

Proving that Jesus is The Christ (Acts 9:10-18)^a

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Context

1. **The primary enemy of the early church, Saul of Tarsus, on the way to Damascus to arrest disciples of “The Way”**
2. **Himself “arrested” by an encounter with Jesus**
3. **Struck physically blind and shown his own spiritual blindness**
4. **Fasting and praying for 3 days**
5. **God sends Ananias to lay hands on Saul and heal his sight**

Today’s Passage (Acts 9:19-31)

[19] So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. [20] Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. [21] Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” [22] But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. [23] Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. [24] But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. [25] Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. [26] And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. [27] But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. [28] So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. [29] And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. [30] When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. [31] Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.¹

Evidence of a radical, undeniable transformation

1. **Isn’t that just like God? He arranges for the first major opponent of the Church to become one of its greatest advocates!**

As Ananias was instructed to tell Saul, *The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.* (Acts [22:14-15](#))

2. ***Then all who heard were amazed and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem” (v. 21)***
3. ***And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple (v. 26)***

Dangerous to the belief he once advocated

1. **The Jews of Damascus plotted to kill him (v. 24)**
2. **The Hellenist Jews of Jerusalem plotted to kill him (v. 29)**

Why such a harsh reaction?

1. **He was previously one of their own**
 - A. **At one time, he was fully convinced of their position**
 - B. **He is unaware of their arguments and the evidence**
 - C. **His very existence as a follower of “The Way” stands as a powerful witness to the truth of Christianity and the incorrectness of Judaism**
 - I. **Paul’s pedigree as a Pharisee: *circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless* (Php. [3:5-6](#)).**
 - II. **Paul’s conversion is not just about one man changing his mind: it is a threat to the very system/institution which he now opposed**
 - D. **Opponents of the early church, primarily Jews who rejected Jesus, could not claim Paul was ignorant or unstable — they would have to answer his arguments which, as this passage illustrates, they could not do!**
 - I. **This seems to be one reason why God chose Saul: he was an expert on Judaism, the Old Testament, and a well-spoken logical thinker.**

Saul begins his ministry

1. ***Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God (v. 20)***
2. ***Immediately - an immediate zeal to serve God***

in the synagogues

1. **Paul's area of expertise as a Pharisee**
2. **The center of his concern: protecting synagogues from false teaching (previously, "The Way")**
3. **Ground-zero for "uncompleted Judaism" — Judaism which "skipped the tracks" by rejecting the promised Messiah.**

Paul's gifts begin to be used: teaching, preaching, and apologetics

1. ***confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus (v. 22)***
2. ***disputed with the Hellenists in Jerusalem (v. 29)***
3. **These were abilities Paul already had prior to faith, but they were enhanced and redirected to God's purposes.**

Proving Jesus is the Christ

1. ***proving that Jesus is the Christ (v. 22)***
 - A. **Not referring to Jesus' last name! :-)**
 - B. **A specific title, derived from the Old Testament word for "anointed"**
 - I. **Applied to Aaron, when dedicated as high priest (Lev. [4:3,5,16](#))**
 - a. **The selection and approval of God on his role as high priest is represented by being anointed with oil:**
 - b. **Exodus [29:4-7](#) - *And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod. You shall put the turban on his head, and put the***

holy crown on the turban. And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him.

- c. The concept of **Χριστός** [*Christos*] or **מָשִׁיחַ** [*māšīaḥ*] can refer to “a person having sacred oil poured ceremonially on one’s head, and so become a person with special authority and function, with the implication of one having the choice and approval of God”²

II. Applied to Saul as king by Samuel

- a. **1S. 10:1** - *Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: “Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?”*
- b. David refers to Saul as “the anointed of the LORD.” The position occupied by Saul in God’s purpose for the king is the basis for David refusing to take matters into his own hands when he has the opportunity to physically harm Saul (**1S. 24:7,11; 26:9,11,23; 2S. 1:14,16**).

III. Applied to the gentile King, Cyrus, who would perform the will of God in restoring Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity

- a. Isaiah **45:1-2a** - *Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held— To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: ‘I will go before you And make the crooked places straight;’ . . .*

IV. Applied to the Israelites as a chosen nation with a God-given purpose . . . *Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm* (Psalm **105:15b** cf. Eze. **16:9**).

- C. Although there are various anointed individuals or groups, there is a very specific individual “anointed” individual who stands out in the Old Testament. He is known as is “the Messiah” in the Hebrew, or “the Christ”, from the Greek.

D. A sampling of OT References to the Christ³

- I. **Ps. 2:2** - *The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed . . .*

- a. “His Anointed” is מָשִׁיחַ [m^ešîḥô] from מַשִּׁיחַ [māšîaḥ] from which the Jewish term *Messiah* is derived.
 - b. LXX - Against the LORD and His Christ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ [*christou autou*]
- II. 1S 2:34-35 - *Now this shall be a sign to you [Eli] that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever.*
 - III. **The predicted individual, the Messiah, in Gabriel’s famous prophecy to Daniel concerning Israel’s seventy sevens**

“Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined” (Daniel 9:25-26).
 - IV. **Jesus refers to His special anointing when He reads a passage from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth and applies it to Himself (cf. Heb. 1:9)**
 - a. *Isa. 61:1 - The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound*
 - V. It is this Old Testament person whom Paul asserts is Jesus of Nazareth
- E. **A sampling of NT passages concerning the uniqueness role of “the Christ”**
 - I. **Statement made by Andrew when he told his brother about Jesus: . . . “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ) (John 1:41)**

- II. **The old man Simeon who sees Jesus in the temple as a baby - *And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ* (Luke [2:26](#)).**
- III. **Jesus, speaking to disciples on road to Emmaus following His death and resurrection, *said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."* And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day"** (Luke [24:44-46](#))
- IV. **This title and role of Jesus is a important focus of the preaching of the early church among the Jews—many of whom, as today, were aware of the OT predictions of a coming Messiah**
 - a. **Acts [5:42](#) - *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ***
 - b. **Acts [17:2-3](#) - *Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."***
 - c. **Acts [18:27-28](#) - *And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ***

Jesus as the Son of God

- A. **that He is *the Son of God* (v. 20)**
- B. **OT "son of God" (singular)⁴**
 - I. **Adam (Luke [3:38](#))**
 - II. **Angels, but plural: Gen. [6:2,4](#); Job [1:6](#); [2:1](#); [38:7](#))**
 - III. **The riddle of Proverbs [30:4](#) - *Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound***

the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, If you know?

a. Quiz concerns the unique nature of God

What is the name of His son? suggests the question, "Has He imparted His nature or attributes to any other who may in any sense be called His 'Son'?" (T. T. Perowne, *The Proverbs*, p. 180)⁵

IV. Like Adam, the phrase "son of God" emphasizes Jesus' direct relation to God

a. Luke 3:23-38 - *Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of . . . the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God* (Luke 3:23-38).

b. In His humanity, Luke 1:35 - *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God*.

c. In His divinity, He has always existed, as prefigured by Melchizedek

i. Heb. 7:3 - *without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually*.

C. We have good evidence the devil understood the divine nature of this "Son of God" of the riddle in proverbs. Notice how the devil addresses two of his attempts to tempt Jesus in the wilderness:

I. *And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread"* (Luke 4:3).

II. *Then [the devil] brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here* (Luke 4:9).

D. Peter came to understand the Jesus identity as the Son of God. Jesus asked, "who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:15-16).

E. The Jewish leadership of Paul's day was well aware that the claim to be the *Son of God* carried with it unique claims to be like God:

- I. **At the trial of Jesus, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (John [19:6-7](#)).**

- II. **At Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas, the high priest . . . said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God! Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. . . .” (Mat. [26:63-64a](#))**

Paul’s ministry, throughout the remainder of his life, would center on this most important issue: answering the question Who is Jesus?

1. Who is He to you?

2. A wise sage? A well-meaning zealot who got himself killed? A historical fabrication? A misunderstood revolutionary?

3. The Apostle John explains the importance of coming to see Jesus as both *the Christ and the Son of God - 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* (John [20:30-31](#)).

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV](#), (Acts [9:19-31](#))
2. [Ref-0618](#), #5431
3. See also 1S. [2:34-35](#); 1S. [2:10](#); Ps. [132:17](#)
4. I’ve purposefully omitted Daniel [3:25](#) due to controversy as to how the phrase should be translated.
5. [Ref-0038](#), Pr. [30:4](#)

Sources:

NKJV

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Ref-0038 John Walvoord and Roy. B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983).

Ref-0618 James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

Links Mentioned Above

a - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/30_Acts_9_19-31/index.htm.

b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.

c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.