**Jesus: The “Only Begotten” of God**

*by Jerry Fite*

A cherished passage of Scripture which also contains a mystery is 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.” Was Jesus “begotten”? Was there a time when He did not exist?

When we hear of “begetting,” we think of the birth process. When we hear of “only begotten” we think of one child. These concepts are accurate when understanding what a man communicated when he came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, I beseech thee to look upon my son for he is mine only child” (Luke 9:38). The same is true when Jarius invites Jesus to come to his house for “...he had an only daughter” that was dying (Luke 8:42).

The Greek word in these two passages is the same when referring to the “son” or the “daughter.” It is “*monogenees*.” We interpret “only” from “*mono*;” and we see something “generated” in “*genees*.” In one case it is a girl, in the other it is a boy.

But Jesus was not an only begotten son like an only begotten daughter. The only son and only daughter of these passages in Luke had a beginning when begotten, while the Son of God has never had a beginning, but is still begotten of God.

We know Jesus taking on flesh and blood, while being born of Mary in Bethlehem was not when Jesus became God’s begotten Son. Jesus was already the begotten Son of God because “...God sent His only begotten Son into the world” (1 John 4:10).

Before Jesus became flesh (John 1:14), He was “the Word” (Jn. 1:1). Notice “equality” and “distinction” when John writes of “the Word” and “God”. In the beginning...“the Word was with God (denoting a distinction between “The Word” and “God”), and “The Word was God” denoting equality. As we generate words from our being, which can be distinguishable from our per- son through hearing or reading, we are still the one who is speaking these words.

Jesus as “The Word” is communicating and manifesting the character and will of God. As the “only begotten,” He manifests God’s “grace” and “truth” just as one would see the characteristics of a father in a son (John 1:14). Jesus could say “...he that hath seen me, has seen the father” (Jn. 14:9); not because Jesus and the Father are not distinguishable, but because Jesus manifested in Himself God’s true character. “No man has seen God at any time...” John writes, but “...the only be- gotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18). Jesus is uniquely God declaring God to man. Through fatherhood and sonship, Jesus is manifesting the loving relationship we should have as children with God, our Father.

The unique Son was not “begotten” in time. Being eternally generated from God as “the Word” and “the Son”, Jesus came to make known the character of God, and the proper relationship we should have with our loving Father.

**Forgiving Others**

*by Jerry Fite*

Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). In our relationship with one another as brethren, sin is not ignored, nor is it allowed to be a permanent fixation. If one sins against us, we are to rebuke that brother of the wrong done to us. When the brother acknowledges the wrong, and turns away from it in repentance, we are to forgive. We are not to hold that wrong against them any longer. In rebuke, hurtful sin is acknowledged; in forgiveness, destructive sin is disarmed.

How the personal sin is addressed is critical in reestablishing harmony. We should first address the sin privately with the one we think sinned against us. Jesus said, “And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matthew 18:15). When God’s wisdom is followed, two people are made whole again through forgiveness. We move on.

But how should we react if the person who has wronged us does not feel they have sinned at all? Do we forgive? Paul helps us with this exhortative blueprint: “and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord come to us when we “repent,” and God in turn “blots out our sins” (Acts 3:19). God does not forgive us apart from repentance; neither should we forgive others when repentance is absent.

The steps of restoring personal harmony are now sidetracked. Sin, rebuke, forgiveness and consequent harmony are not allowed to complete their cycle. We have now an adversary. How should we react? First, we should not “...render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). We should pray for those who persecute us, instead of cursing them. We should seek God’s blessings for them (Romans 12:14). This is the way of following after good toward another instead of evil. Christians overcome evil with good, instead of being overcome by it (Romans 12:20-21).

Did you know God is pleased with you when you react this way toward injustice done to you? Peter says, “For this is acceptable, for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully” (1 Peter 2:19). We always have an open invitation to take our need for understanding to God’s throne of grace. His grace is always available for our “time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Is this not enough consolation? This should help us fight the tendency to tell the world about the wrong, instead of first going privately to the one who has wronged us. Let us mature and be like Christ: “who when he was reviled, reviled not again when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:22).