

I'll begin by saying a few words about good systematic theology and a few words about our Confession of Faith.

There is a thoughtful architecture to the best systematic theologies. They are put together with great care and consideration. Our Confession, the 1689, which is a very good, abridged systematic theology, is no exception. And when a body of doctrine is put together well, each successive doctrine builds on that which precedes it and prepares the way for what is to come. Therefore, it is sometimes helpful to reflect on where have we been and where are we going.

If you were a part of Systematic Theology 1, you may remember that we concluded that class by teaching on humanity's problem- Sin and the Fall. Having listened to the Bible's assessment of humanity's problem- we must now consider the solution. And that solution is Christ. Christ's person and Christ's work, is the one and only solution for humanity's problem.

This is the pattern you will see in many of the best systematic theologies- they address sin and the fallout from sin. Then they look at God's gracious purpose and plan to save sinners through the covenants He establishes. This in turn prepares the way for the study of the person and work of Christ which is where we are now. John Frame does this. Wayne Grudem does this. Berkof does this. Many excellent theologies do this. And this is the pattern we see in our Confession.

Thus far in Systematic Theology 2- we have addressed the Person and Nature of Christ. This is absolutely foundational.

Who Christ is must be firmly settled in our minds, before we can adequately appreciate what he does. That bears repeating. Who Christ is must be firmly settled in our minds, before we can adequately appreciate what he does. His person prepares the way for what is to come.

This was Christ's first order of business as he began to establish the mental framework of the disciples understanding-

Mark 8:27–32 (ESV): 27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly.

Who is Jesus Christ?

In the person of Christ we see:

1. The eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, uncreated, infinite, sharing equally the essence of deity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We see one who is fully God. But what else do we see in the person of Christ?

2. We see the Son, the second person of the Trinity, by means of this inexplicable miracle of addition, embrace a full humanity into his person. We see one who is fully man.

He is the God-man. As the God-man:

-He who is eternal entered time and space

-He who is uncreated became part of His own creation

-He who is infinite embraced the limitations of humanity

-He who is immutable experienced the full range of humanity, from conception, to the cradle, to the grave, all without sin.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. Fully human, fully divine, two distinct natures in one person, who dwelt among us, as one of us. This is the incarnation. And the incarnation is profoundly important.

Robert Peterson (former professor at Covenant Theological Seminary) writes about the importance of Christ person and nature in the incarnation- "[Christ] had to be both God and man to save us sinners. He had to be God because only God could save us. He had to become man because the work of salvation had to be performed by a human being and for human beings". The reconciler must be God because only God can restore rebels. And at the same time the reconciler must be a man because death is necessary and God in heaven cannot die. The reconciler is Christ, God incarnate."

Here again we see the principle- that who Christ is most essential to what Christ does. Because who Christ is undergirds what Christ does. The who and what are inseparable. And nowhere is this more apparent than when we consider the atonement.

Last week Pastor Stu addressed this aspect of Christ's work- so I'll be brief.

Christ, because of who he is as the God-man, is the sacrifice of infinite worth. His life and death fully satisfies the righteous demands of the infinitely holy God. His sacrifice of himself brings the full atonement we so desperately need. Jesus Christ came and died in the place of his people (as a substitute), taking upon himself the full punishment that they deserved. Christ offers himself as the substitutionary sacrifice, removing our sins, enduring the punishment and wrath of God for us. Therefore, God's holiness is vindicated, he is simultaneously just and the

justifier of sinners who have faith in Christ. In Christ- we see justice and mercy meet through Christ's sacrifice of atonement.

You may hear this referred to as penal-substitutionary atonement.

And while there are certainly other entailments and benefits that flow from the atonement, (Christ's victory over evil powers, Christ as our example, the healing that comes in the atonement) the penal-substitutionary element of Christ sacrifice is front and center, it is the anchor that makes possible all other blessings. The punishment and wrath bearing death of Christ as our substitute is what secures all other good things that come to God's people.

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This is a glance back at where we have been. We have considered who Christ is and its bearing on what Christ accomplished, the atonement.

Where are we going in our study now?

Today, we will essentially take a step back, in order to see something of the bigger picture of Christ does- to take in something of the bigger picture of Christ's work.

We will approach our study of Christ's work by using the tried and true categories of Christ's offices, namely his role as Prophet, Priest, and King. And my desire is that you will come to appreciate just how incredibly helpful these categories are in providing a framework for thinking about Christ's work.

The categories of Prophet, Priest, and King form biblical grid through which we gain better insight into at least 4 things-

1. Man's original vocation and the privileged estate from which Adam fell.
2. The work of Christ as our Representative.
3. The profound effects of sin and what our greatest needs are.
4. The work of Christ for us, in view of our greatest needs.

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As we get started, a little history on the categories of Prophet, Priest and King are in order.

Although some of the early church fathers spoke of the offices of Christ, it was John Calvin, the Genevan reformer who lived and ministered during the 1500's, that finally systematized these categories in his Institutes of the Christian Religion. Since that time the offices of Christ have

been a regular fixture among many Reformed Christian thinkers. They are an integral part of our rich reformed tradition as well. If you read chapter 8 of the 1689 - you will see the threefold office surface on at least 3 different occasions.

Chapter 8- entitled "Of Christ the Mediator" Paragraph 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 the 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.

Paragraph 9- "This office of mediator between God and humanity is appropriate for Christ alone, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God. This office may not be transferred from him to anyone else, either in whole or in part."

In giving you this brief history, it is important that we realize that the categories of Prophet, Priest, and King have been such permanent fixtures in all good theology, not simply because they are good ideas, but because they are supremely biblical. The Bible describes the work of Christ using these categories. And that is why they have been such a help to Christians throughout the centuries.

Let us look more closely at these three offices.

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We often think of these offices as arriving on the scene in a fully formed way with the Mosaic Covenant and the establishment of the Levite priestly cast, and little later the establishment of the monarchy- as King Saul and King David come on the scene. In the context of the Old Covenant- 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.

Therefore- when we think of these offices in the Old Testament, our minds naturally run out to the prophet Nathan, or Samuel, or Moses even. When we think of priest, we may think of Aaron, the Levites, or Ahimelech and Abiathar. When we think of king, King David and King Saul come to mind.

But what I want us to appreciate is that these categories implicitly emerge in the text of Scripture from the very beginning- even in the very first chapters of Genesis.

Many theologians have observed this, including the respected Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck, who wrote- “the three offices with which Christ was commissioned are a reference to the original calling and purpose of man.” And I think he is right. In a typological way, these offices depict what Adam was meant to be and do in the garden of Eden.

So that brings me to our first point- ***the categories of prophet, priest, and king give us insight into- man's original vocation and the privileged estate from which he fell.***

-As a prophet, Adam received God’s word and was required to speak it in turn to Eve and their descendants.

Genesis 2.16-17: And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

-As a priest, he was to return the sacrifice of praise to God in the garden-temple sanctuary. Eden was God’s temple where we ‘walked back and forth’ with Adam and Eve.

As priests, they clearly had access to something of his approving presence.

Moreover, as priest, man was to serve and guard the garden-temple sanctuary.

Genesis 2.15. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”-

It is the same language taken up in Numbers 3:7-8 to describe the Levitical priesthood and their responsibilities. The implication is that Adam and Eve were to be priests before God.

-As a king, Adam was to exercise dominion, subduing the earth.

Genesis 1.28-And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

The categories of prophet, priest and king help inform us of the glorious, original intention and the privileged estate our first parents knew. *Man's original vocation and privileged estate.*

But Adam failed miserably in this commission- and through disobedience to the command of God, fell from his privileged estate. Through his one act of disobedience:

-Adam did not faithfully carry out his role as prophet. He didn't speak God's explicit command to his wife and the serpent when it mattered most. Rather he listened to the voice of his wife, and by proxy, the lies of the serpent.

-He did not exercise kingly dominion over the serpent-creature, subduing the serpent-creature, crushing his head, making the enemy of God a footstool for his feet. Rather he submitted himself to the serpent's assessment and suggestions.

-Clearly, He did not serve and guard the garden-temple as God's priest. He did not present his body a living sacrifice of praise through obedience to God. Because of his sin he hid himself, no longer moving freely in God's presence.

And as priest, he did not represent all subsequent humanity before God in this wondrous holiness. Rather, as priest, he represented us before God in this rebellious disobedience.

Our original righteousness was to be lived out in the setting of Adam functioning as this representative, obedient, prophet, priest, and king. But Adam disobeyed.

Nevertheless, Christ's representative obedience is the answer to Adam's representative disobedience.

That brings us to a second observation-

The categories of Prophet, Priest, and King give us greater insight into The work of Christ as our Representative.

It should come as no surprise to us that if Adam failed in the context of being God's prophet, priest, and king- it is in these very same areas where Christ succeeds as he carries out his commission from God.

Therefore thinking about Christ as Prophet, Priest and King draws attention to Christ's work as our representative. He is the representative prophet, priest and king, who succeeded where Adam failed.

This brings us to an important point regarding Christ's work. Christ's work must be understood as a representative work.

Perhaps the critical text showing this idea can be found in Roman 5.12-21. In Romans 5:12–21, we find Adam and Jesus compared and contrasted, as representative heads. What they did in this representative position is reckoned by God as having been done by those whom they represent.

Therefore, the Apostle Paul says in Romans 5.19: "For as by the one man's disobedience [namely Adam] the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience [namely Jesus] the many will be made righteous" (v. 19).

Adam acted as a representative covenant head- and his actions were counted to all of subsequent humanity, vicariously. Jesus similarly acts as a covenant head, which means his actions, his righteousness, is counted to his new humanity, vicariously, as well.

And our imputed righteousness, as it were, takes place in the setting of Christ, functioning as this obedient, morally perfect, fully human, prophet, priest and king.

We needed a new, a second Adam, a new prophet, priest, and king to represent a new humanity. And Christ is that. A new covenant head, succeeding where Adam failed.

And this idea of representation being bound up with the three offices is something we see in the Scriptures.

Clearly the priests take on a representative role. But the King had a representative role as well. Read 1 and 2 Kings- essentially the nation goes as the king goes. If the king obeyed, the nation prospered, but if the king transgressed the nation declined- leading to exile. This points us to the fact that we need an obedient king representing us to God. Christ is that representative obedient king.

And though the prophets' primary function was to represent God to the people- they couldn't escape being identified with the people. There was some sort of solidarity there as well.

Isaiah the prophet's words ring out- Isaiah 6.5: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Jeremiah cries out in 17.14 - Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.

Hosea 1.2- 2 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord."

Even among prophets there is solidarity and identification.

When need a better prophet, priest and king to represent us. Jesus is that.

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This brings me to my third observation- The consequences of Adam's failure give rise to our inherited corruption and fallen natures- and the extent of that corruption can be better understood as we contemplate the offices of prophet, priest, and king as well. ***These categories help us to understand more fully the profound effects of sin and what our greatest needs are.*** How so?

Sin is destructive and disfiguring. Sin has turned the way things are supposed to be completely upside down. The moral fabric of man is now inverted. As a result, it could be said fallen humanity- stemming from Adam- is made up of failed prophets, failed priests, and failed kings.

Let's consider fallen humanity as failed prophets- Rather than possessing minds illuminated by the truth of God, and speaking that truth, our foolish hearts are darkened (Rom 1:21) and our thoughts are continually evil (Genesis 6:5). Our minds are clouded by sin and ignorant of the things of God (Eph 4:17-18). We have exchanged God's truth for a lie (Rom 1:25), and our minds are 'blinded by the god of this age' (2 Cor 4:4). In our fallen natures we cannot function as prophets- those who speak the truth concerning God truthfully.

Let's consider fallen humanity as failed priests- Humanity labors under the tremendous weight of guilt-because of our many sins against God. We persistently fail to glorify him, to honor him as God, or render Him thanks (Romans 1:21). And not only are humans guilty for their own individual violations of God's law, but they are also rendered guilty for their vicarious participation in the sin of Adam. Because of our guilt, both inherited and actual, there is no way we can dare stand in the presence of God as priests. (Ps 130:3) 'If you O Lord kept a record of sins, who could stand?' . Instead of those serving joyfully in his presence, the vast majority of people are alienated and separated from the life of God (Ephesian 1 and Ephesians 4).

Let's consider fallen humanity as failed kings and queens- rather than ruling as God's vice-regents, creature kings and creature queens, we are those who are experiencing bondage, tyranny, and corruption because of sin, Satan, death and the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15- Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

2 Timothy 2.26: 26 Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

Romans 6 talks at length about enslavement to sin apart from Christ.

Berkof sums it up well as he describes the effects of sin on our capacities to live as prophets, priests and kings. "*Sin affected the entire life of man and manifested itself not only as ignorance, blindness, error, and untruthfulness (failed prophet); but also as unrighteousness, guilt, and moral pollution (failed priest); and in addition to that as misery, death, and destruction (failed kings).*"

But in contemplating the threefold misery of men introduced by sin- the ignorance, the guilt, and tyranny and bondage of sin- we can now see more clearly the glory of Christ in his

threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, overcoming sin and its effects, through those very offices.

The words of our Confession are instructive on this point- Chapter 8 paragraph 10:

This number and order of offices is necessary; for in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of His prophetic 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 to 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.

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In light of these things- with the remainder of our time, let's look into Christ's threefold work more closely.

Observation 4- Christ offices as Prophet, Priest, and King give us tremendous insight into His work for us-

We will pay special attention to the way Christ exercises each these offices in both his state of humiliation (his incarnation and death) and exaltation (his resurrection and ascension).

And as we look at these offices distinct from one another- let me acknowledge that it is difficult to separate out his offices. They do in fact overlap and intersect and inform each other. In the OT priests would often teach. Christ is a king-priest in the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7). Therefore many are quick to point out that Christ really holds one office, the office of Mediator between God and the elect- and that office then consists of 3 parts.

Another interesting insight is this idea of *anointing*. In the Old Testament- the three offices that received anointing were- you guessed it- the prophet, priest, and king. Well Jesus is the repeated referred to as the Messiah- literally the Anointed One. He is the Anointed One without equal-

And our Confession says it so well- tying his anointing to his office bearing- Chapter 8 paragraph 3-

The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of mediator and surety; which office He took not upon himself,

but was thereunto called by His Father; who also put all power and judgment in His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same.

Christ's work as Prophet

A prophet is one who speaks God's words to man. A prophet is someone who has the very word of God on his lips as it were. Deuteronomy 18:15-22 and Jeremiah 1:9-10, as well as other passages, show that the prophet's words are God's words, and so they are just as authoritative as the divine voice uttered from heaven.

Christ functions as a prophet by revealing God to us and speaking forth His word. That Christ exercised the office of prophet is evident from the fact that Moses predicted that one day God would send a prophet like himself, a prediction which is clearly about Christ

Deuteronomy 18:18 (ESV): I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

Peter affirms that Christ is this prophet Acts 3.19-23

Acts 3:19–23 (ESV): 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.

Hebrews shines light on Christ's prophetic function of revealing God, as Christ brings revelation that outstrips the prophets because of who the source is.

Hebrew 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.

Also, Jesus claimed to speak forth revelation from the Father (John 8:26-28; 12:49, 50; 14:10, 24; 15:15).

John 8:26 (ESV): 26 I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

John 12:49 (ESV): 49 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.

Jesus spoke of Himself as a prophet-

Luke 13:33 (ESV): 33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

Interestingly however, and I think this is helpful, Wayne Grudem points out that in the Epistles Jesus is never called a prophet or the prophet. Why did the New Testament epistles avoid calling Jesus a prophet? Grudem suggests, that although Jesus is the prophet whom Moses predicted, yet he is also far greater than any of the Old Testament prophets, in at least two ways:

1. He is the one about whom the prophecies in the Old Testament were made. He is the fulfillment of what the OT prophets spoke about. When Jesus spoke with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he took them through the entire Old Testament, showing how the prophecies pointed to him: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

And here I might add that, in a real sense, the Old Testament is not only concerned with Christ, it is his word as well: (Rev. 19:10)- "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"

Therefore, the whole Bible is not only the Word of God but the word of Jesus as well.

He is both the author and the chief theme of Scripture.

A Second Observation.

2. Jesus was not merely a messenger of revelation from God (like all the other prophets), but was himself the source of revelation from God. Rather than saying, as all the Old Testament prophets did, 'Thus says the Lord,' Jesus could begin divinely authoritative teaching with the amazing statement, 'But I say unto you' (Matthew 5:22, et al.)."

Therefore, when Jesus begins his teaching ministry, people are amazed at the authority with which he speaks, not at all like the scribes and Pharisees. He declares God's word truly, his words cutting through all the distortions and compromises of the Jewish traditions.

But at the end of the day we must appreciate this: Jesus is the ultimate Prophet, but more than a prophet. He is the very Word of God himself. John 1:1 reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And we see from verse 14 that that Word was Jesus. The entirety of his person and works and words is glorious revelation from God.

Jesus remains Prophet in his exaltation as well.

After leaving this earth by ascending to heaven, Jesus did not cease His prophetic office. He continued it, by means of the Holy Spirit- Christ empowered the preaching of the apostles and

inspired the New Testament. He continues this office today by illuminating the Bible to believers, through the Holy Spirit, so that we understand it. Christ works through the preaching of the Word making it effective in our lives, as God gives faith through hearing, building us up in our most holy faith.

Christ work as Priest

Wayne Grudem gives a helpful description of the priestly office in the Old Testament: “the priests were appointed by God to offer sacrifices. They also offered prayers and praise to God on behalf of the people. In so doing they ‘sanctified’ the people or made them acceptable to come into God’s presence, [although] in a limited way during the Old Testament period. In the New Testament Jesus becomes our great high priest.”

The Old Testament predicts that Christ would be our priest (Psalm 110:4)-

Psalm 110:4 (ESV): 4 The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 7 takes up this text and applies it to Christ.

Clearly, the priest in the OT clearly prefigured Christ’s priesthood. The book of Hebrews contains extensive teaching on Christ’s priesthood, calling Jesus “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (3:1) and our “great high priest” (4:14).

Christ acts as our priest in two ways-

- 1.He is a high priest in His humiliation, and
- 2.He is a high priest in His exaltation. Let's consider those briefly.

His priestly work in His humiliation.

In the Old Testament, the priest was the one who offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. Jesus therefore acted as the ultimate priest when He offered sacrifice for sin to which all other sacrifices pointed. But the crucial difference is this. *While the Old Testament priests offered animals, Jesus offered Himself.*

Hebrews 9:14.“...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Additionally, the Old Covenant sacrifices could not put away sin (Hebrews 10:14) and had to be continually offered (Hebrews 10:1-2). But Hebrews 9:26 tells us that Christ “has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ”

His superior sacrifice successfully puts away our sin, and therefore He never needs to offer it again.

Hebrews 7:27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

Therefore- Jesus is the fulfillment of all that is prefigured in the Old Covenant sacrificial system- not only the Old Testament sacrifices, but also the priests who offered the sacrifices: he was both the sacrifice and the priest.

His priestly work in His exaltation.

Jesus' sacrifice for our sins was not the end of His priesthood, because He "holds His priesthood permanently" (Hebrews 7:24).

Just as in the Old Testament, the priest not only offered up sacrifices for the people but also interceded for the people (mainly by praying for them). *So also Christ, having offered Himself for our sins on earth, continues His priestly work by interceding for us in heaven.*

Hebrews 7:25- "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."

Louis Berkhof very clearly brings out the various elements of Christ's exalted intercession. First, upon His ascension into heaven, Jesus entered the heavenly temple to present His completed sacrifice to the Father. Berkhof writes, "Just as the high priest on the great Day of Atonement entered the Holy of Holies with the completed sacrifice, to present it to God, so Christ entered the heavenly Holy Place with His completed, perfect, and all sufficient sacrifice and offered it to the Father." [6] Christ now appears "in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24), and thus continually embodies before God the sacrifice He made for our sins. "...the perpetual presence of the completed sacrifice of Christ before God contains in itself an element of intercession as a constant reminder of the perfect atonement of Jesus Christ." [7]

Romans 8:33-34 speaks of the benefits of Christ intercession and our continual, unshakable acceptance before God because he presents himself as our completed sacrifice.

"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."

Earlier I mentioned that the punishment and wrath bearing death of Christ as our substitute, the atonement, is what secures all blessings that come to God's people. We can think of his intercession as focused toward the applying of those blessings which flow from the atonement to us.

Here I will make a few observations about his intercession.

1. His intercession is always successful for us, because it is based upon the “credentials” of His death and resurrection on our behalf. The Father is delighted to grant Christ what He requests because He loves Christ, He loves His people, and He will never dishonor Christ’s death for His people.

One Scripture that speaks in an implicit way about this sacrifice procuring for us all good things- reasoning from the greatest gift to lesser gifts, is Romans 8.32- “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?”

2. Christ intercession silences the accusations of our adversary, the devil.

There is no doubt that Christ’s sacrifice cleared all of the charges that were against us. But Satan the accuser is insistent on continuing to bring charges against us. In His intercession- Christ meets all of these accusations by pointing to His completed work (Romans 8:33-34). He thus silences accusations against us by His intercession.

Again-Romans 8.33-34: 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.

3. Christ’s intercession procures our continual sanctification. When we pray to the Father in His name, He makes our prayers pleasing and acceptable to God. He also makes our services done in faith pleasing to God. “...you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:5).

4. Christ’s ministry of intercession is a ministry of loving care for His people. He helps them in their difficulties, their trials, and their temptations.”

“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18).

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

5. Jesus’ intercession means that He continually prays for us. Jesus’ prayer in John 17, often referred to as his high priestly prayer, seems to be an indication of the things he prays for. He asks that all of His saints would be preserved in the faith (v. 11), that we would be protected from Satan and evil (v. 15), that we would be sanctified in the truth and thus progress in holiness (v. 17), that we would all be unified with one another (v. 21), and that we would one day be with Him to behold His glory (v. 24). Basically, the focus of Jesus’ prayers is that we

would live out the full extent our salvation, and that we would be kept from falling away so that we will one day be where He is.

I believe that in addition to the specific requests we read of in John 17, Jesus also makes many other specific requests on behalf of each person who belongs to Him, so that we continually grow in faith and love and joy- *praying for exactly what we need with the aim of maximizing our joy in Him.*

6. Finally, it is significant to recognize that not only is Christ's intercession continual, it is also effectual. Christ's prayers are always answered (John 11:42) because He is the Son of God and at the right hand of the Father — the highest seat of authority in the universe (Romans 8:34).

What is the resurrected Christ doing-right now? He is interceding at the Father's right hand. Even now he is thinking of us, bringing our needs to the Father's attention. And the Father willingly hears the intercession of his Son. Elsewhere it says that the Spirit is interceding as well. The bottom line is that we can be sure that the Father will withhold no good thing from us. The whole Trinity is on our side. God is of one mind on our behalf, and if God is for us, who can be against us?

The truth of Christ's intercession provides comfort for faltering saints as well- we: Berkof writes- "It is a consoling thought that Christ is praying for us, even when we are negligent in our prayer life; that He is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds and which we often neglect to include in our prayers; and that He prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, and against the enemies which threaten us, though we do not notice it. He is praying that our faith may not cease, and that we may come out victoriously in the end."

Christ work as King

Jesus' Kingship is a very significant truth. We could spend countless hours examining how Christ is Lord and King. I will bring out just a few things about how his kingly office meets our deepest needs.

The confession states that - in respect to 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.

As king, therefore- He persuades us powerfully to believe and obey. This is the doctrine of irresistible grace coupled with the doctrine of effectual call. His prophetic work teams up with his priestly work, and we are drawn to faith in him. This is His kingly work.

As king- he governs our hearts by his Word and Spirit- fostering obedience to his word.

As king he overcomes our enemies by his almighty power and wisdom- he is Christ victorious. He rules in our hearts indwelling there by the word of God. He rules over lives externally, by His government and providence, even over His and our enemies.

As such, we can agree with John Calvin when he says, "We may patiently pass through this life with its misery, cold, contempt, reproaches, and other troubles—content with this one thing: that our King will never leave us destitute, but will provide for our needs until, our warfare ended, we are called to triumph."

Hebrews 8:1 brings out the marvelous connection between Christ's Kingly and priestly offices: "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens..." It is wonderful that our priest who offered Himself for us and intercedes for us is also King — King of the Universe, and in a more intimate way, King of the Church ruling all things for our good.

Implications

First, this understanding of Christ's three-fold offices ought to give us encouragement and strength to hold fast our confession and draw near with confidence to God. This is the great application the book of Hebrews gives us because Jesus is our high priest: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Second, we as Christians even now begin to imitate Christ in each of these roles, though in a subordinate way. Our prophetic role is in our proclaiming the gospel to the world and in teaching God's word. We are also priests as well. Peter calls us 'a royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2:9). He invites us to be built into a spiritual temple and 'to be a holy priesthood' as well as 'to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' (1 Peter 2:5)." Christ has made us "priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:6). This enables us to have personal and direct access to the Father through Christ (Ephesians 2:18), to enter the Holy of Holies not made with hands through Christ (Hebrews 10:19, 22). We offer up a "sacrifice of praise to God" (Hebrews 13:15) and sacrifices of good works (Hebrews 13:16) as priests.

Finally, we share in Christ's kingly office in some measure because God has "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ" (Ephesians 2:6). We will share more fully in His Kingship in the age to come when God promises that we will reign with Christ (Revelation 22:5).

Through Christ work our ignorance is healed by his prophetic office; our guilt remedied by his priestly office; the tyranny and corruption of sin overcome by his kingly office. The prophetic light of Christ scatters the darkness of error; the merit of the Priest and the sacrifice of himself takes away guilt and reconciles us to God; the power of the King removes the bondage of sin and death, subduing our rebellious affections. Christ as prophet shows God to us; Christ as priest leads us to God, into His presence; and the King rules for the glory of God and the good of His people.