

The Commissioning of Messianic Community

Synopsis

The Messianic Covenant Community has been commissioned to work alongside the Messiah in his mission

Topics

1. Military commissioning
2. God's commissioning
3. Commissioned as disciples

Terms

Commission

To charge with responsibility for a task or duty, as when a military officer is given a specific rank and responsibility (e.g. *he was commissioned after attending the training academy*)

To grant authority to undertake a task or function, as when an architect is authorised to build something, (e.g. *the architect was commissioned to manage the project*).

Scripture

Read these passages aloud together.

- Numbers 27:23
- 2 Corinthians 2:17
- Galatians 1:1
- Colossians 1:25

Memorise the following passages, in time for your next meeting.

Matthew 22:14

For many are called (invited and summoned), but few are chosen

1 Corinthians 9:17

For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have my reward; but if it is not of my own will, but is done reluctantly and under compulsion, I am still entrusted with a sacred trusteeship and commission

Military commissioning

This section examines the experiences of a military soldier, in order to enlarge our understanding of what it means to be *commissioned*. It highlights three principal stages of becoming a soldier: calling, training and commissioning.

Calling

A soldier's life starts when they perceive a *calling* to a life of military service.

A calling is an awareness that a particular occupation represents a desirable, compelling, or appropriate vocation to pursue. There may be many reasons why someone enlists in an army, but at some point they sense a calling towards it.

Training

A soldier's calling is tested with a period of intensive, *basic training*, which potentially equips them for a lifestyle of military service.

Trainee soldiers experience all kinds of difficult trials and hardships that test their discipline, teamwork, communication, competence, obedience, initiative, determination, loyalty and resolve. During this time, each individual's capabilities

and characteristics are either affirmed, enhanced or exposed as inadequate.

At the end of this period, training officers assess whether each soldier has satisfactorily completed basic training. If so, they may begin active service. If not, they must either repeat basic training, until they pass satisfactorily, or leave military service altogether.

Commissioning

A soldier's commissioning represents the beginning of their *active service*, as a member of a regiment or division of the army.

They are equipped and authorised for military service: capable, ready and trusted to fulfil their duties—which include general soldiering, as well as a personal vocation such as infantry, chef, driver, engineer, medic, officer and so on.

In this new phase, soldiers continue to lead highly-disciplined lives and to experience difficult trials and tests. However, unlike the training phase, significant achievements are rewarded—generally by receiving enhanced or additional responsibility.

OPTION

- Discuss *Soldiering*, or
- Continue to *God's commissioning*

God's commissioning

This section explores the origins of the word *mission* and its connection with *commissioning*, in order to understand how the messianic, new-covenant community is united with God's mission.

The sending of God

The English word, *mission*, derives from a Latin word, *missio*, meaning *sending*. It was originally used exclusively to refer to *God's sending of himself*^[1] into the

world, to restore it from the effects of human wickedness, idolatry, chaos, spiritual darkness, oppression, injustice and evil. We see this in three particular ways.

- **The Old Testament^[2] reveals God's covenant presence**

In particular, the *Sh'kinah*, (Hebrew: glorious Presence of God; see Luke 2:9, Hebrews 1:3; 1 John 1:14, 2 Peter 1:17; Matthew 17:6 etc), which manifested as a pillar of cloud and fire during the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 13:17–14:29) and within the *Ark of the Covenant*, visited by Moses and Aaron (Exodus 40) and following Solomon's dedication of the temple (2 Chronicles 7).

- **The New Testament reveals the Messiah, Jesus**

As “Lamb of God,” apostle and high priest and “the sole expression of the glory (*Sh'kinah*) of God—the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature^[3]”—in every way Jesus the Messiah reflects the reality that God the Father is a missional god.

- **The New Testament reveals the Holy Spirit**

As the *Breath*^[4] of the Messiah—sent by the Messiah, as the Messiah was sent by the Father—the Holy Spirit empowers and *sends* the messianic community, anointing us to do the works of God.^[5]

The sending of God's people

Mission, having begun with God's *sending* of himself, is enlarged through the biblical covenants, as the people of God are united with God and his mission—his sending of himself—within the world.

- This is what commissioning means: *to join, or unite with a particular mission* (*co* means joining, uniting or sharing, thus, *co-mission*).
- The messianic covenant community is *commissioned* by God: united with his mission to reconcile and restore creation to himself, through the Messiah.

Joining the Messiah's mission

The *mission* of Jesus is the purpose for which he was sent into the world: to represent the Father and to do the works of God, forming and sending disciples, in his name^[6].

As the Father sent me, so I now send you—*John 20:21*

The *commission* of the messianic community means being united with and sharing in the *mission* of the Messiah: representing the Father, joining him in doing the works of God, forming and sending disciples in his name.

Thus, *Messianic commission* refers to joining, uniting with the Messiah, in his mission.

We are called to be with him; to be prepared, set apart, blessed, anointed and sent towards the world, for the sake of the world; to bless the peoples of the world, in God's name.^[7]

OPTION

- Discuss *Commissioning*, or
- Continue to *Commissioned as disciples*

Commissioned as disciples

This section explores parallels between soldiering and discipleship.

The metaphor of a soldier

The apostle, Paul, uses the metaphor of a soldier to emphasise that disciples of Jesus Christ must endure discipline, hardship and suffering.^[8]

Take your share of the hardships and suffering which you are called to endure as a good, first-class soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of civilian life; his aim is to satisfy and please the one who enlisted him—*2 Timothy 2:3–4*

Called to serve

Military commissioning explored how soldiering begins with discerning a calling to military service. Messianic discipleship similarly begins with a *calling*. This happens as we personally or corporately discern a calling to serve God's mission, in some way—to serve God's eternal purpose.^[9]

Many are called, but few are chosen

Those who hear and respond to a calling to military service are only commissioned after satisfactorily completing basic training. Jesus' words, *Many are called, but few are chosen*^[10] confirms that hearing the call to serve God's mission is only a start.

Like soldiers, disciples of the Messiah need to learn the basic disciplines and specialised skills required for vocational service. Like soldiers, progressing from *calling* to *commissioning*—which is what it means to be *chosen* by the Messiah—requires yielding ourselves fully to the demands of vocational service: becoming disciplined, skilled and faithful in response to our calling.

- The process of calling, training and commissioning is how we are prepared for useful service^[11].
- It is how we are enabled to become co-workers with the Messiah in his mission.
- It is how we become appointed and anointed to work alongside him, gathering a *harvest of faithfulness*,^[12] in the power of his Spirit.

OPTION

- Discuss *Training* and *Faithfulness*, or
- Continue to *Summary* and *Discussions*

Summary

This concludes the study, *The Commissioning of Messianic Community*, which:

- explored the metaphor of soldiering, including calling, training and

commissioning;

- explained that *commissioning* essentially means joining together in mission, illustrating how the new-covenant community joins with the Messiah's mission;
- compared military service with messianic discipleship, highlighting similarities relating to obedience, faithfulness and reward.

In summary, the study revealed that

The Messianic Covenant Community has been commissioned to work alongside the Messiah in his mission as a community of disciples, called, equipped and chosen to serve God's eternal purpose.

Discussions

Soldiering

Related to Military commissioning

Discuss how the rigours of military soldiering and its disciplines differ from the challenges of civilian life.

- How helpful is the military metaphor of soldiering with respect to Christian discipleship in the context of your culture and your personal life?

Commissioning

Related to God's commissioning

Discuss one thing relating to the idea of commissioning that stood out to you, during this study.

- How might this idea contribute towards the development of Christian community in your local or national context?

Training