

## What does “only-begotten Son” mean?

Most Christians will tell you that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, but if you ask them what that means they cannot tell you. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The Greek word for “only begotten” is *monogenes* and means “uniquely born” or “one-of-a-kind birth.” The conception and birth of Jesus was unique—nothing like it had ever happened before and will never happen again in the future. He was conceived in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Spirit and is the **only one who has two natures—divine and human**; all God and all man. “Only begotten” does not mean that Jesus came into existence at a point in time, which is what cults believe.

### 1. Jesus existed in eternity past as “the Word.”

Jesus always existed as God in eternity past. Micah 5:2 says His days are from eternity. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word (this was His name before “Jesus”) and the Word was with God (the Father), and the Word was God.” This shows Jesus pre-existed as God before He came to earth and became man.

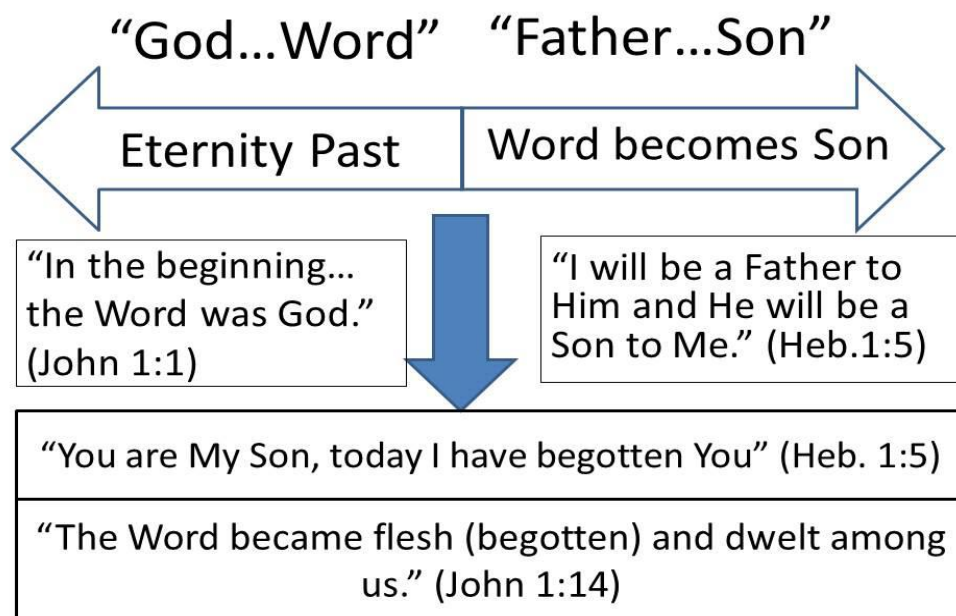
### 2. When Jesus left heaven to put on human flesh, “the Word” became “the Son.”

Cults teach that a father is older than a son, so Jesus must have come into existence at a point in time. The Bible does not teach this. Jesus has always existed as God in eternity past, and the term “Son” refers to His humanity which began at His Incarnation. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” This happened 2,000 years ago when He entered a human body and was named Jesus. The Word became the Son when He came to earth.

Dr. Walter Martin, author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, writes:

There is no such thing as “the eternal Son of God.” Before Jesus took upon Himself a human form, He already existed with the Father. Hebrews 1:5-6 says that when He brings the first-begotten into the world, He says, “I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me.” This is a reference to the Incarnation. It is a change of relationship when the Word takes on flesh—the Word becomes the Son.

The terms “Father” and “Son” describe the first two Persons of the Trinity, God and Jesus, after Christ came to earth. This proves that the terms “begotten” and “sonship” refer to His humanity and not His divinity. As God, He had no beginning, was not begotten, and was not a Son. As man, He was begotten in the flesh and became the Son.



In Acts 13:33, the apostle Paul quotes from Psalm 2:7 and applies the verse to the resurrection of Jesus when He was begotten from the dead. He says, "God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.'" Romans 1:4 tells us that He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. Psalm 2:7 describes the King being exalted, and Acts 13:33 describes Jesus being exalted as King through His resurrection.

Although Paul applies Psalm 2:7 to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, it does not change the doctrine of Christ's human sonship as being the only begotten of the Father. The resurrection of Jesus is not the cause of His sonship or the reason why He is called the Son of God, but it is a manifestation of it. Although Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4), He was the Son of God before His resurrection from the dead:

- He was declared to be the Son of God by a voice from heaven at His baptism (Matt. 3:17) and on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5).
- Peter confessed Him to be the Son of God (Matt. 16:16) and He was believed on by His disciples as such (John 1:49).
- Even demons confessed that He was the Son of God (Luke 4:41).

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