

A NEW KIND OF PRIEST

Advent 2022, Jesus in the Old Testament

December 11, 2022

*“ Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you,
who are symbolic of things to come:
I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.”
Zechariah 3:8*

Priests pointing to Jesus

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ² The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

³ Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.”

Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

⁵ Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

⁶ The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: ⁷ “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.

⁸ “ ‘Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. ⁹ See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

¹⁰ “ ‘In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”

Zechariah 3

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

Revelation 5

1. There is a long history of priests in the Old Testament: Cain and Abel in Genesis 4, Melchizedek in Genesis 14; Jethro in Exodus 2; God promised that his people would be a kingdom of priests in Exodus 19:6; the Aaronic priesthood in Exodus 28:1-5; the priestly work in Leviticus; and the priests who mourn in the Minor Prophets (see Joel 1:9; Ezra and Nehemiah)
2. The purpose of the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthods is to prepare for Jesus!

The priesthood of Melchizedek

¹⁷ After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High,
¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand.”

Then Abram gave [Melchizedek] a tenth of everything.

Genesis 14

⁴ The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind:
“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”

Psalm 110

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5

¹¹ If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? ¹² For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. ¹³ He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵ And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, ¹⁶ one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is declared:

“You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸ The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 7

1. Melchizedek's priesthood is shared by Cain and Abel, Job and Jethro, and Abraham
2. Melchizedek's priesthood always pointed forward to a future priest who would complete Melchizedek's work
3. Melchizedek's priesthood provides the “perfection” that Aaron and his sons never could

What Jesus did and is doing as our Priest

¹¹ 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, ¹³ and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

¹⁶ “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

¹⁷ Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”^o

¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

Hebrews 10 (quoting from Jeremiah 31:33-34). See Jesus’ prayer in John 17:16-18.

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, 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 sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4 (see 1 Corinthians 10:13)

²³ Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶ Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 7

1. Jesus is the ultimate provision from God
2. Jesus’ experience of suffering and temptation
3. Jesus is interceding for us
4. Jesus opens access for us to the throne room of God

What Jesus' priesthood means for the church

1. Our priesthood is a ministry of spurring, meeting and encouraging

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10

2. Jesus' priesthood answers questions about suffering and wrath

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5

3. Jesus' priesthood shows that his work is finished

A further thought. The text leads me to say to you that it is utterly hopeless, if you desire salvation, for you to expect Jesus Christ to do anything more than he has already done. Many are waiting for a something, and they scarce know what. Now Jesus, when he died and went to heaven, perfected for ever all his work; and if you do not believe to-day in what he has done, there will be no surer grounds for belief to-morrow.

Spurgeon's "The Only Atoning Priest"

4. We are priests who serve!

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 1, also Revelation 5:10, 20:6

See 1 Peter 2:4-12 for a little longer passage on "holy" and "royal" priests.

Serving God:

Serving each other:

Serving our community:

Resources for meeting Jesus in the Old Testament

I appreciated Tim Challies' visual Christmas study at <https://www.challies.com/visual-theology/a-visual-theology-advent-reading-calendar-for-your-family/>

Tim Keller has a wonderful "big picture" series on Genesis which is available at <https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/genesis/chapter-genesis/chapters-03-05-fall> . I've included his sermon on Genesis 3 is at <https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9>

William Ames has a classic Puritan take on the three-offices at <https://heraldofgrace.org/offices-of-christ/>

John Calvin summarized his thinking on Christ's work as prophet, priest and king at https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/ppk_calvin.html

Kim Riddlebarger, "The Triple Cure" at <https://www.monergism.com/triple-cure-jesus-christ-%E2%80%93-our-prophet-priest-and-king>

Spurgeon has several sermons on these themes:

his sermons on Hebrews at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/scripture-index/hebrews/>

"The Kingly Priesthood of Saints" at <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/sermons/2022/the-kingly-priesthood-of-the-saints-c-h-spurgeon-sermon/>

"The Only Atoning Priest" at

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/sermons/1034.cfm

"The Priesthood of Believers" at <https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs3266>

Berkoff has some great discussion of Christ's priesthood at

https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/berkhof/systematic_theology.html#priest

Derek Thomas has a short article on the importance of Genesis 3:15 at

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/significance-genesis-315>

David Linden has a sermon on the "long story of Jesus" in Isaiah at <https://davidhlinden.com/article/birth-of-jesus-christ>

R. C. Sproul has a wonderful summary of the incarnation at <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/incarnation-what-we-celebrate-christmas> and an article on Jesus' kingship at

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/king-kings>

Tim Keller wrote a Christmas Eve editorial in the NY Post at <https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/>

John Walton has a good analysis of names in Isaiah 7:14 at http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/30/30-3/30-3-pp289-306_JETS.pdf

ADVENT

THE NEED FOR A SAVIOR

THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOR

THE WAIT FOR A SAVIOR

THE BIRTH OF A SAVIOR



Christmas is the most unsentimental way of looking at life

By [Timothy Keller](#)

December 24, 2016

at <https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/>

Christmas is the only Christian holy day that is also a major secular holiday. This brings some discomfort on both sides. Many Christians can't help but notice that more and more of the public festivities surrounding Christmas studiously avoid any references to its Christian origins. The background music in stores is moving from "Joy to the World" to "Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas."

On the other hand, nonreligious people can't help but find that the older meaning of Christmas keeps intruding uninvited, for instance, through the music of traditional Christmas carols. It can be irritating to have to answer their child's question, "What does that music mean — 'born to give them second birth'?"

Christmas does not say, 'Cheer up! If we all pull together we can make the world a better place.'

As a Christian believer, I am glad to share the virtues of that day with the entirety of society. My fear is, however, that its true roots will become more and more hidden to most of the population.

The secular Christmas is a festival of lights, a time for family gatherings, and a season to generously give to those closest to us and to those in greatest need. These practices are genuinely congruent with the Christian origins of the celebration. The emphasis on light in darkness comes from the Christian belief that the world's hope comes from outside of it. The giving of gifts is a natural response to Jesus' act of self-giving, when he laid aside his glory and was born into the human race. The concern for the needy recalls that the Son of God was born not into an aristocratic family but into a poor one. The Lord of the universe identified with the least and the most excluded of the human race.

But the truth is that Christmas, like God himself, is both more wondrous and more threatening than most understand.

Christmas is about receiving presents, but consider how challenging it is to receive certain kinds of gifts. Some gifts by their very nature make you swallow your pride. Imagine opening a present on Christmas morning from a friend — and it's a dieting book. Then you take off another ribbon and wrapper and you find it is another book from another friend, "Overcoming Selfishness." If you say to them, "Thank you so much," you are in a sense admitting, "For indeed, I am fat and obnoxious."

In other words, some gifts are hard to receive, because to do so is to admit you have flaws and weaknesses and you need help. Perhaps on some occasion you had a friend who figured out you were in financial trouble and came to you and offered a large sum of money to get you out of your predicament. If that has ever happened to you, you probably found that to receive the gift meant swallowing your pride.

There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do. Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God himself could save us. That means you are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good life.

Christmas, therefore, is the most unsentimental, realistic way of looking at life. It does not say, "Cheer up! If we all pull together we can make the world a better place." The Bible never counsels indifference to the forces of darkness, only resistance, but it supports no illusions that we can defeat them ourselves.

Christianity does not agree with the optimistic thinkers who say, “We can fix things if we try hard enough.” Nor does it agree with the pessimists who see only a dystopian future.

The message of Christianity is, instead, “Things really are this bad, and we can’t heal or save ourselves. Things really are this dark — nevertheless, there is hope.” The Christmas message is that “on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

Notice that it doesn’t say from the world a light has sprung, but upon the world a light has dawned. It has come from outside. There is light outside of this world, and Jesus has brought that light to save us; indeed, he is the Light.

Adapted from the book [*“Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ”*](#) by Timothy Keller (Viking). Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan.

The Offices of Christ

William Ames at <https://heraldofgrace.org/offices-of-christ/>

Christ undertook His office in order to obtain salvation for His people (1 Tim. 1:15). Both the *calling* and the *components* of the office are worthy to be considered. The *calling* is an action of God the Father, whereby He bound His willing Son to His office by an eternal covenant (Ps. 110:4; Isa. 53:10; Luke 22:22; Acts 4:28; Heb. 5:4, 6; 7:24). This involved choosing the ends (Isa. 42:1); foreordaining the means (1 Peter 1:20); and sending the Son (John 3:17).

There are three *components* to Christ’s office. First, Christ holds the office of *Prophet* (Deut. 18:15). By this, He reveals perfectly the whole will of God. This office has various names: Christ is a Teacher (Matt. 23:7); the Apostle of our confession (Heb. 3:1); the Angel of the Covenant (Mal. 3:1); the Word of God (John 1:1); the very Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24); and the Treasure of wisdom and understanding (Col. 2:3).

In order to be the perfect Prophet, Christ necessarily was both God and man. It was necessary for Him to be God in order to understand and minister the will of God perfectly (John 1:18; 3:13; 1 Cor. 2:11, 16). If He had not been man, He could not have properly declared this will to men by His own person (Heb. 1:1).

Second, Christ holds the office of *Priest*. His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:17), and therefore is indestructible (Heb. 7:16); stable and perfect (Heb. 7:18–19); eternal (Heb. 7:24); and perpetual, leaving no room or need for other priests (Heb. 7:24–25).

In the execution of His priestly office, Christ is the Priest, the sacrifice, and the altar. He is Priest in both natures (Heb. 5:6). He was the sacrifice principally in His human nature, as the Scriptures attribute His sacrifice most primarily to His body (Heb. 13:12; 1 Peter 2:24; Col. 1:22) and blood (Col. 1:20). However, this sacrifice became effectual because of Christ’s divine nature as the very Son of God (Acts 20:28; Rom. 8:3)—which is understood properly according to the idea of the altar (Heb. 9:14; 13:10, 12, 15). The function of the altar is to sanctify the offering, granting it dignity beyond itself (Matt. 23:17). Herein is

manifest why Christ as Priest had to be both God and man: if He were not man, He could not have atoned for men; if He were not God, the sacrifice would not have been sufficient.

Third, Christ holds the office of *King* (cf. Deut. 17:14–20). His kingdom is called the kingdom of *God*; the kingdom of *peace and glory*; the kingdom of *light and glory*; the kingdom of heaven; and *the world to come*. In His kingdom, Christ's rule is His power to dispense and administer all things pertaining to the salvation of men with force and authority (Ps. 2:6; Dan. 2:44; Luke 4:36). This kingship is universal, that is, it encompasses all ages, being eternal (Matt. 22:43–45; Dan. 2:44; 7:14). Christ's rule is over all kinds of men (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 17:14)—even all the world and its creatures (Eph. 1:21, 22). Christ governs both man's outward and inward activity (Rom. 14:17), dispensing everlasting life or death (Rev. 1:18). For the heirs of the kingdom, Christ as King brings the greatest peace and most perfect joy (Isa. 9:6; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 7:2). Again, it is necessary that Christ be King as God and man: the latter, that He might be the spiritual King of our souls, dispensing eternal life and death; the former, that He might be the Ruler of the same nature as His body.

The threefold office of Christ announces three truths. First, it identifies the state of man and how it is remedied in Christ. Man suffers under ignorance, which is resolved by the prophecy of Christ; dwells in alienation from God, which is restored by the priestly work of Christ; and possesses no power to live holily, which is established by the kingship of Christ. Second, Christ's threefold office reveals the way salvation is brought to bear upon man. It is first preached by His prophecy; obtained by His priesthood; and applied by His kingship. Third, the threefold office exposes that salvation is accomplished by Christ. Christ first taught others the will of God; then He offered Himself; and afterward He entered to rule in His kingdom.

William Ames (1576–1633) was William Perkins's most famous successor. His *Marrow of Theology*, had a profound impact in England, The Netherlands, and especially New England. This article is adapted from 1.19 of this classic.

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