

LESSON 9:

Rediscovering Redeeming Love

Jesus Is Prophet, Priest, and King

Getting Started

There were three major offices among the people of Israel in the Old Testament: the *prophet* (such as Nathan, 2 Sam. 7:2), the *priest* (such as Abiathar, 1 Sam. 7:2), and the *king* (such as King David, 2 Sam. 5:3). These three offices were distinct. The *prophet* spoke God's words to the people; the *priest* offered sacrifices, prayers, and praises to God on behalf of the people; and the *king* ruled over the people as God's representative. These three offices foreshadowed Christ's own work in different ways. Let's look at Christ's work, thinking about the perspective of these three offices or categories. Christ fulfills these three offices in the following ways:

- **Prophet**—He reveals God to us and speaks God's words to us.
- **Priest**—He both offers a sacrifice to God on our behalf and is himself the sacrifice that is offered.
- **King**—He rules over the church and over the universe as well.

(Above taken from *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem)

One of the great contributions of John Calvin was developing the Reformed Doctrine of the threefold offices of Christ. The *Westminster Confession* would later embrace it. (See margin.) In the Old Testament, the prophets, priests, and kings were anointed by God to occupy these offices. With divine blessing they became *mediators* between God and man. A mediator is a *go-between*. He is one who stands between two or more persons or groups who are in a dispute and tries to reconcile them. In biblical terms, human beings are described as being at enmity against God. We rebel, revolt, and refuse to His rules. As a result, God's wrath is upon us. In order for this catastrophic situation to be resolved, it is necessary that we become reconciled to God.

To bring about our reconciliation, God sent His Son to be our *Mediator*. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant of the Law. In the Old Testament Moses served as God's go-between, giving the Israelites the law. But his work of mediation was not one of ultimate reconciliation. Jesus is superior to Moses. The author of Hebrews says:

Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Savior of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto whom He did from all eternity give people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified."

—The Westminster
Confession

Whereas, in the Old Testament, the mediating offices of prophet, priest, and king were held by separate individuals, all three offices are held supremely in the one person of Jesus. R.C. Sproul says: “Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecy of Psalm 110. He is the one who is both David’s descendant and David’s Lord. He is the Priest who is also the King. The Lamb who is slain is also the Lion of Judah. To gain a full understanding of the work of Christ we must not view Him merely as a prophet, or as a priest, or as a king. All three offices are perfectly fulfilled in Him.”

The thoughts for this week are:

Jesus a Prophet

Jesus as Priest

Jesus as King

Jesus as Prophet

The Old Testament prophets spoke God’s words to the people. Moses was the first major prophet, and he wrote the first five books of the Bible. Following Moses there was a succession of other prophets who spoke and wrote God’s words. Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jeremiah were all prophets.

1. (a) What did Moses predict in Deuteronomy 18:15-18? Who do you believe Moses was referring to? What characteristics did Moses say this prophet would have?

- (b) What does Paul say in Acts 3:22-26?

The duty of the Old Testament prophet was to reveal God and speak His words to the people, but Jesus *is* the Word (John 1:1). When people observed Him they were observing God in the flesh.

2. Read John 14:9-11. What did Jesus tell Phillip about His words?

Jesus was like the Old Testament prophets in the following ways:

- **His Anointing**—At the time of His baptism He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament prophets were anointed with oil when they were commissioned for service. Oil was often symbolic of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.
- **His Announcements**—Jesus often used the same *announcements* that were used by the Old Testament prophets. Examples are: “Woe unto you,” and “Blessed are you.”
- **His Prophetic Messages**—Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus made prophetic predictions like foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1-28). His first sermon was based on a prophetic text. He read Isaiah 61:1-2 and then stated: *Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.* (Luke 4:18-21)

Examining all of Jesus’ prophetic teaching, He taught most often on the impending Kingdom of God. Like John the Baptist, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus echoed the preaching of John the Baptist regarding the coming kingdom and how the people were unprepared for it because they were unclean.

I would not give much for prophetic intelligence if it does not begin, continue, and end with the person, work, and glory of Christ.

—H.H. Snell

3. (a) Read Isaiah 6:1-2 along with Luke 4:16-21. In His first sermon Jesus quotes the Scripture from Isaiah. The scene described in Luke is a dramatic one, especially since this sermon is given in the synagogue in which Jesus grew up. If you had been in the audience what would have been your reaction?

(b) What was the reaction of the crowd in Jesus' home church to His message? (Luke 4:28-30)

(c) If Christ is to be our Example (I Peter 2:21) then what is your responsibility to proclaim God's message? (See Colossians 4:2-4.) How can you be a part of sharing the message this week?

(d) If you are going to "proclaim it clearly," as Paul states in Colossians 4:4, then what are you going to need to do in order to accomplish that?

- The Old Testament prophets spoke God's words to the people.
- Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus was anointed for service with the Holy Spirit, He made announcement, and His messages often foretold the future.
- Christians should be modern-day prophets and give out God's message in their generation.

Truth for Today: *The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners. Isaiah 61:1*

A prophet is one who knows his times and what God is trying to say to the people of his times.
—A.W. Tozer

Jesus as Priest

In the Old Testament, the priests were appointed by God to offer sacrifices. They also offered prayers and praise to God on behalf of the people. In doing so they *sanctified* the people or made them acceptable to come into God's presence in a limited way. In the New Testament, Jesus becomes our great High Priest. This theme is developed extensively in the book of Hebrews.

Jesus was like the Old Testament priests in the following ways:

- **Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice for sin**—In the Old Testament the Israelites brought lambs and other animals to the priest who would sacrifice them to God on their behalf. These sacrifices offered in the Old Testament had no intrinsic value in atonement for sin. They simply foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice that would be made by Christ. They were not permanent, but had to be repeated over and over again. (Heb. 10:1-9)
- **Jesus continually brings us near to God**—The Old Testament priests not only offered sacrifices, but also in a representative way they came into the presence of God from time to time on behalf of the people. But Jesus does much more than that. As our perfect high priest, He continually leads us into God's presence. We no longer need a Jerusalem temple or a special priesthood to stand between us and God. (Heb. 10:19-22). When Jesus died the curtain in the temple was ripped from top to bottom allowing the people to enter the presence of God (Matt.15:38).
- **Jesus continually prays for us**—The priests in the Old Testament offered prayers on the behalf of the people (Heb. 7:23-25)

Jesus was like the Old Testament priests but He was superior to them because His sacrifice was both perfect and permanent.

1. (a) Read Hebrews 10:1-9. Did the Old Testament sacrifices have any power to remove sin?

- (b) What was the purpose of the animal sacrifices?

- (c) Why do you believe that Jesus' sacrifice was *permanent* and the animal sacrifices had to be repeated year after year?

2. What does it mean to you that Jesus is continually praying for you? (Hebrews 7:23-24)

The priests in the Old Testament, at God's command, were always descended from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was descended from the tribe of Judah. The blood of the animal sacrifices was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat within the Holy of Holies behind

All Christians whatsoever belong to the 'religious' class; there is no difference between them except as they do different work...Baptism makes us all priests... Those who exercise secular authority have all been baptized like the rest of us; therefore they are priests and bishops.

—Martin Luther

the veil in the temple at Jerusalem. Jesus' blood was shed on a cross outside the city gates. This confused the Jews.

2. (a) Read Hebrews 6:20-7:7. In the passage who is defined as the *greater*—Abraham or Melchizedek? Why?

- (b) Why is it important that Jesus is described as a *priest in the order of Melchizedek* in Hebrews 6:20 and Psalm 110:4?

3. (a) Read I Peter 2:9. What does this verse say about believers today?

- (b) Examining the duties of priests above, what do you believe is your personal responsibility as a member of the priesthood? Be specific. (See Romans 12:1)

- (c) What changes do you need to make in your life in order to become a godly priest?

- Jesus was like the Old Testament priests because He offered sacrifice for sin, brought them closer to God, and prayed for the people.
- Jesus was superior to the Old Testament priest because His sacrifice was perfect and permanent.
- The priesthood is made up of believers today and should share in priestly responsibilities.

Truth for Today: *This...but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.* Hebrews 7:24-25

Every day bring God sacrifices and be the priest in this reasonable service, offering thy body and the virtue of thy soul.
—St. John Chrysostom

Jesus as King

The theme of the kingdom of God is a central theme that runs as a thread through both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the king had the authority to rule over the nation of Israel. Like the prophets and the priests, they were anointed when they came into office. The Old Testament is replete with prophecies describing Jesus as King.

1. Read the following verses and describe what it says about Jesus being King.

Psalm 45:1-7 _____

Psalm 89:3-4 _____

Zechariah 6:12-13 _____

The New Testament indicates that the kingdom of God is both present and future. There is an *already* and a *not yet* to the kingdom. Both aspects must be understood and embraced by Christians. To view the kingdom either as already totally realized or as totally futuristic is to pervert the message of the New Testament. We serve a King who has already been enthroned. (Heb. 8:1; Rom. 8:34) Yet we await His triumphal return in glory when every knee will bow before Him (Phil. 2:10). His coronation has already taken place, but His throne is not yet visible for all to see.

In the New Testament, Jesus was born to be King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2). However, Jesus refused any attempt by people to try to make him an early king with earthly military and political power (John 6:15).

R. C. Sproul says: “John Calvin argued that the church’s task is to make the invisible kingdom of Christ visible. The essence of the ministry of witness is to make manifest what is hidden to the eyes of men. Our King is also Prophet and Priest, perfectly fulfilling the role of mediator of a New Covenant that was sealed by and in his blood.”

At His ascension, Jesus commanded His disciples to be His witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8). They are to witness to the reign of Jesus as King of Kings. Jesus’ current status as cosmic King is invisible. The world is either ignorant of His sovereignty or denies it. It is the task of the church to give visible witness to the invisible kingdom (Acts 1:8).

2. Read Acts 1:8. What are some ways that you can *give visible witness to the invisible kingdom*?

3. (a) Read Ephesians 1:19-21. Jesus is enthroned already at the right hand of God. (See margin.) How aware do you believe the rulers and governments of this world are of His reign? Explain.

Jesus is enthroned at God’s right hand, and all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. It is a profound political reality that Christ now occupies the supreme seat of cosmic authority. The kings of this world and all secular governments may ignore this reality, but they cannot undo it. The universe is no democracy. It is a monarchy.

–R.C. Sproul,
**What is Reformed
Theology**

Jesus Christ will be Lord of all or he will not be Lord at all.

–St. Augustine

