

Title: **"Proving that Jesus Was the Christ" (Part 2)**
Text: **Acts 9:19b-22**
Date: **August 18, 2024**

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Big Idea

In our day, it is assumed (falsely) that if you are putting your faith in Jesus it must also mean you are in some ways forfeiting (or "crucifying", if you prefer) your intellect. You are leaping blind in the dark. You are taking steps, not towards the facts, but away from them. But the Bible nowhere tells us to blindly accept Jesus without evidence or good reason. Quite the opposite: much evidence and many good reasons are put forward. Consequently then, what we discover is that real biblical faith isn't opposed to reason . . . it accords with it!

Proof #3: Clear Literary Form (Continued)

Sometimes it is claimed that these early Christians simply borrowed from the myths around them when writing of Jesus. This is where they got the idea for his virgin birth, and his atoning sacrificial death, and his resurrection, and many other things. The various gods of the cultures around them had already had their own versions of these stories. And the Christians were just "plagiarizing the pagans," you might say. What do we make of this? What do we do with this?

- **Step #1: Take a Breath**
- **Step #2: Go Back to the Sources**
- **Step #3: Investigate the Supposed Parallels** - *"With the rarest of exceptions, the primary sources—that is to say, the actual ancient texts that describe the pagan practices—don't include any real parallels to the New Testament"* (Timothy Paul Jones).
- **Step #4: Carry On**

Proof #4: Eyewitness Testimony

Why should we believe what the NT writers have to say about Jesus? So they claim to be writing history. On what basis can we actually trust that they are, in fact, doing so? Well, one of the critical pieces at play in all this, it seems to me, is this issue of eyewitness testimony.

Remember, in the ancient world, when you were trying to establish something as fact, as true, eyewitness testimony was everything. This is why we see such an emphasis on it in the NT records (Luke 1:2; 1 John 1:1-3; cf. John 19:35; 2 Pet. 1:16; Acts 1:8, 22; Acts 26:16).

Proof #5: Early Composition

One of the common objections to taking the Gospels as accurate history is this idea that simply too much time has passed between the events themselves and when the writers finally got around to recording things. It is assumed by many that, in the passing of time, as might be expected, the bare bones of Jesus' story as a historical person began to be embellished by his followers and he was built up into something more than he ever was. In other words, they turned this "Jesus of Nazareth" into the "Christ of faith." But there's one little problem with this theory. Most all the records we have of Jesus in the Bible are now almost universally understood to have been written within the range of 10 to no more than 60 years after the death of Christ, with the majority coming somewhere in the middle of that. This time frame, then, would fit well within the lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses. They're not written hundreds of years later.

Proof #6: A Mountain of Manuscripts (literally)

"Among the Greek manuscripts, less than one-tenth of one percent of all textual variants are both meaningful and viable—that is, they change the meaning of the text to some degree that could possibly go back to the original. But how meaningful are they? There is not a single essential doctrine of the Christian faith that is jeopardized by any textual variance" (Daniel Wallace).



Reflection Questions

- Which of the three (and a half!) proofs shared during this week's sermon seemed most significant to you personally and why?
- Think about the non-Christians you know. What objections do you think they have to placing their faith in Christ? What questions are they asking? What doubts do they have? How might God use you to help them along towards Jesus?
- Who might you invite to come learn more about all this with us next week?

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Our Mission & Values

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FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

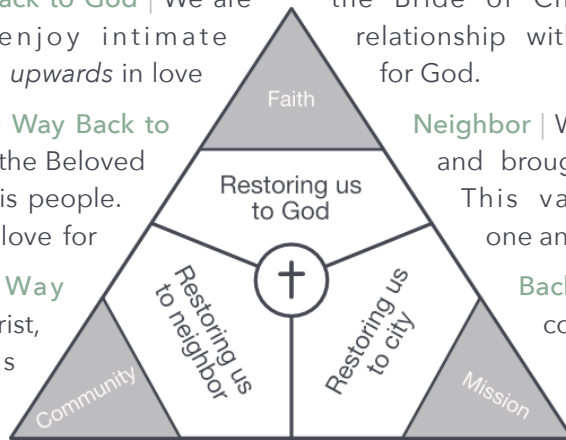
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Mercy Hill Men's BBQ Hangout + Tasting Tour

Men of Mercy Hill! There are a lot of good BBQ joints around the Bay Area and we thought it might be fun to hit some of them up together. What better way to connect and encourage each other towards Jesus than while enjoying a burger or some smoked brisket :)

The next stop on our tour is going to be South Winchester BBQ (1362 S Winchester Blvd, San Jose, CA 95128). We'll meet at 1:00pm for lunch on Saturday, August 24th. Feel free to invite a friend or two. We hope to see you there!

Scan the QR code below for more info and to find a link to RSVP!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Paul Walton at pwwalton@comcast.net.

All Church Prayer - Tonight!

CityTeam's Grace Village Apartment Renovation!

Scan the QR code below for more info!

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