

# What does the Title “Son of God” Mean?

## **Introduction**

Jesus is given many titles in Scripture. For example, in many places he goes by the following titles: the Christ (or Messiah), our Lord, and the Son of Man. In addition, in a few places he is called the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the King of the Jews.

One other - and very notable - title that Jesus is given is: the Son of God. Here are some examples:

Matthew 16:15-17 (ESV):

<sup>15</sup>He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Mark 15:37-29 (ESV):

<sup>37</sup>And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Luke 4:40-41 (ESV):

<sup>40</sup>Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. <sup>41</sup>And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

The writings of the apostle John are *especially* emphatic about Jesus being the Son of God. In fact, John tells us that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, *in order* to be saved! Here are some examples:

John 3:16 (ESV):

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 20:30-31 (ESV):

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1 John 4:15 (ESV):

<sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

1 John 5:13 (ESV):

<sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

So, since we evidently *must* believe that Jesus is the Son of God, it seems to me that it is extremely important to determine *what*, exactly, the title “Son of God” means, when it is used in reference to Jesus.

### Three other uses of the title “Son of God”

As it turns out, there are a number of *other* beings - other than Jesus - who are *also* called “sons of God”. Let’s take a look at some of those other beings:

#### Example 1:

Job 38:4-7 (ESV):

<sup>4</sup>“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.  
<sup>5</sup>Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
Or who stretched the line upon it?  
<sup>6</sup>On what were its bases sunk,  
or who laid its cornerstone,  
<sup>7</sup>when the morning stars sang together  
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

In the above passage, God is talking to Job, about the time when God created the earth. The end of that passage refers to “the sons of God” shouting for joy. So, *who* exactly are these “sons of God”? Well, since those beings were present when the earth was created, it occurs to me that they must be *spirit beings* (i.e., angels) - because no *human* beings existed while the earth was being created, right?

So, angels are also called *sons of God* - presumably because God created them *before* creating the universe.

#### Example 2:

Luke 3:23-24,37-38 (ESV):

<sup>23</sup>Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, <sup>24</sup>the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ...  
<sup>37</sup>the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, <sup>38</sup>the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

The above passage is an excerpt from Luke’s genealogy of Jesus. In that genealogy, each person listed is the *son* of the *next* person listed. As a result, verse 38 could be written this way:

Enos, who is the son of Seth,

Seth, who is the son of Adam,

Adam, who is the son of God.

So, Adam is also known as *the son of God*. This is presumably because God *directly created* Adam - as opposed to Adam being born through normal human procreation.

### Example 3:

Matthew 5:9 (ESV):

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Romans 8:14 (ESV):

<sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Galatians 3:26 (NASB):

<sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The above passages appear to state that all “redeemed” human beings - i.e., everyone who has faith in Christ Jesus - are also called “sons of God”. In Romans 8:15, Paul goes on to explain that we have received the spirit of “adoption as sons” - by which we cry “Abba! Father!”.

So, apparently every person who has faith in Jesus has become an “adopted” *son of God*.

### **What about Jesus?**

Now we get to the most important question - *why*, exactly, is Jesus called the Son of God? Fortunately, Scripture *explicitly* answers that question:

Luke 3:26-35 (ESV):

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”

<sup>29</sup>But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

<sup>34</sup>And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

<sup>35</sup>And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy— the Son of God.”

This passage looks crystal clear to me - the reason *why* Jesus is called the Son of God, is because *God caused Mary to conceive!*

In other words, the reason why Jesus is the Son of God, is because God caused Jesus’ mother to become pregnant with him!

So, here are two basic points, from all of the above information:

1. As noted in the introduction, the apostle John tells us that we *must* believe that Jesus is the Son of God, in order for us to be saved.
2. From the passage in this section, we can see that the reason *why* Jesus is the Son of God, is because God caused Mary to *conceive* Jesus in her womb.

When the above two points are combined, we wind up with the following assertion:

We *must* believe that God caused Mary to conceive Jesus in her womb, in order for us to be *saved*!

As it turns out, the apostle John appears to agree with that assertion:

<sup>1</sup> John 4:2-3 (ESV):

<sup>2</sup>By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

As noted above, John emphasizes that Jesus has “come in the flesh”. To me, that phrase means that Jesus was born as a *human being*, to a *human mother* - through a miraculous virginal conception.

So, to reiterate: From what I can see, here is what the title “Son of God” means, when it is used in reference to Jesus:

Jesus is the Son of God, precisely because God caused Mary to conceive Jesus in her womb.

### **Additional information about Jesus**

Of course, many Christians are not content to “leave it at that”. In other words, many Christians want to go into *painstaking detail*, about who, exactly, Jesus is. So, let’s delve into some additional information about Jesus.

As stated in Luke 3, Jesus is called the Son of God, *because* God caused Mary to conceive Jesus. However, many people claim that there are also *other* reasons why Jesus is the Son of God - other than the fact that God caused Mary to conceive.

As mentioned previously, there are some *other* beings - other than Jesus - who are also called sons of God. Those other beings fall into three main categories:

Category 1. Angels are called sons of God, because God created them *before* He created the universe.

Category 2. Adam is called the son of God, because God *directly* created him - as opposed to Adam being born through normal human procreation.

Category 3. Christians are called sons of God, because of their faith in Jesus. In other words, Christians are “adopted” sons of God.

The three categories listed above contain some other reasons why beings can be called “sons of God”. So, does Jesus fit into any of those three categories? Let’s explore that question.

To begin with, I think we can eliminate category 3 right off the bat - i.e., it appears that Jesus is *not* in that category. The reason why is because that category states that Christians are sons of God, due to their faith in Jesus. Is Jesus a son of God, because of his faith in *himself*? That doesn't make any sense, does it?

Category 1 has been the subject of many *intense* debates. The basic question is: did God *originally* create Jesus as a *spirit being*? In other words, did God initially create Jesus as an angel - and then did God "transfer" that angel into Mary's womb, to cause Jesus to be born as a human?

There are many, *many* verses that are quoted (on both sides) to try to answer this question. To me, though, the most important passage to look at is Hebrews 1:5-6:

Hebrews 1:5-6 (ESV):

<sup>5</sup>For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son"?

<sup>6</sup>And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

Verse 5 contains *rhetorical questions* - i.e., questions to which the answer is obvious. The basic question is, "To which of the angels did God make these statements?" The obvious answer is: "none" - God did not make those statements to *any* angels. However, God *did* make those statements about Jesus. So, since God did *not* make those statements to any angels - but He *did* make them about Jesus - that tells me that Jesus was *not* originally created as an angel.

Verse 6 states that *all* of God's angels worship Jesus. So, if Jesus, himself, is actually an angel, then that means that he must worship *himself*! That concept doesn't make sense to me - especially given the great humility that Jesus displays throughout Scripture. So, verse 6 also indicates to me that Jesus is *not* an angel.

Some people claim that Jesus is not an angel - but that he *is* an archangel. In other words, some people try to draw a great distinction between the terms "angel" and "archangel". However, the term archangel basically means "high angel" or "chief angel". It occurs to me that a chief angel is, himself, an *angel* - and therefore, Jesus cannot be an archangel, either - based on Hebrews 1:5-6.

Category 2 states that Adam is the son of God, because God directly created him - rather than Adam being born through normal human procreation. So, was *Jesus* directly created by God - rather than being born through normal human procreation?

The passage in Luke 3, above, states that God *directly* caused Mary to conceive - *and* that Mary was a *virgin* at that time. Of course, virgins do not *normally* conceive - i.e., virginal conceptions are *not* a part of normal human procreation.

So, since God directly caused Mary to conceive - and since virgin conceptions are *not* a part of normal human procreation - Jesus *does* seem to fit into category 2!

In addition, Scripture goes out of its way to emphasize the *similarities* between Adam and Jesus. For example:

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 (ESV):

<sup>21</sup>For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Romans 5:12-14,17 (ESV):

<sup>14</sup>Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

<sup>17</sup>For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

The above passages emphasize the similarity between Adam and Jesus. Basically, the *first* perfect man - Adam - *disobeyed* God, and therefore caused sin and death to spread to all mankind. Then, the *second* perfect man - Jesus - *obeyed* God, and therefore provided an opportunity for all mankind to be saved. In addition, here is a *very* well-known passage that compares Adam and Jesus:

1 Corinthians 15:42-49 (ESV):

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup>It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup>It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup>Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup>But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup>The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup>As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup>Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

The above passage talks about *resurrection* - i.e., the hope that we have for life after death. The passage states that when we are initially born, we receive "natural" (mortal) bodies; but when we are resurrected, we receive "spiritual" (immortal) bodies.

Verse 45 appears to refer to that *very* concept. In other words, verse 45 seems to be stating the following: "When Adam was created by God, he was given a *natural body*. When Jesus was resurrected by God, he was given a *spiritual body*." Note that when Jesus was initially born, he had a natural body, *just like* Adam did. The reason why we know this because Jesus *died* on the cross.

Many people point to verse 47, to try to claim that Jesus was *originally* created as a spirit being - *before* God caused Jesus to be born on the earth. However, verse 46 explicitly states people do *not* start out with spiritual bodies - instead, people *always* start with natural bodies, *before* they are given spiritual bodies. That certainly seems to state that Jesus must have had a natural body, *before* he had any sort of spiritual body - i.e., that Jesus could *not* have had any sort of spirit existence, before he was born on the earth.

Also note that the phrase “from heaven” is sometimes used in a *figurative* sense. In other words, in some cases the phrase “from heaven” means “manifested by God”. More information about the different meanings of the word “heaven” can be found [here](#).

## Conclusion

The apostle John tells us that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, in order for us to be saved. Also, Luke 3 tells us that the reason *why* Jesus is the Son of God, is because God caused Mary to conceive Jesus in her womb.

So, apparently we must believe that God caused Mary to conceive Jesus, in order for us to be saved!

Some people believe *other* things about Jesus as well. For example, some people believe that God initially created Jesus as a spirit being; and then he “transferred” Jesus into Mary’s womb, in order to cause Jesus to be born as a human being. (I concede that there are some verses in Scripture which *appear* to support that concept.)

However, *even if* the above concept is true, we certainly do not need to believe that concept, in order to be saved. If we *did* need to believe that concept, then God would have *explicitly stated* that concept in Scripture - like the way He explicitly stated that He caused Mary to conceive, and that is why Jesus is the Son of God.

Also note: In addition to *believing* that Jesus is the Son of God, it appears to me that we also must *follow* Jesus (and God), in order to be saved. In other words, we must sincerely try to do what God and Jesus want us to do, in order for us to be saved. Consider these passages:

Matthew 7:21 (ESV):

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

James 2:14-17 (ESV):

<sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup> So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Hebrews 10:26-27 (ESV):

<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

The above passages certainly seem to contradict the “once saved, always saved” doctrine. That is just my belief, of course!