

THE PROPHET LIKE MOSES

Advent 2022, Jesus in the Old Testament

December 4, 2022

"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, The Lord speaking to Moses

John Calvin was right

Three Things Briefly to Be Regarded in Christ
—Viz. His Offices of Prophet, King and Priest
by John Calvin

The principal parts of this chapter are—

- I. Of the Prophetical Office of Christ, its dignity and use, sec. 1, 2.
- II. The nature of the Kingly power of Christ, and the advantage we derive from it, sec. 3–5.
- III. Of the Priesthood of Christ, and the efficacy of it, sec. 6.

. . . . The voice which thundered from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear him" gave him a special privilege above all other teachers. Then from him, as head, this unction is diffused through the members, as Joel has foretold, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions," (Joel 2:28). Paul's expressions, that he was "made unto us wisdom," (1 Cor. 1:30), and elsewhere, that in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," (Col. 2:3), have a somewhat different meaning, namely, that out of him there is nothing worth knowing, and that those who, by faith, apprehend his true character, possess the boundless immensity of heavenly blessings. For which reason, he elsewhere says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," (1 Cor. 2:2). And most justly: for it is unlawful to go beyond the simplicity of the Gospel. The purpose of this prophetic dignity in Christ is to teach us, that in the doctrine which he delivered is substantially included a wisdom which is perfect in all its parts.

1. We start with "This is my beloved Son, hear him"
2. We share Christ's prophetic "unction"
3. Of everything we know from the Prophet, "Jesus Christ and him crucified" is all we need

The promise and the fulfillment

¹⁴ *The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. ¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."*

¹⁷ *The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. ²⁰ But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."*

²¹ *You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" ²² If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.*

Deuteronomy 18

¹⁷ *"Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.'*

²⁴ *"Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."*

Acts 3, Peter's second post-resurrection sermon in Jerusalem

1. We are heirs of the prophets' story of Jesus
2. The message of the prophets included Jesus' suffering and his exaltation to heaven
3. The key question: Do we actually listen to Jesus? (Hint: See Matthew 7:24-28; John 15:9-17)

The song of the Prophet

- Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
- 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.
- 3 A voice of one calling:
"In the desert prepare the way for the LORD;
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God.
- 4 Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.
- 5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
- 6 A voice says, "Cry out."
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.
- 7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass.
- 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God stands forever."
- 9 You who bring good tidings to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"
- 10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,
and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.
- 11 He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.

Isaiah 40 (see Luke 3:1-6)

1. This song looks forward to the prophet who is the servant of God who speaks for God and comes with the power of God, but the prophet has a shepherd's heart
2. This song prepares the way for the prophet who prepares the way for the Prophet
3. This song celebrates the Word and its power

Learning from the Prophet

1. Bringing tidings of “comfort and joy” is the task of the church

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Romans 10 (with a lot of help from Isaiah). See also Acts 13:1; Ephesians 4; Hebrews 5:10-11

2. Jesus the prophet should make every other prophet very careful

⁴ Her prophets are arrogant; they are treacherous men.

Her priests profane the sanctuary and do violence to the law.

Zephaniah 3. See 2 Timothy 4:3; James 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-6

3. ‘Office’ was how the Puritans organized their thinking about Jesus

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, Puritan theologian

4. I am obligated, even when the message isn’t pleasant

⁷ “For the Lord GOD does nothing

without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

⁸ The lion has roared; who will not fear?

The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?”

Amos 3

5. Sometimes the prophecy is especially important!

⁶⁷ *His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:*

⁶⁸ *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and has redeemed his people.”*

Luke 1 (and fun, like Ezekiel 37)

Resources for further studies in faith practices

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/threshold/sdg/ppk_calvin.html

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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