

10-2017

If Jesus Christ was Indeed the God-Man, How do We Explain Certain Titles Ascribed to Him?

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/second_person



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "If Jesus Christ was Indeed the God-Man, How do We Explain Certain Titles Ascribed to Him?" (2017). *The Second Person File*. 28.

https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/second_person/28

This The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is brought to you for free and open access by the Theological Studies at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Second Person File by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

If Jesus Christ was indeed the God-Man, how do we explain certain titles ascribed to Him, such as “firstborn,” “only begotten,” “beginning of creation,” etc.?

Also, what did Jesus mean when He said His Father was greater than He? (John 14:28). Let us briefly examine each of these four phrases:

- Firstborn:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Col. 1:15).

Two separate Greek words are helpful at this point.

A. *Protoktisis*, meaning, “first created.” This word is never used of Jesus.

B. *Prototokos*, meaning, “first rank,” “first in position.” This is the word used in Col. 1:15. An Old Testament example of this “first in position” title is seen in Psa. 89:27: *“Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.”* Here God is referring to David who was not the firstborn son of Jesse. To the contrary, he was the youngest of the sons (1 Sam. 16:10-13).

- Only begotten:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Here the meaning is “unique,” or “one of a kind.” Although New Testament believers are said to be sons of God (1 John 3:1), Jesus and Jesus alone is His unique Son (see Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

- Beginning of creation:

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). The Greek word *arche*, here translated “beginning” is literally, “one who begins,” or “source” or “first cause.” The NIV renders Rev. 3:14 as *“the ruler of God’s creation.”*

In fact, *arche* is used in describing both the activities of God the Son (Rev. 1:8, 11; 3:14; 22:13) and God the Father (Rev. 21:6).

- “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

How do we explain Jesus’ words here? To begin with, this statement should be compared with His previous one in John 10:30—*“I and my Father are one.”* The Athanasian Creed perhaps says it best in describing Jesus as “equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.”