

4	Acts 13:33 reads in the AV, “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus <i>again</i> ; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee”, but the RV correctly leaves out “again”. Then what does the verse refer to?	
4a	Christ’s birth.	Paul might have mentioned the Lord’s birth in verse 23, but not in this context, although we accept that Paul spoke for longer and this is Luke’s précis of the critical essence of his speech.
4b	His baptism.	Likewise, verse 25 refers to John’s preaching and baptism of repentance, but this is not the context of verse 33.
4c	His resurrection.	The psalm confirms the action God took in raising His Son from the dead, which Paul likewise confirms in Romans 1:4: “declared to be the Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord” (RV mg.). His birth had been questioned by the Jews, his resurrection is irrefutable.

“Behold the man!”

The titles and descriptions of Jesus of Nazareth

2. The Son of God

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THE PRINCIPAL message being conveyed to us by the titles considered in this article is that Jesus of Nazareth is the literal Son of the Creator of heaven and earth. Jesus is in fact part (the pivotal part) of the creation of God. These titles explain to us the miraculous circumstances of the birth of Jesus. The number, diversity and frequency of these expressions leave the reader in no doubt as to the authenticity of intention that Jesus is God’s Son. It will be noticed very plainly that never in Scripture is he called ‘God the Son’. This title is part of the doctrine of the Trinity and has no basis in anything but pagan superstition.

A secondary message that is worthy of consideration is that being Son of God meant that he acted as a Son of God should. We recall that there were sons of Belial, and generations of vipers, who were so called because of the way they acted. In Genesis 6 the sons of God were not angels but godly men and women. The Scripture has thus set a precedent that people are called the children of those whom they resemble. The centurion re-

marked at the crucifixion, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mt. 27:54). What he actually meant was not *the* Son of God but *a* son of God, as is borne out by the Greek, and he was saying that Jesus was a righteous man, as Luke records: “Certainly this was a righteous man” (23:47). When we read of Jesus as the Son of God we must therefore realise that he was also a righteous man.

Son of God

This is a very common title and is used many times in the New Testament. Most often it is associated with the definite article, making a distinction between him and other sons of God. At no time is any other person called “*the* Son of God” (Heb. 1:5). This distinction marks him out as being a special Son of God in a way that we are not entitled to claim. Jesus did not have an earthly father. There was no man involved in his conception at all, contrary to the ignorant jibes of the Jewish leaders. We may not claim to have been so conceived or to have such a relationship with God.

There are many other occasions in the Bible where Jesus' sonship is referred to where the words 'Son of God' are not found. In such places we find instead 'Son', 'My Son', 'the Son' and others. All of these put together amount to a very strong emphasis on the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.

Son of the living God

This title is used twice in the New Testament, both times by Peter (Mt. 16:16; Jno. 6:69). This title is different from the one above by only one word. The extra word, "living", is interesting. Peter was an impetuous man, a man of life and action. Peter perceived Yahweh to be a living God. To Peter, it was important that Jesus had the same quality of life. The words of Peter in John 6 tell us his thoughts: "thou hast the words of eternal life" (v. 68). Since God is a living God, it follows naturally that His Son would have the message of life.

Son of the Blessed

This title is used only once, in Mark 14:61. The word "Blessed" means 'praiseworthy', and is only ever used as an appellation of God. The context of this passage compared with the same account in the other Gospel records leaves us in no doubt that "the Blessed" is God Himself (cf. Rom. 9:5, RSV).

Son of the Highest

This title occurs only once in the AV, in Luke 1:32. The word "Highest" means literally 'the most exalted One' and, as with "Blessed", the meaning and context leave no room for any other explanation than that it refers to God, as in, for example, Psalm 87:5. Let us look at some of the ways in which Yahweh is the Highest.

- Yahweh is above all others: "The LORD is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, Who dwelleth on high . . . !" (Ps. 113:4,5).
- He is highest in power: "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, That bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that

the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding" (Isa. 40:25-28).

- He is highest in abode: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built! Have respect therefore to the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which Thy servant prayeth before Thee: that Thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof Thou hast said that Thou wouldest put Thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant prayeth toward this place. Hearken therefore unto the supplications of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear Thou from Thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when Thou hearest, forgive" (2 Chron. 6:18-21).
- He is highest in holiness: "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11).
- He is highest in mercy: "For Thy mercy is great above the heavens: and Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds" (Ps. 108:4).

Jesus is not the son of any ordinary god, but Son of the Highest!

Son of the most high God

This title is the same in the Greek as the one above. It is found in Mark 5:7.

Son of the Father

This title is found only in 2 John v. 3. This is an emphatic rendering indicating that he is *the* Son of *the* Father; that is to say, that he is different from all other sons of all other fathers. He is the principal Son of the Father of all.

Root of David

This title occurs twice in the book of Revelation (5:5; 22:16). We understand that in this title Jesus is claiming descent, not from David, but from Him Who preceded David. If we take the family tree of David back to its roots we come to God (Lk. 3:38). Jesus is thus emphasising the Divine involvement in his life. We note that it was not the branch from David but the root that prevailed in 5:5; that is, it was his Divine begettal that enabled him to overcome sin. Being the branch of David made

him subject to sin, but being of the root enabled him to prevail. Isaiah 11 gives the Old Testament basis for this title: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots . . . And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (vv. 1,10).

Beloved Son

This title occurs several times in the Gospels, notably in the records of Jesus' baptism and of his transfiguration. The word "beloved" is very interesting. The Greek word is *agap tos*, derived from *agap*, the love that is so deep that we sacrifice ourselves for another. This title is saying that Jesus is the object of God's *agap* love. We understand, then, that God would, because of His deep love for Jesus, sacrifice whatever He could for him. The wonder of it all is that God sacrificed Jesus for us! Surely this deepens the gratitude and love that we have for God. That God should take the only man He ever loved in this way, His only Son, and give him for us, the ungodly, is almost beyond comprehension: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). That means that God planned the time and circumstances to sacrifice his Beloved Son for us.

Little wonder, then, that we have the words of warning in Mark 9:7, "And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear him". God has sacrificed His Son for us! If we will not listen to the voice of the Beloved Son of God, what further can God do for us? Jesus is described by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:13 as "His [God's] dear [*agap*] Son". This is more correctly rendered in many modern versions as "the Son of His love". This is saying more than that Jesus was born because of God's love for us. Jesus is the Son whom God loves in this sacrificial way. What a sacrifice has been made for us!

King's son

This title is to be found in Psalm 72:1. The message is quite simple. God is the Great King and Jesus is His Son. It is speaking of a time when the King's Son will be king himself: "Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's [God's] son". Irrespective of any other reasons for being king, Jesus is the Son of the greatest King ever. Jesus is the heir apparent (Heb. 1:1,2).

The beginning of the creation of God

This title is to be found in Revelation 3:14. Jesus gives himself the title. We are not to assume that Jesus existed literally before he was born, that he was the first work in the Genesis creation. Clearly that was not the case. Jesus was the first of the new creation. This creation is a new mental, moral and physical creation. It was commenced when Jesus was the first one to be given immortality by God. The words of the Apostle Paul in the following verses add to this thought:

"the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29);

"the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20);

"the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15);

"the firstborn from the dead" (v. 18).

The title presupposes that the creation will continue in the same fashion as it began. God desires to follow the firstfruits with many others who will be "a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (Jas. 1:18).

Firstbegotten

This title is found only in Hebrews 1:6. The word indicates that God expects to have many others born after Jesus in the same family. The birth of Jesus was literal, and by that means he was the Son of God. Jesus was also a true Son of his Father because of his character and actions. We are children of God by creation as well as by adoption into the same family of which Jesus is the first-born. The title emphasises for us that the Father of the Firstbegotten is God.

Dayspring from on high

This title is found only in Luke 1:78, in the words of Zacharias. The word "dayspring" indicates a rising or a springing forth, especially of the sun. The word is also related to the word 'branch' in the Old Testament. In the Septuagint the word is used in Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 6:12. (The title 'the Branch' will be dealt with in a later article.) Whether the meaning should be related to the sun, as in Malachi 4:2, or to the branch is not clear. The following verse in Luke 1 speaks of spreading light and would favour the former interpretation. If this is the case, the title is describing how Jesus is sent by God as a light to bring understanding and healing to the nations. The origin of Jesus from this title is clear; he is from on high, that is, of God. The following verses may be helpful: Matthew 4:16; Hebrews 7:14; 2 Peter 1:19.

[\(To be continued\)](#)