

The Son of God and Christ—Acts 9:20-22—12/21/25
Copyright by Mark Vaughan 12/2025

As we praise our Lord Jesus Christ on this Sunday before Christmas, let's remember who He is & why His arrival was so significant.

To do so, let's go back to the passage in Acts we covered last week & recall what Saul began to do soon after his conversion.

Turn to Acts 9 & we'll not read the whole account of his conversion, but let's read verses 20-22 to note the content of his ministry. [READ]

I've mentioned how important this chapter is to show the divine & undeniable transformation of Saul.

And if you remember our look at Stephen's sermon before he was martyred, I described it as historical theology with Stephen.

Stephen explained history from God's perspective, with divine commentary that framed His dealings theologically.

Now at the end of this section in Acts 6-9 where the Gospel spread beyond Jerusalem, Saul has become a successor to Stephen's ministry.

Saul approved of killing Stephen, but Jesus could not be stopped as He changed Saul to make him like Stephen.

But both Stephen & Saul, were not preaching themselves, as Paul wrote in 2nd Corinthians 4:5, *For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, & ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.*

They were slaves of this Jesus, this name that the Jewish leaders in Acts did not want to hear preached.

They were slaves of this Jesus, whom they preached as Lord & Christ.

As Luke described it in Acts 9:20, the newly converted Saul preached Jesus, saying He is the Son of God.

As Luke said in Acts 9:22, Saul was proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Of course, those were not new terms to refer to Jesus with some honor that was invented during His time on earth.

Those were very old terms laden with theological hope & anticipation.

And you know that—you know those terms—but I want us to review their significance today.

I want to lead us in a brief historical theology review to stoke the fires of our devotion to Jesus as we celebrate His coming at Christmas.

I want to encourage our worship of Jesus by thinking on what it means that He is the Christ & Son of God.

So as a 1st of 3 points in our flow of thought this morning, let's simply recall that the Son of God & the Christ are Christmas proclamations.

To understand the wonder & worship of Christmas, we need to note that the Son of God & Christ are Christmas proclamations.

To remind you that these categories relate to Christmas, turn to Luke 1 to see these terms in Luke's narratives surrounding Jesus' birth.

Read these familiar words in Luke 1:26-35. [READ]

As verse 32 says, this virgin-born son will be called the Son of the Most High—meaning the Son of God, as verse 35 calls Him.

Being given the throne of His father David, as verse 32 also says, means He will be the promised King, the anointed One.

As you know, the Greek word for Christ means 'Anointed One'.

So reigning over the house of Jacob forever & His kingdom having no end, as verse 33 says, carry that same emphasis.

Jesus was announced as the Son of God & the Christ & King.

Mary understood those categories & worshipped in amazement at the grace shown to her to serve in God's plan.

Then turn to Luke 2 & let's recall the angel's words to the shepherds.

Follow along in Luke 2:8-12. [READ]

Who is this Savior who was announced by angels?

He is Christ the Lord—the Messiah & Yahweh the true God.

That mattered not merely to His immediate family or the royal line.

That mattered to isolated shepherds as *great joy ... for all the people*, meaning even those beyond Israel, even me & you.

Jesus knew His unique Sonship as He grew up because He referred to God as His Father in Luke 2:49 when Jesus was 12 years old.

When His parents came to find Him in the temple, He said He had to be in His Father's house, meaning God's house.

And then it's interesting how Luke mentioned Adam as *the son of God* in Luke 3 in what is actually Jesus' genealogy through Mary.

Mary's father Heli, or Eli, had no son & so Joseph would've taken on that role of son when he married Mary.

That's why you can see how Luke 3:23 says Jesus was, *as it was being thought*, or *as was supposed*, the son of Joseph.

That genealogy works backward in time to Adam with literally only "of" each next person with *the son of* understood.

Then verse 38 ends it with "of God", as in Adam was the son of God.

I think Luke phrased it this way to highlight Jesus as the Second Adam who came to do what the first Adam did not.

Jesus was the true Son of God who showed the character of His heavenly Father like the first Adam had not.

And Jesus was the ultimate Son of God who would exercise dominion over creation like the first Adam had failed to do.

Remember in Genesis 2:28 that God had commanded man to rule over creation—but the first Adam had not fulfilled that.

Yet Jesus would rule & have a kingdom as the true Son of God.

He would even crush the devil as predicted of the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 who was the hope of all history after that.

As we say often, that promise of Genesis 3:15 of a Deliverer who would crush sin & Satan carried into all promises after it.

Man could never rule over all creation like he was created to do until that Conquering Seed came to crush sin's curse & the devil's domain.

So the first Christmas brought the highest celebration because the virgin-born Son of God was expected to bring that victory.

The first Christmas brought amazed anticipation of a kingdom not controlled by the devil's darkness.

That's evident in Jesus being announced as a Savior from sin & even given the name *Jesus*, which means *Yahweh saves*.

Matthew's account of the angel's appearance to Joseph in Matthew 1:21 also pointed to Jesus coming to *save His people from their sins*.

And Matthew 1:23 also quotes Isaiah 7:14 in calling Jesus Immanuel, which means God with us.

So that's why we talk about worshipping Jesus at Christmas.

He is **God** who came to rescue His people from sin's curse.

The visit by the distant magi in Matthew 2 shows how Jesus was expected to be the King of the Jews who was worthy of worship.

The questions about the Messiah or Christ & the quote Micah 5:2 about Him being a Ruler add to what was known of Jesus.

The devil also knew Jesus was the Son of God as he tempted Jesus by saying, If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.

That's in Luke 4:3 & then the third temptation in Luke 4:9 says he devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple & said, if You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.

Similarly, Luke 4:41 says *Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!'* But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

Even the demonic legion in Luke 8:28 recognized Jesus as the Son of the Most High God who had authority to torment them.

So Jesus was known as the supreme King who would crush evil.

It was known to His earthly family, to His extended family, to angels & demons, & even to magi from distant lands.

From the announcement & arrival of Jesus onward, He was known as the Christ & Son of God.

That's why Matthew's Gospel started with the genealogy that named Jesus as the Christ or Messiah in Matthew 1:1, 16.

So again, this is a reminder that you know, but we note 1st today that the Son of God & the Christ are Christmas **proclamations.**

Those terms extol some of the majesty of the first Christmas.

We know that because Son of God & Christ are also long-held hopes.

We can note that as a 2nd point as we meditate on these titles for Jesus that lead us to worship Him.

Note that the Son of God & the Christ are (1) Christmas proclamations, & 2ndly also (#2) **ancient expectations.**

They were announced with excitement at Jesus' arrival because they were long-awaited from promises & prophecies.

So note, 2nd, that the Son of God & the Christ are ancient expectations.

Those hopeful categories began to build with the Seed promise in Genesis 3:15 as we mentioned where that Seed was a Son.

When Adam & Eve had their first son, their words in Genesis 4:1 may indicate an expectation of the Lord, Yahweh God, coming.

Think of it: a Deliverer would have to be greater than Adam to crush the devil who had deceived Eve & led Adam into sin.

Although most translations add 'with the help of the Lord', the more literal translation implies that it is the Lord Himself who is the child.

Either way, divine provision & deliverance were expected.

And when Cain killed his brother Abel, Seth's name meant put or placed to signal his place in the line of hope in the place of Abel.

Yet death continued throughout Genesis 5 except with Enoch who walked with God & was taken up.

Then Genesis 6 says Noah's birth came with hope, as his name meant, & yet he also proved that he was not the ultimate Deliverer.

After the flood judgment, you may think generations would fear & follow God, but the Tower of Babel proved otherwise.

So God brought a promise to bless one man Abraham & his seed in Genesis 12 as the channel of blessing to all the families of the earth.

That promise passed down to Isaac & Isaac's son Jacob & Jacob's 12 sons while none of them proved to be that Seed.

So the second book of the Bible, Exodus, opened with more longing for a better day and final victory.

Yet even Moses proved that he was not the final Deliverer as Deuteronomy 18:15-18 promised a prophet greater than Moses.

But God did come to dwell with His people Israel in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 29 & 40 describe the altar where God was approached & the whole Tabernacle as anointed to set them apart to God.

That kind of anointing came to signify a special ceremonial spreading of oil over things & even of prophets, priests & kings set apart to God.

And that word *anointed* is the Hebrew word for the *Messiah*.

That's how the term Messiah or Christ became connected with the King God promised as a descendent or Seed of David in 2nd Samuel 7.

2nd Samuel 7 is a reference to memorize for God's covenant promises to David for his kingship & kingdom to never end.

God told David of both near fulfillments in his son Solomon & far fulfillments in his ultimate Son the Messiah King.

Many passages build on that expectation of David's Son like Jeremiah 23:5 & 33:15 describe him as the Righteous Branch.

Psalm 110 mentions him as Lord & King who is a priest forever like Melchizedek was as both a priest and king in Genesis 14.

Zechariah 6:11-13 also puts the roles of priest & king together.

We don't have time to read those passages, but you can note 2 Samuel 7 & Jeremiah 23:5 & 33:15 & Psalm 110 & Zechariah 6:11-13.

Every story points beyond it to the hope of Someone better who could be what everyone else could not.

And since that Someone better is honored in Psalm 2, let's turn there.

Let's read Psalm 2 & note the Lord's Anointed, or Messiah, in verse 2 & His King in verse 6 who is His Son in verses 7-12.

Notice the war against God & His Messiah or Anointed & yet God's plan for His Son to crush evil & rule the nations with blessing in Him.

Follow along as I read Psalm 2:1-12. [READ]

Note Yahweh's Anointed & how Yahweh's Son fulfills what's expected for Yahweh's King to rule & conquer evil & bring blessing.

That's why Psalm 2 ends by calling people to worship the Son of God, to pay homage to Him as One equal with God.

Psalm 2 brings together these ancient expectations of the Son of God who is worthy of worship & who will bring final justice & give refuge.

So when you read those Christmas narratives & sing Christmas songs, think about the words being used & their meaning.

When we sing of Luke 2 & say "*Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King!*", realize the significance of **Jesus as that King**.

Recall the ancient categories of Him as Christ & Son of God where He is the King who will rule the nations with justice.

Realize that it is “*Joy to the World*” that *the Lord has come* & that the earth should receive her king & bow in worship to kiss God’s Son.

Recall that the Son of God & Christ are ancient expectations.

Yet the Jewish leaders at Jesus’ trial tried to use those categories that He fulfilled to reject Him & accuse Him of blasphemy.

Luke 22:67 reports they said to Him, *If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe.”*

He did not answer because they knew He was the Christ as Luke 23:35 & 39 later recorded them & others mocking His claim to be the Christ.

Anyone willing to admit it could **know** Jesus was the Christ.

And then Luke 22:70 says Jesus did answer when “*they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then? And He said to them, “**Yes, I am.**”*

And the response of the Jewish leaders to then punish Him for blasphemy shows what that title “*Son of God*” meant.

It meant He was making Himself equal with God, claiming to be God in the way that the OT had spoken of the Son of God.

He had said it before & people had tried to stone Him as John 10:31-36 records.

He had said it & He had proven it & yet the Jewish leaders hated Him.

So they rejected Him to fulfill what He said in Luke 24:26, that it was “*necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*”

As He said in Luke 24:46, “*Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.*”

It was necessary for the Christ to suffer because He had to be *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* as John the Baptist proclaimed in John 1:29.

The Son of God & promised Christ was also the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah’s prophecies who also had to suffer to spread His glory.

His 1st Coming was to die for the sins of His people as predicted in Isaiah 53 & depicted in the OT sacrifices.

Then His 2nd Coming will fulfill His promises to rule the nations in His kingdom in His visible victory over sin & Satan.

And it’s in that sense that the Son of God & the Christ are eternal determinations for everyone to know & respond to.

We said the Son of God & the Christ are (1) Christmas proclamations, (2) ancient expectations & now (3) eternal determinations.

This matters not only for the past or Christmas, but for eternity.

Because Jesus is the Son of God & the Christ—& because of what those terms mean—your response to Him will decide your destiny.

As God the Father said it on the Mount of Transfiguration as Luke 9:35, “*This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!*”

It is eternally significant to hear with faith in & following of God’s Son, to pay homage to the Son, as Psalm 2:12 says.

As 1st John 4:15 says, *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

1st John 5:1 adds that, *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.*

Whether you confess & believe in Jesus as the Son of God & Christ determines if you are born of God & have God in you.

So please do not treat your whole life response to Jesus lightly.

So 1st John 5:10 concludes, *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

And we could add many other passages, especially in John's Gospel, highlighting the significance of how you respond to Jesus.

The climaxing statement of John 20:31 says he wrote these things *so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

And it's in that sense that we should note finally that the Son of God & the Christ are eternal determinations.

Your response to those revelations of Jesus will determine whether you inherit eternal joy or endure eternal wrath.

So it's no wonder that Saul persuasively preached Jesus as the Son of God & the Christ as was summed up in Acts 9:22 & 24.

He had seen the truth & knew the significance.

He understood that Jesus was the promised Son of God from Psalm 2 with roots of hope all the way back to Genesis 3:15.

He knew that Jesus was the expected Priest & Prophet & King to bring God to people & lead people to God & rule as God.

It's no wonder he would later write in Romans 1:1-4 that he was "*set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Paul never lost that wonder at Jesus the Christ & Son of God.

What about you?—have you come to wonder at & worship Him?

Do you know your need for Him because you have sinned against Him like we all have since Adam first sinned?

Do you detest your slavery to sin & long for relief from your guilt?

If so, then stop ignoring Him or minimizing Him & surrender to Him as the true King & Savior that He is.

The Son of God & Christ will receive you as you come to Him in faith.

He has come to us as a baby to show His grace to dwell among us & be like us in all ways yet without sin as Hebrews 4 says.

He is God's revelation to us as God's Son as Hebrews 1 says & He is greater than Moses & Melchizedek & every other human ever to live.

If you humble yourself to trust Him, He will count His perfect life as if you lived it & His sacrificial death as paying for your sins & He rose from the dead to prove you can trust Him.

But if you do not bow before Him in this life, you will bow in judgment & be cast forever for punishment in the lake of fire.

So realize that trusting Jesus as the Son of God & Christ is an eternal determination for you & do not take that lightly.

And if you embrace the significance of these descriptions of Jesus, then worship Him with renewed fervor & share Him with fresh zeal.

Commit today to exalt Him in your thoughts & affections this week & to start conversations about Him as often as possible.

He is worthy & He is the One whom everyone needs to know & love.

So let's pray that we will honor Him in all the opportunities that we will have this week—pray with me as we close.