

# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

## We Proclaim Christ ...

*The October 2012 equipping section is from a devotion given by Presbyterian Lay Committee board member Peggy Hedden at its Spring 2012 board meeting. Hedden, of Columbus Ohio, is a member of Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church in Gahanna, Ohio, and has been a member of the PLC since 1996. She and her husband, James have two children.*

To the [saints] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Christ, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. Col. 1:27-28

The name “Christ” is used about 555 times in the New Testament. We are so used to the name “Jesus Christ” that we do not often stop to think about the great claim that it makes. For the Greek word “Christ” means “the anointed one,” the same as the Hebrew word “messiah.” This study will help explore what it means for Jesus to be “The Anointed One.” Both the Westminster Larger Catechism (Questions 41-45) and the Heidelberg Catechism (Questions 31 and 32) explain Jesus as Christ.

Olive oil was used to anoint for a sacred purpose, whether articles in the Tabernacle or persons chosen to serve as priest or king. Prophets were most often set apart

by the Spirit of the Lord coming upon them as a type of anointing; this happened in an even more spectacular way at Jesus’ baptism.

When the Bible story moves from Old Testament persons and promises to New Testament fulfillment in Jesus, the offices of prophet, priest, and king take on heightened meaning.

We see how they *together* shaped and equipped Israel to serve God as well as to point forward to Jesus as the perfect Prophet, Priest, King for the entire world. (Theologians call this the *munus triplex*.)

# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

## Week 1: Jesus Christ the Prophet

Q. 42. Why was our Mediator called Christ?

A. Our Mediator was called Christ, because He was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the office of prophet, priest, and king of His church, in estate both of His humiliation and exaltation.

Q. 43. How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in His revealing to the church in all ages, by His Spirit and Word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation.

A prophet of God speaks God's message to people. That is the duty given to Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Huldah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and so many others. They usually received what they were to say in visions and dreams or from angels. But the outstanding prophet of the Old Testament was Moses – he spoke with God face-to-face. (Deut. 34:10)

The question arises: *Why do we need a prophet*, someone to tell us the words of God?

The short answer is that we, as fallen creatures, are ignorant because in our wickedness we suppress the truth about God – Romans 1:18-23. Our foolish hearts are darkened and we are disobedient to God. Ephesians 4:17-18 tells Christians that, being in Christ, we must no longer live as the Gentiles do, “in the futility of their thinking. [Gentiles] are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” Through the words of Old Testament prophets, God revealed Himself and His purposes to us. Through those prophets we learn of God's power and love, of His promises and faithfulness in keeping them, of His will expressed in commandments, of His working out the plan of salvation to redeem us from slavery to Satan and sin.

Despite the fidelity with which the messengers of God relayed to the Israelites (and others), they were not sufficient to bring people back to God. And God knew that they could not do the job; so He promised: “I will raise up for them a prophet like [Moses] from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.” (Deut. 18:18) Jesus fulfills that promise:

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son ... Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses ...”(Hebrews 1:-2a, 3a)

And the words Jesus speaks are those of God:

“Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather it is the Father living in Me who is doing His work.” (John 14:10)

But the work of Jesus, the Anointed Prophet, surpasses the work of former ones in that Christ does not just inform, but His

word is powerful and brings light to the darkness:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it ... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth ...” (John 1:1-17)

His word transforms and breaks our bondage:

“To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said ‘If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... Everyone who sins is a slave to sin ... If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’” (John 8:31-34)

### For further study and discussion:

1. Skim Matthew 5-7, then consider these verses – 7:28-29. What do you think of the crowd's response? Read Luke 4:14-22. What does Jesus claim by His words in verse 21?
2. Continue and read Luke 4:23-30. Why do you think the crowd responds the way it does and so differently from the crowd in Matthew?
3. Read Luke 24:13-27. What do the two recognize about Jesus in verse 19? How does Jesus show that He is more than that?
4. How important is truth? The Truth of God? Read Matthew 7:15-23 and John 5:36-40, and John 1:14; in their light discuss this statement: “Truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness...”
5. Read Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:1-11. How often should we return to the Word of God, written and Living? How often do you? Do you need to make changes? If so, will you share your plans with someone who will keep you accountable?
6. John Craig's Catechism (1594) talks in Questions 30-34 about reading Scripture privately and publicly under pastors and teachers. Craig sets the question: How long should we continue in this school? Answer: “All the days of our lives, seeing we are ignorant, forgetful, and easily deceived.” Which one of these reasons is most true for you? The passage that Craig cites for his answer is Colossians 3:16. Read the verse; how do you live this out?
7. Write a note of appreciation to someone who has taught you and brought you to the Word of God.

# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

## Week 2: Jesus Christ the Priest

Q. 44. How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?

A. Christ executeth the office of a priest, in His once offering Himself a sacrifice without spot to God, to be a reconciliation for the sins of His people; and in making continual intercession for them.

A priest stands between a sinful people and a holy God to reconcile the two. Men were anointed and set apart to administer this office for the people of Israel; they were to live lives of physical and moral purity.

*Why do we need reconciliation?* The sin of humankind has estranged and alienated us from God; we need forgiveness. After Adam and Eve's sin in Eden, they were removed from God's presence and the garden and were prevented from returning by a cherub with a flaming sword.

So, how can mankind gain access to God? The Old Testament provided a system of blood sacrifices. The most solemn ritual of the Jewish year was the Day of Atonement – literally “at-onement” – when the high priest killed one goat as a burnt offering and laid on another the sins of the community to be carried away into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16) Israelites were forbidden by God from eating blood “for the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves ... It is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. (Leviticus 17:11)

Since the sacrifices needed to be repeated regularly and the priests died, it was obvious that both were of limited sufficiency. (Hebrews 7:11) Psalm 10 declares this, though: “*The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*” The statement is set in a psalm that talks of a mighty king and was quoted by Jesus in a query by Him to the Pharisees about whose son the Christ is. Melchizedek is first and briefly mentioned in Genesis, but the fullest explanation comes in Hebrews, and chapters 5, 6, and 7 of that book tell us much also about the office of priest. There we learn that the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness” and as king of Salem also “king of peace.” He had no father or mother, “without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.”

Hebrews goes on to explain:

“... [B]ecause Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. ***He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself.*** (Hebrews 7:24-27)

Thus, the supreme act of Jesus as the Anointed Priest is His sacrifice of His own body and blood for the sins of the world.

***For further study and discussion:***

1. Do you think that most people have a feeling or understanding that there is something wrong between them and God? What are some of the ways that people have tried over the centuries to change that? What do you see people doing today? How successful do the efforts seem?
2. Read John 6:25-29 and John 3:16. Are there difficulties in doing such work? Where do you go for help?
3. Read John 19:28-30. What do you think are some of the things that Jesus meant when He said “It is finished”?
4. For further reflection of the ways people try to reconcile themselves to God, read Questions 93-99 of the Westminster Larger Catechism about the moral law. Examine your own motives in obeying the Ten Commandments. If you do not know them, memorizing them will be good place to start.

# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

## Week 3: Jesus Christ the King

Q. 45. How doth Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to Himself; and giving them officer, laws, and censures, by which He visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon His elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings; restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for His own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God and obey not the gospel.

The last Old Testament officer who was anointed was the king. A king had two major duties – governing his people and protecting them from enemies outside or inside the kingdom.

*Why do people need a king today?* The Bible makes it clear that fallen mankind is in rebellion against God (Gen. 8:21a) and is itself captive to Satan (2 Tim. 2:26).

The first person to be anointed king of Israel was Saul; after Saul's sin, though, the prophet Samuel was told to anoint David. David did not assume the office of king until a number of years later, but it was to David that God promised his heir to an eternal kingdom:

“The LORD declares to you that the Lord Himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you ... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:11b-16)

David's ascendance to the throne fulfilled a prophecy made a thousand years before to his forebear Judah, when Jacob blessed his son Judah. Jacob said:

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. he will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.” (Genesis 49:10-11)

About a thousand years after David, his descendant Jesus came to establish God's kingdom and fulfill God's promise; He declared:

“The time is *fulfilled*. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news.” (Mark 1:15)

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God (or Heaven). It is here although presently unseen. As king, Jesus first has dealt with our hearts, replacing rebellion with submission and seeking after God, through the Holy Spirit, we become conformed to Jesus Himself. Second, Jesus has conquered the enemy who had made us His prisoners:

Since the children have flesh and blood, [Jesus] too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:11-15)

In the last days of Jesus' earthly life, the big questions asked by those who followed Him or heard of Him were: “Is He the Messiah? Is He the Anointed King that God promised? Will He be the one to restore the earthly kingdom of Israel to world importance?” The prophecies of the Anointed Prophet and Anointed Priest were not uppermost in their minds.

On Palm Sunday, the crowds gave the answer that He was; on Good Friday, they said that He was not. They wanted someone to save them from the Romans, not their sins. (Matthew 1:21) So, the king was crucified for the crime of claiming to be a king, although He truly was, just of a different kind than they expected.

The Father gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), which He exercises right now. But Jesus as the Anointed King has a future fulfillment as well. Revelation 19:11-20:15 pictures the coming of a Christ riding the white horse of war rather than a donkey and crowned with many crowns, not of thorns, with the sword striking down the nations instead of preaching salvation. The writing on His thigh proclaims “King of Kings and Lord of Lords,” not the “crime” Pontius Pilate posted – “King of the Jews.” It pictures Jesus on the judgment throne, from which those not in the book of life and death and Hades are ordered into the lake of fire.

### *For further study and discussion:*

1. How well are you doing in willingly subjecting yourself to Christ's rule? What is an area where rebellion still lurks?
2. Before you became a Christian, did you think that you were a slave of Satan? After your rebirth in Christ, can you see ways in which you recognize such captivity? Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. To whom is Peter writing? What is the devil's relationship to us now? What does Peter admonish us to do?
3. Read Rev. 22:7, 10, 12, 20, 21. How did you respond when you read Christ's message? Do you look forward to the day?
4. Read Matthew 24. What three things does Christ Jesus tell us to do: v. 4; 6; 36-51? Do you have these in your mind now so that you will be respond wisely in that day?

# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

## Week 4: We Proclaim Christ

The Gospel writer Luke begins the Book of Acts thus:

In my former book ... I wrote about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles ... He said to them ... [Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and *you will be My witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:1-8, emphasis added)

Being Christ's witnesses is what we in our own times are. The world looks at those of us who call ourselves Christians and then forms opinions about who Jesus Christ is. Most probably those opinions are based more on how we behave than from what we say we believe. The challenge for us is to be faithful witnesses:

*You're writing the Gospel, a chapter each day,  
By things that you do and words that you say.  
People read what you write, whether faithless or true;  
So what is the Gospel according to you?*

Peter tells us that we are:

"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ... that [we] may declare the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His wonderful light ... Live such good lives among the pagans that ... they may see your good deeds and glorify God ..." 1 Peter 2:9-12

Observe carefully that we are told both to declare, *i.e.*, using words, and to live good lives, *i.e.*, using actions. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit in us, we are being equipped for this holy work.

### ***For further study and discussion:***

1. Read Mat. 16:13-20. What are the two parts of Peter's answer? How did Peter come to know this?
2. How did you come to confess Jesus as Christ?
3. Read John 4:1-30, 39-42. How did the woman know Jesus is the Christ? How did she proclaim it? How effective was her proclamation?
4. Read Rom. 10:5-15. Can Christians be faithful witnesses to Christ without words? How can we know when and how to speak?