

Jesus is the Christ John Hepp, Jr.

See at end for material to hand out: (a) Part I verses printed out to read in pre-service, (b) rest of general outline, (c) explanations of *Christ* and *Son of God*.

Aims: (a) Realize that the message “Jesus is the Christ (Messiah)” is the essence of the gospel, (b) Understand the meaning of *Christ/Messiah*, (c) Submit to Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

Introduction

Hundreds of times I have heard the gospel preached with the following points: “Jesus is divine. Before He became a man—even before the world existed—He lived with God His Father. But He came down from heaven and was born as a man by the virgin Mary. His purpose was to be the Lamb of God and die for our sins.” All those facts are true. But it is really strange that they did not preach the gospel that way in the Book of Acts. They did not talk about Jesus’ divinity, His pre-existence, His virgin birth, or the purpose of His death. Instead, they told about His works and said that He died but not why He died. They emphasized His resurrection instead—and His particular title the *Christ*.

Can we be sure what they preached? Of course we can. For one thing, the Book of Acts is the divine history of how the church began. It starts by telling how our resurrected Lord taught His apostles, then ascended to His Father’s right hand in heaven. It tells how He granted His Holy Spirit to guide and empower His followers. It tells us how the apostles and others preached the good news, the gospel—and how the church grew by hearing and believing that gospel. It also tells just what they preached. The book records many summaries of their gospel sermons—summaries both short and long. So today I want to explain to you the gospel summary Acts gives most often: that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Christ. Christ is not His name but His title. I

want to explain to you what that title means and get you to respond.

I will generally limit my comments to passages we have looked at before. In Part I we will begin by looking again at the six sample passages you read earlier, passages that give that summary. I will ask you a question about each passage.

I. The Most Common Summary of the Gospel

1. Look at the verse from John 1. John the Baptist had already given the first witness. All four Gospels agree that John testified what happened when Jesus was baptized. On that occasion Jesus was also anointed with God’s Spirit and acknowledged as God’s Son. Now in John 1:41 we see the reason the earliest disciples followed Jesus. Andrew gives his first witness to his brother Simon later called Peter. We read Jesus’ title as Andrew spoke it in Aramaic, then its translation in Greek. Our version does not translate the form from either language, but only says them in English. What is that title in Aramaic and in Greek?

John 1:41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

Answer: In Aramaic the title Andrew used is “the Messiah”; in Greek it is “the Christ” (the *Cristos*). Both of these mean “anointed.” Jesus is the Anointed One.

2. Next look at Luke’s version of the Great Confession, which is recorded by all four Gospels. The apostles made this confession after Jesus had done most of His mighty works. Who did they confess Jesus to be?
Luke 9:20 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

Answer: The apostles confessed that Jesus is “The Christ of God.” In this sermon I will explain what that means.

3. Next, look at our first example in the Book of Acts, the conclusion to Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. That was the church's birthday. Many of Peter's audience had a direct part in crucifying Jesus. He reminded them of Jesus' works and death, then testified of Jesus' resurrection. The Scriptures had foretold that resurrection and the ascension to heaven. He told them they could be forgiven by repenting and being baptized in Jesus' name. 3000 did so. In his conclusion, what did he want them to believe about Jesus?

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Answer: Peter wanted them to believe that God has made the Jesus they crucified, to be Lord and Christ.

4. Next we will look at a summary of what the apostles kept preaching to bring more people into the church. What was their good news?
Acts 5:42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.
Answer: The good news the apostles preached was that Jesus is the Christ.
5. Next we will look at an example of what the apostle Paul preached after he got converted. It was the same good news he had earlier opposed. We will read the two-part summary of his message in Thessalonica. What are its two parts?
Acts 17:2-3 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said.

Answer: In Thessalonica Paul preached (a) that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and (b) that Jesus is the Christ.

6. From the other New Testament books, we will look at only one more sample summary of the gospel. The apostle John wrote this years later than the time of Acts. According to this verse, who is born of God?

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Answer: Everyone is born of God who believes that Jesus is the Christ.

We have just looked at six sample summaries of the gospel from four books. They all use the same summary: Jesus is the Christ. Nobody has ever come up with a better summary of the gospel than this one. Now I would like to explain the title *Christ* from the Scriptures. If you will truly listen to this gospel and believe it, you will be saved.

II. Old Testament Background of the Title *Christ*

First, we will look at the roots of this title in God's creation plan and His covenants, then consider two of the specific prophecies about the Christ. Although the title *Christ* is not used in the first part, the reason for it becomes evident. That title is

- A. Rooted in God's Creation Plan, Psalm 8:3-6. *Christ* is the title for the man who can lead us to a glorious rule over creation.

3 When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

**4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?**

**5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.**

**6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet:...**

So when God made us, He designed us to rule over all His marvelous creation. Aren't you glad He created a material universe with the warmth of the sun and the light of the sun, moon, and stars! The dazzling beauty of snow! The green of spring! The marvel of the animals, from miniscule to mammoth! Our own bodies with their senses to appreciate such a creation! Aren't you glad He made us human beings morally and intellectually like Himself! Here we are, with the capacity to be His representatives, to rule for Him and with Him. But we are not ruling yet.

Hebrews 2 quotes from this very psalm and says that it has not been fulfilled yet but will be fulfilled in the world to come. It says that Jesus will bring many sons to glory. Aren't you glad that, in spite of our sin and weakness, God will not give up on us nor on His material creation! Through the death and resurrection life of Jesus the Christ, He will fulfill His original plan. He will restore all things and make us capable of ruling over them. Will you be one of the rulers in the new world? Be sure you believe in and follow His Christ. Then you will share in that coming glory.

IF TEACHING, WITH PLENTY OF TIME, add this from Genesis 1.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

**27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.**

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

So far you have seen that Jesus' title *Christ* is rooted in God's creation plan. It is also

B. Rooted in God's Covenants

His covenants are His solemn promises and agreements that show how He is proceeding to fulfill His purposes. They determine the course of all history. We will take the time now to mention only two of them. Both of these are alluded to in the first verse of the New Testament, which says that the Christ is the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. He is the only one who can fulfill the covenants with those two men. Consider

1. The Covenant with Abraham

God's original promises to Abraham are listed in Genesis 12:1-3. For now I am going to read only the last of those promises. The same promises were later implied in Genesis 15, when God formally ratified that covenant. Listen to chapter 12, verse 3b.

[[1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;]]

**and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."**

These promises show us that in spite of mankind's apostasy from the living God, He will bless us through Abraham. It is therefore essential that the One who brings the blessing must be a descendant of Abraham. That is why the New Testament begins by saying that as Christ, Jesus is the Son of Abraham. Now consider

2. The Covenant with David

I will read some of God's promises to King David in 2 Samuel 7:11b-16. God would not let David build a house for Him, that is, a temple. But God would build a house for David—an eternal royal house, an eternal kingdom, and an eternal throne. Notice also that God chose David's royal descendants, those who sat on David's throne, to be His own sons. Even if one of them did wrong and had to be punished, as Solomon did, he was still the son of God.

The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: 12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

So in this covenant God promised to establish forever the house, the kingdom, and the throne of David. The former occupants of that throne dis-

graced it, and God even suspended the throne and the kingdom. But in faithfulness to His promises to Abraham and to David, He will restore that throne to a descendant of David, a descendant God promised to make His son. Again, that explains why the New Testament begins by saying, "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Don't forget that God promised in this His covenant with David to make the king His own Son. That is just what Hebrews 1:5 says that God would do for Jesus. Quoting from this Davidic covenant, God says about Jesus, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son." In this sense, His title as Son does not refer to what He was before He came to earth but after He became a man. As verse 4 says, "he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs." That name He has inherited is "God's Son," as promised in the Davidic covenant. Hebrews 1:5 also quotes Psalm 2 with the same meaning. We will consider that psalm as one of two

C. Selected Specific Promises about the Anointed King

1. Psalm 2. For the coming worldwide king, this psalm uses both titles: *Son* and *Christ*. *Christ* is in the first stanza:

1 Why do the nations conspire

and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The kings of the earth take their stand

and the rulers gather together

against the LORD

and against his Anointed One.

3 "Let us break their chains," they say,

"and throw off their fetters."

Did you see the title *Christ*? That is a trick question. It is not there in English but in the Greek version. It

is the title “Anointed One” in verse 2. In Hebrew “Anointed One” is *Mashiac*. But translated to Greek, the same title is *Cristos*, which we say as *Christ*. This is the title Andrew used when he called Jesus the Messiah. And it is the same title in the Great Confession all the disciples made, which we read from Luke 9:20. So when they said that Jesus is the Christ of God, the *Cristos* of God, they meant His Anointed One. Now let us continue reading in Psalm 2. The Lord responds to the nations who do not want Him or His Christ, His Anointed One.

**4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.**

**5 Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,**

**6 “I have installed my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”**

In the third stanza the Anointed One, the King speaks. He makes known the decree that the LORD has adopted Him as Son. Notice what He will inherit as God’s Son.

**7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD :
He said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.**

**8 Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.**

**9 You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”**

So here the King says that the LORD has made Him His son: “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And we see why He is called the Son: because He will inherit all the world from God. “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You will rule them....”

So this Psalm 2 calls the LORD’s chosen ruler by both titles: God’s Son, and God’s Anointed One. He is the Son because He is the heir. But why is He the Anointed One, that is, God’s Christ? Because His being anointed is what capacitates Him to rule. God chooses Him as Son to give Him the right to rule, then anoints Him with His Spirit to make Him able to rule. Neither term in itself requires that He be divine. In fact, even wicked King Saul was called “the LORD’s anointed” in 1 Samuel 24:6, 10 and 26:11. Next we will look at a passage that pictures Jesus’ anointing and His kingdom.

2. Isaiah 11:1-6. These verses describe how He is anointed in order to rule, then sketch His rule. They start by saying that He is descended from Jesse, David’s father.

**1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.**

**2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-**

This shows that Jesus is anointed not with oil but with the Spirit of God.

3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

**He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;**

**4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the
earth.**

**He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.**

**5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.**

**6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.**

When we confess that Jesus is the Christ, we mean that He has this fullness of God's Spirit in order to rule as described in Isaiah 11 and other prophecies. The title implies that He will fulfill God's original plan by creating a new world. It also implies that He can impart that Spirit to us, so that we can rule with Him. Are you included?

IF TEACHING WITH PLENTY OF TIME, ADD POINT 3, GIVING A CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANOINTED ONE'S COMING.

3. Daniel 9:24-26a The title *Mashiach* ("Anointed One" in verses 25 and 26)
**24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.
25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.**

In Part II we have looked at the roots of the title God's *Christ*. It is essential to God's plan for creation and His covenants with Abraham and David. We have seen that each divinely selected king is called God's son because he inherits from God. In Isaiah 11 we have seen the meaning of *Cristos*, that is, Christ, described as anointed with God's Spirit. So Christ is not His name but His

royal title. However, the word in English has lost that royal meaning. So it is good to use instead the Aramaic form of the same title, *Messiah*, as you saw in John 1. In Part III I will make that change. I will substitute *Messiah* for *Christ* even in the translations of Scriptures. Practice by looking again at the some of the six passages we began with. Read Acts 5:42 and 17:3, using *Messiah*.

III. New Testament Emphasis that Jesus is the Messiah

Jesus' Messiahship was always the issue in the Gospels and in the beginnings of the church in Acts. First,

- A. In the Gospels
 1. The Issue in the Gospels as books. The Gospel of Mark is just like Peter's sermon to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, Acts 10. It tells the same facts and has the same outline. Notice the theme of Mark.
Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Messiah, the Son of God.
 2. The Issue in His birth account in Matthew 1
**1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:
16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Messiah.
17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.**
 3. The Issue in His works, Matthew 8-10
Hebrews 2:3-4 refers to Jesus' and the apostolic message about the "great salvation," which is still future, as seen in 1:14. God's witness to their message included "various miracles [Gr. *dunamesin*]," which Hebrews 6:5 calls "the powers [*dunameis*, the

same word] of the coming age.” Thus, it is evident why Matthew 8-10 relates Jesus doing such miracles, then enabling His disciples to do them. They show that Jesus can bring the kind of kingdom the prophets had pictured.

John the Baptist had given testimony that Jesus was God’s Anointed One, God’s *Christ* or *Messiah*, who would baptize others in the Spirit. He had seen God anoint Jesus and acknowledge Him as Son when He was baptized. But later, when John was put in prison and Jesus did nothing about it, John began to wonder. Was Jesus really “the one who was to come”? Note Jesus’ reassuring answer through the messengers. They should go back to John and tell him of Jesus’ miracles (to use the label in Hebrews) “of the coming age.”

Matthew 11:3-5 3 [John sent] to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” 4 Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

So what did Jesus’ miraculous works prove? That He is the Anointed One, the Messiah, as John had testified.

4. The Issue in the Great Confession—as recorded in Luke, which we read before, and also the account in Matthew.
Luke 9:20 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “The Messiah of God.” (that is, the One anointed by God to be King).

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

As you saw earlier, Messiah and Son of God are titles Peter used right out of the Old Testament, such as Psalm 2. These titles referred to Jesus’ role as Heir and Ruler, not His divinity.

5. The Issue at His trial and death, Matthew 26-27
26:62 Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” **63** But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” **64** “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
27:11 Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.
28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, **29** and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said.
37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: **THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**
41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. **42** “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43** He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

So even in the Gospel story of Jesus' trial and death, the issue did not change. It was still His royal sonship, His being Messiah or King. The issue continued to be the same when the church started and spread. Reread

B. In Acts (two of the verses we read before.)

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

Acts 5:42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Conclusions

1. How did they preach the Gospel in the early church?

If the record in Acts is accurate, they preached that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. In our culture it seems rare that anyone preaches that. We love the supplementary concepts added by the apostle John or in later teaching—that Jesus existed before He became a man, came down from heaven, was born of a virgin, became the Lamb of God and died for our sins. But according to the divine record, the early Gospel lacked those supplements! Instead, the message was that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah who died but rose from the dead. We just read it in

Acts 2:36 "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

This is the gospel they preached. Was it preached to you? Well, it has been now.

2. Why did they preach it that way?

I will suggest three reasons. All of them were to orient us properly, starting off new believers with the proper emphasis.

- a. To emphasize His authority—because as King He is Lord.
Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- b. To emphasize God's plan to bring His kingdom—not just our personal desire to be forgiven. We do not just look inward but forward. As we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we realize that everything else is related to that coming kingdom.
- c. To emphasize God's Word. That Word is like God's seed that gives us life and like God's light that guides us. To say it another way, the gospel train is not just staying at the station. It is on the way to the kingdom. Hearing the gospel doesn't start with observing everything about the engine but learning who He is and where He will take us. The Messiah is Jesus—and He will take us to heaven on earth, the kingdom God has always been planning for.

3. **What will you do about it?** At least, submit to Jesus as Lord and Messiah. What is the first step in that response? The same as the one they made on the Day of Pentecost.
Acts 2:38-39 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

HANDOUT

Jesus is the Christ

I. The Most Common Summary of the Gospel

John 1:41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

Luke 9:20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

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1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

II. OT Background of the Term *Christ*

- A. Rooted in God's Creation Plan, Psalm 8
- B. Rooted in God's Covenants
 1. The Covenant with Abraham
 2. The Covenant with David
- C. Selected Specific Promises about the Anointed King
 1. Psalm 2
 2. Isaiah 11:1-6

III. NT Emphasis that Jesus is the Messiah

- A. In the Gospels
 1. The Issue in the Gospels, Mark 1:1
 2. His genealogy, Matthew 1
 3. His works, Matthew (8-10) 11
 4. The Great Confession, Luke 9:20; Matthew 16:16
 5. The Issue at His trial and death, Matthew 26-27
- B. In Acts Reread 2:36 and 5:42.

Conclusions

1. How did they preach the Gospel?
2. Why did they preach it that way?
3. Submit to Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

Christ—*Christ* is the English pronunciation of the Greek title *Cristos*, used in both the OT and NT. Readers in the Greek version of the OT find *Cristos* there just as in the NT. It is never a personal name, as many think, but a verbal adjective or a royal title. It means "anointed," just like Hebrew *Mashiach* and Aramaic *Messiah*, for which it stood (see John 1:41). As a verbal adjective *Mashiach/Cristos* described the High Priest as anointed with the holy oil (*ha-cohen ha-mashiach*, Lev. 4:3, 5, 16). But as a title they referred to God's chosen king, anointed not only with oil but with the Holy Spirit. This was true of any legitimate king of God's people Israel. For example, David called Saul God's *Mashiach* (His Christ or Messiah) in 1 Samuel 24:6, 10. That title was especially appropriate for the promised future Ruler (as in Psalm 2:2, 6), whose full anointing is described in Isaiah 11:2. The royal meaning is unmistakable in Matthew 2. The wise men were looking for the One "born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2), who two verses later was called "the Christ" (*ho Cristos*, Matt. 2:4). Remember that *Christ* is not a translation itself but simply the Greek title pronounced in English. Since *Christ* has lost its royal meaning, it is often better to use *Messiah*.

Son of God—Has multiple uses, normally not (or rarely) implying divinity. Often a title for the king (synonym for *Mashiach* or *Cristos*). God even used it for wicked kings (2 Sam. 7). It emphasized Messiah's being God's heir: "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations **your inheritance**..." (Ps. 2:8).