



---

## JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

---

### Part 95 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 22:63–71 | October 23, 2011

Luke 22:63–71

<sup>63</sup> Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. <sup>64</sup> They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?” <sup>65</sup> And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

<sup>66</sup> When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, <sup>67</sup> “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, <sup>68</sup> and if I ask you, you will not answer. <sup>69</sup> But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” <sup>70</sup> So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” <sup>71</sup> Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

### INTRODUCTION

Pastor Mark here in a place that it is believed that Jesus was held, not at the house of the high priest, but in addition to that the Scripture records another place that he would've been temporarily held, and Luke records this in chapter 22, verses 63–71.

“Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, ‘Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?’ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him. When the day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ‘If you are the Christ, tell us.’ But he said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ So they all said, ‘Are you the Son of God, then?’ And he said to them, ‘You say that I am.’ Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.’”

Now, it's curious here, as well, the men were holding Jesus, they were mocking him, they were beating him, they were blindfolding him, and perhaps they were doing something else. I'll show you what they would do to kill time. In this particular area, there was an archeological dig that unearthed something very interesting. This is an ancient game of tic-tac-toe. It is likely the way that the soldiers who abused Jesus spent their time, bored as they were, drawing in the stone games to be played.

### WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

The most important question for us all to answer is, “Who is Jesus Christ?” And it seems as if everyone has their own answer to that question and an opinion regarding him. In fact, more books have been written about Jesus than anyone who has lived in the history of the world.

But what would be honorable, what would be right, what would be fair is not to just consider what everyone has to say about Jesus, but instead to listen to what Jesus has to say about himself. In fact, this is the way that you and I would want to be treated if people misrepresented us, or spoke ill of us, or criticized us. We would want them to first hear from us and allow us to speak on our own behalf.

And we get this magnificent opportunity today to do just that in the Gospel of Luke. We're actually in the ninety-fifth sermon in Luke. We will conclude Luke with one hundred sermons coming up in the next few weeks, but today we learn that Jesus is the Son of God in Luke 22:63–71.

And at this point in the storyline of Luke, it's a biography of Jesus' life. We've seen Jesus born and grow up, spent roughly the first thirty years of his life working with his father on a construction crew, building things with his dad. At about the age of thirty, he started a public ministry, preaching, teaching. It was primarily centered in a rural region called Galilee where it was comprised of fishermen and farmers in small towns.

Over the course of three years, we've seen Jesus' fame and popularity grow, and he has now journeyed to the big city of Jerusalem, and along the way he's gathered quite a large following. His support base has increased markedly. This makes him opposed by religious and political leaders, because he keeps declaring himself to be God and a King, and that infuriates the religious leaders and the political leaders who see that the people, in large numbers, love Jesus and are following him. That means he is eroding their base of authority and support. And so what they invariably do is they turn one of his disciples to aid them in his arrest, a man named Judas Iscariot.

### BLINDFOLDED, BEATEN, AND BLASPHEMED

And at about this point in the story, Jesus is roughly thirty-three-ish years of age, and he has been arrested. He has been arrested through the collusion of religious and political leaders. These two groups disagree on almost everything, but the one thing that unites them is they want to stop the growing popularity of Jesus Christ. And so they hold him through a series of false trials that are occurring under the cover of darkness over the course of a night. And so they are both cowardly and illegal, and this is not a fair trial. This is, in every way, an effort to legally justify murder. That's all that it is.

And so you need to understand the context, that Jesus is on trial, and if he recants and says, "I am not God," then perhaps he can be set free and allowed to live. And if he continues to declare, "I am God," they're going to put him to death via crucifixion. And he is at the precipice of his death, and he knows it. And so there can be no more honest moment than the one we find today.

There would be no reason, under these circumstances, for Jesus to lie. When you and I lie, it is to benefit us, correct? We don't tell lies that condemn us. We tell lies that benefit us. If Jesus were lying, he would be lying in a way that benefited him. The fact that he's going to tell the truth, repeatedly, emphatically, clearly, unapologetically that he is God, knowing it will cost him his own life, is strong evidence that he's telling the truth. And the reason that he says that he's God is not because he has anything that will benefit him by doing so, but simply because he believes it to be true.

We find the context of the story in Luke 22:63–65. "Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, 'Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?' And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him."

So, they arrest Jesus, and three things happen. He is blindfolded, he's beaten, and he is blasphemed. If you'd be so kind for just a moment, close your eyes and consider what that was like for Jesus Christ. You can't see anyone, you can't see anything, and you are encircled by a mob of violent, angry men, some older, who are jealous and have been publicly stalking you and criticizing you for weeks, months, maybe even years, and now they've finally got you.

Imagine, as well, their young followers who want to prove their masculinity by beating you, pummeling you, punching you, assaulting you. You can't see where the blows are coming from. You can't protect yourself, defend yourself. You can't fight back. You're absolutely, utterly defenseless, and this mob is beating you incessantly. They are laughing. They are joking. These are bullies and thugs and jerks. These are men who find it comedic to make you bleed.

In an effort of one-upmanship, one guy takes a punch, and the other guy says, "I can hit him harder than that," and does so. Your fear is if you fall to the ground, you'll be stomped to death, so you're just trying to stay upright, but the beating is incessant, and the men have encircled you. You're getting punched in the nose and the mouth and the ear, in the face, in the throat, in the kidneys, in the back. Open your eyes.

That's Jesus. This is a beating late at night by a mob that has no other witnesses, and it's overseen by religious leaders because sometimes religious leaders can be the worst of all. And they blindfold Jesus, they beat Jesus, and they blaspheme Jesus. They're speaking ill of him, they're cursing at him, they are dishonoring him. It's amazing: God comes to earth, and this is how we treat him. This is how religion treats him. That's the context. And they then proceed, after beating Jesus for what may have been hours—because you'll find, in just a moment, their questioning didn't even begin until sunrise the next day—so they apparently beat him all night.

Some of you are abuse and assault victims. The Bible says that we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weakness, because the Lord Jesus Christ has been there. Some of you have been physically and/or sexually assaulted in various ways. Jesus was physically assaulted. He was beaten. His dignity was shamed and attacked by vicious men. Some of you have had abusive boyfriends, husbands, a violent father, a bunch of bullies who picked on you, someone who made your life painful and they hurt you. The God of the Bible understands, he relates. He has been there himself. That's amazing, and it's tragic.

As Jesus is enduring all of this and suffering all of this, you've got to see him. By the time of dawn and morning, he's bleeding out the mouth, he's bleeding out the nose, his eye is black and blue, his face is swollen, his kidneys are sore, his joints are aching, and then they begin the questioning. After a sleepless night of beatings, he is hungry, he is tired, he is dehydrated, and now they're going to have their proverbial trial.

## **“ARE YOU THE ONLY GOD?”**

They're going to ask him a series of questions, and all the questions are really about one issue: Are you the only God? That's it. That's the only point that they are pressing him on because if they can get him to openly, publicly confess, "I am God," then the religious leaders can justify his execution because they would consider him guilty of blasphemy, someone claiming to be God, and the political leaders could use the state's authority to put him to death because in declaring himself to be the King of kings, that would elevate him above Caesar and make him guilty of treason. He never sinned; he told the truth. But they're judging him by religious and legal law.

And you've got to know that if Jesus was not God, this would be the time for him to articulate that. These are not just idle threats. All right, this is a mob of men leaning forward, asking questions, fists clenched, encircling him with no witnesses. They've already beaten him mercilessly. And when they tell him, "We will kill you. Answer this question: Are you God?" it's like someone putting a gun to your head. At that moment, if you were to lie, it would only be for your own survival. It would not be for your own death. Jesus does not lie; he tells the truth.

And in three ways he declares himself to be the only God, knowing that he's going to be put to death in a brutal, bloody, barbarous way: death by crucifixion, which is a shameful, public way to die, and that's going to happen in the presence of his own brokenhearted mother.

## **1. JESUS IS THE CHRIST**

And so here begins the line of questioning, the first of which reveals to us that Jesus is the Christ. Luke 22:66–68, “When day came—” So, again, they beat him all night. “—the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes.” Those are the religious leaders. You could be religious and not know or love Jesus. “And they led him away to their council, and they said, ‘If you are the Christ, tell us.’ But he said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer.’”

So, their first question is, “Are you the Christ?” That’s their way of asking, “Are you the only God?” Christ was a title. In the Greek New Testament and in the Hebrew Old Testament, it was also called the Messiah. So, that’s what they’re asking. “Are you the Messiah? Are you the Christ?” which means, “Are you the anointed one? Are you the chosen one? Are you the special one? Are you the awaited one?” Because God’s people had been awaiting a redeemer, a Savior, a deliverer. The question is, “Are you he? Are you God among us? Are you here to save? Is that who you think you are? God? Are you the Christ?”

What’s Jesus’ answer? “You know this is what I’ve said many times. That’s why I’m on trial. That’s why I’m here. And I could tell you again, but you’re not going to believe me. Your hearts are not receptive. Your minds are not open. You should believe that I am the Christ. But it doesn’t matter how many times I say it; you won’t believe it.” He is here publicly confessing, “Yes, that’s who I am. That’s exactly who I am. I am the Christ, the Messiah.”

Some of you have been lied to. You’ve been told Jesus never said he was God; that Jesus was a good teacher and a nice man, and he never said he was God. He did. He repeatedly, emphatically, clearly said he’s the only God. That’s why they put him to death. That’s why they blindfolded him. That’s why they beat him. That’s why they blasphemed him.

Some of you prefer certain other parts of the gospels. You’ll say, “Well, Jesus loved children and he was friends with marginalized women and he fed the poor and he looked toward the outcast and he welcomed the stranger.” All of that is completely true, but that’s not why they killed him. None of those reasons motivated them to arrest him, blindfold him, beat him, and blaspheme him. One. One thing caused those things to occur: He said he was God. He said he was God.

Some of you have been lied to. Some of you have been told he never said that. He did say that. He said it on trial, and he says it three times in three ways just on this occasion in Luke’s gospel, and the first way he says it is, “I’m the Christ.”

## 2. JESUS IS THE SON OF MAN

So, they press and proceed with their line of questioning. We then read that Jesus is the Son of Man in Luke 22:69. He says, “But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” Number one, “I’m the Christ.” Number two, “I’m the Son of Man.” And, again, we hear this, and for us, this can be hard to ascertain. What exactly does that title mean?

Well, they would’ve known, because he lifts this language from the Bible. And what’s amazing is the people who are opposing and harming him, they know the Bible. You can know the Bible and not know Jesus. Now, the truth is the Bible is all about Jesus, so you may know the Bible, but you don’t really understand the Bible unless you love Jesus.

These are religious people. This is how religious people work. They will quote the Bible and say they believe the Bible, but they don’t love Jesus. And so Jesus quotes the Bible that they say they believe in. And he goes roughly seven hundred years prior, and he quotes from Daniel 7. And this is Jesus’ favorite designation of himself, title for himself in all four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He refers to himself roughly eighty times as the Son of Man. He uses this title, “Son of Man,” some twenty-five times in Luke’s gospel. We’ve looked at it repeatedly in our more than two-year investigation of Luke, and here he uses it again.

So I want to revisit where this comes from. It comes from Daniel 7, penned by the prophet Daniel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, some seven hundred years before Jesus was even born on the earth. In Daniel 7:13–14 we read, “. . . with the clouds of heaven—” So, where does he come from? Somebody’s coming. Where’s he coming from? The clouds of heaven. So, he exists before he enters human history. This is God, the Creator dwelling eternally in his heavenly kingdom. He’s coming from the kingdom of heaven to the earth.

God is coming “—like a son of man.” He’s going to take on human flesh, this eternal Spirit, God. He’s going to take on human flesh, and he’s going to look like the rest of us. He’s going to look like a human being. He’s going to appear among us as one of us.

“And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.” Well, that’s God the Father. So, there are two ruling here in heaven together. The first member of the Trinity— we believe in the Trinity: one God, three persons, not three Gods; one God, three persons. The Ancient of Days, God the Father, and one “like the son of man.” That’s the second member of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ coming into human history, sent by God the Father on a mission, on a mission; Creator entering into creation, the God of heaven coming on a mission to the earth.

“And to him was given dominion and glory—” that’s worship language— “and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.” That’s worship language. This person is to be worshiped, because he’s the King of kings, Lord of lords. He rules over all peoples, all languages, all cultures, all religions, all times, all places. You can’t get a bigger declaration than this. This is as big as it gets. He’s coming, he’s coming, he’s coming, and everyone needs to worship and serve him. Everyone needs to give glory to him. And he’s going to establish a kingdom as the King of kings, ruling over all kings and kingdoms.

And how long will his kingdom last? “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be

destroyed.” That’s a massive statement. The eternal Creator, Spirit God, is going to come like a man into human history, and everyone is to worship, honor, glorify him. He’s establishing a kingdom that will never end. He’ll live forever, and his people will live forever under his rule, and it doesn’t matter what your ethnicity, what your race, what your sexual orientation is, what your cultural background is. Everyone, everywhere, all the time should honor him. That’s a massive statement! And so God’s people were waiting for hundreds of years. Who is this? The answer is he is the Son of Man, God become a man.

And so when Jesus shows up, and he’s on trial, out of his bloodied mouth, he says, “I am the Christ, and I am the Son of Man.” Wow! You cannot make a clearer statement of deity than that, and he does so in front of his enemies, he does so on trial, he does so on public record, and he does so with nothing to gain if he’s telling a lie.

### 3. JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD

And he continues, and in a third way he declares himself to be God. So, we then learn that Jesus is the Son of God in Luke 22:70–71. “So they all said—” Now they’re leaning forward. This is like blood in the water for the sharks. “Oh, we’ve got him now. If we can just make sure that this is absolutely clear, incontrovertibly clear, he’s ours.” Oh, the bloodshed has just begun.

Leaning forward, all at one time—this is a mob, men with furrowed brows and clenched teeth and closed fists—they asked this question, “They all said, ‘Are you the Son of God, then?’” Here’s the issue. There’s one issue: “Are you, yes or no, yes or no, the Son of God?”

“And he said to them, ‘You say that I am.’” Here’s what Jesus is saying. “I have told you repeatedly I am the Son of Man. All you’re doing is echoing what I’ve already said. Yes, that’s who I am. Yes, that’s what I’ve said. Yes, that’s what I’m saying.”

“Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.’” “He’s guilty!” It is as if you were brought into court. They put you on the stand and the attorney stands before you. “How do you plead?” “Guilty to all charges.” There’s no need to bring in additional witnesses. There’s no need for a long deliberation. There’s no need to take it to the jury. It’s over!

Jesus is on trial, and it’s a false trial run by cowards and abusers, but it’s a trial nonetheless. “Are you the only God?” “If that is the charge, guilty. I’m guilty of saying I’m God. I’m guilty of being God and I’m not recanting of being God. And if you need to, put me to death.” He is the Son of God, and that was, for them, the final word. He is the Son of God.

### MORMONS AND MUSLIMS

So, what does that mean, Jesus is the Son of God? Let me first tell you what it does not mean. And it’s interesting, because this issue is absolutely relevant today. It’s amazing. We’re reading an eternal book that’s timeless, so it’s always timely. Today, this issue of Jesus being the Son of God is in the news with Mormons and Muslims.

We’ve got a Mormon running for president, and the question is, are Mormons Christians, and do they believe Jesus is the Son of God? And, similarly, there’s a big debate raging in Christian circles about how we translate the Bible for Muslims, and should we call Jesus the Son of God? There was actually a translation committee meeting. I think it was in Istanbul, Turkey, recently. There’s a big debate: Should we call Jesus the Son of God? Well, the Bible does. But they say, “Well, Muslims struggle to understand that concept.” So, again, ripped right out of the headlines is this issue: Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?

First we’ll deal with how the Mormons interpret this. So, let’s say a couple of nice guys in white shirts with ties, on bikes, showed up to your house, knocked on the door, very nice, clean cut, and you ask them, “Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?” what will they say? “Yes.” You say, “Okay, so they’re Christians.” No, they’re not. Ask them what they mean, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

See, cults, and false teachers, and aberrant theologians, they’ll use the same language of Christians, but they’ll import different meaning. Like, I had a cult leader come to my house years ago. I said, “Do you believe in the Trinity?” “Oh, yes, we believe in the Trinity.” “What do you think the Trinity is?” “Faith, hope, and love.” Ah, wrong answer! Father, Son, Holy Spirit. That’s the Trinity.

So, if you ask a Mormon, they will say Jesus is the Son of God. Okay, what do you mean by that? What they will say is that men become gods—not that God became a man, but that men become gods—and that when men become gods, they can impregnate women and have children that are then the sons of god. “Oh, that’s different.” Yeah, by about this much, that’s different.

So, they would say there’s a God named God the Father, who, then, he is a man with anatomical—I’ve gotta figure how I say this. He’s a guy, he’s a man, physical man. There, I don’t have to fire myself. [*Congregation laughing*] He’s a man anatomically and physically. So, you know, there are lots of gods then, and gods are basically glorified men in physical bodies. And that this god, in a physical body, had actual intimate relations with a teenage girl named Mary and got her pregnant.

So god knocked up a junior high girl. Okay? And then she gave birth to Jesus Christ, and because the father was a glorified spirit being, Jesus is a son of a god. But lots of people are sons of god, and sons of gods, and perhaps even Lucifer, then, could count as a son of god in their theology. There’s a debate regarding that point.

Well, that’s not what Christians believe, because the Bible says Mary was a virgin. In addition, the Bible says repeatedly God is not a man. God the Father doesn’t inhabit a physical body. God the Father is a spirit being. Jesus says, “God is spirit, and those who worship him worship him in spirit and

truth." But what they do is they'll take the Father/Son language of the Bible, and they will press too literally.

## PLAIN LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE LITERAL INTERPRETATION

So, now we're going to get into something called *hermeneutics*. You're going to get a few big college words. The first one is hermeneutics, and that means interpretation and how we interpret the Bible. And some will say, "Well, you can't interpret the Bible literally." It's like, "Really? Do you want me to interpret that literally?"

See, we do interpret the Bible literally, but we believe there are two kinds of literalness. There's plain literal and figurative literal, and this is how we use normal everyday conversation, right? So, if I came to you and I said, "I'm hungry," you would say, "You know what? I think he's hungry." You wouldn't have to do much interpretation. "I think 'hunger' there means a Freudian longing of the human soul for complete wholeness." No, it means burrito. That's what it means. I think he just wants a burrito. I don't think it's Freudian, Jungian, Malthusian. I think it's burritian, right? He just wants a burrito. That's what he wants.

But let's say I came to you and I said, "I could eat a horse." You'd say, "Really, a whole horse?" I'd say, "No, that's a figure of speech," right? I don't want a horse with sauce at all. [*Congregation laughing*] It's a figure of speech. And so what you'd have to do there is you'd attempt to interpret it according to plain literal. You'd say, "That doesn't make sense. A horse, I don't think he could eat a whole horse. What would he do with the hoofs? There are just a lot of complex variables. Ah, a figure of speech. He wants a burrito." All right, we're back to the original interpretation.

So, this is how we conduct ourselves in normal speech. If there's a bunch of guys, and they're like, "That gal is really hot." "Really? She looks normal temperature." No, no, no, no, it's a figure of speech, right? A bunch of gals see a good-looking guy. "Oh, he looks really hot," no. "Oh, he's attractive," a figure of speech. We do this all the time, right? So does the Bible.

So, when we come to the Bible, we go to plain literal, and if that doesn't make sense, then we go to figurative literal. Oh, it must be a literal truth communicated in a figurative way. And what the Mormons do, they go to the Bible and say, "Oh, God's the Father and Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Then he must be a man who had intimate relations with a teenage girl." No. No.

Because if you do that, you end up with really weird views of God, because elsewhere in the Bible it says that God gathers his people unto himself like a hen, a mother hen, gathers her chicks under her wings. "Oh, so God's a chicken." [*Congregation laughing*] "God's a chicken. So, I'm going to die and stand before a huge chicken to give an account for my whole life, including all the chicken wings I ate." [*Congregation laughing*] So, you know, I don't think God's a chicken. I think that's figurative language that God loves us, and cares for us, and covers us like a mother hen cares for her chicks. It's a beautiful picture, right, if you understand figurative literal language.

Well, that's what's happening here. God is, to use the language of John Calvin, he's using baby talk. When we're trying to communicate things to our children, we're trying to, "Okay, how do I say this in a way that you're going to understand?" And we are nowhere near the intelligence of God. We have three-pound fallen brains, and there's a lot we don't understand, especially when it comes down to there is one God, three persons, sharing the divine attributes, simultaneously existing together forever in perfect union and communion, without any physical being, but out of nothing they created everything, and they love and serve and glorify one another. Huh? Okay, it's like a dad and his son. Like Father, like Son, they share similarities. We'll call them attributes. They love one another, they do life together, they care for one another, they communicate with one another, and they share a deep, unbroken affection. "Oh, okay, it's a figure of speech." It's figurative literal.

And so we do not believe that God inhabits a physical body and that men become gods and that we can impregnate women through illicit union, with physical, spiritual gods, and physical women, and all of that. No, that's not what we mean by "Son of God." What we mean is that God is using a figure of speech. He's using baby talk.

It's the same way I would explain it to my sons. If one of my sons came up to me, let's say my five-year-old son, Gideon, or my nine-year-old son, Calvin, or my twelve-year-old son, Zac. "Dad, what's it like, the first and second member of the Trinity?" I'd say, "You know what? It's kind of like us, buddy. You know, we have things in common, so God's like that. God has attributes that the first and second members of the Trinity have in common. And just like I love you, you love me, and you respect me, and I serve you, and we do life together, and no matter what, we're sticking together forever and I always want what's best for you, and I know you love me, and you want to honor me, it's kind of like that. It's kind of like the love we share, but in a bigger, more perfect way." When the Bible is using that familial language for the nature of the Trinitarian God of the Bible, that's what it's doing. It's a literal truth, but it's communicated in a figurative way.

Now, what happens—so back to the point. Are Mormons Christians? No. They may be nice neighbors. They may be decent friends. They may be all kinds of things, but they don't worship the same God as historic, orthodox, biblical Christianity. Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians all agree there's one God, three persons. God is not a man and God the Father does not inhabit a physical body, and he did not impregnate a teenage girl, and we're not all sons of God like Jesus was.

And then the Muslims come along, and they hear this language of God the Father and God the Son, and they immediately think the same thing the Mormons do. "Are you saying that God the Father is a physical being, who inhabits a physical body, and impregnated a teenage girl, and therefore they had Jesus as the Son of God?" If so, they find that scandalous. They say, "That sounds horrible. That can't be true." So, they reject it. And there's a lot of things we disagree with Muslims on, but, actually, on this point, we agree with them. They would say, "That sounds wrong." Well, that is wrong. But then what happens is Muslims tend to see this Son of God language as necessitating kind of a Mormon view of God.

Again, Muslims, like Mormons, deny the Trinity, so they have a different God. Muslims don't think that Jesus is God. They don't think he died on the

cross for our sins. Some say that he swooned on the cross. Others would say that someone else died on the cross, not Jesus. They would say that Jesus is a prophet of God, but he's not God. They may even say that he was the best man who lived, until the prophet Muhammad came along, and we would call him the false prophet Muhammad.

And they would say, "Jesus is like us. He's just a man. He's not the God man, but he's a good man, but he was a prophet who spoke for God." And I would say, "If he says he's God, how could you call him a prophet? You can't say Jesus is a good man, who spoke for God. He said he was God!" "Well, that's wrong." "Well, then, he's not a good man or a prophet. He's a liar." You can't say he's a good man and a prophet who lied about being God! That would make him a false prophet and a bad man.

So, Jesus is either a truth-teller or a liar, and when he clearly, emphatically, publicly says, "I'm God," in a variety of ways, the Muslims are on the horns of a dilemma. They can't receive him as a good man and a prophet. They would say that Muhammad was actually better than Jesus, a better representative and prophet for God, and he is the greatest man who has ever lived, greater than Jesus, and Jesus is not God.

So, the Mormons actually believe in multiple gods, and they would say that perhaps Jesus is a god, but there are lots of gods. Muslims would say Jesus was not God; there is only one God, but that's not him. And so both miss Jesus, and part of it is around this language of the Son of God.

And this is really a big issue for Muslims. Is Jesus the Son of God? I had a sweet gal ask me this question recently at Mars Hill. Earlier today, here at the Mars Hill Ballard Church, we had an Iranian Muslim gal understand Jesus, become a Christian, and get baptized today. She finally understood Jesus is Son of God. [*Congregation applauding*] She finally understood what it meant that Jesus was the Son of God. That means, like Father, like Son. He's equal to God the Father. There's one God in three persons—not three gods, one God.

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

And this is a theme that is woven throughout the Gospel of Luke. I'll give you three occasions. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel, Luke 1:31-32, comes to Mary, and he says, "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus," which means, "God is my Savior." "He will be great and be called Son of the Most High."

"Mary, do you remember back in Isaiah, where it says that the virgin would have a child, a son? You're that virgin. That his name would be Immanuel, which means 'God with us.' That's happening in your womb, and you're going to give birth to a son, but he's ultimately going to be the Son of God, God in human flesh, God in human history coming through your womb."

The same thing happens in Luke 3:22, as we investigated some time ago, at the baptism of Jesus. There's the whole Trinity. The second member of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, is being baptized. And as he comes up out of the water, the third member of the Trinity descends on him in the form of a dove, and God the Father, the first member of the Trinity, speaks from heaven and says, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased."

So, the angel Gabriel, on behalf of God, and God the Father, himself, both publicly declare Jesus is the Son of God. And Satan does the same. In Luke 4:9, we looked at Jesus spending forty days, prayer, fasting in the wilderness. Satan is tempting, and trying, and testing him, and he says, "If you are the Son of God—" Here's what he's saying. "You keep saying, Jesus, you're the Son of God. Prove it." And Jesus says, "I don't prove anything to you. I don't submit to your authority. I don't play by your rules. I reject your temptations."

Jesus is the Son of God. The angel declares it, God the Father declares it, Satan even knows it, and Jesus, on trial, from a bloodied mouth, proclaims it, knowing it will result in his own murder. And those who originally heard the language of, "Jesus is the Son of God," they didn't hear it the way the Mormons do. They didn't hear it the way the Muslims do. They heard it as God intended. He is claiming to be equal with God the Father. He is claiming to be the Creator of heaven and earth! He is declaring himself to be Lord over all and not just the best among us, but in a category unto himself! He's saying he's God! And if that's not true, that's blasphemy, and the penalty is death.

And we see this in another place in John 5 where Jesus makes this same claim, that he is the Son of God, and they hear that as a claim to deity. So, John 5:18, "This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself," what? "Equal with God."

Friends, that's why Jesus was arrested. That's why Jesus was blindfolded. That's why Jesus was beaten. That's why Jesus was blasphemed. That's why Jesus was hated. That's why Jesus was crucified. And they took Jesus, and they beat him some more. They scourged him, ripping the flesh off his back. He was marred beyond human likeness. They made him forcefully carry a heavy Roman crossbar on his barren, bloodied, traumatized back. He fell on his face, and it crushed his chest. He had to have help to carry that crossbar to his place of execution and crucifixion.

They laid him down, and they drove the equivalent of railroad spikes through the most sensitive nerve centers on the human body, the hands and the feet, and they killed him openly, publicly, and shamefully, in the presence of his own mother, as people cursed at him, and jeered at him, and spat upon him.

Friends, let me say this. If he was lying, you have to explain to me why. All he had to do was recant, "I'm not God," and his life was spared. And he died. And to ensure he was dead, they ran a spear underneath his side, puncturing his heart sac underneath his rib cage, so that water and blood, the inner and outer sacs of the heart, flowed from his side.

They buried him in upwards of one hundred pounds of burial linens and spices, and they put him in a cold tomb, hewn out of rock, and they rolled an enormous stone over it to ensure that there was no tampering with the body, and they placed the seal of the Roman government upon it to defend and

protect it. They posted guards to observe it, and Jesus was dead, and he died for our sins. Three days later, on a Sunday morning, he rose from death, essentially declaring, "I told you I'm God," and he conquered sin and death.

And those who had previously been afraid, afraid of persecution, afraid of arrest, they had cowered in fear, they were intimidated, they didn't want to suffer the same fate as Jesus, all of a sudden they became bold. "Yes, Jesus is God." "We're going to arrest you." "That's fine." "We're going to crucify you, as we did him!" "We saw what happened. He'll take care of us. Jesus is God, who forgives sin. Jesus is God, who conquers death. We're no longer afraid of death."

## JESUS IS JUDGE, NOT YOU

And what I find fascinating, God comes to earth, and we put him on trial! We put God on trial! We still do it today. It happens in psychology. It happens in philosophy. It happens in history. It happens in theology. It happens in spirituality. People judge Jesus all the time, as if we have a right to sit on a bench with a gavel in our hand and parade him before us.

"Ah, he said he's the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through him. That seems very intolerant. Guilty of intolerance, Jesus. You said we're all sinners. That seems very negative. That seems very primitive. Jesus, your ideas are outdated. Guilty! Oh, Jesus, you talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible. We took a vote at our community college study group. We were studying philosophy with a guy in long hair who plays hacky sack. He's our professor, and he's working on his degree. He seems very smart. And he sort of opened up this conversation, and we decided some of the things you said are very offensive, and we should reject them and we should reject you or you'll need to edit yourself because us sophomores, we voted, and it was very serious. We expect you to consider that. And the long-haired grad student prof, he agrees with us. So, what do you have to say about that Jesus? We've judged you." Really?

How many of you have judged Jesus? "I don't like what he said. I don't like how my life is going. I don't like the way he conducted himself on certain occasions." Friends, let me tell you this. There is a judge; it's not you. That God was humble enough to come into human history, that God was humble enough to be judged, just shows how horrendous we are. We don't judge Jesus; Jesus judges us. And Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead. He says this in John 5. He says, "The Father judges no one. He's entrusted all judgment to the Son."

Here's reality, friends. If you're still sitting in judgment over Jesus, you're just like those people who crucified him. You're just as arrogant, and proud, and self-righteous. You think that you're smarter than he is. You think that you're better than he is, or you think that your influence—that might be a philosopher, or a religious leader, or a theologian, or a historian—that their criticism of Jesus is valid, because you find them to be more compelling, and more insightful, and more convincing.

And here's my question to you: Will you trust Jesus or someone else? And if you're going to trust someone else, why? Are they smarter than Jesus? Are they better than Jesus? Have they made a bigger difference than Jesus? Are they more selfless than Jesus? More humble than Jesus? More loving than Jesus? More truthful than Jesus? The answer is no. You've got to trust somebody, and at Mars Hill we would encourage you, trust Jesus.

We don't believe Jesus is God because it's something we made up. We don't believe Jesus is God because it's something the church history made up. We believe Jesus is God because he said he was God. We believe Jesus is God because Jesus is God, and he died without ever recanting, and he rose from death to prove he is the only God. And I so appreciate that Jesus did this openly and publicly.

Friends, let me say this. People don't make this claim. You can't say Jesus was a nice man and a good teacher, who said he was God, who has billions of followers, who tells people, "Give your life to my cause, give your finances to my cause, give your children to my cause. Glory to me, worship me, honor me, serve me, obey me!" You can't say he's a good man who teaches nice things, and he got one thing wrong, the whole God part!

So, you've got a decision to make, and there's no other religion that has this statement by its founder: "I'm God." In fact, we know you're holy, if you say you're unholy, right? If you say, "I'm sinless and perfect, and I've come down from heaven, and my name is God," we don't say, "They're a nice person with pithy insights." We say, "That's a lie," or "It's the truth." It's really that simple. That kind of clear statement means you're telling the truth or lying. There's really no other option.

No other world religion has a founder who ever said, "I'm God. I've come down from heaven. I'm the King of kings. I'm the Lord of lords. I am the Christ. I am the Son of Man. I am the Son of God." People don't say that, and the handful who do are not good; they're evil. They're not truth-tellers; they're liars. They're not prophets; they're false prophets. They're not safe; they're very dangerous.

You have a decision to make, the most important decision in your whole life, the decision that determines your eternal life. Are you going to judge Jesus, or are you going to let Jesus judge you? Are you going to acknowledge, "I'm the sinner, self-righteous, proud. I have no right to judge Jesus. He has every right to judge me, and he loved me so much that he came into human history as a person to identify with me. He lived without sin, the life I've not lived. He died on a cross, the death I should die. He rose, conquering Satan, sin, and death, and he tells me that one day I will be judged by him. And so he invites me on this day to trust in him so that his death would be my death, and that his righteousness would be my righteousness, and that his life would be my life, and that he would be my God, and that I would be a citizen of his kingdom forever with him." And friends, this is the day of your salvation.

Jesus publicly declared himself to be the only God, and some of you don't know Jesus as God. You have to take him at his word. You can't make him into someone he is not or less than he truly is. And so you've got a decision to make. Is Jesus your God? Not just your teacher, not your leader, not your example, not your inspiration, but your God and your Savior?

Some of you today, God is working in your heart, and he is stirring in your soul. Some of it may have been a process leading up to today that culminates with you saying, "That's it. Jesus is my God. I become a Christian today, by the grace of God." For some of you, it's something that God is beginning to work in you right now. And this is not just information; it is, for you, unsettling. "Yes, I have not really considered Jesus as I ought to. Who is he, and who is he to me?" Let me say that that is God stirring and working and beginning to birth new life, Christian life in you.

For some of you, you've borrowed the faith of your parents, or your friends, or your family, and you need to have your own relationship with Jesus, and you can't just say, "Jesus is our God." You have to say, "Jesus is my God." We love you. We're so glad you're here, and we want you to know Jesus as God. So, I'm going to pray for you.

Father God, I thank you that you, Ancient of Days, devised a plan to send the Son of Man into human history. Lord Jesus, I thank you that you came humbly, that you resisted all temptation, that you endured all opposition. Jesus, thank you that you were willing to be blindfolded, beaten, and blasphemed by people that you made, that shows how good you are and how bad we are. Jesus, I thank you that when on trial before a mob, you said, "I am the Christ," you said, "I am the Son of Man," and you said, "I am the Son of God!" And you died without ever recanting of those clear claims to be the only God. Jesus, you died for our sin. Jesus, we thank you that you rose from death, that you conquered sin and death, that everything you said was proven true by your triumphant victory. So, Jesus, I pray for my friends. Holy Spirit, I ask you, I humbly invite you to have your way with the people who would hear this word, that, Holy Spirit, you would change hearts, that you would renew minds, that you would alter destinies, that you would cause people to stop judging Jesus and start trusting him as God. God, we ask that this would be a sacred moment for many. Jesus, we thank you that you did not lie. You told the truth. Give us the grace to receive that truth. We ask, Lord God, in Jesus' good name. Amen.

*Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.*