

Is Jesus the biological child of God?



Big picture: Muslims think that Jesus' title of 'Son' means God entered into a biological relationship with Mary, yet in the OT 'Son' is a title rooted in kingship and deity.

1. Is Jesus the biological child of God?

Since the inception of Christian belief, Jesus's claim to be the Son of God has always been a controversial topic. As this belief (Jesus, God the Son) grew in the Roman Empire and beyond, so did the number of sects developed who held different views of Jesus being the Son of God. The sects began to influence various faiths including Islam in the seventh century.



Islamic holy book, the Qur'an states that Jesus is not the son of God. In Islamic thought, the term son of God is interpreted in a literal sense. Although the term "Allah begets not" does not explicitly refer to Jesus, among Islamic scholars and popular audience it is often associated with Jesus. Because of this, in Islam, the idea that God begets a son is vehemently opposed.

In this research paper, I will make a case for Jesus' designated title as "only begotten" the Son of God. I will begin this by presenting three common Islamic objections against this title. I will focus particularly on the term "only begotten" in reference to Jesus to argue that this term does not mean Jesus was literally the biological child of God (as the Qur'an implies). Then I will address the three objections by refuting their wrong understanding of the Biblical teaching.

2. Muslims objection to Jesus being the begotten Son of God

Objection 1: It is not appropriate for Allah (God) to beget a son.

Though the verse (Arabic text) does not mention explicitly about Jesus, it is often understood by some Muslim scholars that this verse refers to Christians' belief that Jesus is the son of God. Allah states in the Qur'an i.e., "It befits not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son [this refers to the slander of Christians against Allah, by saying that 'Iesa (Jesus) is the son of Allah]. Glorified (and Exalted be He above all that they associate with Him). When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, "Be!" and it is." [Quran 19.35](#) (Mohsin Khan).

Objection 2: Allah has no wife.

Islamic scholars argue that Allah cannot have a son because he has no compatible consort. The Qur'an states "He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything." [Quran 6.101](#) (Mohsin Khan).

Objection 3: Jesus was only a (human) prophet of God (Allah)

Based on [Quran 5.75](#), Islamic scholars argue that Jesus cannot be divine in any sort because he was only a human being. As all other humans need food for nourishment, Jesus and his mother also ate food. The Qur'an says, "The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. See how We make the revelations clear for them and see how they are turned away!" [Quran 5.75](#)

3. Arguments for the biblical meaning of Jesus the only begotten Son of God

Common expressions of the son of god

Before we explore the meaning of Jesus being the Son of God, it is important to identify how this expression or title was understood in the first century by the pagans and the Jews. The title “son of god” was a common expression among the pagans and the Jews of the New Testament period. The Pharaoh, the ruler of the Egyptians, was thought to be a god. Likewise, Roman emperors were recipients of worship as gods. However, in Judaism the concept of son of God was different. Although this expression “son of God” was used in the Old Testament in three ways i.e., the nation of Israel is called “son of God”, this expression is associated with the kings of Israel and people (including angels) who were commissioned for special mission, they were never considered divine in any sense. However, when the term “the Son of God” applied to Jesus, it was associated with the deity of the God of the Hebrew Bible. Early Jewish Christians worshipped Jesus as God incarnate. Designation “only begotten” the Son of God in reference to Jesus never understood by the authors of the New Testament in a literal sense.

The use of the word monogenes

The Greek word monogenes is used five times in [John 1:14](#), [18](#), [3:16](#), [18](#) and [1 John 4:9](#) in reference to Jesus as the Son of God. The word is also used in the gospel of [Luke 7:12](#), [8:42](#) and [9:38](#) and Hebrew [11:17-19](#) but in a non-Christological term. Traditionally, monogenes is translated as “only begotten” when applied to Jesus as the Son in the Johannine literature. But what does “only begotten” mean when it is applied to Jesus as the Son of God?

As we know, any word can have several meanings or interpretations, its true meaning is often determined from its context of usage. Before I attempt to examine monogenes’s meaning in Johannine’s literature applied to Jesus as the Son, I will briefly explore its usage in the wider context of the Greek language. Though monogenes can mean in a literal sense “to beget”, “derivation” or “of sole descent,” it is also interpreted in many contexts as nonliteral expression. As Iron notes that “A careful study of monogenes in the Septuagint, the Greek New Testament, and extrabiblical Greek literature suggests at least three nonliteral extensions of the word monogenes.” i.e., Only Legitimate Child or Heir, Metaphorical Only Begotten and Only One of its kind.

Pre-existence of Jesus

The pre-existence of Christ is clearly affirmed in the New Testament. The doctrine of Christ’s pre-existence is apparent in the fourth gospel ([John 8:58](#), [John 17:5](#)), Hebrews ([Hebrews 1:1](#), [7:3](#); [2:9](#); [10:5](#), Paul’s epistles ([Romans 8:3](#)) the synoptic gospels ([Mark 9:2-8](#), [Matthew 11:27](#) and [Luke 10:18-20](#)) and many more.

Simon. J. Gathercole, in his book *The Preexistent Son*, argues that the case for the preexistence of Christ has been highly plausible since the earliest Christianity. Gathercole claims that “the argument here is simple: that preexistence Christology is already widespread among various individuals and in various different communities around the Mediterranean well before AD 70.” As [Philippians 2:6-8](#) is considered by the most biblical scholars as pre-Pauline tradition, Gathercole argues that this passage reflects the clearest and the earliest statement of the Christ’s preexistence. [Philippians 2:6-8](#)

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,[a] 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,[b] being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [Philippians 2:6-8](#)

Eternal Generation

Traditionally, theologians have used the term “eternal generation” to refer to the Son’s eternal origin in the Father. For example, Athanasius of Alexandria has argued in his *Defense of the Nicene Definition* that the Son is eternally begotten by the Father. Athanasius’s argument is based on two key passages [Psalms 2:7](#) “You are my Son, and today I have begotten you” and [Proverbs 8:25](#) “Before all the hills, I was brought forth.”

Both references, in the Septuagint, use the key verb gennao to signify begetting or generation. [Psalms 2:7](#) is cited in [Acts 13:33](#) as well as [Hebrews 1:5](#) and [5:5](#) in reference to Jesus applying language of generation.

In [Matthew 11:19](#), Jesus is described as personified Wisdom. The apostle Paul also recognises that Jesus is “Christ the

power and wisdom of God ([1 Corinthians 1:24](#)). Paul elaborates that through Christ, “all things were created through Him and for Him” ([Colossians 1:16](#)). [Proverbs 8](#) also talks about Wisdom, who is present with God and actively involved in creation. Like other theologians of his time, Athanasius makes a connection between [Proverbs 8](#) and Christ as personified Wisdom in the New Testament. Athanasius concludes that the Father did not create the Son because of the usage of the language of generation: “If then son, therefore not creature; if creature, not son.”

Furthermore, Christ pre-existence is indicated in [John 1:1](#), as Jesus was the only known as the “Word” who was with God in the beginning. And through whom God created all things ([Colossians 1:16](#)). Within this context, Athanasius concludes by appealing [Psalms 2:7](#) and Proverb 8:25 that “the Son was eternally generated by the Father, as “light from light” and “very God of very God,” to use the Nicene terminology.” To demonstrate the relationship of the Son (Jesus) with the Father, Athanasius uses analogy of the procession of light from the sun. Athanasius concludes that just as no one is capable of separating the radiance from the sun, likewise the Son cannot be separated from his eternal Father.

4. Bible responses to Muslims objections

Objection 1: it is not appropriate for Allah (God) to beget a son.

The Qur'an's refusal to assert that God can beget a son is based on unawareness of the biblical teaching and meaning of son of God. Though Islam claims to be an Abrahamic faith, interestingly, it never acknowledges the most common expression of son of God used, in most generic sense, in Judaism in reference to the Israelites as a whole nation, title associated to the kings of Israel and people commissioned for special mission of God. Its rejection of God begetting a son, reflects that the Qur'an always understand the expression of son of God in a literal sense.

Wider context of the biblical and Greek literature usage of the Greek word monogenes translated “only begotten” shows more than one meaning. When applied to Jesus in the Johannine text, lexical evidence suggests that it is used in a metaphorical biological sense meaning “only begotten.”

Objection 2: Allah has no wife.

Birth of Jesus by his virgin mother, Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit is never understood in the New Testament in a biological sense. In biblical understanding, God does not need a female consort to bring forth a son. Jesus was not believed to be the Son of God because of the virgin birth. Jesus was eternally begotten meaning he alone was the Word who was with God in the beginning became flesh ([John 1:1](#)). Jesus came from the Father, as acknowledged by the Father “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” ([Matt. 3:17](#)).

Objection 3: Jesus was only a (human) prophet of God (Allah)

The Qur'an rejects Jesus' divinity on the basis of Jesus humanity, if human then can't be divine. The New Testament consistently portrays Jesus' humanity as well as his deity. Furthermore, only Jesus is called with the absolute title ‘The Son.’ Jesus' humanity and deity can be summarised in one verse i.e., [John 1:14](#) “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” ([John 1:14](#)). Additionally, the author of the John's epistle claims of eyewitnesses of the incarnation of the Word of life i.e., “we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and out hands have touched” ([1 John 1](#)).

The role of eyewitness informants is very important factor for historians. Richard Bauckham, in his book Jesus and the Eyewitnesses extensively elaborates this component. Bauckham notes that “for Greek and Roman historians, the ideal eyewitness was not the dispassionate observe but one who, as a participant, had been closest to the events and whose direct experience enabled him to understand and interpret the significance of what he had seen.” This suggests that eyewitnesses' aspect of reporting is crucial to establish fact about Jesus.

5. Conclusion: Jesus is eternally begotten Son of God

Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of God. Jesus did not become a son of God at his birth. He is the Son of God who

always existed. He was the Word who was with God in the beginning became flesh. Jesus was the personification of Wisdom who was involved in creation with the Almighty God. The Qur'an's denial that "Allah begets not" is based on its lack of knowledge of the biblical term "only begotten." The Qur'an's claim is baseless that Jesus cannot be divine because of his humanity. It is pure speculative, as it cannot substantiate any evidence from early sources.

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