

Chapter XVI: The Offices of Christ

The Bible ascribes a threefold office to Christ, speaking of Him as Prophet, Priest, and King.

1. The Prophetic Office

The Old Testament predicted the coming of Christ as a prophet, Deut. 18:15 (comp. Acts 3:23). He speaks of Himself as a prophet in Luke 13:33, claims to bring a message from the Father, John 8:26-28; 12:49, 50; 14:10, 24, foretells future things, Matt. 24:3-35; Luke 19:41-44, and speaks with singular authority, Matt. 7:29. It is no wonder, therefore, that the people recognized Him as a prophet, Matt. 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 6:14; 7:40; 9:17. A prophet is one who receives divine revelations in dreams, visions, or verbal communications; and passes these on to the people either orally or visibly in prophetic actions. Ex. 7:1; Deut. 18:18; Num. 12:6-8; Isa. 6; Jer. 1:4-10; Ezek. 3:1-4, 17. His work may pertain to the past, the present, or the future. One of his important tasks was to interpret the moral and spiritual aspects of the law for the people. Christ functioned as prophet already in the Old Testament, 1 Pet. 1:11; 3:18-20. He did it while He was on earth, and continued it by the operation of the Holy Spirit and through the apostles after the ascension, John 14:26; 16:12-14; Acts 1:1. And even now his prophetic ministry continues through the ministry of the Word and the spiritual illumination of believers. This is the only function of Christ which is recognized in modern liberal theology.

2. The Priestly Office

The Old Testament also predicted and prefigured the priesthood of the coming Redeemer, Ps. 110:4; Zech. 6:18; Isa. 53. In the New Testament there is only a single book in which He is called priest, namely, Hebrews, but there the name is found repeatedly, 3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1. However, other books refer to His priestly work, Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Rom. 3:24, 25; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18. While a prophet represented God among the people, a priest represented the people before God. Both were teachers, but while the former taught the moral, the latter taught the ceremonial law. Moreover, the priests had the special privilege of approach to God, and of speaking and acting in behalf of the people. Hebrews 5:1, 3 teaches us that a priest is taken from

among men to be their representative, is appointed by God, is active before God in the interests of men, and offers gifts and sacrifices for sins. He also makes intercession for the people.

The priestly work of Christ was, first of all, to bring a sacrifice for sin. The Old Testament sacrifices were types pointing forward to the great sacrifice of Christ, Heb. 9:23, 24; 10:1, 13:11, 12. Hence Christ is also called “the Lamb of God,” John 1:29, and “our passover,” 1 Cor. 5:7. The New Testament speaks very clearly of the priestly work of Christ in numerous passages: Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:6-8; 1 Cor. 5:7; 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Rev. 5:12. The references are most frequent in the Epistle to the Hebrews 5:1-10; 7:1-28; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:11-14, 19-22; 12:24; 13:12.

Besides bringing the great sacrifice for sins, Christ as priest also makes intercession for His people. He is called our *parakletos* by implication in John 14:16, and explicitly in 1 John 2:2. The term means ‘one who is called in to help, an advocate, one who pleads the cause of another.’ The New Testament refers to Christ as our intercessor in Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1. His intercessory work is based on His sacrifice, and is not limited, as is sometimes thought, to intercessory prayer. He presents His sacrifice to God, on the ground of it claims all spiritual blessings for His people, defends them against the charges of Satan, the law, and conscience, secures forgiveness for everything justly charged against them, and sanctifies their worship and service through the operation of the Holy Spirit. This intercessory work is limited in character; it has reference only to the elect, but includes all the elect, whether they are already believers or still live in unbelief, John 17:9, 20.

3. The Kingly Office

As Son of God Christ naturally shares in the universal dominion of God. In distinction from this we speak of a kingship that was conferred on Him as Mediator. This kingship is twofold, namely, His spiritual kingship over the Church, and His kingship over the universe.

a. His spiritual kingship. The Bible speaks of this in many places, Ps. 2:6; 132:11; Isa. 9:6, 7; Micah 5:2; Zech. 6:13; Luke 1:33; 19:38; John 18:36, 37; Acts 2:30-36. The kingship of Christ is His royal rule over His people. It is called spiritual, because it relates to a spiritual realm, is established in the hearts and lives of believers, has a spiritual end in view, the salvation of sinners, and is administered by spiritual means, the Word and the Spirit. It is exercised largely in the gathering, the government, the protection, and the perfection of the Church. This kingship as well as the realm over which it extends is called in the New Testament "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven." In the strict sense of the word only believers, members of the invisible Church, are citizens of the kingdom. But the term 'kingdom of God' is sometimes used in a broader sense, as including all who live under the proclamation of the gospel, all who have a place in the visible Church, Matt. 13:24-30, 47-50. This kingdom of God is on the one hand a present, spiritual reality in the hearts and lives of men, Matt. 12:28; Luke 17:21; Col. 1:13; but on the other hand a future hope, which will not be realized until the return of Jesus Christ, Matt. 7:21; Luke 22:29; 1 Cor. 15:50; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:11. The future kingdom will be essentially the same as the present, namely, the rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of men. It will differ, however, in that it will be visible and perfect. Some are of the opinion that this kingship of Christ will cease at His return, but the Bible would seem to teach explicitly that it will endure forever, Ps. 45:6; 72:17; 39:36; 37; Isa. 9:6; Dan. 2:44; II Sam. 7:13, 16; Luke 1:33; 2 Pet. 1:11.

b. His universal kingship, After the resurrection Christ said to His disciples: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth." Matt. 28:18. The same truth is taught in 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:20-22. This kingship should not be confused with the original kingship of Christ as the Son of God, though it pertains to the same realm. It is the kingship of the universe entrusted to Christ as Mediator in behalf of His Church. As Mediator He now guides the destiny of individuals and nations, controls the life of the world and makes it subservient to His redemptive purpose, and protects His Church against the dangers to which it is exposed in the world. This kingship will last until the victory over the enemies of the kingdom of God is complete. When the end is accomplished, it will be returned to the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

To memorize. Passages pointing to:

a. Christ as prophet:

Deut. 18:18. "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

Luke 7:16. "And fear took hold on them all; and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us: and God hath visited His people."

b. Christ as priest:

Ps. 110:4. "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Heb. 3:1. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus."

Heb. 4:14. "Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

c. His characteristics as priest:

Heb. 5:1, 5. "For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins... So Christ also glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He that spake unto Him, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

d. His sacrificial work:

Isa. 53:5. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Mark 10:45. "For the Son of Man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His soul a ransom for many."

John 1:29. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

1 Pet. 2:24. "Who His own self bare sins in His body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness."

1 John 2:2. "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the whole world."

e. His intercessory work:

Rom. 8:34. "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

Heb. 7:25. "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

1 John 2:1b. "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

f. Christ as King of Zion:

Ps. 2:6. "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

Isa. 9:7. "Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever."

Luke 1:32, 33. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: 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; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

g. Christ as king of the universe:

Matt. 28:18. "And Jesus came to them and spake to them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

Eph. 1:22. "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church."

1 Cor. 15:25. "For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet."

For Further Study:

a. What do the following passages tell us respecting the nature of the prophetic work? Ex. 7:1; Deut. 18:18; Ezek. 3:17.

b. What Old Testament types of Christ are indicated in the following passages: John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 8:3-5; 9:13, 14; 10:1-14; 13:11, 12?

c. What do the following passages teach us respecting the kingdom of God? John 3:3, 5; 18:36, 37; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20.

Questions for Review:

1. What threefold office has Christ?
2. What is a prophet, and what proof is there that Christ is a prophet?
3. How did Christ function as prophet in various periods of history?
4. What is a priest in distinction from a prophet? How did their teaching differ?
5. What Scriptural proof is there for the priestly character of Christ?
6. What are the characteristics of a priest?
7. What was the nature of Christ's sacrificial work? How was it foreshadowed in the Old Testaments?
8. In what does the work of Christ as intercessor consist?

9. For whom does Christ intercede?
10. What is the spiritual kingship of Christ, and over what realm does it extend?
11. How is the present kingdom of Christ related to His future kingdom?
12. How long will His spiritual kingship last?
13. What is the nature and purpose of His universal kingdoms?
14. How long will this last?