

“Sonship” vs. “Eternally Begotten Son”

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

Excerpt from Apples of Gold

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

Holy Scripture teaches that there is *one* God who has revealed Himself in three different Persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God, who is a spirit, became a Son for the purpose of dying in order to redeem fallen man. When this occurred, God also remained in heaven – having become a Father as He had “begotten” (imparted life) a son.

Whenever Scripture speaks of Jesus as the Son, it is *always* referring to the 33½ years He spent on the earth as a genuine human, although He never ceased being God. Thus God begat *a Son!* In other words, before the incarnation, before the virgin Mary’s egg was supernaturally fertilized without intercourse (Luk. 1:35) when He became “the Son of God”, “the only begotten Son of the Father” – before all of this and from eternity past – who was Jesus? He was God in His own right. He was *always* God. “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

God is a Spirit (Joh.4:24 KJB). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one and the same eternal Spirit from eternity past. Messiah Jesus is thus the Creator of heaven and earth – the God of the Old Testament whose principal name is Jehovah – come in the flesh for the purpose of saving His people from the terrible consequence of their sins.

Christianity is **monotheistic** – we do not believe in three Gods. There is *one* God (Isaiah 43:10–11; 44:6, 8b; 45:5, 21–22; Mk. 12:29–33; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5–6; 1 Tim. 2:5; and Jas. 2:19) who, for the sake of redeeming fallen man (and that plan via foreknowledge was from before the foundation of the world), has revealed Himself in three distinct persons.

In dealing with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, confusion arises if we fail to keep in mind that various Scriptures unmistakably represent Him as being 100% human whereas others declare Him 100% deity. Scripture does not present Him as 50% human and 50% deity. Such a being is from pure pagan mythology. After all, what is a 50% man? One is either 100% human or he is not human. The same is true of deity.

The confusion concerning Jesus’ nature is compounded when we fail to recognize that some statements in Scripture are intended to emphasize only His humanity whereas others were given for the very purpose of stressing and reminding us of His deity. When this is acknowledged and carefully considered, most troubling questions relating to His person can readily be resolved. Let us now apply this to the “sonship” versus the “eternally begotten son” issue.

I **will** declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son;
this day have I begotten thee. (Psalm 2:7)

We note that the psalmist is saying that some day in the *future*, and after David penned these words, God would have a son (note: Acts 4:25 declares that David was the human author of Psalm 2). The tense in this verse is clearly future (“will”), as is the companion verse, Hebrews 1:5 below (note the words “will” and “shall”).

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, **this day** have I begotten thee? And again, I **will** be to him a Father, and he **shall** be to me a Son?

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The above refers to the incarnation (and as shall be shown, also to His resurrection) when God begat (to impart life) a Son by Mary’s miraculous conception (Mat. 1:18–25; Luke 1:35; John 1:14). This happened on a certain day: “This Day have I begotten thee” (Heb. 1:5–7). Therefore, we cannot say that God had a Son before this time. This demonstrates that sonship in connection with God must refer to His humanity and not to His deity (see: Luk. 1:32a).

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: **therefore** also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be **called the Son** of God. (Luke 1:35)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of **the only begotten** of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Having become human, the second person of the divine Trinity could now die and shed His blood in order to redeem fallen man (Phil. 2:5–11; Isa. 7:14, 9:6). But as Deity, the person we now know of as Jesus Christ had no beginning, was not begotten, was not a Son, and did not come into being. He always existed as God (Psa. 90:2; Mic. 5:2; John 1:1–2; Heb. 1:8), but as a man and as God’s Son He did have a beginning, He was begotten – this being the same time Mary conceived.

Therefore, the doctrine of the “eternal sonship” of Jesus Christ is unscriptural, irreconcilable to reason, and is a self-contradictory concept. Eternity has no beginning; thus, since He has been God from eternity He could not have a beginning as God. Eternity has no reference to time so if He was begotten “this day,” then it was done in time and not in eternity past.

Unless one is a son by creation, as Adam (Luke 3:38) and the angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Genesis 6:1–4), the word Son always supposes time, generation, father, mother, beginning, and conception. Time, created, beginning – these are opposites to God and eternity and are absolutely impossible to reconcile with the two. If sonship refers to deity and not to humanity, then this person of the Deity had a beginning in time and not in eternity. But it is plainly stated in Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 that God had a Son “this day” and not in eternity past.

Moreover, the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 2:7 is revealed in Acts 13 as being resurrection day (see below). At that moment in *time* (not in eternity past), Jesus’ dead human body was suddenly “begotten” (brought back to life) by the Father.

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that **the promise** which was made unto the fathers, God hath **fulfilled** the same unto us their children, in that he hath **raised up Jesus** again; as it is also written in **the second psalm**, Thou art my Son, **this day** have I begotten thee. (Acts 13:32–33; also see Rom. 1:3–4)

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Being resurrected, Christ Jesus now had a glorified body that could never die again. Indeed, Hebrews 5:5 shows that it was upon this very basis that Christ Jesus became qualified to be a priest forever “after the order of Melchizedek” as He now had “an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16–17) ! Therefore, the incarnation and resurrection are seen in Scripture as a single completed entity – the 33½ year span of Jesus’ earthly human life – with these two events as the beginning and ending, the bookends.

Luke 1:35; Heb. 1:5–7 and Mat. 1:18–25 tell us when the begetting took place. It was nearly 2,000 years ago. It had been predicted that God would have a Son (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; cp. Heb. 1:5; Mat. 1:18–25; Luke 1:32–35). This was fulfilled when the Virgin “conceived of the Holy Ghost” (Mat. 1:20) and not in eternity past. Christ’s two natures must ever be distinguished: the human nature whereby He is the Son of God and thus “inferior” to Him – and the Divine nature which was from eternity and equal to God (see Isaiah 9:6 & Phil. 2:5–8 below).

Moreover, the title “son” always refers to a position submitted to one of higher authority – a father. It is *never* meant to signify a position of equal authority to the title “Father”. Were Jesus an eternally begotten Son, He would have always been in a submitted position to the Father: that would mean there were two Gods! Yet Isaiah 9:6 declares Jesus to be equal to and one with the Father (note: the son is called “God” and “the Father”, thus they are eternally the same Spirit), as does Phil. 2:5–8. Hence, these verses speak of both His deity and humanity.

For unto us a **child** is born, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6; also note that Psa. 50:1; Isa. 1:24, 10:20–21; Jer. 32:18 all call Jehovah “the Mighty God”.)

... Christ Jesus: Who, being in **the form of God**, thought it not robbery to be **equal with God**: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him **the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5–8)