

THE WORK OF CHRIST AND THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN (3)

The Prophetic Work of Christ

A. Introduction

1. The work of Christ is the term that is used to describe all Christ did when He came to earth to save us by dying on the cross, all that He is doing now that He has risen from the dead and ascended to God's right hand, and all that He will do when He returns.

Throughout the history of the church, Christians have spoken of Christ's work in His roles as a Prophet, as a Priest, and as a King.

"Prophet, priest and king is not the only way to talk about Christ, but it has to be one of the simplest and best." (Kevin DeYoung)

2. However, the roles of prophet, priest and king, not only are a helpful way of understanding the work of Christ, they are also a helpful way of understanding the life of a Christian.

Christians imitate Christ in each of these roles, albeit in a lesser way.

"Remember this: The work of Christ and the life of a Christian can be summed up in three words – "prophet", "priest", and "king." (Kevin DeYoung)

3. To help us understand what the Bible teaches about the work of Christ and the life of the Christian as prophet, priest, and king, we're going to use some of the different theological tools which are at our disposal.

Exegetical Theology Tool: we use this tool when we study and seek to understand individual texts of the Bible.

Biblical Theology Tool: we use this tool when we trace how a theme develops and progresses through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Systematic Theology Tool: we use this tool when we sum up what the whole Bible teaches on a specific doctrine.

Pastoral (or Practical) Theology Tool: we use this tool when we apply what we learn to the life of the church and individual Christians.

4. A prophet is someone who speaks the words that God gives him to speak.

It is through a prophet that God makes Himself known, along with His will and His ways to His people.

"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him." (Deuteronomy 18:18)

5. God created human beings to be prophets.

To speak truthfully to others what they have been told about God from God.

Adam was the first to occupy this role of prophet, passing on God's words to Eve.

After sin entered the world, people no longer would be able to know God and speak about Him unless God graciously revealed Himself and his purposes to them – which He did.

Adam and Eve were given a promise about a Saviour which they passed on to their descendants.

With the establishment of the nation of Israel, the three roles of prophet, priest, and king, became increasingly separate from each other and were occupied by different individuals.

However, this did not mean that there was no prophetic role for all of God's people.

Israel were supposed to teach God's Law to the surrounding nations, and by doing this they would fulfil a prophetic function. Yet rather than drawing the nations to God, Israel was drawn to the gods of the nations, and so the prophets were needed to call them back to their God.

There were though two problems with all the prophets God raised up for His people. Firstly, none of these prophets were perfect. Secondly, none of these prophets could change the hearts of the people so that they would fulfil the prophetic role they were created to have.

A future prophet was needed who would not only speak God's words, but who would cause His people to as well.

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him." (Deuteronomy 18:15)

God promised that He would come, and in Jesus of Nazareth, He did.

B. Christ's Identity as a Prophet

1. This was announced by John the Baptist.

The final words God spoke to Israel announced that the future prophet would be preceded by Elijah.

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes." (Malachi 4:5)

By the beginning of the first century, it is clear the people of Israel were looking for God to keep His promise and send a prophet who would speak God's words and restore God's people.

"Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." (John 1:19-21)

Though John the Baptist denied that he was the Elijah to come, Jesus saw him as this.

"For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matthew 11:13-15)

John announced to the people that the prophet was coming, and that Jesus was He.

"And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:7-8)

"Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." (John 1:32-34)

2. This was confirmed by God the Father.

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:1-5)

God tells Peter, James and John to "Listen to Him!" Though Moses and Elijah were present, it is Jesus they were told to listen to.

He is the prophet God's people must listen to.

3. This was proven by His words and deeds.

Jesus acts like a prophet.

"The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back." (Isaiah 50:4-5)

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35)

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." (Acts 2:22)

Jesus speaks like a prophet.

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." (John 12:49-50)

"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matthew 7:28-29)

Jesus calls Himself a prophet.

"He replied, 'Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day – for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" (Luke 13:32-33)

4. This was recognised by the crowds.

"The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." (Luke 7:15-16)

5. Christ is the prophet that was promised.

"After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:2-4)

"Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness." (Revelation 1:5)

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." (Hebrews 1:1-2)

6. Christ is more than a prophet.

He doesn't just speak the Word of God – He is the Word of God – the one through whom God makes Himself known.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

"You have heard that it was said... But I tell you that..." (Matthew 5:21-22)

C. Christ's Work as a Prophet

1. Christ's work as a prophet is to reveal God to us and speak God's words to us.

Why do we need Him to be our prophet?

Because without His prophetic work, we would be ignorant of God and unable to know Him and live a life that pleases Him.

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21)

"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." (Ephesians 4:18)

2. Christ does His work as a prophet by making known the Father and by showing us the way to the Father.

"No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." (John 1:18)

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

He did this by His own personal preaching and teaching.

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:27)

He did this by His word written (pre-incarnation by the prophets / post-incarnation by the apostles).

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." (John 16:12-15)

"...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20)

And by His Spirit, He enables us to understand His words, respond to them in repentance and faith, and be saved.

"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." (Luke 24:45)

3. Christ's work as prophet continues by His Spirit today as His Word is proclaimed by His people.

"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

"But the word of God continued to increase and spread." (Acts 12:24)

"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power." (Acts 19:20)

4. When Christ returns, He will as prophet deliver God's judgment on all people based on how they have responded to His words.

"There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day." (John 12:48)

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no-one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God." (Revelation 19:11-13)