

The Heidelberg Catechism – Lord’s Day 12

Coming to Lord’s Day 12 this morning, it’s good for us to remember that we are still in the section pertaining to **God the Son**. Last week Stephen walked us through why the Son of God was called “Jesus” and it is because He saves us from our sins through Him and Him alone. In Lord’s Day 12 the name “Christ” is explained. To the surprise of some, if not many, “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name... “Christ” is the **title** given to Jesus. But what does this title “Christ” mean? In the OT, the Hebrew word often used for this title was “**Messiah**” which means “**Anointed One**”. In the NT, the Greek word used for this title was “**Christ**” which means the “**Anointed One**” or the “**Chosen One**”. So you can see that these words are in many ways interchangeable as they are referring to the same thing. “**Christ**” is His title, signifying Jesus was sent from God to be the Deliverer . “Jesus Christ” means “Jesus the Messiah” or “Jesus the Anointed One.”

The question we see asked in LD12 is an interesting one. We saw last week the significance of the name Jesus. **Q31** says: Why is He also called “the Christ,” meaning “anointed”? You might think, “Isn’t the name Jesus sufficient enough to distinguish Him?” We learned that Jesus means: “God saves” or “Savior.” It would seem that knowing that Jesus came to save His people from their sins would be a sufficient expression of who He is, but we know that He is given a title as well. In Luke 9:18 we see that there is a significance and distinction made to the identity of Jesus. It says, *“¹⁸Now it happened that as He [Jesus] was praying alone, the disciples were with Him. And He [Jesus] asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’ ¹⁹And they answered, ‘John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.’ ²⁰Then He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Peter answered, ‘**The Christ of God.**”* This is a **distinct** and **important** answer that Peter gives. In this answer Peter is signifying that Jesus is the One whom generations had been eagerly awaiting. The One in whom the promises of God were going to be fulfilled. The Messiah that is **anointed of God**.

When Peter confesses Jesus to be the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God, he is confessing that **the promised Messiah of God was standing before Him**. That God had made good on His promise and had **sent the Lamb of God** who would take away the sin of the world. That is what we, too, confess here in Lord's Day 12, that God stands behind the Lord Jesus with His authority and guarantees. When we ask why the Savior is called “the Christ, the Anointed,” we say it is because He is ordained by God the Father. We confess the unique nature of Jesus. Jesus is not just a human deliverer who was willing to die for His mission or ideals. He is not just any deliverer who has risen in the course of history and happened to succeed. No, this Jesus is the Anointed One, the One ordained by God the Father. Jesus responded to Peter’s confession by telling him that he was blessed to have this understanding of Jesus’ title and identity. He said, *“For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”*

Q & A 31 – Q. Why is He called “Christ,” meaning “anointed”?

A. Because He has been **ordained** by God the Father and has been **anointed** with the Holy Spirit¹ to be our chief **prophet** and **teacher**² who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance,³ our **only high priest**⁴ who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of His body,⁵ and who continually pleads our cause with the Father,⁶ and our **eternal king**⁷ who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom He has won for us.⁸

The answer begins by saying that Jesus “has been **ordained** by God the Father and has been **anointed** with the Holy Spirit” In Luke 3, John the Baptist is calling people to repentance and baptism. While many are coming to be baptized, Jesus comes before him to be baptized. When Jesus came to him, John the Baptist did not know what to make of it. He was baptizing the repentant for the remission of sins. But Jesus said that he and John had to fulfill the will of God and make known the fulfillment of the prophecies. Luke 3:21-22 *“Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”* This was the anointing. It is here that Jesus was affirmed by God, to be the Messiah. It is here we see the Father and the Holy Spirit confirming the anointing of Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus Himself confirms this same thing in the following chapter. In Luke 4 when Jesus reads the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 61 when He says, *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has **anointed Me** to proclaim good news to the poor. **He has sent Me** to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ And He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, **‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’**”*

This anointing upon Jesus was one that came with specificity. He would be anointed to specific roles and offices. One of the specific offices that Jesus was anointed to fulfill was “to be our chief prophet and teacher.” Ok, so what does it mean to be a prophet? A prophet is a person called of God, to declare and explain the will of God to men. This generally pertained to things present or future, *which otherwise would have remained unknown*, in a way that the truths which were revealed are from God and not the wisdom of men.

- In Acts 3:22 we see Jesus is set forth as the prophet that God promised to send in Deut 18:15/ Peter was urging the Jews not reject Jesus as He is the anointed One of God.
- We see a very similar theme established by the writer of Hebrews in Heb 1:1-2 tells us: *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days **He has spoken to us by His Son**, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.”*
 - This text in Hebrews highlights this doctrine so well as it depicts the reality that Christ is the final word regarding the will of God. He is the final prophet and teacher that God’s people will need in order to know the will of God. Jesus is the Living Word, the one who brought forth the message of the Gospel from the very heart of God to us.

Answer 31 goes on to tell us that Jesus is the Anointed One of God, our chief prophet and teacher because He is the one “who fully reveals to us the **secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance.**”

- The first thing I wanted to take note of here is the fact that we are told that it is Christ who reveals to us the **secret counsel and will of God**. Let’s explore a bit what is meant by that. Here are two texts to consider:

- John 1:18 *“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”*
- John 15:15 *“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”*
- These texts refer to the point being made about the secret things of God being revealed. We know from the OT that God’s people always relied on the words of prophets just like we saw earlier in Hebrews 1.
- So Jesus, ordained by the Father, anointed by the Spirit, as the chief prophet and teacher is the One who reveals the secret counsel and will of God [about what???] **concerning our deliverance.**
- Luke 24:27-32 is a perfect example of Jesus revealing the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance. In this text, we see Jesus doing literally what our catechism states. This is where Jesus appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It says: *“Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures...”* As Jesus taught the disciples about the will of God concerning their deliverance, do you remember what they said? *“Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”*
 - What joy it must have been to have heard Christ teach about our deliverance!
 - But brothers and sisters, we can have that same joy. John 1 *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about Him, and cried out, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.’”) For from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* The Word became flesh and grace and truth came through Him.

Continuing on in Answer 31, we see that not only is Christ anointed as our chief prophet and teacher, but also our **only High Priest.**

- Generally speaking, a priest is a person appointed by God, for the purpose of offering sacrifices, for interceding on behalf of others.
- The signified and true priest is Christ, the Son of God, who was **ordained** by the Father, and **anointed** by the Holy Spirit to this office. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, He **revealed** the secret will and counsel of God to us, and not only revealed the will of God, but came to fulfill it! He did that by offering Himself as propitiation for our sins, **interceding** on our behalf and **applying** His sacrifice to us.
 - Because He is the anointed Messiah, we can have confidence that His intercession bears the ultimate authority. As our High Priest, He obtains and secures for us the remission of sins
- The book of Hebrews is a great guide for us to see Christ assuming these priestly duties for His people as our Great High Priest.
 - Hebrews 1:3 shows Christ doing the work of a priest in making purification of sins

- Hebrews 2:17 shows Christ being made like us in all things so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
- Hebrews 4:14-15 *“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*
- Hebrews 7:17 tells us as well that Christ will be a High Priest forever. Not like the high priests of the OT who would die and could not continue their duties.
- Heb 7:24 says, *“but He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”*
- Answer 31 goes on to tell us that Jesus, the anointed One of God, He is our only High Priest who has **delivered us by the one sacrifice of His body**
 - The forgiveness of sins does not come to man any other way but through the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 9:12 tells us that our deliverance from the penalty of sin has not come to us through the blood of goats & calves, but through His own blood.
 - Hebrews 10:11-18 powerfully depicts the reality of Christ as our High Priest and the power of His sacrifice for His people.
 - *“11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, **which can never take away sins.** 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, **He sat down at the right hand of God,** 13 waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For by **a single offering** He has **perfected for all time** those who are being sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”* 17 then He adds, ***“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”*** 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”*
 - And with these words from God, here is no other work needed, it is done.

Answer 31 goes on to tell us that Christ, as our High Priest, who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of His body **continually pleads our cause with the Father**

- Recall the words of Paul to the Romans in 8:33-34 *“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? **Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—**who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.”***
 - Hebrews 9:24 *“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, **but into heaven itself,** now to appear in the presence of God **on our behalf.”***
- There is no one who can condemn God’s people for in Christ you are justified and He is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding on your behalf pleading for you with the blood of His suffering.

- 1 John 2:1 *“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate with the Father**, [who is that advocate?] **Jesus Christ the righteous.**”*

As we continue through A31, we see that Jesus is called the Christ, the Anointed One of God because **He will reign eternally as our King.**

- Christ Jesus is the King of Kings. The One ordained of God, to govern, by His word and Spirit, the Bride which He purchased with His own blood, and defend her against all her enemies.
- The one who is to rule over His people does not come delivering burdens, demands, and is not self-seeking. Zechariah 9:9 tells us to, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is **just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.**”*
- Your king comes to you, *seeking **you out***, coming in great humility bringing to you justice and salvation. This king, your teacher, your high priest, your advocate, your Savior who sacrificed His own body for you...He will reign forever with no rivals to His throne.
- Luke 1:32-33 *“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him **the throne of His father David**, and He will reign over the house of Jacob **forever**, and of His kingdom **there will be no end.**”*

And as our King who will reign eternally, He **governs** us by His Word and Spirit, and **guards** us and **keeps us in the freedom He has won for us.**

- John 10:28 *“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”*

Now that we have seen the significance and importance of these offices, we should notice that our catechism doesn't stop there. It goes on to show us that these offices of Christ have great benefits and effects for those who believe in Him. There is a direct and deep connection between Christ and His Christians. But who is a Christian? We see in the Heidelberg that it stresses that it is through faith, and faith alone, that we are tied to Christ, becoming a member of His body and share in His anointing. There is no ritual, no work to be performed, no religious practice that is sufficient to make someone a Christian. Being a Christian is not the simple matter of church membership and a series of good deeds. It is through faith in Christ alone that we are saved and united to Him.

Q & A 32 – Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ¹ and so I **share** in His anointing.² I am anointed to **confess** His name,³ to **present** myself to Him as a living sacrifice of thanks,⁴ to **strive** with a free conscience against sin and the devil in this life,⁵ and afterward to **reign** with Christ over all creation for eternity.⁶

- We are members of Christ **by faith**
 - *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* Eph 2:8-9
- Our faith in Christ unites us to Him and we in turn **share in His anointing**
 - 1 John 2:27 *“But the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in Him.”*

- The apostle was communicating his assurance that they would not be seduced from the truth, and that his confidence in regard to this was placed in the fact that they had been truly anointed unto God as kings and priests in Christ.
- As we share with Christ in His anointing, **we are anointed to confess His name as He has proclaimed to us the message of our deliverance**
 - We are Christians, anointed as members of Christ by faith, to confess His name for He is our hope of salvation and the focus of our worship, praise, and thanksgiving.
 - It is because of this that we can with confidence say that we are not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.
- As we share with Christ in His anointing, **we seek to present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice of thanks in view of the mercy given to us**
 - Just as we are taught by Christ of our deliverance it will then be our desire to therefore share that same message with others...it is in view of God's mercy, "who delivered us by the one sacrifice of His body," that we offer our bodies as living sacrifices as we see in Romans 12.
- As we share with Christ in His anointing, **we will seek to strive with a free conscience against sin and the devil in this life.** Our union with Christ and His anointing give us the will and power through the Holy Spirit to fight sin.
 - Gal 5:16-17 *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."*
 - Eph 6:10-11 *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."*
- As we share with Christ in His anointing, **we are blessed to reign with Christ over all creation for eternity**
 - Matthew 25:33-34 *"He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"*

Brothers and sisters, there are many things that we often wish to know in this life. How long we will live. How certain events will pan out in our lives. Even if we had the knowledge of such things we would not benefit from it one bit. Even if we knew that day and time that the world will end, we would not gain the slightest comfort from it. It would not help us to know whether we will prosper in life or suffer. But it does help us to know that we have been blessed with the advocacy of the Anointed One of God, Christ Jesus. You have a chief Prophet and Teacher who has fully revealed to you the secret counsel and will of God concerning your redemption. You have a High Priest who has redeemed you by the sacrifice of His body, and who continually intercedes for you before the Father. He never fails to plead His blood for your sins. You have an eternal King who governs you by His Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves you in the redemption that He obtained for you.

The LORD will keep you, He will keep your coming in and your going out from this time forth and forevermore. That is what our Chief Prophet and Teacher has made known to us. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. That we have been engraved into the palms of God's hands and that with all our weakness and sin, all our suffering and trials, we are safe in the hands of our Mediator, the Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of the living God. In this we have an inexhaustible source of joy and security.