initiative and creativity, fashioned creation out of nothing. To drive this point home, John also says the same thing negatively, "without him nothing was made nothing that has been

made.” No matter where we look, with our most powerful telescopes, everything we see was made by Jesus, even the star Betelgeuse, which is 880 quadrillion miles away. Jesus made that monstrous planet. Jesus fashioned everything out of nothing in the vastness of space.

Try to wrap your minds around this. The same Jesus who made everything, humbled himself to pour all of himself into a human body to be born, to live the perfect life we could not live, and to die on the cross in our place for our sin. He did not ultimately just save us from sin, but the vast creation that is in bondage to the curse of sin.

While we are on the topic of Christ creating the universe instantaneously out of nothing, and with the appearance of age, we need to wrestle with this idea a bit because it is not what they teach our children in science class. Our children are taught there was some kind of primordial muck. That muck had a big bang followed by billions of years of evolution where things slowly organized and became what we have today.

Many times well-intentioned Christians try to harmonize the idea of primordial muck, a big bang, and billions of years of evolution with the Bible. They think Jesus caused the bang. Jesus organized creation over billions of years. While that is well-intentioned, it is not biblically plausible. The Bible tells us that when Jesus created this vast universe, he created everything instantaneously, not over billions of years. He created everything out of nothing, not from primordial muck. The Bible also tells us Jesus created everything with the appearance of age. Let me show you.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. Psalm 33:6 (ESV)

Remember, the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word. This verse tells us that Jesus is the one who made the vast reaches of space and fashioned every star or planet that exists in space.

For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Psalm 33:9 (ESV)

Nothing existed, Jesus spoke, and it came into existence out of nothing. All it took for Jesus to create things was to speak, and he made everything out of nothing. The New Testament confirms this.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Hebrews 11:3 (ESV)

The Bible tells us everything Jesus made in the universe was NOT made out of things that were visible. Jesus spoke and he created things out of nothing! There was no interval of time between the non-existence of something after Jesus spoke and when it came into existence. Let me show you this in another way.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Genesis 1:3 (ESV)

Where was light before there was light? It didn't exist until Jesus spoke and it came into existence out of nothing. That is what Hebrews 11:3 told us. So many people struggle with this. They want evolution and billions of years of evolving and primordial slime and a big bang and all kinds of crazy stuff, but that isn't what the Bible tells us. There was nothing, then Jesus spoke, and things were created instantly and fully formed out of nothing. That is the clear biblical testimony. Let me prove this to you another way.

A while ago, we preached through the Gospel of Mark. That was a long study, but it was a good one. We learned so much about Jesus. You may remember one of Jesus' first miracles in Mark 1:40 was healing the leper. At that time we studied leprosy. It is a disease that makes fingers rot and fall off, noses rot off the face and ears rot off the head. I showed you pictures of people in leper colonies and the extreme disfigurement that happens as body parts rot and fall off the body. When Jesus healed the leper, he recreated fingers that were no longer on his hand, a nose that was no longer on his face, and ears that were no longer on his head. With just a word, Jesus created those body parts instantly and out of nothing. They were fully formed and had the appearance of the proper age of the body. This is the same way Jesus created the universe. With just his word Jesus created everything in the universe fully formed, out of nothing, and with the appearance of age.

In another of Jesus' miracles, we saw Jesus heal a man blind from birth. At Jesus' word the man who had never seen found his eyes instantly and completely restored. Jesus fashioned working eyes in a man's head by just speaking the word. One of my favorite miracles was when Jesus healed a man who was born deaf and mute. The text emphasized that he had never heard a word in his life or spoken a word in his life. When Jesus healed him by the power of his word, he healed his ears instantly, creating ears that could hear out of nothing. He healed his tongue instantly so he could speak even though he had never spoken. Even more amazing is when Jesus healed this man he instantly implanted into his brain the ability to comprehend the Greek language he had

never heard, and the Bible tells us he spoke that language with perfect fluency. Only God can instantly plant into a person's brain perfect comprehension of a language they have never heard and perfect diction of a language they have never spoken.

If Jesus performed his miracles on earth merely by speaking a word and creating things instantly, completely, out of nothing, and giving them the appearance of age, it makes perfect sense that when Jesus created the vast universe, he did it the same way. He used the power of his word to create it instantly, out of nothing, fully formed, and with the appearance of age.

If you want further proof, look at Adam and Eve. If you want to quibble with the days of creation in Genesis, one thing you cannot get around is the creation of Adam and Eve. The apostle Paul is clear there was a literal Adam and Eve that were specially created by God. Notice that Adam and Eve were created as adults. They were created with the appearance of age. In Jesus' miracles while on earth, he created things with the appearance of the proper age, why would he not fashion all of creation with the appearance of age?

Colossians 1:16 — Jesus is the creator of all things.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16–17 (ESV)

We move from the Gospel of John to the apostle Paul. Paul is also adamant that before Bethlehem Jesus was the one who created everything in the universe out of nothing. Every form of matter or life in all of the vast universe owes its origin to Jesus, no matter which sphere it can be found in or what

qualities it possesses. It doesn't matter if it is something complex or simple, visible or invisible, angelic or earthly. It is all the product of Jesus creating it out of nothing.

While Paul repeats the same theme we saw in John about Jesus making all things in creation, Paul adds to that truth. He talks about Jesus making all things visible and invisible. Jesus didn't just make the vast physical realm we can see but he is also the one who created the vast unseen angelic realm.

Paul says Jesus created "thrones, dominions, powers, and authorities." In rabbinic Jewish thought of the first century, those titles were used to describe the different ranks and powers of angels. You know all angels are not the same. This summer we studied angels and learned about the different types of angels. The Bible tells us some angels are more powerful than others. Some angels have a higher rank than others. Different angels were created for different purposes. Satan has his angels organized into different ranks and positions, and God has his angels also organized into different ranks and positions. It is no different from the local factory which has everything from supervisors, to plant managers, to line workers. It is only an organizational structure like that which enables a plant to produce. In the same way, God has his angels organized into different ranks, powers, and positions so they are effective.

Apparently, there was a false teaching going around the city of Colossae that involved the worship of angels. In the process of worshipping angels, Jesus was downgraded in their minds and considered to be just another angel. Paul was adamant that was not right. Jesus is not just another angel. Jesus is much

greater than the angels. Jesus is the one who created all the angels. That is why Jesus alone is worthy of our worship.

Paul also says the universe was not just created *by* Jesus, but it was also created *for* Jesus. The universe was created for God's glory, but ultimately it was created for Jesus' glory. The universe was built by Jesus to be his property and the theatre upon which God will accomplish his purposes and display his perfections. For example, if this universe were not brought into existence by Jesus, God's justice against rebellion would never be known. Even more important is that God's amazing grace and love for those who rebel against him and deserve his wrath would never be seen if it were not for this world and Jesus dying for our sin to save us.

Paul says creation is for Christ. He is the goal toward which all things are intended to move. Creation is meant to serve Jesus' will and contribute to Jesus' glory. Look what the Apostle Paul says will be the ultimate resolution of creation and the place Jesus will play in it with his resurrected body.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9–11 (ESV)

When we celebrate Jesus' birth, we are not just celebrating the birth of another baby. We are celebrating that the one who created everything in the universe, even all the angelic beings, took on human flesh to become one of us, to die in our place and suffer an eternity of punishment we deserved while he hung on the cross. Jesus did that because he loves us and he wants to show his amazing grace to us, making us the most blessed beings in the universe. One

day, everything that was made by Jesus will bow before Jesus. At that time, we will either bow before him joyfully because he is our savior, or we will bow before him regretfully because he is our judge.

Hebrews 1:2 — Jesus is the creator of time.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV)

One of the goals of the writer of Hebrews is to demonstrate the superiority of what Jesus has done for us compared to anything God had done for his people in Old Testament times. To do this, the book of Hebrews gives us several comparisons. In this passage, we are told that in the past, God spoke to his people through prophets. It was good to have God speak His words through people to us, however the prophets were just creatures in God's creation. Now that we have Jesus, God is speaking to us through the creator of the creation. While having God's words to us through his prophets in the past was good, having God's words to us through Jesus, the creation of creation is better.

It says about Jesus, "through whom he made the universe". This is a repetition of the same theme we have seen in the previous verses but there is a slight variation in the theme that we should notice. In Greek, this reads, "through whom he made the ages." This means Jesus is not just responsible for creating the vast physical universe. Jesus is not just responsible for creating the vast angelic universe. Jesus is also the creator of time itself. We have already seen that Jesus created matter and space. Now we see that he also created time. This makes sense. If any of you have studied advanced physics you know there is a

relationship between space and time. If you can travel fast enough through space you could go back in time. This isn't possible because as we approach the speed of light we take on infinite mass.

The point is simply that Jesus is the creator of space, matter, and time. Is that baby born in Bethlehem getting any bigger? Is the significance of what happened when Jesus was born beginning to make more sense to you?

In Hebrews 1, the writer of Hebrews quotes several Old Testament passages which he says all speak of Jesus. One of the passages he quotes about Jesus is Psalm 102:25, which restates everything we are studying.

And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; Hebrews 1:10 (ESV)

What is even more boggling is Psalm 8.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Psalm 8:3–4 (ESV)

Of everything in this vast universe that Jesus created, more mind-boggling than the number of stars in the sky and more mind-boggling than the size of the universe, is that the Jesus who made all of this, passionately and deeply loves you more than the vast size of the universe. Jesus loves us so much that he completely humbled himself by pouring all of himself into a human body to be born as a baby to die in our place for our sin to bring us back to God and make us the most blessed beings in the entire vast universe. The amount of Jesus' love for us, that the one who made the universe would be willing to humble himself for us to save us, is more mind-boggling than the size of the universe itself.

Today, I don't know how badly you have messed up your life. I don't know what terrible sin, wickedness, or ugliness is part of your past. I don't know what sin you are struggling with in your present. What I do know is that the same Jesus who made this vast universe loves you more than you will ever be able to comprehend or imagine. While each of us deserved an eternity in the lake of fire for our wickedness and sin, he took that eternity of just suffering upon himself while he hung on the cross so you wouldn't have to, if you would turn and ask Jesus to forgive your sin. Then in gratitude for what Jesus has done live your life, following Jesus not because you have to but because you want to. When somebody loves you that much, how can our hearts not be filled with gratitude so that we live for him and love him back? As John says, "We love because he first loved us."

Jesus is the sustainer of life.

If you were amazed by Jesus being the one who created the universe, you will even be more amazed as we see Jesus is also the one who is currently sustaining the universe. Everything in the universe owes its continued existence to the will and power of Jesus. Without Jesus sustaining the universe, our planet, and our lives, yes, the entire universe would collapse into chaos.

The Bible tells us the universe is not like a watch. Jesus didn't build it, wind it up, and walk away. Jesus created everything, and right now, he is actively involved in sustaining everything. To fully understand this, we need to begin with a better understanding of the delicate balance that exists on our planet to sustain life. This growing understanding of the delicate nature of our planet is what has given rise to the climate activists we have in our day.

The sun has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees. If it were any closer to the earth, we would burn up. If it was farther from the earth, we would freeze. The earth orbits around the sun with a slight tilt, which creates the four seasons. The earth is tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, which enables the four seasons. If it weren't tilted at exactly that angle, the vapors from the evaporation of the oceans would move north and south, creating monstrous continents of ice on the top and bottom of the planet. If the moon were a little closer the ocean tides would flood vast quantities of land every day. If the ocean floor slipped only one foot deeper across the globe, the carbon dioxide and oxygen balance on the planet would be upset and no animal or plant life could exist.

How does the universe manage to stay in such a delicate balance? It is all the preserving and sustaining work of Jesus. The Bible says Jesus is not a distant spectator who created the world and walked away. Jesus sustains our planet and the universe on a daily moment-by-moment basis.

Today we hear so much in the news about global warming. We are told the earth will cease to exist in 10 years and we are all going to die from global warming. This week, in the news they were featuring a climate activist who was calling for the voluntary extinction of the human race on the planet to save the planet. Folks, that is a lie from the pit of hell.

I am not for pollution. I want to be a good steward of the planet. I think that is obvious to everyone, but you need to know we are not going to destroy the planet. We are not the ones who sustain the planet. We will not inadvertently destroy the planet. Jesus sustains the planet, not us. I been with far too many

Christians, even pastors, who are terrified we will destroy the planet in a few years because we drive gas-powered cars. That is nonsense.

We need to stop looking at the climate issues ecologically with fear-mongering. We need to look at the climate theologically with the confidence that Jesus is in charge. He has promised to sustain the planet and move everything on the planet to God's appointed purpose for the planet.

Colossians 1:17 — In Jesus, all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16 tells us that Jesus is the one who created all things. Colossians 1:17 tells us Jesus is the one who sustains all things moment by moment on the planet.

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:17 (ESV)

Paul says Jesus is the glue that holds the universe together at every moment. It is Jesus who maintains the universe in continual stability, not us. Do you want proof that is it Jesus who sustains the planet? Let me talk to the farmers. Who watered your crops this summer to give you a harvest? It was Jesus who in his sustaining care for us sent rain, not mankind. Jesus sustains the planet.

Hebrews 1:3 — Jesus is the sustainer of the world.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power... Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

Jesus upholds the universe. Some translations say, "Sustains the universe." This word is rich in meaning. It doesn't mean passive support. It also doesn't mean occasional maintenance to keep something running well. It is the idea of movement making progress toward a goal. In other words, Jesus is

sustaining everything in the universe every moment of every day, but he is carrying all things forward toward their God-appointed purpose.

Here is incredibly good news. If Jesus is intimately involved sustaining the planet, moving it forward to its God-ordained purpose for everything, that means Jesus is also intimately involved in your life. He is moving your life forward to the God-ordained purpose for which he created you. The universe, the earth, and each one of us were created by God on purpose and for a purpose. This means no baby is an accident. No baby is unexpected. A baby may be unexpected by us, but that baby is not unexpected by God. We may not know the purpose of a child's life, but rest assured, God has a good purpose for each child's life.

Jesus preserves his people.

Even better than Jesus preserving and sustaining the universe is that the Bible tells us that Jesus is the one who preserves and sustains us. He is the one who provides our daily bread and our daily strength. That is why we traditionally offer a prayer of thanks before meals. It is a way to stop and thank Jesus for providing our daily bread.

To show you how God provides for and sustains his people, let me give you a window into how he accomplished that in the Old Testament. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes some interesting words about how Jesus sustained Israel during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness after they left Egypt until God brought them into the Promised Land.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same

spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 (ESV)

Paul claims that Jesus is the one who sustained Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus is the one who gave them water when they were in danger of perishing from thirst.

Twice we read in the Old Testament of Moses bringing water out of a rock to provide water for the people, once at the beginning of their journey in the wilderness in Exodus 17:1-9. A second time at the end of their wanderings in the desert in Numbers 20:1-13. The Greek tense used in 1 Corinthians is the imperfect tense. It is a continual action. In other words, Jesus didn't just sustain them by providing the people water in the desert only twice in 40 years but at all times for 40 years, he ensured they had water. Twice Jesus supplied the nation with water from a dry rock. That is how miraculously God supplied their needs.

If we broaden this, we know the tens or hundreds of thousands of Israelites also needed food in the desert. For 40 years, six days a week Jesus sustained them by providing manna on the ground for them to eat, so they didn't die of hunger.

We also read that during those 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the shoes and clothing of the Israelites did not wear out. They didn't need to purchase new ones. Imagine wearing the same set of Nike's for 40 years and not need a retread.

I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. Deuteronomy 29:5 (ESV)

Who sustained them with water, sustained them with manna for bread, and sustained their shoes and clothing, so they made it to the Promised Land? Jesus!

I don't have time to get into the exegetical spade work of this today, but when we studied through the Gospel of John, we learned that the cloud that led the Israelites by day and the pillar of fire that led them by night was also Jesus manifesting himself in the Old Testament protecting his people and leading his people to the Promised Land.

Conclusion

Jesus' work did not just begin in Bethlehem when he was born. Jesus was busy long before Bethlehem. He created space, matter, and time. He created all things in the vast physical universe and the spiritual immaterial universe. After that Jesus is busy sustaining the universe and our very lives to bring us to the purpose for which God has created all things.

As we close, I want you to think a little more on what Jesus has done. In Egypt, when Pharaoh threatened to kill God's people, Jesus rescued them from Egypt and then led and sustained them for 40 years bringing them to the Promised Land.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he was born not to save us from earthly death in Egypt, but from a far more sinister ending, eternal death in the lake of fire from our sin. When we trust in Jesus, we are saved by Jesus and sustained by Jesus in our relationship with God every day of our lives until Jesus brings us home to our Promised Land which is being in Jesus' presence forever in heaven and then the new creation.

Think about that baby in the manger. Is he getting any bigger? Do you love him better and long to worship him more? I hope and pray you do.



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