

John 1:18



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Context

- NET ©** No one has ever seen God. The only one, ¹ himself God, who is in closest fellowship with ² the Father, has made God ³ known. ⁴
- NIV ©** No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.
- NASB ©** No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.
- NLT ©** No one has ever seen God. But his only Son, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart; he has told us about him.
- MSG ©** No one has ever seen God, not so much as a glimpse. This one-of-a-kind God-Expression, who exists at the very heart of the Father, has made him plain as day.
- BBE ©** No man has seen God at any time; the only Son, who is on the breast of the Father, he has made clear what God is.
- NRSV ©** No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.
- NKJV ©** No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him* .

KJV No man | hath seen | God | at any time | the only begotten | Son | which | is | in | the bosom | of the Father | he | hath declared | [him].
 <3762> <3708> (5758) <2316> <4455> ; <3439> <5207> ; <3588> <5607> (5752) <1519>
 <2859> <3962> ; <1565> <1834> (5662)

NASB © No | one | has seen | God | at any | time | ; the only | begotten | God | who is in the bosom | *Him*.
 <3762> <3762> <3708> <2316> <4455> <4455> <3439> <3439> <2316> <2859>
 of the Father | He has explained |
 <3962> <1834>

GREEK yeon | oudeiv | ewraken | pwptote | monogenhv | yeov | o | wn | eiv | ton |
 <2316> <3762> <3708> (5758) <4455> <3439> <2316> <3588> <1510> (5752) <1519> <3588>
 N-ASM A-NSM V-RAI-3S-ATT ADV A-NSM N-NSM T-NSM V-PXP-NSM PREP T-ASM
 kolpon | tou | patrov | ekeinov | exhghsato |
 <2859> <3588> <3962> <1565> <1834> (5662)
 N-ASM T-GSM N-GSM D-NSM V-ADI-3S

NET © [draft] No one | has | ever | seen | God | . The only one | , himself God | , who is | in | .
 <3762> <3708> <4455> <3708> <2316> <3439> <2316> <1510> <1519>

ITL closest fellowship | with the Father | , has made | God known |
 <2859> <3962> <1834> <1834>

NET © No one has ever seen God. The only one, ¹ himself God, who is in closest fellowship with ² the Father, has made God ³ known. ⁴

NET © Notes ¹ tc The textual problem μονογενῆς θεός (monogenh "qeo", "the only God") versus ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός (Jo monogenh "Juio", "the only son") is a notoriously difficult one. Only one letter would have differentiated the readings in the mss, since both words would have been contracted as *nomina sacra*: thus qMs or uMs. Externally, there are several variants, but they can be grouped essentially by whether they read θεός or υἱός. The majority of mss, especially the later ones (A C³ Θ Ψ E^{1,13} I lat), read ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός. I⁷⁵ 33 1κ pc have ὁ μονογενῆς θεός, while the anarthrous μονογενῆς θεός is found in I⁶⁶ κ* B C* L pc. The articular θεός is almost certainly a scribal emendation to the anarthrous θεός, for θεός without the article is a much harder reading. The external evidence thus strongly supports μονογενῆς θεός. Internally, although υἱός fits the immediate context more readily, θεός is much more difficult. As well, θεός also explains the origin of the other reading (υἱός), because it is difficult to see why a scribe who found υἱός in the text he was copying would alter it to θεός. Scribes would naturally change the wording to υἱός however, since μονογενῆς υἱός is a uniquely Johannine christological title (cf. [John 3:16, 18](#); [1 John 4:9](#)). But θεός as the older and more difficult reading is preferred. As for translation, it makes the most sense to see the word θεός as in apposition to μονογενῆς, and the participle ὁ ὢν (Jo wn) as in apposition to θεός, giving in effect three descriptions of Jesus rather than only two. (B. D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 81, suggests that it is nearly impossible and completely unattested in the NT for an adjective followed immediately by a noun that agrees in gender, number, and case, to be a substantival adjective: "when is an adjective ever used substantivally when it immediately precedes a noun of the same inflection?" This, however, is an overstatement. First, as Ehrman admits, μονογενῆς in [John 1:14](#) is substantival. And since it is an established usage for the adjective in this context, one might well expect that the author would continue to use the adjective substantivally four verses later. Indeed, μονογενῆς is already moving toward a crystallized substantival adjective in the NT [cf. [Luke 9:38](#); [Heb 11:17](#)]; in patristic Greek, the process continued [cf. *PGL* 881 s.v. 7]. Second, there are several instances in the NT in which a substantival adjective is followed by a noun with which it has complete concord: cf., e.g., [Rom 1:30](#); [Gal 3:9](#); [1 Tim 1:9](#); [2 Pet 2:5](#).) The modern translations which best express this are the NEB (margin) and TEV. Several things should be noted: μονογενῆς alone, without υἱός, can mean "only son," "unique son," "unique one," etc.

(see [1:14](#)). Furthermore, θεός is anarthrous. As such it carries qualitative force much like it does in [1:1c](#), where θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος (θεοῦ ἢν Jo logo") means "the Word was fully God" or "the Word was fully of the essence of deity." Finally, ὁ ὧν occurs in [Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8, 11:17; and 16:5](#), but even more significantly in the LXX of [Exod 3:14](#). Putting all of this together leads to the translation given in the text.

¹tn Or "The unique one." For the meaning of μονογενής (monogenh") see the note on "one and only" in [1:14](#).

²tn Grk "in the bosom of" (an idiom for closeness or nearness; cf. L&N 34.18; BDAG 556 s.v. κόλπος 1).

³tn Grk "him"; the referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴sn *Has made God known*. In this final verse of the prologue, the climactic and ultimate statement of the earthly career of the Logos, Jesus of Nazareth, is reached. The unique One ([John 1:14](#)), the One who has taken on human form and nature by becoming incarnate (*became flesh*, 1:14), who is himself fully God (*the Word was God*, 1:1c) and is to be identified with the ever-living One of the Old Testament revelation ([Exod 3:14](#)), who is in intimate relationship with the Father, this One and no other has fully revealed what God is like. As Jesus said to Philip in [John 14:9](#), "The one who has seen me has seen the Father."

