

JESUS—BOTH LITERALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BEGOTTEN?

There are 2 schools of thought about Jesus being the “only begotten” Son of God. Conservative thinkers have long argued that He became such in connection with His advent on earth. Modern day thinkers argue that the word “begotten” simply means “one of a kind,” or “unique,” and the word “begotten” need not be employed. Some of us still maintain that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but is indeed “the only begotten Son of the Father.” Some 5 times in our more reliable and conservative translations, He is referred to as such (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Other passages refer to Him as the “begotten,” apart from the *mono* or *genes*, (Heb. 1:6; 5:5; Rev. 1:5; cf Ps. 2:7).

A few years ago, a well-known brother wrote an article entitled “Begotten and Unbegotten” that appeared in some of our brotherhood journals. It is now available in a public way on the Internet, which can be googled up by entering **Begotten And Unbegotten**. We once referred to this brother in print, as simply the one who stated Jesus was not the “only begotten” Son of God. A stern rebuke came back as if a beloved brother was being attacked. So, I shall not use his name **in** this article, but simply refer to him as **BB** (for Beloved Brother), but he will be identified in my final endnotes. This writing is certainly not in any way an attack on **BB**, but is a review of what I believe to be in error. **BB** begins this material by saying, “Physically Jesus was 'begotten' in Mary's womb 'by the Holy Spirit,’ and then went on to state that He was “begotten” “figuratively” in three other ways: His Resurrection, His Coronation, and His Ordination. He bases all points on Psalms 2:7. Please note that **BB** says Jesus was physically begotten, so how could he **ever** argue that Jesus was **not** “the only begotten Son of God?”

To have something “figurative,” there must first be the “literal” (or physical). **BB** prepares his readers for that by stating Jesus was “begotten” *physically*. He seems to have overlooked that there must be some kind of *likeness* or *similarity* between something literal, and then something figurative, as the “literal” becomes the *type* of the “spiritual” (figurative). There must be a direct relation of language between the two. For instance, Israel was the literal kingdom, while the church is God's spiritual kingdom. David was a literal shepherd over literal sheep, while Jesus is our spiritual shepherd and we are His sheep. There is absolutely **no** word connection between “begotten” and the words resurrection, coronation and ordination. In his section on “Unbegotten”, **BB** again referred to Jesus being physically begotten in Mary's womb, but was also figuratively begotten in the three named areas. We shall see!

Concerning the “resurrection”, we note what W. E. Vine says in *Vine's Expository Dictionary*:

The declaration “thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,” Ps. 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5 refers to the birth of Jesus, not His resurrection. In Acts 13:33 the verb “raise up” is used of the raising up of a person to occupy a special position in the nation as of David in verse 22 (so of Christ as a Prophet in 3:22 and 7:37). The word “again” in the KJV in v. 33 represents nothing in the original. The RV rightly omits it. In v. 34 the statement as to the resurrection of Christ receives the greater stress in this respect through the emphatic contrast to that in v. 33 as to His being raised up in the nation, a stress imparted by the added words “from the dead.” Accordingly, v. 33 speaks of His incarnation, v.34 of His resurrection.

In Heb. 1:5, that the declaration refers to the Birth is confirmed by the contrast in verse 6. Here the word “again” is rightly placed in the RV, “when He again bringeth in the

firstborn into the world.” This points on to His second advent, which is set in contrast to His first advent, when God brought His firstborn into the world the first time. (see FIRSTBORN).

So again in Heb. 8:5, where the High Priesthood of Christ is shown to fulfill all that was foreshadowed in the Levitical priesthood, the passage stresses the facts of His humanity, the days of His flesh, His perfect obedience and His sufferings. (586)

Examine the verses as explained by Vine, that Acts 13:33 is merely *identifying* the one who was **later** raised from the dead (God's **Son**, who had **been** begotten), and quotes from Psa. 2:7. The time Psa. 2:7 was referring to is **not** the resurrection day, as we shall see. But note that Acts 13:34 begins with the word “And” which signifies something **else** that was done. He was “raised up” (v. 33), [*as used in v. 22 in reference to David being “raised up”--not resurrected, Acts 2:29*], “and” (in addition to that), Jesus was “raised up from the dead” (v. 34). Psa. 2:7 will also be quoted again in Heb. 1:5 in connection with two major thoughts: (1) When God became the Father, and Christ became His Son, as based on 2 Sam. 7:14; and (2) When this occurred, “when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world (v. 6), at which time the angels **did** worship Him (Luke 2:13, 14).

The third passage that **BB** alludes to **also** quotes from Psa. 2:7, which is significant. True, the verse is saying that Jesus became a High Priest (in heaven), and the passage simply identifies Him as the one who **had been** “begotten,” and reference is made to the “days of his flesh”, which **BB** admits began from his fleshly birth, and all this was **prior** to His becoming a high priest. Remember, all three of **BB**'s “figurative” begettals are based on Psa. 2:7, and each instance identifies it with His *beginning on earth*, when He was “raised up” for the purpose of **later** being “raised up from the dead,” when He brought Him into the world for this purpose. To emphasize a figurative begettal in this manner reminds us of the “argumentation” used by Edwards/Hicks as they used “adultery” in a figurative sense to justify a man putting away his wife and marrying again, when clearly the texts refer to *literal* adultery or fornication.

VINE'S Dictionary states it correctly, when it says:
of “raising” up a person to occupy a place in the midst of a people, said of Christ, Acts 5:30, KJV only (the best texts have *ago*, to bring, RV, “hath....brought”); of David, Acts 13:22 (for v. 33 see No. 2. (506)

Vine continues:

of “raising up a person to occupy a place in the midst of a nation, said of Christ, Acts 2:36; 7:37; 13:33, RV “raised up Jesus,” not here by resurrection from the dead, as the superfluous “again” of the KJV would suggest; this is confirmed by the latter part of the verse, which explains the “raising up” as being by way of His incarnation, and by the contrast in v. 34, where stress is laid upon His being “raised” from the dead, the same verb being used. (506)

So, Jesus was “the only begotten” of the Father by means of *His physical birth*, and all contexts use this as a basis for (1) His Resurrection, (2) His Coronation, and (3) His Ordination as High Priest. He could not have been honored or exalted to either of these without having **first** been the “only begotten Son of God”, so as to enter the fleshly state and then be exalted. “And being found in fashion as a man....Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him” (Phil. 2:8, 9)

In our next writing, we shall look at the **real** and **true** way there is a “figurative” begettal, as there is a true likeness of a conception and birth.

Don Tarbet, 215 W. Sears, Denison, Texas 75020 <donwtarbet@cableone.net>

Works Cited:

Begotten and Unbegotten, by Hugo McCord

W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dict.* Nelson Pub., Nashville, TN. 1985