

SHARING CHRIST'S COMMISSION

Heidelberg Catechism

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Over the years I have found one of the pleasures of teaching children is to smile at some of the naïve answers they give. Once I asked why our Saviour is called Jesus Christ. Why 'Jesus' and 'Christ'. Someone said 'That's simple. That's his surname. Like John Smith, so Jesus Christ.' So, I gave a little prod. 'That means that Joseph's full name was Joseph Christ, does it?' 'Yeah... no... that's not right.' Someone else suggested 'Jesus had two names, like John Paul or Alan John. So, he was Jesus Christ.' I encouraged them to read Luke 9:20. There Jesus is asking his disciples who the people think he is. *"Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."* Then it became clear. Someone said 'It's his title. He is the Christ. The name stands for what he is'. Indeed, it does. I want to explore the amazing ramifications of Jesus' title. And the huge implications it has for you and me.

The name 'Christ' comes from the Greek 'Christus' which translates the Hebrew 'Messiah'. It is Jesus' official title. It refers to his position, his office. As such it points to his authority and responsibilities. In our society we have certain people with titles like 'Prime Minister' or 'Premier' or 'Mayor' who hold special office. As your minister I also have a title. Officially I am 'the Reverend'. These are titles given to those who hold a special office. They are positions that people are usually elected to. You can't just decide you will study to be a mayor or prime minister. You can choose to be an accountant or buy a business. But not a special office. To hold office, you need to be worthy of that role and elected or confirmed and then called or appointed. The special office is a position that is confirmed by a special installation. A prime minister is sworn in to office by the Governor General. A minister or elder is ordained by the church.

Now Jesus has the special office of being 'the Christ', which means 'The Anointed One'. Which is Bible language for saying Jesus is 'The Office Bearer'. Note the definite article there. Jesus is not just an office bearer. He is The Office Bearer. In the Old Testament there were three offices, that of prophet, priest and king. And installation into that office was by 'anointing with oil'. Such an anointing indicated that the person was set

apart by God to serve him. And that the person was equipped by the Holy Spirit. You might remember the account of old Samuel being guided by God to select David to be the king to replace Saul. We read in 1 Samuel 16:13 *"So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David."* That horn of oil was not like a full bottle of olive oil. It was more like a small jar of perfumed oil. By that anointing David was declared to hold the office of king. By that act, he had authority but also many responsibilities.

Now Jesus was also anointed. Not in the Old Testament way with oil. But directly by the Holy Spirit when he was baptized by John. That is the beauty of that scene at the Jordan River. Jesus, when he was baptized, was being ordained to his role. The Spirit came upon him to empower him to bring forgiveness and hope to the creation. That is picked up in Luke 4:18-19 where Jesus quotes from Isaiah *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* With that anointing Jesus gained the office of being 'The Anointed One'. His office combines the three previous offices of the Old Testament. As the Catechism puts it "...he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance; our only high priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal king who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom He has won for us."

The Catechism is doing two things by mentioning these three offices of prophet, priest and king. First it shows how the whole Old Testament points to Jesus as the Christ. And secondly it beautifully summarizes all the work of Jesus in bringing forgiveness and hope. In other words, it is showing that the whole Bible deals with one basic thing. That is 'The Christ', 'The Anointed One' and his work to redeem his people. All Scripture is 'Christo-centric'. It is all Christ centered. Every passage points to Jesus. All the Bible is fulfilled and climaxes in 'The Christ'.

There were many prophets. But they and their words pointed to the 'Chief Prophet', who is himself 'the Word of God'. As John wrote *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through him."* Jesus is the prophet *"...who perfectly reveals ..."* our salvation. Jesus is the fulfillment of the words of Moses the prophet who said (Deuteronomy 18:15) *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him"*. There were many priests who gave innumerable sacrifices for the sins of the people.

But 'The Christ' is the "...*only high priest...*" who has actually "...*set us free...*" And he did so by sacrificing himself. He has fulfilled all the Old Testament sacrificial laws. And as our priest he pleads our cause with the Father day in and day out. There were many Old Testament kings who were specially anointed to govern God's people. But 'The Christ' is the "...*eternal king...*" who is the fulfillment of God's promises to David. Jesus is the one "...*who governs us by his Word and Spirit*" who rules over everything in the universe forever.

So, when we ask: "Why is he called Christ, meaning anointed?" we are asking a very important question. We are talking about the greatest, the most glorious office bearer of all the world, of all time! No one has served to the extent he has. Who else has suffered eternal hell for this people? No one has authority to the extent he has. All the universe, every star, every atom is under his authority. He is 'The Office Bearer'. He is 'The Son of Man', the 'Second Adam of the New Humanity', the Covenant Representative of all God's people. He is 'The Son of God', the 'Lord of Lords and King of Kings'. Every single person's destiny is determined by the answer they give to the question: "Who do you say I am?" What is the Christ to you?

Now, all that being the case I want you to realize the startling implications of Question 32. "*But why are you called a Christian?*" In other words, why are we called by that official name? Why not Jesus-ites? Jewish believers are called Messianic Jews. Again, why the connection to the official title? Is the word 'Christian' a title for us? Is it a reference to a special office of authority and service? Yes, it is! Note the answer 32. "...*by faith I am a member of Christ and so I share in his anointing. I am anointed to...*" Let's think about what this means. "...*by faith we are members of Christ.*" That refers to what Paul says 1 Corinthians 12:27 "*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it.*" The Holy Spirit connects us to Jesus. We are his body, he is the head. That means the God regards us as if we were Christ himself. We are his voice and his hands in our community. All what Jesus has achieved, his obedience and his perfection is ours. All he has attained, all his benefits, are ours. We are the heirs of the Father. But also, the responsibilities of Jesus, and his service, belong to us. We are also prophets, priests and kings. We are also office bearers. And that means honour and responsibilities.

Do you understand the implications of this Biblical teaching? We who have faith in Jesus are all office bearers. We all hold the office of 'Christian'. We hold the general office of 'believer'. It is not just a minister who is in office bearer in the church. Or the elder or deacon. We all are. It is not as if there are some who are the clergy of the church and the rest are the 'laity'. That is the 'people' who are dependent on the clergy. The church is not like a train. There you have a driver and a conductor to ensure all is

well and the passengers are just passive. The church is not just for us to attend and consume spiritual goodies and then go on our way. We are all title holders, office bearers, we are all the anointed ones, 'Christ-ians'. Are you aware that the office we have as 'believers' is the primary office in the church? The offices of minister, elder or deacon are secondary offices. These secondary offices are 'special' in the sense that they are gifts from 'The Christ'. As Paul said in Ephesians 4:11-13 *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."* Jesus gives the church elders and deacons to serve you the believer in the church. They are given to help you as believer to develop and function in your office. They are given by Jesus to equip you for your ministry. The minister has the special office majoring on that of the prophet. My role is to teach and preach the Word of God. By that teaching we can all do our prophetic role of teaching our family and calling on our neighbours and friends to believe in Jesus. The deacon's role relates to that of the priest. They encourage us in our giving, presenting ourselves *"...as a living sacrifice of thanks"*. The elder has the special office relating to that of king. Elders have oversight of us as a congregation through pastoral care. These special offices in our church have one basic function. And that is to teach and encourage all of us in our roles to be prophets, priests and kings.

So, think very carefully about what that means in your life as a Christian. Do you believe in Jesus? Do you embrace him and trust him as your Lord and Saviour? Then you have been called and appointed by the highest office bearer in the world, to represent him, to speak and act on his behalf. So, don't ever think you are insignificant. Don't ever think you are of little worth in this church or our communities. Do not be ashamed of your faith. If we were asked to represent the Prime Minister's office, we would be quite open about it. We would be name dropping all over the place. 'As I was saying to Malcolm the other day...' 'Malcolm who?' 'Why Malcolm Turnbull, of course, the Prime Minister. We were talking the other day...' Well, you represent some one much greater. You represent 'The Christ'. You act as prophet, priest and king on behalf of 'The Word of God', the Son of God, 'The King of kings and Lord of lords'. People experience the love of God, or the judgement of God, depending on how they react to you. Eternal destinies are determined by how a person reacts to your words about Jesus. Eternal life or death is impacted by how they react to your care, your representation of 'The Christ'. Do you grasp the importance of the office you hold?

Christianity in Australia is suffering, not only because the culture is becoming anti-Christian. But also, because for too long, too many Christians have been passive church

goers, consumers of religion who need to be kept contented. That, instead of being inspired officers of the Christ on a mission. The mission to “...*make disciples of all the nations*”. Our Mission Statement says we are to “... *bring hope to the hills community by sharing the good news of Jesus through word and action and growing as disciples who also make disciples of others.*” That implies as office bearers of Jesus we will make a key focus of our lives to be ‘growing as disciples’. We will strive to do that, so we are in a far better place to ‘make disciples of others’. That is the point of our existence. So, we will make time to do our devotions. We can make use of a wonderful tool like the Discipleship Matrix on our denominational website. We will make time to be in small groups and study the Word together. We will minister to our children, care for each other, reach out to our communities. We do these things, not as another burden. We prioritize them to express thanks to God. Not only has he given his Son to bring us hope. He has granted us Christ’s office. We have the honour of representing Jesus. With the calling to bring hope to our communities. So, let’s be faithful to that calling.