

Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King

We just finished looking at who Jesus is, through the metaphors of John, that he is the Word, Life, the True Light, the Lamb of God, the Bread of heaven, the Door to the sheepfold, the Good Shepherd, and the Vine. There are other metaphors in other places, but we can also see who he is through his functional positions, namely that he has a three-fold ministry as Prophet, Priest, and King.

These three offices had OT human counterparts, but never all in the same person. e.g., priests were of tribe of Levi, kings were of Judah (in the southern kingdom, descendants of David). Christ is the perfect prophet, the perfect priest, and the perfect king, all in one.

1. Prophet

A prophet is one who speaks for God, whether the subject is past (e.g., Moses writing Genesis), present (OT prophets telling Israel and Judah to "repent, now"), or future (warning of judgments to come, or speaking of the then-future new covenant, or the latter days and the Day of the Lord).

Jesus was commonly recognized as a prophet.

Mt. 21:10-11 – “. . . all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”

Lk. 7:16 – “And there came a fear on all, and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us . . .”

Lk. 24:19 (On the road to Emmaus) “. . . And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.”

Jesus himself claimed to be a prophet.

Mt. 13:57 – “. . . A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.”

Lk. 13:33 – “. . . for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

Moses predicted the rise of a specific Prophet, "like unto me" (Dt. 18:15-19). The people in Jesus' day were commonly asking if he or John Baptist were 'that prophet' which is plainly referring to Dt. 18.

Jn. 1:21, 25 – (to John the Baptist) “And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not.

Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. . . . Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not thou that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?”

Jn. 6:14 – “. . . This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

Jn. 7:40 – “Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.”

Ac. 3:22-23 – “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

If a prophet speaks for God, how much more appropriate to call Jesus a prophet, who is the Word of God?

2. Priest

"A priest is a God-appointed mediator between God and man through whose intercession, by the offering of blood, atonement is made and justification obtained for the guilty sinner." - Emery Bancroft, in Christian Theology, Systematic and Biblical

The OT priest's ministry was to:

- a. Offer sacrifices on behalf of the sinner (or nation)
- b. Make intercession to God on behalf of the sinner (or nation)
- c. Bless the people on behalf of God

The OT priests could only come from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron, and yet Jesus was plainly of the tribe of Judah. How could he then be said to be a priest? He is a different kind of priest. There were priests before Aaron (e.g., Melchizedec, Jethro).

Jesus was "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec" - Ps. 110:4, Heb. 4:14 - 5:6, 7:14-28. His calling was of God (not self-appointed), he offered up his own self as a perfect sacrifice, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. Heb. 9:11-15.

1 Jn. 2:1 - Jesus is our advocate with the Father. He has compassion on us because he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:14-16).

3. King

God had promised the Messiah as the son of David, sitting upon his throne in righteousness. 2 Sam. 7:12-16

Ps. 89:3-4 – “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne unto all generations.”

Isa. 9:6-7 – “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.”

Jer. 23:5-6 – “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Dan. 7:13-14 – “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Lk. 1:31-33 – “. . . Thou shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: 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.”

Jn. 1:49 – “Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”

Rev. 19:16 – “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

4. Application to His people

Eph. 4:8 quotes Ps. 68:18, that Christ led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men (received gifts for men). We have the privilege of entering into all 3 of Christ's three-fold ministry as prophet, priest, and king!

God's people as prophets: there is now the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12, 14), and the church office of prophet (Eph. 4:11), but also, each one of us has the more general function of the prophet in that we are God's representatives on this earth and are to speak His words to a lost and corrupt world. We are his ambassadors and he has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

God's people as priests: certainly not the corrupt and self-appointed priesthood of Roman Catholicism or the Episcopalians, but rather of 1 P. 2:9 – “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

There are different callings and offices in the church, but there is no distinction between clergy and laity in the Bible. We are all priests of God, under Christ. The priesthood is not some “holy order” of men to rule over the church.

God's people as kings: Rev. 1:5-6 – “. . . Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father . . . ”

Not only will we reign with Christ during the Millenium (Rev. 2:26-27, 20:4), but we are to reign in life even now - Rom. 5:17 - "... much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Right now we are to rule over ourselves, and over sin (Gen. 4:7), but in the future we will literally reign and rule with Christ in his millennial and eternal kingdom.

Rev. 5:9-10 – “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; **And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.**”