

GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE

- **Joy, Prayer And Thanksgiving**
- **Prophet, Priest And King**
- **What On Earth Is God Doing?**

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Do The Lord's Offices **MATTER TO ME?**

We find many things in the Bible about the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest and King. This topic will be addressed in our *Feature* articles, but let's just mention a few points now. In Scripture, individuals were anointed for these offices (a prophet, 1 Ki. 19:16; a priest, Ex. 30:25-30; a king, 1 Sam. 15:1). Anointing speaks of God's choice (Lk. 4:18-19), and the oil used is suggestive of the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 10:38). A prophet reveals God's mind or thoughts; the priest represents man before God and God before men; and the king rules over a God-given domain. The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme Prophet (Jn. 1:1-9,14; Mt. 7:28-29), Priest (Heb. 4:14-16) and King (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14).

We know in the world in which we live, holding an office implies authority. Generally speaking, a head of state has a certain amount of power or control over the things related to a specific country. The aspect of authority applies in other settings as well, including education or religion; although in the world, things in these three areas

are horribly out of tune with the thoughts of God.

Before Him, it is the responsibility of officeholders to act rightly and for the good of the people. Government, for example, is to commend those who do right and punish those who do wrong (1 Pet. 2:13-14), which is a matter of serving rather than self-glorification (Mt. 20:25-28). The priest was to be a mediator for grace and mercy with holiness (Heb. 4:16), and the prophet was to teach truth through words and deeds (Lk. 24:19).

It stands to reason that those under one's authority are to obey (Rom. 13:6). However, do we show through our comments and actions that we recognize the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King? How do His roles in these offices truly impact our lives? These are important questions, for our responses will affect our lives today, our rewards for eternity, and the glory of the Lord our God.

May we be thankful for all that we learn about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul

Joy, PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING

“Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing.

In every thing give thanks:

*for this is the will of God in Christ
Jesus concerning you.”*

— 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 KJV

These verses are so sweet and precious, especially to the young believer. The believers in Thessalonica were Paul’s joy and crown of rejoicing (2:19), and we cannot read the epistles without noticing the spirit in which they were written. In these verses we have the normal state of the Christian: perpetual, or continual, joy, prayer and thanksgiving. What do we know, for instance, of perpetual joy – a joy that never wanes? If we were marked more by these three things what a different people we would be!

In 2 Kings 18:14 we find that Hezekiah was not prayerful. By looking at that portion we also discover the means God used to change him into a man who prayed. King Hezekiah did not turn to God when the king

of Assyria first came up, but God would not let Hezekiah go on in his way. The Devil tried to hinder the king of Judah’s confidence. Finally, after Rabshakeh’s insolence, Hezekiah went into the house of Jehovah (19:1). What a pity that he did not go before!

Hezekiah was learning a profitable lesson, but it needed to be deepened. Hence, he got the letter which then he spread out before the LORD, and he received God’s magnificent answer. Does not this show how much better it would be for us if we were more constantly in prayer? Hezekiah had beautified the house of the LORD more than any; but after opening the house, through not praying, he had to cut off the gold.

In the order in Thessalonians, joy comes before prayer; and the question is, “Where is true Christian joy to be found?” The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10), but how is this joy to be maintained? Paul had it in prison (Acts 16:25), and he told the Philippians to rejoice always (Phil 4:4). This joy is only to be found where the Lord Himself found it: through obedience. As we are obedient we shall prove it likewise. The dependent Man could say in Psalm 16:6, “The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places.” We are no doubt living in the last moments of the Church’s his-

tory, and it is only conscious communion with the Lord that can keep one happy. If you meditate on the Lord, even through a hard day's work, you will find joy.

Next we have "Pray without ceasing" (1 Th. 5:17). "Open thy mouth wide," He has said, "and I will fill it" (Ps. 81:10). The Lord does not want us to close our mouths. The answer in Malachi is: "I will ... open ... the windows of heaven" (Mal. 3:10). Don't we want that? Back in Acts 16 we find the Lord opened Lydia's heart. If you and I open our mouths wide the Lord will fill them. Then, He will do what we cannot do: He will open hearts.

In Luke the Lord is seen praying more than in any other gospel. At His baptism He came up praying. On the mountaintop or in the garden, He was always praying. Confidence and dependence marked Him all through. Only in Luke do we read the admonition, "Men ought always to pray" (18:1).

"Pray without ceasing" does not forbid the thought of definite times for prayer, nor does it detract from the proper carrying out of our service to the Lord. Prayer should indeed have the first place in all our service. Through it we are strengthened of God for whatever He gives us to do. But alas! Are we not ready to put

our work in the first place and to give a lower place to prayer? Not so with the apostles: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we have "thanksgiving." How the Lord loves to hear it! We find three sacrifices in Hebrews: one never to be repeated, two never to be left off. The Lord's one offering can never be repeated (10:12). But in Hebrews 13 we read: "By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (v.15) and, "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (v.16).

There are four records of our Lord giving thanks. With 5,000 hungry men before Him, He gave thanks, knowing what He would do. When His testimony was rejected (Mt. 11:25), He gave thanks. At the grave of Lazarus He gave thanks before He raised him, and in the presence of His own death He gave thanks (Lk. 22:17,19). "In everything give thanks," but that is not as difficult as "giving thanks always for all things" (Eph. 5:20). This is God's will for us. **GT**

(Adapted from "The Bible Treasury," edited by William Kelly. These brief notes were from a Bible study in 1917.)

The Offices Of The Lord Jesus Christ – Prophet, Priest And King

by Alfred Bouter

When “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4 NKJV) had come, after 4,000 years of human history, God sent His Son into this world. He entered it through His mother Mary’s virgin womb, in which He had been conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:18-25). When Mary gave birth to her first-born Son, He was the Baby born as others, yet how different (read Lk. 1-2)! He knew no sin and in Him was no sin – in contrast to all of Adam’s other descendants, who do have a sin nature. Jesus, however, never committed any sin, for He was apart from sin even though surrounded by it and many sinners.

He was King at the very moment He was born (Mt. 2:2). When a baby boy is born into a royal family, he is a prince first and becomes king later. However, the Lord Jesus came as King, yet He was laid in a manger (Lk. 2:7), for He humbled Himself taking a human form of Bondman. He will always keep this form – without losing any of His divinity. Marked by perfect obedience, He was obedient even to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

The angel’s message to the shepherds declared Him to be “Christ [Messiah or Anointed One] the Lord”¹ and “Savior” (Lk. 2:11). He was born in “the city of David”² (v.11) because He was a direct descendant of King David (Mt. 1:6; Ruth 4:17-22; Lk. 3:23-31), as well as of Adam and God (v.38; Mic. 5:2). At the same time He was and is “over all, the eternally blessed God” (Rom. 9:5), “Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Mt. 1:23).

Paul summarized the unfathomable mystery of His person: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich [literally, “being rich”], yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). The expression “being rich” indicates that He did not stop being rich – being God – when He made Himself poor, coming in flesh at His incarnation (Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). This amazing event fulfilled many prophecies about Messiah’s coming, including God’s words to Eve about the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15) and others “in

the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Lk. 24:44).

When He came He was not recognized or honored, except by the shepherds who had been in the fields and later by a few individuals in the temple (2:16-38). We commend the many details about the first coming of the King to your study and meditation, including how He grew up in a despised part of the country, Galilee. Jesus lived in Nazareth, a town not held with honor, and He was known as the son of the carpenter (vv.39-52; Mk. 6:3; Jn. 1:46, 7:52).

The Start Of Jesus’ Public Ministry

Around the time that Jesus was 30 years old (Lk. 3:23), God sent “a witness”: John the Baptist (Jn. 1:6-8). Having been brought up in the priestly³ family of Zacharias and being about 30 years old, it would have been time for John to begin his ministry in the temple. Instead, he was in the wilderness as a prophet proclaiming a special message. This was about 400 years after the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi (Mal. 3:1).

John was called the greatest born of women (Mt. 11:11; Lk. 7:26-28) because he had the privilege of introducing the Messiah to His people. Therefore he was

also the greatest prophet, apart from the Lord of course. At the very moment that this remarkable prophet baptized⁴ Jesus, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove to remain on Him (Jn. 1:33-34), for He was infinitely greater than John (vv.26-27). The Father’s voice was heard from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight” (Mt. 3:17 JND).

As Son of God, Jesus did not need to be tested, therefore the Gospel of John does not include His temptation.

After this, as God’s unique Servant-Son, He was led by God as the:

- *King*, for the Holy Spirit carried Him up into the desert (Mt. 4:1);
- *Servant*, as He was “driven” (literally, “pushed”) into the wilderness (Mk. 1:12);
- *Perfect Man*, who the Holy Spirit led into the wilderness (Lk. 4:1-14).

As *Son of God*, Jesus did not need to be tested, therefore the *Gospel of John* does not include His temptation. However, this gospel describes other aspects, as led by the Holy Spirit, which the other writers did not mention.

The Story Develops Further: A Great Prophet

As King-Servant-Son of Man, Jesus called 12 men to be with Him, learn from Him, and then be sent out later by Him. It is worthy to consider this band of His disciples further by reading passages such as Mark 3:14, Luke 6:13-17 and Matthew 9:37-10:42. There were also several faithful women⁵ who served Him (Lk. 8:2-3, 10:38-42).

David was anointed king, but he was also called a prophet and sometimes functioned as a priest.

Luke summarized the first part of the Lord's ministry in Galilee with the following words, "Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us' and 'God has visited His people'" (7:16 NKJV; see Jn. 6:14). Indeed, Jesus the Messiah was greater than all the prophets, including John the Baptist (read 1:19-37).

A prophet (Hebrew, *nabi*) means a "forth-teller" because he is God's spokesperson, sent by Him with the purpose of bringing His failing and deviating people back to Himself. A striking example is Samuel (1 Sam. 1-12), who was privileged to anoint David and introduce him among God's people (16:1-13). God also used women

for prophetic service, such as Miriam (Ex. 15:20) and Deborah (Jud. 4-5). The enemy, however, sent false prophets and prophetesses who claimed to speak in the name of the LORD; as an example of this, read 1 Kings 22.

Important Considerations

David was anointed king, but he was also called a prophet (Acts 2:30) and sometimes functioned as a priest. In fact, God used him to organize the services of the priests and Levites in relation to the temple that Solomon would build (1 Chr. 22-29).

Before David, Moses had been "king" (Dt. 33:4-5 JND) in Jeshurun – one of Israel's names – and he functioned as a priest at several occasions and a prophet often. In this last capacity Moses spoke about the coming Prophet like him to whom the people should listen (18:15-19).

Shortly after Pentecost, Peter explained that Jesus of Nazareth was that Prophet (Acts 3:22-23) to whom the Jews should have listened, for He had been speaking to them on God's behalf on earth. Yet, they still had the opportunity to listen to Him as He was now speaking from heaven (v.26). Later, Paul explained the same to the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 13:26-47; see Heb. 3:1-5). Both Moses and David

were remarkable types of the Lord Jesus, who unites, or will unite, the three offices in His person.

Seen in a chronological order and in a dispensational sense, we suggest that Jesus is firstly the *Prophet* who came to proclaim God's thoughts and rights where the people had failed. As *Priest*, He became Mediator between God and man, first on earth (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:17-18) in connection with His work on the cross and then as Minister of the sanctuary (8:1-2) as the true High Priest in heaven. Being from the tribe of Judah, as David's Descendant, the Lord Jesus was also *King*.

Not being from Levi or descended from Aaron, He was not allowed to function as Priest on earth *in any official capacity* (7:13-14), even though He acted as Priest, especially in Luke's gospel. Because of Christ's accomplished work on the cross and His resurrection, God introduced a new covenant, with a new set of rules and a change of law. Under this new law the Lord Jesus is Priest, not only in the similitude of Aaron's service, but also after the order of Melchisedec, a king and priest (7:15-8:2). Understanding this comes through maturity and the Holy Spirit (5:11-14, 6:1).

The Prophet Rejected

Let's go back to the Lord's minis-

try on earth. From a human perspective His ministry seemed to have been a failure when He died on the cross outside Jerusalem, but it was not. God had foreseen and predicted this in Isaiah 49:1-7 and elsewhere. The Lord Jesus, of course, was in full agreement with God's plan and ways (Mt. 11:25-26), and He knew from the beginning what would happen.

The problem was not on His side. Rather, His people rejected Him despite all the evidence He had given that He was their promised Messiah (Jn. 1:9-11, 20:31). In His life He had glorified God, who accepted His person and work, confirming this several times. His death, resurrection and exaltation were for the glory of God, in contrast to Israel's behavior.

Stephen summarized Israel's history of hardening and their resisting of the Holy Spirit: "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52 NKJV). Stephen's solemn indictment summed up Israel's history and condition, as he reviewed Christ's ministry as God's great Prophet.

Just before Stephen's testimony and death (6:8-8:2), Peter had spoken to the Jewish leaders about Israel's responsibility as to

“those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled” (3:18). “Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days” (vv.22-24).

Two things are obvious: Christ’s ministry as God’s Prophet fulfilled God’s plans (Acts 2:22-24), and God’s earthly people had completely failed. Sadly, this will lead to Israel’s acceptance of a false prophet (Jn. 5:43; 2 Th. 2:3-12; Rev. 13:11-18), as predicted in many examples and types. This man – who must and will be Jewish – will be the counterfeit prophet-priest-king allowed by God, just as was King Saul in the Old Testament.

However, in the world to come – “the millennium” – God will use many young and old among His earthly people to be His prophets (Acts 2:17-18). Obviously these individuals will repent and believe – which is a point of similarity in the various

periods in God’s ways, or dispensations, despite great differences between them. The coming “great tribulation” will take place after the true Church is raptured into heaven (1 Th. 4:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-52) and many other changes have taken place.

The True King Will Reign

Israel will then finally repent and return to God: the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin first (Zech. 12:10, 13:6-9), followed by the ten tribes (Hos. 6:1-2; Isa. 49:25; Dan. 7:14, 25-27; Ezek. 20:33-42, 34:11-31, 37:15-28; Jer. 31-33). Afterward the Lord Jesus – the Messiah – will reign as King over Israel (Ps. 2, 72) and the nations (Ps. 8; Mt. 25:31-46) to the glory of God.

A careful study of Revelation 21-22 shows certain differences between the millennial reign, in which righteousness will *reign* (Rev. 21:9-22:6), and the eternal state of the new creation (21:1-8) where righteousness will *dwell* (2 Pet. 3:13). The Lord’s reign is eternal, yet a difference exists between the enforcement aspect of righteousness during the millennium – with the rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) – and the dwelling aspect of righteousness in the eternal state.

Similarly, there will be a difference between the Church, the heavenly city, *the Holy Jerusalem*

of the millennium (Rev. 21:10), and the Church as *the New Jerusalem* of the eternal state (Rev. 21:1-2). In the eternal state Christ will be all and in all, according to God's eternal counsel (Col. 3:10-11; Eph. 3:10-11).

Christ, Only Christ

As the *Prophet*, using many prophets and various means, the Lord Jesus will bring His earthly people Israel back to God and Himself (see Zech. 4). As *Priest*, He will sustain them throughout the millennial age and have priests among His own people, whereas others will be taken from the nations to serve as priests under Him (Isa. 66:21). Christ will have a people of priests (vv.2,8-10,20-23). This is the case also today – although in a different setting and context – with us, believers taken from Jews and Gentiles linked with Him in the glory (Heb. 4:16). As the *King* (Ps. 45) He will reign in righteousness (Isa. 32:1) over Israel and the nations (Zech. 14:9).

In “replacement theology” it is said that the Church has taken the glorious place God intends to give to Israel in the world to come. Because of this wrong theology, Christ is robbed, God is robbed, His earthly people are robbed, and the true Church is re-

duced to earthly blessings. This is not God's idea at all!

Closing Remarks

The above lessons and instructions about Israel's past and future have applications and lessons for us today (1 Cor. 10:1-13). As true believers taken from among the Jewish people and the Gentiles, we are *priests* (1 Pet. 2:5) and *kings* (vv.9-10), now and forever (Rev. 1:6, 5:10). Today, God gives *prophets* in the local assembly; every exercised brother can

Because of this wrong theology, Christ is robbed, God is robbed, His earthly people are robbed, and the true Church is reduced to earthly blessings.

be used by the Spirit of God to utter a word for the consolation and encouragement of the saints (see the instructions in 1 Cor. 14). In private, children's ministry or other settings, God's Spirit may use sisters too as His mouthpiece.

The above thoughts may seem a bit confusing, but trying to grasp God's thoughts with the Spirit's help we will start to understand that God has a moral testimony before He publicly introduces the actual thing. This was the case with Christ's testimony to Israel as the true Prophet, yet He was rejected. Still, the day will come

when His testimony will be fulfilled under His reign as King.

Today the Church conveys God's thoughts so people may repent and be saved, becoming part of the body of believers taken from among Jews and Gentiles as God's present testimony (see 1 Cor. 1-2). This takes place before

What will be literally true of Israel during the millennium as a people in tune with God, should be morally true of the believers today.

the Church's coming glorious manifestation. Furthermore, what will be *literally* true of Israel during the millennium as a people in tune with God, should be *morally* true of the believers today. Above all, these things were seen in perfection in our Lord's testimony on earth and are so in His present testimony from heaven, before He will reign as King in absolute supremacy.

Israel *failed to listen* to God's testimony through His Prophet and therefore they were not able to function according to His plan. Yet His plans will be fulfilled! He wanted His people to function as His prophets, as Peter had quoted the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-21). This will be the case in the millennium. Then, the King will have a company of kings and priests in heaven as well as on earth, all for

the glory of God and for the true joy and satisfaction of the Lord Jesus and of His own. As *prophets* they will proclaim His rights, as *kings* they will maintain those rights and rule with Him, and as *priests* His earthly people bring Him everlasting glory and praise.

In the eternal state all rebellion will have been eliminated and eternal thanksgiving and praise will rise to our God, from heaven and earth. Praise God! **GT**

Endnotes:

1. This statement implies that Jesus is LORD Jehovah, or Yahweh. The Greek text here has no definite article before "Lord" (*Kurios*), which indicates Jesus to be God: an unfathomable mystery, yet a reality.
2. In the *New American Standard Bible* this term occurs 42 times (6x7): 40 times in the Old Testament and 2 times in Luke.
3. It is fascinating, at least to me, that the Hebrew root of the word priest (*chn*) – translated as "priest," "priesthood" and "to serve as priest" – occurs 777 times in the Hebrew Bible.
4. John preached repentance, and those who repented were baptized confessing their sins. The Lord Jesus had no need to repent, but He was baptized to identify with those who had repented. Those believers were baptized anew after Christ's work on the cross, resurrection and ascension, identifying with the Messiah whom His people rejected.
5. This was also the case in Moses' days when he set up the tabernacle according to God's instructions (Ex. 38:8). Believing women have important roles, but these are distinct from the tasks believing men have in public service, even though there is no difference as to the position both have "in Christ" (Gal. 3:28).



PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

by Martin Girard

Anyone familiar with Israel in the Old Testament will realize that prophets, priests and kings all featured in the life of the nation. How did these distinct offices originate? A brief review of Israel's history will answer that question. To begin with, *an individual* – Abram, later named Abraham – was called by God to leave his familiar surroundings and embark on a pilgrimage to an unknown destination (Gen. 12:1). That individual became the father of *a family*, which eventually became *a nation*, Israel – named after Abraham's grandson, whose original name of Jacob had been changed (32:28).

The nation, as foretold, spent 400 years in slavery in Egypt (15:13-14) before God delivered them under the leadership of two

men – Moses and Aaron. Initially, Moses was fearful and lacking in confidence, but God encouraged him by sending his brother Aaron to assist (Ex. 4:14-16). Moses was the one who had been chosen to speak on God's authority; and Aaron, although a prophet on Moses' behalf, took a secondary place in service to him. (7:1). Later, after God had appeared to Moses at Mount Sinai, instructions were given regarding the tabernacle – the place where God was to be worshiped by His people while they journeyed through the wilderness – and the priesthood. Thus, not only was there *a prophet* in Israel who spoke for God, there were also to be *priests* who ministered in sacred things relating to the worship of God.

The First Of Each

Strictly speaking, Moses was Israel's first prophet. Meanwhile Aaron became the father of a family of priests who ministered at the tabernacle (28:1). Of that family, Aaron assumed the role of high priest on account of his seniority, as ordered by God. After the nation became established in Canaan, their "Promised Land," the people began to take notice of the nations around them. Each of these other nations had kings who reigned over them, and the Israelites wanted to be like them (1 Sam. 8:5).

Samuel, God's prophet at the time, was displeased; but God told him to agree to their request and establish a king over them. The first king chosen was Saul, who was anointed with oil before taking up his responsibilities (10:1).

Three different figures therefore came to feature in the life of the nation of Israel:

1. The *prophet* was God's messenger and spoke with His authority.
2. The *high priest* ministered at the tabernacle and was over the family of priests and Levites.¹
3. The *king* was the secular ruler of the nation, under God. The judgments of God rested with him (Ps. 72:1).

All of these leaders were mortal and died. Moses, after living for 120 years, passed from this earth (Dt. 34:7). By that time Aaron had already died (Num. 20:28). Years later we read of the deaths of Saul (1 Sam. 31:6) and then of David (1 Ki. 2:1,10), who was arguably Israel's finest king.² The life of each was marked by success and failure, but death prevented them from occupying their positions in a permanent sense.

Promised

While these facts are clear in the Old Testament, other Scriptures indicate God's intention of raising up a prophet, a priest and a king who would surpass all those

who had gone before them. Moses, speaking to the Israelites, told them that God would raise up "a Prophet" from the midst of His people, "of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken" (Dt. 18:15 *KJV*). The LORD had told Moses, "I will ... put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him" (v.18). A "Prophet" – notice the capital letter – who would arise in Israel was therefore promised and would speak with the authority that Moses had possessed. The Jewish people have certainly respected Moses throughout their history, so who could this *promised* "Prophet" be?

Not only do we read of the coming Prophet in the Old Testament but also of the coming Priest. Consider Psalm 110:4: "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The promise, we notice, does not concern a priest like Aaron but like Melchizedek who had lived before Aaron. Mentioned only briefly in Genesis 14, Melchizedek was "the priest of the Most High God" and "king of Salem" (v.18). We find no king of Israel officially serving as a priest in the Old Testament. Any who dared to do so incurred the judgment of God (2 Chr. 26:16-

21), for the roles of priest and king were distinct.

Prophets in the Old Testament prophesied of the coming of a special king who would bring peace to the warring planet. Isaiah wrote, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Isa. 9:6-7). Who could this special king be?

Three In One

Turning to the New Testament we discover that one Person is the perfect fulfillment of all these Old Testament prophecies. The Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is revealed as Prophet, Priest and King. We must consider each role in turn.

As already mentioned, Moses had foretold of a coming Prophet with features similar to his own (Dt. 18:15). On one occasion the Lord Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth and read the words of Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because

He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord”

Isaiah had written of the Messiah who would come bringing the message of God. He *had* come!

(Lk. 4:18-19). After sitting down, the Lord Jesus told His listeners, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” They marveled as they listened to the gracious words that proceeded from His mouth (vv.21-22).

Isaiah had written of the Messiah who would come bringing the message of God. He *had* come! When a crowd of 5,000 had been fed miraculously by the Lord Jesus, people declared, “This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world” (Jn. 6:14). The Lord Jesus Christ, as “the Word,” was the very expression of God (1:1) and spoke *as* God. He was one of Israel’s own people, like Moses, and was known as “Joseph’s son” (Lk. 4:22). Although He was not recognized as a Jewish rabbi, He spoke with authority, unlike the scribes (Mt. 7:29). His words were living

words (Jn. 6:63). His critics were forced to declare, “Never man spake like this man” (7:46).

Promises in the Old Testament speak of another Priest – not a descendant of Aaron but connected with Melchizedek. The book of Hebrews elaborates on this theme and reveals in Hebrews 5:5-6 that Christ is the fulfillment of Psalm 110:4. In Hebrews 7 the subject is developed further. Melchizedek, with no recorded ancestors, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is eternal. Under the law He could never have served as a Levitical priest, “for it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14). The Lord Jesus, “after the similitude of Melchizedek,” was appointed as Priest – “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life” (vv.15-16). The priests of the tribe of Levi “were

“an unchangeable priesthood” (v.24). In order to function as a priest, however, “it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer” (8:3). The wonderful truth revealed is that Christ “offered up Himself” (7:27) – not in the sense of a repeated sacrifice like the priests of old, but “once ... to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (9:26).

Melchizedek, you may remember, “priest of the Most High God” who lived at the time of Abraham, was also a king (Gen. 14:18). Before His birth at Bethlehem, Mary the mother of our Lord was told that her Son would be given “the throne of His father David” and that He would “reign over the house of Jacob for ever” – His kingdom knowing no end (Lk. 1:32-33). Tracing His earthly genealogy we discover that the Lord Jesus was indeed a descendant of both Jacob and David (3:31,34). The words spoken to Mary resemble those we have

But the New Testament unfolds the truth that the three offices have been brought together in one Person – our Lord Jesus Christ.

already considered in the Old Testament in Isaiah 9:7. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to us in the New Testament as *the Prophet* whom Moses spoke of, *the Great High Priest* according to the order of Melchizedek, and *the King* of David’s line. Significantly, when Jesus was crucified, the title placed above

many ... because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death” (v.23). By contrast, Christ, who lives forever, has

Him was, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews” (Mt. 27:37).

In the Old Testament three distinct offices were seen – prophet, priest and king. Nobody in Old Testament times could combine all of these because they were *distinct*. But the New Testament unfolds the truth that the three offices have been brought together in one Person – our Lord Jesus Christ.

Past, Present, Future

The subject we have been considering is vast, and this article certainly has not done justice to it. Before concluding, however, an explanation might be helpful.

The three roles that we have been looking at need to be related to the three aspects of time – past, present and future – and can be examined in that order. The Lord Jesus fulfilled His role of being the Prophet of God in His *first* coming. Hebrews 1:2 makes it plain that the God who had spoken in past dispensations to our forefathers by the prophets “hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” Christ, the Eternal Word, is God’s final “word” to mankind. He has nothing further to say.

But the very next verse goes on to speak of this great Prophet by whom God spoke actually purging our sins through His sacrifice at the cross before taking His seat

at God’s right hand on high. One of the great themes of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is Christ’s work as our Great High Priest. Not only did He offer the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, but He also fulfills another priestly function at the present time. The priests of old needed to “have compassion on the ignorant” and to be “called of God” to the task (5:2,4). Hebrews presents the Lord Jesus to us as our compassionate Great High Priest (4:15) who “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (7:25). This statement brings us to the present time. The Lord Jesus is our Great High Priest at this moment, helping us in our need and pleading for us before the Father. What a wonderful provision we have!

But we must also consider the future. Christ, our Great High Priest who lives in the very presence of God, “shall ... appear the second time” – not to deal with sin again but coming “unto salvation” (9:28). In other words, He will come again to bring final deliverance and blessing to His people. So many New Testament passages speak of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 19:11-16 describes Him returning to earth accompanied by the armies of heaven. He wears the

inscription “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (19:16) and comes to reign for 1,000 years (20:6). But beyond that millennial reign it remains true that “He shall reign for ever and ever” (11:15).

Only God Could Have Planned All This!

What a wonderful prospect lies before us: those who belong to Christ shall reign with Him! But more than that, what a wonderful book the Bible is! What human mind could have planned all these things and caused them to fit together with such perfection? Along with G. V. Wigram in his hymn “What Raised The Wondrous Thought?”, we can only exclaim, “O God! The thought was Thine ... Thine only it could be.”

All of these thoughts center in God’s beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom He was well pleased (Mt. 17:5). Like the wise men of old, let us “worship Him” (2:2), listen to Him through whom God has spoken to us, and obey Him. As our Great High Priest He will never fail us, and one day He will return from heaven to reign as King, supreme over all, forever. **GT**

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Endnotes:

1. Levites generally served in less significant ways than the priests.
2. The kingdom was taken from Saul (1 Sam. 15:23), while it was covenanted to David forever (2 Sam. 7:13).



What raised the wondrous thought, or who did it suggest,
That we, the church, to glory brought, should with the Son be blest?
O God! the thought was Thine, (Thine only it could be),
Fruit of the wisdom, love divine, peculiar unto Thee:
For, sure, no other mind, for thoughts so bold, so free,
Greatness or strength, could ever find; Thine only it could be.
The motives, too, Thine own, the plan, the counsel, Thine!
Made for Thy Son, bone of His bone, in glory bright to shine.

—George V. Wigram (1805-1879)



What on earth is God doing? It is an important question. The answer will:

- Help us know how to live for Him today and get excited about the future glories of the Lord Jesus,
- Cause us to be wise about what our calling is and is not, and
- Draw us to worship the Lord Jesus as we are reminded that all God's plans center on Him and will be accomplished through Him.

Beginning our study at the cross and ending with the eternal state, let's form a very basic outline of seven chronological points as to what God has done, is doing and will do on earth and beyond. In the process we will see that God's counsels are wise, His purpose good and His Christ great! Christ Himself will restore divine authority over the entire

universe prior to the ushering in of the eternal state.

1. Christ's Cross

Christ's sacrifice on Calvary's cross is the focal point of all God's dealings with the human race. It proves God's love, satisfies His righteousness and allows Him to bring us into a relationship with Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31; Rom. 5:1, 10:8-9). Without the cross the only dealing God could have with humanity was judgment (Jn. 3:16-20, 5:22; Rev. 20:11-15). God's purpose has always been to have a relationship with the people He created, which is why man was made in the image of God – a relational being (Gen. 1:26; Ex. 25:8; Prov. 8:31). The work of Christ on the cross formed the basis by which God could accomplish this in righteousness and holiness (Col. 1:20).

The disciples of the Lord Jesus missed all of this during His ministry on earth. They merely looked for deliverance from their earthly enemies, the Romans (Mt. 20:21; Jn. 6:15; Acts 1:6) – failing to realize this would accomplish

Because God is holy, before He reigns in power and majesty, His subjects must be redeemed from their sins, for only then can they truly be His people forever.

nothing lasting if they remained in their sins. The Messiah, the Hebrew word for “Christ,” was promised in Old Testament times to unconditionally deliver Israel as a nation from their enemies (Isa. 9:6-7; Mic. 5:2). Because God is holy, before He reigns in power and majesty, His subjects must be redeemed from their sins, for only then can they truly be His people forever. As a nation the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, saying, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him! ... We have no king but Caesar!” (Jn. 19:15 NKJV).

The Messiah had also been promised unconditionally as a blessing to those who are not from Israel: the Gentiles (Gen. 22:18). The Romans, representative of the Gentile world, mocked and crucified Him. Hence the world as a whole cast out its

Savior, and individuals who try to justify themselves before God continue this rejection in spirit.

God allowed man to crucify Christ, using this apex, or climax, of man’s injustice to pour out His wrath against sin on His well-loved Son, the Lord Jesus.

In doing so, the Lord Jesus became the substitute for all who turn to Him for forgiveness (2 Cor. 5:21). He paid the debt that we could never pay (Ps. 49:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Raising Him from the dead after three days, God confirmed that Christ’s sacrifice is able to save all who put their faith and trust in Him (Rom. 4:24-25). The Lord Jesus truly can give eternal life as He stated during His earthly ministry (Jn. 10:27-28). He is the only way to a restored relationship with God (14:6).

2. Christ’s Bride

Even though the world as a whole cast out the Lord Jesus, His death was ultimately in obedience to the work His Father had given to Him (4:34; Phil. 2:8). This obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, made it possible for God to approach humanity in righteousness and grace (Rom. 3:21-26). Ever since, God has been accomplishing something very important and wonderful on earth! It is not a national work or general improve-

ment in some area of the world, which God now calls “this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4 KJV). Instead, according to God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 3:6-11) the Holy Spirit is gathering a heavenly bride for the Lord Jesus,¹ redeemed out of love by Christ Himself (5:25). She is also referred to as “the Church” (1:23, 5:25) and the “body” of Christ (1:22-23, 2:16, 4:4, 5:30-31; Col. 1:18). This bride is composed of believers in the Lord Jesus who are indwelt individually by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 1:21-22) and baptized by the Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

“In Christ,” believers have no national or social distinctions; they are one (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). This is something special and unique, which started on Pentecost following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2) and was not known in Old Testament times (Eph. 3; Col. 1:24-27). The bride of Christ:

- Belongs to heaven although presently on earth (Phil. 3:20),
- Has no affection for a world system that seeks satisfaction and renown without Christ (vv.7-8),
- Looks to no man, woman, program or campaign to fix the world system around her, and
- Faithfully presents her Beloved as man’s only hope (Acts 4:12; Rom. 7-8; Phil. 4:13; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Therefore she is outwardly a light in a dark world (Mt. 5:14-16), the salt of the earth (v.13) and heaven’s ambassador on earth (2 Cor. 5:20). She does this work tirelessly to the blessing of mankind (Gal. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:58), by the calling of God (1 Pet. 2), in separation from unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14) and the world (Jas. 4:4). Inwardly she enjoys the blessings of her heavenly calling even now (Eph. 1:3),² knowing her place is seated with Christ in heavenly places – now in spirit but soon face to face (2:4-6; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 4:17-18).

From this biblical description of the bride’s calling and actions it immediately becomes clear that much of what is called “Christianity” is not really so. Over the centuries many have used the name of Christ to build political and religious systems and organizations that are primarily about power and riches. Christ promised His followers neither. This corruption of Christianity, termed “Christendom,” continues to thrive today in various forms. Whole groups have been abused under this umbrella. It comes in all flavors, ranging from nationalistic to anarchist – and to false theocracies where God is recognized as ruler in name but not practice. Christendom has Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Evangelical branches. Its chief

purpose is to make a name for itself on earth, usually under the guises of “improving the world” or “honoring God.”

Members of the true bride of Christ have often been deceived into participating in the efforts of Christendom. Hence, we need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Mt. 10:16), acting for Christ in a way that is consistent with our purpose and calling.

Dear Christian, if the world seems to get darker despite our labors, take encouragement from God’s Word; what is done for Him, in His way, is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9). Although we want to be a blessing on earth we do not seek our blessing *from* the earth, but from our Man in the glory. He is coming soon to take us out of this present evil world to be with Him forever, and He will raise all believers who are asleep in Christ (1 Th. 4:13-18)! The Church’s time for glory is not now. God’s Word says: “When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). In addition to this, although we know the greatness of God’s love and grace, let’s not forget that Christ’s glory is what God’s purposes are ultimately about, not our blessing and destiny. May we be found watching, working and waiting for Him.

3. Christ’s Wrath

Will God be finished with this earth when the Church is taken to heaven? We know from Scripture that following the rapture of the Church the “man of sin” will take prominence on earth and exalt himself to the place of God (2 Th. 2:3-4). The world will hail him as a savior (Jn. 5:43; Rev. 13:4). In fact, there will be a trinity of evil that rules over the western world led by a figure called “the beast” (presumably synonymous for “the man of sin”), his chief propagandist is called “the false prophet” and Satan (Rev. 12-13). This will be the pinnacle of fallen man’s rebellion against God, drawing wrath and judgment from God even more terrible than the global flood of Noah’s day (Mt. 24:21).

The time period of these events is known as the tribulation – and often our interest in prophecy inappropriately lingers here. However, God will not allow this world’s history to end with a cast out Savior! The glory and honor of our Lord Jesus is where all history is headed (Ps. 72; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:10). God does have purposes on earth following the rapture of the Church. Christ will rule in power and majesty over this world in a kingdom characterized by righteousness. He will be the center of heaven and earth. The Church is not the instrument God

will use to bring this about, but it will be accomplished through God's wrath and judgment (Rev. 11:15-18). The blessing of the Church is to be with Him in His kingdom, reflecting His heavenly glories for the whole world to see (Eph. 2:6-7; 2 Th. 1:10).

So what is the purpose of the tribulation time in God's counsels? Let's back up for a moment and consider the big picture. God made promises to the patriarchs and Israel that have not been fulfilled (Gen. 13:14-16, 26:3, 35:10-12). These promises include that Israel will rule over the nations who have oppressed them (Isa. 14:2). Messiah will receive tribute from the nations (Ps. 72) with Jerusalem as His capital city (Isa. 60), never to be destroyed by the Gentiles again (Jer. 31:40). The nations will travel to Jerusalem annually to worship Jehovah there (Isa. 2:1-5; Zech. 8:20-23). However, Israel cannot enjoy these promises yet because of its rejection of Christ (Hos. 5; Mt. 23:37-39).

These promises are ultimately about the glory and honor of our Lord Jesus; He will be magnified and rule with power over a world which once rejected Him (Ps. 110; Lk. 21:27; 1 Cor. 15:25; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:15). History past, present and future is about *His* glory on earth and in heaven (Eph. 1:10). You might ask, "Isn't

Christ reigning now?" Yes, He is on the Father's throne in heaven at this very time, but He is waiting until His enemies are made His footstool (Ps. 110:1).

Rebellion against God and sin against His name are practiced openly on earth both now and

History past, present and future is about *His* glory on earth and in heaven.

during the tribulation, but that will change in a future day. God needs to accomplish four things in order to fulfill His ancient promises:

- The apostate, false church of Christendom must be destroyed;
- The Jewish people must be led to repentance, prepared to receive their Messiah;
- The unrepentant Jewish people must be judged; and
- The unrepentant nations that persecute Israel and hate God must be judged.

Only then will the times of refreshing – also known as the millennial reign of Christ – come on this earth from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

The tribulation period accomplishes the first two items. It lasts seven years (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24; Rev. 6:1-17, 11:2-3, 12:6,14, 13:5-6) and begins with the beast signing a protection treaty with Israel that God calls a “covenant with death ... and ... agreement

with hell” (Isa. 28:18). The judgment which God will pour out on this earth during the tribulation is summarized in the book of Revelation. We read there of seal, trumpet and bowl judgments – seven of each (Rev. 6, 8-9, 16). God uses these judgments to bring a significant number of Jews, known as the Jewish remnant, to repentance (Joel 2:12-18; Zech. 13:8-9), preparing them to receive their Messiah. The false church of Christendom will be completely destroyed during this time (Rev. 2:22-23, 17) while the beast and false prophet will continue to rule over the western world in defiance against God.

It is important to note that during this terrible time the gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the entire world. Many will receive it and be saved even though they will suffer intense persecution and many will be martyred. These saints will certainly be believers in the Lord Jesus, but they will not be

they will serve before the throne of God and He will dwell among them (6:9-11, 7:13-17, 14:6-7).

4. Christ's Controversy

God's Word speaks of His controversy and indignation with both unrepentant Israel and the unrepentant nations (Hos. 4:1, 12:2; Mic. 6:2; Jer. 25:31).³ God will use one of Israel's ancient enemies, Assyria, as "His rod" to execute His final judgment on unrepentant Israel. The leader of the Assyrian invasion is referred to as "the king of the North" (Isa. 10:5, 28:14-19; Dan. 11:40-43). At the close of the tribulation the king of the North will ravage the land of Israel as he passes through on a larger campaign to invade Egypt. The beast will make what appears to be a half-hearted attempt to meet his treaty obligation to protect Israel and belatedly send his armies. Kings of the east will converge on the land of Israel at the same time, apparently motivated by the news that Israel is on her

knees and ready for the taking. Armageddon will have begun (Dan. 11:44; Joel 3; Rev. 9:13-17, 16:12-16; Zech. 14:1-3).

Christ's controversy will then begin with the nations, and in an awesome display of power and glory He will return to earth (Mt. 24:27-30; 2 Th. 2:8). The

Christ's controversy will then begin with the nations, and in an awesome display of power and glory He will return to earth.

part of the Church, not having its distinctive features. Of course they will be brought to glory and have their part in God's eternal city along with the Church. There

Church, His bride, will be with Him – she will always be with Him (1 Th. 4:17; Rev. 19:11-14). This is the second coming, or appearing, of Christ.

Beginning with the beast and the false prophet, Christ will destroy His enemies (vv.17-21). The king of the North, hearing of a challenger in the land of Israel, will return from Egypt only to meet his doom (Isa. 31:8; Dan. 11:44-45; Joel 2:20). Finally, in an intimate and personal introduction to the repentant faithful of Israel, Christ is to set foot on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, and present Himself as their Messiah (Zech. 14:4). With weeping and joy He will be received and the nation of Israel restored to Christ (12:10-14). The ten scattered tribes will then return to Israel with help from the nations (Isa. 11:11-16, 14:1-2, 66:8; Jer. 31:6-9).

Christ's kingdom will be challenged unsuccessfully in its infancy by Gog and Magog – likely the backers of the previously defeated king of the North (Dan. 8:24; Ezek. 38-39). As the undisputed King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Christ will rule from the throne of His glory and gather all the nations formally (Mt. 25:31-46). Those found to be His enemies are to be confined to eternal fire while the rest live on in His kingdom.

Christ's controversy is then settled and earth's golden era begins.

5. Christ's Reign

All Christ's enemies will be made His footstool (Ps. 110). Israel will be restored to Him (Ezek. 36-37). Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:2) and righteousness will reign in the universal kingdom the Lord establishes (Ps. 72; Isa. 9:7, 32:1). The earth itself will flourish, and the animal kingdom will be at peace, docile and vegetarian (11:6-9). Crops will be so productive that the plowman will overtake the reaper (Amos 9:13). The desert shall blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1). There will finally be world peace (Ps. 72:7; Isa. 2:4; Hos. 2:18)! The poor and needy will be saved and receive justice, for oppression will cease. Christ will bring blessing to all, and He will be honored by every nation (Ps. 72). The prophecies of a Ruler who is both human and divine will be fulfilled in Him (Ps. 8; Isa. 9:6; Jer. 33:15; Mic. 5:2).

The future reign of Christ in power over the earth will be the full display of His glory (Ps. 8, 24). He will be the center of everything in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10). The cross is the focal point of all history, on which all God's purposes hinge, but God would not allow world history to end with the humiliation of His

Son. Scripture testifies, “For He must reign” (1 Cor. 15:25).

How wonderful that God has revealed to us the future exaltation of the Lord Jesus on this earth. During the millennial reign of Christ, Israel will be the display of His glory *on earth* as the nation redeemed by Him, and the Church will be the display of Christ’s glory *in heaven* (Eph. 2:6-7; 2 Th. 1:10). How grateful and full of worship we should be, knowing that we will be associated with Him in that coming day. The Father has decreed the exaltation of the Lord Jesus over all things in heaven and earth to be the climax of all history (Eph. 1:10). Even now, let us give Him the pre-eminence in our lives!

6. Christ’s Court

Lest we think that an ideal environment is all fallen man needs to live in harmony with God, Scripture states that even the wonderful reign of Christ does not cause fallen man to love Him (Rev. 20:7-9). How completely this demonstrates the need for new birth! Children will be born during the millennial reign of Christ, but not all will accept Him as their Savior. Scripture states that after 1,000 years of Christ’s glorious reign Satan will be loosed for a short while. Given the opportunity, fallen man will again act against God. Were it not

written in God’s Word we would not believe it.

This final revolt fails while still in the setup stage; Christ’s kingdom is everlasting and will not fail (Dan. 7:13-14). The revolt is destroyed by a consuming fire from heaven and leads directly to the final judgment where God’s righteousness is executed towards those who died in their sins (Rev. 20:11-15). They are found standing before God, the Lord Jesus seated on a great white throne with authority to execute judgment. From this dreadful scene heaven and earth flee.

Dear reader, the Lord Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again so we can be free from judgment by believing on Him. Confess your sin to Him and He will be your Savior. If you refuse His forgiveness, He must be your judge.

7. Christ’s Rest

“Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28 NKJV). We see that our blessed Lord Jesus will fully restore divine authority, ruling by the authority of the Father. Having accomplished this He will continue His rule forever under that same authority and in

the same subjection.⁴ That is the thrust of the quoted passage. It is an amazing fact that our Lord Jesus will remain a Man for all eternity! However, the subjection He placed Himself under by becoming Man never made Him any less divine. In eternity the Lamb will share the throne and be the object of worship that belongs to God alone (Rev. 5:12-14, 22:3).

A new heaven and earth will usher in the eternal state with the eternal city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God (21:1-2). Here righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13) and a perfect rest of joyful fellowship is enjoyed forever (Mt. 11:28; 1 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 4:9; 1 Jn. 1:3-4; Rev. 2:17, 21:4, 22:4).

Throughout the ages of time God has reserved a redeemed company of people who put their faith in Him. The destiny of all the redeemed is to have their part in God's eternal city, with God dwelling among them (Heb. 11:10, 12:22-23; Rev. 21:9-10, 21:12, 22:3-4). All are eternally blessed and worshipers of God.⁵ In this way all the redeemed are equal and represented in the book of Revelation as the 24 elders who worship the Lamb. At the same time God has distinctive relationships among His redeemed ones that carry on in eternity as well.⁶

The bride and the friends of the bride retain these respective relationships with Christ in eternity (Jn. 3:29). The twelve tribes of Is-

Therefore the fellowship all the redeemed enjoy in the eternal city will be a perfect balance of unity, diversity and individuality.

rael remain distinct in eternity, as do the tribulation saints referred to earlier (Isa. 66:22; Rev. 7:14, 21:12). Therefore the fellowship all the redeemed enjoy in the eternal city will be a perfect balance of unity, diversity and individuality. God's ultimate purpose will be achieved: "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God'" (v.3).

Concluding Thoughts

Summing up, we see that God is ordering history in a way that will exalt His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, over all things. Through the blood of His cross, not only are people reconciled to God (Col. 1:21) but even creation itself will be restored (Rom. 8:19-22, Col. 1:20). Christ's reign will restore divine authority over the entire universe and vindicate the char-

acter of God where sin had brought ruin. The eternal state that follows will not be so much the vindication of the character of God as the satisfaction of His heart.⁷ This will be the perfect eternal rest of fellowship, life and love.

Let us close by thinking specifically of the relationship the bride of Christ enjoys with Him in eternity. The Lord Jesus shall be completely satisfied, the Bridegroom with His bride (Isa. 53:11; Jn. 14:3; Eph. 5:25-32). Our longing for Him will be a fulfilled longing with continuous amazement far beyond the Queen of Sheba's response to Solomon's glory (1 Ki. 10:6-9). Union with Christ is the wonderful portion of the Church, now and for all eternity.

Then we'll know Him as He knows us,
Face to face His name we'll bless,
This the perfect, precious fullness,
Of His glorious purposes! **GT**



Endnotes:

1. First Corinthians 12:13 in connection with Ephesians 5:30-31 shows the link between the Church as one body and the bride.

2. Among others, our blessings include: peace with God, open access to the Father, fellowship with fellow-believers, a secure future with Christ.

3. The *King James Version* uses the word "controversy" in each of these verses. Isaiah 10:25 and 34:2 refer to the indignation of the LORD against Israel and the nations.

4. J. Dwight Pentecost, "Things To Come," *Zondervan Publishing House*, first Grand Rapids printing 1964, pp. 493-494.

5. Hebrews 11:40 implies the Old Testament saints will be made perfect *with* us.

6. First Thessalonians 4:16 includes Old Testament believers. Revelation 19:4 refers to the redeemed as "the 24 elders," then separates the redeemed into "the bride" and implied guests in verses 7-9.

7. G. Davison, "Reconciliation," <http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/davison/Rdgs/RECONCIL.html>

Why Did Jesus Come?

– Part 4

by Shereen Ghobrial

He Came To Preach

“And He said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.’ And He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.” —Mark 1:38-39 ESV

A remarkable attribute of Christianity in the twenty-first century is the spread of megachurches. A simple definition of a megachurch is any local Protestant church that has a weekly attendance of 2,000 or more. If we go back to the 1950s, we could count 2-3 megachurches, but now there are many. One characteristic of megachurches is that their growth is directly related to a “good” preacher. We use “good” in quotes because that is the description made by man, not necessarily God.

The objective of this discussion is not to study megachurches. Instead, we desire to highlight the importance of preaching and

see from the Bible points about the style and message of the greatest preacher: the Lord Jesus.

The Preacher Versus The Message

Which is more important, the preacher or the message he is preaching? There are arguments for both viewpoints. On one hand, what impacts people and changes their lives is the message they hear. On the other hand, if the preacher is not skilled and knowledgeable enough, then his message may not reach the hearers.

God has preached a very long sermon during the course of human history. He is the perfect preacher, giving one idea or reve-

lation at a time. The focus and object of God's message is the same: the Son of God and His work on the cross. God started this sermon in the garden of Eden, where He clothed Adam and Eve with skins from an animal sacrifice to show *the need of a substitute*. The mes-

The ultimate revelation was when God took the form of a man and came to this earth.

sage continued growing by revealing that the Substitute would be *provided by God*, as Abraham had learned when offering Isaac. Later, as the Israelites learned from the Passover lamb, the Substitute *must be perfect*. Many other revelations are found on the pages of the Old Testament as well.

The ultimate revelation was when God took the form of a man and came to this earth. He is named Jesus, and He revealed to us everything we can know about God. In Him we see God's love – as much as we can understand. We also see in Him God's hatred of sin, His power over nature, and His mercy to the poor, sick and needy. Through Jesus we realize God's wisdom in finding a solution to the problem of sin and know the divine plan to bring sinful people to eternal glory by saving them “by the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20).

If we consider God's revelations and messages throughout history as one sermon, the main theme is Jesus.

Jesus' Preaching Strategy

What was Jesus' preaching strategy? Did He use teams to prepare crusades, or stadiums and conference centers? What marketing incentives did He utilize?

I am sure we can easily answer these questions as we look on the pages of the four Gospels. He gave messages on a mountain, from a ship, and in a crowded house. The Lord's messages were spontaneous and triggered by people's questions or the need that He saw in them (Mt. 9:36, 14:14; Mk. 6:34). His team consisted of 12 men – mostly fishermen with no marketing experience. Some of His disciples were hated by Jewish society, such as Matthew the tax collector. One can argue that Jesus had a good tactic of attracting people by providing food, but Jesus Himself rebuked that practice (Jn. 6:26-27).

When looking at the different occasions of the Lord's preaching we see Him speaking to crowds of hundreds and thousands as well as to just one Samaritan woman. What was His guidance in picking His audience? It was simply to obey the Father's will (4:34) – a will that

does not focus on numbers.

The Lord Jesus spent over 33 years on earth, but only preached during the last three years. During His public ministry He spent most of His time with His 12 disciples, rather than in public healing and teaching. In this we see a few lessons in ministry:

- Plans should always be guided by the Father's will, not by any human ambition of having more services or a bigger audience.
- Success should not be measured by what people think, but how God values our motives and efforts. The Lord Jesus was the best preacher, but He only impacted a few hundred individuals, as seen at the end of His ministry (Acts 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:6). Yet, He was able to tell the Father that He had finished all the work the Father had given Him to do (Jn. 17:4).
- For a lasting impact it might be best to spend more time with fewer individuals or to utilize a private setting. The Lord spent most of His time with His disciples, and most of them went on to change the face of history as available tools of the Holy Spirit.

Comparison With Other Preachers

One attribute of Jesus' preaching is the fact "He was teaching

them as One who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt. 7:29). He was unique in this, for He was the living Word, the true expression of God Himself. We can only model Him in that aspect, by preaching the written

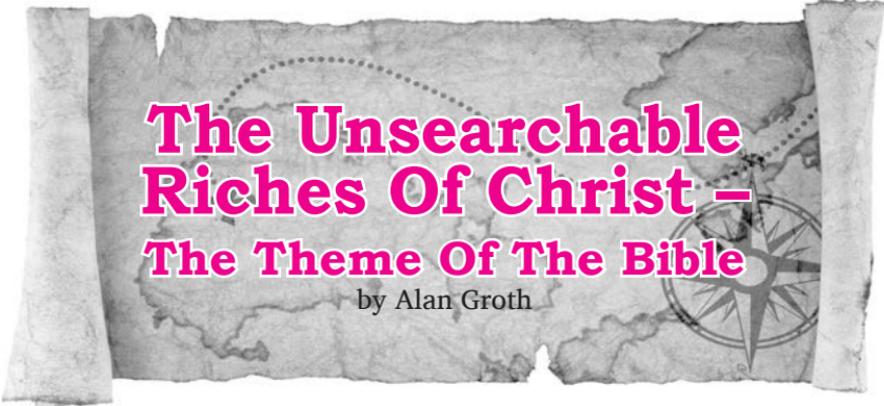
The Pharisees were the most respected preachers at Jesus' time; however, they were preaching ideas they did not live out.

Word, the Bible. Similarly, John the Baptist, coming before Jesus, preached about the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). Only Jesus had the authority to say, "You have heard ... but I say to you ..." (Mt. 5:21-23,27-28,33-34,38-39,43-44).

The Pharisees were the most respected preachers at Jesus' time; however, they were preaching ideas they did not live out (Mt. 23:1-3). The Lord Jesus was a great preacher because He practiced what He taught. To be accurate, He taught what He practiced (Acts 1:1). The best message we can minister to people is through what we do – even more than what we say. Let us keep this point in mind as we preach in this world, waiting eagerly to be with Him. **GT**

Look for Part 5 of this Series next month!

The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.



The Unsearchable Riches Of Christ – The Theme Of The Bible

by Alan Groth

Christ The Shepherd

Psalm 100:3 says, “Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” In Isaiah 53:6 we read: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” The Shepherd of the sheep is our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who bore their iniquity.

Let’s look at some Bible passages where we see the riches of Christ as the Shepherd.

Read John 10:1-30

1. What kind of shepherd did Jesus call Himself? _____
2. Name some characteristics of this Shepherd. _____
3. Name some characteristics of His sheep. _____
4. Who else protects the sheep? _____

Read Hebrews 13:20-21

1. What did God do for the Lord Jesus? _____
2. What kind of Shepherd is He called in these verses? _____

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. To whom is Peter writing? _____
2. What were these men to do? _____
3. What will they receive for their service? _____
4. When will they receive this reward? _____

Read Ezekiel 34:11-12; Luke 15:4-7

1. What will the Lord GOD do? _____
2. What did the man do who found his lost sheep? _____

Read Psalm 23

1. Who wrote this psalm? _____
2. Who is the psalmist's shepherd? _____
3. Did David trust the LORD? _____
4. What does the Shepherd do for His sheep in:
v.2 _____
v.3 _____
v.4 _____
v.5 _____
5. What are the results of the Shepherd's care (v.6)? _____

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25

1. What did Christ leave for us? _____
2. Describe briefly what He did or did not do. _____
3. What is Christ for us (v.25)? _____

In our next month's *Discover Column* look for more riches of Christ.

Thanksgiving At Meals

by E. J. T.



Who Is The Giver?

Why have so many Christians, on sitting down to meals, begun by praying? The appropriate response to accepting a gift is to give thanks. The Christian recognizes God as the giver of his food, and therefore should render thanks to Him. This indeed is consistent with Scripture: “Meats ... God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them who are faithful and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:3 JND).

The man of the world regards his food as the product of a machine or institution, which he calls “Nature.” The Christian goes behind this and recognizes

the Creator of the entire system of nature. Furthermore, he not only believes that there is such a Creator, but he knows Him and is actually in communion with Him “by the word of God and prayer” (v.5 KJV). The Darby translation of this phrase is: “By God’s word and freely addressing [Him].” In an illuminative note of the whole subject, Mr. Darby wrote: “This I believe to be the sense here: *enteuxis* implies interaction with a person, then petitions and intercession; one person speaking personally to another ... I believe the creature, fallen through Adam, belongs to the faithful and those

who know the truth, by God's speaking to us and our freely speaking to Him. This has set all on a new footing, because we have met God again, the Word of God having put us into communication by grace. The faithful and those who know the truth, who have availed themselves of it, come and enter into an interaction. It is no longer by nature, but by the Word of God."

A Prayer For The Meal?

Scripture says, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (vv.4-5). The current idea is that each meal needs to be prayed about before it can be properly partaken. But the contrary is the truth. It is sanctified, or set apart, by the fact of the new position in which the Christian stands: "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:22). Scripture directs with authority that the action on our part should be not prayer but thanksgiving:

- "If it be received with thanksgiving ..." (1 Tim. 4:4).
- It is "created to be received with thanksgiving" (v.3).

Thus the Christian's meal table becomes an altar of praise; the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

Using A Prayer Formula?

How different from the dead formula which some of us have had to listen to with pain: "Sanctify, we beseech thee, O Lord, this food to our use, and us to Thy service, for Christ's sake. Amen." Not a word here of thanks to the Giver of all good for His bounties spread on the table before us. This oft repeated prayer is out of place, seeking that God would do something which He has already done, and for which He expects thanksgiving or praise from loving hearts which know Him.

Even where formulas have long been laid aside, one often hears what is really only an expansion of the gloomy one just quoted. We hear a prayer about our food, ourselves and our service, *but never a note of praise to our God for His creature-gifts!* Prayer is very, very blessed, but also in its place is praise. Not only does it react upon ourselves, but it glorifies God. "Whoso offereth praise [or, "thanksgiving," margin] glorifieth Me" (Ps. 50:23). At a meal table it is sometimes said, "Will you ask a blessing?" The appropriate reply would be, "No; the food is already blessed; it is sanctified to our use; but for this food, which is already blessed, I will cheerfully give thanks."

What Is The Basis Of Giving Thanks?

A precious thought in connection with the meal table is that the thanksgiving is on the basis of redemption. We do not receive God's gifts on the original ground of creation, but because of the cross of Christ. God could not, being righteous, bestow the smallest benefit upon a sinner unless His righteousness in doing so was satisfied. Therefore it is on account of the propitiation of Christ, or the satisfaction God has in Christ, that our daily mercies come to us and, indeed, to the world. This is the basis on which God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45).

The man of the world little dreams that he owes his food, clothing and every good that he enjoys to the despised atonement of Christ; but God would be exhibiting indulgence to sin if it were otherwise. It is in this regard that "Christ ... is the propitiation ... for the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2). Men continue to live on the earth and are afforded the free use of God's magnificent – though marred – creation because of the propitiation of Christ. It is in this sense that God is Savior and Preserver of all men, especially of those who believe (1 Tim. 4:10). Let us carefully note that this text

refers to temporal salvation from day to day, not eternal salvation.

Should I Give Thanks In Public?

If we understand now that the offering of thanksgiving glorifies God, should we refrain from this when we are in public, say at a restaurant? No doubt this is often a trial to the flesh. It is an open confession of Christ, which the natural heart would willingly evade. However, we need to recall to our minds the Lord's precious words: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God" (Lk. 12:8) and, "Them that honor Me, I will honor" (1 Sam. 2:30). Paul, on board a ship, "took bread and gave thanks to God, in presence of them all" (Acts 27:35). Daniel kneeled and prayed at his open window as he had done previously, three times a day, at the penalty of death (Dan. 6).

Thus this slight matter of thanksgiving at meals may afford to us a test of where we really are as to the power of God in our souls. "I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will," Paul said, "and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Cor. 4:19-20). **GT**

1 Timothy

by Leslie M. Grant

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” —1 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

First Timothy (Timothy means “honoring God”) was written to an individual, a young man for whom Paul had deep affection. Being of a timid, retiring nature, and yet gifted by God, Timothy needed to be stirred up to a sense of responsibility as to proper behavior “in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God” (v.15).

Timothy’s ministry was given not for its independent exercise but for the sake of the welfare of the Assembly, the body of Christ. He was called upon also to see that sound doctrine is maintained in the local assembly and order is kept by the actions and service of faithful elders and deacons.

The assembly was to be a place of prayer (1 Tim. 2). In chapter 3 the assembly is stated to be “the

pillar and ground of the truth” (v.15) – a witness of God being made manifest in flesh in true, blessed Manhood and the Spirit of God publicly justifying Him in His descent in the form of a dove on the Lord at His baptism (Mt. 3:16). The power of this anointing was seen in His life. In Christ, God had appeared to angels, who had never before seen Him. And He has been preached to Gentiles: the person and work of the Lord Jesus provides a world-wide gospel, meaning “good news,” for all mankind. He is “believed on in the world.” Whether by many or few, *faith* has responded to such a revelation. “Received up in glory” completes this list of blessed facts to which the Assembly, or Church, bears witness. **GT**

This column is adapted from the book “The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief.” It is available for purchase from: Believer’s Bookshelf USA (www.bbusha.org) and Believers Bookshelf Canada (www.bbcan.org).

Q&A

Is dancing in worship for the Church?

The New Testament mentions dancing on only three occasions: the men-pleasing dancing of Herodias that cost John the Baptist his head (Mt. 14:6-11; Mk. 6:21-28), the dancing of little children at play (Mt. 11:16-17; Lk. 7:32), and the dancing the older son heard after his younger brother – the prodigal – had returned home from life in a far country (Lk. 15:25).

Nowhere in the New Testament is dancing associated with Christian worship or referred to as an activity of the Church. Singing and praying are both mentioned with approval in 1 Corinthians 14. Blessing is equated with giving thanks in verse 16. Speaking in tongues and prophesying are mentioned here too, although 1 Corinthians 13:8 makes plain that tongues would cease and prophecies should be done away. A psalm, a teaching, a revelation and an interpretation are added to these activities in 1 Corinthians 14:26, but dancing is never mentioned. Apparently it is not something for the edification of God's heavenly people, nor is it referred to in other instructions for the

church (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16). Not once in the historical record in the Acts do we find believers dancing in worship or testimony.

The worship of God's earthly people in the Old Testament was to be in holy splendor, in the beauty of holiness (1 Chr. 16:29; Ps. 96:9). Its components were outward – a geographic center, a gorgeous, well-furnished building, tangible sacrifices, priests with vestments, musical instruments, choirs, incense and much more. Dancing fits right into this pattern, a pattern set aside in the New Testament until we come to Revelation, which is written in symbolic terms and describes worship in heaven rather than on earth. Today the Father seeks worshipers who worship in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). May *our hearts*, appreciative of His Son's finished work, overflow in worship and adoration before Him! **GT**

We are reprinting this answer from the June 1998 Grace & Truth Magazine for the blessing of the Lord's people today, particularly those who recently asked this question.

their Savior will go. All those who have not personally accepted Christ as Savior will be left behind for judgment.

How About You?

Are you ready for the coming of the Lord? When He comes again will you be taken up or will you be left behind? Do you look forward for Christ's coming, or is the thought distasteful to you?

Get Ready Now!

Jesus could come at any time! If you are not already saved from your sins, wouldn't you like to be so you will be ready to go to heaven with Him? Confess to Him that you are a sinner, repent of your sins, and receive Christ as your Savior. After Jesus comes again it will be too late, and the door of heaven will be closed to you forever! **GT**

(This article is available in tract form from the publisher!)



I wish to inform you that “Resolving Family Conflicts” (J/A ’16 – May ’17) was a good one for our monthly couple retreats.

– Abia State, Nigeria

Your magazine is good and very spiritual. God uses your articles to bless many Christians and give me direction to understand the Bible.

– Punjab Province, Pakistan

I truly love this magazine and am learning a lot from it. The facility where I live discourages anyone from receiving Christian literature. Please pray for this place as no one comes for church services or Bible studies.

– Texas, USA

I read each issue page by page then pass the magazine to others in our prayer group! We all liked the October 2017 edition. I particularly liked “Testing Every Man’s Work” and “Running The Christian Race.”

– Florida, USA

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The Coming Of The Lord

by Raymond K. Campbell

Over 2,000 years ago Jesus Christ came from heaven to this earth to die on the cross for sinners. He was then raised from the dead and went back to heaven.

A Promise Given

Before He returned to heaven Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:2-3 NKJV).

What a wonderful promise! Jesus returned to heaven to prepare a place for all who believe on Him as their Savior. He will come again to take them back to heaven with Him. How wonderful for us who know Him as Savior and Lord!

Concerning this event, the apostle Paul told us that “the Lord [Jesus Christ] Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:16-17).

Only Real Christians

Jesus will come from heaven with a shout heard only by those who belong to Him – those who have been “born of God” (Jn. 1:13) by faith. All believers who have already died will be raised, and together with living believers will be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52) and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. But only those who have received Him as

- continued on inside back cover

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