

Title: "Proving that Jesus Was the Christ" (Part 3)
Text: Acts 9:19b-22
Date: September 1, 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 #7: Fundamental Improbabilities

C.S. Lewis, responding to the idea that Jesus' first followers just exaggerated his claims and dreamed up some of these stories that put him on par with God, writes: *"This is difficult because His followers were all Jews; that is, they belonged to that nation which of all others was most convinced that there was only one God—that there could not possibly be another. It is very odd that this horrible invention about a religious leader should grow up among the one people in the whole earth least likely to make such a mistake. On the contrary we get the impression that none of His immediate followers or even of the New Testament writers embraced the doctrine at all easily"* ("What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?").

These early followers of Jesus were not in any way predisposed to the ideas of Jesus we now have today. In fact, for a number of reasons, they would seem to be the least likely to ever consider them. How or why they would ever come to imagine this crucified peasant from Nazareth to be their Christ—their Lord and their God (cf. Thomas in John 20:28)—is beyond an answer . . . unless, of course, it's just the way things really went!

Proof #8: Counterproductive Content

What seems at first to be a pretty significant vulnerability to the Christian cause—namely, the foolishness of the founders—in the end only serves to validate it all the more. The only reason they'd think to write all this embarrassing stuff is if it actually happened. And the only reason they'd be willing to include all this embarrassing stuff is because they knew Jesus' love is just that good!

Proof #9: The Threat of Persecution

"Why would the apostles lie? . . . If they lied, what was their motive, what did they get out of it? What they got out of it was misunderstanding, rejection, persecution, torture, and martyrdom. Hardly a list of perks!" (Peter Kreeft).

Proof #10: The Historical Fact of the Church

"Why among all the cults and philosophies competing in the Greco-Roman world did Christianity succeed and outstrip all others? Why did it succeed despite getting more severe opposition than any other, why did it succeed though it had no influential backers in high places but consisted mainly of the poor and slaves? How did it succeed so completely that it forced the most powerful state in history to come to terms with it and then outlive the very empire that sought to uproot it? It is clear that at the very beginning of Christianity, there must have occurred a vast release of energy perhaps unequaled in our history. Without it, the future course of the Christian religion is inexplicable. . . . Something happened to the men who associated with Jesus. That burst of energy was ascribed by the early disciples to the founder of their faith" (Kenneth Scott LaTourette).



Reflection Questions

- Which of the four proofs shared during this week's sermon seemed most significant to you personally and why?
- How does the story of Peter outlined during the sermon encourage you? In what ways are you like him? If you were telling the story, would you edit the embarrassing stuff out? Why or why not? How does the gospel free us to be honest?
- Who might you invite to come learn more about all this with us next week?

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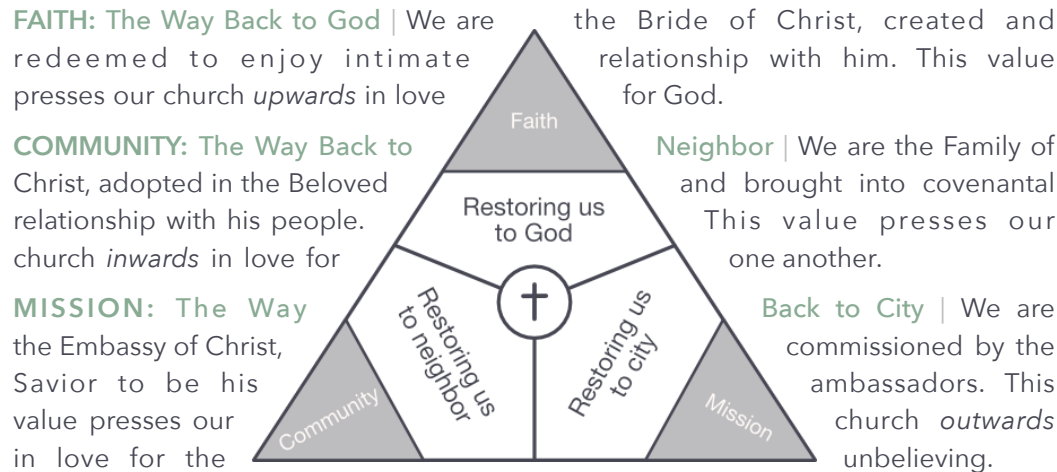


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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



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

All Church Hangout - BBQ-Style!!!

Meaningful community is hard to find in Silicon Valley, even in the church. Our congregation is spread out all over the city. But there is one day of every week when we all commit to gather together and worship our God: Sunday. It seems strategic to take this pre-existing momentum and work with it in an attempt to develop deeper community within our body. Therefore, on most first Sundays throughout the year we will invite the church to enjoy picnic-style afternoons together immediately following the service.

And this Sunday (TODAY!) is going to be special :) We'll be grilling up hot dogs and sausages (with a veggie option, if preferred)! We'll also provide fruit, chips, cookies, some drinks, etc. We'll have water balloons and other fun activities—not just for the "little" kids, but also for us "big kids" as well :) We thought this would be a fun way for us as a church family to connect and kick off the Fall together!

Mercy Hill Kids - Volunteers Needed!

Prayer Village - Season 2!

Kids & Youth Volunteer Fingerprinting - Next Sunday (9/8)

All Church Prayer - Cancelled Tonight

CityTeam's Grace Village Apartment Renovation!

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Or find it online at mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub.