

THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

Rev. H. Hofman sr. - Lord's Day 12, Question 31

Psalter 111

Scripture: Heb. 5

Psalter 198:1-6

Psalter 303

Psalter 325

Dear congregation, we ask your attention for Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 31:

Question 31: Why is He called Christ, that is anointed?

Answer: Because He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and to be our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also to be our eternal King, who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in (the enjoyment of) that salvation, He has purchased for us.

We wish to consider with you:

The Offices of Christ

1. Christ is Anointed to be Our Chief Prophet
2. Christ is Anointed to be Our Only High Priest
3. Christ is Anointed to be Our Eternal King

I repeat: The Offices of Christ: First, Christ is Anointed to be Our Chief Prophet; secondly, Christ is Anointed to be Our Only High Priest; and thirdly, Christ is Anointed to be Our Eternal King.

Paul said that he did not desire to preach anything else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He also said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." What a precious Person He is, and what a blessing it is to know Him as our Savior. It is not only a great blessing, gift, and work of the Holy Spirit that we may know Him, but it is also necessary that we know Him. Without Christ there is no spiritual life. Christ is that new creature. He is the new life, and He only. If we are not in Christ, then we are lost and without hope. Paul said to the Ephesians that they were in former times without Christ, and that means without hope and without God in the world.

Thus, congregation, what a blessing it is that we are instructed in the Person and work of the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Last time we heard about that precious Name, Jesus, and the meaning of this Name--He saves us and delivers us from our sins. Do you know that precious Name and Person? Have you ever spelt this Name by faith, that you heard the proclamation of His grace and of His Name, and that the answer of your soul was, "He is mine, and I am His"?

Today we are to discuss that Jesus, the Son of God, is also Christ. Every Sunday we make confession of our catholic faith, and we say, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ." This Jesus is also Christ. That is not only a confession with our lips, but it is the language of faith, the language of the heart. I have said already many times, preaching out of the Catechism, that we hear the language of faith, the language of the heart of God's children, that they believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus cannot be the Savior of sinners without being Christ. Jesus is His Name as a Person, and the name Christ refers to His work, to His offices. That is what the Catechism speaks of in Question and Answer 31.

"Why is He called Christ, that is anointed?" Anointed is the literal meaning of the name Christ. Christ means anointed. That Jesus is anointed means that He is appointed of God the Father and qualified to be, not *a* Savior, but to be *the* Savior. He is anointed, appointed, chosen by God the Father, and He is also qualified of God to be the Savior. We read in Psalm 45, "Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows," and Isaiah 61 says, (and Jesus quoted these words of Isaiah Himself) "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the

meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." The Lord God has anointed Jesus to proclaim the day of salvation, to open the way of salvation, to proclaim the possibility to be saved only through Him. There is no end to texts out of the Holy Scriptures which say that Jesus is anointed. I will give you only a few examples. We read in Acts 10:38 how God has anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power. We can learn from this that Jesus was not a revolutionist. He had not made Himself Prophet, Priest, or King. He was chosen of God from all eternity. We have no words to explain that.

It says here in the Catechism that Jesus is called Christ, that He is our chief Prophet and Teacher who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. He is anointed from all eternity. We may know and believe that thoughts of peace were in God's heart, but hidden for sinful people. This Jesus is also Christ, anointed, chosen, appointed by God from all eternity to take away the veil of the counsel of God concerning our redemption. What a precious Person this Jesus is! He is called in Holy Scripture the Servant of the Lord. He was willing to give Himself to accomplish the work of God. That means that He came upon this earth as the Christ, in the name of God, chosen of God and anointed with the Holy Spirit. It means that behind Jesus and His work is the eternal God of heaven and earth, and that it is the will of God that He is Christ. He did everything to obtain His black bride in His Father's Name. That is the hidden and secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption.

The Catechism speaks first that He is ordained "to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption." By nature we are blind for the way of redemption. Even if we are brought up under God's Word, even if we have heard all our life about Jesus and about His work, we remain blind and know nothing about the way of salvation. Congregation, we find proof of it in the life of the Pharisees, the scribes, and the lawyers among Israel. They knew the Scriptures. When the wise men came from the east, they could tell them right away that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, but they knew nothing about the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption.

That is our picture by nature. What are we doing with the religion we confess? Even if we know the whole Bible from cover to cover, then we still know nothing about the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. What are we doing with our religion? Are you upon the way of self-righteousness? If so, it is proof that we know nothing about the way of salvation.

Many years ago I talked with a ninety-year-old lady who had been raised and brought up under the truth. She said, "I spent my whole life in the church. I never left my place empty in God's house, I gave to the church as much as I could, and I have never bothered my neighbors. I have lived a decent life." At the end of her life, her last words were that on the basis of her works she had hope for eternity. This proves how blind we are.

But here is a Prophet. Here is the Lord Jesus Christ who is ordained and chosen of God the Father. His Name is Christ, because He is ordained of God the Father and anointed with the Holy Ghost. We must learn, as the Catechism tries to tell us, the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption by Christ. Have you ever felt the need of a Prophet, of a Teacher? Have you ever felt in your heart a deep need, "Lord, teach me the way of truth, and I will not depart from it"? You need Christ the Prophet to teach you the way of salvation. Jesus says, "Without Me you can do nothing." We have our own opinions. We have our own way. We don't like to be instructed by Jesus Christ. When Jesus appeared and revealed Himself as a Teacher in the days He was upon earth, Mary sat at His feet to hear His word. But there were others like the Pharisees who said, as it were, "Are we blind also? We have Abraham for our father. We have never served any persons. We don't know what you are talking about. We know everything. We have our own way. Are we really blind?" They couldn't imagine that they were blind. But Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet to hear His word.

If we know ourselves, then it seems that our heart is filled with enmity against the instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ as our chief Prophet. It appears that we like the darkness more than the light. But let us rather see God's goodness in giving us this Savior, this Jesus whose name is also Christ. He comes with divine authority. He is sent from God. "Behold My Servant," the Lord says.

To reveal "to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption." What is the task of a prophet? Let us go a little deeper into Jesus' prophetic office. According to scriptural usage, a prophet is one who speaks for

another. We read in Exodus 7:1, "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." Aaron had to speak for Moses. Thus a prophet in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament was one who spoke for another. Moses was to be the authoritative source of the communication, and Aaron the organ of communication. This is the relation of the prophet to God. Then we must say that God communicates. We are sinners, fallen creatures, departed from God. For us, in our natural condition, God is a consuming fire. There cannot be communication. That is impossible. Think about it. I have mentioned already what Paul said to the Ephesians in chapter 2, that before they were without hope and without God in the world. What does it mean that we and our children are conceived and born in sin and outside of the kingdom of God? It means that there is no communication possible anymore. That was broken by the fall in Paradise, and that continues because of our actual and original sins. There is no communication possible from the earth to God, but God has given Himself a Prophet who speaks for another. Here we see the goodness of God. This Prophet stands between God, the holy and righteous God, and a sinful creature. He communicates, He brings the word of God to this sinful world, to sinful creatures. He is God's mouth to us.

What are the words which this chief Prophet brings to lost sinners, congregation? It is "the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption." He is given of God. He came in the fullness of time, in the day appointed by God, and He reveals the will of God concerning our redemption. Before the time of the New Testament, He fulfilled His prophetic office by the mouth of the prophet and by the patriarchs, sometimes in dreams or visions. But immediately after the fall the work of Christ as Prophet started. The will of God was revealed. At times this was hidden, so that there was only spoken about the seed of the woman, but it became more and more clear as the time came nearer and nearer.

In experiences in spiritual life, if our heart is broken by the law, if we have tried all that we could to come to God, if we have promised the Lord, "Lord, have patience with me and I will pay everything," if we feel the heavy burden of the curse of the law, if we know that we have nothing to offer the Lord, that our hands are empty, that we have sinned against God and done that which is evil in God's sight, in other words, if our life is a lost life, if we are burdened with our sin

and guilt and must confess that the Lord is righteous if He casts us away forever, if there is a strong desire in our heart to know if there is a possibility to be saved, to escape that well-deserved punishment, if we have tried everything, and everything worked out completely in the wrong direction, and there was no progress, then we must say, "Oh Lord, I don't know how to be saved. I have tried it for many years. I have fought against sin. I have tried to break the power of sin." Maybe you have succeeded with respect to some actual sins, but if the Lord shows you that it is not your actual sins, but because of your corrupt nature that there is no possibility left, then you must say, "Oh Lord, I don't know how to be saved."

Maybe there are such poor people in our midst today. Maybe there are boys or girls, fathers or mothers, among us who took their place in God's house, saying, "Lord, I don't know how to be saved. I don't know the way, Lord. What must I do? Is there a possibility for me that I can be saved?" Here is Jesus whose name is also Christ. He is appointed, chosen, and ordained of God. To do what? To reveal the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption. He comes and He instructs. Nothing from our side counts. That is the deep lesson which He teaches us. He teaches us that the way of redemption comes from God's fatherly heart. Here is the counsel of peace, the covenant of redemption from all eternity. It was hidden from Adam and Eve when they departed from God. By His Word and Spirit, that precious Jesus, whose name is Christ, will instruct in the way of salvation, that it all comes from God alone, that it proceeds from the father heart of God, and that He has had thoughts of peace from all eternity.

I cannot explain what goes on in the heart of a sinner who does not know the way of salvation, but who may hear out of the mouth of Jesus, who is also Christ, that He will instruct sinners in the ways untrod before. He opens their eyes and enlightens their mind, their understanding, their heart, so that they may climb up by faith, led by the Holy Spirit, to see what God has done from all eternity, and that to save a sinner is God's work only.

How necessary it is that we receive this instruction from Christ. He is appointed. He is the chief Prophet and Teacher. He communicates with God. We hope to come back to that again, but that communication is His work as Prophet--to bring the supplications, the prayers, the tears, and the need of the heart of such a poor soul to God as Father. Paul lay flat on the ground and prayed, and by

Jesus the prayers of the penitent sinner are brought to God. Then He speaks for another.

Dear congregation, these souls are broken and humbled to the dust. They are like the publican who didn't dare to lift up his eyes. They smite their breast. They do not dare to pray and to open their mouth to the holy God. There Christ stands, appointed from God, speaking for another. There He brings their needs to the heart of God, which is full of love, mercy, kindness, and goodness, and He instructs that lost, poor, helpless, and hopeless sinner in the name of God.

Here is the only chief Prophet and Teacher. Do you need this Teacher? Do we take this precious Name on our lips and still go our own way? That it is based on God's Word, we find proof of in Isaiah 21:10, where Isaiah said, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you." Thus Christ is the chief Prophet. He brings the word of the broken and humbled sinner to God in heaven, and He also brings the Word of God to such a sinner, the words of the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. It becomes such a wonder and it gives such a bright light in the heart when a sinner may hear something of that secret counsel and will of God regarding our redemption. He may hear that it is not God's desire to destroy and to cast away such a broken and humble and lost sinner, but that it is His desire to heal them and to strengthen them, to wash them from all their uncleanness and to bring them back into communion with God. What a wonder it is that we may go to God through Christ. Then the heart is given also the liberty to pray to God in His Name. "I have heard it out of His mouth." There are times when the sweet words of Christ about the counsel and will of God concerning our redemption come in their heart, and that they may see that it is possible to be saved. Those are times that the love of God flows in the heart, and that they think that all their sins are forgiven. Then they think they are ready to go to heaven, and that there is nothing between the Lord and their soul anymore. They sing of God's goodness, and of the glory of that King; they spell that Name, that He is their Prophet.

The Lord Jesus Christ fulfills His office in sending and calling His servants to proclaim the gospel. With all their shortcomings and imperfections, the Lord has sent His servants to be His mouth, and to be an instrument in the hand of the Lord, so that Christ fulfills His prophetic office in your midst. They may stand

before the holy God in Christ's Name and reveal to you in Christ's Name the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. I would say, congregation, never leave your place empty when the house of God is open, if you have the opportunity, and are not sick or you do not have to care for your little ones. There Christ will reveal to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. If your place is empty, then I believe that you are not concerned about your eternal wellbeing. Then you despise Him whom the Father has sent. As Christ went through the cities and villages in the days when he was upon earth, He taught daily in the temple, but there were many who despised this instruction. There were many who were offended at His teaching. Then Jesus said that if they reject Him who is sent from the Father, appointed and chosen by God, they reject Him who has sent Him.

What a blessing and also what a responsibility it is to live under the proclamation of God's Word and the gospel teaching of Christ. The Son of Man, Jesus Christ, came to seek and to save that which is lost. That is His work. He is appointed to seek that which is lost, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. God has chosen Him and ordained Him to preach the gospel to the poor.

Congregation, with all their shortcomings and imperfections, God's servants come in His Name, fulfilling the prophetic office of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we sit in God's house, must we not tremble because of our sins and God's loftiness, greatness, and His majesty, but also because of His goodness, in that it pleases Him to give One to speak for another. Oh, that we, His servants, might bring your needs to the Lord, and that the Lord would answer through the preaching of the gospel.

"Why is He called Christ, that is anointed?" Do you need Him? Do you feel the necessity of this precious Person and His precious work in your heart? He will instruct sinners in His ways.

Let us first sing from Psalter 303, all stanzas.

"And to be our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us." A priest, congregation, was also an office appointed by God to act for other men in things pertaining to God. Under the old dispensation, the high priest alone could enter within the veil with the blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people. Thus under the Old Testament the people were not allowed to draw near

to God. Speaking about the prophetic office of Christ, we have heard that a prophet is one who *speaks* for another, but here the priest *acts* for another. Only the high priest could enter within the veil. No other person was allowed to draw near to God. We all need one who is appointed to draw near to God on our behalf.

Thus Christ is appointed to be our only High Priest by the one sacrifice of His body. That is His action, His work. Under the Old Testament, these priests many times had to bring sacrifices. All these types are fulfilled in Christ. As I have read for you from Hebrews 5, "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men"--for their benefit and in their place--"in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Such a priest Jesus is declared to be. He has all the qualifications for this office. He was appointed by God. He was a Priest of a higher order than Aaron. His priesthood superseded all others. He performed all the functions of the office--meditation, sacrifice, intercession. And by the one offering of Himself, He has obtained eternal redemption for all His people. The thoughts of God concerning our redemption are revealed in that great and only sacrifice of Christ. He had given Himself before time was. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." It is the love of God the Father who gave His Son. And Christ was willing to give Himself to save His people. He never rebelled against the will of His Father.

Congregation, salvation lays in such good hands. God in Christ desires the redemption of His people. He redeemed them to be His own. Oh, whom else should we seek? He is Christ for people who have nothing to present and who have nothing to offer the Lord, people who have no access, dare not to pray and do not know *how* to pray. But He, as our High Priest, fills our emptiness and prays for us, standing before the Father with His blood. He prays that their faith fail not.

As a Prophet He reveals the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. That is an increase in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to sit at His feet and to hear His Word. What a blessing it is that we may hear out of His mouth that there is a way of salvation, that there is a counsel of peace, that there is a way to be saved for the greatest of sinners. Oh, that sometimes takes away the burden of our sins. Then we think that everything is alright with us. But if the Lord Jesus Christ continues His instruction as a Prophet,

as He did with His disciples when they saw His miracles, when they saw and heard how His words were always accompanied with miracles, then it is good to be near to Him and to hear His word. But when Jesus started to talk to them about His suffering and death, when He talked about the cross and His death, then they could not believe it. They were not willing to go that way.

It is necessary that we are instructed in the way whereby we must be saved, and not only that there is a possibility to be saved, but we must learn *how* to be saved. Congregation, why is that so hard? In the prophetic office and instruction of Christ, we can gain something--we can become something. Then we gain our tears, our experiences, our humble and broken heart, and we believe sometimes that that is the foundation of salvation. Then we pray so often for a broken heart, for a contrite spirit, for a humble spirit. But, congregation, if that heavenly Prophet instructs us in His priestly office, then our tears, our experiences, our broken and humble heart are not the foundation of salvation. Then it can come so far that we think that we have deceived ourselves and that we have lost everything. It seems that the word of Christ has no influence on our heart and mind anymore, so that we lose everything. The Lord by His faithful instruction then gives more and more light into our corrupt nature, revealing that it is not only our actual sins, but that our nature is corrupt. If the Lord shows us that we cannot pay the mountain of our sin and guilt, if the Lord shows us, as that chief Prophet, that God's justice must be satisfied, and He shows us our empty hands, that nothing is left but sin in a corrupt nature, then we don't know how to be saved. Then we know nothing about the way of salvation. We can try, by saying, "Lord, have patience, and I will pay everything." We can try again to reform our life, to live a more and more decent life, but as a faithful Instructor He takes everything away so that all that remains is a lost sinner. If in the depth of our lost condition Christ comes and reveals the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption, then Christ reveals Himself as the only Priest, and that He has paid everything. He takes us along in the way of His crucifixion and gives us instruction in the Scriptures, showing us the way He went, appointed from the Father, His willingness to go the way of the cross, that He has given Himself as a ransom for sinners, that it is God's pleasure, that He brought that only sacrifice for our sins, and that it is sufficient. That is a deep way. Then we learn the depths of our heart. Then it is not the Jews who spit upon Him, but it is

I. Then it is not the Jews who crucified Him, but it is I. I have crucified Him; I have spit upon His holy face; I have nailed Him to the cross; I have mocked Him. He hangs there for my sins.

What a wonder, that great miracle of sovereign grace! He now acts as Priest instead of me; His death becomes my life; His curse has taken away my curse. He is that great Substitute. He acts in my stead. Do you see that you need such a Priest? And there is such a Priest. He is the only High Priest. There are times that we become rebellious if the Lord, by the discovering light of the Holy Spirit, shows us that He does not need our tears and our sacrifices. We become rebellious against a way of dying to ourself. There are times that we become angry if the Lord shows us that He does not need our broken hearts, our humble and contrite spirits, and our tears, but that there is only one Sacrifice. If we may see this High Priest, if we may lay the hand of faith upon Him, then our heart is not angry anymore, but then we also cannot utter what is going on in our heart. Then I may see that Substitute who has paid for me, who has reconciled me from all my sin, who has acted in my stead, and that now all His merits are for me.

Congregation, He is our only High Priest, "who by the one sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us." That is a wonder of free, sovereign grace. Then nothing is left to be done by us. It is all accomplished by Him. In His work the Father is well-pleased. Christ's work was sufficient, and it becomes enough for us. Then we may embrace this precious, only High Priest. Then it is, "I am nothing, and He is everything!" Christ is all and in all.

I cannot explain in one hour, nor in all eternity, the greatness of this precious Christ. Eternity will not be too long to glorify this Name, Jesus Christ, where we may see in His fullness the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. Then we may see the King in His beauty and glorify that precious High Priest and that gracious and faithful Instructor. Then we may glorify Him forever and ever.

The Catechism says, "and also to be our eternal King, who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in (the enjoyment of) that salvation, He has purchased for us." Nothing is more certain, according to Scripture, than that Christ is King. In the second Psalm, God declares: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Zechariah 9:9 says, "Rejoice greatly, O

daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee." Gabriel said to Mary, "and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." Christ shall have dominion over land and sea. To Him is *the* kingdom and the power forever, and of His kingdom there is no end. Jesus is King over all His children. He has translated them from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought them into subjection to Himself. He rules and reigns over them, protects and preserves them. By grace they have learned to recognize Him as their King in their inward as well as their outward life. They make Him the object of reverence, love and obedience. In Him they trust for protection from all enemies, seen and unseen. On Him they rely for help in all the circumstances of life.

Congregation, this King and His kingdom continue today. He still gathers His people from the ends of the earth to become His subjects. Have you ever bowed before this King? He must reign as King in our heart. To enter into that great kingdom, we must be born again. Oh, I wish to proclaim this precious Name to all of you. He is Prophet, Priest, and King. Seek Him while He is to be found, and call upon Him while He is near. Seek Him, boys and girls. Your young years are the best years. The Lord comes with serious callings also in the young lives of the congregation. Do you hear it and do you believe it, my young friends? My dear boys and girls, there is a High Priest, there is a Prophet, there is a King. His Name is Jesus. He is appointed of God to be our *chief Prophet*; He is appointed of God to be our only *High Priest*; He is appointed of God to be our *eternal King*. And if you reject this Name, if you reject this Person, if you reject His work, then you reject Him who has sent Him and you reject salvation.

Amen.

Psalter 325: All Stanzas