



# Terms Referring To Jesus

By Maurice Barnett

We must be very careful in assigning definitions to words and meanings to phrases. Some make the mistake of assigning a literal meaning to figurative terms, or a figurative meaning to literal terms where they do not belong. Mistaking either one will lead us into a perversion of specific passages of scripture and then lead us into some broader theological errors. In regard to the present study, this is readily seen, not only with the word "spirit," but also "Father" and "Son," and related phrases when applied to the relationship of these latter two beings. Do these terms indicate that Jesus was somehow less Deity than the Father, or maybe He just lost some of His powers and abilities and was a *little* less Deity? Or, perhaps, they indicate that Jesus was created by a Father in some distant past as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons maintain?

God has communicated with humanity by using human language. Thus, the terms used relative to the Godhead, taken from human language, retain some *part* of the literal meaning. The mistake that too many make is to think that terms mean just exactly what they mean in the most commonly used human framework. "Father" must mean one who generates a son who is a person who is different

from, and less than, the father. "Son" must mean a male child who did not exist in any sense until generated by a father. "Firstborn" must mean the same as "son," as does "only begotten." What are the facts? Let's see.

**FATHER:** Does this term only refer to God's generation of Jesus by Mary? If that's so, the Word would have a beginning as a son with the Father generating Him. Let's look at the accounts in Luke 1:31-35 and Matthew 1:18—

"And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God."

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother

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Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit."

Seeing that the Holy Spirit had as much a part as the Father in this conception of Mary, why is the Holy Spirit not also included as a Father? It would seem that Jesus would have had two "Fathers" if a literal generation of parent to son is what "Son of the Most High" means here. It does mean a literal son as far as Mary is concerned but in this sense she is the physical mother of Jesus of Nazareth. But, "Son of the Most High" doesn't refer to that kind of relationship here. Father/Son are the *roles* these two persons of the Godhead would take. In addition, the Holy Spirit had His role in all that happened.

Seeing that Jesus was physically, by Mary, a descendant of David, He could legally sit on the throne of David. However, even this is figurative because it was not a literal throne nor a physical, worldly kingdom under consideration. "David's throne" was in heaven, Acts 2:29-36, and the kingdom over which Jesus would rule was a spiritual one, John 18:36.

Consider the things connected with Jesus as the Son of God with a heavenly Father. "*Son of God*" is a title that goes with His being a king, crowned as such by the one who had the authority. In the midst of figurative titles and roles, we have a *Son of God* and a heavenly "Father." Why should we not take Father/Son to be as figurative as the word, "king?" John 5 gives us a clue—

"For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God." John 5:18.

*"...that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him." John 5:23.*

The Jews understood the phrase, "*his own father*," and knew He was claiming equality with the Father. Jesus had just said that He had as much right to work on the Sabbath as the Father had - "My father worketh until now, and I work." The phrase, "even as," means, "exactly the same." Jesus was to be honored exactly as the Father was honored; He was equal with the Father. The Jews took up stones to kill Jesus because of this claim.

There is a sameness declared of father/son which we can see in other places. "*Jabal was father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle*," Genesis 4:20. "*Jubal was father of such as handle the harp and pipe*," Genesis 4:21. These statements do not mean that Jabal personally generated, as a parent to son, all of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. Jabal was the first to do that and established a sameness, a common ground, with all who did that after him. This was also true of Jubal. The Pharisees father was the devil because they thought and acted like the devil, John 8:44. God was the "Father" of Jesus in declaring sameness between them. It has nothing to do with generating an offspring. Shortly, we will see this from the point of view of the word "son" as well.

As we have seen, the Father was the Director of this universe project and "Father" was His role just as being a servant was the role of the Word. The term "Father," and the image of a son in subjection to a father, was an object lesson for disciples. It was necessary

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that they understand what it means to serve a heavenly Father. Jesus and the Father provided that lesson. The image of "Father" is what we are to have in our relationship to Him. The church is the house, the family of God. We are His children and He is our loving father who provides for us. Prayer is to be offered to our Father in heaven. Father/Son are terms used in keeping with the roles they took in this universe project.

Yet, at the same time, the word, "Father," in some sense refers to Jesus in prophecy. Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7 say—

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

"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, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this."

Oneness advocates insist that this proves there is only one person who is God; He simply came into the world as Jesus. Not so. These verses identify the nature of Jesus. There is no doubt that they refer to Him as the promised son who was born of a virgin. The government would be on His shoulders; He would be the universal ruler, Psalm 2, 72, Colossians 1:15-20, I Corinthians 15:25-28, Matthew 28:18. He would

sit on the throne of David and reign as King over His kingdom, Acts 2:29-36, Colossians 1:13, I Timothy 6:14-15.

As well, His name would be "Mighty God," *el giboor*. The name, "immanuel," means "God with us" as is clearly stated in Matthew 1:21-23. Notice, it says—

"And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us."

With such inspired interpretation, we cannot doubt the prophetic reference to Jesus. He was indeed, God with us. This fact of His Godhood has already been discussed in Chapter 2 and then in Appendix B of this volume, and in my book, *The Person of Christ*, which see.

He would also be called, "Everlasting Father." This refers to the fact that all things were created through Him and by Him as well as all things being in subjection to Him. See, John 1:1-4, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:8-13. In that sense, He is the Father of all things that exist but He is not the same *person* whom He, Himself, refers to as our "Father in heaven."

*SON:* This term has several meanings, as does the word "father." It may refer to the offspring or posterity of a human, such as son or daughter; it may refer to offspring several generations down the line, such as in genealogies. A common use is to refer to sameness or likeness to something.

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(1) Mark 3:17 - sons of thunder—  
an explosive character.

(2) Luke 10:6 - son of peace—a  
peaceful man.

(3) Luke 20:34 - sons of this  
world—meaning worldly minded.

(4) John 17:12 - son of perdition—  
a wicked man.

(5) Acts 4:35 - son of consolation—  
a helpful man.

In John 10:30, Jesus says that "*I and the Father are one.*" The Jews well understood that this was a claim for Himself of being God. They accused Him of blasphemy and sought to stone Him. For Jesus to say that He was the Son of God meant that He was equal with the Father, He was also God. Thus, in verse 36, Jesus said —

"..say ye of him, whom the  
Father sanctified and sent into the  
world, Thou blasphemest; because  
I said, I am the Son of God?"

For Jesus to say that "*I and the Father are one,*" was the same as saying that He was the "*Son of God*" and thus equal with the Father. Further, it could be said that He was the Son of God because He was sanctified and sent into the world by the Father.

Yet, another meaning of His being a Son is found in Psalm 2. It is a prophecy of the Christ, with a fulfillment related to several subjects in the New Testament. The time of the fulfillment of this prophecy is clearly specified in Scripture.

(1) Psalm 2:1-5 speaks of the nations setting themselves against God and His work, but God will overcome them. He will have His way. See Acts 4:23-30 for a statement of the fulfillment, explained in the prayer of the disciples.

(2) Verses 8-12 speak of the universal dominion of the Christ. Following His

resurrection, Jesus declared that all authority was given to Him in heaven and on earth, Matthew 28:18. The time that this universal dominion began was when He ascended to sit down at the right hand of God, Ephesians 1:19-23.

(3) Verse 6 says that God would set His king on His holy hill of Zion. This refers to the beginning of the rulership of Christ as King on His throne. Acts 2:29-33 connects this event with the time of His *resurrection and seating at Gods right hand.*

(4) Verse 7 says that God has declared the decree, "*thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*" Here is the only begotten Son. When was this fulfilled? Acts 13:32-34 says that it was fulfilled in the *resurrection of Jesus, not His physical birth by Mary!* See Romans 1:1-4.

(5) This was also the time when He would be High Priest, Hebrews 5:5-6. Psalm 2:7 is specifically referred to in that passage in Hebrews. See also Hebrews 8:4, Zechariah 6:12-13. He would be a priest on His throne. Jesus did not become High Priest until he went to Heaven following His resurrection.

The prophecy and fulfillment of Psalm 2 and the fact of Jesus being the only begotten Son of God relates to the time of His resurrection, not His incarnation, not His birth by Mary. Jesus is never referred to as "Son" in the Old Testament except in prophecy.

Further, "Son of God" is used as a title equal to that of "Christ" and "King." Look at the following: Matthew 16:16, 26:63, Mark 14:61, John 1:49, John 11:27. There are numerous other passages that say the same thing.

The phrase, Son of God, declares sameness with the Father and is a title of His position.

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***ONLY BEGOTTEN SON:*** *Monogenes* generally means that which is unique. It may be used to refer to an offspring who is one of a kind, an only child. Luke 7:12 records Jesus raising a dead boy, the "only son" of a widow of Nain. Luke 8:42 describes the healing of the "only daughter" of one Jairus. There is something unique about an only child in any family.

Hebrews 11:17 says that Abraham offered his "*only begotten son*," Isaac. In His instructions to Abraham in the Old Testament, concerning the offering, God refers to Isaac as "*thine only son*." However, though Isaac was Abraham's literal offspring, the fact is, Isaac was neither the only son of Abraham nor the first son to be born to him. Ishmael was Abraham's first born son. This should immediately tell us that the phrase, *only begotten son*, is being used in some sense other than a literal, physical, offspring. It is a figurative phrase that identifies Isaac as the child of promise through whom the blessings would come, a unique position. In this passage, he was only begotten in that he, not Ishmael, was the sole channel of God's promises for the future; no other person was to be considered.

In the same manner, Jesus was the Father's sole representative through whom the promises of salvation would come. He is referred to as the only begotten Son of the Father in several places, John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, Hebrews 11:17, I John 4:9, but it has nothing to do with His origin, nor a literal father/son relationship, nor to any idea of Jesus being less than God, nor that he lost any of His powers and abilities of God. The phrase refers to uniqueness rather than derivation; it carries no idea of generation

as it does with humans. We saw this amplified in the previous section on the word "son."

***FIRSTBORN:*** In the course of human offspring, the "firstborn" had rights and position that no other child in the family had. It is another term, like previous ones, that has the idea of a unique position. It does not refer to Jesus being the first one born to the Father in some human sense, nor of some humanlike relationship of Father/Son. It is a figurative usage—

"....in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Colossians 1:14-18.

Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, meaning He was the creator of all things. Notice the way it is expressed—"*the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created*." He is the firstborn from the dead because of His position of authority. Note—

"For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living." Romans 14:9.

This is what we have already seen in His being called the Son of God, Psalm 2. His being the firstborn from the dead refers to His resurrection. He was the first to be resurrected, never to die again,

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and thus received a throne and universal authority. Note again: *"the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."* It is a statement of position, not origin.

**SON OF MAN:** The common opinion concerning this phrase is that it declares the humanity of Jesus. It is said that Son of God emphasizes His Deity and Son of Man emphasizes His humanity. It is true that He was, by physical lineage through Mary, a descendant of David and was the head, type and ideal of the human race. From that standpoint, He could be called a son of man, physically; in some passages and it may mean that. But, that isn't the significant meaning of Son of Man. We must understand the origin of the phrase in order to understand why this was the most used phrase by Jesus to refer to Himself. The origin of the phrase is in Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in Christ.

(1) The expectation of a Messiah on the part of Jews for hundreds of years, based on Old Testament promises, involved in their eyes the Messiah being a superior human male. The phrase, "son of man," was indicative to them of that hope. Messianic promises indeed used this phrase. He would be a deliverer of the people from oppression. Thus—

**"Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." Psalm 80:17.**

Psalm 80 is an appeal to God at a time of trouble and decline for the nation. They are asking for a hero, a leader, one chosen of God to save them from their condition. Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the chosen leader sent from God. "Son of Man" identified Him with that role. The problem for the Jews was that they were looking for something different from what Jesus appeared to be. The

Jews thought that the kingdom of prophecy would be a restoration of the grand kingdom that they experienced under Solomon. Their view of the Messiah was equally wrong. But, just as the kingdom was far different from the one they envisioned, so was their view of the Messiah.

(2) Especially in the book of Ezekiel, God does not address the prophet by his name, Ezekiel. Rather, 89 times he is addressed as "son of man." This is a special designation for this special envoy of God. The use of the same phrase by Jesus identifies Him with this well known prophet of God in the Old Testament. Jesus was indeed the promised prophet sent from God, Acts 3:22-23, Hebrews 1:1-3. His identity with Ezekiel by using the phrase, "son of man," emphasized that role.

(3) The most direct connection with the phrase in Old Testament prophecy is in Daniel 7:13-14, along with its fulfillment in Jesus —

**"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."  
Daniel 7:13-14.**

Every item of this vision of Daniel was fulfilled in Jesus. Certainly, Jesus was taken up into the clouds at His ascension, came before the throne of God and was given dominion, glory, universal authority, and a kingdom that will never be destroyed—

**"...and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and**

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then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Matthew 26:64.

The connection of Jesus to Daniel cannot be denied. His repeated reference to His being the Son of Man was intentional, drawing attention to His being the fulfillment of promise and prophecy. He was Son of Man because He was the saviour of the nation, the Messiah, the prophet of God, the universal ruler, king of His kingdom and so many other things. They are all wrapped in the title of Son of Man.

(4) Notice these two passages—

"And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." John 3:13.

"What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" John 6:62.

Who is the antecedent of "he" in these verses? It is "*Son of man*." It was the Son of man who was in heaven and descended out of heaven. It was the Son of man who was here on earth. It was the Son of man who ascended back to heaven where he was before. It could not refer to His time here in the physical body of Jesus, born of Mary. We can only conclude that the phrase is used in some figurative manner, as a title, one of His names. Here are some other verses -

"For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." Matthew 12:8.

"The Son of man shall send

forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:41-42.

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, there are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Matthew 16:27-28.

"But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:" Matthew 25:31.

"The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born." Matthew 26:24.

The position of authority of the Son of Man is evident in these passages. And, these are just a sampling. They not only declare His position but also show a title equal with King and Judge. John 8:28 says—

"Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am."

The crucifixion of Jesus was not a declaration of the humanity of Jesus but rather a demonstration of His Deity. It was not to show that He was just another human but rather that He was I AM. Look at the passage. Every detail of the crucifixion was foretold and they had but to stop and look at the scene around them to understand that. He was not merely human; He was God.