

JESUS THE MESSIAH AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

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ABSTRACT

Ever since John Calvin popularized the view that Jesus was the first person to fulfill the three roles of prophet, priest, and king, this view has been a commonplace in biblical studies. This article demonstrates that Jesus was not the first to fulfill the three roles. Several Old Testament characters did, although not always in an official office. In Jesus, the three functions are realized in perfection. Each of the earlier persons was a type of the coming Messiah.

THE PERSPECTIVE THAT THE MESSIAH fulfills the three offices of prophet, priest, and king has a long and continuing legacy in the history of biblical interpretation.¹ The London Baptist Confession (1689), for instance, puts it this way: “This office of mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God; and may not be either in whole, or any part thereof, transferred from him to any other.”² John Calvin is often credited with popularizing this view, alt-

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¹ Joel Beeke writes, “He is your Prophet to teach you; your Priest to sacrifice for, intercede for, and bless you; and your King to rule and guide you.” Joel Beeke, “Jesus’ Threefold Office as Prophet, Priest, and King,” Ligonier Ministries, February 1, 2019, <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/jesus-threefold-office-prophet-priest-and-king/>.

² “The London Confession of Faith,” 8.9, accessed February 1, 2019, <http://www.reformedreader.org/cc/1689/bc/english/Chapter08.htm>. “This number and order of offices is necessary; for in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of his prophetic office; and in respect of our alienation from God, and imperfection of the best of our services, we need his priestly office to reconcile us and present us

though he was not the first to make the observation.³ Berkhof writes, “While some of the early Church Fathers already speak of the different offices of Christ, Calvin was the first to recognize the importance of distinguishing the three offices of the Mediator and to call attention to it in a separate chapter of his *Institutes*.”⁴ Here is Calvin’s claim: “Therefore, that faith may find a firm basis of salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be prophet, king, and priest.”⁵

These three functions figure prominently in the biblical story, from the Old through the New Testament books.⁶ Both the functions and individuals in narrative texts who hold the office can be seen as types of the Messiah. Other texts predict a messianic prophet, priest, or king. This article will argue that although there are many prophets, priests, and kings in the Scriptures, several characters in the Old Testament are particularly significant as types of the Messiah.⁷ Each of these explicitly and implicitly point forward to the fulfillment in the perfect antitype, Jesus the Christ. Berkhof concludes, “Hence it was necessary that Christ, as our

acceptable unto God: and in respect to our averseness and utter inability to return to God, and for our rescue and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom” (8.10).

³ Eusebius seems to be the first to have observed this: “And a proof of this is that no one of those who were of old symbolically anointed, whether priests, or kings, or prophets, possessed so great a power of inspired virtue as was exhibited by our Saviour and Lord Jesus, the true and only Christ.” Eusebius, *Church History*, 1.3.7–9, accessed February 1, 2019, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.vi.iii.html>.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 356.

⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.15.1, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 494. Calvin continues, “The title ‘Christ’ pertains to these three offices: for we know that under the law prophets as well as priests and kings were anointed with holy oil. . . . I recognize that Christ was called Messiah especially with respect to, and by virtue of his kingship. Yet his anointings as prophet and as priest have their place and must not be overlooked by us” (2.15.2).

⁶ Breshears muses: “Traditionally, theologians follow Calvin in speaking of the work of Christ in terms of three OT offices that relate to God and man. . . . One wonders why other offices are not considered. Judge, warrior, shepherd and sage are all possibilities.” Gerry Breshears, “The Body of Christ: Prophet, Priest, or King?,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (March 1994): 5. There are many possible explanations; perhaps prophet, priest, and king include these others.

⁷ Walvoord writes, “Latent in the Old Testament is a rich treasury of Christological truth in the form of biblical types.” John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 62.

Mediator, should be prophet, priest, and king. As Prophet He represents God with man; as Priest He represents man in the presence of God, and as King He exercises dominion and restores the original dominion of man.”⁸

FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICES

PROPHET

A prophet speaks for God. Primarily, the prophet speaks to God’s people, but he or she often speaks to nonbelievers and even to creation. The first person designated as a prophet in the Scriptures is Abraham (Gen 20:7), but “OT prophecy received its normative form in the life and person of Moses, who constituted a standard of comparison for all future prophets.”⁹

A clear description of the prophetic function is seen in Exodus 7:1–2: “The LORD answered Moses, ‘See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet. You must say whatever I command you; then Aaron your brother must declare it to Pharaoh so that he will let the Israelites go from his land.’” Moses will speak God’s words, and Aaron, who is to be Moses’s prophet, must declare those words to Pharaoh. Aaron will speak for Moses. Then, in Deuteronomy, the prophetic function is emphasized when the Lord describes another prophet: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (18:18). A prophet, thus, speaks for God. When the prophet speaks, God speaks. This “prophet like Moses” is the Messiah, but between Moses and Jesus there is a line of prophets.¹⁰ They brought messages from God to the people. Sometimes these prophets predicted the future, but their function was not limited to foretelling. Prophets delivered messages of encouragement and comfort as well as oracles of doom and judgment. When the prophet spoke, the words were to be received as the words of God because the prophet spoke as the mouthpiece of God.

⁸ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 357.

⁹ J. P. Baker, “Prophecy, Prophets,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., ed. J. D. Douglas et al. (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1982), 975. Baker goes on to describe the function of a prophet as combining proclamation of a message from God and prediction of the future.

¹⁰ Many are named (Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.), and others are unnamed among the many spokespeople for God throughout the history of Israel.

PRIEST

A priest primarily mediates between God and people, and this mediation extends in both directions.¹¹ Thielman explains, “Some kind of mediation between God and humanity is necessary simply because God is separate from all he has created and, yet, graciously extends his fellowship to his creatures. Mediation takes on a particularly important role, however, in light of humanity’s rebellion against the Creator. The situation of hostility that resulted from Adam’s fall could only be remedied through the mediation of a third party.”¹² Priests also mediated God’s blessing to creation, especially the land occupied by the Israelites. For example, the Lord promised to bless not merely his people but also the animals and the land itself (Deut 28:1–14). The blessings of God mediated to Israel by the priests would be mediated to creation as well.

The first human priest identified in the biblical story is Melchizedek, whose priesthood predates the establishment of the Levitical priesthood by several generations. In God’s grace, he established the Levitical priesthood to mediate blessing to the people of Israel. According to the Law of Moses, “the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the LORD’s covenant, to stand before Yahweh to serve Him, and to pronounce blessings in His name, as it is today” (Deut 10:8). Only males from this tribe qualified to serve as priests.

KING

A king reigns over people and territory. Although there were kings before him, the first righteous king in the biblical story is Melchizedek (Gen 14:18), and Israel’s first king is Saul (1 Sam 10:1). But there is no king like David, to whom God promised an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:16). Kaiser observes that in nine of the uses of “messiah” in the Old Testament, “the reference is to some ‘anointed one’ who would be coming in the future, usually in the line of David, and who would be Yahweh’s king: 1 Samuel 2:10, 35; Psalms 2:2; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9; Habakkuk 3:13; Daniel 9:25, 26.”¹³ God’s reign

¹¹ Henry W. Holloman, “Priest, Priesthood,” in *Kregel Dictionary of the Bible and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 419. Holloman adds this responsibility: “to perform certain religious acts that have been passed along from generation to generation.”

¹² Frank Thielman, “Mediator, Mediation,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 517.

¹³ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 16.

and his provision of blessing for his creation are mediated through human kings and ultimately through the Messiah (Rom 1:3).

TYPES OF PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

The Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ is used in the Old Testament to designate someone or something that has been anointed, set apart in some relationship to God, including prophet, priest, or king.¹⁴ All of these roles are fulfilled in the Messiah, the Anointed One, the divine king who is also prophet and priest.

From the beginning of the biblical story, God provided types of the Messiah as prophet, priest, and king, with many individuals filling one or more of these functions. The resulting expectations become increasingly explicit and clear while types, foreshadowing, implicit prophecies, and explicit predictions become more and more well defined. Of particular interest are characters who foreshadow the Messiah by combining all three functions in one person.

ADAM

When God created Adam, he created him male and female (Gen 1:27; cf. 5:1–2) and gave the two of them a simple command: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it” (1:28).¹⁵ That “subdue” is a ruling function is clear when God continues, “Rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” To rule over creation apparently includes the responsibility to mediate blessing to these creatures, for prior to creating humans and blessing them, God had blessed the creatures that live in the water and the sky: “So God blessed them, ‘Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth’” (v. 22). Particularly in a pre-Fall world, to rule over such creatures would be to care for them, to bless them, to provide good for them. Since the Fall had not yet occurred there would be no need to exercise force, or threaten force, to control animals or to protect some from others.

¹⁴ Randall Price, “The Concept of the Messiah in the Old Testament,” accessed February 1, 2019, <https://worldofthebible.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-Concept-of-the-Messiah-in-the-Old-Testament.pdf>.

¹⁵ That the name “Adam” is given to the two of them and that the two, male and female, are referenced with the singular pronoun, does not deny that God created a man and woman. Moses in Genesis 1 is emphasizing the unity of the two, the common adamic nature of the man and woman.

In the second account of creation, the narrator gives further details: “The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden to work it and watch over it” (Gen 2:15). Then “the LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name” (Gen 2:19). In so doing, the man functioned as a prophet (he spoke for God), a priest (mediating blessing to these creatures), and a king (naming them exercised rule over them). Eugene Merrill writes, “When Yahweh brought the animals to Adam ‘to see what he would name them,’ He was in effect transferring from Himself to Adam the dominion for which man was created.”¹⁶ Naming the creatures, already blessed by God, would thus fulfill all three functions.

The Creator gave Adam dominion over creation, which he exercised when he named the animals, spoke as an agent of the Creator (as the *imago Dei*), and mediated blessing to them by caring for them. Sadly, he failed to carry out those tasks; instead of mediating life and blessing to creation, he brought about her curse. He failed to produce innocent offspring; his children all share his guilt and condemnation. He failed to speak for God and instead silently accepted the serpent’s lie (Gen 2:1–6). He failed to rule over creation; instead he caused creation’s curse and would struggle with her until he would die and return to the dust (3:19).

Another Adam came and accomplished perfectly what the first Adam was created to be and do (1 Cor 15:21–22, 45–49; Rom 5:12–21). Merrill summarizes: “Jesus fulfilled in His life the potentialities of unfallen Adam just as by His death He restored all mankind to those potentialities.”¹⁷ Berkhof makes the connection between the first and last Adam when he observes, “The fact that Christ was anointed to a threefold office finds its explanation in the fact that man was originally intended for this threefold office and work. As created by God, he was prophet, priest, and king, and as such was endowed with knowledge and understanding, with righteousness and holiness, and with dominion over the lower creation.”¹⁸ Grudem similarly concludes, “If we look back at the situation of Adam before the fall and forward to our future status with Christ in heaven for eternity, we can see that these roles of prophet,

¹⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 15.

¹⁷ Merrill, “Theology of the Pentateuch,” 17.

¹⁸ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 357.

priest, and king had parallels in the experience that God originally intended for man, and will be fulfilled in our lives in heaven.”¹⁹

MELCHIZEDEK

In Genesis 14, Moses tells the story of the capture of Abram’s nephew Lot by a confederation of four kings (Gen 14:8–12).²⁰ Abram mustered an army and rescued his nephew. As Abram and his troops returned home, he met a visitor in the Valley of Shaveh: “Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, he was a priest to God Most High” (v. 18). Melchizedek is identified as both a king and a priest, but he was also a prophet. He spoke to Abram and blessed him in the name of “God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth” (vv. 19–20). Melchizedek spoke to Abram on behalf of Abram’s God; this is the function of a prophet.

In addition to being the first righteous king, “Melchizedek is the first priest mentioned in Scripture.”²¹ Since Genesis was written to the Israelites in the context of the Exodus and giving of the Law, they would have understood the role of a priest and should have recognized that their Levitical priesthood was not the first priesthood established by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The significance of Melchizedek can hardly be overemphasized. In Psalm 110, David, the prophet, quoted the Lord, “This is the declaration of the LORD to my Lord” (v. 1). He then asserted that his Lord, the Messiah, would be a priest forever, “like Melchizedek” (v. 4).²² In short, the Messiah will be an eternal priest in the pattern or type of Melchizedek. Since Israel’s king would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), specifically in the line of David (2 Sam 7:12–16), and priests from the line of Levi (Deut 18:1–5), no Israelite could be both king and priest. Since the Messiah will be

¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 629.

²⁰ Lot was vulnerable to capture because he was no longer under the protection of his uncle Abram (cf. Gen 13). Had Abram and Lot found a way to co-exist in the land, Lot would not have been captured and Abram would not have met Melchizedek. God’s grace is often seen clearly in his response to human sin.

²¹ D. G. Peterson, “Melchizedek,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 659. Peterson also observes, “Although Israelite kings sometimes exercised priestly functions, the distinction between the offices was much more definite in Israel than in neighbouring cultures. Psalm 110 therefore appears to be prophetic of a new situation in proclaiming that a Davidic king will be ‘a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’ (v. 4)” (ibid.).

²² The NET Bible translates this verse, “You are an eternal priest after the pattern of Melchizedek.” The “likeness” is a “pattern” or “type.”

both, however, his right to the throne is through the line of David but his priesthood is through Melchizedek. The Messiah's priesthood is not based in heredity but in a type or pattern. That seems to be the point, as explained by the writer of Hebrews: Melchizedek was "without father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God—remains a priest forever" (Heb 7:3). Some have misunderstood this phrase as asserting that Melchizedek had no parents because he was the pre-incarnate Christ himself. But that would destroy the typology. David Peterson's explanation is superior: "It is also noted that, unlike other significant figures in Genesis, Melchizedek is introduced without genealogy and without reference to his birth or death (7:3). Since the legitimacy of a man's priesthood in the ancient world depended on such factors, the silence of Scripture at this point is remarkable. The implication is that Melchizedek did not obtain his priesthood because of hereditary rights."²³ Similarly, the Messiah's priesthood is not based on heredity.

Melchizedek's blessing of Abram is also significant, according to the book of Hebrews, because it reveals his superiority to Abram. Abram, the father of the people of Israel and of all people of faith, is inferior to this Canaanite prophet, priest, and king. Two things evidence this. First, Abram was blessed by Melchizedek and "without a doubt, the inferior is blessed by the superior" (Heb 7:7). Further, Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. In so doing, even Levi, who as a priest was the recipient of Israel's tithes, paid tithes to Melchizedek (vv. 8–10).

MOSES

Moses was a prophet, the greatest of a long line of prophets. As a prophet, Moses spoke for God, who states the job description for a prophet when he promises to send another prophet, a prophet like Moses: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him" (Deut 18:18).²⁴ Since many prophets served between Moses and Jesus, this is the promise of a succession of prophets (as there is promised a succession of priests and a succession of kings) and the promise of a great prophet who would come. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise.

A prophet must speak for God and not presumptuously: "I will

²³ Peterson, "Melchizedek," 660.

²⁴ The people of Israel were familiar with Moses and his prophetic role. This job description was a reminder of what they already understood.

hold accountable whoever does not listen to My words that he speaks in My name. But the prophet who dares to speak a message in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet must die” (Deut 18:19–20).²⁵ The Messiah spoke only what his Father told him to say (John 12:49–50); there was no presumption in him.

Moses and Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, were descendants of Levi (Exod 6:16–20). Moses served as a priest (Ps 99:6). As the mediator between God and the people of Israel, he represented God to the people and the people to God, which was their request when God appeared to them on Mt. Sinai (Exod 20:19).²⁶ Moses set up a tent in which he communicated with God face to face, representing God to the people and taking their concerns to God (33:7–11). Originally, he attempted to fulfill this role by himself; his father-in-law recommended a better method, delegating this responsibility to others (18:17–23). Moses adopted this approach; those he appointed “judged the people at all times; they would bring the hard cases to Moses, but they would judge every minor case themselves” (v. 26). Moses’s mediatorial function foreshadows the Messiah’s as the unique mediator between God and humanity, the God-man Jesus (1 Tim 2:5).

Moses is never called the king of Israel. Israel’s first king was Saul. But Moses functioned as the ruler, the leader, and the judge of the Israelites. In short, as the mediator between God and the people, Moses performed the role that a king would have fulfilled. He had God-given authority as the ruler. The Lord declared that he had made Moses like God (Exod 7:1), which surely indicates his rule over the people.

Moses’s functions of prophet, priest, and king come together clearly in the aftermath of the golden calf incident (Exod 32–34). While Moses was on the mountain with the Lord, the people asked Aaron to make a god for them. Aaron agreed, formed a golden calf, and called for a festival celebrating the Lord who had delivered them from Egypt. When God threatened to destroy the people because of their sin, Moses pled with God to forgive them (Exod

²⁵ The test of a false or presumptuous prophet is that what he proclaims does not come true (Deut 18:22). The God of truth speaks only truth, and thus one who speaks for God speaks truth. A similar test of a false prophet is found in Deuteronomy 13:1–5. It should be noted that there are no tests of a true prophet, only of a false or presumptuous one.

²⁶ Moses was also the mediator between God and the nations, especially Egypt. God spoke to Pharaoh through Moses, brought judgment on them through him, and thus mediated his sovereign rule over Egypt through Moses.

32:11–13). Moses represented the people to their God; he mediated with God on their behalf. In doing so, he functioned as their priest but also their leader. Moses spoke to God for the people, as their priest, but he also spoke to the people for God, as a prophet. He pled with God to deliver his people. In a similar way, Jesus, while being unjustly executed for the sins of the whole world, would ask God to forgive his murderers, “for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

DAVID

David also functioned as prophet, priest, and king. David spoke for God. He wrote many psalms, nearly half of the psalter.²⁷ His psalms are widely quoted in the New Testament, often in messianic texts. David wrote Psalm 110, the psalm most often quoted by New Testament writers.²⁸ Ross observes, “The expressions are those of a prophet who had received a revelation from God.”²⁹ David claims to be quoting the Lord, thus speaking for him, when he writes, “This is the declaration of the LORD to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool’ ” (Ps 110:1). Jesus quoted from the psalm, attributing it to David, to defend that the Messiah would be the Son of David (Matt 22:41–45).

David was a king, but he was more than a king; he was the father of a line of kings in a kingdom that would never end. God made a covenant with David, promising him an eternal dynasty (2 Sam 7; Ps 89). Instead of a succession of sons of David reigning as king, the greater Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, would fulfill this promise eternally (Rom 1:3; Col 1:11–20). Strauss explains, “David is the prototype of the ideal coming king—the Messiah. God’s promise to David of a perpetual line (2 Sam. 7) becomes in the royal psalms and the prophets the expectation of an ideal king from David’s line.”³⁰

David functioned as a priest. He served as a mediator between Saul and God. Although Saul wanted him dead, David refused to respond in kind. Instead, although he had many opportunities to kill his enemy, he refused. In so doing, he mediated grace to Saul,

²⁷ Allen Ross attributes 73 of the 150 to David. Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 783.

²⁸ L. Michael Morales, “Jesus and the Psalms,” accessed February 1, 2019, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/jesus-and-psalms/>.

²⁹ Ross, “Psalms,” 873.

³⁰ M. L. Strauss, “David,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 435.

not judgment. David also offered sacrifices, a function of the priesthood, several times. For example, David recaptured the ark of the covenant and was transporting it from Baale-judah (2 Sam 6:2). When the oxen pulling the cart stumbled, Uzzah reached out to steady the ark and he died (v. 7). Eventually the ark was brought to Jerusalem and “set in its place inside the tent David had set up for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings in the LORD’s presence” (v. 17). Lest there be any misunderstanding, the narrator repeats: “When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of hosts” (v. 18). Thus, David offered sacrifices and blessed the people. David functioned as a priest. Merrill observes, “David was not a descendant of Aaron, and could not therefore ordinarily qualify to be a priest. He was, however, the anointed of the Lord, the founder of that messianic line that would be fulfilled in the King who would also embrace the offices of priest and prophet (7:12–16; 1 Sam. 2:35; Deut. 18:15–19).”³¹

Later, the Lord was angry with Israel, and David was enticed to number the people (2 Sam 24:1). David realized his mistake and confessed his sin to the Lord (v. 10). As a consequence, the Lord offered David three choices: “Do you want three years of famine to come on your land, to flee from your foes three months while they pursue you, or to have a plague in your land three days?” (v. 13). David’s choice was to trust the mercy of God: “Let us fall into the LORD’s hands because His mercies are great, but don’t let me fall into human hands” (v. 14). In a plague, 70,000 people died (v. 15). The prophet Gad instructed David to set up an altar; David complied (vv. 18–19). He purchased a threshing floor and oxen, and then “built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings” (v. 25; cf. 1 Chr 21:28).³² David was not a priest in the line of Levi, but again he offered sacrifices and prayer, which the Lord accepted: “Then the LORD answered prayer on behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel ended” (v. 25).

Of course, that David offered sacrifices does not prove that any king could presume to function as a priest.³³ Rather, this is evi-

³¹ Eugene H. Merrill, “2 Samuel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 463.

³² According to Merrill, “This was where Abraham had offered Isaac (Gen. 22:2). And on this same spot Solomon later constructed his magnificent temple (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1).” Merrill, “2 Samuel,” 482.

³³ Saul had offered a burnt offering and was rebuked by Samuel: “You have been foolish. You have not kept the command which the LORD your God gave you. It was at this time that the LORD would have permanently established your reign over

dence of God's grace, and it seems particularly significant that David, like Adam, Melchizedek, and Moses before him, was functioning as a type of the Messiah by filling the offices of prophet, priest, and king.

JESUS AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

In his first advent, Jesus filled the offices of prophet, priest, and king. He fulfilled the expectations set for those offices. In the eschaton, he will continue to fulfill them perfectly and eternally; there is no succession of prophets, priests, or kings following him. According to Thomas Oden, "The Son of God became incarnate to do the threefold work of messianic prophet, priest, and king. His work consisted in the fulfillment and consummation of the prophetic office, the priestly office, and the kingly office, to which servants of God in the Old Testament were anointed."³⁴

When the angel appeared to Mary and announced the birth of the Messiah, he promised that the Son of God would fulfill the promise made to David. According to Gabriel, "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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32–33). After the angel made a similar announcement to Joseph, Matthew explains, "Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel,' which is translated 'God is with us'" (Matt 1:23). This child is the Son of God, God with us, and the fulfillment of the promise of prophet, priest, and king. Defending this claim seems to have been the author's purpose in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews begins with the assertion that the Son of God is the superior and final Word of God: "Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son" (1:1–2). The Son is divine; he is the Creator and "the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (v. 3). The three functions of prophet,

Israel, but now your reign will not endure. The LORD has found a man loyal to him, and the LORD appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not done what the LORD commanded" (1 Sam 13:13–14).

³⁴ Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *The Word of Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989), 280.

priest, and king come together in this prologue. David Allen summarizes, “It was marvelous enough that God should speak through the prophets, but now comes an extraordinary truth: God has spoken to us in one who is by his very character and nature a Son.”³⁵ He also notes that these verses articulate “the two major themes of Hebrews: high priestly sacrifice of the Son and kingly exaltation of the Son. This theme of Christ exalted to the right hand of God permeates the Christology of the epistle.”³⁶

Jesus is greater than angels (Heb 1:5–14) and greater than Moses, the great prophet (3:1–6). He is also a great high priest, “one who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin” (4:15). He functioned as a priest when “He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him, and He was declared by God a high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (5:9–10). He was greater than Melchizedek because he is the Son of God (5:5; cf. 7:1–22). His covenant is better than the old covenant (7:22), and as perfect high priest his priesthood is superior (7:23–8:12). His sacrifice is superior to the sacrifices under the old covenant, since “the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the actual form of those realities” (10:1). The sacrifice of the Son is perfect and has made his people perfect: “By this will of God, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins. But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (10:10–12).

Jesus’s work of redemption is not yet complete. He will one day reign over an eternal kingdom: “He is now waiting until His enemies are made His footstool” (10:14). Jesus is “the source and perfecter of our faith” (12:2) and has promised that “we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (12:28).

The benediction to the book of Hebrews praises the work God accomplished through this prophet, priest, and king: “Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—with the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you with all that is good to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. Glory belongs to Him forever and ever. Amen” (13:20–21).

³⁵ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

CONCLUSION

The Messiah came to fulfill perfectly the offices and functions of prophet, priest, and king. The Scriptures foreshadow him through a line of prophets, beginning with Abraham and particularly in Moses; priests, particularly Melchizedek and the Levites; and kings, David and his sons. Although there are many prophets, priests, and kings, a handful of biblical heroes combine the three functions in one person, foreshadowing the Messiah who will fulfill all three perfectly and permanently. In these biblical types of the Messiah—Adam, Melchizedek, Moses, and David—the Scriptures point forward to the coming Immanuel who will be the final Adam, the priest like Melchizedek, a prophet like Moses, and the Son of David because he is the Son of Man and the Son of God. Those who came before him are types, foreshadowing the one who would fulfill all three functions perfectly and completely, when God took on flesh.³⁷ Walvoord correctly observes, “The offices of Christ are one of the major themes of the Old Testament as they relate to Christ.”³⁸ He concludes, “Taken together, the three offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King are the key to the purpose of the incarnation. His prophetic office was concerned with the revelation of the truth of God; the priestly office was related to His work as Saviour and Mediator; His kingly office had in view His right to reign over Israel and over the entire earth. In Christ, the supreme dignity of these offices is reached.”³⁹

³⁷ See Gavin Ortland, “Resurrected as Messiah: The Risen Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54 (2011): 749–66.

³⁸ Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 209.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.