

## Heidelberg Catechism 33 – What does “Son of God” mean?

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: There have been many questions raised about the nature of Jesus Christ throughout history. There were some who believe that Jesus Christ was fully God who took only the shape of man, but was not man. There were others who believed that Jesus Christ was fully man with a great spirit within him, but he was not fully God. Others believed that Jesus Christ’s Divinity神性 and Humanity were fused融合 together into a hybrid混合型 God/Man. Some believe that Jesus Christ was a son of God like you are a child of your parents. You will hear the truth about Jesus as the **“Son of God”** today.

It is important to understand these truths about Jesus because most cults start with false teachings regarding the persons and nature of the Trinity.

Our headings are:

Jesus Christ is the **Eternal Natural Son**

Jesus Christ was **not the adopted son of God**

Our goals are: **That you will grasp the true nature of the Lord and how that nature was critical for you to become an adopted son of God.**

33 Q. WHY IS HE CALLED GOD’S “ONLY BEGOTTEN SON” WHEN WE ALSO ARE GOD’S CHILDREN?

A. Because Christ alone is the **eternal, natural Son of God**. We, however, are **adopted children** of God— adopted by grace through Christ.

### **Jesus Christ is The Eternal Natural Son**

**1. Your Messiah, your Christ, is the eternal natural Son of God.** In what way is Jesus the eternal natural Son of God? Is it in the same way that you are a son of your parents? **Jesus is not the Son of God in the same way you are a son of your parents.** You did not exist at one time and then you were conceived and born, but Jesus was pre-existent.

**2. God often describes himself and his work in anthropomorphic拟人化 ways – assigning human characteristics to himself** in order that you can understand who he is and what he does. For example, God is described as “having an arm that is not so short that he cannot reach and save.” Does this mean that God has a literal arm? No, it does not. Again, you read that God feels for you in his “bowels.” Does God really have bowels? No. **God used this anthropomorphic idea to help you understand that he cares for you.** So when God says that Jesus is his Son, it is not in the same way you have a Son. **If you use a literalist interpretation you will dig a big hole, fall in,** and never get out. **A literalist might get scared that someone might get a firebrand放火者 with the number 666 on it and brand you on the forehead.** (Literalism)

**3. So what does it mean then that Messiah was the eternal natural Son of God?**

**a. Jesus is the Son of God from eternity.** There was never a time when Jesus was not the Son of God. Jesus Christ did not become the Son of God after he was born in the earth. Jesus Christ the Son of God became the **Son of Man** – the son of Adam – at his birth.

**b. Jesus, the Son of God, had the same nature of his Father.** He was not the product of the Father and someone else. This is why he said: **I and the Father are one.**

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the **only begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth.

**c. Man met the Son of God when he became Son of Man – Adam.** This same Son of God was there in the beginning with God and was the Creator of heaven and earth.

John 1:1 In the **beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God**, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

**4. A common error regarding Christ's Sonship was held by John MacArthur (who has since changed, I hear). He misunderstood a couple of passages and claimed that they taught that Jesus became the Son of God at his incarnation化身: Hebrews 1, which was based on Psalm 2.**

Psalm 2:7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, **Today I have begotten You**.' 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance..."

In Psalms 2, the Father was teaching that Jesus Christ was to be viewed **from that day forward** as properly the eternal Son of God. The word "begotten" is used to refer to a simple "declaration of Sonship." The Father was saying: "From the day of your coming into the world forward it will appear to the world that I have begotten you." The conversation in **Psalm 2 was written for your benefit, not Jesus'**. And Psalm 2 was not intended to teach the origin of Jesus. It taught the work and rule of Jesus and how you are to view him. **So remember the context**. Look now at Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:1 God... 2 has in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**...<sup>5</sup> **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**"? 6 But when **He again brings the firstborn into the world**, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." 7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." 8 **But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;** A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, **Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness** more than Your companions." 13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

Christ, the Son of God, was the Creator of heaven and earth and **perfectly reflects God's nature (V2)**. He was greater than man, greater than the prophets, and greater than angels. He has an eternal throne and will bring the world to full submission to him by conquering their hearts in peace or heads in punishment. **He was anointed "Son"** and given all authority before he was born. **His anointing was for your instruction**. Does that sound like your son? My son can barely get his breakfast. And remember, "firstborn" doesn't mean the one born first. Firstborn means "priority" or "preeminence."

**Another serious false teaching comes from Joyce Meyer**. She taught that Jesus ceased to be the Son of God when bore your sins on the cross. So, **she argued, Jesus had to be born again**. That is heresy. This is what many people buy. So they have a weak view of Jesus and don't praise him as they ought.

**5. Let's look other passages. The Son of God existed long before his birth in a manger 2000 years ago.**

**The Son of God appeared with the Hebrew youths in Nebuchadnezzar's fire.**

Daniel 3:25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the **Son of God**."

**The disciples recognized that the phrase "Son of God"** was not a generic "son of God" but a title of Divinity. Notice how they worshiped the Lord.

Matthew 14:33 Then those who were in the boat came and **worshiped** Him, saying, "**Truly You are the Son of God**."

**The Jews and their leaders recognized the uniqueness of the Son of God**. They accused Jesus of blasphemy 褻瀆 for claiming to be the Son of God, **for that, in their belief, made him equal to God**. And for **this reason they executed him**.

Matthew 26:63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, **the Son of God!**"

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

**Demons confirmed that Jesus was the Son of God and they knew this before he was born as a man.**

Mark 3:11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the **Son of God**."

**Jesus Christ was Not The Adopted Son**

**1. Galatians 3 & 4 highlight by illustration the difference between the Son of God – who was not adopted - and sons of God who were adopted out of love.** The Jews in Galatia tried to force Gentile Christians to follow the ceremonies of the Old Testament—ceremonies that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ and were

no longer required. The Jews wanted the Gentiles to do this in order to be adopted. They argued that only the Jews were natural sons of God – even genetically, but the Gentiles were not. **But only Jesus is the natural and eternal Son of God, so** Apostle Paul argued that all are adopted children of Christ through Abraham – Jews and Gentiles. None was a natural born son of God after Adam.

**2. We can consider all men to be children of God, but they are children only by creation, and are, in fact, enemies of God.**

**3. Those who come through the Son of God and are restored with the Christly offices (prophet, priest, and king) that were lost through Adam, are adopted and become the children of God by re-creation.**

John 1:12 But as many as received Him (the Son), to them **He gave the right to become children of God**, to those who believe in His name:

Galatians 4:4... God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that **we might receive the adoption as sons.**

The one who is baptized with Christ has put on Christ... like you would put on clothes to an orphan you adopt. He covers you with righteousness and gives you a new name.

Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a **new name written** which no one knows except him who receives it."

And the newly adopted children are **given confidence**. They can approach the Lord confidently.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the **Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...

There was no need for Christ to be adopted. Christ could not be adopted. Why was that an important fact? Someone who simply became the "son of God" would not be fit to be a substitute for you! He would not be great enough to die for you! And if someone were to become a son of God, it implies that at one time he was not. Therefore, he wouldn't be great enough to die for the sins of the world.

**4. You see, you were like the child who was trained by a slave (the law).** When you were grown up and proved yourself to your father, you were no longer under the tutor –the slave. Theologically, **you were under the law**, but **you are now adopted in Jesus Christ**. You are now heirs of the riches of Christ's grace.

**Conclusion:**

**The eternal natural Son of God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world.** The eternal natural Son of God was also **the perfect Son of Man** (Son of Adam). This Son of God and Son of Man came into this sin-cursed world to save you with his blood so **you could be recreated and adopted as a son of God.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Since the Lord Jesus, Son of God, is your Creator and Re-Creator, **you can fully put your trust in him for everything in life.** You can trust him with your future, with your job, with your children, with your country, and with your relationships, knowing that he will always do what is best for you.
2. Since the Lord Jesus, Son of God, is your Creator and Re-Creator, **you can worship him with whole heart and mouth.** So sing the song: Beautiful Savior, King of Creation, Son of God and Son of Man! Truly I'd love Thee, truly I'd serve Thee, Light of my soul, my Joy, my Crown. When you sing it, mean it. You were the slave being trained by a slave (the law) and kept in slavery (sin), but Jesus Christ, the eternal natural Son of God came and redeemed you from slavery and adopted you as his child. So sing it like you mean it. And you can **work for him...in your home, church, community, and country.**

Finally, if you are a child of God only by creation, then you are his enemy. Rebellion is in your heart. But he died that sinners like you can be adopted. Would you accept his offer of help today? Would you say: Yes, I

want your death to be my death, yes, I want to be adopted into the family of God, and yes, and I want to be in God's household today, not tomorrow? He will adopt you if you ask.