



## **PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING**

**Kevin Presley**

Christians have long referred to Jesus in sermon and song as Prophet, Priest, and King. But this is much more than poetic prose or soaring sermonic rhetoric. It refers to three distinct offices central to the Jewish religion, and consequently to God's entire system. These three offices point to the primary title Christ wears which is that of the Christ or the Messiah. Messiah is a Hebrew word and Christ is the Greek word expressing the same thing: both words mean "anointed" or "chosen One" and refer to one chosen by God and divinely set forth to fulfill a certain office. Now, under the Old Covenant, men were selected by God and anointed to fill one of these three important roles. There were prophets through whom God spoke to His people. There were priests who mediated between the people and God. And then there were kings who were anointed to rule over them. When one was chosen to serve in a respective office, one, acting by God's authority, would go that person who God chose and take a horn of holy oil and anoint them with it. This was God's way of designating that individual as His selection to that office and appointing them to serve. So, we might say that prophets, priests, and kings throughout the Old Testament were anointed ones (that is they were chosen by God to fill those important offices), but they were not THE anointed One! Their service in those offices were ultimately prophetic pictures of Jesus who would one day come and fulfill all three roles at the same time. Usually, these three offices were distinct and occupied by different people. In other words, a prophet was not usually a priest, a priest was not a king, a king was not a prophet and so forth. Jesus, however, is all three at the same time! He is the perfect Prophet, the perfect and sinless Priest, and the perfect and absolutely sovereign King. Jesus did not come and assume these offices Himself. He came with the Father's anointing and God set Him forth before first, His people the Jews, and ultimately the whole world to be the rightful occupant of these three divine appointments.

Now, whereas a man under the Old Testament would have his head symbolically anointed with oil, this too foreshadowed the anointing of Jesus. Not with literal oil but with the Holy Spirit. This is where the title of Christ relates to Jesus. Had you met the Lord Jesus during the first thirty years of His life, He would not have introduced Himself to you as Jesus Christ (because for one thing, Christ is not His name –

it is a title or description) but also because for most of His earthly life, He was not identified as the Christ but simply as Jesus of Nazareth. He lived an ordinary (though pure and sinless) life. He had a childhood – He grew into a Man and worked with His hands as a carpenter. He had neighbors, and we would assume friends and associates. But one day, during the ministry of His cousin, John the Baptist, the world’s perception of Him started to change. As John was preaching the imminent arrival of the Messiah and His kingdom rule – He was baptizing in the River Jordan at Bethabara. Jesus went to John this day and requested baptism by him. Jesus had no sins to repent of or to remit but He still complied with this command of God because it fulfilled righteousness (or it was the right thing to do) and thus set an example for others and to connect the message of John to His own message and ministry. It was at this moment, that God “anointed Him” before the people. The record tells us in Matthew 3:16-17 “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Now, God’s pronouncement meant much more than to merely commend what Jesus had just done. He, by sending the Spirit down upon Him, was doing what those men of old had done with that oil down through the centuries every time a priest or a new King or a prophet was chosen and set forth before the people. God was anointing Jesus – that is setting Him forth – as Prophet, Priest, and King. As I said, all three of those divine offices were to now find their fulfillment and culmination in Jesus, the Christ – the Anointed One! This is how the moment where Jesus left the carpenter’s shop and began His ministry leading up to His death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement.

Let’s consider for a few moments these three offices that Jesus has fulfilled and occupies today. First: Jesus is our anointed PROPHET. Now, a prophet is one who speaks the word of God. Referring to the prophets under the Old Testament, Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” In other words, God expressed Himself to mankind through the words and works of the Old Testament prophets. The prophets preached; they upbraided the people in the sins and called the people to repentance and a renewed relationship with God; they prophesied the future, including not only God’s promises of hope but His sure threats of judgment to come; and they manifested God’s power by sometimes performing miracles. Well, Jesus perfectly fulfills this divine office. In fact, the writer of Hebrews shows us that Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic office in the beginning of his letter. Hebrews 1:1-2 says: “God, who at sundry (or various) times and in divers manners (or in different ways) spake in time past (throughout the Old Testament) unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days (the New Testament dispensation) spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

Jesus not only serves as God’s ultimate Prophet by the things He has spoken but by His very person. Not only His words but His very being is the expression of God to man. The beautiful prologue to John’s gospel says in John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word (the logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus did not only BRING the Word of God, He IS the Word or expression or revelation of God to us. Look at verse 14: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” And then, verses 17-18: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Not that God did not speak through Moses and not that Christ doesn’t have a law but rather that Christ is the full and final revelation of God to man) “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Jesus is God (not the Father but He is God the Son) and He,

by His becoming human manifested the unseen God to us and is the ultimate revelation of God and the supreme Lawgiver.

The greatest human prophet Moses, himself, prophesied of Christ in Deuteronomy 18:15 saying: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;” Peter as well as Stephen made it clear in their preaching that Moses was speaking of Jesus according to Acts 3:17-23 and Acts 7:37-38. But remember what the religious leaders of the first century did with this Prophet God sent forth – the same thing they did to the other Prophets God had sent throughout time. Stephen said in verses 51-53 (and this is what cost him His life) “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”

To reject the teachings and commands of Jesus is to reject Jesus – and to reject Jesus is to reject God! If you resist the words of Jesus, you’re resisting the word of God and thus are rebelling against the authority of God Himself. You cannot claim that Jesus is the Christ of God – the anointed One of God – and turn around and deny or ignore His words and His commandments. You cannot set His ways aside and still call Him the Christ.

But then, to say Jesus is the Christ is also to say that He is our PRIEST. Old Testament priests were men chosen to be mediators between sinful humans and holy God. Because of man’s sinful condition, we cannot just saunter into the presence of God and appear before Him. His holiness will not allow that. So, God provided a system to allow man access to His throne and that is through a priesthood. Now, in the dawn of time, that role was assumed by the father of each family. God dealt with the family unit through the father which is why we call that the Patriarchal age from Adam up until Moses.

With the establishment of the nation of Israel though, God moved to a national model. He manifested His presence with them through the tabernacle and its sacrifices and forms of worship and He chose the men of the Tribe of Levi to serve as priests for the people. It was the job of these priests to offer sacrifices on behalf of the nation whereby God could be appeased, and His righteousness satisfied. These priests were anointed to their office and that meant that the people were to look to them as their mediators or their means of representation before God. Now, in particular, God appointed a High Priest whose duty and privilege it was every year on the Day of Atonement (according to Leviticus 16) to enter into the Holy of Holies where God’s presence, the Shekinah glory, dwelt and to approach God at the Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant and offer the blood of sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the people. That was God’s temporary means of dealing with sin – temporary because such blood did not possess the inherent value to atone for the sins of man but merely satisfied God’s demands for the time and pointed forward to the means God would give Himself as a sacrifice upon Calvary.

Now, the book of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4:14 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” Jesus is our Great High Priest. Hebrews 10:1 says: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” Verse 12: “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;” And then verses 19-23: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; (Jesus) Let us

draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, (the application of the blood of Christ to our sin-stained souls) and our bodies washed with pure water (the washing away of the filth of sin in baptism – just like that priest had to wash in the laver before entering God’s presence). Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” What a beautiful picture!

Friend, there is absolutely NO access to God but through the work of Jesus the Christ our Great High Priest. You cannot come to God on the basis of your good character because your character will never be good enough. You’re a sinner. You cannot come to God on the basis of some noble philosophy or on the basis of good intentions. You cannot come to God through Mohammed, Buddha, or any other person. Jesus Christ is THE way, THE truth, and THE life (John 14:6). He is our Great High Priest, and He is therefore our only right of access to the throne of a holy and just God. 1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

And then, Jesus was anointed as our KING. I told you that usually one man only held one office. There was the exception of a man who lived in the days of Abraham and His name was Melchizedek. The bible tells us in Genesis that He was the King of Salem and that he was also a priest. He uniquely filled both offices at the same time. That mysterious reference in Genesis is there for a reason – because He prefigured or represented Christ as serving in both offices at the same time as well. Hebrews chapter 7 clearly draws this parallel. Now, the office of King sets forth His sovereignty and His power and authority over us.

God’s physical nation under the Old Testament was ruled by a succession of kings. Actually, God didn’t intend for that to be the case. God never wanted Israel to have a human king but rather, He was to be recognized as their only ruler (1 Samuel 8:7). God did not design man to be ruled over by other men. That order is the result of sin and man’s rebellion. Eventually, Israel wasn’t satisfied to have God as their king. They wanted a human king so they could be like the pagan nations around them. God let them have a king, not because that was His desire but so that they would reap the consequences of their rebellious wish. And like God has always done, He worked through this arrangement to foreshadow His Son and through His Son, place Himself back upon the throne. God used the throne of Israel to symbolize the reign of His Son, Jesus, the CHRIST (His anointed One) in the hearts of His people. Jesus was the rightful heir of the throne and God set Him upon that throne at His right hand. Thus, when Jesus completed His work on earth and prepared to ascend back to heaven he told His apostles “All power (authority) in heaven and in earth has been given unto Me.” (Matthew 28:18) He then ascended to His Father and Peter boldly preached then on the Day of Pentecost that the Jesus they had crucified had not ascended to David’s throne and that He was to be recognized and submitted to as their King – God’s anointed. Friend, this is what Peter meant when He said in Acts 2:36 that “God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both LORD and CHRIST.” God has given to Him rule over His kingdom and He will rule until He has put all enemies under His feet including death in the resurrection at the end of time and He will then deliver His kingdom up to God according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

My friend, do you understand now the importance of what is called the Good Confession? Do you understand the eternal significance of confessing with our mouths Jesus as the Christ? We are told that we MUST confess Him before men to be saved. Peter made that confession: “Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God...” The Ethiopian nobleman made that confession before he waded down into the waters of baptism “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God...” Those aren’t just words. That isn’t just an acknowledgement of some vague faith in Jesus. It is a statement of absolute allegiance to Jesus Christ. When you stand before God and before men and you say, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the

Son of God” you are saying “I believe that Jesus is God’s anointed One”. “I believe and I recognize Jesus as my Prophet – I will LISTEN to Him and receive His words in faith and obedience. I claim Jesus as my great High PRIEST and I confess that there is no other way to be forgiven of my sins to be reconciled to God but through Him. And I bow before Jesus as my Lord and my King and I will surrender my will, my heart, my life my body, my possessions, my past, my present, and my future to Him and acknowledge Him as my only true King and I will be loyal to Him, will serve Him, and I will OBEY Him. Is that what Jesus means to you? Have you made that good confession before men and been united with Him in baptism? If not, won’t you come to Jesus today and recognize Him as your PROPHET, YOUR PRIEST, and YOUR KING.

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