

# Prophet, Priest, and King

## **Christ the Mediator**

We previously spoke of Christ the Mediator. Nothing could be more sensible in terms of a remedy for man's dilemma (inevitable death and darkness) than to have a man, with the power of God, reconcile man's relationship with God.

Human ingenuity and innovation have proven to be consistent failures in this endeavor (reconciliation with our Creator). In the Bible, six is the number of a man (Revelation 13:18) and no matter how many sixes you add it will never be seven (the number of completion or perfection).

Our Mediator, our Savior, though a man, is also God, and thus infinitely perfect (complete) in all His ways. His nature, as we learned last time, is both humanity and deity—man and God. He is therefore not only the appropriate representative of the human race; He is also an insurmountable force in His battle over the wickedness of iniquity. As the catechism puts it, He will not sink "under the infinite wrath of God."

The God, who all men know exists, graciously sent His Son to negotiate peace. He is our only hope.

**For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,* <sup>6</sup> who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).**

## **The Offices of Christ**

Having spoken of the nature of our Mediator, we will now speak of what has come to be known as the offices of our Mediator—that Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King.

Perhaps some will resist these categories. Lists can often be contrived and there is no single verse in the Bible that explicitly assigns these offices to Jesus. However, it has been the uniform testimony of orthodox Christianity (at least since the Reformation) that these are the offices of Christ and there is, as I hope to show, good reason for it.

Let us not ignore the nature of our Mediator as we discuss these offices. In the fulfilling of these offices Christ is endowed with the full sympathies of His humanity and the full force of His deity. That is to say that as a man there was never a more impassioned prophet, sympathetic priest, or empathetic king. Yet as deity He is the quintessential mouthpiece of God, the immeasurably capable Priest, and the overpowering Potentate.

## **Prophet**

History has distilled the discipline of philosophy down to three categories—metaphysics (what is real), ethics (what is right), and epistemology (how we know it). In His prophetic office Christ brings to the human race something they could never acquire on their own—true knowledge. Jesus is the light of the world (John 1:4, 5). He is the great prophet spoken of by Moses.

**I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him (Deuteronomy 18:18).**

By the words of Peter we know this is a reference to Jesus:

**For Moses truly said to the fathers, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.<sup>23</sup> And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22, 23).**

### **Half-Hearted Interest in Truth**

Though it may be accurate to say that men are interested in true things (everyone wants to know who truly shot Kennedy) in the final analysis men are not genuinely interested in truth (John 4:11). At least this was the opinion of Jesus.

**And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).**

Truth is attractive to people only to a point—usually until the microscope of truth is aimed in our direction. You see Jesus, as prophet, did not come to reveal who shot Kennedy or if there is life on Mars; it is much more personal than that. Speaking to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:2), God’s word is...

**...living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.<sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:12, 13).**

Prophets tend to make things very uncomfortable. Elementary Christianity teaches us that when confronted with Truth in the person of Christ, men nailed Him to a cross. Man’s natural disdain for truth is a result of the fall. Even when the truth of Christ’s prophetic utterances revealed the hope of salvation, men scoffed.

**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18).**

By His word and Spirit, Christ continues His office of prophet to this day. But today, as then, the cross is foolishness to those who trust in their own sophistry and a stumbling block to those who trust in the weak and shifting sands of their own righteous deeds (1 Corinthians 1:23). So we must conclude that even though the message of Christ—the gospel—is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), the mere message, in a certain sense, is insufficient to save; hence the need for the second office—Priest.

### **Priest**

One needn’t look too far to find the office of priest in the Old Testament (2 Chronicles 31:4; Hebrews 7:5). Prophets came to the people on behalf of God; priests came to God on behalf of the people.

**For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1).**

In the old covenant the priest would bring the blood of the sacrifice into the holy of holies and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat (the ark) to make atonement, or satisfaction for sin (Leviticus 16:13-16). Of course this was only valuable in that it pointed to the atoning work of Christ (Hebrews 11). The priesthood of Christ brings to a close any functional use of a priesthood among men. Christ is our High Priest (Hebrews 5:10). And His priesthood is a superior priesthood.

### **A Superior Priest**

Human priests had to make sacrifice for their own sins (Hebrews 5:3). Human priests have great limitations in their own sympathies (Hebrews 4:15). Human priests are limited by their own mortality. Our High Priest knows not these limits.

**Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.<sup>24</sup> But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.<sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:23-25).**

But more than all of this, human priests are limited by the very nature of the sacrifices they offer. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).

**Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.<sup>6</sup> In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.<sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’” (Hebrews 10:5-7)**

A body was prepared for Christ that He might offer it up to God thus fully satisfying God’s divine justice. This was not done in a man-made temple but in the true holy of holies, heaven itself (Hebrews 9:23-28). It is this great sacrifice that pacifies God toward us.

### **Intercession**

And although Christ’s priestly sacrifice was once for all (Hebrews 10:10), His priestly intercession continues (John 17; Romans 8:34). In the same way Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith not fail (Luke 22:32), so He prays for us that our faith may not fail (John 17:20).

The Father receives as acceptable the sacrifice of the Son and the Father hears the prayers of the Son. He is the Priest in whom we must trust. Christ’s prophetic office assures the veracity of the true message and His priestly office assures the satisfaction of the Father’s divine justice, yet there is another office—that of conquering king.

### **King**

The negotiations have been made and both parties are satisfied. God the Father has received the payment and Christ,

**“...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2, 3).**

With an eye toward the joy, Christ endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. But Christ does not sit in repose (merely resting). Due to the onslaught of dispensational error,<sup>1</sup> we often fail to appreciate the office of Christ the king. In Daniel we read of what occurs on the other side of Christ's ascension when He was received into a cloud (Acts 1:9).

**I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. <sup>14</sup> Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13, 14).**

Dispensationalists often interpret this passage as being concurrent with the beginning of Christ's future millennial reign. They believe it "will be fulfilled at Christ's Second Advent."<sup>2</sup> But the Son of Man is not coming to earth in this passage. He is coming on the clouds to the Ancient of Days (God) and given a kingdom.

The Old Testament foreshadowing of this kingdom was the kingdom under David. We read of this in Acts.

**Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, <sup>31</sup> he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ (Acts 2:29-31).**

When would Christ assume this office of King? At His resurrection! Contrary to popular belief, even though Satan in some sense is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:3—that is, many people are governed by him), he is not God and he is not king. Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). It cannot be more forcefully stated than in the first chapter of Ephesians:

**He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. <sup>22</sup> And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:20-23).**

### **Christ's Activities as King**

Numerous are Christ's activities as King: As King He makes and enforces laws (James 4:12); He ordains authority (Ephesians 4:11; Romans 13); He rewards (Revelation 2:10); He corrects (Revelation 3:19) and orders all things to His own glory (Romans 14:10, 11), and more.

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<sup>1</sup> Dispensationalism asserts that the kingdom will not begin until the Second Coming. Some modern forms of dispensationalism grant varying aspects of the present kingship of Christ but the full force of this office is never granted.

<sup>2</sup> Walvord and Zuck, (Bible Knowledge Commentary), p. 1351.

But there are two things He does as King that I would like to emphasize as we finish our lesson. First, He builds His kingdom by subduing the hearts of those whom He has ransomed.

**After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up (Acts 15:16).**

He created us yet we were lost in rebellion. He then purchased us with His own blood. He is our maker and redeemer. He is the King of the hearts of men and by virtue of that authority exercises proper dominion.

**The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will (Proverbs 21:1).**

The means by which this grace comes to men is word and sacrament. One might argue that the sword of Christ's mouth (Revelation 19), in one sense, is the power of His word to draw unto Himself the hearts of men.

But there is another facet of Christ's kingship which must not be ignored. The catechism teaches that as King He takes, "vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel."<sup>3</sup> So in another (and probably more exegetically accurate) sense we are informed,

**And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Revelation 19:15).**

Christ is a loving and benevolent King. But one must understand that rebellion against Him is not like rebellion against any human potentate (king). Rebellion against the regal office of Christ is rebellion against the very essence of what is good, true, and right. And goodness, truth, and righteousness will have its way in quashing evil and infidelity—both in history, and finally, in eternity. Let us be reminded of the most quoted Old Testament text we find in the New Testament:

**For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.<sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:25).**

Praise be to Christ who, as Prophet, brings God's word to men, as Priest satisfied the divine justice of the Father, and as King lovingly and irresistibly rescues us from our own rebellion.

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<sup>3</sup>Smith, M. H. 1996, c1990. *Larger catechism of the Westminster Confession Standards*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.) (Page 2). Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press: Greenville

### **Questions For Study**

1. Why does man need a mediator between himself and God (page 1)?
2. Why is it necessary that mediator be fully man and fully God (page 1)?
3. What are the offices of Christ (page 1)?
4. As prophet, what does Christ bring to the human race (pages 1, 2)?
5. Why do men reject the message of Christ (page 2)?
6. What is the role of a priest versus the role of a prophet (page 3)?
7. In what respects is Christ a superior priest (page 3)?
8. Discuss the intercession of Christ (pages 3, 4).
9. When did Christ take His throne as King (pages 4, 5)?
10. What does Christ do as King (pages 5, 6)?