

Lord's Day 13

33. Q. Why is he called God's *only-begotten Son*, since we also are children of God?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. We, however, are children of God by adoption, through grace, for Christ's sake

We are going to be focusing on the phrase "only-begotten Son"

This is also known as the doctrine of "Eternal Generation"

- Why is Jesus referred to as the "Son of God?"
 - What does this mean?
- Why is Jesus referred to as the "only Begotten" son of God?
 - Does this mean Jesus was created by God at some point in the past?
- When was Jesus begotten?
 - At the incarnation?
 - Or from all eternity?
- What is the doctrine of Eternal Generation?
- Because Jesus was begotten by the Father, does this mean He is not equal to the Father?

The Son – Jesus

- The second person of the Trinity "*only begotten*"
 - Regarding the Functional Trinity in regards to the redemption of the elect
 - Not the Ontological Trinity regarding His nature or essence
- The "only" (μονογενής) begotten
 - Meaning "unique" – "one of a kind"
 - This cannot be said about anyone else
- "Begotten" (γεννάω) – to bring forth, beget, produce, to parent
- Remember:
 - We have to understand how these words are used in the context of the verse
 - We simply do not take the dictionary definition and apply it to the text
 - Rather – *how is the word being used in its context?*
 - Example:
 - Was the Son of God created?
 - No – He is eternal
 - Therefore – God did not beget or produce Him like your parents begot you.
 - The word *begotten* means to "bring forth" or "produce"
 - But this definition cannot be directly applied to Jesus

Gregory Nazianzus

- "The begetting of God is to be honored by silence; the great thing is for you to learn he was begotten"

The Doctrine of Eternal Generation

- In the same way one concludes the doctrine of the Trinity is the same way one understands eternal generation.
 - There is no one proof text for the Trinity, no verse that explicitly states that there is one God in three Persons.
- The doctrine is derived by looking at multiple texts of Scripture and putting them all together.
- The same is true for eternal generation, there is no proof text that summarizes the doctrine.
 - Good and necessary consequence is needed in order to put all the verses together.
- The Doctrine of Eternal Generation deals with the personal names that describe *the relationship* between the Father and the Son (only begotten).
- The doctrine describes the *personal characteristics* which make each Person of the Godhead unique
 - How the One God is *eternally differentiated / distinguished*.
- Within the Godhead both the relation and the distinction of personal properties between the three Persons are kept.
 - The Father is “*unbegotten*,”
 - The Son is “*begotten*,”
 - The Spirit “*proceeds*” from both the Father and the Son.
 - The Father is not begotten, neither does the Son proceed.
- The **attributes** (Ontological Trinity) of the divine Godhead are to be distinguished from their **personal properties** (Functional Trinity).
 - Attributes - All three are co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal
 - = Ontological Trinity
 - And yet maintain their own distinct properties (Father, Son, Spirit)
 - = Functional Trinity
 - Each person property is kept to the individual person of the Trinity.
 - The Father is eternally unbegotten,
 - The Son is eternally begotten,
 - And the Spirit eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son
- **Generation** must also be understood differently from **creation**.
- Because we associate begottenness with bringing forth children, there is a tendency to read this back into the generation of the Son.
 - This is false thinking.
 - At no point was the Son created.
 - He has existed for all eternity as the Son of God but was also begotten.
 - This is where much of the confusion lies:
 - *How the second Person can both be the eternal Son of God and begotten at the same time.*
 - We must always keep in mind the distinction between the creature (humanity) and the Creator (God)

- the infinite and the finite.
- Language is being used to communicate something that we are not capable of understanding.

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Bible Verses that Support the Eternal Generation of the Son

- **John 5:26** - *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself*
 - The question is what Jesus meant by the Father having life in Himself.
 - In order to understand the Son, we must first understand the Father.
 - The words “as” and “so” indicate in the Father’s existence means the same thing as the Son’s existence.
 - Augustine states the Father begat the Son to be unchangeable life, which is life eternal.
 - This life is the type of life only God can have.
 - It is completely self-existent life which is dependent upon nothing else.
 - This verse can be confusing and is often interpreted as the 2nd Person becoming the Son at the incarnation.
 - This is not the case since He was already God before becoming a man
 - Jesus’s personal property of Sonship is eternal just like the person property of the Father.

- **Psalm 2:7** - *I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you*
 - **What is meant by “today?”**
 - It is referring to eternity, the span of Jesus’s existence
 - The speech is from the past, and by the time the words are spoken the Son has already been proclaimed.
 - The time of the decree is not specified but it a *metaphorical use* of “this day,” indicating it took place in eternity
 - **Psalm 95:7** - *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*

- **John 1:18** - *No one has ever seen God; the only God / Son, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known*
 - The only begotten Son existed from all eternity by the side of the Father.
 - The Son became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14) to reveal (exegete) the Father to humanity
 - This eternal infinite relationship is what makes it possible for Jesus to know and discuss heavenly things because He is the eternal Son of God.

- **John 1:1** - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (pros) God, and the Word was God*
 - The Word was with (pros) God, meaning face to face with Him.
 - This demonstrates both relationship and equality between the two Persons, eliminating any confusion of ontological subordination.
 - The subordination is economic, not ontological.
 - In His divine nature He is autotheos, or self-God.
 - As to His Person, He is begotten from the Father

34. Q. Why do you call him *our Lord*?

A. Because he has ransomed us, body and soul, from all our sins, not with silver or gold but with his precious blood, and has freed us from all the power of the devil to make us his own possession

Exodus 20:2 - *“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”*

- Every Christian has been brought out of the land of Egypt
 - In a sense where we all started out in the world at some point
 - We all needed to be redeemed from this world’s system
 - We were all in bondage to our sin

1 Corinthians 6:20 - *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body*

- This redemption was not free
- We were all bought with a price
 - The blood of Christ
 - It took God the Son to come to earth to die for us, in order for us to be redeemed out of the slave market of sin
 - So no – live accordingly

Colossians 1:13 – *“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son”*

- The battle is spiritual
- We all started out:
 - In our sin
 - In this world’s system
 - Aligned with the seed of the Serpent
- Christ has transferred us
 - Out from the realm of the Serpent
 - To the kingdom of His beloved Son
 - The kingdom of the seed of the woman