

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 225

THE WORK OF CHRIST

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

Hebrews 10:12

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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#225

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NO DOCTRINE MORE EXCELLENT

John Flavel (c. 1630-1691)

*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save
Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—1 Corinthians 2:2*

THERE is no doctrine more excellent in itself or more necessary to be preached and studied than the doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. All other knowledge, how much soever it be magnified in the world, is, and ought to be esteemed, but dross in comparison of the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phi 3:8). “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

Eudoxus¹ was so affected with the glory of the sun that he thought he was born only to behold it; much more should a Christian judge himself born only to behold and delight in the glory of the Lord Jesus. The truth of this proposition will be made out by a double consideration of the doctrine of Christ.

First, let it be considered *absolutely*.² Then these lovely properties with which it is naturally clothed will render it superior to all other sciences and studies.

1. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the very marrow and kernel of all the Scriptures, the scope and center of all divine revelations: both Testaments meet in Christ. The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the gospel is full of Christ. The blessed lines of *both* Testaments meet in Him. How they both harmonize and sweetly concenter³ in Jesus Christ is the chief scope of that excellent epistle to the Hebrews to discover, for we may call that epistle the sweet harmony of both Testaments. This argues the unspeakable excellence of this doctrine, the knowledge whereof must needs therefore be a key to unlock the greatest part of the sacred Scriptures. For it is in the understanding of Scripture, much as it is in the knowledge men have in logic and philosophy: if a scholar once comes to understand the bottom-principle upon which, as upon its hinge, the controversy turns, the true knowledge of that principle shall carry him through the whole controversy and furnish him with a solution to every argument. Even so the right knowledge of Jesus Christ, like a clue, leads you through the whole labyrinth of the Scriptures.

2. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a *fundamental knowledge*...The knowledge of Christ is fundamental to all *graces, duties, comforts, and happiness*.

¹ **Eudoxus of Cnidus** (c. 408 BC-c. 355 BC) – Greek astronomer and mathematician.

² **absolutely** – viewed by itself, without reference to or comparison with others.

³ **concenter** – come together at a common center.

(1) *It is fundamental to all graces.* They all begin in knowledge: “The new man is renewed in knowledge” (Col 3:10). As the old, so the new creation begins in light: the opening of the eyes is the first work of the Spirit. And as the beginnings of grace, so all the after-improvements thereof depend upon this increasing knowledge: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour” (2Pe 3:18). See how these two—grace and knowledge—keep equal pace in the soul of a Christian: in what degree the one increases, the other increases answerably.

(2) *The knowledge of Christ is fundamental to all duties.* The duties, as well as the graces of all Christians, are all founded in the knowledge of Christ. Must a Christian believe? That, he can never do without the knowledge of Christ: faith is so much dependent on His knowledge that it is denominated by it, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many” (Isa 53:11); hence, seeing and believing are made the same thing (Joh 6:40). Would a man exercise hope in God? That, he can never do without the knowledge of Christ, for He is the author of that hope (1Pe 1:3). He is also its object (Heb 6:19), its groundwork and support (Col 1:27). And as you cannot believe or hope, so neither can you pray acceptably without a competent degree of this knowledge...The true way of conversing with and enjoying God in prayer is by acting faith on Him through a Mediator...O then, how indispensable is the knowledge of Christ to all that do address themselves to God in any duty!

(3) *It is fundamental to all comforts.* All the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain. Jesus Christ is the very object matter of a believer’s joy: our rejoicing is in “Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:3). Take away the knowledge of Christ, and a Christian is the most sad and melancholy creature in the world. Again, let Christ but manifest Himself and dart the beams of His light into their souls, [and] it will make them kiss the stakes [*on which they hang*], sing in flames, and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil.

(4) *This knowledge is fundamental to the eternal happiness of souls.* As we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it: “This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3). And, if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ. As Christ is the *door* that opens heaven, so knowledge is the *key* that opens Christ...Thus, you see how fundamental the knowledge of Christ is: [it is] essentially necessary to all the graces, duties, comforts, and happiness of souls.

3. The knowledge of Christ is profound and large; all other sciences are but shadows. This is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature hath a line long enough to fathom the depth of it. There is height, length, depth, and breadth ascribed to it (Eph 3:18). Yea, it passeth knowledge. There is “a manifold wisdom of God in Christ” (Eph 3:10). It is of many sorts and forms, of many folds and plates;

it is indeed simple, pure and unmixed with anything but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds, and administrations. Though something of Christ be unfolded in one age and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold Him...It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a newly discovered country: at first men sit down by the seaside, upon the skirts and borders of the land; and there they dwell. But by degrees, they search farther and farther into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent!

4. The study of Jesus Christ is the most noble subject that ever a soul spent itself upon. Those that rack and torture their brains upon other studies, like children, weary themselves at a low game: the eagle plays at the sun itself. The angels study this doctrine and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay hid in the bosom of God? (Eph 3:8-9). God's heart is opened to men in Christ (Joh 1:18). This makes the gospel such a glorious dispensation⁴ because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein; and the studying of Christ in the gospel stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul.

5. It is the most sweet and comfortable knowledge. What is it to be studying Jesus Christ, but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? And the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts ravished with the discoveries of Christ in the gospel! What ecstasies, meltings, transports do gracious souls meet there?...A believer could sit from morning to night to hear discourses of Christ: "His mouth is most sweet" (Song 5:16).

Secondly, let us compare this knowledge with all other knowledge, and thereby the excellence of it will further appear.

1. All other knowledge is natural, but this [is] wholly supernatural. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Mat 11:27). The wisest heathens could never make a discovery of Christ by their deepest searches into nature; the most eagle-eyed philosophers were but children in knowledge, compared with the most illiterate Christians.

2. Other knowledge is unattainable by many. All the helps and means in the world would never enable some Christians to attain the learned arts and languages. Men of the best wits and most pregnant parts⁵ are most excellent in these; but here is the mystery and excellence of the knowledge of Christ: men of most blunt, dull, and contemptible parts attain to this knowledge, through the teaching of the Spirit, in which the more acute and ingenious are utterly blind. "I thank

⁴ **dispensation** – a divinely ordained order prevailing at a particular period of history.

⁵ **pregnant parts** – high intellectual ability, teeming with thoughts.

thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Mat 11:25). “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1Co 1:26-27).

3. Other knowledge, though you should attain the highest degree of it, would never bring you to heaven. [It is] defective and lame both in the integrity of parts—the principal thing, Christ, being wanting—and in the purity of its nature. For, the knowing heathens grew vain in their imaginations and in the efficacy and influence of it on the heart and life: “They held the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:21). Their lusts were stronger than their light (Rom 1:18). But this knowledge hath potent influences, changing souls into its own image (2Co 3:18); and so [it] proves a saving knowledge unto men (1Ti 2:4).

From “The Fountain of Life” in *The Works of John Flavel*, Vol. 1,
The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

John Flavel (c. 1630-1691): English Presbyterian minister; born at Bromagrove, Worcester.



CHRIST AND GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

OF the purpose of God concerning man's salvation before all worlds, we read in Scripture, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). And it is said of Jacob and Esau that "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Rom 9:11). And, in Christ we are said to obtain an inheritance, "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). Elsewhere the apostle speaks of "the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:10-11). Again, "[He] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9). All these hold forth this truth: God purposed in Himself from all eternity to bring them, whom He foreknew, to life and to salvation... This purpose of God speaks [of] our stability and certainty of salvation in Christ. When God once purposeth, it is past altering: "Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed," saith God, "so shall it stand" (Isa 14:24)...

Methinks this word speaks to me, as if I heard God say from all eternity, "It is My purpose to save a remnant of mankind. Though all are lost by sin, yet My wisdom hath found out a way to choose out some; and though...those few that I have purposed to save stand in very slippery places, yet I will be 'the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever' (Heb 13:8)...I purpose to bring this little flock to heaven! My purpose is in and from Myself, and I am God, and not man; therefore, I cannot repent nor call in the purpose that now I have. Have I said, and shall not I do it? Have I spoken, and shall I not make it good (Num 23:19)? Yes, yes, My purposes *must* stand! And for this purpose, I will set My Son between My people and Myself, so that if they sin, I will look on Him..." Thus may I imagine the Lord from all eternity to say, speak, and purpose with Himself. Surely, His purposes must stand upon this account: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom 11: 29).

THE DECREE: The decree of God concerning man's salvation before the foundation of the world appears in these texts, "I will declare the decree," saith God (Psa 2:7). What was that? Why, concerning Christ and concerning the Church: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"

(Psa 2:7-8). It was God's decree to give out of Jews and Gentiles a Church to Christ... This decree in Scripture hath several titles:

1. It is the very same with that which we usually term *predestination*. For what is predestination but a decree of God concerning the different preparation of grace, whereby some are guided infallibly unto salvation? Predestination is a decree of both the means and end, a decree of grace given, effectual unto some persons here and of bringing the same persons unto glory hereafter. This decree, this predestination, this golden chain of the means and end, is set down by the apostle: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom 8:30). As God hath predestinated some to life and glory, so He hath predestinated them to be called and justified before they be glorified. Whomsoever the Lord hath decreed to save, them hath He also decreed to sanctify before they come to enjoy that salvation. God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be first holy and then happy (Eph 1:4). See how these are twisted [together] by the apostle once and again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2: 13)...

2. This decree is the same with that book of life wherein are written the names of the elect. Paul tells us of some women with Clement and other fellow-laborers, "whose names are in the book of life" (Phi 4:3). And Christ bids His disciples, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luk 10:20). And John saw in his vision "the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life" (Rev 20:12)...

3. This decree is the very same also with God's seal. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his" (2Ti 2:19). A seal is used in three cases: (1) to keep things *distinct*, (2) to keep things *secret*, [and] (3) to keep things *safe*. In every one of these respects, God's decrees are seals, but especially in the last. Those souls that are sealed by God are safe in the love and favor of God... God seals up His saints, *i.e.*, He secures them of the eternal love of God, so that they shall never drop out of His heart. All these titles speak [of] the immutability of God's eternal immanent acts,¹ *q.d.*,² "I decree, I predestinate, I book it, seal it, that such and such persons shall be eternally saved... Is there any power, or shall there ever be, to take them out of My hands? Or is it possible that ever I should have a relenting thought at the saving of these souls?... No, no, 'I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' (Mal 3:6)."

THE COVENANT: The covenant concerning man's salvation is the last and main particular I [give in proof]: I dare not be too curious to insist on the order of na-

¹ **immanent acts** – mental acts performed entirely within the mind.

² **q.d.** – *Latin* = as if one should say.

ture and the rather:³ because I believe the covenant between God and Christ from everlasting⁴ is interwoven with the decree, foreknowledge, and election above. So the apostle tells us, “He hath chosen us in him [*Christ*] before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). Mark that—in *Christ*. There was an *eternal [plan]* between the Father and the Son; there was a *bargain* made (I speak it with reverence) between God and Christ; there was a *covenant* between the Lord and His Son Jesus Christ for the salvation of the elect. And, of this, we observe especially these following texts:

In Isaiah 49:1-4, the prophet seems to set it dialogue-wise: one expresseth it thus: First, Christ begins and shows His commission, telling God how He [*the Father*] had called Him and fitted Him [*Christ*] for the work of redemption. He would know what reward He should have of Him [*the Father*] for so great an undertaking. “The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me” (Isa 49:1-2). Upon this, God answers [*Christ*] and tells Him what reward He should have for so great an undertaking...Methinks I imagine as if I heard God speak unto Christ from eternity, “See, here I have loved a remnant of mankind both of Jews and Gentiles with an everlasting love. I know they will sin, corrupt themselves, and become enemies to Me, liable unto eternal death. Now Thou art a mighty person, able to do what I require of Thee for them. If Thou wilt take upon Thee their nature and sins, undertake to satisfy My justice and law, take away that hatred that is in them towards My law and Me, and make them a believing holy people, then I will pardon them. [I will] adopt them in Thee for My sons and daughters and make them co-heirs with Thee of an incorruptible crown of life.”

Then said Christ, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10:7-9). Christ as it were, struck hands with God, to take upon Himself the nature and sin of man, and to do and suffer for him whatsoever God required of Him...Thus was the whole business of our salvation first transacted between God the Father and Christ, before it was revealed to us. Hence, we are said to be *given* unto Christ. “I have manifested thy name,” saith Christ, “unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (Joh 17:6). This very giving implies, [that] the Father in His eternity [must] have said to the Son, “These I take to be vessels of mercy, and these Thou shalt bring unto Me; for they will destroy themselves, [unless] Thou shalt save them out of their lost estate.” Then the Son

³ **the rather** – for this reason.

⁴ **Covenant of Redemption** – the agreement between the members of the Godhead, especially the Father and the Son, to redeem sinners: God the Father purposed the accomplishment of salvation through the Person and work of God the Son, and the application of salvation through the regenerating power of God the Holy Spirit.

takes them at His Father's hand, looking at His Father's will: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing" (Joh 6:39). He thereupon takes care of each: He would not for a world [let] any of them...be lost, which His Father hath given Him. They are more dear than [to let it be] so.

In Isaiah 53:10-11 and in Psalm 40:6, Christ is brought in as a surety,⁵ offering Himself for us and readily accepting of God's will in this very matter. Hence it is that He is called God's servant, and His ears are said to be opened.

In Isaiah 42:1-6, this very covenant is expressly mentioned. Thus, God speaks of Christ: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth...[I will] give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Yea, this covenant and agreement seems to be confirmed with an oath in Hebrews 7:28. And for this service, Christ is required to ask of God, [Who] will give Him the heathen for His inheritance (Psa 2:8). Observe how the Church of God is given to Christ as a reward of that obedience that He showed in accepting the office of a surety for us. Some make this stipulation to be that counsel of peace spoken of by the prophet: "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zec 6:13), *i.e.*, between the Lord and "the man whose name is The BRANCH" (6:12). For this agreement, Christ is called the second Adam (1Co 15:45, 47; Rom 5:12-19). For as with the first Adam, God [solemnly promised] a covenant concerning him and his posterity, so also He did [covenant] with Christ and His seed concerning eternal life to be obtained by Him. I deny not but that some promises were made only to Christ in His own person and not to descend to His children, as, "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Heb 1:13). "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa 53:10). "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa 2:8). But there are other promises made to Him *and* His, [such as] that grand promise, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son" (Heb 1:5; Jer 32:38)...and that special promise of spiritual grace (Joh 1:16), of justification (Isa 50:8), of victory and dominion (Psa 110:2), of the kingdom of glory (Luk 24:26). They are every one first made to Him, and then to us.

The business from eternity lay thus: "Here is man lost," said God to His Son, "but Thou shalt in the fullness of time go and be born of flesh and blood, die for them, and satisfy My justice. They shall be Thine for a portion, and they shall be called, 'The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD' (Isa 62:12). This shalt Thou do," said the Father, "and upon these terms they that believe shall live." This was God's covenant with the Son of His love for us, to Whom the Son answered (as it were) again, "Content, Father, I will go and fulfill Thy pleasure, and they shall be

⁵ **surety** – one who assumes the debts of another.

Mine forever. I will in the fullness of time die for them, and they shall live in Me. Burnt offerings and sin-offerings, Thou hast not required (no, it was *self*-offering), ‘then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God’ ” (Psa 40: 7-8). In what book was it written that Christ should come to do the will of God? Not only in the book of the Law and the Prophets, but also in the book of God’s decrees. In this sense, [He was] “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). His Father from before all time appointed Him to be our High Priest, and He from all eternity subscribed to His Father’s pleasure in it.

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Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664): Anglican, then Presbyterian minister; known for his exceptionally holy life; born in Ormskirk, Lancashire, England.



CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

NO one can read the Scriptures without seeing that great prominence is given to Christ Jesus in the plan of salvation. (1) He is there said to be the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Author and Finisher of faith. He is the Bishop of souls, the Fountain of living waters, the Head of the Church, the bright and morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Paul was so taken with Him that he “determined not to know anything among you [*the Corinthians*], save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (2Co 2:2).

(2) **To the Old Testament church, He was known by such names and titles as [these:]** the Angel of the Covenant, the Angel of the Lord, Wonderful, Counselor, the righteous Branch, the Messiah or Anointed. He is also there called the Mighty God and the Lord of Hosts (Isa 6:3; 9:6). In the New Testament, His personal name is Jesus, or Savior (Mat 1:21; Luk 2:21). His official name is Christ, or “Anointed.” He is also called Emmanuel, or “God with us.” He is often called God and Lord.

(3) **A mediator is one that comes in between parties who are at variance in order to reconcile them.** Where there is no variance, there can be no mediation. “A mediator is not the mediator of one; but God is one” (Gal 3:20). If there are no parties, there can be no mediator. A mediator differs from an advocate because the latter, strictly speaking, looks to the interest of one alone, while the former has a regard to both. Christ is called the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Mediator of a better covenant, and the Mediator of the New Testament. (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). In the Old Testament, a mediator is called a daysman (Job 9:33).

(4) **It is right and fitting, perhaps, it is necessary that a mediator should be the equal of both parties.** Jesus Christ has this fitness for His work. He can lay His hand upon both God and sinners. He knows God’s will and God’s rights. He knows man’s sins and man’s wants. He will not betray either party. It is no robbery for Him to claim equality with God (Phi 2:6).

(5) **Strifes and controversies are of three kinds:** 1. Such as arise merely from mistakes, 2. such as result from wrong on both sides, 3. such as come from wrong on one side only. Man’s controversy with God is of the last class. Man *alone* is to blame. Man *alone* has done wrong. The Lord’s ways are equal. Man’s ways are not equal. (*cf.* Eze 18:25, 29; 33:17, 20).

(6) **Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator of the New Covenant.** So says Paul, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1Ti 2:5-6). If it is wicked to believe in two or more gods, it is no less wicked to believe in two or more mediators. Moses is once called a mediator (Gal 3:19). The history of the event there referred to shows that the meaning is simply this: he was a messenger to make known God’s will to Israel and to make known the desires of the people to God. The passage refers to the giving of the Law, when the display of the divine majesty was so terrible that Israel said to Moses, “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exo 20:19). In mediation between God and sinners to secure salvation, there is no mediator but Christ (Act 4:12; 1Co 3:11).

(7) The great end of Christ’s mediation is the salvation of His people. So said the angel that announced His birth: “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph 5:23). As a mediator, He is no respecter of persons. Birth, blood, riches, honors, color, nationality are nothing with Him. He utterly disregards all distinctions made by art or by man’s device. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6).

(8) The necessity for a mediator is found in the holiness and justice of God and in the fears, guilt, and miseries of man. God is so holy that He cannot look upon iniquity (Hab 1:13). And how can man, left to himself, be just with God? (Job 9:2). No two things are more contrary to each other than the vileness of man and the purity of God.

(9) To the office of Mediator, Jesus Christ was chosen by His Father (Isa 42:1; 1Pe 2:4). Nor was any other ever chosen by God to the same work. He was no intruder into His office. His Father repeatedly declared Himself well pleased in Christ and with His undertaking. His raising Him from the dead and exalting Him at His own right hand was the highest possible proof that in Christ He was well pleased. God greatly honored Moses when He buried him in a secret place; but He never set Moses at His right hand.

(10) It is a great thing to live under Christ’s mediation. Through Him, we have wonderful discoveries of the character and glory of God. Through Him, heavenly influences are sent down to draw us to God. Never were there so glorious proposals made to creatures as are found in the offers of life and salvation. To those who accept the mediation of Jesus Christ, the very richest blessings are given. Thus says Paul to believers, “All things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1Co 3:21-23). “Where the Spirit

of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:17-18). “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2Co 5:1). “I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2Co 6:17-18). All these countless blessings are made sure to him who [believes on] the Lord Jesus Christ as all his hope and all his salvation. Eternity itself will not exhaust the unsearchable riches of Christ made sure to believers.

(11) **It is a solemn thing to live under the gospel.** No man can despise the mediation of Jesus Christ without incurring the greatest guilt and exposing himself to the greatest peril. “For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Heb 2:2-4). There is nothing more sinful or dangerous than treading underfoot the Son of God, treating His blood as an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:28-29).

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William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister, gospel preacher, and author of numerous books; born in Greensburg, PA.



CHRIST THE PROPHET

John Gill (1697-1771)

THOUGH there are many other names and titles of Christ, yet they are all reducible to these offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. It may be observed that these are executed by Christ in the order in which they are here put: He first exercised the *prophetic* office, which He entered into upon His baptism and continued throughout His life. At His death as a Priest, He offered Himself a sacrifice to God for the sins of His people and now ever lives to make intercession for them. And upon His ascension to heaven, [He] was made and declared Lord and Christ. [He] sits as a King on His throne and has been ever since exercising His kingly office. [He] will do so more apparently hereafter. I shall begin with His prophetic office...

FIRST, IT WAS FORETOLD THAT CHRIST SHOULD APPEAR IN THE CHARACTER OF A PROPHET. [He] was therefore expected by the Jews as such. Hence when they saw the miracles He wrought, they said, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world” (Joh 6:14), meaning, that was prophesied of by Moses, to whom the Lord said, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee” (Deu 18:15, 18). [This] cannot be understood of a succession of prophets, as the Jews say; for only a single person is spoken of...not Joshua, David, nor Jeremiah, [but] only Jesus of Nazareth, to Whom [the writings of Moses and the prophets] are applied (Act 3:22; 7:37)...He was “raised” up of God as a Prophet. This, the people of the Jews were sensible of; and therefore [they] glorified God on that account and considered it as a kind and gracious visitation of His (Luk 7:16). He was raised up “from among his brethren,” being the Son of Abraham, the Son of David; of the tribe of Judah; born in Bethlehem; and so was of the Israelites, according to the flesh.

He was “like unto Moses”—a prophet, like unto him and greater than he. As the Law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Christ. As Moses was raised up and sent to be a redeemer of Israel out of Egypt, Christ was raised up and sent to be a Savior and Redeemer of His people, from a worse than Egyptian bondage. As Moses was faithful in the house of God, so [was] Jesus: they are compared together, but the preference is given to Christ (Heb 3:2-6). The words of God were “put into the mouth” of Christ. The doctrine He preached was not His own, but His Father’s. He spoke not of Himself; what He spoke, as the Father said unto Him, so He spoke; and He spoke “all” that He received from [the Father] and that [the Father] commanded Him. And so [Christ] was faithful to Him that appointed Him (Joh 7:16; 8:29; 12:49-50; 15:15; 17:6, 8). Therefore, [Christ was] to be hearkened to,

as His Father directed His apostles to do, saying, “This is my beloved Son...hear ye him” (Mat 17:5), plainly referring to the above prophecy.

The qualifications of Christ for this prophetic office were also foretold, which lie in the gifts and graces of the Spirit, which He received without measure: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek” (Isa 61:1). From [this] passage of Scripture, Christ preached His first sermon at Nazareth; and having read the text, [He] said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luk 4:16-21; *see* Isa 11:1-2).

There are also several names of Christ by which He is called in the Old Testament, which refer to His prophetic office: as a “Messenger,” *the messenger of the covenant*, Whose work it was to explain and declare the sense of it. The same with *the apostle of our profession*: “an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness” (Job 33:23)—an interpreter of the mind and will of God, Who lay in His bosom and has revealed it, and Whose business it was to preach righteousness, even His own, in the great congregation. And [He] has done it (Psa 40:9)...He is called a “Counselor,” not only because He was concerned in the council of peace; but also because He gives counsel and advice in the Gospel and [ministers] it both to saints and sinners (Isa 9:6; Rev 3:18). He is represented as a “Teacher” of the ways of God and of the truths of the Gospel, called His law or doctrine (Isa 2:2-3; 42:4; Joe 2:23)...Moreover, He is called a “Light” to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, and to give a clear knowledge of the truth as it is in Himself (Isa 9:2; 42:6). Likewise, [He is called] “a Witness of the people” (Isa 55:4); and to bear witness to the truth, He came into the world. And a *faithful* witness He is (Joh 18:37; Rev 3:14)! All that belonged to and pointed at the prophetic office of Christ have all appeared and met in our Jesus—yea, the very place and more particular parts of Judea, where He was chiefly to exercise as a prophet—were foretold (*see* Isa 9:1, *cf.* Mat 4:12-15).

SECONDLY, THE EVIDENCE AND PROOF OF JESUS BEING THAT PROPHET THAT WAS TO COME ARE THE MIRACLES THAT WERE WROUGHT BY HIM. Upon Christ’s working the miracle of feeding five thousand persons with five loaves and two small fishes, some of the Jews that saw the miracle were convinced and said, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world” (Joh 6:14). And upon His raising from the dead the widow’s son of Nain as he was carried to the grave, they said, “A great prophet is risen up among us” (Luk 7:16). So Nicodemus was convinced that Christ was “a teacher come from God” from His miracles (Joh 3:2). The Jews expected that when the Messiah came, He would do many and great miracles. They had just reason for it: it was foretold He should (Isa 35:4-6). Therefore, when they saw what kind of miracles and what numerous ones were wrought by Christ, some of the Jews were convinced by them that He was the Christ (Joh 7:31). When John [*the Baptist*] sent two of his disciples to Christ to inquire of Him

whether He was “he that should come”—the prophet that was to come—or whether they were to “look for another,” He bids them go and tell John what they had seen and heard, meaning the miracles wrought by Him. [These things] He particularly mentions and closes the account with saying, “The poor have the gospel preached to them,” plainly intimating that He was that prophet that should preach glad tidings to the poor and His miracles were a confirmation of it (Mat 11:2-5). He frequently appeals to His miracles, not only as proofs of His Deity, but of His Messiahship (Joh 5:36; 10:37-38). [These] miracles were true and undoubted ones: they were such as exceed the laws and power of nature, what a mere creature could *never* perform!...The next thing to be considered is,

THIRDLY, THE PARTS OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE EXECUTED BY CHRIST, which lay,

3.1. First, in foretelling future events: As He is God omniscient, He knew all things future...and did foretell them, [such as] a colt tied at a certain place, which He bid His disciples go and loose. [He] intimated to them what would be said by the owners of it and what they should say to them. [He foretold] a man’s carrying of a pitcher of water, whom His disciples were to follow, which would lead them to the master of a house where the Passover was to be provided for Him and them (Mar 11:2-6; 14:13, 16).

But more particularly and especially—Christ foretold His sufferings and death: the kind and manner of it—crucifixion (Mat 16:21; 20:18-19; Joh 12:31-32); [and] the means by which His death should be brought about—by one of His disciples betraying Him into the hands of His enemies. He knew from the beginning who would betray Him and declared to His disciples in *general* that one of them would do it; and to Judas in *particular*, He directed His discourse and bid him do what he did quickly. And when the time drew nigh for the execution of the scheme Judas had formed, Christ said to His disciples with Him, “He is at hand that doth betray me”; and, immediately, Judas appeared with a great multitude and a band of soldiers to seize on Jesus by a signal given them (Joh 6:64; 13:18, 21; Mat 26:46-47). Christ foretold the behavior of His disciples towards Him upon His being apprehended: they would all be offended with Him and forsake Him; and that, particularly, Peter would deny Him thrice before the cock crew—all [of] which exactly came to pass (Mat 26:31, 34, 56, 74-75).

Likewise, [He foretold] His resurrection from the dead on the third day, which He gave out both in more obscure and figurative expressions, in more plain and easy ones, and [pointed] to the sign of the prophet Jonah as a token of it. And notwithstanding all the precautions of the Jews, so it came about, who owned that in His lifetime He predicted it (Joh 2:19; 12:39-40; Mat 16:21; 27:63-66). He spoke beforehand of the treatment and usage His disciples should meet with from men after He was gone; that they should be delivered up to councils, scourged in syna-

gogues, and be brought before kings and governors for His sake; that they should be put to death and those that killed them think they did God good service. All [this] came to pass and was fulfilled in all His disciples (Mat 10:17-18; Joh 16:2).

He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem: the signs going before it, its distresses, and what followed upon it (Mat 24:1-51)...The Book of the Revelation is a prophecy delivered by Christ to John, concerning all that were to befall the Church and world, so far as the Church was concerned with it, from the resurrection of Christ to His second coming. The greater part of [this] has been most amazingly fulfilled; and there is the utmost reason to believe the rest will be fulfilled in due time.

3.2. Secondly, another part of the prophetic office of Christ lay in the ministration of the Word. [This] is sometimes in Scripture called *prophecy* (1Co 14:3). This was not only exercised by Christ in interpreting the Law, giving the true sense of it, pointing out its spirituality and extensiveness, and vindicating it from the false glosses of the Pharisees (Mat 5:1-48), but chiefly in preaching the gospel. For [this,] He was in the highest degree qualified. [He] was most assiduous¹ in it, preaching it in one city and then in another, whereunto He was sent, and that throughout all Galilee and other parts (Luk 4:43; Mat 4:23). And [this,] He delivered with such authority as the scribes and Pharisees did not (Mat 7:29), even the whole of it; declaring all that He had heard of the Father, Who spoke His whole mind and will by Him and so sealed up prophecy. Hence, no regard is now to be had to the pretended prophecy and revelations of men, inconsistent with the Word of God (Joh 1:17; 15:15; Heb 1:1-2; Dan 9:24), and which He taught freely, boldly, and without fear or respect of persons, as the Jews themselves acknowledged (Mat 22:16). [He taught] with such wisdom, prudence, and eloquence, as never man spake (Joh 7:46) and with such gracefulness and such gracious words—grace being poured into His lips—as was astonishing to those that heard Him (Psa 45:2; Luk 4:22). This part of His prophetic office lay not only in the external ministry of the Word, but in a powerful and internal illumination of the mind: in opening the heart, as Lydia’s was (Act 16:31), to attend to the things spoken; and in opening the understanding to understand the Scriptures, to receive and embrace the truths thereof—the word coming not in word only, but with power and in the Holy Ghost and much assurance.

FOURTHLY, THE TIME WHEN THIS OFFICE WAS EXECUTED BY CHRIST: It may be observed that this office may be considered as executed either “immediately”² or “mediately.”³

¹ **assiduous** – marked by care and persistent effort.

² **immediately** – directly, without anyone or anything in between.

³ **mediately** – indirectly, acting through someone or something.

4.1. Immediately, by Christ, in His own Person by Himself. This was here on earth in His state of humiliation. For He came [as] a Teacher from God, being sent and anointed by Him to preach the gospel. [This] office, He entered quickly after His baptism and continued in the exercise of it until His death, but only to the lost sheep of Israel to whom He was sent. To them only did He give His apostles a commission to preach the gospel during that time; for He was “a minister of the circumcision,” that is, a minister to the circumcised Jews and to them only (Rom 15:8).

4.2. Mediatly, by His Spirit, by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by the apostles and ministers of the New. In this sense, He exercised the office of a Prophet both before and after His state of humiliation.

4.2.1. Before His incarnation: He did indeed sometimes personally appear in a human form and preached the gospel to men, as to our first parents in the Garden of Eden, immediately after their fall. [He declared] that “the Seed of the woman,” meaning Himself,⁴ would “break the serpent’s head.” Thus the gospel, strictly speaking, “began to be first spoken by the Lord” (Gen 3:15; Heb 2:3). So, under the name of the Angel of the Lord, and very probably in a human form, He appeared to Abraham and preached the gospel to him, saying, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:15-18; Gal 3:8). He was with the thousands of angels at Mount Sinai...He was with Moses in the wilderness, to whom He spoke at Sinai and gave unto him the lively oracles of God (Psa 68:17-18; Act 7:38)...And as Christ was spoken of by all the holy prophets that were from the beginning of the world, so He, by His Spirit, spoke *in* them and testified of His own sufferings and [of] the glory that should follow (1Pe 3:18-20; 1:11).

4.2.2. Christ continued to exercise His prophetic office after His state of humiliation was over, and He was raised from the dead and had glory given Him. For He appeared to His disciples after that and expounded to them the Scriptures concerning Himself. [He] opened their understanding that they might understand them and spoke unto them of the things concerning the kingdom of God. [He] instructed them in [those things] and renewed their commission to preach and baptize, and enlarged it. [Christ] promised His presence with them and with their successors to the end of the world. By them, and not in His own person, after His ascension to heaven, He went and preached peace to them that were nigh and to them that were afar off, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ speaking in and by His ministers. They that hear them, hear Him; and they that despise them, despise Him. So He continues and will continue to exercise His prophetic office in and by His ministers and by His Spirit, attending their ministrations throughout all ages to the end of time, until He has gathered in all His chosen ones.

⁴ **Himself** – some believe that the “seed” included God’s elect as well.

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John Gill (1697-1771): Baptist minister, theologian, and biblical scholar; born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England.



Those that teach men must be first taught by Christ. All the prophets of the Old and all the prophets, pastors, and teachers of the New Testament have lighted their candles at His torch... What Paul received from the Lord, he delivered to the church. Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd, and all the under-shepherds receive their gifts and commissions from Him. These things are manifestly implied in Christ's prophetic office.

—*John Flavel*

CHRIST THE PRIEST

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

*Now once in the end of the world has he appeared to put away sin
by the sacrifice of himself.—Hebrews 9:26*

QUESTION: How does Christ execute the office of a priest? **Answer:** In His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us. What are the parts of Christ's priestly office? Christ's priestly office has two parts: His *satisfaction* and *intercession*.

HIS SATISFACTION: This consists of two branches: (1) *His active obedience*: He fulfilled all righteousness (Mat 3:15). Christ did everything that the Law required. His holy life was a perfect commentary upon the Law of God; and He obeyed the Law for us. (2) *His passive obedience*: Our guilt being transferred and imputed to Him, He suffered the penalty that was due to us. He [came into the world] to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The paschal lamb slain was a type of Christ Who was offered up in sacrifice for us. Sin could not be done away without blood. Without blood is no remission (Heb 9:22). Christ was not only a lamb without spot, but a lamb slain.

Why was it requisite¹ there should be a priest? There needed a priest to be an umpire, to mediate between a guilty creature and a holy God. How could Christ suffer, being God? Christ suffered only in the human nature. But if only Christ's humanity suffered, how could this suffering satisfy for sin? The human nature being united to the divine, the human nature suffered, the divine satisfied. Christ's Godhead supported the human nature that it did not faint and gave virtue to His sufferings. The altar sanctifies the thing offered on it (Mat 23:19). The altar of Christ's divine nature sanctified the sacrifice of His death and made it of infinite value.

Wherein does the greatness of Christ's sufferings appear? (1) *In the sufferings of His body*. He suffered truly, not in appearance only. The apostle calls it "the death of the cross" (Phi 2:8)...The thoughts of this made Christ sweat great drops of blood in the garden (Luk 22:44). It was an ignominious,² painful, cursed death. Christ suffered in all His senses. His eyes beheld two sad objects: His enemies insulting and His mother weeping. His ears were filled with the revilings of the people. "He saved others, himself he cannot save" (Mat 27:42). His smell was offended when their spittle fell upon His face. His taste, when they gave Him gall and

¹ **requisite** – made necessary by particular circumstances.

² **ignominious** – marked by shame and disgrace.

vinegar to drink. His feeling, when His head suffered with thorns, His hands and feet with the nails. His whole body [was] one great wound; now was this white lily dyed with purple color. (2) *In the sufferings of His soul*. He was pressed in the wine—[the] press of His Father’s wrath. This caused that vociferation³ and outcry on the cross, “My God, my God” (Mat 27:46). Christ suffered a double eclipse upon the cross—an eclipse of the sun and an eclipse of the light of God’s countenance. How bitter was this agony!...Christ felt the pains of hell in His soul, though not locally, yet equivalently.

Why did Christ suffer? Surely not for any desert⁴ of His own. “The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself” (Dan 9:26; Isa 53:6)—*it was for us*...He suffered that He might satisfy God’s justice for us. We, by our sins, had infinitely wronged God; and, could we have shed rivers of tears, offered up millions of holocausts⁵ and burnt offerings, we could never have pacified an angry Deity. Therefore, Christ must die that God’s justice may be satisfied.

It is hotly debated among divines, whether God could have forgiven sin freely without a sacrifice. Not to dispute what God could have done, when He was resolved to have the Law satisfied and to have man saved in a way of justice as well as mercy, it was necessary that Christ should lay down His life as a sacrifice.

(1) **To fulfill the predictions of Scripture:** “Thus it behoved Christ to suffer” (Luk 24:46).

(2) **To bring us into favor with God.** It is one thing for a traitor to be pardoned, and another thing to be made a favorite. Christ’s blood is not only called a sacrifice, whereby God is appeased, but a propitiation,⁶ whereby God becomes gracious and friendly to us. Christ is our mercyseat, from which God gives answers of peace to us.

(3) **Christ died that He might make good His last will and testament with His blood.** There were many legacies that Christ bequeathed to believers, which had been all null and void had He not died and by His death confirmed the will (Heb 9:16). A testament is in force *after* men are dead: the mission of the Spirit, the promises, those legacies, were not in force until Christ’s death; but Christ by His blood has sealed them, and believers may lay claim to them.

(4) **He died that He might purchase for us glorious mansions.** Therefore heaven is called not only a promised, but a “purchased possession” (Eph 1:14). Christ died for our preferment;⁷ He suffered that we might reign; He hung upon the

³ **vociferation** – the act of crying out with a loud voice.

⁴ **desert** – conduct that deserves punishment.

⁵ **holocausts** – sacrifices wholly consumed by fire.

⁶ **propitiation** – a satisfaction for the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath.

⁷ **preferment** – advancement or promotion to a position.

cross that we might sit upon the throne. Heaven was shut: the cross of Christ is the ladder by which we ascend to heaven. His crucifixion is our coronation.

Use one: In the bloody sacrifice of Christ, see the horrid nature of sin. Sin, it is true, is odious as it banished Adam out of paradise and threw the angels into hell. But that which most of all makes it appear horrid is this: it made Christ veil His glory and lose His blood. We should look upon sin with indignation, pursue it with a holy malice, and shed the blood of those sins that shed Christ's blood...The sight of Christ's bleeding body should incense us against sin...Let not that be our joy, which made Christ a man of sorrow.

Use two: Is Christ our Priest sacrificed? See God's mercy and justice displayed. I may say as the apostle, "Behold the goodness and severity of God" (Rom 11:22). (1) *The goodness of God in providing a sacrifice.* Had not Christ suffered upon the cross, we must have lain in hell⁸ forever, satisfying God's justice. (2) *The severity of God.* Though it were His own Son, the Son of His love, and our sins were but imputed to Him, yet God did not spare Him, but His wrath did flame against Him (Rom 8:32). If God was thus severe to His own Son, how dreadful will He be one day to His enemies! Such as die in willful impenitence must feel the same wrath as Christ did; and because they cannot bear it at once, therefore they must endure it forever.

Use three: Is Christ our Priest, Who was sacrificed for us? Then see the endeared affection of Christ to us sinners. "The cross," says Augustine,⁹ "was a pulpit, in which Christ preached His love to the world." That Christ should die was more than if all the angels had been turned to dust; and especially that Christ should die as a malefactor, having the weight of...men's sins laid upon Him, and that He should die for His enemies (Rom 5:10). The balm-tree weeps out its precious balm to heal those that cut and mangle it; so Christ shed His blood to heal those that crucified Him. He died freely. It is called the offering of the body of Jesus (Heb 10:10). Though His sufferings were so great that they made Him sigh, weep, and bleed; yet they could not make Him repent. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied" (Isa 53:2). Christ had hard travail upon the cross, yet He does not repent of it, but thinks His sweat and blood well bestowed because He sees redemption brought forth to the world. Oh infinite, amazing love of Christ! A love that passeth knowledge!—that neither man nor angel can parallel (Eph 3:19). How should we be affected with this love!...At Christ's death and passion, the very stones cleave asunder, "The rocks rent" (Mat 27:51). Not to be affected with Christ's love in dying is to have hearts harder than rocks.

Use four: Is Christ our sacrifice? Then see the excellence of His sacrifice. (1) *It is perfect.* "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb

⁸ See FGB 211, *Hell*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁹ **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa and theologian.

10:14). Therefore, how impious¹⁰ are [those who join] their merits and the prayers of saints with Christ's sacrifice! They offer Him up daily in the mass, as if Christ's sacrifice on the cross were imperfect. This is a blasphemy against Christ's priestly office. (2) *Christ's sacrifice is meritorious*. He not only died for our example, but to merit salvation. The person Who suffered being God as well as man put virtue into His sufferings; and our sins were expiated¹¹ and God appeased...No sooner did Christ die, but God's anger was pacified. (3) *This sacrifice is beneficial*...It procures justification¹² of our persons, acceptance of our service, access to God with boldness, and entrance into the holy place of heaven (Heb 10:19)...Israel passed through the Red Sea to Canaan; so through the red sea of Christ's blood, we enter into the heavenly Canaan.

Use five: Let us apply this blood of Christ. All the virtue of a medicine is in the application. Though the medicine be made of the blood of God, it will not heal unless applied by faith...Faith makes Christ's sacrifice ours. "Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phi 3:8). It is not gold in the mine that enriches, but gold in the hand. Faith is the hand that receives Christ's golden merits...Faith opens the orifice of Christ's wounds and drinks the precious [tonic] of His blood. Without faith, Christ Himself will not avail us.

Use six: This sacrifice of Christ's blood may infinitely comfort us. This is the blood of atonement. "Christ's cross is the hinge of our deliverance" (John Calvin); the hinge and fountain of our comfort. (1) *This blood comforts in case of guilt!* "Oh," says the soul, "my sins trouble me, but Christ's blood was shed for the remission of sin (Mat 26:28)." Let us see our sins laid on Christ, and then they are no more ours but His. (2) *In case of pollution*. Christ's blood is a healing and cleansing blood. It is healing. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:5). It is the best weapon-salve¹³—it heals at a distance. Though Christ be in heaven, we may feel the virtue of His blood healing our bloody issue. And it is cleansing. It is therefore compared to fountain-water (Zec 13:1). The word is a [mirror] to show us our spots, and Christ's blood is a fountain to wash them away; it turns leprosy into purity. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all our sin" (1Jo 1:7). There is indeed one spot so black that Christ's blood does not wash away, *viz.*, the sin against the Holy Ghost. Not but that there is virtue enough in Christ's blood to wash it away; but he who has sinned that sin will not be washed; he contemns Christ's blood and tramples it under foot (Heb 10:29). Thus, we see what a strong [tonic] Christ's blood is: it is the anchor-hold of our faith, the spring of our joy, the crown

¹⁰ **impious** – disrespectful toward God.

¹¹ **expiated** – paid for.

¹² **justification** – "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 32) See FGB 187, *Justification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹³ **weapon-salve** – ointment believed to heal a wound by being applied to the weapon that made it.

of our desires, and the only support both in life and death. In all our fears, let us comfort ourselves with the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood. Christ died both as a purchaser and as a conqueror: as a purchaser in regard of God, having by His blood obtained our salvation, and as a conqueror in regard of Satan, the cross being His triumphant chariot, wherein He has led hell and death captive.

Use seven: Bless God for this precious sacrifice of Christ's death. "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psa 103:1). And for what does David bless Him? "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction!" Christ gave Himself a sin offering for us; let us give ourselves a thank-offering to Him. If a man redeems another out of debt, will he not be grateful? Let us present Christ with the fruits of righteousness, which are unto the glory and praise of God.

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Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): Nonconformist Puritan preacher and prolific author; actual place and date of birth unknown.



CHRIST ASCENDED AND EXALTED

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

THE first step in Christ's exaltation was His resurrection; the second, His ascension to heaven; the third, His sitting at the right hand of God. Having [briefly] considered the first, let us now meditate on the other two.

I. HIS ASCENSION:

1. **Our Lord, having risen [from the dead], did not at once ascend to heaven, but remained on earth forty days (Act 1:3).** By this delay (1) He would give His followers all reasonable proof of His humanity: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet" (Luk 24:39-40). Long after His ascension to heaven, the last surviving apostle testifies, "That which was from the beginning; which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...declare we unto you" (1Jo 1:1-3). (2) Christ would give all reasonable satisfaction concerning the reality of His resurrection. This He did many ways, calling one poor doubter to reach forth his finger and behold His hands, and to reach forth his hand, and thrust it into His side (Joh 20:27). Indeed, He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible signs (Act 1:3). (3) Christ remained on earth a season that He might aid His disciples in recovering from the terrible shock that their faith had received at the crucifixion and that He might further confirm and instruct them in the nature and things of His kingdom. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luk 24:44-45).

2. **Prophecy required the ascension of our Lord and the Scripture cannot be broken.** So we read, "God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet" (Psa 47:5). "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them" (Psa 68:18). Of this prediction, we have an inspired and so an infallible interpretation given by Paul in Ephesians 4:8-13. Daniel foretold the same thing: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him" (Dan 7:13-14). Our Lord Himself often foretold His own ascension: "I go unto the Father"

(Joh 14:28). “I go my way to him that sent me” (Joh 16:5; *see* Joh 1:51). Much more did He say to the same effect. So that beyond all doubt, several predictions, running over the space of at least a thousand years, required that Christ should ascend to God.

3. With the prophecy, the historic record well and fully agrees. Neither Matthew nor John record Christ’s ascension. Yet it is declared in four books of the New Testament. The testimony of Mark on the subject is, “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mar 16:19). In his gospel, Luke says, “And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luk 24:50-51). In Acts 1:9-11, we read, “After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.” They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Ye men of Galilee,” they said, “why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul says He was “received up into glory.” Thus, the record agrees with the prediction and explains it...

4. From Olivet, Christ ascended to heaven. His going to heaven is expressly said to have been necessary: “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things” (Act 3:21). God’s purpose, the truth of prophecy, and the fitness of things required Christ’s ascension into heaven. Mark says, “He was received up into heaven.” Luke says, “He...was carried up into heaven.” Christ Himself says, “no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (Joh 3:13). In Acts 1:11, we have the words of the angels: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Stephen saw “the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Act 7:56). Paul warns masters to be kind and gentle and gives this as a reason, “knowing that your Master also is in heaven” (Eph 6:9). Again, “Our conversation [*citizenship*] is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phi 3:20). Again, “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). Peter also says, He “is gone into heaven.” But Paul says He is “made higher than the heavens” (Heb 7:26). This mode of speech may have reference to the Jewish idea of three heavens—first the aerial heavens, and then the starry heavens. Christ is made higher than these heavens and has entered the third heaven, often called “the heaven of heavens.”

5. **When we speak of Christ ascending, we speak of His human body and human soul.** His divine nature fills, and has always filled, heaven and earth. Essentially, it fills all space, is confined to no place, but pervades immensity. When Christ was walking here on earth, He spoke of the Son of man as being then in heaven (Joh 3:13). At all times this was true of His *divine* nature, and of it only. The effect of this exaltation on the human nature of Christ was not to annihilate it, not to [alter] it so that it ceased to be human nature, but to glorify it, to crown it with glory and honor. When Saul of Tarsus saw Him, soon after His ascension, He shone with a luster above the brightness of the sun. The vision produced blindness, which was miraculously healed. About sixty years later, John saw Him and he fell at His feet as dead. The ordinary mode of explaining this wonderful change in the appearance of Christ is that while He was here on earth His glory was veiled. At His transfiguration, the veil was taken away; and His raiment became white and glittering. In heaven there is no veil, no covering. The glory shines out brightly, and nothing obscures it.

6. **The manner of Christ's ascension is worthy of our attention.** Christ ascended not figuratively, but literally; not spiritually, but [bodily]; not insensibly, but visibly. His disciples saw Him ascend to heaven as clearly as they saw Him on the cross, on the ship, or at the seaside. He ascended in a cloud. No one has told us how bright that cloud was or what its appearance was; but it was like the cloud in which He will come to judgment (Act 1:11). Nor was He taken away suddenly. He was seen to leave the earth, and seen for some time after He left it. They gazed upon Him as He went up. His ascension was triumphant! Forty-three days before, He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt. He now ascends triumphantly into the heavenly Jerusalem. He left the world speaking words of encouragement and benediction to the humble. The first nine sentences of His sermon on the mount began with the word *blessed*. The last thing He ever did on earth was to pronounce a blessing on His people. His ascension to heaven was every way glorious. His appearance was doubtless such ...Our Lord's ascension was every way a joyous event and was so regarded by His disciples, as Luke expressly informs us. It was the blessed fruit of His sufferings and obedience. And it was witnessed by a sufficient number of competent and credible witnesses, not less than five hundred (1Co 15:6)...

II. HIS SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD: This is the third measure of our Lord's reward—the third step in His exaltation. This was required by prophecy. David had said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa 110:1; *cf.* Luk 20:42, Heb 1:13). Both Peter and Paul prove that this applies to Christ. Christ Himself foretold the same thing when He was in the hands of His murderers: "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luk 22:69).

This session at the right hand of God is much spoken of in Scripture...Paul says, God “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:20). Peter says, He “is on the right hand of God” (1Pe 3:22)...To a higher degree of rest, rule, bliss, favor, power, and majesty, Christ could not be raised. In this glorious state, Jesus Christ executes all the mediatorial offices.

He is the great Prophet of the Church. With Him is the fullness of the Spirit. By His Spirit, He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (Joh 16:8)...He has no guide or counselor. He is equal with the Father and the Son. He is sovereign in all His acts (1Co 12:11). He cannot be purchased with money, tears, or blood. But there is a glorious harmony in the counsels of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. There is no diversity of counsel or of will in the Godhead. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, “[Jesus,] being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which you now see and hear” (Act 2:33). So the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He enlightens our minds, works faith in us, and saves us. Christ also raises up, qualifies, and sends forth every real, genuine gospel minister. He is Head over all things to the Church.

In His exalted state, Christ continues to be our Priest. He makes, indeed, no more offerings; but He gloriously intercedes for us. The glory of His intercession may be learned from these facts: (1) the Person of the Intercessor is [inexpressibly] gracious. (2) He is the delight of His Father. (3) His intercession is full of authority. (4) It always prevails. (5) It is alone. (6) It continues forever.

In His exaltation, Christ is also a King. In this, His great glory is (1) His kingdom is *spiritual* and so has its seat in the hearts of His people. (2) It is wholly ordered in truth, equity, and righteousness. (3) It is as stable as the throne of God. (4) It is forever and ever.

1. *[Therefore,] we have a right to expect the conversion of all God’s chosen.* Native depravity and long-continued habits of sinning may seem to render a change of heart hopeless. But because Christ is sitting at God’s right hand, His people shall be willing in the day of His power (Psa 110:1-3).

2. *There will be no failure in the completion of all God’s plans and schemes.* “The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen” (Psa 110:5-6).

3. *The Church is safe.* Her Head is exalted, and He loves her and bought her with His blood. He has engraved her on the palms of His hands. Her success depends on an arm full of power, on grace that is infinite, on intercession that always prevails. Humble and exclusive confidence in the Captain of our salvation can never be disappointed.

4. *To what a glorious state believers in Christ are rapidly tending.* Heaven, the heaven of heavens, the third heaven, paradise, the new Jerusalem, the city of God are some of the names by which the glory of the spirits of just men made perfect is shadowed forth. The glory of that blessed world is that the Lamb is the light thereof. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1Jo 3:2). Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phi 3:21). We shall be forever with the Lord (1Th 4:17).

5. *Hearty and universal submission and obedience to Christ are both reasonable and obligatory.* Submit we must, either joyfully unto salvation or reluctantly unto destruction...No cries for mercy will be more loud, no shrieks of anguish will be more piercing, no moanings of despair will be more heart-rending than those uttered at the last by men who all their lives made light of eternal things. If you are yet in your sins, one of two things is true: either your conscience is at perpetual and fearful war with your practice, or you have embraced some error that strips life of dignity and death of hope.

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CHRIST THE INTERCESSOR

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

INTERCESSORY prayer is the second element of [Christ's] priestly office, of which we read, "Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom 8:34); "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25); "...to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb 9:24); "We have an advocate¹ with the Father" (1Jo 2:1). Concerning His intercession, we must consider its necessity, nature, and efficacy.²

WE WILL FIRST CONSIDER ITS NECESSITY. Intercession is a task that belongs to Christ's high-priestly office: "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb 8:1). As High Priest, He is in heaven; as High Priest, He sits at the right hand of God. The task in which He engages Himself as High Priest is to appear before His Father on behalf of His elect, interceding for them. It is thus a task of Christ's high-priestly office to *intercede*. The matters for which He intercedes there are [these:]

(1) **All that which His elect are in need of in this life in order to enable them to walk in the way to heaven**—namely, the Holy Spirit Who illumines, comforts, and sanctifies them. This we observe in John 14:16-17: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth."

(2) **He intercedes for them so that they may perfectly possess salvation after this life.** "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (Joh 17:24). This is also confirmed in Hebrews 7:25: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

For men to be saved, it was not sufficient that by His suffering, death, and holiness He merited salvation; but it is also necessary that by means of His intercession He would *apply* salvation and make them actual partakers of it. This was typified in the Old Testament by the high priest, who was not finished after offering the sacrifice, but had to enter the Holy of Holies with blood in order to sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and burn incense. The Lord Jesus, being the antitype, likewise had to enter in with His own blood (Lev 16; Heb 9:12). This prerequisite³ was of such necessity that without it He could not be a high priest. "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest" (Heb 8:4). Had He not been a priest, there would be no salvation for the elect, for they must come to God and be saved by way of a

¹ **advocate** – one who appears in another's behalf; mediator; intercessor; helper.

² **efficacy** – power to produce a desired effect; effectiveness.

³ **prerequisite** – something that is required in order for something else to happen.

priest. For this reason, sacrifice and prayer are joined together. “It is Christ that died...who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:34); “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation⁴ for our sins” (1Jo 2:1-2). This necessity is also evident for the following reasons:

First, it is fitting to God that it be continually acknowledged that He has been despised by man, that His righteousness neither permits man to approach Him nor Him [to approach] man, except by an atoning Surety⁵ Who continually displays His atonement. He therefore “ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

Secondly, since God’s majesty had been despised, it could not be tolerated that He would come to man or even to the Surety, but rather that the Surety would come to Him, and that, so to speak, He would bring the ransom home and lay it down before His countenance.

Thirdly, in reference to man as well as to the gift of the Surety, God also wills that His free grace in the salvation of the sinner be displayed and ever be acknowledged: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). Therefore, although the sacrifice of Christ is perfect and is of an eternally atoning efficacy, it must nevertheless be applied by way of intercession. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest...Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:14, 16)...

Fourthly, it was also necessary in reference to the Lord Jesus Himself. He was Surety and could not be released from His Suretyship as long as His elect had not in actuality been made partakers of salvation. In order to prepare a place for the elect, however, and to lead them unto salvation, intercession necessarily had to occur (*cf.* Joh 17:24; Heb 7:25). Thus, the Lord Jesus must continue with His intercession until all His elect will have been gathered into heaven.

Fifthly, the [Father] also wills that the Lord Jesus be acknowledged as still being engaged to [the advantage of the elect], so that they would come to the throne by Him, and in coming would there find Him to be an Advocate Who brings their prayers before the Father (Rev 8:3-4)...It is necessary that the Surety continually display the atonement before the throne. Paul pointed to this in Romans 5:10: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” And why are we saved by His life? “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

THE SECOND THING THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO INTERCESSION IS THE MANNER IN WHICH HE PRAYS. First, even as Christ executed

⁴ **propitiation** – an appeasement; a sacrifice that turns away wrath.

⁵ **surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another.

the first element of His high-priestly office as Surety, that is, the sacrifice of His body, He likewise administers the second element of His office, that is, intercession, as Surety. He does not merely stand before the throne as a friend who speaks well on behalf of His people but stands there as Surety, Who has taken upon Himself to fully execute the salvation of His own. This is evident from Hebrews 7:22-25. In verse 22, the apostle expressly calls Him “surety.” He also speaks of Him as such in the subsequent verses: “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood” and “ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:24-25). Furthermore, since He executed the first aspect of His priestly office as God and man, the efficacy of His sacrifice being derived from His divine nature—from the divine Person—Christ must likewise be viewed as God and man in the second element of His priestly ministry. That the efficacy of His intercession is also derived from His Person, that is, from His divine nature, is demonstrated by the apostle in Hebrews 4:14, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” He is great, for He, being the Son of God, is equal to the Father. That is the critical point, and it is that which yields comfort and boldness...

Secondly, one must not think that Christ falls upon His knees there and prays with strong crying and tears (Heb 5:7). No, that was His engagement in His humiliation. His intercession, however, consists in His appearance in the sanctuary before the countenance of His Father with His blood, “that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:24). It consists in the demonstration of the efficacy of His suffering and death.

Thirdly, it consists in His efficacious will whereby, on the basis of the covenant, He demands the fulfillment of all the promises for His elect both in this life (Joh 17:15–17) and in the life to come. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 17:24). The Father gives Him license to make such demands by saying, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psa 2:8). The Father has promised Him this. “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa 53:10). This the Son demands.

Fourthly, His intercession consists in advocating and pleading the cause of His elect against all accusations made against them. The Apostle John therefore calls Him an Advocate (1Jo 2:1). This is confirmed by the apostle who says, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is Christ...who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:33-34). Since He is able to demonstrate that He has fully paid for each and every sin and has fulfilled the Law on their behalf by placing Him-

self under and being obedient to the Law, He concludes that there is no condemnation for His elect, but that they have a right to eternal felicity.⁶

Fifthly, it consists in presenting the prayers of His children that, through the Spirit of grace and supplication, have been offered in His name. Since they have been offered in His name, His merits must have such efficacy that their prayers are heard...

THE THIRD MATTER THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO INTERCESSION IS ITS EFFICACY. Such is evident for three reasons: First, there is the righteousness of the cause. Here, neither favoritism comes into play, nor is there a looking the other way, nor does Christ merely make a request. Rather, the matter that Christ pleads as Advocate is entirely just and is confirmed by superlative⁷ documentation. He appears on behalf of His elect with His paid ransom, which is so perfect that not one penny is lacking: "...he had by himself purged our sins" (Heb 1:3); "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:12). He has so completely fulfilled the Law on behalf of the elect that they are "the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21).⁸ The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us (Rom 8:4). This He demonstrates to His Father, and therefore this can only be followed by actual justification⁹ and the bestowal of the right to possess eternal felicity.

Secondly, the efficacy of His intercession is also evident from the relationship between God and the elect, which is as between a father and his children. The Lord Jesus prays for those whom the Father has loved with an everlasting love, accepted as His children, designated to be the objects of His grace and benevolence, and towards whom His heart is tenderly inclined. The Father is therefore desirous that someone would speak to Him on their behalf. How can this Advocate then possibly be rejected?

Thirdly, this efficacy is also evident from the Person Himself Who is the Advocate. He is the great High Priest (*cf.* Heb 4:14; 10:21). He is great in His Person, being coessential¹⁰ with the Father, and great is the friendship between Him and His Father. "For the Father loveth the Son" (Joh 5:20). With full acquiescence¹¹ and total delight He has become Surety. By an oath, He has been consecrated to His priestly office and has been obedient to His Father in all things, even unto the death upon the cross. The Father Himself says to Him, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee" (Psa 2:8). How can such an Intercessor possibly be rejected? Now con-

⁶ **felicity** – happiness.

⁷ **superlative** – surpassing all others; of the highest degree.

⁸ See FGB 191, *Imputed Righteousness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁹ See FGB 187, *Justification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁰ **coessential** – having the same essence or nature.

¹¹ **acquiescence** – acceptance and submission without protest.

sider all of these things together. As such a High Priest—the very Son of God Who as the one party in the covenant of redemption has submitted Himself willingly and obediently to everything—He represents the most righteous cause, which He can confirm by way of His passion and death and prove from His obedience to the Law. With all of this He pleads the cause of His elect, doing so before a gracious and benevolent Father on behalf of His beloved children and heirs. For these reasons, His intercession is efficacious to the superlative degree. It is thus most certain that it will prevail and the matter be given to His children. Yes, if Christ, while upon earth, was always heard (Joh 11:41-42), much more will He, now being in heaven, receive everything at His request.

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Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711): Dutch theologian representing the Dutch Second Reformation; born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



Many would admit Christ to be their advocate to plead for them,
but not their king to rule over them.—*Thomas Watson*

CHRIST THE KING

John Flavel (c. 1630-1691)

*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself
against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every
thought to the obedience of Christ.—2 Corinthians 10:5*

WE now come to the *regal* office by which our glorious Mediator executes and dischargeth the undertaken design of our redemption. Had He not, as our Prophet, opened the way of life and salvation to the children of men, they could never have known it. If they had clearly known it, except as their Priest He had offered up Himself to impetrate¹ and obtain redemption for them, they could not have been redeemed virtually by His blood. And if they had been so redeemed, yet had He not lived in the capacity of a King to apply this purchase of His blood to them, they could have had no actual, personal benefit by His death. For what He revealed as a Prophet, He purchased as a Priest; and what He so revealed and purchased as a Prophet and Priest, He applies as a King: first subduing the souls of His elect to His spiritual government, then ruling them as His subjects and ordering all things in the kingdom of Providence for their good...

DOCTRINE: *Jesus Christ exercises a kingly power over the souls of all whom the gospel subdues to His obedience.*

No sooner were the Colossians delivered out of the power of darkness, but they were immediately translated into the kingdom of Christ, the dear Son (Col 1:13). This kingdom of Christ, which is our present subject, is the internal spiritual kingdom, which is said to be within the saints. “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luk 17:20-21). Christ sits as an enthroned king in the hearts, consciences, and affections of His willing people (Psa 110:3). And His kingdom consists in “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17)...

FIRST, WE WILL OPEN THE WAY AND MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST OBTAINS A THRONE IN THE HEARTS OF MEN, AND THAT IS BY CONQUEST. For though the souls of the elect are His by donation and right of redemption, [and though] the Father gave them to Him and He died for them, yet Satan hath the first possession. And so it fares with Christ as it did with Abraham to whom God gave the land of Canaan by promise and covenant: the Canaanites, Perizites, and sons of Anak had the actual possession of it, and Abraham’s posterity must fight for it and win it by inches before they enjoy it. The house is conveyed to Christ by Him that built it,

¹ **to impetrate** – to obtain by request or entreaty.

but the strong man armed keeps the possession of it until a stronger than he comes and ejects him (Luk 11:20-22). Christ must fight His way into the soul, though He has a right to enter, as into His dearly purchased possession. And so He doth; for when the time of recovering them is come, He sends forth His armies to subdue them, as it is [in] Psalm 110:3: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” The Hebrew may as fitly be rendered, and [it] is by some, “in the day of thine armies,” when the Lord Jesus sent forth His armies of prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, under the conduct of His Spirit, armed with that two-edged sword, the Word of God, which is sharp and powerful (Heb 4:12). But that is not all:

He causes armies of convictions and spiritual troubles to begird and straiten² them on every side, so that they know not what to do. These convictions, like a shower of arrows, strike point-blank into their consciences. “When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Act 2:37). Christ’s arrows are sharp in the hearts of His enemies, whereby the people fall under Him (Psa 45:5-6). By these convictions, He batters down all their loose vain hopes and levels them with the earth.

Now all their weak pleas and defenses, from the general mercy of God, the example of others, etc., prove but as paper walls to them. These shake their hearts, even to the very foundation and overturn every high thought there that exalts itself against the Lord. This day, in which Christ sits down before the soul and summons it by such messengers as these, is a day of distress within—yea, such a day of trouble that none is like it! But though it be so, yet Satan hath so deeply entrenched himself in the mind and will that the soul yields not at the first summons, until its provisions within are spent and all its towers of pride and walls of vain confidence be undermined by the gospel and shaken down about its ears! *Then* the soul desires [negotiation] with Christ. O now it would be glad of terms, *any terms*, if it may but save its life: let all go as a prey to the conqueror. Now it sends many such messengers as these to Christ, Who is come now to the very gates of the soul: “Mercy, Lord, mercy! O were I but assured thou wouldest receive, spare, and pardon me, I would open to thee the next moment!” Thus, the soul is “shut up unto the faith” [of Christ] (Gal 3:23) and reduced to the greatest strait and loss imaginable.

And now the merciful King, Whose only design is to conquer the heart, hangs forth the white flag of mercy before the soul, giving it hope it shall be spared, pitied, and pardoned, though so long in rebellion against Him, if yet it will yield itself to Christ. Many staggerings, hesitations, irresolutions,³ doubts, fears, scru-

² **begird and straiten** – encircle and hem in closely.

³ **irresolutions** – doubts concerning two or more courses of action; indecisions.

ples,⁴ half-resolves, reasonings for and against there are at the council table of man's own heart at this time. Sometimes there is no hope: "Christ will slay me, if I go forth to Him," and then it trembles. But then, who ever found Him so that tried Him? Other souls have yielded and found mercy beyond all their expectations. "O but I have been a desperate enemy against Him." Admit it, yet thou hast the word of a King for it: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7).

"But the time of mercy is past; I have stood out too long! Yet if it [is] so, how is it that Christ hath not made short work and cut me off—set fire, *hell fire*, to my soul and withdrawn the siege?" Still He waiteth that He may be gracious and is exalted that He may have compassion. A thousand such debates there are, until, at last, the soul considering [that] if it abides in rebellion, it must needs perish. If it goes forth to Christ, it can but perish. And being somewhat encouraged by the messages of grace sent into the soul at this time, such as, "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him" (Heb 7:25); and, "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out" (Joh 6:37); and, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28), it is at last resolved to open to Christ and saith, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Psa 24:7).

Now, the will spontaneously opens to Christ! That royal fort submits and yields; all the affections open to Him. The will brings Christ the keys of all the rooms in the soul...The rocky heart rends in two. A poor soul comes into the Word, full of ignorance, pride, self-love, desperate hardness, and fixed resolutions to go on in its way; and by an hour's discourse, the tide turns..."What aileth thee, thou stout will, that thou surrenderest to Christ—thou hard heart that thou relentest and the waters gush out?" Thus, the soul is won to Christ: He writes down His terms, and the soul willingly subscribes [to] them. Thus, it comes in to Christ by free and hearty submission, desiring nothing more than to come under the government of Christ for the time to come.

SECONDLY, LET US SEE HOW CHRIST RULES IN THE SOULS OF SUCH AS SUBMIT TO HIM. He exerts His kingly authority over them in six things:

1. He imposes a new law upon them and enjoins them to be severe and punctual in their obedience to it. The soul was a Belialite⁵ before and could endure no restraint: its lusts gave it laws. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Ti 3:3). Whatever the flesh craved and the sensual appetite whined after, it must have, cost what it would. If damnation were the price of it, it would have it, provided it should not be present pay. Now, it

⁴ **scruples** – hesitations from the difficulties of determining what is right.

⁵ **Belialite** – son of the devil.

must not be any longer without law to God, but under law to Christ. Those are the articles of peace that the soul willingly subscribes in the day of its admission to mercy: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Mat 11:29). This “law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). Here is much strictness, but no *bondage*; for the law is not only written in Christ’s statute book, the Bible, but copied out by His Spirit upon the hearts of His subjects in correspondent principles. [This] makes obedience a pleasure and self-denial easy. Christ’s yoke is lined with love, so that it never galls the necks of His people...

2. He rebukes and chastises souls for the violations and transgressions of His law. That is another act of Christ’s regal authority: “Whom he loves he rebukes and chastens” (Heb 12:6-7). These chastisements of Christ are either by the rod of *providence* upon their bodies and outward comforts or upon their *spirits* and inward comforts. Sometimes His rebukes are smart upon the outward man: “For this cause, many among you are weakly and sick, and many sleep” (1Co 11:30). They had not that due regard to His body [*in the Lord’s Supper*] that [was appropriate for them], and He will make their bodies smart for it. And He had rather their flesh should smart, than their souls should perish. Sometimes He spared their outward and afflicts their inner man, which is a much smarter rod. He withdraws peace and takes away joy from the spirits of His people. The hidings of His face are sore rebukes. However, all is for [correction], not for destruction. And it is not the least privilege of Christ’s subjects to have a seasonable and sanctified rod to reduce them from the ways of sin: “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me” (Psa 23:3). Others are suffered to go on stubbornly in the way of their own hearts: Christ will not spend a rod upon them for their good, will not call them to account for any of their transgressions, but will reckon with them for all together in hell.

3. Another regal act of Christ is the restraining and keeping back His servants from iniquity and withholding them from those courses that their own hearts would incline and lead them to. For even in them, there is a spirit bent to back-sliding; but the Lord in tenderness over them keeps back their souls from iniquity, and that when they are upon the very brink of sin: “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped” (Psa 73:2). Then doth the Lord prevent sin by removing the occasion providentially or by helping them to resist the temptation, graciously assisting their spirits in the trial, so that no temptation shall befall them. [Yet He opens] a way of escape that they may be able to bear it (1Co 10:13). Thus, His people have frequent occasions to bless His name for His preventing goodness, when they are almost in the midst of all evil. And this I take to be the meaning of Galatians 5:16: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,” [*i.e.*,] “Tempted by them, you may be; but fulfill them,

ye shall not. My spirit shall cause the temptation to die and wither away in the womb, in the embryo of it, so that it shall not come to a full birth.”

4. He protects them in His ways and suffers them not to relapse from Him into a state of sin and bondage to Satan any more. Indeed, Satan is restless in his endeavors to reduce them again to his obedience. He never leaves tempting and soliciting for their return; and where he finds a false professor, he prevails; but Christ keeps His that they depart not again. “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition” (Joh 17:12). They are “kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation” (1Pe 1:5). Kept, as in a garrison, according to the importance of that word. None [are] more solicited, none more safe than the people of God! They are “preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude 1). It is not their own grace that secures them, but Christ’s care and continual watchfulness ... This is His covenant with them: “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” (Jer 32:4). Thus, as a king He preserves them.

5. As a king, He rewards their obedience and encourages their sincere service. Though all they do for Christ be duty, yet He hath united their comfort with their duty: “This I had, because I kept thy precepts” (Psa 119:56). They are engaged to take this encouragement with them to every duty: He Whom they seek “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). O what a good Master do the saints serve!

6. He pacifies all inward troubles and commands peace when their spirits are tumultuous. This “peace of God” rules in their hearts (Col 3:15)... When the tumultuous affections are up and in a hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this hushes and stills all. “I will hear (saith the Church) what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints” (Psa 85:8). He that saith to the raging sea, “Be still,” and it obeys Him; He only can pacify the disquieted spirit... These are Christ’s regal acts. He puts them forth upon the souls of His people powerfully, sweetly, suitably.

(1) **Powerfully:** Whether He restrains from sin or impels to duty, He doth it with a soul determining [effectiveness]: for “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1Co 4:20). And those whom His Spirit leads, go bound in the spirit to the fulfilling and discharge of their duties (Act 20:22). And yet,

(2) **He rules not by compulsion, but *most sweetly*.** His law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The Church is the Lamb’s wife (Rev 19:7). “A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench” (Isa 42:2-3). “I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” saith the apostle (2Co 10:1). For He delighteth in *free*, not in forced obedience. He rules *children*, not slaves; and so His kingly power is mixed with *fatherly love*. His yoke is not made of iron, but [of] *gold*.

(3) **He rules them suitably to their natures in a rational way.** “I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love” (Hos 11:4), *i.e.*, in a way proper to convince their reason and work upon their [intellectual capacity]. Thus, His eternal kingdom is administered by His Spirit, Who is His vicegerent⁶ in our hearts.

From “The Fountain of Life” in *The Works of John Flavel*, Vol. 1,
The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.



⁶ **vicegerent** – a person appointed by a ruler to act as an administrative deputy.

CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM

A. A. Hodge (1823-1886)

THAT the office of Mediator between God and sinful men must include the function of kingly dominion and control is self-evident. Christ's functions as Prophet and Priest would have been ineffective without it. That the promised Messiah of the Old Testament was to be a King and that the historical incarnate God of the New Testament actually is a King in the highest sense are witnessed to by almost every page of the whole Bible.

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Num 24:17). "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). I have "set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa 2:6, 8-9). "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days...And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14). The angel Gabriel, in the annunciation to the Virgin Mary, said, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luk 1:31-33). The universality and pre-eminence and absoluteness of His kingly authority is expressed in the Revelation when it is declared that the Lamb is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 17:14) ...The title which spontaneously springs to the lips of all men, even of the indifferent stranger, but with infinitely more meaning from the lips of all who have been made recipients of His love, is LORD—Jesus, Possessor, Master, Sovereign. It is universal over all, dominating the highest as well as the lowest, comprehending and bending to its own sway all lower authority and power—King of kings. It is absolute in all, knowing no limit in soul or body, in time or eternity—absolutely owning, possessing, and disposing to His own uses all we are and all we possess, each thing entirely, and all things in all relations.

1. And all this is predicated of Him not merely as God, but as God-man in His work as Mediator between God and man. As the second Person of the Trinity, equal in power and glory to the eternal Father, the Word of God possesses an ab-

solite, inherent sovereign dominion as King over the whole universe. This authority is intrinsic,¹ underived,² inalienable, and is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). During all the years of the earthly life of the God-man, alike while an unconscious babe in the manger and while hanging a dying victim on the cross, the eternal Son of God was exercising His sovereign dominion over the entire universe.

But in His office as Mediator, and in His entire Person after the incarnation as God-man, He was constituted a King by the authority of the entire Godhead as represented in the Father. His mediatorial sovereignty is...given to Him by the Father as the reward of His obedience and suffering. “He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:7-11). This authority, thus bestowed upon Him by the Father, is special, having particular reference to the salvation of His own people, and, to that end, to the administration of all the provisions of the covenant of grace,³ of which He is the gracious executive. It attaches not to His divine nature exclusively, but to His entire Person as the God-man. A MAN sits upon the mediatorial throne of the universe. He Who stood insulted, despised, condemned at Pilate’s judgment seat, now sitting at the right hand of God, rules all worlds, as He will hereafter, seated on the great white throne, judge all men. Our blood Brother according to the flesh has “all power in heaven and in earth,” that He may make “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28). The attributes of both the divine and the human nature are together exercised in the administration of this kingly reign. All His kingly acts are infinitely wise, righteous, and powerful because He is God. But they are at the same time the acts of a man. They possess a truly human quality; for in all His administration, He has a feeling for our infirmities as well as an eye for our interests.

2. Christ is already a King upon His throne in the full sweep of His kingly administration. As the eternal Word, of course, He has been Mediator between God and sinful man ever since the fall of Adam. Otherwise, the sentence of the law must have been unconditionally executed immediately upon the apostasy. Ever since, we have been living—and human history has been evolved—under a system

¹ **intrinsic** – belonging to something as a basic and essential feature of what it is.

² **underived** – not obtained from another source.

³ **Covenant of Grace** – God’s gracious, eternal purpose of redemption, conceived before the creation of the world, first announced in Genesis 3:15, progressively revealed in history, accomplished in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and appropriated by faith in Him.

of forbearance involving an arrest of judgment. This was, of course, possible only as the human family has existed under the protection of a divine and competent Mediator. All the functions of the mediatorial office mutually imply one another. If He were “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8), He must have been a Prophet before Moses, a Priest before Aaron, and a King before David. He was in these respects their predecessor and the ground from which they sprang, as well as their successor and antitype.⁴ A close inspection shows that the Jehovah of the Old Testament, Who is also called the Angel of or the one sent by Jehovah, is the second Person of the Trinity, as is declared by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (*cf.* Psa 45:6-7; Heb 1:8-9; Gen 31:11, 13, 48:15-16 with Hos 12:2-5; Exo 3:1-14 with Act 7:30-35).

He reigned over all human affairs, as the biblical history relates. He gave the Law from Sinai, including the entire ceremonial ritual, as well as the Ten Commandments. He brought Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness and established them in the Holy Land “with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders” (Deu 26:8). He fought their battles with the Philistines; established His types and representatives, David and Solomon, upon their temporary, symbolical thrones; and He directed the entire course of human history to the consummation of the fullness of times in preparation for His own advent in the flesh.

But, on the other hand, in the strictest sense we must date the actual and formal assumption of His kingly office in the full and visible exercise thereof from the moment of His ascension into heaven from this earth and His session at the right hand of the Father. He could not have actually entered upon His kingly office as the God-man before He had become both God and man in the one Person through His incarnation. His function as Priest in a sense precedes His function as a King, as well as acts together with it. His atonement is the foundation of His royal right to His people and His royal administration in their behalf. When He was announced, it was declared, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 3:2). He was received by His disciples and rejected by the Jews as one claiming to be a king. Pilate wrote the title of His kingship in three languages and attached it to His cross. “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb 10:12-13). His kingly office is essentially the royal dispensation of grace by Him as a Savior. In order that this may be universally and infallibly effectual and complete, He declares that now “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,” and He founds on this His great commission to His Church: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Mat 28:18-19). And Peter on the great Day of Pentecost declared that when the prophet David recorded the sworn promise of

⁴ **antitype** – person or thing represented by a type or symbol.

God to raise up Christ to sit upon the throne, He spake of the resurrection of Christ: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Act 2:32-33, 36).

3. The present mediatorial kingdom of the God-man is universal, embracing the whole universe and every department of it...This truth, nevertheless, is just as plainly and as certainly taught in the New Testament as any other article of our faith. In Psalm 8, God declares His purpose to put all things under the feet of man. This purpose Paul declares was fulfilled in Christ "when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:20-23). He declared to His disciples, as the ground of the commission He gave to them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mat 28:18). In Philipians 2:9-10, Paul says, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." This absolutely and exhaustively includes the whole universe in all its categories of heaven, earth, and hell, just as the passage in Ephesians includes all duration, the... world-age, which now is and that which is to come. And this is repeated and emphasized in the most forceful language in Hebrews 2:8: "For in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him"; and in 1Corinthians 15:27, He only "is excepted which did put all things under him"—that is, absolutely all things but God the Father...

Theologians have accordingly made a distinction, designed to classify the different aspects and methods of this vast administration of royal power, between Christ's kingdoms of *power*, of *grace*, and of *glory*. These, of course, are not [entirely] different realms or spheres of government, since the kingdom of power includes the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of grace precedes and prepares the way for the kingdom of glory. They are rather different methods of working and different special systems of administration, all comprehended in His universal reign as King.

I. CHRIST'S KINGDOM OF POWER: This is the providential reign of the God-man over the whole universe in the interests of His mediatorial work as Redeemer of His own people. The universe in all its provinces, material and spiritual, constitutes one system. The certain attainment of any end, the absolute control of any

single department, necessarily involves the control and the coordinate administration of all the parts.

1. Hence, Christ's universal kingdom of power must include, in the first instance, His providential control of the [entire] physical universe. The physical universe is the necessary basis of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual world. The higher cannot be adequately governed unless the lower is controlled. The laws of matter and the order of the material world remain the same as before, and no change takes place that can be discovered by science. Nevertheless, the glorious fact is that the God-man, as mediatorial King, has, during the present...world-age, brought the whole mechanism of the material universe [under His command] as means to secure the establishment of His mediatorial kingdom. He guides the marshaled hosts of heaven to that supreme result. The great currents of all the world-forces are directed to that end. The sweet influences of the Pleiades obey His voice, and the bands of Orion are in His hands. It is not the God absolute, but it is our kinsman Redeemer, the man who is also God, Who orders the courses of the stars; "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Psa 147:8-9); Who numbereth all the hairs of our head (Mat 10:30); and will not allow any plague to come nigh our dwelling (Psa 91:10).

2. Christ's mediatorial kingdom of power includes the universal moral government of God over all His intelligent creatures. The moral government of God over the human family constitutes only one province of the immeasurable empire. Angels, devils, and whatever intelligent creatures may exist in other worlds must constitute one systematic moral whole with the human race. The entire moral empire of God must be governed on the same general principles of righteousness. The will of God must be the common rule of all, His love their common motive, His glory their common end, His fellowship their common goal. Christ in this widest sense is King of kings and Lord of lords. God hath appointed His Son "heir of all things." He is placed "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph 1:21). All in heaven and all on earth who are to bow at the name of Jesus, include all rational creatures. And all men and angels are to be gathered to His judgment seat. The devils "are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

He exercises this universal moral government providentially in various ways, according to the various characters and conditions of His subjects, but always upon the same principles of essential righteousness. He employs angels as ministering spirits for His people at present, and He will employ them as His executive agents in the siftings of the great judgment. He restrains and controls the action of the devil and his angels, the spirits of the power of the air. He controls all

events for the good of His people. Especially, He directs events to the end of effecting their complete discipline and education, and consequent preparation for the enjoyment of His glory. The end is the complete redemption of His people. But in order to secure this, all the members of the human family in their successive generations and in their various family and national groups must be dealt with as subjects of the same government. During the present world-age it is not God absolute, but our kinsman Redeemer, the God-man, Who is the Lord, “the Governor among the nations.” He speaks with authority to every conscience. He has a supreme right to control for His own ends the service of every life. He orders every political and social event, and the entire evolution of civilization and associated human activity, to the accomplishment of His supreme end. And at the close, every tribe, people, and tongue shall stand to be judged before His throne and to have its destiny fixed by His decree.

II. CHRIST’S KINGDOM OF GRACE. This spiritual kingdom, which is the special care of Christ, for the sake of which His government of the universe is undertaken, respects, *first*, His own spiritual people individually, and, *second*, His professed people collectively organized in the visible Church.

1. Christ reigns over His own individually, both from without and from within. From *without*, He subdues His and their enemies, restraining Satan, his angels, and wicked men. He strengthens them in weakness, defends them in danger, directs and co-operates with them in action, and gives them ultimately the victory in all their contests, and causes them always to persevere to the end that they may receive the crown of life. He also, under the inspiration of His Spirit, brings His spiritual people into sympathy with one another and stimulates and guides the great currents of sympathy...[and] all the various functions in which is manifested the “communion of saints.”

From *within*, the God-man reigns supreme in every Christian heart. It is impossible to [trust] Christ as our Sacrifice and Priest without at the same time cordially [trusting] Him as our Prophet, absolutely submitting our understanding to His teaching and accepting Him as our King, submitting implicitly our hearts and wills and lives to His sovereign control. Paul delights to call himself the *doulos*, purchased servant, of Jesus Christ. Every Christian spontaneously calls Him our Lord Jesus. His will is our law, His love our motive, His glory our end. To obey His will, to work in His service, to fight His battles, to triumph in His victories is our whole life and joy.

2. Christ’s kingdom of grace also embraces His visible Church. Although the true Church is constituted simply by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and although no organization is essential to its being or coextensive with its existence, nevertheless Christ wills that His true Church shall, for great practical ends, tend always spontaneously to organize itself in some form. Its forms are very various,

determined in their differences by providential conditions; and they are of very different excellence; yet they are all, whether better or worse, forms of the true Church...And Christ alone is the legitimate Head of this visible Church in any of its forms whatsoever. He has appointed no vicegerent. He has forbidden His servants to be called rabbi or master (Mat 23:9-10). He pronounces a curse upon those who lord it over His heritage, whether national sovereigns, universal patriarchs, or popes. He has in His inspired Word and through His ever-indwelling Spirit provided for the government of this Church through all ages. He has therein ordained the conditions of membership, the laws, and offices...We are not bound to believe any doctrine or to fulfill any duty that He has not clearly revealed in His Word. The disciples of Christ are the Lord's freemen, discharged from all human bondage because they are bound to render absolute obedience to Him alone...

Christ declared that His kingdom is “not of this world”—that it is not one kingdom associated with the other kingdoms, with like organizations, laws, methods of administration, and ends. But it is a *spiritual* kingdom, embracing and interpenetrating all others, so different in method and ends from them that it cannot, when loyal to its Head, interfere with any of them or enter into organic alliance with any of them. Its Head, members, laws, officers, methods, penalties, and rewards and ends are not of this world, but are spiritual—that is, they are revealed and applied by the Holy Ghost; and they bring man into relation to the great world of spiritual realities which is revealed in the Scriptures.

III. CHRIST'S KINGDOM OF GLORY. During the present age Christ is set forth principally as a conquering Captain, reigning at the head of His militant host, the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10), the conqueror of His and our enemies, and the subduer of the world (Rev 19:11-16). But hereafter the Scriptures reveal a final consummation, when Christ's kingdom shall be complete in all its members, and shall be developed to its perfect state—when all the redeemed shall be gathered, the crisis of judgment past, the glorified bodies of the saints reunited to their perfected spirits: then “shall the Son of man sit in the throne of his glory,” and “there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev 22:3-4).

From “Christ the King” in *Evangelical Theology*, The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886): American Presbyterian theologian, born in Princeton, Mercer, New Jersey.



CHRIST FOREVERMORE

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

THERE is approaching a period—ah, how it speeds!—that will be the most solemn and severe, yet the sweetest and truest test of the sustaining, soothing power of Christ’s preciousness in the experience of His saints: *the last sickness and the closing scene of life*. Imagine that moment to have arrived. All of earth’s attraction ceases, all of creature-succor fails. Everything is failing—heart and strength failing, mental power failing, medical skill failing, human affection and sympathy failing. The film of death is on the eye, and the invisible realities of the spirit-world are unveiling to the mental view.

Bending over you, the loved one who has accompanied you to the margin of the cold river asks a sign. You are too weak to conceive a thought, too low to breathe a word, too absorbed to bestow a responsive glance. You cannot now [declare] your faith in an elaborate creed, and you have no profound experience, ecstatic emotions, or heavenly visions to describe. One brief, but all-emphatic, all-expressive sentence embodies the amount of all that you now know, believe, and feel. It is the profession of your faith, the sum of your experience, the ground of your hope—“Christ is precious to my soul!”

Enough! The dying Christian can give and the inquiring friend can wish no more. Dearest Savior, be Thou close to me in that solemn moment! Tread the valley by my side, pillow my [faint, weary] head upon Thy bosom, speak these words of heart-cheer to my struggling, panting, departing soul, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee” (Isa 41:10)—then, it will be happiness for me to die. Death will have no venom, the grave no gloom, eternity no dread. And, from the measured experience of Thy preciousness on earth, I shall pass in triumph through the shadowy portal into the full sunshine and perfect realization and eternal enjoyment of all that faith believed and love desired and hope expected of Thy full-orbed glory and preciousness in heaven. “In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11).

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Trust your souls with Jesus, and your souls are saved. He suffered in the room, place, and stead of all that trust Him.—*Charles Spurgeon*