THE THREE-FOLD OFFICE & ANOINTING

In this study we will be looking at the redemptive work of Christ through the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. The order in which we look at them does have significance. In His earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated and fulfilled these offices in this order (with some overlap), so it is important that we approach this study as such. We will also see, however, that Jesus continues to serve as Prophet, Priest, and King in glory.

It is of importance to take into consideration the fact that the offices of prophet, priest, and king are dominant throughout the Old Testament. Many of the key characters occupied these offices (e.g. Moses, Aaron, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah). In fact, we cannot talk about the life and ministry of Israel without discussing these important offices and those who occupied them. These offices provided the structure to Israel’s every-day life and service. We know, however, that those who occupied these offices were not perfect, often committed heinous sins, and therefore were themselves in need of a Savior (which is Christ). It is even true that Adam was, in a sense, a prophet, priest, and king. Louis Berkhof states, “Man, as he was created by God, was intended to function as a prophet, priest, and king. Hence, he was endowed with knowledge and understanding [referring to his prophetic role], with righteousness and holiness [referring to his priesthood], and with dominion over the lower creation [referring to his kingship].”¹ Now, obviously, after the Fall and upon the establishment of the Israelite nation these offices became more defined and formal. These three offices point forward to the Messiah who would fulfill them all, and in fulfilling such offices would accomplish the salvation or redemption of His people. Wayne Grudem sums up well the distinct significances of each office and the way in which Jesus fulfills them:

The prophet spoke God’s words to the people; the priest offered sacrifices, prayers, and praises to God on behalf of the people; and the king ruled over the people as God’s representative. These three offices foreshadowed Christ’s own work in different ways….Christ fulfills these three offices in the following ways: as prophet he reveals God to us and speaks God’s words to us; as priest he both offers a sacrifice to God on our behalf and is himself the sacrifice that is offered; and as king he rules over the church

and over the universe as well.²

Now, it is important that we briefly consider Jesus’ title as Messiah/Christ (lit. “Anointed One”) when considering how He fulfills these offices. It was, after all, these three offices in the Old Testament that received anointing with oil (Lev. 8:12, 30; 1 Sam. 9:15-16; 10:1; 16:1, 13; 1 Kings 19:16). Such anointing symbolized that God had called and consecrated the individual(s) for the specific office or duty. In the Old Testament we see God’s chosen Servant as the Anointed One (Ps. 2:2; 45:7-8). When we jump to the New Testament we see Jesus fulfilling these prophecies of the Anointed One. At His baptism Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:13-17; cf. Acts 10:37-38), and this anointing consecrated and empowered Him for His ministry (in life, death, and exaltation). Further, in Acts 2:36, referring to the exalted Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, Peter proclaims that God has made Him both Lord and Christ/Messiah (i.e. Anointed One). So, when we think of Jesus as Messiah/Christ we should think of Him as our Prophet, Priest, and King. As the Anointed One He fulfills these three offices of prophet, priest, and king. The redemption accomplished by Christ through these offices are a necessary part of Him being the Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). We can see the progression and relation of these components below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus is…</th>
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<td>God--&gt;Man (through incarnation)--&gt;Messiah--&gt;Prophet/Priest/King--&gt;Mediator</td>
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I believe the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (based heavily on the Westminster Confession of Faith) provides a wonderful statement on the significance and necessity of these three offices in regards to Jesus as the Mediator between God and man. The following is from Chapter 8 (Of Christ the Mediator) and paragraphs 1, 9, and 10 (the WCF does not contain paragraphs 9 and 10):

1. It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

9. This office of mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God; and may not be either in whole, or any part thereof, transferred from Him to any other.

This number and order of offices is necessary; for in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of His prophetical office; and in respect of our alienation from God, and imperfection of the best of our services, we need His priestly office to reconcile us and present us acceptable unto God; and in respect of our averseness and utter inability to return to God, and for our rescue and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need His kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to His heavenly kingdom.

In the next few lessons we will take a closer look at these three offices of Christ (in the order they appeared here), considering the biblical evidence, theological significance, and points of implication and application.

I. JESUS AS PROPHET

Jesus is first of all a prophet. A prophet was a recipient of God’s revelation – through visions, dreams, or verbal communications – as well as a spokesman for God, communicating the divine revelation to the people (cf. Ex. 7:1). Louis Berkhof provides a definition of the duties of God’s prophets:

It was the duty of the prophets to reveal the will of God to the people, to interpret the law in its moral and spiritual aspects, to protest against formalism and sin, calling the people back to the path of duty, and to direct attention to the glorious promises of God for the future.

In short, a prophet’s responsibilities involved teaching, judging, and foretelling. As we will see, Jesus fulfilled these aspects of a prophet during His ministry. First, however, let us look at an Old Testament passage that prophesied of this Messianic office.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

We find this prophecy of Jesus’ office as prophet in the book of Deuteronomy, and the prophecy is spoken of in relation or comparison to Moses’ role and responsibility to the Israelite people.

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 (cf. Acts 3:22-26) “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall

3 While such reception of divine revelation is certainly true of earthly prophets, Jesus transcends this revelatory process (see Jn. 3:31-36).

4 Berkhof. 201.
While many prophets of the LORD arose after Moses, beginning with Samuel (Acts 3:24), none of them quite matched the leadership role and intimate communion that existed between Moses and God, except Jesus Christ, whose communion with the Father was/is greater, being the eternal Son of God (Num. 12:6-8; Jn. 1:1-2). Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus repeatedly demonstrated Himself to be this unique prophet.

**NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT**

Let us now consider the various ways in which Jesus fulfilled the prophetic office and this Old Testament prophecy.

*He made known or explained the Father, having spoken the word that the Father gave Him.*

**John 1:18** “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

**John 3:33-36** “Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

**John 12:47-50** “If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” [This directly parallels Deut. 18:18-19.]

*He taught the people the moral and spiritual aspects of the Law, accompanied by exhortation and warning, thus exhibiting His authority.*
Matthew 7:28-29 (cf. Matt. 5-7 for whole context) “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

He foretold future events.

Matthew 24:2 “But he answered them, ‘You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.’”

Luke 19:43-44 “For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

He, now in glory, continues to serve as Prophet through the Holy Spirit and the teaching of His Apostles (now enscripturated), especially in the proclamation of the gospel.

John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 16:13-14 “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Mark 16:20 “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.”

Hebrews 1:1-2 “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things....” [The implication is that Jesus’ word continues to testify, to be read and proclaimed.]

SUMMARY
As Prophet, Jesus taught the will of God, expounded the spiritual nature of the Law, called Israel to repentance, and foretold future events. His prophetic role continues, namely through the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures. The primary significance of Jesus as
Prophet is that He teaches us the truth, and so reveals to us the will of God and the way of salvation.

APPLICATION
1. We must therefore heed the words of Christ and build our lives upon them (Matt. 7:24-27; Jm. 1:22).

2. This reality of Jesus’ prophetic office should cause us to hunger for the Scriptures (the word of God), to diligently study them, meditate upon them, treasure them in our hearts, speak them, and live according to them (Ps. 119:9, 11, 105; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-4:5).

3. Jesus’ teaching, and that of His Apostles (which is in accordance with the teaching of Christ; Jn. 14:26; 16:13-15), is the final authority on the interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures (see Matt. 17:1-8; Acts 2:42).

II. JESUS AS PRIEST

We come now to the priestly office of Jesus Christ (Anointed One). Being that we have already considered His prophetic office, let us briefly note the distinctions between the two. Again, I quote Berkhof:

The Bible makes a broad but important distinction between a prophet and a priest. Both receive their appointment from God, Deut. 18:18f; Heb. 5:4. But the prophet was appointed to be God’s representative with the people, to be His messenger, and to interpret His will. He was primarily a religious teacher. The priest, on the other hand, was man’s representative with God. He had the special privilege of approach to God, and of speaking and acting in behalf of the people. It is true that the priests were also teachers during the old dispensation, but their teaching differed from that of the prophets. While the latter emphasized the moral and spiritual duties, responsibilities, and privileges, the former stressed the ritual [or ceremonial] observances involved in the proper approach to God.5

The important point to take away here is that the prophets represented God to the people [i.e. “the LORD says…”], whereas the priests represented the people to God [i.e. the sacrifices].

5 Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology (Ml: Eerdmans, 1941), 361.
THE NATURE & FUNCTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

The nature and function of the priesthood may be developed more fully by looking at the classical passage on this subject, Hebrews 5:1-4:

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

I believe we find in this passage four noteworthy characteristics of the priesthood:

1. The priest is taken from among the people he is to represent
2. The priest is called or appointed by God (i.e. he does not appoint himself to the office)
3. The priest can identify and sympathize with those he is chosen to represent, for he is beset with the same weakness or infirmities
4. The priest offers gifts and sacrifices to God on behalf of himself and the people

In the verses that follow (vv. 5-10) we find that Jesus fulfilled this office. Such fulfillment had been prophesied in the Old Testament (Ps. 110:4; cf. Isa. 53). It is important to note, however, that Jesus, unlike the rest of the priests, was not in need of offering a sacrifice for Himself, for He was without sin (Heb. 4:15), and being without sin He was able to be the spotless lamb of God – the perfect sacrifice – to take away the sins of the world. A look at Hebrews 2:14-18 will demonstrate further this priestly work of Christ. However, before we look at that passage, let us first briefly consider the relation of Jesus’ priesthood to Melchizedek (as this important relation is mentioned in 5:5-10).

JESUS & MELCHIZEDEK

A full discussion of the relation between Jesus’ priesthood and Melchizedek’s is beyond this lesson; however, it is necessary to point out a few key aspects. The author of Hebrews discusses this quite extensively in Hebrews 7. I believe the overall thrust of this chapter is to demonstrate the temporal and typical aspects of the Old Testament priesthood under the Law, as a mere shadow of the better things to come in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, which is not according to Aaron, but according to Melchizedek. While the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood was under the Law, Jesus’ priesthood is under promise and precedes the Law. In short, Christ’s priesthood is eternal, and it transcends and fulfills the Levitical priesthood. While the high

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6 For a similar list, see Ibid. 361.
priest was a mediator for the people under the Old Covenant, Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, the New Covenant (Heb. 8).

**Hebrews 2:14-18**
This is perhaps the best passage that clearly delineates these characteristics of Jesus’ priesthood, as observed above. In this passage we see...

1. **the necessity of the incarnation.** Christ, who is the eternal Son of God, had to be made like those He came to save (the children of flesh and blood). He did not come to help angels, but the offspring of Abraham, which cannot refer to every single human being, but to the children of promise (Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29).
2. **the purpose for which He came.** He came to destroy the work of the devil, and in so doing, deliver sinners from the fearful end of their sin (death; cf. Rom. 6:23).
3. **the relation of these two points (just observed) in regard to His priesthood.** In the former He is able to be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, (To do what?), to make propitiation for the sins of the people. In this accomplishment He fulfills the latter – destroying the devil’s work and saving the offspring of Abraham.
4. **His continued sympathy and aid toward those who are tempted by the ways of the world.** Since He has become like one of us (cf. Phil. 2:7-8), has suffered the same temptations we suffer, and has mightily overcome, He is able to come to our aid.

The two main concepts of this passage, and therefore of Jesus’ priesthood, are sacrifice (or propitiation, which defines more pointedly the meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice; see below) and intercession. Let us then look more closely at these two central works of Jesus’ priesthood.

**SACRIFICE**

Jesus Christ offered Himself up to be a sacrifice for sin. This priestly work of Christ is found all throughout the New Testament. Just a sampling will suffice. Note the emphasis of some passages in regard to the actual nature of this sacrifice (e.g. propitiation, bearing curse of the law) and the result of the atonement (e.g. reconciliation, peace, righteousness).

**John 1:29** “The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

**Romans 5:8** “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
**Galatians 3:13** “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”

**Ephesians 2:13-16** “But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us [Jew and Gentile] both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

**Colossians 1:19-22** “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.”

**Hebrews 9:26b** “But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

**1 Peter 3:18** “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”

It is important that we briefly consider one very key term—propitiation. We are specifically told in four passages that Jesus’ sacrifice was a propitiatory sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). This communicates the idea of satisfaction. Satisfaction of what? of God’s justice toward sin through the outpouring or infliction of His wrath. It means that Jesus, on that cross, bore our sin, and in bearing our sin also bore the punishment of our sin. God is, in other words, appeased, and may now look upon us who have believed in Jesus Christ as blameless and righteous. We may confidently say, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

**INTERCESSION**

Christ’s intercessory work is just as important as His sacrificial work, which is incomplete or not properly applied without His intercession. Berkhof notes this significance, as well as the full intent of Christ’s intercession well:

The intercessory work of Christ is based on His atoning sacrifice, is but a continuation of His priestly work, and carries this to completion....It is not limited to intercessory prayer,
as is often mistakenly thought, but includes much more. As intercessor Christ continuously presents His sacrifice to God as the ground of all necessary blessings for His people, persistently claims these blessings for them according to their need, answers all accusations preferred against them by Satan, by the law, and by conscience, secures forgiveness for everything that is justly charged against them, and presents to God their worship and service, rendering it acceptable through His own righteousness.\(^7\)

Christ’s sacrifice is the pleading ground of His heavenly intercession! We find these truths in such passages as...

**Romans 8:31-34** “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

**Hebrews 7:23-25** “The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

**Hebrews 9:24** “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”

**1 John 2:1** “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

**SUMMARY**

We have seen the great importance of Jesus’ priesthood for our salvation. This office was likewise prophesied in the Old Testament, as well as prefigured and typified in the Old Covenant priesthood and Temple services, especially in the person and priesthood of Melchizedek (prior to the law). Further, we have seen that the two central aspects of this priesthood are the sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood on the cross and His continual intercession. The two are inseparable works, for that which is accomplished in His sacrifice is the pleading ground of His intercession before God. His intercession assumes that justice has

been served and atonement for sin made. In glory Christ continues to plead the case of His sacrifice and righteousness for His people.

APPLICATION

1. Christ’s priesthood serves to assure and comfort us in our trials and temptations, even when we sin. It gives us confidence to draw near to the throne of glory and grace. (see Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 12:1-3; Rom. 8:1)

2. Christ’s priesthood establishes the priesthood of believers. While Christ stands alone in His priesthood (He alone is Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and is holy and righteous in and of Himself), our priesthood is collective. As the body of Christ we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). This priestly service involves offering up spiritual sacrifices (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15-16) and praying on behalf of others.

III. JESUS AS KING

In this lesson we take up the third and final Messianic office of our Lord – His kingship. Jesus is not only Prophet and Priest, but He is also King. These three offices, which were central to the daily life and ministry of Israel in the Old Testament, coalesce in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, bringing about the salvation of God’s elect and establish Jesus as the one Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). Let us consider again the distinctions between these offices, with mention of Christ’s fulfillment. Again, I quote Grudem:

The prophet spoke God’s words to the people; the priest offered sacrifices, prayers, and praises to God on behalf of the people; and the king ruled over the people as God’s representative. These three offices foreshadowed Christ’s own work in different ways….Christ fulfills these three offices in the following ways: as prophet he reveals God to us and speaks God’s words to us; as priest he both offers a sacrifice to God on our behalf and is himself the sacrifice that is offered; and as king he rules over the church and over the universe as well.\(^8\)

OLD TESTAMENT TYPES & PROPHECIES

One of the greatest prophecies of the Messianic King is found in Psalm 2. This Psalm depicts God setting His King, who is called His Son, on His holy hill, Mount Zion, all the while with the

\(^8\) Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology* (MI: Zondervan, 1994), 624. Take note of Christ’s reign over both the Church and the universe, as this will be discussed in detail below.
nations raging against God and His Anointed One (Messiah). The nations stand no chance against the power and justice of this King, so they are called to be wise, fear the LORD, and kiss the Son, lest they perish. Those who take refuge in Him are called blessed. In this Psalm we see the magnificent sovereignty of God and His King.

Further, while the office of king in the Old Testament certainly anticipated the Messianic fulfillment – reigning over His people, exhorting them in the will of God, defending them against their enemies, and conquering the nations – there was a specific king who uniquely typified the Messianic King. This was, of course, King David (and in a lesser way his son, King Solomon). God made this covenantal promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (cf. Ps. 132:11),

> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

Although this promise did have immediate fulfillment with the birth and reign of Solomon (1 Kings 8:20), it did in fact have another, greater fulfillment in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

**NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT**

There are key passages that demonstrate the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus. In these passages we see that Jesus is a descendent of David, and therefore a son, and that He has received a kingdom without end.

**Matthew 1:1** “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

**Luke 1:30-33 (cf. Acts 2:23-36)** “And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
Romans 1:1-6 “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the
gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy
Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh
and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his
resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received
grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name
among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

A Spiritual Kingship & Kingdom
Christ’s kingship is a spiritual kingship. It is a spiritual kingship because of the nature of the
kingdom, the end for which He reigns, and the means by which His kingdom is administered
and experienced. Louis Berkhof sums these points up well:

It is a spiritual kingship, because it relates to a spiritual realm. It is the mediatorial rule
as it is established in the hearts and lives of believers. Moreover, it is spiritual, because
it bears directly and immediately on a spiritual end, the salvation of His people. And,
finally, it is spiritual, because it is administered, not by force or external means, but by
the Word and the Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and wisdom, of justice and holiness,
of grace and mercy. This kingship reveals itself in the gathering of the church, and in its
government, protection, and perfection.9

So Christ has received and established this kingdom through His mediatorial or redemptive
work. This realm or kingdom over which Christ reigns pertains to salvation, and it therefore
consists of God’s elect or the redeemed. The citizens of this kingdom and the ethic of this
kingdom are expressed in Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5-7). Numerous Scriptures
bear these points just mentioned.

John 3:3, 5 “Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he
cannot see the kingdom of God.....’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless
one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”

John 18:36-37 “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were
of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over
to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’ Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are
a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for
this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is
of the truth listens to my voice.’”

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Acts 2:32-36 (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Romans 14:17-18 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.”

Colossians 1:13-14 “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.”

It is important to keep in mind that there is a sense in which this spiritual kingdom has always existed since the fall, for it pertains to the realm of salvation. However, such was not inaugurated until the incarnation, crucifixion, and exaltation (resurrection and ascension). “But though He was permitted to rule as Mediator even before His incarnation, He did not publicly and formally assume His throne and inaugurate His spiritual kingdom until the time of His ascension and elevation at the right hand of God, Acts 2:29-36; Phil. 2:5-11.” It is therefore, in a sense, retrospective (cf. Rom. 3:21-26).

This brings us to another very important point: the kingdom and the gospel go hand-in-hand. This is the significance of the important phrase, “the gospel of the kingdom.”

10 Ibid. 410.
The Gospel of the Kingdom

Throughout the Gospels we find Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:25; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:43; 8:1; 16:16). This was also of central importance in the preaching of the apostles and others in Acts (8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30-31). So, what exactly is the gospel of the kingdom? What does it mean or refer to? The gospel of the kingdom has reference to the kingdom of God being established during the first advent of Christ through His Spirit anointing, sinless life, substitutionary sacrifice, and glorious exaltation (i.e. resurrection and ascension). This is to say that Jesus fulfills this Messianic office of king and establishes His kingdom through the gospel. The King has come, He has accomplished the redemption typified and prophesied long ago, and He now sits on His throne of glory, reigning over the church and the universe. The passages we have already observed make this point evident.

This spiritual kingship of Christ will continue for all eternity, just as much as His headship over the Church will continue forever. He will always be King of God’s people.

Already/Not Yet

I will be brief with this point. There is a sense in which the spiritual kingdom of God and Christ is both present and future. This is often referred to as the “already/not yet” aspect of the kingdom. A few passages will suffice to make this clear (I will only reference passages that speak of the future aspect of the kingdom, as we have already looked at passages demonstrating the present or “already” aspect).

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Acts 14:22 “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (cf. Eph. 5:5) “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

2 Timothy 4:18 “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”
Although we experience here and now the spiritual blessings of the kingdom (i.e. those things that pertain to our salvation), especially through the Spirit poured into our hearts, we yet await the final realization of this blessed kingdom (see Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 5:1-5; 8:18-25).

**Universal Kingship & Kingdom**

There is also the universal kingship of Christ and the universal kingdom. Berkhof notes the nature of the universal kingship/kingdom as consisting of “the dominion of the God-man, Jesus Christ, over the universe, [carrying out] His providential and judicial administration of all things in the interest of the Church.”

Although the spiritual kingship/kingdom and universal kingship/kingdom are certainly related, they are nonetheless distinct. The universal kingdom does not consist of the realm of salvation, as does the spiritual kingdom. Rather, it pertains to the universe at large (i.e. Christ’s sovereignty over the world), redeemed and lost alike. It does not spread and grow like the spiritual kingdom, as the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed (see Matt. 13), but is static. Perhaps the most significant relation of the two kingdoms is that they possess the same King by the same means (the incarnation, crucifixion, exaltation). Further, although the spiritual kingship/kingdom continues for eternity, the universal kingship/kingdom will be given up once all of Christ’s enemies are made His footstool and judgment on the world is accomplished. Berkhof sums up well these various characteristics:

Christ was formally invested with this kingship over the universe when He was exalted at the right hand of God. It was a promised reward of His labors, Ps. 2:8,9; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11. This investiture was part of the exaltation of the God-man. It did not give Him any power or authority which He did not already possess as the Son of God; neither did it increase His territory. But the God-man, the Mediator, was now made the possessor of this authority, and His human nature was made to share in the glory of this royal dominion. Moreover, the government of the world was now made subservient to the interests of the Church of Jesus Christ. And this kingship of Christ will last until the victory over the enemies is complete and even death has been abolished, 1 Cor. 15:24-28. At the consummation of all things the God-man will give up the authority conferred on Him for a special purpose, since it will no more be needed. He will return His commission to God, that God may be all in all. The purpose [which serves the interest of the Church] is accomplished; mankind is redeemed; and thereby the original kingship of man is restored.

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11 Ibid. 410.
12 Ibid. 411.
**The Return of the King**

In the third part of the Trilogy, Lord of the Rings, which is called Return of the King, Aragorn, who is the rightful king of Gondor, returns to His kingdom just in time to defeat the dark forces and claim his throne. The militant people then become a triumphant people. While the events aren’t an exact parallel to the biblical testimony, the essential idea is there. When our King of kings and Lord of lords returns, He will bring to completion the work He accomplished during His first advent. Although the spiritual forces of darkness have already been defeated through the cross (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15), this will be finally realized or completed at His return. The unrighteous will be condemned to an eternity in hell, separated from the presence of the Lord, whereas the righteous (in Christ) will be ushered into His glorious presence, where they will marvel at His grace and glory (2 Thess. 1:5-10). The Church that was once militant, engaged in spiritual warfare, will forever be known as the Church triumphant, living in the blessed bliss of communion with the triune God (Rev. 20-22).

**APPLICATION**

1. The “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5-7) is all about kingdom living.

2. The hope and promise we have of an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God (yet future) is motivation, and indeed a reason, for living this life in holiness and righteousness. We are to strive to live now as we will live then, for we now are in the kingdom, we only await its final realization. Those who do not live according to the gospel of the kingdom will not inherit the kingdom.

3. Evangelism; all three offices (Prophet, Priest, King) have implications and motivations for evangelism. This is especially fleshed out for us in the book of Acts (read it and take note of this three-fold office in the early Church’s evangelism). I will briefly express the significance for each for our evangelism:

**Prophet and Evangelism:** Jesus continues to serve as prophet through the Holy Spirit working through the Scriptures, most notably through the proclamation of the gospel. As the Scriptures are proclaimed, Christ manifests His prophetic office. Further, when we point people to Jesus as having the words of truth and life, we are pointing them to His prophetic office.

**Priest and Evangelism:** The priestly office of Christ centers on the cross, the place where He died in the place for sinners. This is, no doubt, the central focus in evangelism. When we proclaim the cross we are proclaiming the priestly work of Christ.
**King and Evangelism:** As the exalted King, Christ is worthy of submission. When we proclaim the gospel we are to call on people to submit to Christ’s rule. Those who don’t will experience the justice of His rod. This point bolsters our call on people to repent and believe. Further, as we proclaim the gospel the enemies of darkness will not overpower it.

4. As King, Jesus protects His Church, corporately and individually, not allowing any eternal harm to come to them. Our King will not leave us to fend for ourselves against Satan’s schemes, but will rule and strengthen us, helping us to finally overcome, for He has already overcome.