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Reading & Blog

The Bible reading this week is Luke 6-10. Go to the website and blog your thoughts concerning these chapters.

Prophet, Priest and King

John A. Welch

Praise Him! praise Him! Jesus our blessed Redeemer!

Heav'nly portals loud with Hosannas ring!

Jesus, Saviour reigneth forever and ever;

Crown Him! crown Him! Prophet, and Priest, and King!

Christ is coming! over the world victorious,

Pow'r and glory unto the Lord belong:

("Praise Him! Praise Him!", Abiding Hymns: 280, verse 3).

The offices of Christ have usually been divided into three major categories. They are prophet, priest and king. As prophet he reveals God's will to man. As priest he compassionately transmits man's needs to God. As king, he is our ruler and authority.

Jesus, The Prophet

There was confusion among the Jews about the Messiah. Many anticipated a prophet separate from the Messiah. This anticipation was so acute that some expected a physical reappearance of Elijah (to fulfill Mal. 4:5-6) or Jeremiah. This confusion may have been drawn from the inability of the Jews to reconcile the prophecies of the conquering Messiah with those of the suffering servant (Isa. 53). How could a descendant of the persecuted prophets be the same person as the King of Zion?

Their ill-formed conclusions appear in several passages. "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ" (John 7:40-41; see also John

6:14; Matt. 16:13-14). John the Baptist faced this confusion (John 1:20-21). The apostles made this same mistake at the transfiguration, when Elijah actually appeared. Jesus corrected them: "I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. . . . Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:12-13; see also 11:14).

The Jews were willing to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet, as are many today. "There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen among us; and, That God hath visited his people" (Lk. 7:16). "The multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. 21:11).

Jesus claimed to be a prophet. In Luke 13:31-35, Jesus exhibited no fear of Herod's threats to kill him "for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee . . ." Jesus seemed to place himself in the line of the prophets in recounting the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21:33, 45).

Peter indicated that Moses' statement concerning a coming prophet in Deut. 18:15 was fulfilled in Jesus. He began by explaining a solution to the Jewish inability to reconcile the King and the Sufferer. "Those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). He then continued, "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" (Acts 3:22).

I do not believe that it is necessary to note the methods of Jesus' preaching and prophecy in this short study, but we will note the superiority of his revelation above all other prophets. His prophecy was constant, not intermittent. Old Testament prophets could speak only when inspired, yet every word and action of Jesus was teaching or prophecy (John 3:34). His prophecy was complete, not partial. Old Testament prophets did not know all the truth, nor even the end of the things of which they spoke (1 Pet. 1:10-11). Any reserve shown by Jesus was not his inability to declare, but the inability of his disciples to listen (John 16:12). His prophecy was infallible. Old Testament prophets made mistakes because their prophecy was subject to their own faulty prejudice. Thus, Samuel mistook the elder brothers of David for the anointed (1 Sam. 16:6ff), and Nathan told David that he could build the temple (2 Sam. 7:1ff). We need not fear for each mistake is noted and corrected by God. Jesus' prophecy needed no such correction. The prophecy of Jesus was final. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4; see also Heb. 1:1-3).

Jesus the Priest

There can be no notion of religion without a priest, a mediator: one who will approach God in our behalf. The Hebrew Christians knew Jesus as their Saviour and certain elementary facts of the gospel, but they did not know him as their priest (Heb. 5:10-6:3). In the Old Testament, there was no godly priesthood in Egypt, only

Who is Jesus?

A Prophet

Points to Consider

1. Many in the first century believed Jesus was a prophet.
2. Jesus alluded to Himself as a prophet.
3. The apostles recognized that Jesus was a prophet.

Many in the First Century Believed Jesus Was a Prophet

John 4:19-20 *The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."*

The Samaritan woman at the well **concluded** that Jesus was a prophet. Jesus knew things about her that only **God** could have revealed to Him.

John 9:17 *They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."*

The blind man that Jesus healed immediately recognized Him as a prophet. **Only** God could have given Jesus the power to open a man's eyes.

Matt 21:10-11 *And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" 11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."*

When Jesus entered Jerusalem just days before His death, the people hailed him as a prophet.

Matt 21:43-46 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." 45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.*

After telling the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, the Pharisees wanted to arrest Jesus but they didn't because the people **believed** Jesus was a prophet.

Luke 7:16-17 *Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." 17 And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.*

After Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead, the people glorified God by recognizing Jesus as a **great** prophet.

Luke 24:19-21 *So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.*

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus knew Jesus was a Prophet mighty in **deed** and word before God and all the people.

Jesus did what prophets do. Jesus spoke from God. He prophesied about future events. He performed signs to show he was from God.

John 11:20-26 *Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Jesus prophesied that **Lazarus** would rise again. He did.

John 12:30-36 *Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. 34 The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.*

Jesus prophesied that He would be **crucified**. He was.

Luke 24:4-9 *And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" 8 And they remembered His words.*

Jesus prophesied that He would **rise** in three days. He did.

John 12:49-50 *For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."*

Jesus, like all other prophets, spoke the words given to Him by **God**.

Jesus Alluded to Himself as a Prophet

Mark 6:1-6 *Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, "Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him. 4 But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." 5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*

Jesus was talking about Himself when He said a prophet is not without **honor** except in his own country.

Luke 13:32-33 *And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' 33 Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.*

Jesus went to Jerusalem to **die** as a prophet.

The Apostles Recognized that Jesus was a Prophet

Deut 18:15-22 *The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. 18 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. 19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him. 20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' — 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.*

God said that He would raise up a prophet like **Moses**. This prophet would speak God's words to the people.

Acts 3:22-26 *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. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."*

Peter taught that Jesus was the Prophet God told Moses would come.

Acts 7:37 *This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'*

Stephen clearly identifies Jesus as the prophet like Moses and one who **superseded** him. The Jewish leaders thought that accepting Jesus was a rejection of Moses. In reality rejecting Jesus was a rejection of Moses.

It was **impossible** to accept one and reject the other!

Conclusion

People who saw what Jesus did and heard what He said, believed that He was a prophet. Jesus alluded to Himself as a prophet.

Peter and Stephen agreed that Jesus was the prophet God told Moses would come and teach the people His ways.

Many today believe Jesus was a prophet including **Muslims**.

Others, such as the **Jewish** people, don't believe Jesus was a prophet.

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redemption. Similar to the Priesthood given at Sinai, Jesus serves as our priest, to reveal man's true relation to God, to provide access to God, and to prevent fear of approaching him.

The character of the priest determines the nature of the religion. If the priest or his sacrifice is imperfect, then the religion is imperfect. If both are perfect, the conscience will effectively be purged and sin, as a barrier between God and man, will be removed. Paul proved that under the Old Testament imperfection reigned, while in Christ a perfect priest is found. The Old Testament priests were imperfect because they were only allowed to enter the holiest once a year, then not without offering blood for their own sins (Heb. 9:6-9). The sacrifices offered were imperfect because they had to be continually offered. They never effectively did the job of removing sin (Heb. 10:1-4).

In Jesus we have a perfect priest.

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own

sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:24-27).

The various aspects of his priesthood are set forth in Hebrews. His commission is given in Heb. 5:4-6. He was called of God. not taking this honor to himself. His preparation for this service is cited in several passages. The priest had to be one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way . . ." (Heb. 5:2). Thus, in Jesus' case, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15; see also 2:14-18; 5:8). The priest must have a suitable offering (Heb. 8:3; 5:1). Christ's sacrifice was "his own blood;" Himself "once offered" (Heb. 9:12; 27-28). The scene of His ministry is the sanctuary. The Old Testament priests served a "worldly sanctuary" (Heb. 9:1); Christ serves in ". . . the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:1-2). Christ's intercession is our behalf is so capable of abolishing our fear of approaching God that we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace . . ." (Heb. 4:16). The result of this new priesthood is that we have a "new testament" which enables us to approach God by a "new and living way" (Heb. 9:15; 10:20). "For the

priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12).

Jesus, the King

The kingship of Jesus was the most disputed of His claims to be the Messiah. The Jews were willing to acknowledge him as the Prophet. Paul explained by the precedent of Melchizedek how Jesus of the tribe of Judah could be a priest (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:1-17). The Jews would not accept him as a king. Some have asserted that Jesus never intended to be a king. Some claim that he is not a king yet, but will be in a future millennium.

Christ claimed to be a king. He spoke of the time when "the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory" (Matt. 19:28). In two parables He applied this claim to Himself. He obviously applied the Parable of the Pounds to Himself as the nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom (Luke 19:11-27). In explaining the Parable of the Tares, He said, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of the kingdom all things that do offend . . ." (Matt. 13:41).

Jesus was willing to accept the title of king from others. This is a bigoted assumption if the title was not really His to accept. The plea of James and

John's mother was that her sons would receive an exalted place in his kingdom (Matt. 20:20-22). In preparing to enter Jerusalem, Jesus went to some effort to fulfill a prophecy which stated, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt. 21:5; Zech. 9:9). Upon approaching the city, he was hailed by that title most appropriate, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38).

He was charged and condemned as a king, thus indicating that the people had common knowledge of His claim to be a king. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (Luke 23:2). In replying to the question "Art thou a king then?" Jesus stated, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world . . ." (John 18:37). Aghast at the inscription of the cross, the Jews pled, "Write not, the King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews" (John 19:19-22).

In Acts 2, Peter introduced Jesus as having been by the resurrection raised to sit on the throne of David (Acts 2:30-36). Some argue that His authority is now incomplete. They insist that there is a future and finer manifestation of Christ's kingdom here on the earth. Yet, now he is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph. 2:21-22). What is lacking? His authority is absolute. To insist that Christ is not a king now is to ignore some of the most assertive passages of the New Testament.

We might conclude by considering the nature of his kingdom. His kingdom is spiritual. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight... but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). Paul later emphasized this by saying, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4; see also Eph. 6:10-18). It is important to note that this not only excluded all those weapons of steel, brass and

wood, but others as well. Second Corinthians is rebuking in context that sort of carnality which Paul condemned in the first letter to these Corinthians. "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). I often hear brethren bemoan the politics in churches. Some erring brethren seem to feel that if the simple force of their argument will not convince men, then they must campaign and inveigh privately and behind the scenes! This is the sort of smoky room politics that afflicts our governmental affairs. This is just as much a carnal weapon as bashing another in the head with a club. It is just as condemned. Christ never stooped below the spiritual kingdom, nor should its citizens. Christ's kingdom is a universal kingdom. It is not bound by geography, time, race, or space. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). Christ's kingdom is an eternal kingdom. It will never change or be replaced. It will never be conquered. Its citizens will never have to adapt to new rule. "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 forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33; see also Rev. 11:15; 22:5).

Yet, someone will ask about 1 Cor. 15:24-28. It says there will come a time when he will give up His reign as king to God. Certainly, no one denies that there will be no end to his kingdom, but 1 Cor. 15 unmistakably does say that Christ will give up His reign when the last enemy, death, is destroyed.

The answer can be found in the Greek word "ever" in the three passages initially cited. It is the Greek word *aion*. It variously means age lasting, through the age, or through the ages, depending on whether it is singular or plural. Various phrases where it is used are the "end of the age" (Matt. 24:3 NASV, and many others), "the sons of the age" (Luke 16:8 NASV), "before the ages" (1 Cor. 2:7 NASV), "the ends of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11, NASV), etc. In the Septuagint version of Ex. 31:17 the Sabbath was a "sign . . . forever." The preceding verse de-

fines "forever" as lasting "throughout their generations." Ex. 30:8 reminds the Sabbatarians that the Sabbath would last only on the same basis as would the candlestick and the incense. Thus, the statement of Luke 1:33 is saying that Christ will rule over the house of Judah throughout their generations, not just for a few years as their former kings reigned. This harmonizes with the great commission where Christ comforts us with the statement, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (*aion*)" (Matt. 28:19). He will be with us with all authority and power as long as the gospel is being preached or throughout the age. These agree perfectly with the intention of 1 Cor. 15, where Christ will reign as long as the world lasts, throughout our generations, while the gospel is being proclaimed, till the last enemy is destroyed. Then the eternal kingdom will return to the Father.

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