

*Are You the Son of God?**We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

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, ⁶⁷“If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” ⁷⁰So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “You say that I AM.” ⁷¹Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from His own lips.” (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dearly Beloved, Our text starts with a command, **“If You are the Christ, tell us.”**

It was at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry that a similar question and tactic was put to Him from the devil himself.

“If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.”

It was a temptation straight out of hell. Hadn't the Father only 6 weeks before at Jesus' baptism declared it to be so, saying, **“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”** ^{Matthew 3:17}

Yet, now it is put to Christ again. And here it was just as demeaning a temptation.

They were as little interested in the truth as the devil was in Jesus' hunger.

And Jesus calls them out on it... and on their sham of a trial.

“If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸and if I ask you, you will not answer.

We have heard how they tried to use false witnesses, but couldn't even get those to agree.

We have heard how they had already decided that Jesus was to die.

They were not really going to listen to Him.

They weren't going to investigate His claims, hearing the evidence of the thousands He had healed or the 10s of 1,000s that had heard Him preach.

Even if He were allowed to cross-examine and to question them,

They had shown earlier that week that they couldn't/wouldn't answer His questions openly/honestly.

He had asked them,

“The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” ^{Matthew 21:25}

They wouldn't admit it because it would completely delegitimize their animosity toward Him.

And if they had answered the way they wanted to, they were afraid of the people.

Which is also the reason why this trial was happening through the night into the wee hours of the morning – they were afraid of the people.

And then, as if to prove His point, Jesus gives them something extra in His testimony.

He says, **“But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”**

Obviously speaking of Himself as the Son of Man, He makes a claim that would seem ludicrous.

He tells them that one day these roles of judge and accused will be reversed.

And while they sit upon a temporary and powerless seat of judgment,

He will be seated on the most powerful and eternal judgment seat of God.

And implied in His judgment is the absolute justice that He will mete out.

He will give swift and perfect justice. Then those who sit in judgment over Him will be found guilty and their unjust condemnation will have its eternal consequences.

But not ones to miss an opportunity... AND completely understanding what He had just claimed, they all of a sudden do take keen interest in what He has to say.

And ask Him directly: **“Are you the Son of God, then?”**

While they had wasted all that time listening to the false witnesses trying to get others to “prove” that He was guilty, they assumed that He wouldn’t be so foolish as to make such a claim Himself.

But here He just had. They simply needed to hear Him positively claim it.

Was He beaten so badly now, one too many blows to the head, that He would make such an open claim as to be the Messiah, the Son of God?

Jesus knew the consequences. It wasn’t the blows that freed His tongue; it was the Truth.

From another Gospel, we hear that they adjured Him, compelled Him by the Living God, to testify.

It was not a defense for Himself (for which He had been keeping silent).

Instead it was a declaration of the Truth.

And what a declaration it was; much more than they could have ever hoped for:

“You say that I AM.”

In English, that doesn’t sound so bold, but considering the Greek text,

Jesus is not just saying, “Yes, I am the Son of God.”

He is saying, **“I AM, ‘Yahweh’”** The same ‘I AM’, that appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

Jesus is assuming the name of God, which is complete blasphemy as the priests cried,

UNLESS IT IS TRUE!!!

By this confession, Jesus simply bears witness to the truth. He cannot do otherwise.

Some might wonder at this, thinking how foolish of Him to admit it in that viper’s nest.

But what is the alternative?

If He were to deny it, He would perjure Himself and be sinful like those He came to save.

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The truth is hard sometimes. It’s hard to speak.

Take Peter, for example: For three years he had followed Jesus.

He had even performed miracles in His name, even cast out demons in His name.

He had seen Jesus raise people from the dead, seen Him transfigured before his very eyes...

But this very night, as Jesus was making His public testimony to His divinity,

Peter was denying ever knowing **“this man.”**

Like Peter, you bear the name of God on you.

It was given to you at your Baptism, for Yahweh, the I AM, is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You bear this name wherever you go, whatever you do.

But it is not always easy like when you are at church with all the like-minded Christians.

Sometimes, you’re among those who are simply hostile to Christ, or at least to the idea of Christianity.

They think they know what it is about... or don’t know... or they don’t care either way.

They simply don’t want to be ruled by any being other than themselves.

And so they persecute, or threaten, or make life miserable, or even just uncomfortable for those who do confess Christ.

And so it is simply easier not to say anything to anyone about the Savior there. Neighbors, co-workers, your own family. It is simply safer not to say anything, or even try, like Peter, to fit in, to be one of the group.

Other times, being cognizant of that name, makes you realize that you shouldn't do something that you want to do, because you know it will bring shame on you and your Father's name. And so, like the Jewish leaders, you do it in secret, at night, away from others' eyes. And yet, you know that there are not secret places, hidden from the eyes of God.

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It seems contradictory, but the timing of Jesus confessing to be God, by claiming His name, really was quite perfect, because, not only was it the Truth, but it was also what brought to fulfillment what He was sent to accomplish: the great act of redemption.

Now think back to that burning bush scene 1400 years earlier, Yahweh told Moses that He had come down... to redeem His people Israel. That redemption took place on that very first Passover, when Yahweh commanded His people to sacrifice the innocent lambs and to spread that blood on the doorposts to their houses. A visible sign, not only to the Angel of Death that passed over their houses, but also to the Egyptians who passed through in the days that followed.

It was the Passover Lamb of God, who was now on trial. Though innocent in every respect, yet by and based on His own testimony, the High Priest and the Jewish Council condemn Him to death. These wicked men take the appointed Sacrifice and perform their sacred function as they offer up for sacrifice the perfect, innocent victim for the guilty.

Dear fellow redeemed, that innocent blood has been spilt for you. That blood has been lavishly painted on the doorposts of your heart at the font of Holy Baptism. Jesus Christ, who was not ashamed to call Himself your God and Redeemer, took the cross that you were not and are not able to bear upon Himself, so that He could **cleans**e you from all sin^{1John1:7} and shame and guilt. Your secret sins, your shame of silence, your guilt of joining in with those who mock God, are atoned for in that same blood that crosses your lips as you partake in the Holy Communion. Jesus, the Son of God, the Christ, forgives you all your sins and gladly, publicly calls you His redeemed brother/sister and child of God.

Soli Deo Gloria