

Christ as PROPHET

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[0 : 0 0] I want this evening to begin what will be already short and mini-seas, but we'll do it just in the monthly meetings. So this month, we're looking at the first of the three aspects of Christ's office of prophet, priest, and king.

And so we look at that of prophet tonight, Lord willing, of priest in October, and then in November, the kingship of Christ. So we'll confine this to the monthly meetings rather than stray over into the ordinary weekly prayer meetings, which tend to be more often disrupted by other things.

So this month, prophet, next month, priesthood, and finally in November, kingship of Lord willing, of course. And when I was thinking on trust being led into this particular thought of study, one of the things that troubled me slightly was, I thought, well, we know that Christ is constantly or frequently referred to as our prophet, priest, and king, but, you know, I can think of priesthood examples and kingship examples.

Is Jesus actually referred to as prophet anywhere? And then once you begin to think of it, it becomes embarrassing just how often he actually is.

One of the most obvious indications of that Christ has come to fulfil that prophetic office is that which is initially prophesied way back in Deuteronomy 18, where Moses, under God's guidance, says, at verse 15 of Deuteronomy 18, The Lord thy God will raise up unto me a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken.

[1 : 4 7] According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of December, say, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command them.

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of them. Now, of course, a cynic might say, Oh, yes, well, of course the Lord's going to raise up another prophet after Moses.

There's lots of prophets in the Old Testament. I mean, Joshua would be the next one after that, and he's the obvious one that he would succeed Moses. God would raise up another one after him, or if not him, then Isaiah, or Jeremiah, one of the others, that would account for that.

But this was something which was understood messianically by the Jews. It was understood to apply to the Messiah. And one reason that we know this to be the case is remember that Moses says, under God's inspiration, A prophet like unto me will the Lord raise up.

[3 : 0 3] And as we go to the end of Deuteronomy, in chapter 34, we see at verse 10 it says, There arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

There arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. In other words, it cannot possibly be referring to Joshua.

And even if it were to be referring to Isaiah and Jeremiah and all these other ones, then surely that would have been adjusted in Deuteronomy. But it stands that there has not been a prophet like Moses since then, to the extent that the Jews and Israelites came to understand this prophecy of the prophet, that prophet that you come to be, one who would fulfill the office of the Messiah.

And we have an instance of that, for example, if we look at John chapter 1, where John the Baptist is baptising, and the Jews, the same priests and the invites from Jerusalem, said, Who art thou?

And he confessed, and denied not, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he said, I am not. Art thou that prophet?

[4 : 19] Now some people take this and they read this and say, Are you Elijah? Are you that prophet? In other words, asking twice, Are you Elijah? That's not what it's referring to. When they ask first of all about Elijah, one of the most towering prophets of the Old Testament, particularly as the Old Testament ends with the Lord saying he would send the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

We know that John the Baptist is in the spirit and power of Elijah, but he says, No, he's not Elijah. Not physically Elijah. Art thou that prophet? Now when we say art thou that prophet, why baptisest thou then?

If thou be neither Christ nor Elias, neither that prophet, verse 25 of John 1. That prophet refers to Deuteronomy 18. The prophets say that a prophet would come.

That prophet would come. Who would be the fulfilment of all that Moses had spoken. Now, did people understand Jesus in that sense, in that prophetic sense?

Well, again, there is abundant testimony in the New Testament that people did think in terms of Jesus as at least a prophet.

[5 : 30] I'll run through some of them with you, Neil. Forgive me, we're simply multiplying examples. I think it's necessary to reinforce the point that in his day Jesus was recognised both by the crowds and also by his own disciples as being at the very least a prophet.

Matthew 21, verse 46. When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they saw to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude because they took him for a prophet.

The multitudes took Jesus for a prophet. Mark, chapter 6, verse 14. King Herod heard of him, that is, heard of Jesus. But his name was spread abroad and he said that John the Baptist was risen from the dead and therefore mighty works do show for themselves in him.

Others said that it is a prophet or as one of the prophets. Luke chapter 7, verse 16.

Where we read, And there came a fear, this is after he has raised the son of the widow of Nain and raised him back to life. There came a fear on all. And they glorified God saying that a great prophet is risen up among us.

[6 : 47] And that God hath visited his people. And then in Luke 24, of course, in the road to Emmaus, when Jesus meets with the two disciples, one of whom is Cleopas.

And we read in chapter 24 of Luke, verse 18, one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger of Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and had the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified them.

Now these are disciples of Jesus, who understand him to be at the very least a prophet. Turn a couple of pages, and then we've got in John chapter 4, verse 19, The woman at the well of Samaria, who is not Jewish, and is not one of the Lord's people in that sense, that the woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Turn a couple of pages again, John chapter 9, and we see at verse 17, After Jesus opens the eyes of the man born blind. And then the family says, They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him that he hath opened thine eyes?

[8 : 03] He said, He is a prophet. People in Jesus' own day recognized him as being, at the very least, a prophet.

Whatever other office Jesus occupies, Clearly that of a prophet is not only that which God has appointed him to, but also which people recognized in his day, that this was the least that could be said about him.

We might, however, legitimately say, Well, that's all very well. That's what people said. But, you know, does Jesus himself say that he is a prophet? Sometimes people have wrong ideas, you know, about Jesus.

Some of them thought it was Elijah, thought it was Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets come back to life. Now, Jesus doesn't clearly be one of the old prophets brought back to life. But what does he say about himself?

Does he acknowledge himself to be a prophet? Well, if we read in Matthew's account of the Gospel, in chapter 13, and we see at verse 57, when he comes to his own township, he's at Nazareth and Galilee and so on.

[9 : 13] And they say, Well, we know who this person is. We know that he's the carpenter's son. His mother's called Mary. His brother, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. His sisters, are they not all with us? Once then hath this man all these things, and they were offended in him.

But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country. Now, this parallel is given likewise in Mark's account of the Gospel, and also in John's account of the Gospel. We read, of course, from John 5, we turn back to John 4, verse 44, you've got it there.

Jesus himself testified that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. But also, we see in Luke's account of the Gospel, chapter 13, where we see it, verses 32 and 33, when the Pharisees said, Get thee out of the park, or her head will kill thee.

And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

[10 : 20] Nevertheless, I must walk today and tomorrow on the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

Now, in the previous instance, if he just says, Oh, a prophet's not without honour, save in his own country, he could have just been kind of quoting a proverb there. He could just have been saying, Well, you know, if you have prophets not without honour in his own country, then how much more am I going to have no honour in my own country?

But this reference to his death, this reference to his own crucifixion, that is coming at Jerusalem, where he goes on to say, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would thou gather thy children to gather as a hen, thou gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.

Now, in this instance, he directly specifies that he must go to Jerusalem to die there, because it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

So, in other words, we can say without fear of contradiction, that both to the people in Jesus' day, the crowds, the multitudes, also to his own disciples, he was recognised as being, at the very least, a prophet, that he himself did not deny that office, but rather owned it, and acknowledged, yes, he was a prophet, he was that prophet, he was the fulfilment of all the scriptures, as his teaching makes clear.

[11 : 49] Now, of course, what he says about John the Baptist, when the people, he says to the people, What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, I'm more than a prophet.

If John the Baptist is more than a prophet, and he is taken as being, traditionally speaking, the last of the prophets, with a capital P, not the last of those with the gift of prophecy, we read of those in the New Testament, in the Acts of the Apostles, who have the gift of prophecy, but the last one of the prophets.

He is taken as being, more even than a prophet, Jesus says, For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.

In one sense, John the Baptist is the last of the prophets. But Jesus, who is the ultimate prophet, as well as priest and king, the ultimate prophet succeeds John.

There can be no prophet, in that sense, after Jesus. Once you have the marriage, you don't go back to engagement, and likewise to betrothal.

[13 : 04] Once you've got the fulfillment, you don't go back again to the preparation. You can't say, Oh, someone's a prophet, and someone's a guru, and they came after him, and they're a great teacher, just like Jesus was.

No, not just like Jesus was. There is no comparison with Jesus. He acknowledges himself to be the ultimate prophet.

Then we acknowledge, or since we acknowledge Jesus to be that fulfillment, that prophetic office, we have to say, Well, what is it that a prophet does? What is the purpose of a prophet?

Well, I used to think that when, when in traditional, reformation, and, theology, and outlook, you say, Well, nowadays we don't have prophecy in the old sense, but, but preaching is really just like prophecy, isn't it?

And I thought, well, come on, it's not, it's not really, is it? I mean, we are taking the scriptures, those who are called to preach, and they're expounding them, and they're setting them forward. A prophet was one who had visions of God, and God spoke directly to them, or to an angel, and he said, Thus saith the Lord.

[14 : 12] Well, that was partly because they didn't have the written scriptures in front of them. Those prophets who were given the words of God, often subsequently wrote them down, or else dictated them for others to write down, as Jeremiah, for example, was Baruch.

And their words became part and parcel of the written word of God. But when God spoke to them and through them, there wasn't scriptures amassed and piled up for people to consult.

And one reason that we can say, again, with some authority, that yes, the setting forth of God's word, the proclamation, the declaration of what God has said, thus saith the Lord, is, in a sense, preaching is not unlike prophecy in that sense, because this is what prophets did, with or without the written scriptures, and primarily, the ultimate prophet, capital P, Jesus.

That is what he himself is doing. That is what he himself is doing here. He is not actually, and I'm saying this with all reverence, Jesus is not taking, sort of, divine inspiration with a fresh new word, here, a fresh new word there, or something that nobody's ever come out with.

As I've mentioned often in the past, the overwhelming majority, the vast majority, 90 something percent, if not actually 99 percent, of everything Jesus teaches, can already be found in the Old Testament scriptures.

[15 : 46] which means that when Jesus teaches them, and expounds them, with or without parchments in front of him, and let's face it, it's always without, because he knows them, he knows them from memory, he knows them from heart, he is the author of them, it is nonetheless the written word of God, which he is himself expounding, which he is setting forth.

That's what a prophet does. He declares the word of God. He sets forth the words that God has given to men, in order that men may understand them, and receive them, and have them declared to them, because not everybody can go and search the scrolls.

And Jesus says, when he says, search the scriptures, as he says here in verse 39, in John 5, but we live, search the scriptures, for in them you think that ye have eternal life. And they are the ones who testify of me.

He's not saying it, to the multitude in general, saying, well that's all very well for him, but I've got to go back to my fields, or to my fishing boat, I've got to go back, and repairing my dike, and mending my roof, and you know, I'm not able to search the scriptures, the rabbis and the others, they can sit in the synagogue, and they can look through all the scrolls, and the part, I can't do that.

Jesus isn't saying this, to the multitude in general, he is saying it, to the scribes, and the Pharisees. He is saying it, to those, who oppose him, but who are nonetheless, steeped in the scriptures, of the Old Testament.

[17 : 15] These are they, who think they know the law, who think they know the word, and the words, of God. And Jesus says, well if you really know these things, go back to them, and actually read them, and actually look at what they say.

Search the scriptures, for in them you think ye have eternal life, because you know them so well, you think that's what will save you. They are they, which testify of me, and you will not come to me, that ye might have life.

In other words, this is what Moses, and all the prophets, were testifying, leading up to, the fulfillment in Jesus. That's what he says, to those people, who knew the scriptures, says go back to them, search them.

You know, nowadays you might say, to a techie person, or whatever, you know, scroll through your app, or you know, go on your computer, and call up the programs, and so on, and check. Get your search engines, to look, and find out, what it says.

But in those days, they learned, they read, they memorized. They knew the scriptures, but they had always, read them, through the lens, of prejudice, and could not see, when Jesus came, that this is actually, what it's all pointing to.

[18 : 23] Now, in all fairness to them, we would have to say, with charity, neither did the disciples, know that well, that this was the fulfillment, of all the scriptures.

The disciples were not, actually that switched on, either, that Jesus was the fulfillment. They didn't see, this is why, you know, we read at the end, of Luke's account of the gospel, we made reference, to the disciples, on the road to Emmaus, and when Jesus, then meets with them, and when he speaks, to them, he says, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expanded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

Luke 24, verse 47. And again, when he meets with the disciples, later on, back in Jerusalem, he says, these are the words, which I speak unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written, in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.

Then opened he, their understanding, that they might understand, the scriptures, that they might see, in them, the declaration, of God.

God personified, God having come, having visited, his people, it's good news, that the time had come, for it all, to be fulfilled.

[19 : 38] Now, most of you, will be aware, you haven't already, picked up on it, that just under, a week ago, leave our world, settled with a minister, of its own. Now, I can assure you, that's an event, for which I longed, and prayed, and waited, with great anticipation.

And all the work, of preparation, and all the forms, that had to be filled, and all the applications, that had to be made, and all the meetings, that had to be held, and all the signatures, that had to be gathered, and so on, all of this, it was work, it was in a sense, long, it was necessary, it was good, it was happy work, but when you get, the settlement, that is what, all of these things, have been leading up to, that is what, all the purpose of, signing the call, and calling the press, when they come down, and so on, all of these things, are leading up to that, nobody having, the settlement, now wants to say, actually, let's go back, to the vacancy again, and let's go over, these forms again, and have a couple of meetings, deciding, who we're going to call, or whatever, nobody's going to do that, nobody wants, to go back to that, they might look back, with affection, or sentiment, and say, look, there's the call, we subscribed, remember those meetings, we had, now we've got, the minister of our law, nobody wants, to go back, nobody wants to say, oh, if only we hadn't, got the fulfillment yet, if only we still, were in the preparation stage, this is Christ, in all the scriptures, that has been leading up to this, it is, as it says, in John's account, at the beginning, the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace, and truth, and that which is in brackets, you know, we beheld his glory, the glory has of the only begotten of the Father, that is in brackets, the sentence has to make sense, without the brackets, you have to be able to read it, as though the brackets aren't there, the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace, and truth, in the beginning, was the word, the word was with God, the word was God, the same was in the beginning, with God, all things were made by him, and without him, was not anything made, that was made in him, was life, and the life, was the life of man, and the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not, what is the word made flesh, it is Jesus, now what is he declaring to people, he's declaring, not simply, well, here I am, that's it, that's me, but rather, he is himself declaring, with this unique, divine authority, all that God had been saying, all along, that's one reason why, it is no irreverence, to say, that Jesus is not actually, coming up with much, there's a wee bit, but not much, which is actually novel, it is rather, that which God, has been saying, all along, because God, does not change,

God is consistent, throughout, and that, for which he has been, preparing his people, and that which, for all the law, and the sacrifices, and all the commandments, were leading up to, it's perfectly in life, and what he finally reveals, this is one reason, why, when Jesus himself, expands, and declares, and opens up, the word of God, in for example, the sermon on the mount, he does not undo, any of what God, has previously revealed, if we look at what he says, you know, in Matthew 5, for example, he says explicitly, think not, that I am come, to destroy, the law, or the prophets, I am not come, to destroy, but to fulfill, for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth, pass one jot, and one tittle, shall no wise, pass from the law, till all be fulfilled, he has come, to fulfill, whosoever therefore, shall break, one of these commandments, shall teach men, so he'll be called, the least in the kingdom of heaven,

Jesus doesn't break any, he fulfills them all, and sometimes, he demonstrates, the difference, the divergence, between what God, teaches in his word, and what men, have added to it, the man made traditions, he is quite happy, to dispense with, he is quite happy, to break them, and say, look, this is not, what God has commanded, but he goes back, to what God has revealed, and he expounds it, with his prophetic, authority, and this is what he gives, we look for example, at verse 20, except your righteousness, exceed the righteousness, of the scribes, and Pharisees, you shall in no case, enter into the kingdom of heaven, in other words, legalism will not cut it, it's not enough, just to be able to recite, things like a parrot, you know that, sometimes Christians, in other lands, are put under pressure, with a gun, literally to their head, saying you know, recite this, this particular portion, of the Quran, once you've recited it, that makes you a Muslim, now it's not the case, if you just recite, the Lord's Prayer, or the Catechism, or whatever, or the Apostles' Creed, that makes you a Christian, no it doesn't, you may have that, head knowledge, but that does not, engage the heart, it does not, bring you into this, relationship, with the Lord, your righteousness, has to exceed, the righteousness, of the scribes, and Pharisees, who may have, all the head knowledge, in the world, and all the legal, ability in the world, and may be able, to recite, vast chunks, of the Old Testament scriptures, but it does not, make them right, with God, it does not mean, that they have, a righteousness, that is necessary, to enter the kingdom, of heaven, what do you need, for that, you need perfection, and they don't, have perfection, and we don't, have perfection, that is why, we need a saviour, that is why, we need Christ, that is why, we need the ultimate prophet, of God's word, because he is, that word, you see,

I, again, I've used this example, in the past, I often used to, to wish to myself, that when we were, slogging away in school, through these, sort of English exercises, and a book, or an author, written and say, now what did the author, mean by this, write a nice, what do you think, the author meant, about that, what do you think, he's trying to get at here, or he or she, when she makes this part, or whatever the case may be, and I sometimes, wished, that we could just, sit the author, down in there, and say, what did you mean, by this passage, and they say, actually, I didn't mean that at all, that was what they were, getting you to write an essay, up, no I didn't mean that at all, what I meant was this, I thought that would be so great, that would be so great, if I didn't, I could tear up my essay, I thought I don't have to do that, anymore, because here's the author, they can tell us, what they actually meant, that's what Jesus is doing here, on the Sermon on the Mount, he's taking what God, has revealed, in his written word, and he is expounding, saying this is what God needs, he doesn't just want you, to recite, a legal mantra, he doesn't want you, simply, to fulfill, a legalistic requirement, a ticker box, he wants you to enter, into the spirit, of what has been revealed, see verses 21 and 22, you have heard, that it was said, by them of old time, thou shalt not kill, sixth commandment, he knows, what's written there, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger, of the judgment, but I say unto you, notice what he's not doing, he's not saying, forget it, you can kill if you like, he's saying, whosoever is angry, with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger, of the judgment, and whosoever shall say, to his brother, a racker, shall be in danger, of the cancer, it's almost like, a spitting out, kind of criticism here, but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger, of hellfire, what is he doing here, he's taking the spirit, of the commandment, saying okay, you might not physically, actually kill someone, that's only because, you're worried about getting caught, that's only because, you know, that if you kill them, then the state, is going to kill you, all the tribes, are going to gather around, and stone you to death, or the kinsman redeemer, is going to hunt you down, and slay you, that's the way the law works, and it may be, that the law, stops you from killing somebody, but really, you hate them in your heart, and Jesus says, it's fine to say,

[27 : 42] I shall not kill, that's great, but what I say to you is, that you will not, even hate in your heart, you won't be angry, with your brother, without a cause, you'll go beyond, even the legal, minimum, of what God requires, this is what he was getting at, when he said, you shall not kill, and I know, said Jesus, because I'm the author, I am God, and this is God's word, again in verse 27, ye have heard, that it was said, by them of old time, in other words, it is written, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh, in a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery, with her already, in his heart, how many people, are going to get caught, in that net, an awful lot of people, how many then, will be guilty, of that commandment, how many then, would on the basis, of their outward righteousness, get in heaven, nobody, Jesus says, your righteousness, has got to exceed, that near legal, minimum, whosoever looks, on somebody, and we have to take it, as applying to both genders, equally, so that's why he says, if you're right,

I have to pluck it out, faithfulness to God, should be more important, to you even, than your bodily comfort, and it's in this context, at this time, that he first mentions, about putting away, your wife, and divorce, and so on, because one of the main reasons, people would then, have a quickly, easy divorce there, is because they've seen, somebody else they fancy, they've seen somebody else, they lust after, what they like better, they know they can't, just have a flame, with them, because that just, wouldn't happen in that culture, people would kill them for it, so you dispose of one wife, you get another one, and this is what happens, in some religions today, all you have to do, is say, I divorce thee, I divorce thee, I divorce thee, that's it, now you can get, a younger model, and Jesus ties it in, with what is, often the case, pure, unadulterated lust, again, you've heard, it hath been said, by them of old time, I shall not forswear thyself, but shall perform, unto the Lord, my oath, but I say, don't swear at all, don't take oaths, lightly at all, don't swear by heaven, it's God's throne, or the earth, it's his food store, by Jerusalem, it's the city, of the great king, don't swear by your head, because you cannot make, one hair of a white, or black, just like your communication, yes, yes, or no, no, be truthful, be faithful, for what you're actually saying, you shouldn't need, these extra oaths, you've heard, it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, resist not evil, whosoever shall smite thee, and thy right cheek, turn to him, the other also, then you may not, and soothed thee, at thy law, take away thy coat, and my coat also, and so on, go the second mile, with people, you have heard, that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy neighbor,

I say to you, love your enemies, bless them, that curse you, do good to them, that hate you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children, of your father, which is in heaven, now this is new, this is taking, the minimalist commandment, designed to contain evil, and saying, you shouldn't just be containing evil, well then, you should be turning it inside out, the only way, to eliminate an enemy, is to turn into a flat, if you're praying, for somebody, it's very much harder, than to take that, if you love them, which love you, what reward have you, do you even the publicans, the same, you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others, you're not even the publicans, so, be ye therefore, perfect, even as your father, which is in heaven, is perfect, written, nobody can be perfect, nobody, nobody in us, it can be sinless, but we can be, fitted, for God's presence, when our heart, is right, with him, if we are redeemed, by the one, who is the word, made flesh, even that last verse, 48 and 45, that itself, is a quotation,

Deuteronomy 18, verse 13, it's all, based, on God's, written word, Jesus, is the prophet, par excellence, he is taking, the original word of God, of which he himself, is the author as well, and he is expounding, declaring it, setting it forth, with prophetic authority, that God, might be made, known, to his people, and that when Jesus, is able to say, he that has seen me, has seen a father, to declare with that, divine love and authority, this is what God is like, now, you can't, from nowhere, let us pray.