

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

January 14 - 18, 2008



January 14, 2008 **Christ as Prophet**

“For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”¹

Jesus identified himself as a prophet² and he fulfilled that role during his incarnation. He applied the Law in his own time and context³ and he spoke messages given to him by God the Father⁴. Christ foretold future events⁵ and he spoke with recognized authority⁶. Though the people of his day did not understand the fullness of his identity, they acknowledged him to be a great prophet⁷, powerful in his teachings and authenticated by his actions⁸.

The risen Christ continues to exercise this office through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ works within believers to enlighten and apply the Scriptures to our lives. He also speaks God's truth through the use of spiritual gifts such as teaching, prophecy, evangelism and word of knowledge⁹.

Jesus' calling as Prophet, then and now, is to glorify God by revealing God's reality, love and will. The appropriate response to that revelation is for us to love and serve him.

¹ John 12:49-50

² Luke 13:33

³ E.g. Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7

⁴ John 8:26-28; 12:49-50

⁵ Matthew 24; Luke 19:41-44

⁶ Matthew 7:29

⁷ Matthew 21:11,46; Luke 7:16

⁸ Luke 24:19

⁹ These gifts will be examined in Daily Dose later in the spring.

January 15, 2008 **Christ as THE Prophet**

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”¹

Historically, Christians have given the highest level of reverence to the ‘prophetic’ role of Christ by seeing his words recorded in Scripture as authoritative. In a similar way the teachings of the apostles as recorded in the New Testament are on a par with the Old Testament and the words of Christ because the Spirit guaranteed their inspiration in a unique way. But in the recent past, Christ’s prophetic role has been trivialized from two directions.

The Enlightenment skepticism which rejected miracles also rejected the ‘miraculous’ inspiration of the Bible and the accuracy of the teachings by and about Jesus. Liberal theologians and preachers looked to the sciences, philosophy, etc. as being more ‘modern’ and ‘enlightened’ sources of truth. Jesus’ voice became just one among many.

In recent decades, some teachers in the ‘Latter Rain’ stream of the charismatic movement have also laid great emphasis upon believers receiving immediate communication from God in the form of Spirit-inspired messages. One unintended consequence has been a diminishing of the Bible’s role in shaping spirituality.

We cannot honour Christ as Saviour and King while trivializing his role as Prophet. His Word is the definitive word in the lives of his followers.

¹ John 14:26

January 16, 2008

Christ as 'Priest'

"Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."¹

While the primary role of a Biblical prophet was to communicate and interpret God's will, the primary role of a priest was to represent the people before God. The priest was the one who could approach God's presence in the Tabernacle or Temple and there speak and act on behalf of the people. In this role, as the above scripture indicates, a number of things were essential.

First, the priest had to be 'one of us'. An angel, a pe of divine being would not do. The priest had to be human. So God the Son became one of us in order to function as the perfect Priest.

Secondly, the priest had to be appointed by God. God took the initiative to appoint Aaron and his descendants to approach him in this way. When others tried to take this function upon themselves, they were decisively rejected.² God appointed Christ as our perfect High Priest.³

Thirdly, the priest was to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins and he was to intercede with God. Jesus offered up himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin and lives forever to intercede on our behalf at the right hand of God. So Christ not only was the perfect priest, but he continues in that role even now.⁴

¹ Hebrews 5:1 (TNIV)

² Numbers 16

³ Though not of the tribe of Levi, Jesus was appointed High Priest 'in the order of Melchizedek' – Hebrews 5:4-6; 7:1-10;

⁴ Hebrews 7:23-25

January 17, 2008 **The Perfectly Holy Priest**

“Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”¹

While Old Testament priests were to be humans like us, they also needed to become holy and pure in order to appear before a holy God. To that end, upon their ordination and whenever they went to offer sacrifices, the priests first had to undergo cleansing rituals and offer sacrifices for their own sins.²

In a similar way, the sacrifices themselves had to be perfect and without any kind of defect.³ Nothing but the best was to be offered to God in expiation for sin.

The fact that Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin”⁴ reflects Jesus’ divinity. The divine Son could not have succumbed to sin without ceasing to be divine! It also points to Jesus suitability to function as both the great High Priest who is fit to enter the heavenly Holy of holies, and to himself be the perfect sacrifice, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”⁵.

“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”⁶

¹ Hebrews 7:26 (NIV)

² E.g. Leviticus 8

³ Exodus 29:1; Leviticus 1:3, 10; 4:1; 5:15

⁴ Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)

⁵ John 1:29; Hebrews 9:1-28

⁶ Hebrews 9:14 (NIV)

“If any member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands, he is guilty....he must bring as his offering for the sin he committed a female goat without defect. He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering.”¹

Sacrifices were extremely common in ancient religions and were based on a variety of ‘theories’:²

- Some saw the sacrifice as a ‘gift’, given with the hope of establish good relations and securing favours from the gods – essentially a form of bribery which intimated a fairly low concept of divine morality.
- Some felt the sacrifice was a means of connecting ‘sacramentally’ with the god. Certain animals were seen as representing the gods, so eating a ritually sacrificed animal allowed one to assimilate those divine qualities. A variation on this was the notion that the blood gave the power of ‘life’ when eaten in communion with the divinity.
- Some saw sacrifices as a token of homage to the deity, declaring dependence on the god as overlord and protector.

In comparison, Old Testament sacrifices were ‘expiatory’ or ‘atoning’ in nature. It is true that concepts of sacrifice as thanksgiving or to express communion with God are sometimes present in Scripture. However the chief focus is that the slaying of the animal was a vicarious atonement (payment) for the sins of the guilty party. The death of the sacrifice was received in substitution for the punishment of the sinner.

¹ Leviticus 4:27-29 (NIV)

² Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 362-363