



Is Jesus **“the only begotten God” (John 1:18)**. Most translations render the phrase as, “the only begotten Son”. However, the very important Greek manuscript P66 from about 175-200 CE, shown above, has “the only begotten God” at [John 1:18](#). But, why the difference? Which rendering from the Greek text of [John 1:18](#) is more accurate? How can Jesus be **“God” (John 1:1)**, and also be **“the begotten from the Father” (John 1:14)**?

John 1:18 - “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (NASB).

John 1:18 - “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten God who is on the bosom of the Father—He has expounded [Him]” (Literal Standard Version)

John 1:18 - “No one has ever yet seen God. *The* only begotten God, the *One* being in the bosom of the Father, He has made *Him* known” (Berean Literal Bible)

John 1:18 - “No one hath seen God at any time. An Only Begotten God, the One existing within the bosom of the Father He hath interpreted him” (The Emphasized

Bible)

We have quoted four literal translations of **John 1:18**, which accurately translate from the Greek text, **“the only begotten God”**. How can we be so sure this is the correct rendering of the Greek?

*“(only begotten God) is the reading **supported by Papyrus 66, Codex Sinaiticus, and Codex Vaticanus**; ὁ μονογενῆς θεός is supported **by Papyrus 75, by an early corrector of Codex Sinaiticus, and by minuscule 33**”—Text of the Gospels*

*“The question of reading here is very interesting. Most MSS. and versions have ‘the only-begotten Son’ or ‘only-begotten Son.’ But **the three oldest and best MSS. and two others of great value have ‘only-begotten God.’** The test of the value of a MS., or group of MSS., on any disputed point, is the extent to which it admits false readings on other points not disputed. Judged by this test the group of MSS. which read ‘only-begotten God’ is very strong; while the far larger group of MSS. which have ‘Son’ for ‘God’ is comparatively weak, for the same group of MSS. might be quoted in defence of a multitude of readings which no one would think of adopting. Again, the revised Syriac, which is among the minority of versions that support ‘God,’ is here of special weight, because it agrees with MSS. from which it usually differs. **We conclude, therefore, that the very unusual expression ‘only-begotten God’ is the true reading, which has been changed to the usual ‘only-begotten Son,’ a change which in an old Greek MS. would involve the alteration of only a single letter.** Both readings can be traced up to the second century, which again is evidence that the Gospel was written in the first century. Such differences take time to spread themselves widely”—Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*

“The only begotten son (ὁ μονογενῆς υἱὸς)

Several of the principal manuscripts and a great mass of ancient evidence support the reading μονογενῆς Θεός, “God only begotten.”

Another and minor difference in reading relates to the article, which is omitted from μονογενῆς by most of the authorities which favor Θεός. Whether we read the only begotten Son, or God only begotten, the sense of the passage is not affected. The latter reading merely combines in one phrase the two attributes of the word already indicated - God (John 1:1), only begotten (John 1:14); the sense being one who was both God and only begotten.”—Vincent’s Word Studies

Yes, Jesus is “God”, in the sense of being **“the only begotten God,”** meaning that Jesus was created, and is obviously not the Almighty God, who created everything. Jesus is also **“God”** in a similar sense that Moses, Israelite kings, rulers and judges were called **“God” (Exodus 7:1 EB; Psalm 45:6 NAB; Psalm 82:6 NAB)**. *“O God: the king, in courtly language is called ‘god,’ i.e., more than human, representing God to the people”* (NAB note on Psalm 45:7). This explains how Jesus can be both “God” and “begotten”.

The fact that Jesus is called “the only begotten God” should not surprise us, because Jesus is **“the Mighty God”**, but he’s not **“the LORD Almighty”**, that is, **“the Lord God Almighty” (Isaiah 9:6,7 NIV; Revelation 21:22)**.

Since no one has ever seen God, and yet, many people saw Jesus, Jesus could not be Almighty God. Trinitarians admit that the first mention of **“God”** in **John 1:18** means the Father, and Jesus did explicitly say, **“No one has seen the Father” (John 6:46 NIV)**. But, **John 1:18** plainly says, **“No one has ever seen God at any time” (NIV)**. **1 John 4:12** further confirms this by saying: **“No one has ever seen God” (NIV; NAB; NLT)**. So, it’s not just *“the Father”* that “no one has ever seen, it is also *“God”* that “no one has ever seen.”