

"Only Begotten"

Introduction.

1. The passages containing the words "only begotten" are among the difficult passages of the Bible.
 - a. These words comes from the Greek "monogenes" [mah nah geh **nace**].
 - b. This word is found 9 times in the New Testament - 5 times of Christ, and 4 times of others.
2. What are meant by these words?
3. This question becomes urgent especially as we think about "only begotten" as used in regard to Jesus.

JOH 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the **only begotten** from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOH 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; the **only begotten** God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His **only begotten** Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

JOH 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the **only begotten** Son of God.

1JO 4:9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His **only begotten** Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

4. It is abundantly clear that Jesus is called God's "only begotten"?
 - a. What is exactly meant by these words?
 - b. Do they mean Jesus is God's only Son?
 - c. Do they mean Jesus came after the Father and God beget Him before creation? Some believe it refers to God begetting [creating] Christ before the world began and contend Jesus is a created being.
 - d. Do they refer to the virgin birth of Jesus? This is a very common view.
5. Before jumping to any conclusion it is vital that we go to the scriptures and study how these words are used.

Meaning Of "Only Begotten"

1. The words "only begotten" come from the Greek word "monogenes" [mah nah geh **nace**].
 - a. The word "monos" [**mah** nahs] means "only, alone." See Matt. 4:4, 10.

b. The word “genos” [geh nahs] means “kind, sort, species.”

- 1) It is used in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 14:10 to mean “kind” referring to the various “kinds” of tongues [languages]. It can mean “kind” and when used with “monos” it means “only kind, one of a kind, unique.”
- 2) Some have mistakenly thought “monogenes” is a combination of the word “monos” [only, alone] and “gennao” [gehn nah oh] meaning “to beget.”
- 3) They have used this to teach Jesus was begotten by God before the world began and Jesus [the Word] is not eternal.
- 4) Strong’s Greek lexicon gives this definition of the word “monogenes” - “single of its kind, only.”
- 5) “genos” is used in Acts 17:28 to mean “offspring.” NASB, NIV. This is not its usual meaning.
- 6) The compound word “monogenes” [monos + genos] is used of “a one of a kind” in Luke. (Lk. 7:12; 8:42; 9:38). It is used to denote “only son” or “only daughter.”

2. “Monogenes” thus has the idea of “only, one of a kind, only born, unique.”

- a. One must examine the context to determine its meaning in context.
- b. It is used in different ways.

Isaac - The Bible refers to Isaac as Abraham’s “only begotten.”

HEB 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his **only begotten** son; Lit. the (his) only begotten. “son” is in italics, but it is understood.

1. Do these words mean that Isaac was the only son of Abraham? NIV “one and only” is an incorrect interpretation and does not agree with the rest of the scriptures.
2. An examination of the scriptures reveals that Abraham actually had eight sons.
 - a. His first son was **Ishmael** by Hagar.

GEN 16:15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

GEN 16:16 And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

- b. The Bible reveals that his second son was **Isaac** by Sarah. (Gen. 21:5).

GEN 21:5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

- c. The Bible further reveals that Abraham had **six other sons** by Keturah. (Gen. 25:1, 2). Sarah’s death. (Gen. 23:1,2).

GEN 25:1 Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.

GEN 25:2 And she bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.

- d. All of this makes one question what is meant by the translation “only begotten” in Hebrews 11:17.

- e. It is clear Abraham had eight sons.
- f. Two of these sons, **Ishmael** and **Isaac**, are very well known (Gal. 4:22,23), but the other names are less recognizable.

3. Here are some things we know about Isaac's birth.

- a. It was not a virgin birth, but it was a miraculous birth.

1) Rachel miraculously gave birth to children. (Gen. 30:22).

GEN 30:22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.

2) God also opened the womb of Hannah, and she gave birth to Samuel. (1 Sam. 1:6, 19, 20).

1SA 1:6 Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb.

1SA 1:19 Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

1SA 1:20 And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord."

- b. Sarah was way past the age of child bearing. (Gen. 17:17; 18:11).

GEN 17:17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

GEN 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.

- c. Sarah was only able to give birth to Isaac through the divine intervention of God.

- d. Abraham was also quite old to father a child.

HEB 11:12 therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him **as good as dead** at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

- e. Nothing is too difficult for Jehovah. (Gen. 18:14).

1) What seems too hard for man is no challenge to God. (Matt. 19:26).

2) As already note, Abraham had 6 more sons. (Gen. 25:1,2).

- f. God could bless humanity through the offspring of this very elderly couple. (Gen. 12:3).

4. One thing is apparent about Isaac and that is he was not the only son of Abraham.

- a. He was the special, unique son of Abraham.

1) His birth was a miraculous birth.

2) It was through Isaac and his descendants that God would fulfill His promise to bless the nations. (Gen. 12:3;

17:19; 21:12; 22:18).

- b. The promise would be fulfilled through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, etc. (Matt. 1:1,2).
- c. The words “only begotten” [only born] convey the wrong meaning.
- d. The word “monogenes” means he was the unique son of Abraham.

Others - The words “only begotten” are used of several in the gospel of Luke.

- In all instances in Luke it is translated “only” and is used of children.
- “Monogenes” is not speaking of a virgin birth.

1. It is used in regard to the son of a widow.

LUK 7:12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the **only son** of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.

- a. It is clear this widow had only one son.
- b. The word translated “only begotten” is translated “only son” in this verse. See also NIV
 - 1) We do not know if this was her only child.
 - 2) This “dead man” was her “only son.”
- c. The translation “the only begotten son of his mother” is a violation of human biology.
- d. Jesus raised this only son from the dead to manifest His mercy and to demonstrate He was the Son of God. (Jn. 20:30, 31).

2. It is used of a daughter in Luke 8:42.

LUK 8:42 for he had an **only daughter**, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes were pressing against Him.

- a. The word translated “only begotten” is rendered here “only daughter.”
- b. It has reference to Jesus raising Jairus’ 12 year old daughter from the dead.
- c. Though men laughed at Him for suggesting He could raise this young girl from the dead, Jesus silenced their laughter and mocking by raising her from the dead. (Lk. 8:49-55).

3. It is used in Luke to refer to a boy [son] who was possessed with an evil spirit.

LUK 9:38 And behold, a man from the multitude shouted out, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my **only boy**,

- a. Lit. “he is the only [boy] to me.” The word “boy” is in italics but is understood.
- b. The text reveals this was the only son or boy of this unnamed man.

c. Jesus healed this son who was the only son of this man who believed Jesus could heal his son. (Lk. 9:39-42).

d. Again the word “monogenes” is not denoting a virgin birth or a miraculous birth.

Jesus - Jesus is called God’s “only begotten.” (Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn. 4:9).

1. Is Jesus the only Son of God?

2. We need to read and examine the Bible to answer this question.

a. Adam was called “the son of God” because God created him. (Lk. 3:38; Gen. 1:26, 27).

b. Even angels are called “sons of God.” (Job 1:6; 38:7). They are created beings. (Psa. 148:2,5).

PSA 148:2 Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!

PSA 148:5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created.

c. The gospel of John reveals that God has many children or sons. (Jn. 1:12, 13).

JOH 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to **become children of God**, even to those who believe in His name,

JOH 1:13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

d. Paul spoke of God having “sons and daughters.” (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

2CO 6:17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.

2CO 6:18 "And I will be a father[Father] to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

e. The epistle of John also reveals this same fact that God has many children.

1JO 2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is **born of Him**.

1JO 3:9 No one who is **born of God** practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is **born of God**.

1JO 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is **born of God** and knows God.

1JO 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**; and whoever loves the Father loves the child **born of Him**.

1JO 5:4 For whatever is **born of God** overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.

1JO 5:18 We know that no one who is **born of God** sins; but He who was **born of God** keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

4. The Bible also tells us that Jesus has “many brothers.” (Rom. 8:29).

ROM 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the **first-born among many brethren**;

a. This is not a reference to His four fleshly brothers. (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3).

MAT 13:55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"

MAR 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

b. This is a reference to His spiritual brothers - Christians.

c. The word "first-born" denotes preeminence.

d. Jesus is God's preeminent Son. No other son compares to Jesus. No angel compares to Jesus. (Heb. 1:4-13).

- He was known as "the Word" before His birth. (Jn.1:1, 18; 1 Jn. 1:1).
- He may have also been known as "the Son" denoting His close relationship to God. (Gal. 4:4).
- Some believe Galatians 4:4 is a proleptic use of the words "the Son," that is, speaking of what the Word would become at His birth of the virgin Mary.

GAL 4:4 But when the fulness of the time came, **God sent forth His Son**, born of a woman, born under the Law,

- We cannot know for sure if Jesus was called "the Son" in eternity.
- It is for sure that He is designated as "Son" after His birth of the virgin Mary.

LUK 1:32 "He will be great, and **will be called the Son of the Most High**; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

- 1) He is the One who has always been with God except for the brief time of His incarnation.
- 2) He is the One who has all authority. (Matt. 28:18).
- 3) He is the One who sits at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:32, 33).

ACT 2:32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

ACT 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

5. The birth of Jesus was a miraculous birth, but different from other miraculous births.

a. It was a virgin birth. (Matt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-35).

b. His birth is totally unique.

1) Only Christ did not have a human father. See Lk. 1:34; Matt. 1:18-25.

2) Only Christ was born of a virgin in the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. (Isa. 7:14).

Children Of God - God has innumerable sons or children.

1. Every person is a “child” or “son” of God by creation. (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:2).
2. One becomes a spiritual child of God through the new birth. (Jn. 3:1-5; Tit. 3:5; Gal. 3:26, 27).
3. This new birth is brought about by obedience to the word of God, the gospel, the truth. (1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18, 21; Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:23; Jn. 8:32).
4. Every Christian is a “son” or “child” of God. (Gal. 3:26, 27). See again 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.
5. God has given us “the right” to become His child through Christ. (Jn 1:12).

JOH 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

How Does All This Apply To Isaac And Jesus?

Isaac - We know Isaac was one of eight sons of Abraham.

1. He was the one of a kind, unique son of Abraham.
2. He was a special son through whom the Messianic promises would come.
3. He was not Divine, but was a human being.

Jesus - Jesus is one of many sons of God.

1. Every child of God is a son of God.
2. Jesus is, however, the **unique** Son of God.
 - a. Jesus was human. (Jn. 1:14; Gal. 4:4).

JOH 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

GAL 4:4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

- 1) Jesus alone was sent from the Father.
 - 2) He alone was born of the virgin Mary to become the Savior of the world.
 - b. He had a human mother, and human brothers and sisters. He experienced a physical birth and had the experiences of a human - hunger, thirst, joy, pain, suffering, death, etc.
 - c. Jesus was more than human. He was “God [Deity] with us. (Matt. 1:23; Jn. 10:30; 14:9; Col. 1:15).
 - d. He was the Divine Son of God. (Matt. 16:16, 17; Matt. 3:16, 17; 17:5; Jn. 20:30, 31).
3. Here are some of the ways Jesus was the unique, a one of a kind Son of God.

He alone is eternal. (Mic. 5:2; Isa. 9:6,7; 1 Jn. 1:2). The “Word” is before all created things. (Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2).	He alone has the confirmation of His Sonship from heaven. (Matt. 3:16; 17:5).	He alone has ascended to be with God in heaven. (Acts 1:8-11; Jn. 3:13).
He alone is the Son who created all things. (Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col.1:15-17). All other sons [men or angels] are created.	He alone had the full measure of the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 3:35).	He alone sits at God’s right hand. (Acts 2:32, 33; Heb. 1:3).
He alone was born of a virgin. (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-35).	He alone died vicariously on the cross for our sins. (Isa. 53:4-6; Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 15:3,4).	He alone is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16).
He alone was Deity. (Isa. 9:6, 7; Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1; 10:9; 14:9; 20:28; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8).	He alone has all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:18).	He alone is our High Priest and Mediator. (Heb 3:1;. 4:14, 15; 1 Tim. 2:5).
He alone was sinless. (1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15.).	He alone is the pledge of our resurrection.(1 Cor. 15:20-23).	He alone is coming again with the angels to raise men from the dead and be the judge of all mankind. (Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; Acts 17:30, 31; 2 Cor. 5:10).
He alone is the first born from the dead, that is, died but arose from the grave. (Col. 1:18). All others who had been raised died again.	He alone is the “chief corner stone” of the church. (Matt. 21:42; Eph. 2:20).	He alone is able to defeat Satan and all the forces of evil. (1 Cor. 15:24-27).
He alone was Deity in the flesh. (Jn. 1:14). See Matt. 1:23; Isa. 9:6,7. 1 Tim. 3:16.	He alone is our Advocate with the Father. (1 Jn. 2:1,2).	He alone is the One to whom every knee shall bow. (Phil. 2:9-11).
He alone fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah	He alone is the “Chief Shepherd.” (1 Pet. 5:4).	He alone is the “Head” of the body. (Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23).

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)