

## FOUNDATIONS: What Christians Should Believe

25 January 2011

*SALVATION: How God Makes Rebels His Children*

Part 5

**Context:** In our ongoing study through our church's confession of faith,<sup>1</sup> we are currently discussing the doctrine of salvation.<sup>2</sup> Thus far we have learned what it means to be saved, how salvation is wholly of grace, and how salvation is only and always mediated through Jesus Christ. Tonight we will consider Jesus' three mediatorial offices, His roles as Prophet, Priest, and King.

**Salvation:** *We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by his death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven; He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith.*

### Review:

I. "Salvation...wholly of grace":

- A. In what way is salvation wholly of grace?
- B. Why must salvation be wholly of grace?
- C. How can a righteous God give saving grace to His enemies?
- D. How should we reflect God's grace to others?

II. "...through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ":

- A. What does it mean that salvation comes through a mediator? Who is this mediator?
- B. Explain the connection between a salvation wholly of grace and a salvation that is accomplished by a mediator. Why does a salvation by grace demand a mediator?

**Bible Reading:** Hebrews 3:1-6

### Study:

I. What are Jesus' "Mediatorial Offices"?

- A. As you may have noticed, our statement of faith teaches that we are saved, not through the mediatorial *office* of Jesus, but through the mediatorial *offices* (emphasis on the plural) of Jesus. What might these offices be?
- B. Throughout most of church history, Christians have summarized Jesus' mediatorial work around the three roles of *Prophet, Priest, and King*. Here are a few historic examples of this method of organization (note especially the dates):

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete copy of our church's confession of faith, visit our website ([www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org](http://www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org)) and look under the "We Believe" category. We will attempt to put all the previous notes from this series on the church website in the not too distant future.

<sup>2</sup> If you would like to go deeper in the study of the doctrine of salvation, we recommend the following resources: For an introductory study, see *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010); for a more intermediate consideration, consider *The Truth of the Cross* by RC Sproul (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007); for a challenging yet rewarding study, check out *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* by John Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).

1. "...the true Christ, the divinely inspired and heavenly Word, who is the only high priest of all, and the only King of every creature, and the Father's only supreme prophet of prophets."  
—Eusebius (AD 263 – 339), *Church History*, 1:3:8
  2. "*For what threefold office was Christ anointed?* Christ was anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King."  
—Martin Luther's Small Catechism(AD 1529), question 125
  3. "So that this Office to be Mediator, that is, to be Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church of God, is so proper to Christ, as neither in the whole, nor in any part thereof, it can be transferred from him to any."  
—First London Baptist Confession of Faith (AD 1644), article 8
  4. "It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus,...to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king..."  
—The Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith (AD 1742), 8:1
  5. See also Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Westminster Confession of Faith(1647), Second London Baptist Confession (1689), The New Hampshire Baptist Confession(1833), The 1925 Baptist Faith and Message, etc.<sup>3</sup>
- C. While it is true that no single Bible verse teaches that Jesus is the ultimate prophet, priest, and king, this is a clear and coherent deduction drawn from Scripture. The Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings collectively foreshadowed the person and work of Jesus. Once Jesus is born, He assumes the sole role of prophet, priest, and king in our lives.

## II. In What Sense is Jesus Our Ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King?

### A. The Old Testament Background:

1. In the Old Testament, God gave His people three different types of leaders, fulfilling three different roles:
  - a. Prophets (e.g., Moses, Isaiah, etc.) spoke the Word of God to the people on behalf of God:  
Numbers 12:6 –And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream."<sup>4</sup>
  - b. Priests (e.g., Aaron, Zadok, etc.) brought sacrifices to God on behalf of the people and made atonement<sup>5</sup> for the sins of the people:  
Leviticus 4:20 – Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.
  - c. Kings (e.g., David, Solomon, etc.) ruled the people of God on behalf of God:  
1 Kings 1:34 – And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' You shall then

<sup>3</sup>In the event you are wondering why there are not any examples from the Middle Ages, the Middle Ages were not particularly kind on Evangelical Christianity. In general, this was a time when "Christendom" ruled and the church gradually degenerated into something resembling, at times, the Mafia. True believers were either in the minority and/or persecuted. While there were certainly some bright lights (e.g., Anselm, Hus, Wycliffe, etc.), by and large, this was a time when Evangelicalism was simply surviving and not thriving. This required the Protestant Reformation, which resulted in so much revival of biblical Christianity.

<sup>4</sup>Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>5</sup>Though we should always remember that the atonement made by the Old Testament priests was anticipatory, provisional, and not saving. Like Hebrews 10:4, 11 says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins...And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." The Old Testament sacrifices always foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Christ and Old Testament saints were forgiven, not on the basis of the shed blood of animals, but because God knew that Jesus would eventually die on the cross for their sins. In this sense, Old Testament sacrifices were similar to our celebration of the Lord's Supper, only looking forward to Jesus' death as opposed to backward.

come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, for he shall be king in my place. And I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

2. In the Old Testament, these three roles collectively mediated God to man. Prophets spoke for God, priests made sacrifices to God, and kings ruled in God's stead. God remained in heaven while the prophets, priests, and kings acted on His behalf on earth.
3. In the Old Testament, one individual could not be a prophet, a priest, and a king simultaneously. Priests were required to come from the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3) while Kings were required to come from a different tribe, the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).<sup>6</sup>
4. The Old Testament prophesied that somehow the coming Messiah would fulfill the roles of prophet, priest, and king:

a. Messiah as the Prophet Greater than Moses:

Deuteronomy 18:15-18 – The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [i.e., Moses] from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.'<sup>7</sup>

b. Messiah as the Priest Greater than Aaron:

Psalms 110:4 – The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."<sup>8</sup>

c. Messiah as the King Greater than David:

2 Samuel 7:12-13 – When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

B. The New Testament Fulfillment:

1. The New Testament clearly reveals Jesus as fulfilling all three roles of Prophet, Priest, and King:

a. Jesus as the Ultimate Prophet:

(i.) John 12:49-50 – For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

(ii.) Acts 3:18-23 – What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled...Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'

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<sup>6</sup>Prophets could come from any of Israel's tribes (and sometimes from outside Israel; e.g., Balaam) but had to be sovereignly called by God to this ministry (e.g., Isaiah 6).

<sup>7</sup>While this verse may not appear immediately Messianic, the Jews clearly understood this as a reference to the coming Messiah. See Acts 3:22 & 7:37.

<sup>8</sup>That this Psalm is Messianic is clear from the context. David begins by saying in verse 1, "The LORD said to my Lord..." How could King David have both a LORD and a Lord? Furthermore, this one designated the Melchizedekian priest will be a priest forever. No human individual could fulfill that promise. Moreover, the New Testament repeatedly interprets this Psalm as Messianic (e.g., Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34).

- b. Jesus as the Ultimate Priest:
    - (i.) John 17:1-26 – When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours...Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.”
    - (ii.) Hebrews 4:14 – Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.
  - c. Jesus as the Ultimate King:
    - (i.) Mark 15:2 – And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.”
    - (ii.) Acts 2:29-31 – Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.<sup>9</sup>
    - (iii.) Revelation 17:14 – They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”
2. The New Testament resolves the dilemma of Messiah as being Prophet, Priest, and King simultaneously in a most remarkable manner:
- a. A thoughtful Old Testament Jew would have encountered a difficulty when studying the promises of the coming Messiah. Like we discovered above, the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would be a prophet, a priest, and a king. According to the Old Testament Law, however, one individual could not be a priest and a king simultaneously since they came from different tribes.
  - b. From a human perspective, this seems to be an insurmountable dilemma. Did we misunderstand God’s promises regarding the Messiah? Is this a mistake in the Bible? Will there be more than one Messiah?
  - c. The New Testament’s resolution to this perceived dilemma is ingenious. Relying on a somewhat obscure passage in Genesis 14, the New Testament reminds us that there was source from which priests might be selected in addition to the tribe of Levi: the order of Melchizedek:
 

Hebrews 5:1-10 – For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

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<sup>9</sup>Note in this passage the way in which it is the resurrection which uniquely proves that Jesus has fulfilled the promise to David that there would be a Davidic king forever. In a sense, Jesus’ resurrection is His coronation as God’s anointed King of the universe (cf. Philippians 2:1-11).

"You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you";

As he says also in another place,

"You are a priest forever,  
after the order of Melchizedek."

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

- d. In this way, the Bible once again provides us with an answer that no man could have conceived of. Jesus would not come from the expected line of priests, but from a much older, more honorable<sup>10</sup> line, the order of Melchizedek. Even the person of Melchizedek prefigures Christ in that he is both "king of Salem" and "priest of God most high" (Genesis 14:18). Again we see how the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man.

### III. What is the Significance for My Christian Life that Jesus is our Ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King?

- A. As Prophet, Jesus perfectly and fully reveals God to us (John 1:1-18). We need never turn to other religions, superstitions, world philosophies, sooth-sayers, etc. to know God. Jesus and Jesus alone is the full revelation of God and to know Him is eternal life (John 17:3). Moreover, since Jesus speaks to us today through the Bible (John 16:12-15), we have in the Bible everything we need for salvation and godly living (2 Peter 1:3-4).
- B. As Priest, Jesus perfectly and fully redeems us to God by the sacrifice of Himself (Ephesians 1:7). Consequently, all Old Testament sacrifices have passed away since they foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11-14). We should not look at the Lord's Supper, or any other ritual, as any sort of atoning sacrifice. Moreover, because of Jesus' complete priestly ministry, we should never attempt to atone for our own sins in any manner (e.g., penance, rituals, self-imposed punishment, etc.) or look to other religions for forgiveness. Jesus is the only means of reconciliation to God (John 14:3). Furthermore, Jesus' priestly ministry continues today as He continually intercedes in prayer for believers (Romans 8:34).
- C. As King, Jesus perfectly and fully rules God's people for God (Revelation 17:14). Jesus has the authority to command people and people are bound by God to obey Jesus. Furthermore, when we become Christians we are embracing Jesus as our king (Colossians 1:13), though, certainly, we will grow in our subjection to Jesus for the rest of our lives. Since Jesus is a loving king, He promises to protect those in His kingdom from the Evil One (1 John 5:18). One day King Jesus will return and judge all those who rejected His kingly authority (Matthew 25:31-46), establish His dominion unchallenged (1 Corinthians 15:36-28), and believers will reign with Him forever (2 Timothy 2:12).

### IV. What are Some Practical Applications of Jesus Being our Ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King?

- A. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King powerfully demonstrates the unity of the entire Bible. The Old Testament storyline, with its various prophets, priests, and kings, is not a meandering, pointless history but a carefully crafted, sovereignly orchestrated account preparing us for Jesus.
- B. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King reminds us of the supernatural inspiration of the Bible. The incredible manner in which the entire storyline of the Bible, written by dozens of human authors over a period of nearly 1500 years, points us to and prepares us for Jesus proves without a doubt that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and not some invention of men (2 Timothy 3:16). How could Jesus accidentally fulfill over 300 prophecies and types?

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<sup>10</sup>I use the term "honorable" because unlike the Levitical line, the order of Melchizedek was not marred by shameful priests (e.g., Nadab, Abihu, etc.) who utterly failed in their priestly duties and brought reproach on the mediatorial office.

- C. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King teaches us how to read the Old Testament with an eye to Jesus (Luke 24:44-45). Jesus is the ultimate Hero of the Bible and the various little heroes of the Bible foreshadow Jesus. King David's reign foreshadows the greater reign of Jesus, Moses' prophetic ministry foreshadows Jesus' greater prophetic ministry, etc. As we read the Bible, our attention should not ultimately be drawn to any human character, but to the divine Messiah the Bible centers upon.
- D. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King reminds us of how we should think of our Christian lives in terms of King/subject. While Jesus is certainly our friend, He is also the King of Kings. We do not have the freedom to ignore some of Jesus' instructions or to cut them out of the Bible (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus words are the authoritative words of our Great King. Furthermore, since Jesus is our King, we need not live in terror of the Devil. While the Devil may fiercely attack and sometimes wound us (e.g., Job), Jesus is a far greater King than the Devil and will eventually vanquish the Evil One (Revelation 20:1-15).
- E. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King emphasizes how in evangelism we are calling upon people to submit to Jesus' loving leadership. Trusting in the biblical Jesus includes believing that He is God's King of the universe (i.e., "Christ", cf. Romans 10:9). Let us make this clear as we talk to others about Jesus. We are not inviting them to make Jesus their "life-coach" but the King of their souls.
- F. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King Jesus reminds us of how Jesus leads His church through the Bible. Sometimes people wonder, "If Jesus is the Head of the church, how does He lead the church today?" The answer is, "the Bible." It is through the Bible that Jesus speaks and leads. Therefore, in our individual lives, and as a congregation, to the degree that we are ordered according to Scripture, to that degree will we be led and guided by Jesus.
- G. Seeing Jesus as the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King shows us how Jesus meets all our needs. The three offices of prophet, priest, and king correspond to three deep-seated human needs. As a result of our sin we need spiritual guidance (prophet), we need forgiveness (priest), and we need someone to rule and protect us (king). All these essentials Jesus and Jesus alone richly provides. It is as Dr. Kim Riddlebarger writes:

"In his threefold office as prophet, priest, and king, Jesus cures our ignorance, he removes our guilt, and he delivers us from our corruption."<sup>11</sup>

**Application:**

- I. In what ways has this lesson enabled you to appreciate your salvation more than you did before? Has it moved your heart to worship God for what He did to save you?
- II. Can you think of additional practical applications of Jesus' three roles as Prophet, Priest, and King?
- III. What point from tonight's lesson most stood out to you and why?

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<sup>11</sup>Valiant for Truth Blog, article for 1-24-12, <http://wscal.edu/blog/entry/basics-of-the-reformed-faith-jesus-as-prophet-priest-and-king>, accessed 1-25-12.