

Westminster Larger Catechism

Question 43

Halifax, 6 July 2008

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.

Just a few interpretive comments about the answer...

- notice that it says “revealing to the church **in all ages**”...
 - That is a reference to the fact that even before Christ came, He was working in His prophetic office to reveal truth by His Spirit—As 1 Peter 1:11 says, it was the Spirit of Christ that spoke by the prophets...
 - “in divers ways of administration” means, for example, that in the Old Testament, it was by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, and other types and ordinances—in the New Testament it is by Word and sacrament.
 - “the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation” points out that while the scripture does not tell us all we need to know about performing heart surgery or repairing a broken rocket, it tells us everything we need to know about serving God—edification and salvation.
 - It is always amazing to me how often the morning and evening messages relate to each other—
 - That is certainly the case tonight...

Introduction

This week, we continue in that section of our catechism that has to do with the names, titles, and offices of Christ.

Last week, I showed you that the title Christ means “anointed one” and is the same as the title Messiah...

- And that as the anointed one,
 - it shows that God has called Him and set Him apart as our mediator,
 - giving Him the Holy Spirit to execute the offices of a prophet, priest and king both in His humiliation and exaltation.
 - As prophet, He reveals God’s will to us
 - As priest, He offered the atoning sacrifice for us and intercedes for us.
 - As king, He brings us into subjection to Himself, and destroys our enemies.

- All three of these offices involve work that is done on earth (in his humiliation) and in heaven (now that He is exalted to sit at God's right hand).
- I told you that we would look at His offices of prophet, priest, and king in more detail over the next few weeks.
 - This week, we will begin with the office of prophet.
- God's call for us concerning Christ as prophet is this:
 - "This is my beloved Son, hear Him."
 - Jesus brings truth to us from heaven,
 - and as Mediator, it is in particular truth about salvation!
 - He declares to us all we need to know in order that we might be reconciled to God and serve God in a way that pleases Him!
 - The question for you is:
 - How shall you escape if neglect so great a salvation!
 - God has truly spoken to us by His Son!
 - Hear Him!

John introduces Christ to us as prophet in his gospel.

READ> John 1:1-18

I. Jesus is uniquely God's prophet from heaven.

A. A prophet is God's mouth.

1. The prophets of old were told this:

- **Exodus 7:1: So the LORD said to Moses: "See, I have made you *as* God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land."**
- **Jer 15:19: You shall be as My mouth.**

2. The prophets spoke through Christ and about Christ.

- a. He was both the one who revealed truth to them...
 - and the one about whom they spoke.
- b. 1 Peter 1:10-11 brings out both of these ideas

- **1 Pet 1:10-11: Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.**
 - It was the Spirit of Christ who was in them and revealed truth to them...
 - the Spirit of Christ was the one who testified...
 - And, the truth that was revealed was truth about Jesus' death and resurrection...
 - His sufferings and the glories that would follow.

TRANS> So you see that Christ is both the message giver and the one the message is about.

- c. This passage also explains that the prophets often spoke better than they understood...
 - In other words, the Lord so guided their words that they said things that would not be fully understood until later...
 - You may remember how Daniel was puzzled by some of his prophecies and was told to seal up the book because the time was not yet.
 - These things would not be understood until they came to pass...
 - That means we have a better understanding of the OT prophecies than even the OT prophets did.
 - Some Christians seem to feel that they are cheating if they go back today—now that Christ has come—and read the Old Testament in the light of His appearing...
 - They feel as if they have to read it in the way that it would have been understood by the Old Testament people or else they are reading into the text what is not there...
 - But that is not so!
 - Christ is in those OT scriptures and we are supposed to see more than the contemporaries of the prophets were able to see...
 - and even more than the prophets themselves were able to see.
 - They knew there was more to be seen and they tried to see it as best they could...

- But now that Christ has come, the Old Testament revelation of Him opens up to us—the veil is taken away when we read...
 - You are supposed to see what they could not see...
 - It was there all along, but could not be seen until Jesus came...

- d. In Luke 24, we see how Jesus Himself explained that He was the main subject of the prophets and the Psalms, and how He opened the eyes of His disciples to see Him there:
 - **Luke 24:44-49: Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”**
 - Here again, you see that the message of the past as well as the one they are to proclaim is about Christ...
 - He is the subject and He is the author of prophecy.
 - When we preach rightly from the Old Testament, we preach Christ.

B. Christ Himself is the **Word** (the messenger and the message from Heaven).

1. It was by His word of command that all things were created and that life given to us in the beginning.
 - **John 1:3-4: All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**
 - This is the powerful decretive word that brings life into existence and then sustains it. It is the creative Word—
 - He speaks, and things that are not come to be...
 - He says, “let there be light” and the light shines
 - This creative word is referred to in Psalm 33:6-9:
 - **Psalm 33:6-9: By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and it stood fast.**

- This in the powerful word that creates and holds the world together—
 - It is the Maker of history—
 - It is God’s Son.
 - When He was on earth, He demonstrated His powerful word (and that He was the Word) by speaking and causing the lame to walk and the blind to see and dead to arise and the storms to cease.
- By saying that He is the light of man in John 1:4,
 - John speaks of Him as the foundation of all knowledge and the source of wisdom.
 - He is the starting point for all understanding.
 - There is no understanding except what He creates...because there is nothing to be understood but what He has created...
 - All knowledge has its foundation in Him.

TRANS> Okay, so the word is what brings everything about and what we understand when we understand truth...

- This is a fact of creation...
 - The word is the foundation and cause of what is...
 - But the word also presents truth to us...
2. It is His Word that presents the truth to us (whether or not we receive the truth)
- **John 1:5: And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**
 - **John 1:9-10: That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.**
 - You see that in both of these verses, Jesus, the Word, is said to shine forth, but not be seen—
 - In verse 5, He is not seen by the darkness...
 - In verse 9-10, He is not seen by the world...
 - Verse 5 could be translated, “and the light is shining in the darkness and the darkness has not comprehended it.”
 - It has been shining all along, but it especially shines now that Jesus has come into the world.
 - This is the light that would make us different from stones and beasts if we would receive it.

- Here is the folly of man...
 - We cannot even begin to think without Jesus...
 - Yet, in our rebellion we reject Him and do not know Him.
- Your little brother wants to play chess with you...
 - But then he wants to move his knight like a bishop (when it is convenient)
 - Yet when it is your turn to move, he insists that you keep the rules.
- That's the way people are who deny Christ, the source of truth and light.
 - They live in His world every day and depend on His truth and His laws of nature and even his laws of morality...
 - But then they pretend they don't know Him and deny Him when they don't like what He has said—when they don't like His rules...
 - The same rules they depend on for life...and understanding.
 - There is the guy who claims to believe that there are no absolutes, and then gets upset when someone steals from him.
 - There is the Buddhist who looks both ways when he crosses the street even though to do so denies everything he believes.
 - (That distinctions we make between a speeding car and a person crossing the street are not legitimate—that there is no difference between pain and comfort...)
- Jesus is the truth. He is the foundation. We cannot live without Him...
 - Yet we deny Him and do not know Him.
 - We are dead until the Word—Christ—is revealed to us as Christ.

3. See here, it is the Word that brings life into us

- This is what you are told in John 1:12-13:
 - **John 1:12-13: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”**
- If you receive Him, then He fills you with life...
 - He makes you a child of God.
 - The light of salvation is revealed to you through Jesus who is the light of salvation...

- John 1:14-18 explains how Jesus is actually the word made flesh and coming to us in a way that we can understand...
 - **John 1:14-18: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.”**
 - We sometimes speak of Jesus being veiled in flesh, but John speaks of His coming in flesh in the opposite way...
 - He shows that the flesh is not what veils, but actually the medium by which God is revealed to us!
 - We see Him and come to know Him because He is declared to us in Jesus...
 - God did not save us in heaven and then just tell us about it...
 - He came in the flesh and did the work of salvation among us.
 - And we come to know Him by beholding the person and work of Christ on earth.

4. Jesus, come in the flesh, is both the messenger *and* the message.

C. Jesus knew Himself to be God’s revelation to us from Heaven

1. He shows this self understanding in John 18:37:
 - **Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”**
 - Jesus came as prophet to bring the truth to us—
 - If you are of the truth (living in the reality of God), then you hear His voice.
2. Likewise in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus shows again that He knows Himself to be God’s prophet to us...
 - **“The Spirit of the LORD *is* upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to *the* poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to *the* captives and recovery of sight to *the* blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”**

D. After He came, being Himself the subject of prophecy, there was a greater understanding.

1. Hebrews speaks of this greater revelation in Him.
 - a. Hebrews 1:1 explains that with the coming of Christ, God speaks to us in a final, full way...
 - **Heb 1:1: God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...**
 - We learn of God through Christ!
 - He speaks to us through Him.
 - b. Hebrews 2 explains that this greater speaking brings a greater responsibility upon us...for we have received the Word of God from Heaven...
 - **Heb 2:1-3: Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.**
 - If you miss this revelation—
 - If you are not captivated by the word of God from heaven...
 - It this does not arrest you and grip you—
 - Then you are beyond hope.
 - There is no escape for you.

TRANS> But how can we who live now, after Christ has ascended, benefit from His coming and revelation among us as the Word of God?

2. He gave the message of Himself to the apostles to publish in all the world—
 - It is revealed by His Spirit to the apostles:
 - **Hebrews 2:3-4: How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?**
 - John 14:26 applies especially to them.
 - **John 14:26: But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**
 - This is a promise to the apostles so that they could leave an inspired record about Jesus for the church in all the ages to come.
 - They bring the word of God to us...so that the world may believe.

3. Jesus continues to speak through preaching
 - Matthew 28:18-20,
 - **And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**
 - **Psalm 68:11: The Lord gave the word; great *was* the company of those who proclaimed *it*:**
 - **Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good *things*, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”**
 - You can still hear Jesus through the word preached.
 - **Eph 4:20-21, But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:**
 - This passage literally says “If you have **heard Him...**”
 - Now the Ephesians had never meet Christ, so how could they hear Him?
 - They heard Him through preaching...
 - And the result is that faith comes through hearing His voice—hearing Christ preached...
 - **Romans 10:17-18: So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”**

II. His prophetic ministry is divinely powerful...

- By that, I mean that it actually imparts life to us as it is spoken...
- A. You see, by nature, we have a serious problem
1. As John 1 says, the light shines, but we don't see it.
 - The light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it...
 - We are as blind as ever even though the Word of God is brought to us—
 - We are blind as long as the word is only presented to us and we are left as we are...
 2. This is because of the corruption of the human heart
 - The corrupt heart relishes what is not good and despises what is good.

- There is something bad wrong with us—
- We are like a person who loves sewage.
 - We can't understand beauty because we love what is ugly...
 - He comes into the world and the world does not know Him—even though He is our Maker....
 - It is a serious problem!
- The scripture says that we are deaf, blind, and dead
- Jesus illustrates this in the parable of the sower...
 - He speaks of four types of ground that receive seed...
 - First, there is the pathway where the seed is snatched away before it even takes root...
 - That is the person who hears the Word with his ears, but it never gets inside—
 - It has no impact on him...
 - Here the Son of God is fully revealed and this poor soul does not recognise Him at all...
 - Second, there is the stony ground—where there is shallow soil with stone underneath...
 - The plant springs up quickly, but then is dried up by the sun because it has no root...
 - This represents the surface hearer who hears of Christ and realises that this is something special...
 - but as soon as trouble comes, he is gone...
 - He stops following...it was not special enough!
 - Obviously, he never really comprehended that Christ is the Word of God from heaven—it did not mean much to this one...
 - Third, there is the ground with the weeds—
 - The word falls into this ground, and once again, He is received and the plant begins to grow...
 - But before any fruit comes,
 - the weeds choke out all the life from the plant...
 - This represents the one who sees something in Christ, but again, never comprehends who He really is...

- For the weeds represent the cares of the word and the deceitfulness of riches...
- This person places these above Christ...
 - He obviously does not understand who Christ is.
- The forth kind of ground is the one who truly receives the word and then produces fruit...
 - He recognises Christ as the Word from heaven and latches on to him by Spirit-wrought faith—
 - He abides in Him and so produces much fruit.
 - But we are looking at the problem that we have by nature that keeps us from receiving...
 - Until we are changed, we are all like one of the first three kinds of ground to whom Christ comes,
 - but who do not comprehend him...
- 2 Cor 4:4 says
 - **“The god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them...”**
- And 1Co 2:14 explains:
 - **“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”**

B. But Jesus, as prophet, not only speaks, but also breaks through our death!

1. His word actually produces life by His word!!

- In John 5, the word of Christ is said to spiritually resurrect us:
 - **John 5:25-26: “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”**
- In these verses, Jesus is not talking about physical resurrection, but spiritual resurrection...
 - And you see that it comes by the mighty working of the word...
 - Just as Christ the word speaks light into existence,
 - so Christ the Word speaks life into dead sinners...

- His word comes into them, bringing life.

2. It is the work of the Holy Spirit –

- John 16:7-8 explains that it is not because of our cleverness, but because of God’s power that the word gives us life!
 - **John 16:7-8: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”**
 - In saying that the Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement,
 - Jesus is essentially saying that the Spirit will make sin, righteousness, and judgement real to people...
 - In other words, they will see what they are as sinners, what Christ is as the righteous one, and how God’s judgement crushed Christ as the representative of sinners and will crush all who are outside of Him...
 - They who are dead will be awakened by the Word of Christ to the realities of God and His salvation...
 - Christ the Word will bring life to the dead by the powerful working of His Spirit in connection with the Word.
 - The Apostles would have preached in vain if not for the Spirit...
 - That is why Jesus says,
 - “It is to your advantage that I go away—”
 - The world must have the Spirit working with the Word to be saved.
- In 2 Cor 1, Paul explains how the natural man does not recognise the word...
 - The natural man is what we all are apart from the influence of the Spirit.
 - The only reason believers differ from the natural man is because the Spirit comes to change us so that we can receive the Word...
 - **2 Cor. 1:10-11: But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.**
- We have examples of this divine work of the Word given in Scripture...
 - In Acts, we are told that a woman named Lydia received the word...

- **Acts 16:14: Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.**
- Another example would be Samaritan woman to whom Jesus spoke at the well.
 - When she encountered the Word, it as if her whole life was laid bare...
 - She concluded at once that Jesus was the Messiah because His word broke into her heart and gave her life.

III. How should all this affect you?

- A. It should cause you to pray that you would hear Him and that others would hear.
- Pray for preaching
 - **Eph 6:18-20: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**
 - Pray that you would hear Him (not just about Him—His voice)
- B. It should cause you to give thanks for what you have heard and seen (and cherish it)
- **Psalm 147: “He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and *as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!*”**
 - Psalm 73
 - This Psalm speaks about the believer becoming envious of the ungodly, but then realising how stupid it is to be envious of them when we have God as our portion forever.
 - We come to our senses when the word of God comes to us in the sanctuary.
- C. It should make you eager to bring the word to others (to your children, your spouse, your neighbour).
- Psalm 78—we will not hide them from our children...
 - Ephesians 5, 6—Husbands to love their wives, and fathers their children, by ministering the word to them.
 - Ephesians 4—speaking the truth in love—we are to minister the word to one another, spread it around)

- Eph 5—in psalms, hymns...we are to be spreading an attitude of gratitude, reminding each other what God has done.

D. It should make you confident

- It's not just the word of men...
 - **1Th 2:13: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**
- It gives you a sure hope (of His love and mercy)
 - **Heb 6:13-19: For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which *it is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...**
- It gives you confidence before adversaries—
 - **Ps 119:51: The proud have me in great derision, *yet* I do not turn aside from Your law.**
 - **Ps 119:110: The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts.**
 - **Ps 119:157: Many *are* my persecutors and my enemies, *yet* I do not turn from Your testimonies.**
 - Even though there are thousands of important people laughing at you for your faith, it matters not—you have the word—the sure word that will stand.
 - It is the word that is attached to all the you have, all that you are, all that is in the world...
 - It is the word that created you that also saves you.