

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXX

October 11, 2020

No. 41

The “Only Begotten”

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John writes, “*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Those who beheld Jesus in the flesh, saw a glory that was equated to one identified as “*the only begotten from the Father.*” We immediately think of “sonship” when we read “begotten,” especially when connected with a “father.” In Jesus’ case, it is “the Father,” the one true God in heaven. John explicitly makes this clear in John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*”

On the surface, thinking the “only begotten” refers to Jesus’ virgin birth, might be a possible explanation of being begotten. It is certainly when the “Word” became “flesh.” And, the virgin birth was unique, establishing the “only” of “begotten.” While John states the Word “became” flesh, he, nor any other inspired writer ever writes, “the Word became begotten.” Could the concept of “only begotten” in John 1:14 be something different from the virgin birth of Jesus?

John identifies “*the Word*” as already in existence “*in the beginning*” (John 1:1) While distinct in

person - “*the Word was with God,*” - the Word at the same time “*was God*” in the beginning.

John further identifies “*the Word*” as the one who is the maker of all things. “*All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made*” (John 1:3). John’s inspired affirmation establishes “the word” as not being “made” for there is nothing made that “the Word” did not make. “The Word” being God, has no beginning. He was not “made”, for he would have to create Himself. “Being God,” He created all things (Colossians 1:16).

The Word, becoming flesh, allowed man to see a glory reserved for the eternal God. Jesus, “*the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had made purification for sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High*” (Hebrews 1:3). The inspired writer exalts Jesus as being the “effulgence” or “brightness” of God’s glory while being the “very image” of God’s “substance.” Notice that in time Jesus “*made purification for sins.*” Then, being raised from the dead, Jesus “*sat on the right hand of the Majesty on High.*” But His “being” has always been glorious, reflecting the brightness of the

Great God, of which He is equal in substance.

Since “the Word” has always been in existence, without beginning. We should connect the glory of the “only begotten” in the same light. These two words in English translate the single Greek word “*monogenes.*” This speaks of the uniqueness of the Father/Son relationship. While the virgin birth was a glorious miracle in time “the only begotten” characterizes His eternal “being” as the Word. Jesus did become flesh, something He was not before. But Jesus has always been God. As God, He has always been the “only begotten Son of God.” Eternally, He has enjoyed the love that exists in a father/son relationship.

C. S. Lewis helps us understand the “begotten” concept when he contrasts it with that which is “made.” He said, “*a beaver begets little beavers and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam...*”. So, Jesus was “begotten,” but He was not “made.” Jesus, as the Word, has always been of the same substance as God, His Father. Understanding “the only begotten” deepens our appreciation for what God gave to save us from perishing eternally!