Jesus Christ was both the Son of God and the Son of Man; He was both human and divine. As both man and God, what was His role on earth? The Bible reveals that Jesus fulfilled at least three roles: He was “Prophet, Priest, and King.” We want to investigate the significance of those three roles.

JESUS CHRIST WAS, AND IS, A PROPHET

The Law foretold the coming of a great prophet. Moses said,

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. . . . The Lord said to me, “. . . I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:15–19).

Because of this prophecy, the Jews in Jesus’ day were looking forward to the coming of a specific prophet, the Prophet like Moses. When the priests and Levites were trying to find out who John the Baptist was, they asked him, “Are you the Prophet?” (John 1:21; emphasis mine).

The apostles preached that Jesus was not just a prophet; rather, He was the Prophet like Moses. In Acts 3 Peter was preaching about Jesus (3:13), “the Holy and Righteous One” (3:14), “the Prince of life” (3:15), “the Christ appointed for you” (3:20). He identified Jesus as the Prophet predicted by Moses (3:22, 23).

During His lifetime, Jesus was sometimes recognized as the Prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy. After He had fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, the people said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14). When some heard Jesus teach in the temple, they responded, “This certainly is the Prophet” (John 7:40).

Even those who would not acknowledge that Jesus was the Prophet like Moses recognized Him as a prophet.1

- After Jesus demonstrated His miraculous knowledge to the woman at the well, she said, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet” (John 4:19).
- When Jesus raised the young man of Nain from the dead, people exclaimed, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” (Luke 7:16).
- After Jesus had healed a man born blind, that man replied to the question “What do you say about Him . . . ?” with the words “He is a prophet” (John 9:17).
- When Jesus asked the apostles whom others said He was, they replied, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets” (Matthew 16:14).

1Why did the people recognize Jesus as a prophet? He proclaimed the word of God with authority. He also performed miracles, as some of the prophets in the Old Testament had done, and He exhibited miraculous knowledge (see Matthew 9:4; John 4:19; Luke 7:39) like that displayed by some of the Old Testament prophets.
As Jesus triumphantly entered the city of Jerusalem, some asked “Who is this?” and others answered, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee” (Matthew 21:10, 11).

After Jesus’ resurrection, He encountered two of His disciples who were discussing “the things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people” (Luke 24:19).

If we might have any question about Jesus’ being a prophet, He Himself resolved it. He acknowledged that He was a prophet when He said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household” (Matthew 13:57).

All the evidence we have about Jesus supports that He was indeed a prophet, but how is Jesus’ being a prophet significant? What did it mean to people when He lived on the earth, and what does it mean to us today?

**Jesus Spoke for God**

As a prophet, Jesus Christ came from God and spoke for Him. Throughout the Old Testament, the prophet’s role was to serve as God’s spokesman. Consequently, the message of the prophet was always “Thus says the Lord!”

Jesus Himself claimed to speak for God, saying, “I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world” (John 8:26). God acknowledged Jesus as His spokesman when He said at the time of Jesus’ transfiguration, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5b). In addition, the writer of Hebrews testified, “God, after He spoke long ago in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

**We Must Listen to Him**

Since Jesus is our Prophet, we must hear what He says to us! Jesus’ words were not just the teachings of another wise man; they were the very words of God! His message came from heaven! To fail to hear and heed that message is, therefore, to refuse to hear the Lord God, who said, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” (Mark 9:7).

**JESUS CHRIST WAS, AND IS, A PRIEST**

The Book of Hebrews proclaims that Jesus is our High Priest. Again and again, the writer emphasized that fact:

... consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (3:1).

... we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God . . . (4:14).

So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest . . . being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:5–10).

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (8:1).

... Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come . . . (9:11).

Christ’s Priesthood was similar to that of the high priests under the law of Moses in several ways. Just as the high priests under the law were appointed as priests by God, so was Christ (Hebrews 5:4, 5); and just as the priests under the old covenant offered “gifts and sacrifices,” so did Christ (Hebrews 8:3).

However, Hebrews draws a clear contrast between Christ and the high priests of the Mosaic dispensation:

1. They were not sympathetic, but Christ can sympathize with us (4:15).
2. They were descendants of Levi, but Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek (7:15).
3. They were priests because of a legal requirement, but Christ became a priest by the power of an indestructible life (7:16).
4. They became priests without an oath,
but He was made a priest with an oath (7:20, 21).

5. Their priesthood was temporary, but Christ’s is permanent (7:23, 24).

6. They were sinful, but He is sinless (7:27).

7. They offered sacrifices of animals, but Christ offered Himself (9:12).

8. They had a ministry that served as a shadow of the good things to come (Hebrews 10:1); Christ is the High Priest of the good things that have come (9:11).

9. They offered sacrifices daily, but Christ offered a sacrifice only once (10:11, 12).

Outside the Book of Hebrews, other New Testament writings speak of Christ’s priestly activities in other terms. Paul wrote, “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). John said, “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

**Jesus Represents Man to God**

The role of the priests was to represent man to God. While the prophet proclaimed God’s word to the people and so represented God to man, the priest interceded on behalf of man to God. Under the old covenant, the priests did so by presenting sacrifices to appease God’s wrath. Jesus Christ did the same, giving Himself as a sacrifice for man’s sins to satisfy the demands of God’s justice. In addition to that sacrifice, Jesus continues to intercede on our behalf before the throne of God. Hebrews 7:25 says, “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

For Christians today, the fact that Christ is our “merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God” (Hebrews 2:17) is good news. Even better news is that He is our sympathetic High Priest. We read,

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

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

We can rejoice that our High Priest, who intercedes with God on our behalf, knows what it is like to suffer, to be tempted, and to be human!

**He Gives Us Confidence**

With Jesus as our sympathetic High Priest, we can approach God with confidence. Hebrews 4:16 puts it this way:

> Therefore [because Christ is our high priest] let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Christ not only speaks to us from God as God’s prophet, but He also speaks for us to God as our Intercessor. Let us take advantage of His intercession by constantly drawing near to God’s throne with confidence, believing that God will—through Christ’s intercession—hear our prayers and meet our needs.

**JESUS CHRIST WAS, AND IS, A KING**

The prophets had long predicted the coming of a divine king. God promised that He would place David’s descendant on his throne and that his throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12–16). The prophets fleshed out that promise. Isaiah said, “Behold, a king will reign righteously” (Isaiah 32:1). He also prophesied,

> For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness . . . (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

**Jesus Is the Prophesied King**

The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy concerning the king who would sit on David’s throne. The angel Gabriel revealed to Mary, concerning the child to whom she would give birth:

> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:32, 33).
Jesus was, in fact, recognized as a king—while He lived, at His death, and after His ascension. According to Matthew 2:2, the wise men who were looking for Jesus asked, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” John 12:13 says that as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, the crowd shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” In John 18:37 we read that, when Pilate asked, “So You are a king?” Jesus stated, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world.”

Above the cross, soldiers placed Pilate’s sign that said, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Matthew 27:37).

According to Colossians 1:13, Christians have been “transferred . . . to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” In Revelation, John described Christ, the Lamb of God, as “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14).

We Must Obey Him

As our King, Jesus has the right to command us. He has all authority (Matthew 28:18) and requires our obedience to His commands (Matthew 7:21). If we refuse to obey, we will be punished. Paul wrote that Christ will return “in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8; emphasis mine).

The King’s obedient subjects enjoy His protection. The kingdom into which Christians have been transferred cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28). We are ruled by a King who cannot be defeated! Let us hold our heads high, for we are followers of the greatest King in the universe, the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15)! While we can rejoice in this relationship, we must not forget to bow submissively before the King and seek to do His will in every way, and so avoid His wrath.

CONCLUSION

Christ’s role is threefold: He is Prophet, Priest, and King. As the foretold Prophet, He has spoken to us for God. We must listen to Him! As our Priest, He intercedes for us. We can approach God confidently through Him. As King, He commands His kingdom, which will ultimately triumph and will exist forever. We must respect and obey our King.

How do you see Jesus Christ? If you fail to see Him in His roles as Prophet, Priest, and King, you cannot fully appreciate what He does for you. More important, you will not understand how to respond to Him correctly. Will you listen to Him as our Prophet from God? Will you be able to embrace the benefits of having Him as your High Priest? Will you enjoy the blessings of being in His kingdom? He offers you the opportunity to be transferred into that kingdom which offers “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13, 14).

To know the joy of being in Christ’s kingdom, accept His teaching and obey His commands. You are commanded to believe in Jesus (see John 8:24) and confess your faith in Him as God’s Son (Matthew 10:32), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16).

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