

*monogenês* ([3439](#)), “only-born”

Reference	+ <i>uios</i> (son)	+ <i>thugater</i> (daughter)	+ nothing	+ <i>theos</i> (God)	NASB	HCSB	<a href="#">JTB</a> (Literal translation from Greek text)
Luke 7:12	X				the only son of his mother	He was his mother’s only son	only-born son of his mother
Luke 8:42		X			he had an only daughter	he had an only daughter	there was to him only-born daughter
Luke 9:38	X				I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only <i>boy</i> ,	I beg You to look at my son, because he’s my only child.	I beg of You to look upon the son of me because only-born to me he is,
John 1:14			X		glory as of the only begotten from the Father	glory as the One and Only Son from the Father	glory as of only-born from Father
John 1:18				X	the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father	The One and Only Son – the One who is at the Father’s side	Only-born God, the One being within the bosom of the Father
John 3:16	X				that He gave His only begotten Son	He gave His One and Only Son	so that the Son, the only-born He gave
John 3:18	X				he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.	he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.	he has not believed into the name of the only-born Son of the God.
Heb. 11:17			X		and he ... was offering up his only begotten <i>son</i> .	and he was offering his unique son,	and the only-born he was offering,
1 John 4:9	X				that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world	God sent His One and Only Son into the world	that the Son of Him, the only-born, the God sent into the world

[Friberg’s](#) definition: “*monogenês, ês* of what is the only one of its kind of class, *unique*; (1) an only child born to human parents *one and only* (Luke 7:12; 8:42); substantively *only child* (Luke 9:38) (2) as a child born in a unique way (a) used of God’s Son Jesus *only, only begotten*; substantively (John 1:14); (b) used of Abraham’s son Isaac *only*; substantively *ho m. his only true son* (Heb. 11:17).”

Conclusion: I conclude that *monogenês* is a hybrid adjective from *mónos* (3441), only, and *génos* (1085), “born.” I believe John’s usage stems from those who are connected in a family bloodline “born,” rather than merely a unique category. So I reject HCSB’s translation (above) and modify NASB’s translation from “only begotten” (which is archaic) to “only-born,” which is perfectly understandable today. See also the conclusion under the *génos* table below. Please understand what I am NOT saying. I am NOT questioning Jesus’ Deity. He has *always* and *will always* partake of the same essence of God, the Yahweh of the OT and the Father of the NT. But my contention is that He became the “only-born” Son of God when He was born. One has to be *born* to be *only-born*.

## The Likely Origin of the *genês* portion of *monogenês* *génos* (1085)

<p><u>Thayer’s</u> definition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. kindred <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. offspring</li> <li>b. family</li> <li>c. stock, tribe, nation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. i.e. nationality or descent from a single people</li> </ol> </li> <li>d. the aggregate of many individuals of the same nature, kind, sort</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p><u>Friberg’s</u> definition: (1) of common ancestry <i>posterity, descendant, family</i> (Rev. 22:16); (2) of common identity as an ethnic group <i>race, people, nation</i> (Acts 7:19); of common identity as believers <i>nation, people</i> (1 Pet. 2:9) (3) of members of a family circle <i>kindred, relatives, (extended) family</i> (Acts 7:13); (4) of a distinctive species of something <i>kind, class</i> (1 Cor. 12:10).</p>
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Reference	ESV	NASB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
Matt. 13:47	fish of every <b>kind</b>	<i>fish</i> of every <b>kind</b>	every <b>kind</b> of fish
Matt. 17:21		[But this <b>kind</b> does not go out except by prayer and fasting] <sup>1</sup>	[However this <b>kind</b> does not come out except by prayer and fasting]
Mark 7:26	a Syrophenician by <b>birth</b>	of the Syrophenician <b>race</b>	a Syrophenician by <b>birth</b>
Mark 9:29	This <b>kind</b> cannot be driven out by anything but prayer	This <b>kind</b> cannot come out by anything but prayer	This <b>kind</b> can come out by nothing but prayer [and fasting]
Acts 4:6	who were of the high priestly <b>family</b> .	who were of high-priestly <b>descent</b>	and all the members of the high-priestly <b>family</b>
Acts 4:36	a Levite, a <b>native</b> of Cyprus	a Levite of Cyprian <b>birth</b>	a Levite and a Cypriot by <b>birth</b>
Acts 7:13	Joseph’s <b>family</b>	Joseph’s <b>family</b>	Joseph’s <b>family</b>
Acts 7:19	He dealt shrewdly with our <b>race</b>	he took shrewd advantage of our <b>race</b>	He dealt deceitfully with our <b>race</b>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 17:21. There is a textual problem here. Early mss do not contain this verse. (NASB footnote)

Acts 13:26	sons of the <b>family</b> of Abraham	sons of Abraham's <b>family</b>	sons of Abraham's <b>race</b>
Acts 18:2	Aquila, a <b>native</b> of Pontus	Aquila, a <b>native</b> of Pontus	Aquila, a <b>native</b> of Pontus
Acts 18:24	Apollos, a <b>native</b> of Alexandria	Apollos, an Alexandrian by <b>birth</b>	Apollos, a <b>native</b> Alexandrian
1 Cor. 12:10	various <b>kinds</b> of tongues	<i>various kinds</i> of tongues	different <b>kinds</b> of languages
1 Cor. 12:28	various <b>kinds</b> of tongues	various <b>kinds</b> of tongues	various <b>kinds</b> of languages
1 Cor. 14:10	many <b>different</b> languages	many <b>kinds</b> of languages	different <b>kinds</b> of languages
2 Cor. 11:26	danger from my own <b>people</b>	dangers from my <b>countrymen</b>	dangers from my own <b>people</b>
Gal. 1:14	among my <b>people</b>	among my <b>countrymen</b>	among my <b>people</b>
Php. 3:5	of the <b>people</b> of Israel	of the <b>nation</b> of Israel	of the <b>nation</b> of Israel
1 Pet. 2:9 <sup>2</sup>	But you are a chosen <b>race</b>	But you are a chosen <b>race</b>	But you are a chosen <b>race</b>
Rev. 22:16	I am the root and the <b>descendant</b> of David	I am the root and the <b>descendant</b> of David	I am the Root and the <b>Offspring</b> of David

### Observations and a Conclusion

**1.** As [Friberg](#) (above) suggests, there are clearly instances where *génos* is used with reference to his definition #4: “of a distinct species of something *kind*, *class*.” The following references illustrate that definition: Matt. 13:47; 17:21; Mark 9:29; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; 14:10. The term “category” can easily be used here. These categories include the following: (1) the category of fish (Matt. 13:47); (2) the category of demon exorcism (Matt. 17:21); (3) the category of tongues (used in a figurative sense of languages) (1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 14:10).

**2.** There are other instances, however, in which *génos* has a “place of origin” connotation. In these instances, terms such as “native” and “birth” are appropriate. These words identify those who were “born” in a certain region, such as Syrophenicia (Mark 7:26), Cyprus (Acts 4:36), or Pontus (Acts 18:2), or else they were born in a particular city, such as Alexandria (Acts 18:24). In each case, however, the idea is present that these individuals were actually born somewhere.

**3.** There is yet another category which identifies those who are “genetically” related to one another in a human blood line. Combining translations from each of those listed above (ESV, NASB, HCSB), here are the different “genetic” translations: (1) family (Acts 4:6; 7:13; 13:26) (2) descent (Acts 4:6); (3) race (Acts 7:19; 13:26; 1 Pet. 2:9); (4) people (2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 1:14; Php. 3:5); (5) countrymen (2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 1:14); (6) nation (Ph. 3:5); (7) descendant (Rev. 22:16); (8) offspring (Rev. 22:16). These terms are appropriate because they are speaking of actual people who are actually biologically connected, not mere “kinds” or “categories” which have no human biological association.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 2:9 - race: Many commentators believe this term refers metaphorically to Gentiles, but I do not. I believe it refers to the believing race of Israel, i.e. the believing remnant who are Messianic Jews. See my comments on 1 Peter 1:1 in my [Annotated Outline of 1 Peter](#).

**Conclusion:** It is my conclusion that Definition #3, which speaks of a personal family or kinship relationship, is the definition that is behind John's use of the term *monogenês* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9. In other words, Jesus is the "only-born" Son of God because He partakes of the same essence as His Father. This is not a physical bloodline, but a personal, spiritual, essential line. Jesus is just as much God as God the Father is because He partakes of the same essence as His Father. But the term "only-born" is appropriate because Jesus was actually born. One cannot be "only-born" if he has never been born at all. This unique relationship was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit through the medium of the Virgin Birth of Christ.

Please understand I am not questioning Jesus' eternal Deity. He has always been Deity and He will always be Deity. But being "only-born" has to do with His becoming humanity. In John 1, John carefully called Jesus the Word (Logos) of God prior to His having become man (John 1:1-3). But the moment John referred to Jesus as "becoming flesh" (John 1:14) is the first moment he also identified Jesus as being God's "only-born." The Virgin Birth was the method God used to ensure that the eternal Word of God, who was Deity, would be combined with the human descendant of David in a one-of-a-kind hybrid – the only God/Man, Jesus of Bethlehem / Nazareth.

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