

Why is Jesus Called the Only Begotten Son?



Only
Begotten
Son

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Today we're going to be discussing an extremely important topic regarding the Son of God. There are many opinions regarding what people believe the phrase Son of God actually means. The Scripture is quite clear on what this phrase is actually referring to. There's a description in the Scriptures of why Christ is referred to as the Son of God since we need to understand exactly who He is before we accept Him. We can't just accept someone that we don't know. That's just not how things are done. The gospel is preached so people can know who He is before they choose to give themselves over to the LORD. This is going to be a Part 1 of a series explaining who the Son of God is.

We're going to start with John 3:16. Many people know this verse:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Many individuals focus on the word begotten. Begotten means "to come forth from." Monogennão is a compound word. The word mono means "one" or "unique" and the word gennão means "birth." So in actuality, this verse is saying that He gave His only uniquely-birthed Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. There are many that say this verse says He has given His only Son, the unique one, when in actuality the word Son is in the sentence so we cannot escape the phrase "only-begotten Son." He is not the unique one; He is the uniquely-birthed Son. We're going to expound on this as we move forward.

Many are saying that Jesus is the Son of God only because He was born on this earth or because of prophecy. We're going to see that there's no evidence in the Scripture of that, but the evidence of the Scripture reveals that these two ways are not the case. He is not the Son of God simply because He was born on this earth because that wouldn't make Him unique. Let's look at Luke 1:13-17:

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elisabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. [This is the announcement of John the Baptist's birth by the angel to Zacharias.] And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Here, John the Baptist's parents are being told that this individual will be filled with the Holy Spirit from the mother's womb. Elisabeth was barren so the Holy Spirit came upon Elisabeth, and she conceived a son who was filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb.

This definitely sounds familiar. Let's look at Luke 1:35:

And the angel answered and said unto her [Now the angel is talking to Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon you [Mary], and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.

So the angel is expressing a different type of a manifestation of the Son of God, a different type of meaning for the Son of God. It's a new sense. He's revealing a different type of sense.

"You're going to be filled with the Holy Spirit and inside of you, there's going to be a child who is going to be brought forth. And because you are filled with the Holy Spirit, your child will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and He will be the Son of God."

John the Baptist was also filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb because Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. We see this in Luke 1:41,

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe [John the Baptist] leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were godly, God-fearing individuals. They were filled with the Spirit because of their Faith and they believed in the coming Messiah. When Elisabeth received the power of the Holy Spirit over her, her body, which was barren, was able to conceive. Likewise with Mary. Mary was a virgin so when the Holy Spirit came over her it was a miraculous situation in which the individual who was not able to have a child, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was now able to have a child. Both children John and Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb. Therefore, being born with the Holy Spirit is not the reason Jesus is referred to as the only-begotten Son.

We're going to look at some other examples of being the son of God. Luke 3:38 starts to go down the genealogy of Adam but it goes backwards. It says,

...Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Likewise, we know that Adam was the son of God by creation. God created him in His image and likeness. He created him as His son. We see also in Galatians 4:5-6:

To redeem them that were under the law [under the condemnation of the law], that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

(You can learn more about this in my article entitled The Truth about the Spirit.)

Here it's saying that we receive son-ship by adoption. So there is son-ship by creation and son-ship by adoption. We also have the miracle births of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself. Thus, we see

that there are many ways to be sons of God. However, there's a reason why John 3:16 is referring to Jesus as "the only-begotten Son" and this is what we're going to understand.

First, let's clear up some false ideas. One view is that Jesus was not the Son of God until He was born during New Testament times. Another view is that Jesus was the Son of God because of prophecy. He was just labeled the Son of God from the very beginning. We're going to show how these two ideas are also incorrect, using the Scriptures.

Let's look at the view that Jesus became the Son of God when He was born in Bethlehem. However, Proverbs 30:4 states:

Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended? who has gathered the wind in his fists? who has bound the waters in a garment? who has established all the ends of the earth? [This is speaking about Creation.] What is his name, and what is his son's name, if you can tell?

Here He's describing His ability to move through heaven and earth at will, that He gathered the wind in His hands; He decorated the earth; He created the oceans and established the ends of the earth. Then He asks the name of the individual creating and the name of His Son. So this is an acknowledgement, at least by Solomon, that Jesus was the Son of God prior to His incarnation. Let's continue to look at that. If Solomon knew that God had a Son, then David must have known. Let's look at Psalm 2:11-12 which says,

Serve Yahweh [the Father] with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, [the word kiss there means "to pay homage to," "to reverence"] lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

This is a clear indication, especially when it says, "...you perish from the way." After all, Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and

the Life.” So these verses are saying to serve the Father with fear and to reverence the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the Way. It says to put your trust in the Son. This is a clear indication that not only David and Solomon but also the Israelite’s understood that there was a Father and He had a Son. Thus, it is not confusing why John would say “only-begotten” when he wrote “God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son...”

[Just a side note on John 3:16: God sent His only-begotten Son. He didn’t send someone who became the Son when he got here. He sent His Son, an individual who was already identified as “the Son of God.”] Thus, the idea that He was not the Son of God in the Hebrew scriptures but only in the New Testament scriptures is flawed. (Notice that I’m only using Old Testament scriptures to refute this idea.)

The other idea is that there was a prophecy that Jesus was going to be born on earth; therefore, He obtained the title Son of God before His incarnation only because it was promised. There’s no evidence in the Scriptures of that. That is basically a philosophical explanation.

Now let’s see what occurred prior to Christ’s incarnation that allowed Him to obtain the titles Son of God and only-begotten Son. We’re going to start in Micah and then we’re going to dissect another few verses in Proverbs.

Let’s look at Micah 5:2. It’s very interesting to note certain words:

But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Keep this in mind: His “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” The interesting thing is that the term goings forth in the Hebrew actually means “origin” or “beginning” so it is saying “whose origin/beginning of existence has been from of old, from everlasting.” Then he says, “Yes, if your beginning is from everlasting, then you are everlasting.” That’s not English,

everyone! That is not English. If your “going’s forth,” if your origin, is “from everlasting,” that means that you have begun in a time frame referred to as “everlasting.”

We’re going to use the Scriptures to prove this. We’re going to see what Jesus Himself says as well as Paul and the disciples. First, let’s go to Proverbs 8:22-35, specifically verse 22. It says:

The LORD [the Father] possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old...

We’re talking about a time frame before anything was created, “before his works of old.” It says that “the LORD possessed me in the beginning,” in the beginning of His creation. Before His creation, the LORD possessed me. What does this word possessed mean? “To have something in possession” or “to acquire.” It means that you are newly receiving something or someone. This word was also used in Genesis 4:1 when Eve had given birth to Cain and said, “I have gotten a son, a man from the LORD.” The word gotten means “to acquire,” meaning “I did not have a son, and now I have acquired a son from the LORD.” This is the same word that is used in Proverbs 8:22. It says, “The LORD has acquired me in the beginning of His creation,” before He started to create anything.

Let’s continue to read. This is quite clear. Verse 23 says,

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

We read in Micah 5:2 that His origin was “from of old” and “from everlasting.” We see here that He is being acquired by the Father. The Father is receiving Him. Not only is He receiving Him but He is also setting Him up in the same time period, which is referred to as “everlasting” or before the earth existed. Lets continue in Proverbs 8 verse 24 which says:

When there were no depths, I was brought forth.

The term begotten or birthed means “to be brought forth from.” This is why throughout the genealogies, it shows all the children being begotten from the men – because they were coming forth from the man to the woman to fertilize the seed. It also mentions in Hebrews chapter 7 verse 9 says that Abraham and Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek because Levi was still in Abraham’s loins. So we see that “brought forth” is referring to the birth process.
Verse 25:

Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

So He’s telling you when He was brought forth.

While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

“The foundations of the earth.” Remember, Proverbs 30:4 says,

Who hath ascended up into heaven...who hath established all the ends of the earth?

Proverbs 8:30 says:

Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;

In the Hebrew, this phrase one brought up means “architect.” “I was by Him as an architect.” And if you dissect that word architect, it means “support” or “a helper.” He was by His Father’s side, assisting Him in Creation. This is amazing!

So we see that the Son, at one point in time, “in everlasting,” according to Micah 5:2, was brought forth. That is to say, His origin has begun from the Father, and He was established by the Father as His right hand, as His Son, as His support. This is why when He says “Please restore the glory that I had with you before the world was,” when He ascended into heaven, where did He sit? At the right hand of majesty. We’re going to read a verse about that.

Many people look at this and say this is Wisdom, but that makes absolutely no sense because in Proverbs 8:22 it says that the LORD has just acquired this individual in “the beginning.” There is no time in which the Father has just acquired wisdom. He is Wise. That is the epitome of who He is. He did not acquire wisdom. But wisdom is also something else. Let’s look at Proverbs 8:35 so we can see who this individual is and who it is talking about. It cannot be any of the prophets because it said “while He was creating, He was by His side” but in verse 35 it says,

For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Father.

This definitely sounds like Christ. In 1 John 5:12 it states,

He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.

So we see here clearly that this individual referred to, having His beginning in everlasting, is the Son of God Himself. Therefore, why is He referred to as “the only-begotten Son”? He’s the only one who was brought forth out of God “in everlasting.” We’re going to see Christ Himself expressed this idea. We’re going to build on this idea. Let’s look at John 8:41-42:

You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love me: for I

proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

We see here that Jesus is trying to explain to them, “Listen. I came forth from God in everlasting and then He sent me here. If He is your Father, this is how He is My Father. He is My literal Father.”

Let’s continue to look at this idea in Hebrews 1:1-4. First, let’s identify the differences. It says,

God [not a trinity, but God], who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son [so obviously God is the Father, and His Son is being mentioned in verse 2], whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds...

Here we see God the Father is using the Son to make and create the world. We see in Proverbs 8 that before His creation, the Son proceeded forth from God; then He was by His Father’s side, being used by Him to create the world. This is quite clear from Proverbs 8 and Hebrews 1:1-2.

Hebrews 1:3 says:

Who being the brightness of his glory [the Son is in the brightness of the Father’s glory], and the express image of the Father’s person...

The word brightness means “reflection.” He’s the reflection of the Father’s glory and the express image, or the exact duplicate, of His Father’s person. Do we understand the importance of this? He is the reflection; He is not the source. He is the reflection of the Father’s brightness, and He is the duplicate –He is not the actual thing. He is the exact copy of His Father’s being.

Verse 3 continues,

...And upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance...

Who receives an inheritance from his father: an individual who is co-equal with his father or a son?

Verse 4 states,

Being so much more better than the angels, He has by an inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?

Again, this word begotten here is “gennāo.” There’s no other meaning for this word besides “birth.” To be birthed is to be brought forth from your parents. This verse is being quoted from Psalm 2:7 which reveals that when He set up His holy King, God referred to His Son saying,

“You are My Son. This day I have begotten you.”

We have already read in Proverbs 8 what day that was – a day in everlasting when He was acquired, brought forth from the Father and established in eternity, in everlasting. This is why He is the eternal Son – because He was brought forth and born in eternity when there was no time created. After that, the Father used the Son to create all things.

Let’s continue to read. Hebrews 1:6 is very interesting:

And again, when he brings in the firstbegotten into the world, he says, And let all the angels of God worship him.

This is obviously talking about His identity as the firstborn of heaven, being brought into the earth and being born on this earth. In Matthew, in the very beginning of the gospels, you will see the angels worshiping Him as He’s in the manger. So here we clearly see that He is the first-begotten before He was begotten on this earth. He was the firstborn of heaven before He was born on this earth. He is the true Son of God because He proceeded forth from the Father.

Let’s look at a few quotes from Jesus Himself. John 17:3 says:

And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Jesus Christ Himself referred to the Father as “the only true God.” (We have a video referring to the title Elohim which breaks down the term God. Please check that out.) So Christ is referring to His Father as the only true God. We know that John 3:16 says that He sent His only-begotten Son. Hebrew 1:6 says the “first-begotten” came into the world. Let’s continue to see this idea of Him in Proverbs 8, being begotten from eternity, set up at His Father’s right side, and then given to this world when they have sinned.

Let’s look at John 17:8. It says:

For I have given unto them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

We see this theme that we must believe that He came out from God. After that, God sent Him here. But let’s prove this idea. In John 16:25-27, Jesus says,

These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

Now look at the sequence in verse 28:

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

So we see here He first says, “I came forth from the Father; then I came to this world; now I’m going to leave this world and go back to my Father.”

Verses 29-30 say,

And His disciples said unto him, now you speak plainly, and speak no proverb. Now are we sure that you know all things, and need not that any man should ask you: by this we believe that you came forth from God.

This is very clear, extremely clear. This is why John 17:8 says,

For I have given them the words which You gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you did also send me.

This is quite clear. Jesus is the only-begotten Son because He is the only individual in the history of the universe who has physically come out from the Father. If He has come out from the Father, this is why He is the reflection and the express duplicate of the Father. This is why when we see Him, we see the Father – because He is the express image of the Father. He is not the Father; He is not co-equal with the Father. The Father is the source of Jesus' being. Jesus is the complete, exact representation of His Father to us that we may understand who the Father is and who the Son is. He is the “only-begotten Son” because He was born in heaven, and the first-begotten was brought into this earth, according to Hebrews 1:6.

"And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

This verse is clear as to reveal that there existed a Son of God prior to His incarnation. How can you bring the First-begotten or the Only begotten son into the world if you do not have one to bring? Jesus has been the Son of God since He was begotten in eternity past.

I hope that you were blessed by this message. I ask that you pray and meditate on these verses and allow the Spirit in the Scriptures

to be your only guide to understanding. Pray for wisdom and knowledge that we may better understand Whom we serve and Whom we worship.