

He Is the Christ

Greg Laurie tells this true story about a woman who finished her Christmas shopping and was returning to her vehicle when she saw four men inside the car. She dropped her bags, drew her handgun, and screamed, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car!" The four men didn't hesitate; they ran from the car like crazy.

Somewhat shaken, but glad she had gotten her pistol permit, the woman loaded her bags in the car but no matter how she tried, she couldn't get the key in the ignition. Then it dawned on her: her car was parked four spaces away! She had chased the men from their own car!

Absolutely mortified at what she had done, but being an honest citizen, she reloaded her bags in "her" car and drove to the police station to turn herself in. The desk sergeant to whom she told the story nearly fell off his chair laughing. He pointed to the other end of the counter where four men were reporting a carjacking by an older woman with thick glasses, gray hair and very big gun! No charges were filed. ⁱ

Being able to identify your car at the mall is important these days, but much more important is being able to identify Jesus. We are so familiar with this story that, like that woman and her car, we can assume we know who He is. That's why we're doing this series on His names this month. This week we come to the name "Christ." What does that name tell you about Jesus? Did you think it was His last name? It's not. In fact, it's not even a name. It's a title. It means "the anointed One." So, what does that mean? Why was Jesus known as "the anointed One"? First, because...

I. He was Anointed to Reveal God to People

When the Scripture was read today, you probably were asking yourself, "What does that have to do with Christmas?" Let me explain. These three Old Testament passages are speaking about three anointed offices that we find in the Old Testament. Those are the office or position of Prophet, Priest and King. To be qualified to serve in any of those positions, you needed to be anointed with oil. There was no magic power in the oil, it's just that a ceremonial anointing verified that God had appointed each person to perform one of those jobs. Ps. 105:15 speaks of the fact that prophets were anointed to a certain task and that task was to reveal God to people. Prophets spoke for God - I think we're all aware of that. When God had something to say to people, He didn't write it in the sky or make a video or send a text. He told a prophet His message and the prophet told it to the people.

When Jesus came into this world, He came to fulfill the job description of "The Messiah." That job had three components that match up perfectly with the three major leadership categories in the Old Testament - Prophet, Priest and King. So, when we say that the title "Christ" means "anointed," what we mean is that Jesus was anointed to perform the job responsibilities of a Prophet, a Priest and a King.

And what did a prophet do in the Old Testament? He or she revealed God to people. He or she spoke on behalf of God.

Now, we could spend the rest of the hour talking about how Christ fulfilled just the role of a prophet but let me emphasize a few important facts. First, the people verified that Jesus was a prophet. In Matt. 21:46, the Pharisees wanted to arrest Jesus but they feared to do so because the people considered Him a prophet. Secondly, Jesus Himself said He was a prophet when He was in Nazareth. He couldn't do many miracles there because "*Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.*" (Matt. 13:57) Thirdly, Peter links Jesus with Moses' prediction that a prophet like himself would one day come. Peter said in Acts 3:

For Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you." (Acts 3:22)

So, while Jesus shared many attributes with the other prophets, He also was distinct from all other prophets in one very significant way: He had come from the very presence of God. He preexisted with the Father. No other prophet could say that. Dr. Merrill C. Tenney accurately translates Jn.1:18 this way:

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

The phrase "*the only begotten God*" is a translation of the Greek word *monogenace*. It does not mean He was created, as the Jehovah Witnesses claim regarding this verse. They're misunderstanding the Greek. Listen to what the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says about this word:

In compounds... the 'genace' suggests derivation rather than birth... The 'mono' does not denote the source but the nature of derivation. ⁱⁱ

So, "*the only begotten God*" doesn't mean the "only created Son of God" but rather the "only member of the Trinity that became a human being." John had already clearly stated in verses 1 and 2 that this Son of God was eternally in existence and was forever God. The Jehovah's Witnesses don't understand the Greek and so they misunderstand what John is saying. What John is saying is that a tremendous miracle has happened at Christmas. The eternally existent God took on flesh. He didn't stop being God, He just limited Himself or as Philippians 2 puts it, "*...he humbled himself.*"

Millard Erickson, my Systematic Theology professor in seminary, uses this great analogy. "It's like if the world's greatest sprinter would enter a three-legged relay with one of his legs tied to me! Although his physical capacity is not diminished in any way, the conditions under which he now must exercise them are severely limited. This is what it was for Christ to become human. His real capacity as God was still there, but He voluntarily limited Himself in order to accomplish a greater purpose." ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus the Christ was anointed first of all, to speak to us on behalf of God. He was a real prophet but a unique prophet, unlike any other because while He was fully human like us, He was also fully God like His Father. Jesus the Prophet, came to tell us the truth from God. That's the first thing it means for Him to be the Christ. Secondly...

II. He Was Anointed to Reconcile People to God.

The work of reconciliation was the work of a priest in the Old Testament. When men became priests, they had to be consecrated, anointed with oil, which signified that a spiritual cleansing had taken place. You weren't a priest just because your father was a priest. You had to be anointed and consecrated. The instructions from God to Moses that we read from Exodus say:

You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy.

Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. (Ex. 30:29-30)

Now, just sprinkling some oil on them wasn't all that was done to make them holy. No, not by a long shot. Read Leviticus chapter 8. They had to sacrifice a bull, sacrifice a ram and then sacrifice another ram, all the while sprinkling blood on the altar, on the priests, everywhere. And then, what did this accomplish? It made the priest qualified to offer sacrifices for the people when they sinned. For every kind of sin, the anointed priests were given a protocol for how to have that sin forgiven. Let me read you one of those protocols. This is the process they were to follow when the whole community sinned:

When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. (He sprinkles the blood on the altar, etc. etc.) In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. (Lev. 4:14-16, 20b)

And before the priests offered any sacrifices for the people, they had to offer sacrifices for themselves, for THEIR own sins.

Now again, just as Jesus was a legitimate prophet, He also did the work of a legitimate priest. Hebrews 3:1 says:

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

But how can Jesus be a high priest? Moses made it clear that only descendants of Aaron could be priests. (Hebrews 5:1, 4-6)

Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (Okay, that's just what we saw earlier in the Old Testament. Keep reading. Verse 4) **No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,**

"You are my Son;

today I have begotten you. (Remember that word??!!)

And he says in another place,

"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Now, jump to Hebrews 7 where it explains who Melchizedek was. He was a priest way before Aaron, back when Abraham lived, so the writer reasons that

Melchizedek is a greater priest than Aaron because *“Levi was still in the body of his ancestor”* Abraham when Abraham worshipped God through the priest Melchizedek.

Then, the writer of Hebrews gives this explanation of how Jesus could become a legitimate high priest and not be a Levite:

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood... why was there still need for another priest to come - one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry BUT ON THE BASIS OF THE POWER OF AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE... (Jesus is MORE qualified to be a priest than any of the other priests because His anointing is based on actual sinless perfection! He never had to make a sacrifice for sin because even in human form He was perfectly holy, eternally consecrated!!)

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

And it is not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind:

You are a priest forever. (Ps. 110:4)

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

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. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

(Heb. 7:11-16, 18-22, 26- 8:2)

Oh, do you understand now what the name Christ means? It means that Jesus came not only to speak to us on God's behalf, telling us the truth about Him. But He came to speak to God on our behalf and when we are willing, when we finally become aware of the damage our sin has done in our lives and we ask our High Priest for help, He will!!! He not only offered the necessary sacrifice for our sin, but He tells the Father, "Father, write down this one's name in your book of life, because starting today - THIS ONE'S MINE!!!" This is all possible because Jesus is a sinless priest. A priest by oath, not by law. But there's one more part of his job description...

III. He was Anointed to Reign and Rule as King.

Jesus spoke openly about this part of his job description while He walked this earth. He said, “...my kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36) and that one day He would sit on “...his glorious throne.” In the revelation He gave to John after He had returned to His Father, Jesus revealed that He would return to earth and establish a rule that would last a thousand years. (Rev. 20) Won’t that be a great, great day?

Now, while all this gives us great hope for the future, what about the here and now? *Open Doors* ministry estimates that 100 million Christians around the world today live under various forms of persecution. Is Christ’s rule only for the future and not today?

While we were on our tour of Israel, as a group we attended a worship service in Jerusalem. It was a wonderful mixture of Christians from Israel and at least 7 or 8 other countries. The speaker talked about our commitment to Christ and how that does not always lead to an easy life, especially in the Middle East. To conclude his talk, he showed a video of the members of one of the Egyptian churches that was burned and destroyed by the Muslim Brotherhood on Aug. 14 of this year. But because Jesus is their King, they did not retaliate. Please watch this video that records their response to this severe persecution.

[Show “Minya Song” beginning at :06 and ending at 4:11, Youtube]

Jesus is THE Christ. He is prophet, priest and king. Though Muslims and Mormons and other religious groups say they know Jesus, they don’t know Him as The Christ. Those who do, submit their lives to Him fully and are, therefore, able to respond, even to persecution, with grace and mercy. *Open Doors* ministries lists the ten worst countries in the world in terms of persecution of Christians. Nine of the ten are primarily Muslim countries. We’ve made available to you in the bulletin, a prayer sheet for one of those countries. Would you be willing to commit to pray for these, your brothers and sisters? Let’s stand as “one with them” so that they can do what these believers in Egypt are doing – give grace and mercy in response to hatred and violence. Let’s pray...

ⁱ Greg Laurie, “A Time to Worship,” *Decision Magazine* (November 2001)

ⁱⁱ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), p. 737-738

ⁱⁱⁱ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983, 84, 85), p. 735, 736