

## Was Jesus eternally begotten? If so, what does that mean?

Written by Josh Winslett

Monday, 08 August 2016 15:54 - Last Updated Monday, 08 August 2016 15:55

---

A question answered for one of our readers:

Was Jesus eternally begotten? If so, what does that mean?

The phrase in question is found in multiple Baptist and Christian Confessions from yesteryear. In short, the phrase simply conveys the idea that Jesus has eternally existed as the only begotten Son of God. Note again, it doesn't say that he was generated at some point in eternity, but instead, that he has always existed as the only begotten from all eternity. I do, however, usually stray away from using the term "eternally begotten" because it often causes confusion. This truth, and said phrase, is often perverted by various false Christian denominations to say that Christ was created or produced sometime in eternity. Again, this is why when explaining the phrase I usually point out that it doesn't mean that Christ was begotten in eternity, but instead it means that he has eternally existed as the only begotten.

To consider this more in depth, Primitive Baptists traditionally view the term "eternally begotten son" as compounding two true doctrinal tenets, 1) that Jesus is the eternal Son, 2) that Jesus has eternally existed as the only begotten Son. The minority view, which is usually rejected by most Primitive Baptists, states that the Word of God became the Son of God when he took on flesh. This minority Incarnate Sonship view borders on to Sabellianism. Primitive Baptist hold that Jesus has eternally existed as the Son of God and took on the title Son of man at incarnation.

The truth of eternal Sonship can be seen in how the NT often uses language that states that God sent and gave his son. You cannot send or give a son that does not already exist. I would challenge anyone to find a passage that says that God made a son. (Isaiah 9:6, John 3:16, 1 John 4:9-10, Galatians 4:4-6, etc.). Isaiah 9:6 not only states that a son was given (not made) but it says that one name for God is everlasting Father. How can you have an everlasting Father without an everlasting Son. The Son is also said to have made all things (Colossians 1:13-16; Hebrews 1:2). Furthermore, how can something be manifest that did not already previously exist (1 John 3:8)? Also consider Hebrews 7:3, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." In comparing Melchisedec to Jesus and showing how this

## Was Jesus eternally begotten? If so, what does that mean?

Written by Josh Winslett

Monday, 08 August 2016 15:54 - Last Updated Monday, 08 August 2016 15:55

---

high priest was "made like unto the Son of God", the writer of Hebrews uses this parallel, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Please take note of this parallel. The fact that Melchisedec was without father, mother, natural decent, beginning or end of days proved that he was like unto the Son of God.

Again, the phrase Son of God refers to Christ's eternal divinity and the phrase Son of Man refers to the eternal Son of God made flesh.

Now let's consider the phrases in the Bible using the word "begotten" and how they pertain to the eternal Son of God.

Concerning the phrase "this day have I begotten thee" - Psalms 2 and all verses that use this phrase in the NT are all in reference to the resurrection of Christ and not his incarnation (Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5).

Concerning the phrase "only begotten son" - This is an interesting phrase that can often cause confusion without deep and personal study. How is Christ the only begotten son of God? The phrase "only begotten" comes from the Greek word monogenes, which is a combination of two adjectives. This combination denotes the idea of Christ being the unique one, or the only one in a very special sense. Let's consider this phrase:

The phrase "only begotten" usually is viewed as describing the special relationship that the Son has with the Father, wherein the Son is equal with the Father in substance, essence, and nature. This can be seen through John 5:18, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." By claiming Sonship and God as his Father, Jesus makes himself equal with God to first century readers. So the phrases "only begotten" can be viewed as showing Christ's special, and eternal, relationship in the God-head. To quote Elder Michael Gowens in his Exposition on John, "....Jesus is the unique Son of God. He is not God's Son by natural birth, new birth, or special creation, but by virtue of His essential oneness with the Father."

It could also possibly be said that Jesus is the only begotten of God in the same sense in which Isaac was the only begotten of Abraham (Hebrews 11:17). Abraham had many sons (Genesis

## Was Jesus eternally begotten? If so, what does that mean?

Written by Josh Winslett

Monday, 08 August 2016 15:54 - Last Updated Monday, 08 August 2016 15:55

---

25:1) but it was only through Isaac that his seed would be called (Hebrews 11:18). To parallel, it is equally true that only through Jesus are God's children called.

I hold a variation of both views, but primarily hold to the first.

Some would falsely charge the above view as being Catholic in origin. It does not take much study of early church fathers prior to Catholicism to see that the eternal Sonship view predates the church of Rome.

In conclusion, the phrase "eternally begotten Son" is simply meant to convey the biblical truth found in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."