

Old Testament Reading: Leviticus 16:11-22

New Testament Reading: Hebrews 9:11-28

What a difference in testaments! BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED! This changes everything. Prior to the Christ, atonement was a regular, repeating, predictable event. Blood spilt; repentance and atonement given; the scapegoat condemned to the wilderness with the sins of God's church on its back. But the very next day – likely the very next hour – the people were ALREADY in need of a new repentance, a new forgiveness, a new scapegoat. BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED! This changes everything.

Before we pity the ancient Israelites too quickly for their annual ritual, we might first look at our own habits and proclivities. While in the Marine Corps, I had the opportunity to go down to New Orleans several times to do parades on what is arguably the busiest time for that city – the week before Ash Wednesday, which is the Wednesday on which a period of repentance, fasting, and Lenten sacrifices begin. While it did not begin this way, what Mardi Gras became in New Orleans was quite literally a celebration of sin – a last chance to sin before the season of repentance and sacrifice in the six-week Lenten period leading up to Easter Sunday.

Of course, that's a ridiculous mindset, and a perversion of Liturgical Calendar. In this yearly ritual, there is a sprint at the end of the annual cycle to sin, and perhaps most of us wouldn't even consider taking part in such a celebration. But an annual ritual we are all perhaps more familiar with is our instinct or custom to start the New Year with the resolve to be better – if only in a couple areas. We make these resolutions with all the ceremony and ritual of a midnight mass. But how long does it take for us to break this contract with ourselves? This sprint to abstain from sin, or do better, at the beginning of the cycle may be more noble than the deliberate annual lasciviousness of Mardi Gras, but – by ourselves – it is just as pointless. So before we pity the Israelites for their annual ritual of repentance from sin and promises to do better, understand there are many around us today who are to be pitied more, and need the Gospel we will hear about again today.

This morning's exhortation will focus on Jesus Christ's legal role as the Testator. But before we do, I want us all to be on the same page – the same level of appreciation – for what a Christ actually is. We can proclaim to our pagan friends and neighbors, "Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God!" But how would YOU respond when they reply, "What in the world is a Christ?"

The word, "Christ," itself is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Meschiach – Messiah – anointed one. The idea of oil-anointing is contained within the word Christ – which comes from the Greek verb "Chrio", to rub or anoint with scented unguents, or

oils.¹ And yes, we even have English words that contain this oiliness in Chrio words. A chrism is used in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches to anoint people at baptism or confirmation. A chrismatory is the vessel that stores this oil. And what is the oily part of milk that rises to the top? Cream, yes! Now that etymology is more a curiosity than anything. I don't think it answers the question, "What is a Christ?" Is Jesus the Christ simply because someone anointed him with oil? Is that the entire list of qualifications to be a Christ?

Of course not, so what is involved or expected in holding the office, "Christ"?

You might be surprised to learn there are many "christs" in the Old Testament – that is, anointed ones. David was anointed in 1 Samuel 16, and called the christ of God²) (מְשִׁיחַ | χριστὸν θεοῦ), and Solomon and the kings of Israel were similarly christened (מְשִׁיחַ | ἔχρισαν | anointed)³.

Leviticus 4 calls the high priest, "the christ-priest" (הַכֹּהֵן הַמְשִׁיחַ | ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ χριστὸς) three times.⁴

God rebukes kings in Psalm 105:15, saying "Touch not my christs my מְשִׁיחַי, my χριστῶν, do my prophets no harm;" Isaiah says "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed (מְשִׁיחַ | ἔχρισέν) me;" and we see Elisha the prophet christened by Elijah in 1 Kings 19:16: "And you shall anoint (מְשִׁיחַ | χρίσεις) Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-mehola, to be prophet in your place."

So being a christ was special – you were either a prophet, a priest (the high priest), or a king. But not every king, priest, and prophet was anointed; not every prophet, priest, and king was a christ. You had to be special AMONG the already-special. Are we starting to get a sense now why Jesus as the Christ is a big deal? What we should see here, is not just that Jesus was "a Christ," that is, a temporal prophet, priest, OR king. But that Jesus

¹ Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed in the Old Testament, though in different ways. Anointing someone with oil probably moved from the practical to the ritual. Oil anointings were in ancient times used as health care, for treating and preventing certain health issues. It was also used as a preventative and treatment of foul odor in the hot desert climate. It was both a practical preventative and treatment for malady and malodor.

Ritually, for the kings of ancient Israel, the anointing marked the Spirit of the LORD – the ruach Adonai – rushing upon the king, conferring divine blessing, prosperity, and authority. The anointing of prophets can be viewed as an anointing with the word of the LORD (1 Kings 19), and the anointing of the priest marked their elevation from the profane into the holy places, with the authority to operate there within, one might say, at the right hand of the Father. See Milgrom, Jacob, and Louis Isaac Rabinowitz. "Anointing." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 179-180. Vol. 2. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. Gale eBooks (accessed July 31, 2021).

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587501124/GVRL>

² 2 Samuel 23:1

³ 1 Chronicles 29:22

⁴ Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16

is the CONSUMMATE Christ, eternally fulfilling the anointed offices of prophet, priest, AND king. No, Jesus was not an ANNUALLY elected office holder, who annually did not meet the expectations of his voters; Jesus is not an annual ritual to be performed, only to need it the very next day. Jesus is so much better. BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED! This changes everything.

There were Messianic Jews in the first century, zealous to see the Messiah return, many assumed this Messiah would be an earthly messiah-king, or christ-king, and it's not clear if a majority understood THE MESSIAH to be the consummate Messiah, or just another messiah king like many thought Judas Maccabaeus was 150 years earlier. Though Isaiah 9 is pretty clear about the prophecy of an eternal king, Jews in the first century were anxious only to have a messiah that would overthrow the Romans.

Fewer Jews, I think, were anxious to see a christ-priest. The Jews had priests, and were used to the regular and predictable offering of sacrifices, going through the regular and predictable rites of atonement, over, and over, and over, every year. Perhaps they didn't see a need for someone to enter once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.⁵ Besides, regular, annual sacrifices was good for business.

Even fewer Jews were probably longing to see a christ-prophet, pronouncing judgment from God upon them. The Jews of the Day liked Isaiah and Jeremiah. They probably thought, "Man, I'm so glad our generation is not as bad as those Israelites of Isaiah's day, who were always getting yelled at for their commandment-breaking. I'm glad we are so much better!" Or, "Do you remember when Zephaniah pronounced woe upon Jerusalem? 'Her officials are roaring lions? Her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning? Remember this line, 'her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the law?' I'm glad those days are over, and we Pharisees are in charge!"

But how is Jesus as the CONSUMMATE Christ – not just a christ-king, but also a christ-priest, and christ-prophet – better than these messianic zealots could have ever hoped?

Is Christ the king? Yes. He speaks constantly about his kingdom, the kingdom of God (or heaven), and tells Pilate, "my kingdom is not of this world." Christ is the consummate king. Christ is the king spoken of in Isaiah 9:6-7: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." Christ is the CONSUMMATE king.

⁵ Hebrews 9:12

Is Christ prophet? Yes. He is the prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. "...I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

Jesus himself said so, "I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life."⁶

Jesus also repeated the prophet Isaiah in Luke, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD." Then he closed the book, gave it back to the minister, sat down, and while everyone in the room was staring at him, waiting for him to speak, he said, "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."⁷

Jesus does not just speak the Words of God, he is the eternal WORD of God (John 1:1). Christ is the CONSUMMATE prophet

Is Christ the high priest? Yes. Christ is the CONSUMMATE high priest. "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."⁸

It's in this office of the consummate high priest that we return to the text, and hopefully to better understand the promises, covenants, or TESTAMENTS of God. BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED!! This changes everything.

Christ has given us a new testament – "This cup," he told his disciples, "is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you".⁹ **Christ is the testator, and we are the inheritors.** If you recall what a Last Will and Testament is, you will remember, we have no say in what's in the testament. We do not get to amend the will; we do not get to hold out for a better deal; and we cannot disclaim this testament. Testaments, also called covenants, are properly understood as a one-way contract, not the mutually agreeable contracts we are familiar with today. It is no coincidence this promise is called a testament.

That's what's different about this testament, from the old testament. It's why the writer of Hebrews understood this new testament to be better than the old.¹⁰ Because Christ on earth is the testator of this will. Christ – the consummate king, prophet, and priest – is not only the testator of this new covenant. Christ is also the mediator of this testament!

⁶ John 12:49-50

⁷ Luke 4:18-21

⁸ Ps 110:4, Heb 7:17

⁹ Luke 22:20, KJV

¹⁰ Hebrews 7:22

And unlike the mediators of the old testament, the priests, all of whom are now dead, Christ is eternal, and his sacrifice is eternal. The priests of old are dead; the eternal high priest died – once for all – and is now risen from the dead. The priests of old in their sacrifices served “copies and shadows of heavenly things”,¹¹ but Christ is the real perfect, guiltless sacrifice. His sacrifice is eternally efficient – unlike the signs of sacrifice, the worship postures and ceremonies in the old testament, created to point unto the consummate Christ.

The blood of goats and calves, really did – for a moment – purify the flesh;¹² but the blood of Christ – who was an actually perfect man, a truly undefiled sacrifice – will purify our conscience, give us a heart truly inclined toward holiness, and secure for us an eternal redemption.¹³

What did God bequeath to his people in Leviticus 16? What was the point of sacrifice and ritual then? The whole point of the blood and the washing and the preparation of the tent and the dressing of the priest was to reconcile a rebellious people with a Holy God.

We know, brothers and sisters, there is no way we of our own merit can ascend to our own holiness in order to reconcile our selfish, sinful, wicked, evil, “authentic selves”¹⁴ to a holy, perfect, eternal, and all-powerful God. Even the physical work of the bull sacrifice could not obligate God’s favor if the priest were just going through the motions.¹⁵ We may not buy or trade our way into heaven with the putrid, filthy rags we call righteousness and piety.¹⁶ We broke that deal in Adam, and man is now cursed to be a slave to sin.¹⁷ Bound and chained into depravity. But in this state of hopelessness, what does God do through the consummate Christ?

Knowing we cannot ascend unto holiness, God instead condescends unto us – a wicked people that curses and scorns him, the one who made us – purchased us from that slavery – redeemed us – then to **give** us in his testament, to bequeath unto us that reconciliation through the eternal Christ-king; the eternal Christ-prophet; the eternal Christ-high priest, to make us holy and live forever.¹⁸

God emptied himself, became flesh, became one of us, suffered as we suffer, obeyed the law perfectly, bore our sins as the scapegoat driven to the despair of the wilderness, alone, forsaken by the Father on the cross, and bore those sins unto death.¹⁹

¹¹ Hebrews 8:5

¹² **Hebrews 9:13**

¹³ **Hebrews 9:14**

¹⁴ Romans 8:7-8, Psalm 5:9

¹⁵ Hosea 6:6

¹⁶ Isaiah 64:6

¹⁷ Romans 6:20

¹⁸ Romans 9:15

¹⁹ Philippians 2

Since this death has occurred, the last will and testament is in effect. SINCE CHRIST APPEARED!! This changes everything. The testator has died, and the will has been executed. "The will is not in force as the one who made it alive."²⁰ Don't you see? Our inheritance required a death! Every inheritance requires a death. I'm sure there are some modern loopholes that redefine "death" or "inheritance" for tax purposes, but the principle of a testament and an inheritance requires the testator to die.

BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED!! This changes everything. God incarnate – the creator of the universe – the fundamental legislator of the laws of physics, the laws of logic, and the laws of morality – deliberately ordained that he should become flesh, and deliberately ordained that flesh would die for a people he deliberately ordained as his own. Because without his death, this testament of eternal life and forgiveness of sins, could not be in effect. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.²¹ BUT WHEN CHRIST APPEARED!! This changes everything.

This CONSUMMATE Christ is the one whose name is above every name – and that name is not his given name, "Yeshua" or Jesus. No, that name above all names is YHWH, so at this name YHWH that Jesus possesses, every knee shall bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth – and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, Adonai, YHWH, to the glory of God the Father.²²

Think of this: This is the one and same **Name Above All Names** that knew at the garden of Eden, that when the LORD God cursed Adam and Eve away from paradise,²³ he would have to die as the Second Adam to return his chosen people unto paradise. Think of that! Christ knew he was sentencing himself to death when he cursed mankind, but he chose in that death to bequeath an eternal redemption for us.

Think of that! We have as our testator the I AM THAT I AM – that being that ever was, ever is, and ever more shall be; that being from whom all other being exists, and unto which all other being is dependent; that being from which all blessings flow, and unto which is due all blessing, glory, honor, and power.

This is the inheritance of the Christian – **we get to be the sons and daughters of God**. I don't think I grasp what that fully means. I grasp it a little more now than I did 10 years ago, but I know I don't fully get it. At the very least, I know we get to be in the presence of God, and glorify and praise him forever.

This testament of the Consummate Christ, as the writer of Hebrews reminds us, took effect at the bloody death of Christ, like every other testament given to God's people

²⁰ **Hebrews 9:15-18**

²¹ **Hebrews 9:22**

²² Philippians 2

²³ Genesis 3

before the incarnation of Christ.²⁴ The difference now though is that those bloody deaths in pre-Christ Israel were copies of the heavenly things – signs of a thing signified. But Christ, as the real deal – an actual efficacious sacrifice, that is, one that works because of what it is, not because of what it signifies – has **once for all** (not on an annual basis) conquered sin by the sacrifice of himself, then rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the father, and from thence will come to judge the quick and the dead; but for us, will come a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.²⁵

Every single one of you will have an opportunity to write a last will and testament. And though we may grumble about the government having their hand in that cookie jar, when we write our testament, we know it is more than a transfer of money from one person to the other. No, the testament is not just a transfer of property; it is a bequest of a legacy, of a reputation. I don't want to know what is in your legal, earthly will this morning, but I would like you to consider what legacy you are creating for your children, for your friends, for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus Christ, has shown us how to leave a legacy. Jesus Christ did not just come to earth, immediately to be offered as a perfect sacrifice without trial or neighborly interaction. No, Jesus Christ came to live and work among us, creating a perfect legacy of holiness, **not just in theory, but in action**. Christ as the consummate man, loved his neighbor perfectly – healing the sick, feeding the poor, proclaiming the kingdom of God, reminding people of the law of God and their sins, especially the sins of the heart, and calling them to repentance. Christ left us such a legacy of Good Works, he was able to command us, “Love one another as I have loved you.”²⁶

How can we love one another as Christ has loved us? What legacy of Good Works would you leave behind for your fellowship of the saints? Would you divide the saints into categories of worth? Would you “make distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”²⁷ Or would you recognize that in Christ there is no partiality, that we are joint-heirs, co-equal heirs to the kingdom, which he has promised us? Would your legacy of Good Works to each other be such that you can encourage others, like Paul, to “be imitators of me, as I imitate Christ.”²⁸

Isn't this understanding of the Christ the Consummate Testator – the eternal Christ, the eternal anointed one who gave himself, **for us as one of us** – a much more beautiful understanding than a man whose first name is Jesus and last name is Christ? If you cannot claim this inheritance; if you have not put your faith in the Christ, I would urge you to repent from your sins, from placing your meager self as the priority over the

²⁴ Hebrews 9:18-21

²⁵ Hebrews 9:23-28, Heb 10:13

²⁶ John 13:34

²⁷ James 2:4

²⁸ 1 Cor 11:1

sovereign God of the universe, who has established the moral laws you have broken. Repent, for his kingdom is at hand. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is LORD, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, and you will be saved.²⁹

May we all say with Peter, “thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.”³⁰ May we as Christians strive in our testimony, our legal witness as inheritors of the testament of Christ, to reflect the glory and beauty of that man who ever was, ever is, and ever more shall be our consummate prophet, our consummate priest, and our consummate king.

Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς (Matt 16:16)

Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἀνὴρ (2 Sam 12:7)

²⁹ Romans 10:9

³⁰ Matthew 16:16, KJV