



Why Jesus is called “The Son of God” and What It Means

Description



The question “*Why is Jesus called the Son of God*” has

been rattling around in my head since a recent talk with a friend of mine (*who’s a Jehovah’s Witness*). We’re debating if Jesus is God, or merely “a god”. My friend insists that because Jesus is the “Son of God”, he can’t be God Himself.

I did a bunch of research and – as it turns out – I think the opposite is true.

But I’m getting ahead of myself.

The “Son of God” in the Bible

The Bible uses this phrase a few dozen times and it usually – but not always – refers to Jesus Himself.

In many Bible translations, Luke 3:38 lists Adam as the “son of God” in Jesus’ genealogy. However, the word “son” does not exist in the Original Greek. It was added for clarity in the translation. (*you can see the [interlinear for Luke 3:38 here](#)*.) The Berean Literal Bible translates it as “*of Enosh, of Seth, of Adam, of God.*” which is closer to the Greek, though less pleasant in English.

Secondly, Christians, the nation of Israel, angels, and a few people are occasionally referred as “sons of God”. However – as we will see in a minute – it has a slightly different meaning when applied to Christ.

Why Jesus is called the “Son of God”

Some have argued that the phrase “Son of God” refers to Jesus’ relationship with God the Father in eternity past before time began. Many incorrect ideas are built on this, such the (*heretical*) idea that Jesus was a created being. However, Jesus’ title of the “Son of God” has a very clear and specific reason/cause, which was revealed when Gabriel visited Mary.

Luke 1:34-35

34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

35 The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; **and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.**”

Jesus is the Son of God because of the incarnation.

That’s the only reason.

Therefore, Jesus was not the “Son of God” before the incarnation.

This is a crucial point that most people seem to miss. Jesus relationship to the Father became a father/son relationship because of the incarnation. However, the scriptures are almost entirely silent on what Jesus’ relationship with the Father was before the incarnation. We simply don’t know. The only clue we are given is that the Father sent Jesus into the world. (*1 John 4:9 and others*).

That’s about all we know of the Father’s relationship with Jesus before the incarnation.

However, the phrase “Son of God” had an extremely important meaning to 1st century Jews that we modern westerners often miss.

We’ll look at that next because it reveals the reason that calling Jesus the “Son of God” proclaims His Deity, and thus was so upsetting to the Pharisees.

The Context

As with all things Biblical, Context is absolutely crucial. (*You can read my articles on [Tithing](#), and [Speaking in Tongues](#), and especially [my article on Revelation](#) if you disagree*) The root of the title “Son of God” and its meaning goes all the back to the beginning. Specifically, Genesis 1 and the account of creation.

Genesis 1: 11-12, 21, 24

11 Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit **after their kind** with seed in them”; and it was so.

12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed **after their kind**, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, **after their kind**; and God saw that it was good.

21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed **after their kind**, and every winged bird **after its kind**; and God saw that it was good.

24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures **after their kind**: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth **after their kind**”; and it was so.

25 God made the beasts of the earth **after their kind**, and the cattle **after their kind**, and everything that creeps on the ground **after its kind**; and God saw that it was good.

Notice the phrase, “after its kind” I’ve highlighted. Contrary to what Evolutionists think, every species on this planet is unique in its “kind” (*It’s genus and species.*) You cannot create new species of animal.

You just can’t.

(NOTE: *You can mix a few of them that are very closely related to each other – such as Horses and donkeys to get a mule – but these hybrids are always sterile. They cannot reproduce “after their kind”. Further, you can only cross species that are already VERY closely related like horses and donkeys.*)

Every species that exists was created to reproduce “after its own kind”. You can breed for certain traits (*dogs come in both Doberman Pincer and Poodle varieties*) but you can’t change their species. The offspring of two dogs is always another dog.

Always.

100% of the time.

A species can only reproduce “after its own kind”, and this is key to understanding what “the Son of God” meant in its original context.

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The son of an Ape is always an Ape.

The son of a Sloth is always a Sloth

The son of a Turtle is always a Turtle.

Always.

No exceptions.

So the Son of the true God must be: _____?

(if you said "the true God", you get a gold star)

Remember, the Bible was primarily written by Jews, to Jews, living in a Jewish culture. To the Jews, this idea of "after its own kind" was obvious. It was a part of their culture. A son is always exactly the same species as his Father.

Every time, no exceptions.

So it is with Jesus.

That's why Jesus claiming to be the Son of God was the final nail in the coffin at His trial. *(after they couldn't get false witnesses to accuse Him)*

Matthew 26:63-66

63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You **tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.**”

64 Jesus said to him, “**You have said it yourself**; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has **blasphemed!** What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the **blasphemy**;

66 what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”

Some have claimed it was Jesus reference to judgement that was the blasphemy. However, Luke’s account is more concise and leaves us in no doubt that Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God was the blasphemy.

Luke 22:70-71

70 And they all said, “**Are You the Son of God, then?**” And He said to them, “**Yes, I am** .”

71 Then they said, “**What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.**”

If Jesus was merely claiming to a creation of God (*as some suggest*) why would Jesus saying that He was the Son of God be blasphemy? Claiming to be a creation of God is hardly blasphemy. However, if being the Son of God means claiming to **be** God, then it makes sense.

Again – from a Jewish perspective – the Son of God could only be God.

Another thing, Sonship meant more than Species.

“Son” establishes the relationship between two people. A father and son are identical species, but the father has more authority. Jesus submitted Himself to the Father in everything, partially as an example to us. So the “son of something” is exactly like that thing except that the Father has a higher authority.

The “Son of God” is a perfect way to phrase Jesus’ relationship with the Father as well as His unity to the Father.

But then, why does the Bible call Christians (*and others*) “sons of God”

I’m glad you asked.

Ephesians 1:5

5 He predestined us to **adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

The key word there is “adoption”. We are not “natural” sons of God but rather adopted into the family. Because we are adopted, we don’t have to share God’s qualities even though He calls us “sons of God”.

A example:

A family of sloths might adopt a turtle and welcome him into their family. The turtle might be loved and welcomed into the sloth’s family. However, that doesn’t mean the turtle can hang upside down on trees. Though he is a son, he is a son by adoption. So it’s not required that the turtle be the same the species with the sloths... because he’s adopted.

Further, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus is the “only” Son of God.

John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His **only begotten** Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

The word that’s translated “only begotten” (*yes it’s just one word*) is the Greek word “[monogenes](#).” I have joked before that monogenes means “*The only one with my genes*”, and that’s not far from the actual definition.

3439 monogen?s (from 3411 /*mish?tó*s, “one-and-only” and 1085 /*génos*, “offspring, stock”) – properly, *one-and-only*; “**one of a kind**” – literally, “one (*monos*) of a class, *genos*” (**the only of its kind**).

Notice, the idea of “begetting” is not contained in the Greek word. Here’s the definition of “beget” from the Merriam-Webster and Cambridge dictionaries respectively.

to procreate as the father: SIRE
– *He died without begetting an heir*

to be the father of:

– *In the Bible it says that Adam begat Cain and Abel.*

To be 100% clear: the word “begotten” does NOT appear in the Greek, nor does monogenes include “begotten” in its meaning.

It's not there.

It's an (*inaccurate*) hold-over from the King James version and only appears in a few modern translations because monogenes does NOT indicate birth or creation of any kind. It refers to being the “only one of its kind” as seen above.

In the New Testament, it's used of both Jesus and others. In each case, it refers to only children.

Luke 7:12

12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, 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.

Luke 8:41-42

41 And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house;

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

Luke 9:38

38 And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my **only** boy,

(Notice how the word “begotten” isn't used in the translation of those verses? That's because it doesn't belong.)

Notice that it refers to an only child when it's used. Now lets throw a (*really cool*) wrench in this definition.

Hebrews 11:17

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received

the promises was offering up his **only begotten (*monogenes*)** son;

This statement about Issac being Abraham's only son is interesting because we know that's not the case. In Genesis 16, Abraham has a child (*Ishmael*) with Hagar. Yet Issac is described as Abraham's only son.

How?

Because Monogenes doesn't mean "only son/daughter/child". It means "*the only one of its kind*". Issac was the son of promise, Ishmael was the result Abraham and Sarah trying to get ahead of God. Despite their shared father, Issac was the "only one of his kind" as it relates to inheritance because of the promise to Abraham.

We also see this usage outside the bible.

The word monogenes is also used to describe the only heir of a king or pharaoh, even though the king/pharaoh had other children by concubines. **The point is not "only had one son" in that context; the point is only legitimate heir.** Again – as I like to joke – it's "*the only one with my genes*".

That's how it's used of Christ.

It's not that God doesn't have other "children" (*such as Christians being His adopted children*). Monogenes sets out that Jesus is the only one of His kind. All of the other children are grafted in, adopted, or not actual heirs like a son would be. Jesus is the only one who "*has God's genes*".

Again, we come back to the context of Genesis. Jesus is the only (*monogenes*) Son of The Father, and that means he is the only one who is God... Because the son of an Ape is an Ape, and the son of God is God.

That's why Jesus is called "The Son of God" and that's what it means

Pretty cool huh?

Jesus is also the "Son of Man"

Just a quick final thought. In addition to being called the Son of God, Jesus is also called the "Son of Man". This is true in the sense we've already talked about. (*The son of a man is a man*). The fact that both "Son of God" and "Son of man" are applied to Jesus is further evidence for the "Fully God, Fully Man" doctrine.

However it also has a deeper meaning and is a reference to a prophecy about Jesus.

Daniel 7:13-14**13**

"I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

14

"And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.

Again, pretty cool. ?