

CHRISTOLOGY (42)

The Jewish people of Christ's day were looking for and expecting a political kingdom, but they neglected to acknowledge their need, so Christ used the Sermon on the Mount as a means of informing Israel concerning the proper attitudes which are needed and ultimately will exist when He does establish His Kingdom.

Verbal Address #2 - The message on the Mount of Olives . Mt. 24-25

By the time Jesus Christ ended His earthly ministry, it was evident that the Jewish leaders and majority of Jewish people had totally rejected the Kingdom. A natural question arose as to whether or not God had cancelled the Kingdom program forever. This particular address is designed to establish that God has not eliminated the Kingdom program, and it shows the conditions which will exist just prior to its establishment. This is Christ's earthly farewell message to Israel.

Verbal Address #3 - The message in the Upper Room . John 13-17

This address is clearly different in content and tone from the preceding addresses. The reason for this is that this message was designed to set the stage for the coming Church Age.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer does an excellent job on this point: "This message is spoken to the eleven after the dismissal of Judas, for the most part, and they are no longer reckoned to be Jews under the Law (cf. 15:25), but are those who are "clean" through the Word spoken unto them (cf. 13:10; 15:3). As for its application, it is dated by Christ beyond His death, beyond His resurrection, beyond His ascension, and beyond the Day of Pentecost. The discourse embodies, in germ form, every essential of that system of doctrine which is distinctively Christian. This portion is like a seed plot in which all is found that is later developed in the epistles of the New Testament" (Vol. 3, p. 25).

From these major addresses we conclude that Jesus Christ was indeed a prophet who gave enough revelation for all people of all ages, not just Israel. He prophetically states what will happen in the future, even predicting His own death. He was without question the greatest ever to hold the office of a prophet.

Office #2 - Jesus Christ held the office of a Priest .

The major difference between a prophet and a priest is that the prophet speaks to men from God. The priest speaks to God for men.

Dr. Hodge says the office of a priest means at least three things: (Vol. 2, p. 31)

- 1) He was a man duly appointed to act for other men in things pertaining to God.
- 2) He was a man who was appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin.
- 3) He was a man who was appointed to make intercession for the people.

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It may be demonstrated that Jesus Christ not only fulfilled priestly responsibilities, but He did things far above and beyond what any other priest could ever do. As Dr. Walvoord observed, Jesus Christ is “the embodiment of all that is anticipated in the Old Testament priesthood.”

According to the O.T., in order for one to be a priest, He had to come by way of Levi and be in the Aaronic line (Ex. 28:1; Num. 16:40). Primarily, the responsibilities of these priests were to represent men to God, offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, and make intercession for the people. Those who qualified had to be at least thirty years old (Num. 4:3) and had to be publically consecrated (Num. 8:5-7, 19-22).

It needs to be brought out that the sacrifices offered by these priests for the people were numerous. There was a continual offering of sacrifices made to God (i.e. Heb. 10:1-4). Once Jesus Christ offers Himself, no more sacrifice is needed.

When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He was not of the tribe of Levi, but the tribe of Judah (Mt. 1:2; 2:4-6). That is why Psalm 110:4 becomes so important. Here it is predicted that the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, whose work is described in Genesis 14:18-20 and Hebrews 7:1-3. There were at least four unique features of the Melchizedekan priesthood that were totally distinct from the Aaronic priesthood:

(Feature #1) - It was a royal priesthood.

This is a major difference, for Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest (Gen. 14:18). Although this was clearly predicted by the prophet Zechariah (6:13), as Dr. Ryrie states, “The uniting of these two functions was unknown among Aaronic Priests...”

(Feature #2) - It was a non-ancestral priesthood.

Hebrews 7:3 says that Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without genealogy...” This is not referring to the fact that Melchizedek did not have any real parents, but to the fact that nothing from his parents or genealogy had anything to do with his appointment as priest. This issue was the key issue when it came to being an Aaronic priest, because these priests depended totally upon their genealogy to qualify.

Dr. John MacArthur writes, “The point in Hebrews is that Melchizedek’s parentage and origin are irrelevant to his priesthood. Whereas to the Aaronic priesthood genealogy was everything, to the Melchizedek priesthood it was nothing. In this, Melchizedek was a type of Christ, not because Jesus had no genealogy, but because Jesus’ genealogy was not significant in regard to His priesthood” (*Hebrews*, p. 152).

(Feature #3) - It was a timeless priesthood.

Hebrews 7:3 makes it clear that the priesthood of Melchizedek had no beginning or ending.

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This was a very peculiar and superior feature of this priesthood as opposed to the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood. Jesus Christ is the ultimate priest, with no beginning or ending.

(Feature #4) – It was a superior priesthood.

Dr. Ryrie brings out a very important point concerning Genesis 14:20 when he says, “Abraham, out of whom came the Aaronic order, acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek when he gave tithes of the spoils of war to him. Levi, though unborn, and all the priests that came from him were involved in this act which demonstrated the superiority of Melchizedek” (p. 258).

Whatever the Aaronic and Melchizedekan priesthoods were symbolically, Jesus Christ was and is actually. The priestly work of Jesus Christ has specific application for the N.T. believer; for it is very clear that every believer has been made a priest. The priesthood of every individual believer is a theme that surfaces several times in the Word of God (i.e. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

Part of the responsibility of a priest is to offer a sacrifice to God and there are at least four New Testament sacrifices that every believer/priest is to offer:

Sacrifice #1 - The believer/priest is to offer himself. Rom. 12:1

Every believer/priest is responsible and accountable to offer himself as a “living” and “holy” sacrifice. One is to present himself in such a sacrificial way that it would be “acceptable” to God. Every believer/priest must be interested in conforming his life to the Word of God and being a living example of God’s grace and mercy.

Sacrifice #2 - The believer/priest is to offer praise. Heb. 13:15

Every believer/priest is responsible and accountable to offer worthy, sacrificial praise unto God. Out of a holy and sacrificial life, each believer should learn more and more of the perfections and greatness of God so that he may offer praise and worship to God, which God will accept.

Sacrifice #3 – The believer/priest is to offer good works. Heb. 13:16

The specific good that is described here is the good of sharing. When a believer shares what he has with others, he is actually offering up a sacrifice of praise to God in a very priestly way. The Christian life is not to be a life totally focused on self-satisfaction, but humble service. Such was the life of our Lord and such is to be our life as well.

Sacrifice #4 – The believer/priest is to offer his substance. Heb. 13:16

Dr. Walvoord says: “The New Testament saint, while not obligated to keep the details of the Mosaic law in which God required Israelites to give a specific portion of their worldly goods, should nevertheless according to the Bible offer his sacrifice of substance” (pp. 249-250).

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| 1. Systematically—I Cor. 16:2 | 4. Sacrificially—II Cor. 8:2 | 7. Trustingly—II Cor. 9:8 |
| 2. Regularly—I Cor. 16:2 | 5. Liberally—II Cor. 9:6, 13 | |
| 3. Proportionately—I Cor. 16:2 | 6. Cheerfully—II Cor. 9:7 | |

Office #3 - Jesus Christ held the office of King.

The office of a prophet gives Christ the right to speak to men from God.

The office of a priest gives Christ the right to speak to God for men.

The office of a king gives Christ the right to reign over all men.

A king was an executive who was the legislature over all affairs. Judicial, economic and military activities were all under his authority. There will come a time when Jesus Christ will fulfill every one of these functions, reigning in perfect righteousness. There are many O.T. passages of Scripture that speak of one who would fulfill every one of these functions—reigning in perfect righteousness:

- 1) II Sam. 7:16 –The Davidic throne would be established forever, meaning one would eventually come from the Davidic family who would be a King who would reign forever.
- 2) Psalm 2 –This Psalm predicts there will come a King who will have total reign over everything on earth.
- 3) Psalm 45 –This Psalm speaks of a glorious King who is to be worshipped.
- 4) Psalm 72 –This Psalm speaks of a King who will reign, judging in perfect righteousness.
- 5) Psalm 110 –This Psalm speaks of a King who will eventually destroy all enemies of God.
- 6) Isaiah 9:6-7 –This text speaks of a majestic and powerful King who has total authority and governmental controls from the Davidic line.
- 7) Daniel 7:13-14 –This passage speaks of a reigning King who has total dominion over all people and nations forever.
- 8) Zechariah 9:9 –This passage speaks of a King coming the first time in very humble circumstances.

From these passages, it is evident that the Messiah would hold the office of King. As we journey through the N.T., it is clear that Christ did hold this office:

- 1) Luke 1:31-33 –This important passage reveals that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and will receive the Davidic throne from God and will reign forever on that throne. No other king in history can fulfill this.
- 2) John 1:49 –Nathanael identified Jesus Christ as being King of Israel.
- 3) John 18:37 –Jesus Christ stated that being King was one of the reasons He was born.
- 4) John 19:12 –The Jews knew that Jesus Christ did claim to be King.
- 5) 1 Cor. 15:25 –Paul knew Christ reigning as King was crucial to God’s prophetic plan.
- 6) 1 Tim. 6:14-15 –Paul identified Jesus Christ as being the ultimate King of Kings.
- 7) Rev. 1:5, 17:14; 19:16 –Revelation clearly identifies Jesus Christ as King.

Dr. Ryrie points writes: “Because the King was rejected, the Messianic, Davidic kingdom was (from a human viewpoint) postponed. Though He never ceases to be King and, of course, is King today as always...He does not rule as King. This awaits His second coming.

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Then the Davidic kingdom will be realized (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 19:15, 20). Then the Priest will sit on His throne, bringing to this earth the long-awaited Golden Age (Psalm 100)” (Ryrie, p. 259).

In thinking of Christ holding the offices of prophet, priest and king, Dr. Walvoord concluded his study of this by writing the following: “Taken together, the three offices of Christ as prophet, priest and king are the key to the purpose of the incarnation. His prophetic office was concerned with the revelation of the truth of God; the priestly office was related to His work as Savior and Mediator; His kingly office had in view His right to reign over Israel and over the entire world. In Christ the supreme dignity of these offices is reached” (Walvoord, p. 137).

QUESTION #18 – What is the significance of the baptism of Jesus Christ?

Perhaps no matter concerning Jesus Christ has been misunderstood or misinterpreted more than His baptism. We agree with Dr. Chafer who writes: “No phase of the life of Christ on earth is more misunderstood than His baptism. This misunderstanding is evidence by the wide variety of more or less contradictory meanings and modes assigned to it. It is obvious that, though all of these assigned meanings and modes might be untrue, not more than one of them could be true” (Vol. 5, p. 56). In following the basic outline of Dr. Chafer, we will ask and answer three important questions, which hopefully will give us a solid understanding of Christ’s baptism:

(Question #1) - By whom was Christ baptized?

Jesus Christ was baptized by John, the last of the O.T. prophets (Mt. 11:13), the greatest human born of a woman (Mt. 11:11), the one predicted and selected to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ (Is. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1; Mark 1:2-4; Lk. 1:13-17; Acts 19:4). This John is the one who baptized Jesus Christ and actually shied away from his responsibility of doing this (Mt. 3:13-15). John admitted that his baptism of water was far inferior to a future baptism of the Spirit (Jn. 1:19-34).

(Question #2) - Why was Christ baptized?

Before attempting to give meaning to the baptism of Jesus Christ, three important interpretive points must be considered:

1. Christ’s baptism must be interpreted in light of Christ’s own words, who specifically stated His baptism was “to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt. 3:15).
2. Christ’s baptism must be interpreted in regard to O.T. Israel, not the N.T. Church (Mt. 10:6; 15:24; Jn. 1:31).
3. Christ’s emphasis is on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not the baptism of water (Mt. 3:11; John 3:5-8).

Unfortunately, these critical theological matters are oft times overlooked when attempting to interpret the meaning of Christ’s baptism in water. There are four main views given as to why Jesus was baptized by John:

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View #1 - Jesus was receiving the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, completely identifying Himself with these sinners and actually substituting Himself for them as the One who later would sacrifice His own life for them.

Those who hold to this view claim the One without sin became sin for us and “was numbered with the transgressors” (Is. 52:12), thus this baptism was His mediatorial satisfaction in “fulfilling all righteousness.”

Dr. Chafer points out three main weaknesses with this view (Vol. 5, pp. 60-61):

1. No scriptural statement or support of this;
2. Christ’s substitutionary/mediatorial work is restricted to His sufferings and death on the cross;
3. This baptism is in direct connection to Him and His connection with Israel.

View #2 - Jesus Christ was identifying Himself in this baptism with the godly remnant of Israel who had responded to the preaching of John and did believe they needed to repent because their King was at hand.

The main weakness of this view is that there is no scriptural support for it.

View #3 - Jesus Christ was being set apart as the Messiah of Israel by this baptism.

Those who hold this view believe that in view of Daniel’s connection between the coming Messiah and righteousness (Dan. 9:24-25) and since Christ said this baptism was to “fulfill all righteousness,” this baptism identifies Him as Messiah and publically begins His messianic ministry.

This view does deal with the “righteousness” matter, but we must acknowledge there is no specific biblical ground of statements clearly stating this is the correct view. Many do cite John 1:31-33, however.

View #4 - Jesus Christ was receiving a baptism that signals that He is the Priest who had been appointed by God.

Those who hold to this view do so for the following reasons:

1. Three times concerning the life of Christ a voice from heaven is heard—His baptism, His transfiguration, His seating on the Davidic throne. His transfiguration emphasizes His office of prophet —“listen to Him” (Mt. 17:5). His future seating emphasized His office of King (Ps. 2:6-7). It is logical that His baptism emphasizes His office as priest (Mt. 16-17).
2. It is specifically stated in the context of His baptism that when He began His ministry to Israel He was “about thirty years of age,” an O.T. age specifically connected to being a Priest (Lk. 3:21-23; Num. 4:3). It is pointed out that this is the only public ministry that had an age limit. There is no age limit for a prophet or king; therefore, we may assume this is a priest.