

GODHEAD

What Did God Mean When He Told Jesus, "Today I Have Begotten You"?

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PR. ALMODAD AMOS YARAGWILLER

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible speaks of several references that point to various events of Jesus' birth. There are also instances where it references conversations between God the Father and Jesus, where it seems that Jesus was begotten by the Father. Many have taken these statements and concluded that: first, there was a time when Jesus did not exist, but God the Father existed first, and thus the life of Jesus originated from the act of the Father begetting the Son, as the Bible explains; second, some have concluded that these Biblical statements make the Bible no longer trustworthy, because how can God give birth, seeing He is not a created being and has no wife?

You will be surprised to discover that the story of Jesus' birth in the context of the Father begetting Jesus does not refer at all to the beginning of Jesus' life nor does it in any way speak of a physical birth, such as we witness among humans and animals. What, then, is the meaning of the words "I have begotten you"?

THE USE OF PICTORIAL LANGUAGE

It is important, when reading the Bible, to allow it to explain itself, as it has the power to define its own meaning. At times, when you read the Bible without careful examination, you may end up with your own personal, misguided interpretation, thinking that you are safe, but the truth is, some scriptures are symbolic, examples, or illustrations, and they were not meant to be taken literally. Instead, the reader is intended to carefully examine the deeper meaning intended by the author.

The first thing to look for in understanding what the author intended when discussing the birth of Jesus is the meaning of the term "birth."

Now, let us explore what the Bible means when it speaks of birth.

FOUR MEANINGS OF BIRTH IN THE BIBLE

The term "birth" in the Bible does not carry a single meaning. It can have approximately four different meanings, as follows:

Meaning 01: The Act of Coming Out of the Mother's Womb

Genesis 38:4

Then she conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan.

In this context, the word "birth" refers to the act of a child coming out of the mother's body, marking the beginning of a creature's physical independent life.

Did Jesus experience this type of birth? The answer is yes:

Luke 2:11 NKJV

> "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

This first meaning here clearly refers to the birth of Jesus through Mary. It is important to note that this was not the beginning of Jesus' eternal existence, but rather the beginning of Jesus' human life on earth, as Paul writes:

Philippians 2:6-7 NKJV

> "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

Meaning 02: Baptism

The second meaning of the word "birth" in the Bible is the act of being baptized. In the Bible, baptism is seen as a symbol of being born again, indicating a spiritual rebirth. Through baptism, a believer publicly demonstrates their faith in Jesus Christ and commits to a new life in Him. This act, which signifies the washing away of sins and the beginning of a new spiritual life, is likened to the new life of a creature being born, and in scriptures, this act is referred to as being "born."

A well-known example related to this is the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus:

John 3:3-5 NKJV

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Meaning 03: Sanctification by the Holy Spirit

In John 3:5 Jesus explained, “'No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit'” The third meaning of "birth" is found in Titus 3:5. Being born by the Spirit refers to the act of a person being empowered to turn away from past evils in order to live a holy life. It is the beginning of a new life of holiness, enabled by the Holy Spirit. When baptism occurs, two things happen: first, the outward act of baptism, which is an act of faith; and second, there is an inward transformation of the heart, which is done by God Himself. This act is called the washing of regeneration. The scripture says:

Titus 3:3-5 NKJV

> "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

This "washing" (Greek: "loutron," as seen in Ephesians 5:26) refers to spiritual cleansing, which purifies a person from the bad tendencies described in Titus 3:3. The term is also used in Ephesians 5:26, where it means "to sanctify."

Ephesians 5:26 NKJV

> "That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word."

Meaning 04: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Grave

The Bible clearly indicates that God the Father begot Jesus Christ. This statement particularly offends our Muslim brothers and sisters, who find it absurd to say that God begets. They then ask, "Who did God beget?" And what kind of woman was Mary, the mother of Jesus? Let us first look at verses that show that the Father begot Jesus:

Psalm 2:7 NKJV

> "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"

Hebrews 1:5 NKJV

> "For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son'?"

Hebrews 5:5 NKJV

> "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"

Jesus Himself also speaks in Proverbs about being born before the mountains and hills were made:

Proverbs 8:22-25 NKJV

> "The Lord possessed Me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth."

Certainly, this offspring refers to Jesus, but not the one born of Mary, for at this time in Proverbs, Mary had not yet been born. Therefore, we see that Jesus was born before the world was created, but also born after the world was created. The key to understand here is that the term "born" in Psalm 2:7, Hebrews 1:5, Hebrews 5:5, and Proverbs 8:22-25 is not referring to the beginning of Jesus' life.

The language used here is prophetic, which always uses symbolism to convey the intended message. If the Bible itself, without the aid of personal opinions or external sources, had not clarified the meaning of the Father's act of begetting Jesus, we would be left with two fundamental rights: first, we could claim that Jesus was simply a child of the Father like we are children of our Heavenly Father; and second, we would have to reject the Bible as an unreliable source. But the Bible does not stop there; it further clarifies the matter, explaining that the act of the Father begetting Jesus is not in any way comparable to the birth that humans, animals, or other creatures experience (the beginning of life from another creature). Let's look at how the Bible clarifies this:

Acts 13:33 NKJV

> "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"

This verse makes it absolutely clear that the statement of the Father saying to Jesus, "Today I have begotten You," is directly referring to the resurrection of Jesus.

This clears up the confusion about how many times Jesus was born, the question of Mary's role as Jesus' mother, and the nature of Jesus' relationship with God the Father. It reminds us that there was never a time when Jesus did not exist. The statement "Today I have begotten You" was a conversation and a promise from God to Jesus, a prophecy that God Himself gave, foretelling that He would raise Jesus from the dead. When Jesus was resurrected, this promise was fulfilled.

Let's read these verses once again, reflecting on them deeply:

Psalm 2:7 NKJV

> "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"

Acts 13:33 NKJV

> "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"

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Injili Milele

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WhatsApp +255 718 834 621 · modaofhope@gmail.com

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