

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 51 – CHRIST'S THREE-FOLD OFFICE]

We have been looking at Jesus' ascension to the Father after His resurrection.

- ◆ Jesus through His incarnation and His atoning work on behalf of humanity has more than demonstrated God's love for His creation.
- ◆ The task now is to make mankind aware of the love this self-sacrificing God has demonstrated on their behalf.
- ◆ The goal of Jesus ministry remains the same, to save the world. The hard work of providing justification and reconciliation for all humanity has been accomplished.
- ◆ The emphasis of His ministry now changes to enlightening a mostly oblivious humanity of what God has accomplished on their behalf and to get them to respond voluntarily to His overtures.
- ◆ They need to be made aware of this "good news," as that is what the "gospel" is all about.

With His ascension to the Father, Jesus assumes three very important roles in order to complete the process of restoring reconciliation between God and humanity.

- ◆ Like many other parts of Jesus reconciling ministry, all three roles have been foreshadowed in the Mosaic Covenant God negotiated with ancient Israel.
- ◆ They are the role of prophet, priest and king.
- ◆ However there is a very important difference between the roles fulfilled by His ancient counterparts and the role Jesus assumes under the New Covenant.
- ◆ Whereas in the past these roles were a mere shadow of the coming reality, Jesus is the genuine article.
- ◆ Moses, in his role as prophet only passed on God's Word as it was relayed to him. Aaron, as high priest acted in a purely representative role as he led Israel in their worship of God, and King David was only king over an earthly kingdom.
- ◆ As we will see, Jesus is the realized embodiment of these three functions.

Neither did Jesus come by these titles lightly. They were agonizingly earned through His incarnation and His atoning sacrifice.

- ◆ His prophetic ministry began when the "Word" humbled Himself and became flesh (John 1:14).
- ◆ His high priestly ministry is primarily associated with His being led as a lamb to the slaughter as He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.
- ◆ His kingly ministry began when He stepped forward as our representative to be baptized by John, then went about the countryside proclaiming the kingdom of God, and finally submitting to the degradation of being raised up on a cross wearing a crown of thorns under the sign proclaiming Him to be, king of the Jews.
- ◆ However, it is only after He has completed each of these tasks and has ascended to the Father's right hand that He is rightfully proclaimed to hold the threefold office of prophet, priest and king.
- ◆ And it is from here at the heavenly sanctuary as part of the new creation, that Jesus continues His ministry as prophet, priest and king, in completing the task of bringing humanity into personal communion with their God.

So then, let's look at these three roles - First, Christ the king.

- ◆ A king, in order to be a king, has to have a kingdom.
- ◆ As we saw, the establishment of this new kingdom begins with Jesus' resurrection and His ascension.
- ◆ This forerunner, as He is called in the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 6:20), now represents all humanity is enthroned as King of kings and Lord of lords over all the powers in the universe.
- ◆ As Jesus prayed in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come" has become a reality.
- ◆ And this kingdom has a worthy king who has more than qualified for that position through His selfless sacrifice.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.***
- ◆ The "***grace of God***" is also the defining characteristic of how Jesus administers His reign.
- ◆ Unlike earthly kingdoms, which are normally ruled by the power of the sword, this heavenly kingdom is ruled by the power of sacrificial love (Matthew 20:24-26).

The kingdom has been established, it has a king, but there is one other crucial ingredient a kingdom needs if it is to be a genuine kingdom. It needs subjects.

- ◆ Among the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples before He ascended to heaven He signaled His intention to accomplish the task of populating this heavenly kingdom with other humans.

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- ◆ **Matthew 28:18-20** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- ◆ So we see the Father appointing the Son as the king of this kingdom, but then assigning Him the task of populating this kingdom with subjects.
- ◆ His final instruction to His disciples before leaving them was to "go, and make disciples of all nations."
- ◆ **v.19** *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*
- ◆ Here is the so-called "great commission" to gather peoples from every nation and tribe to become citizens of this heavenly kingdom.
- ◆ This is the task that preoccupies the king, Jesus Christ now that He has ascended back to heaven.
- ◆ And surprisingly, as indicated in this section of scripture, He enlists the help of mere mortals, the disciples, in this task. But not before He provides them with the godly resources they need to accomplish this task.
- ◆ Of course we are talking about Jesus' promise made to the disciples about the soon-coming support of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17).

Let's look at the second role, Christ the high priest.

- ◆ With Jesus' ascension to the Father, we see the fulfillment of the ritual played out under the Mosaic Covenant of the annual Day of Atonement.
- ◆ However, the sacrifice offered to the Father by this high priest has real forgiving power.
- ◆ **Hebrews 10:11-12** *Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God*
- ◆ This high priest approaches the Father's throne not just representing Israel, but the whole human race.
- ◆ And the sacrifice He brings with Him is His own spilt blood substituted in our place to cleanse us from our sins, but also the righteousness of His sinless life that He has lived on our behalf.
- ◆ Remember we spoke about Jesus' passive obedience and His active obedience. His passive obedience was His willingness to go as a lamb to the slaughter to cleanse us of our sins, and His active obedience was the righteous life He lived in response to the Father's command for us to be holy.
- ◆ This once for all time sacrifice by Jesus has been taken up into the life of God so that now forever before the face of God is the perfect offering guaranteeing forgiveness for all those who willingly accept Jesus' sacrifice on their behalf.
- ◆ **Hebrews 7:24-28** *but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely¹ those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*
- ◆ The Father's acceptance of this offering presented by this high priest is proof our sins have been forgiven and the Father has accepted us as His holy children.
- ◆ Because Jesus has united Himself to us in our humanity as our Savior, His acceptance is our acceptance.
- ◆ And because of His union with the Father, He is the guarantee of our redemption.

With this in mind, what is our standing with God?

- ◆ **Hebrews 4:14-16** *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*
- ◆ Notice Jesus' high priestly ministry in not just something He has accomplished in the past, but He continues to dispense grace and mercy to help us in our time of need.
- ◆ He continues to intercede on behalf of His people.

This introduces another important aspect of His priestly function.

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- ◆ Under the Old Covenant, Moses would go up to the mountain to receive instructions from God and then relay them to Aaron and the children of Israel.
- ◆ In other words, he fulfilled the function of the word or prophet of God under the Mosaic Covenant.
- ◆ The high priest, Aaron, on the other hand was commissioned with the role of implementing the word that was relayed to him by Moses.
- ◆ He led the children of Israel in their liturgical response to God's Word through their sacrificial and ceremonial worship.
- ◆ What we see happening here under the New Covenant is Jesus assuming and fulfilling both of these roles of both prophet and high priest.
- ◆ It is the amalgamation of these two priestly roles into the person of Jesus that necessitates the establishment of a new order of high priest, the Royal Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:19-20).
- ◆ The true Word of God no longer spoke from heaven as in the time of Israel, but humbly joined us with His incarnation (John 1:14).
- ◆ And He provided humanity's perfect response to that word through His righteous life and His sacrificial death.
- ◆ And just as Aaron led Israel's worshipful response to the grace and mercy extended by God, so this new high priest leads us in our worshipful response.
- ◆ Have you every wondered why we conclude our prayers with the phrase, "In Jesus' name we pray"?
- ◆ It's because of this high priestly function. Jesus by joining himself to us in our humanity and substituting Himself sacrificially on our behalf provides the perfect worshipful response on behalf of mankind to the Father's love.
- ◆ What this means is well before our pitiful and pathetic attempts of worship ever reach the father, they are absorbed into the perfect worship and prayers of Jesus Christ offered on behalf of humanity to the Father.
- ◆ It is also in this spirit that we accept the bread and the wine of the Eucharist. It is the acknowledgment of the perfect sacrifice offered on our behalf by Christ to the Father.
- ◆ This is why we come to the table with empty hands.
- ◆ It is a reminder of our inadequacy to contribute anything to our acceptance, as it is only in Christ's offerings that we find true acceptance that enables us to then enter the holy of holies and enjoy the presence of the Father (Hebrews 10:1-14).
- ◆ And it is here at the Father's throne that Jesus performs His priestly ministry, interceding on our behalf dispensing grace and mercy as we read earlier (Hebrews 4:16), but also leading in heavenly worship all those who are united to Him.
- ◆ **Hebrews 2:11-12 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."**

Christ the prophet.

- ◆ **Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.**
- ◆ In the past, prophets were merely instruments to pass on the word relayed to them by God to the Israelites.
- ◆ But now that *the Word* has joined Himself to humanity in the New Covenant, a whole new relationship exists between the God who made the universe and mankind.
- ◆ The Word who spoke personally to us in the incarnation, has returned to ***the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.***
- ◆ So humanity has a spokesperson at the Father's right hand that speaks on their behalf.
- ◆ This verse points us back to the historical Jesus, as it is His life and teachings that demonstrate for us who God is and what His will is for humanity.
- ◆ There is a caution here for upstarts who falsely claim they are modern-day prophets who assert they have a revelation that either supersedes or adds to what *the Word* has spoken.

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- ◆ There is no new revelation. Jesus Christ is the final word. The Word has accomplished all that needs to be said and done for humanity's salvation.
- But the Word's work is not finished. The task of spreading the good news about what the Word has accomplished on behalf of humanity is what now preoccupies the Word.***
- ◆ And it is here through the Holy Spirit that the Word meets us personally.
 - ◆ ***John 14:16-18 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.***
 - ◆ Notice two things here.
 - ◆ First, Jesus promises the disciples the help of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.
 - ◆ But notice a dramatic change from what has occurred in the past.
 - ◆ Where once God resided in the tabernacle or the temple, in other words removed from the people, now the promise is that He will come and live personally in individuals. ***"But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."***
 - ◆ A resource, previously unavailable to humanity, now becomes a reality for those who throw themselves at the foot of the cross and worship the King.
 - ◆ The second thing we notice here is the Word will come to them through the Spirit and exercise his prophetic word to them, ***"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."***
 - ◆ ***John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.***
 - ◆ As a result of this Advocate, we hold the apostolic witness of the words of Jesus preserved for us in the Holy Scriptures.
 - ◆ So two powerful resources are made available to the citizens of this new kingdom. The preserved word of the Word, Holy Scriptures, and the presence of the Word Himself through the power of the Spirit.
- Just one final thought on the role of the One who holds the three-fold office of prophet, priest and king***
- ◆ The Word or prophet who inspired the prophecies recorded in the scriptures, is also the all-powerful king who bends and shapes history so that His purpose shall stand despite what we see happening in the world around us.
 - ◆ So it should be a source of enormous encouragement for those of us who wait for Christ's triumphal return that sitting at the Father's right hand is our Savior who holds the three-fold office of prophet, priest and king.
 - ◆ From His throne in heaven, Christ is reaching out to those who will obey Him as king, trust Him as priest and learn from His prophetic teachings.