



## **“Preaching Jesus: As The Son of God”**

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The commission of the church is to preach Christ to the world. He is the only hope for this world lost in its sin. He came to save us from our sins and from damnation, as He said Himself.

**Luke 19:10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

**I Corinthians 1:21 Paul said, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”**

What is that message of which Paul spoke?

**I Corinthians 2:2 “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”**

That involves more than merely the historical facts of Christ’s life and death; it means to preach His person, His work, His plan, His will. The preaching of the church should be Jesus-centric. He is the Alpha and Omega—that is the A to Z—of the Bible and of God’s eternal plan. But it appears we may be failing, in many cases, to truly preach Jesus. We are living in a time of appalling theological ignorance and even heresy concerning Jesus Himself. Who He is, why He came, what it means to believe in and to follow Him. We see our great lack of understanding reflected in our attitudes toward the Christian faith, the church, and how we live.

Last week, I cited a recent survey that an alarming number—nearly 1/3 of self-described evangelical Christians—do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They believe He was a being created by God and that He was a wise teacher, a brilliant philosopher, a force of change in the world, but not that He was actually God in the human flesh. But to deny this is to deny the gospel altogether. The scripture plainly sets Jesus forth to be the Son of God. To deny that is to deny the Bible, plain and simple.

What do we mean that Jesus is the Son of God? What difference does it make whether or not we believe that? The great apostle Paul spent much of his life denying the truth claims of Christ. He did not believe that Jesus was the promised Christ, a divine being, or that He came from heaven. In fact, Paul was honest and perceptive enough to admit that if Jesus was not the Son of God, that He was the very opposite of a good man and a good teacher. Instead, he would be a fraud and a blasphemer, and that's exactly what Paul thought Jesus was for a significant portion of his life. Therefore, Saul (as Paul was then known) devoted himself to the destruction of Christianity and to the stamping out of its message.

But all of that changed when he met Christ on the Damascus road, as recorded in **Acts 9**. When he encountered the risen Lord in that miraculous appearance that day, his heart, mind, and life were all radically and forever changed. What was the fact that this soon-to-be powerful preacher and Christian leader came to accept that changed everything about him? After meeting the Lord and being blinded by the vision, he was sent into the city to await Ananias to come and tell him what to do.

**Acts 9:17-20** "And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

Paul went forth believing and preaching Jesus to be the Son of God and he preached that very message until the day He died a martyr's death. That message cost him his life. That message shook the Roman Empire in Paul's time and it would shake the world today if we truly believe and preach it.

There is no statement in all the world that has greater implications and greater power than that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That's the good confession upon which the church is built and upon which all eternal hope stands. If that statement is not true, then the Bible is not true. If that statement is false, the gospel is meaningless and powerless and all of humanity is doomed to death and destruction. That's how serious and weighty of a statement this is. When Jesus was in the coasts of Caesarea Philippi with His disciples, He asked them who they thought He was. The masses were divided about His identity, some believing Him to be a prophet, some a reincarnation of Elijah, and so forth. But Jesus asked His closest friends and disciples, those who had witnessed His deeds and been with Him, "*But who do you say that I am?*" That question is put before you and me today and how we answer it will determine where we spend eternity.

**Matthew 16:16** "Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

That's more than a religious expression or a Christian saying that's adopted or repeated. It's the greatest statement made in the history of the world.

**Matthew 16:17** "Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Indeed, Jesus is set forth from the beginning to the end of scripture to be just who Peter confessed Him to be, the Son of God. Jesus repeatedly claimed divine Sonship while living on earth. In one of His most tense encounters with the Pharisees, Jesus said this:

**John 8:42 “...”If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.”**

By being the Son of God, it doesn't mean that God literally fathered Him in the human sense; it means that He was sent from God, His Father. He was miraculously conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit without an earthly father and it was in this miraculous conception and birth that the eternal and divine entered into the realm of time and space—God took on human form. His birth was not according to the normal, natural means, but was divine and supernatural. He is affirming that He was with God and was Himself God, who was sent by God the Father on a divine mission. But it's not only what Jesus claimed about Himself.

**John 8:17-18 “”It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”**

You see, Jesus had not only His own testimony, but also the testimony of many others that He was the Son of God. For one, God Himself. On two different and significant occasions, God the Father spoke directly out of glory and declared Christ to be His Son. When Jesus set out on His ministry and was anointed by God the Holy Spirit as the Christ (which we will discuss more in another lesson), and was baptized of John marking the beginning of His work as the Christ, the Bible says this:

**Matthew 3:17 “And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**

Later, when Jesus took His closest disciples with Him to the top of the Mount of Transfiguration, God made Moses and Elijah—the two greatest and authoritative men of the Old Testament age—to appear before them. In their midst, He glorified Jesus, setting Him above and apart by changing His very appearance, making His face to shine.

**Luke 9:35 “And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”**

Moses and Elijah were great servants of God. They were teachers from God, miracle workers empowered by God, leaders and revolutionary figures. But God sets Jesus apart from them.

There's also the testimony of the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah. He foretold 700 years before Christ was born.

**Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”**

The name *Immanuel* means *God with us*. When indeed by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit the virgin Mary miraculously conceived the Christ child, the angels of God added their voices to the heavenly witness—one to Mary's husband-to-be, Joseph:

**Matthew 1:20-21** "But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Even the demons of hell acknowledged the divine nature of Jesus when they were confronted by His power.

**Mark 3:10-11** "For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God."

One time, Jesus met two men possessed by demons living among the tombs in the country of the Gergesenes and when they saw the Master, they cried out.

**Matthew 8:29** "And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

And the Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus' deity. He wrought mighty works through Jesus and finally raised Him up on the third day after His death upon the cross.

**John 20:30-31** "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Thus, when Jesus finished His work on earth and ascended back to the Father, the apostles went throughout the world preaching Jesus as the Son of God and people believed their testimony and obediently turned to Christ for salvation from their sins, believing that He was the Son of God. Paul begins his masterful treatise on the justification of sinful man, the letter to the Romans, in this way:

**Romans 1:1-4** "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Friend, He is the Son of God. He claimed it, heaven proclaimed it. Those who knew Him, heard Him, and saw Him verified it. Jesus Christ was God living on earth. In fact, later the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and in his first letter to him, he included what many believe to be a portion of an early hymn sang by the primitive church.

**I Timothy 3:16** "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

He now sits at God's right hand. He has been exalted, given power, authority, and glory. You see, to deny that Jesus was the Son of God—God manifest in the flesh—is to deny everything else about Jesus and His claims. You can't believe that He was a good man who said good things or is worthy of any kind

of worship or adulation or worthy of anybody following Him if He's not who He claimed to be. If He is not the Son of God, He was a liar, or He was a lunatic. Christianity is vapid and utterly powerless and meaningless if Christ was not the Son of God.

Liberals and modernists have tried to explain away these divine and supernatural claims. Some allege that when the Bible says that Jesus was the Son of God, it merely means that He was a child of God in the same sense that we can all become children of God. But the so-called golden text of the Bible says this:

**John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

Some translations have removed the word *begotten* from the text and simply say that Jesus was the *only Son of God*, but I believe that robs the text of its true meaning. For Jesus is not the only Son of God.

**John 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"**

If you and I are Christians, we are sons of God. Jesus wasn't the only son of God, but He was the only begotten Son of God. The only One sent from heaven, the only One who was with God and who was God, who came down and took human form, as John declared.

**John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."**

The Greek word that is translated *only begotten* in **John 3:16** is the word *monogenes*. This word doesn't mean the offspring of God or creation of God or born by the Fatherhood of God in the sense that a human father sires a son. That's not what it means. But it means that He shares the divine nature and characteristics of the Father. He was not a son of God like you and I may be sons of God; He was the only begotten Son of God. He is the only one who can actually claim to be God in the flesh. He, unlike any other before or after could ever claim, He is Himself God who came and took on the form of a human. That's what the phrase means.

This brings up a great mystery. How can Jesus be God and be the Son of God at the same time? Many people get way off track because they're not willing to accept by faith what the Bible says about something they don't understand. You see, the Bible teaches that God exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all spoken of. They're all God, but they're not the same person. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. Those are all true statements. But the Father is not the Son nor the Spirit. The Son is not the Spirit nor the Father. The Spirit is not the Father nor the Son. But all three distinct persons are God. That is, all three are One in nature, One in mind, One in mission, One in purpose, One in essence.

You may be saying, *I'm confused*. Good. I think we all ought to be somewhat confused or at least amazed because we're talking about God. God is not a human being and we can't fit God into our little box of limited understanding. Sometimes people say, *what it's like is this: the trinity or the three of the Godhead is like this*, and they try to illustrate it with some earthly relationship or arrangement, but that doesn't work because God is unlike anything here on this earth. There may be reflections of the Godhead in this world, but nothing in this world is "like" God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy

Spirit. The fact is, if we could fit God into our limited understanding and fully comprehend who He is, His nature, and His being, He wouldn't be God—He'd be just like another human being. But He is not a human being; He is God.

We must simply accept by faith that the eternal God exists in three persons, one of which is the Son, who entered into time and space in the form of a human being and thus called Himself the Son of God and at the same time, the Son of man. In other words, He was both divine and human. Not part divine and part human, but fully divine and fully human. He was God living as a man. As God lived here as a man, He lived a life without sin. He showed us on earth what God in heaven is like.

**Hebrews 4:15 “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”**

**John 14:9 “...he who hath seen me hath seen the Father...”**

**I John 5:20 “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”**

So, Christ the Son of God came to show us the Father. He came to set an example of how we are to live. He came to teach and reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And, most of all, He came to open up the way to heaven.

**John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

Because He was the Son of God, He came with the authority of God and the ability to forgive our sins, and the only way He could accomplish that was by doing what no man on earth could do. That is, to live a perfect life on earth so that He could be the only sinless sacrifice that could atone for your sins and mine. The divine came down and partook of the flesh in order that God might be represented to man and also that man might be represented before God. We'll talk more about that in a future lesson. No man of earthly descent could fill that role. No person born of man and woman of this earth could do that because all of this earth are sinners ourselves.

**Romans 3:10 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:”**

So, God the Father, in His love and wisdom, sent God the Son stepping down the starlit stairway of heaven into this world to bring us back to Himself. That's why we must believe and confess that Jesus is the Son of God. We only have two choices and there is no middle ground. There are only two conclusions that you can draw about Jesus today and there is no in between. You can forget all of this business that Jesus was a wise man, a good teacher, a good moral leader, and so forth, because if He is not who He claimed to be, He is none of those things.

You have two choices. You can say, along with Peter, *Thou are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*. If you're willing to say that, mean it, and understand what that means, that will change everything about your life. It'll change how you live, what you believe, what you think, and where you're headed. You can say that, or you can say, along with the chief priests and Pharisees in their accusations about Christ before Pilate, *Sir, we remember what this deceiver said*. You see, that's the only other alternative. Jesus

is one of the two: either the Son of God or a deceiver. What say you? What is 1/3 of the religious world saying who now claim that Jesus was not God? They deny the very claims of Jesus.

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