

“Jesus Eternally Begotten”  
John 1:14  
(Preached at Trinity, August 10, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verse 14** John declares the incarnation of Christ. It is a verse of Scripture that is a gold mine of truth. It is important that we mine its depths to bring out the fullness of its riches. It speaks to the nature of our God. You cannot trust Him unless you know Him. You cannot love Him unless you know Him.  
**LBC 2:3 – Of God and the Holy Trinity** – "In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him."
2. First of all, we've seen the great statement that the Divine Word of Verse 1 has become man. The eternal, unchanging God took upon Himself flesh and blood.
  - a. Jesus is both God and man
  - b. Jesus Christ is not the union of two persons; but the union of two natures in one person – Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person.  
The Divine nature is not weakened by the human, nor is the human nature somehow enhanced by the Divine.
3. Second of all, we've seen that the eternal Word has come to dwell among us. Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, God with us. He was willing to condescend to our condition in order to save us. And He continues to dwell with His people.
4. Thirdly, we've seen that in beholding Christ we have beheld the glory of God. Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. John is declaring to us that when we gaze upon the man Jesus Christ we are gazing upon the living God.
5. As we continue to mine the riches of this verse we need to look at the next phrase: "glory as of the only begotten from the Father"
6. What does it mean that Jesus is the "Only Begotten from the Father?" John uses the phrase several times.  
**John 1:18 NAU** - "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*."  
**John 3:16 NAU** - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

**John 3:18 NAU** - "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

**1 John 4:9 NAS** - "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."

7. Our Confession declares that Jesus is "eternally begotten of the Father."

**LBC 2:3** –

“. . . the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son . . .”

8. The early creeds affirm Jesus as the "only-begotten of the Father."

**Nicene Creed of 325** – "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father."

But what does the statement mean?

- I. It does not mean that Jesus Christ was created

A. Our English translations are unclear and can lead to confusion.

1. The word "begotten" can refer to human procreation. Muslims are offended over the suggestion that Jesus is the offspring of the Father. It suggests that the Father must have had relations with Mary.
2. A misunderstanding or misrepresentation of Jesus has often resulted in the rejection of His claims.
  - a. This was the problem of the Jews. Jesus did not fit their notion of a political, conquering Messiah. A suffering Messiah was most offensive.
 

**1 Peter 2:6-8 NAS** - "For *this* is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner *stone*, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed." <sup>7</sup> This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner *stone*," <sup>8</sup> and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed."
  - b. The same is true of the Muslims. They misrepresent the nature of Christ and reject His claim as the eternal God.
  - c. Many jeopardize their eternal souls because of a misunderstanding of Christ. The words Jesus asked His disciples are of infinite importance. **Mat 16:15** - "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered well, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

- B. The word “begotten” is from the word, *μονογενής*.
1. It is a compound word:  
*μόνος* – Alone, and *γένος* – decendent, family – we get the word genealogy from it. *μονογενής* has a focus upon uniqueness.
  2. In other contexts *μονογενής* is used to refer to an only child – the emphasis on the word “only.”  
**Luke 7:12 NAU** - "Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her."  
**Luke 8:42 NAU** - "for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him."  
**Luke 9:38 NAU** - "And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy,"
  3. The ESV translates it:  
**John 1:14 ESV** - "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
  4. But the ESV misses the force of the meaning of *μονογενής*
- C. John is telling us more than Jesus is the only Son of God. He is telling us that Jesus is the only eternal Son of God sent forth from the Father
1. Jesus was eternally with God and eternally God.
  2. He had no beginning. Jesus has His being in Himself. He is self-existent, self-sustaining, self-sufficient, self-determining self-sustaining.
  3. And yet, He came forth from the Father
- D. Some refer to this as the eternal generation of the Son
1. As we wrestle with the term *μονογενής* we understand that Jesus is eternally generated from the Father just as the Holy Spirit is eternally generated from the Father and the Son. We find eternal generation implicitly taught in **Chapter 5**  
**John 5:25-26 NAU** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;"
  2. When we say “eternal generation” we are not to understand that Jesus had a beginning. Rather, the Son is eternally from the Father.
  3. Stefan Lindblad wrote a [paper on this subject](#) where he states that the Son, “is neither created nor made, as if he were another thing external to the divine essence or another thing caused by the Father. Indeed, the Son’s generation of the Father is without beginning, without end, and without succession. This indicates, moreover, that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father within the unity of the Godhead.”

4. William G.T. Shedd stated it well:  
 “When the Father generates the Son, he does not call another substance into existence from nonentity, as he does when he makes the universe. These internal activities are not temporal and transient, but eternal and unceasing. They have neither beginning nor ending nor cessation. Neither of them is before the other in time. All are eternal and therefore simultaneous. The first person is not the eternal Father before the second person is eternal Son. An eternal Father cannot exist before the eternal Son.”<sup>1</sup>

- II. “Only-begotten” affirms the unity of God as well as the economy or function of the Trinity
- A. Historically, the church has held to the oneness of God
1. **Verse 1** declares that the Word was “with” God but also “was” God. God is one, single, undivided Divine essence.
    - a. Jesus told His disciples:  
**John 14:10 NAU** - "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?"
    - b. Paul also affirmed this unity of God  
**1 Corinthians 8:6 NAU** - "for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him."
  2. However we interpret “begotten” it cannot be in conflict with the unity of the Godhead. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three parts of the whole. God is not divided. Our Confession affirms that God is “without body, parts, or passions. . .”
  3. Some try to interpret “only begotten” and “eternally begotten” as implying an eternal subordination of the Son to the Father.
    - a. This cannot be; God is not divided. God is one in essence and being.
    - b. The eternal Son is of one substance, of one power, of one Divine essence with the Father. There is an eternal equality.
- B. In the economy of the Godhead, however, with regard to the redemption of man Jesus willingly came in submission to the Father.
1. In terms of the Godhead, Jesus is *distinct* from the Father and the Holy Spirit. God exists in three distinct persons. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit.
  2. In terms of the economy of the Godhead, each have their distinct function. In the context of the incarnation the Son came in submission to the Father. This submission, however, is in relationship to Christ being chosen and ordained in the eternal Covenant of Redemption to be the Savior of His people. It does not imply an eternal subordination.  
**Philippians 2:8 NAU** - "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

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<sup>1</sup> Shedd, William G.T. (2003) *Dogmatic Theology*. Third Edition, Edited by Alan W.Gomes. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Page 242.

3. John has been careful to describe the Living Word as being eternally “with” God and at the same time eternally God. He is not separated from the one Divine essence.  
Here in **Verse 14** John declares:  
"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."
4. John uses the word *μονογενής* to describe the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Son who alone has been eternally sent forth from the Father to redeem His people from their sins.

#### Conclusion:

1. You might say, what difference does it make? Can't I just believe in Jesus? What does that mean? Don't you have to know something about the person and work of Christ? Our Confession is correct in declaring that the Trinity “is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him” (LBC 2:3).
2. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, eternally begotten of the Father. He was sent forth by the Father to redeem those He eternally chose to redeem.  
**John 6:38-39 NAU** - "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
3. Your eternal destiny is dependent upon whether or not you trust in Him.  
**John 3:16-18 NAU** - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
4. Have you trusted Him?