



*the  
Golden  
Candlestick*

**JESUS – PROPHET, PRIEST  
AND KING**

**Part 1**

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*Volume 178*

## **HIS NATURE AND OFFICE AS PROPHET**

*Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-24; 7:37; Luke 24:19; John 5:27; Ezekiel 1:26; 2:1,3, 6,8.*

These passages, to which many more could be added, touch upon the first of those designations of which we have made mention above, namely, Jesus as Prophet. If we look at that carefully and thoughtfully it is capable of leading us into a wonderful knowledge and revelation of the Lord Jesus; that is, if the Holy Spirit opens our eyes. Those two who were on the Emmaus road made a statement, which was more full and more true than they had any idea of, "... which was a prophet ...". Yet in the same story we read that their eyes were restrained, so they did not know Him. It is quite clear from their conduct and their state of mind and heart that, although they believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a Prophet, they had not really seen what that meant, how true and how wonderful that was. But very soon He began to take up the Scriptures (with the 'prophets'), and their hearts began to burn as they began to see that He was more of a Prophet than they had ever thought. Something of the wonder of Him of whom they had spoken as "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" began to break upon them. They found a Christ even when it seemed that they had lost Him; and when at length in the breaking of bread their eyes were opened and they knew Him, it was an altogether greater, more wonderful vision of Him than they had ever known. He had been to them a Prophet, mighty in word and deed. Now He, all unknown to them as to who He was at the moment, made them see something more of that which they had known in a way; and then, when they had seen something more of His greatness and His glory, He by an act said, I am He! To put that in another way, it was just like this: Jesus of Nazareth was a Prophet to them; yes, a great Prophet. Now this One has shown how much greater, as a Prophet, He is than ever they knew, and, whereas they thought they had lost Him, they found they had a greater One than they knew. That is the upshot of it all.

We begin in this way in order that our hearts may be led to prayer. We have had some conception of, and faith in the Lord Jesus; we believe that we have known Him; we would strongly make our attestation concerning Him; we would be ready to say of Him, "A Prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people". Yet there is something more than that for us. There is something more in Him than we have ever seen, and our eyes are still very largely restrained. Seeing that that is what happened once, who shall say that it has not happened many times? Seeing that we have such a concrete example of what can happen, should we not come at once to prayer, our hearts saying, O Lord, I have seen Thee, I have known Thee, I have believed Thee; but it is clear that many who have gone that far have made discoveries far beyond anything that they knew; let it be like that with me, and today. He is a Prophet; but what a Prophet! What there is yet to be revealed as to who Jesus of Nazareth really is!

There is a vast amount of technique connected with the Prophet, all of very great value, beyond our power of handling, but there are some things which it is necessary for us to recognise at once, as we approach the Lord Jesus as revealed to us in the Word of God in the capacity of Prophet. It might be thought that when you come to the Scriptures it is not quite correct to put things in that order—Prophet, Priest and King. You might agree to the last two, but question whether it is quite correct to put the Prophet first. It is upon that very point that we rest for one of the most significant things in this threefold unveiling of Christ. It is correct to put it in that order. The Prophet, and the functions of the Prophet, precede that of the Priest and the King, but do not stop when the Priest and the King come in.

We go back as far as Abraham, with all that we know about Abraham as the father of the faithful, the father of Israel, and we are surprised to be told that Abraham was a prophet. You will remember that a certain ruler got into trouble over Abraham, and found himself under judgement, and he enquired as to how he might be delivered from that judgement. The Word of the Lord to him was, that Abraham was a prophet and he should pray for him. Perhaps we have not seen Abraham as a prophet, but I am quite sure we shall see how truly Abraham was a prophet before we get very far.

Then Moses was a prophet. We have thought of him as the lawgiver, the one who delivered Israel from Egypt, constituted the nation and led them through the wilderness. We have not always thought of Moses in the

capacity of a prophet, and yet here in these Scriptures to which we have referred it is quite patent that the Lord regarded him as a prophet. “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up from among your brethren like unto me”, are the words of Moses. That was before the priest came in in any official capacity.

It goes back much further than that. It goes right back into the bosom of God in eternity, but we want for the moment to notice it in relation to the others.

You will see that when the priestly and the kingly failed it was then that the prophet came again into evidence. The prophet, so to speak, took command. The priestly did fail from time to time in Israel, and all that the priesthood stood for failed and fell into disrepute, and a state came into being quite contrary to all that. Then it was that the prophet rose up and took charge. So it was when the kingly failed. Yes, even when David, the greatest of the kings, failed, the prophet came into evidence and took charge. It was one of those painful, sad things. You notice that when David numbered Israel and sinned in so doing, the Lord spoke to the prophet Gad and told him to go to David. David had to communicate with the Lord through the prophet, and it says in that story that David was afraid to go to the tabernacle because of the angel with the drawn sword. David was a man who had worn the priestly vesture, who had enquired of the Lord with the robe of the ephod, to whom the Lord communicated His mind; the great king. He sinned, and now had no way through personally and directly to the Lord, and the prophet had to come in and govern the situation until all was put right again.

All this indicates how the function of the prophet takes priority over all else. Therefore, we are led to ask, What is the central, essential function of the prophet? For what does the prophet stand? We put it into one sentence. The function of the prophet is to satisfy God as to His thoughts concerning men. You probably think that is surely and essentially the function of the priest. That is true, but not so completely as in the prophet.

When you pass your eye over the whole of prophetic ministry or function in the Word of God, you find that three things constitute it:

### ***1) Personal representation***

The first is personal representation. The prophet always stands as a personal representative of God. God is bound up with him. God is associated with him, and he is there as God, possessing God’s thoughts and intentions concerning men. If Moses were a prophet, then remember that

God went a very long way in his case when He said that he should be as God unto the people. The prophet always stood in that capacity. That is why to touch a prophet of the Lord was to touch God immediately. Therefore, “He rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed and do My prophets no harm”, for the anointing is God having committed Himself. To touch the prophet is to touch God.

## **2) *Divine utterance***

The prophet’s word was always, “Thus saith the Lord”. Again look at Moses, and see how often you have such a phrase as this, “As the Lord spake unto Moses”. It was divine utterance, God’s thoughts in expression, God Himself speaking.

## **3) *According to God’s mind***

Things under the prophet were constituted according to God’s mind, and if they deviated or departed from that divine constitution the prophet’s function was to call back to that, to have everything among the Lord’s people so constituted as to be an expression of the mind of God.

That sets forth the function of the prophet, but it is possible to get still more inward. When you have said that there is a heart of things that has not yet been touched, and we have to ask this further question, What is the innermost reality of the prophet? The answer is that it is man as God intends him to be. That is what the prophet stands for, in himself and in his ministry, man. You can leave it with the one word if you like, man; but, of course, man as God means him to be. Hence you find this title, which is essentially and specifically the title of the prophet, Son of man. It immediately designates Jesus of Nazareth a prophet. It is not the title of the priest, it is not the title of the king, it belongs to the prophet. It is a title that is wider than Israel, and wider than that of Messiah, and it is significant to notice that it was given to the Lord on the grounds of Israel’s rejection of Him.

In Luke 9:18-22 you have the Lord Jesus saying to the disciples, “Whom do men say that I am?” They give various answers, and then He directs the question to them, “But whom say ye that I am?” They say, “Thou art the Christ of God.” All that they knew concerning men’s opinion of Him fell short of a recognition of who He really was, and spelled the blindness of Israel regarding Him, blindness brought about through pride and prejudice. Then there broke forth this, “Thou art the Christ ...”. Now note. “See that thou tell no man. The Son of Man must

suffer many things and be lifted up.” The meaning of the title ‘Son of Man’ is clearly because of His rejection by Israel in blindness. It goes right over all the bounds of Israel. It goes right beyond Messiah-ship which belongs to Israel. Son of Man is racial; it embraces the race.

It was exactly the same way in the case of Ezekiel. It was when the glory had gone from Jerusalem, and the prophet was seeing the glory far away from Jerusalem that this title came in, ‘Son of man’. What did that prophet see above the throne? Not the Messiah of Israel now, not Israel’s King now, but the likeness of a Man, and in connection with Man in the throne the address was ‘Son of man’. It is beyond Israel, something much greater. The heart of the prophet is man, God’s thought concerning man.

Well then, if man is in view, you begin with the divine design, and you go right back to the counsels of the Godhead before creation. In the Godhead there is this projecting of purpose and intention, “Let Us make man”. Man is a divine conception, “... in Our image, after Our likeness ...” (Gen. 1:26). The divine intention is concerning a special kind of creation called man; man to be an expression of God; man who is to serve God in His intent to manifest Himself; man the creation to answer to a desire found in the heart of God, a thought found in the mind of God to show Himself. It is a great thing to get right back to the beginnings, because it gives you all the wonder, the glory, the strength and everything that is so amazing about the Gospel. The Gospel has become shrunken and shrivelled, and pulled down to such a small level. It is a great thing to be saved from sin and from misery because of sin, and from the judgement and penalty of sin. It is a great thing to have the peace of God in your heart through sins forgiven. It is a great thing to know you are not going to hell but you are going to heaven; but with all that that may mean it is a very imperfect Gospel in the light of what the Gospel really is. You go right back to the first thoughts of God as they are disclosed to us, and you will find His thought and intent in these words: “Let Us make man in Our image after Our likeness.” Why do we have an image and a likeness? To project ourselves and to express ourselves. The simplest form nowadays of an image or a likeness is in order that when the person is out of sight he or she may still be present, may still be seen. God intended to reveal and manifest Himself, and the vehicle chosen was a special creation, man. It was not reproducing Deity, but divine likeness, moral and spiritual.

Now let us make a parenthesis, and see the significance of that passage in Deuteronomy 18. It was ever God’s thought that He should

express Himself in all that He is, so that He could be seen, and, being seen, could be enjoyed and worshipped and that men should be able to dwell in His presence. When you come to Deuteronomy 18 you come into the realm where man has lost that capacity for enjoying God. God is no longer (to use the word reverently) companionable, but awful and terrible; “God the all-terrible”. He appeared like that in Horeb, and the people asked that it should not happen again. They begged that it should not be repeated lest they died. Did God ever intend the manifestation of Himself to end like that? No! Then you notice what happened. It was because of that that the Lord said, “I will raise up unto thee a Prophet” (verse 15). What is the Prophet for? That they may see God and not die; that they might know God and not perish; that God may be manifested and they may live and have fellowship with Him. That is Jesus Christ: “Jesus ... My Prophet”. The whole Gospel is comprehended in that.

That is what we have previously called the downward bend in the line of divine intention. That line comes up again. The day is coming when man, who could only see God in that way of the Prophet, will see Him face to face in unveiled glory and enjoy His presence, because of the prophetic ministry and person of the Lord Jesus, that He may bring us to God.

That is advancing a little. We have spoken of the divine design, man, an expression, a manifestation of God, or in whom and by whom God manifests Himself. That was the intention, “Let Us make man ...”. The failure of man is recognised everywhere in that he did not conform to the divine thought, and man as we know him is no manifestation of God. He is the manifestation of anything but God, and the more we know of him the more we know how utterly unlike God he is in the depths of his being. But then there is the universal triumph of Jesus of Nazareth, who becomes the universal representation and pattern of man according to God’s thought. In His incarnation, His life here on the earth as Man was subjected to every test of trial and temptation, and all the fires that could be kindled upon Him. His Manhood passed through unscathed, unsullied, and God took that Manhood to heaven. Stephen sees the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Saul sees Jesus of Nazareth in a glory above the brightness of the sun. John sees Him, and because of His glory falls down on his face as one dead. This is God’s Man in representation and pattern.

Into that so much is gathered. First of all — and you need to go back to John’s Gospel for this, for there you have it set forth in a peculiarly rich

and direct way — into the Son of Man there is gathered God’s standard for man. That is what John sets forth. That repeated utterance on His lips, “I am”, brings everything to the Lord Jesus. All the way through John’s Gospel it is a matter of bringing everything to Himself. He brings God the Father to Himself, and He says so definitely and strongly that even God the Father will do nothing apart from Him, “... hath committed all things unto Him”. No man can come to the Father apart from Him, only through Him; no one can know the Father only by Him. He is the sum of everything in man’s concern and interest in relation to God, and God has willed it so. That is, of course, what Israel would not have; that is why they cast Him out. He got in Israel’s way before God. Their charge was that He made Himself equal with God.

The remarkable thing is that all this is summed up in this particular designation, and it is strange that it comes in John. You are not surprised to find it in Luke, but in John 5:27 you find: “... because He is the Son of man”. It does not say the Son of *God*, but the Son of *Man*. The margin says, “a Son of man”. The point there is the nature of the Son of God and His function, His office. God has gathered first of all into a Representative, into One who satisfies Him as to His thoughts for man, His standard for man. And there can be no acceptance of any man or any part of the human race that does not take its character from Jesus Christ.

Now you could open up all that Paul has to say about what we get by faith in Jesus Christ, and then all that he has to say about the Holy Spirit’s operation in us in relation to Jesus Christ, to conform us to His image, and you can see the course of things. It is a universal expression of Jesus Christ in all men who will ever be accepted of God and abide with God eternally. On the other hand, it means that where Jesus Christ is not, eventually that will cease to have a place in God’s realm, in God’s Kingdom. It is only what is of Christ that comes into the Kingdom of God, the realm of God, and abides. Christ is God’s standard.

That explains everything for you and for me. Does it not interpret for us those mysterious activities of God in our lives and in the lives of so many of His people, those apparent contradictions? Here is one who seems so pre-eminently useful, so tremendously active for the Lord, who could be so greatly used and could do so much, and that one is taken right out of it all and shut up in apparent inactivity, where none or very little of that is getting out, and all that work is stopped, and the life seems to be imprisoned. Then the enemy is always there to prompt questions and give explanations which are diabolical and evil, intended to destroy the faith

and to bring under condemnation. What is the answer? God is far more concerned with producing the image of His Son than He is with our being busy, our being full of activity in an outward way, even for Him.

This is one of the perils in Christian service, that so often our work, our teaching, our words go a long way ahead of what we are. We are saying things, and those things are not true in our own being. We are teaching things, and those things have not yet been wrought into us. We are giving ourselves to a realm of objective activity for the Lord, and looking after other men's vineyards, and our own is running to waste. That is a false position, and God says, "Stop, come away from it all, I have got to bring you abreast of those things you are saying. Ministry is not things said. Ministry is what you are, and everything said comes out of what you are, and the only ministry, the only thing that satisfies Me is Christ! The measure of value in My sight is not the amount of things said or the amount of things done. It is the amount of Christ that is there at the heart of everything. It is the measure of Christ."

All our sufferings, even though they be chastening, even though they be the rebuke of the Lord, even though they be (if you like to call it) punishment, all the mysterious providences of God, all those inexplicable handlings of us by Him, have one object. Believe it. It will rescue you from despair. It is the greatest object in God's universe, and that is God expressing Himself in Christ in us.

The Prophet is a representation of God. Conformity to the image of His Son is an expression of God. It takes precedence over everything. It is God's supreme thought, "Let Us make man ...". I wonder how many of us have realised that God has started that process all over again. Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house has a far wider application than Israel. It is racial. The vessel which he made was marred in his hands, and he made it again into another vessel. What did God say when He took this clay into His hands? "Let Us make man ...". He is making the New Man in Christ, the New Man according to Christ. He is making man after His own image and in His own likeness. Presently service such as we have never contemplated will be entered upon. There may be work to be done here, but, mark you, God will govern all our work and our activity here by this thought of increasing Christ in us. Any service for God which does not have that reaction upon ourselves to bring us into greater Christ-likeness is false service. Service must come out of what there is of Christ, and must result in the increase of Christ, otherwise it is not service to God.

So it may be that some, because service is increasing Christ, are

allowed to do it. Others are taken out of it, because that is the way in which the Lord will get a greater increase of Christ in them than allowing them to do it. But, whether it be service or no service, here the governing factor is that making according to Christ which shall eventually issue in: "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." Let it not happen again, said Israel. Ah, but they shall see His face. What has happened? Who sees His face and lives? Jesus of Nazareth is looking fully into the face of God as a Man. He is God's Son, but as Man He is there in the unveiled presence of the infinite God. You and I are being brought through grace to the place where we can abide in the infinite glory, the infinite majesty, where we can see His face and live, and not only live but serve Him. That is what God is doing with us. At present we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. That glory will be without a veil one day, and we shall behold Him as He is. "Now we see through a glass, darkly ..." (1 Cor. 13:12). It is necessary; we could not bear it otherwise. If we had the slightest glimmer and glimpse of the Lord Jesus it would be impossible for this humanity to bear it. Paul carried the effect of that to his death in his eyes that were affected. It is said of some that they would have plucked out their very eyes for Paul. He said, "See how large letters I have written to you ..." (Gal. 6:11). Where did that come from? Just a little unveiling, a flash of the glory. Our destiny is to abide in glory, to dwell in it, and to live and to serve. That is our destiny in Christ. He is preparing us for that. That is the meaning of the Prophet.

We have not seen Jesus yet as a Prophet. There is that seeing of Him which is calculated to transfigure us into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. Into Jesus God has gathered His standard, in relation to which He is carrying on His work in this world. The Lord give us grace to recognise His end in the moulding, in all the perplexing experiences, and let Him do the thing upon which His heart is set, for He has not forsaken His original intention. He has said yet again, with fresh intention, in infinite grace, "Let Us make man ..."; let Us make again after Our own image, in Our own likeness, for the expression of Ourselves.

## CHAPTER 2

### **HIS NATURE AND OFFICE AS PROPHET**

(CONTINUED)

*Reading: Hebrews 2.*

We are going to pause here before going on from where we left off our last meditation, to stress two things.

The first thing is the wonder that God Himself has become His own Prophet, His own Priest, and His own King. That is the utter meaning. We could say God has provided His own Prophet, His own Priest, His own King right out from heaven; but realising that here Jesus is the Son of God, one with God in very essence, we can go the further step and say that God Himself in Christ has become His own Prophet, Priest and King. It is a wonderful thing when you get behind that governing thought, that God said, "Let Us make man ...". Eventually God said, so far as the second Person of the Godhead was concerned, "We will become that Man." So in the letter to the Hebrews you have the Son of God saying, "A body didst thou prepare for Me ...". God prepared and provided Himself with a body. Thus you have one of those grand titles: "They shall call His name Emmanuel ... God with us."

The other thing we want to stress before passing on is this. We must never think of the Lord Jesus, while being the Eternal Son of God, as being a Man until the incarnation. We are rather apt to allow the very words 'Eternal Son' to imply that, or carry that with it. The incarnation is definitely God taking up His original thought in the midst of the ages in relation to man. We must recognise this, that God never did have, even in the first Adam, a man that expressed His thought to the full, until the incarnation when He Himself entered into the body prepared for Him. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, manifested in the flesh, takes up something that has never before been realised.

So the letter to the Hebrews opens with this statement concerning man (not the Son of God in His intrinsic deity): What is man? He is the

express image, the very essence of the Father's nature, the effulgence of the Father's glory. God has in Jesus Christ in the incarnation that which He originally intended to have when He said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." That may be an unnecessary emphasis, but it brings us very much to the point where we want to take things up.

The closing word of our last meditation was regarding the Son of Man having become God's standard, established in heaven and set forth as the pattern for the whole creation. God is working towards this in all who have come into a living relationship with Him, and that fact explains and governs all the dealings of God with every one of His children. God is more concerned about conformity to His Son than He is about anything else. Let us say once more that it is so necessary that we get that firmly fixed in our hearts. He is not concerned in the first place with what we do for Him. He is pre-eminently concerned with the formation of Christ in us, and our conformity to the image of His Son. This explains why even service is so often fraught with experiences of the deepest trial. We might think that being given to the service of God, and being given to the purpose of God, there ought to be such a manifestation of the power and cooperation of God that we simply ride over every kind of adversity without feeling it. The facts are to the contrary, that even when you are most utterly abandoned to God, when you are given up most entirely to the Lord's interests in the service of God, you go through experiences of the deepest and utmost trial, which constitute tests of faith of the most acute character. You are almost brought to a standstill in your service from time to time on the major questions of God, His power, His wisdom, and so on. We do not escape that kind of thing because we are abandoned to the Lord. Sometimes we have thought that we ought to escape it because of our utter devotion to the Lord. It is not so. Even when you and I have no reservation, no personal interests, no ambitions of our own, and the Lord Himself is our object, our goal, and His glory the one governing passion of our beings, even then we shall be tested and tried to the very hilt. Let us not expect it to be otherwise, for this reason that the necessity above all others is that Christ should be fully formed in us, and that is only accomplished along the line of trial and refining fires. So even the souls of those who have been martyred for the testimony of Jesus will go on crying, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Right up to the end we shall be tried, however much we are given up to the Lord. The Lord governs everything by this one matter of sonship, as Hebrews 12 makes perfectly clear.

Now we go on with the next phase, in John 5:21. There we read that the Son quickens, or gives life to whom He will. That is a prophetic act, related to Him as Prophet, and it is the relationship between that and Christ in His prophetic capacity that we feel the Lord wants us to understand at this time.

We have seen that Jesus, in the capacity of Prophet, sets forth God's full thought concerning man, and that the prophetic office is to bring those thoughts into expression in man, and bring man to be constituted according to God's thoughts for him. That is the meaning of the prophet throughout, and all the prophets lead up to the Prophet. The Lord Jesus sums up all the prophets and all prophetic ministry and meaning, so that, as the inclusive Prophet, He represents and embodies God's thoughts for man. He is working to bring man to be constituted according to those thoughts, and to bring those thoughts into man for full expression; that is, the expression of God in man.

Seeing that is the meaning of the Prophet, and who the Lord Jesus is, we are able to understand better what He meant when He said, as Son of Man, as Prophet, "The Son quickens whom He will." The Son gives life to whom He will.

You will remember how often the whole question of life and death arose with the prophets, how those outstanding incidents in the life of certain prophets had to do with the destruction of death and the bringing in of life. We have seen how the whole life of Elisha was summed up in the one issue of life triumphant over death. Now here the Son gives life to whom He will. What is the very first step towards the realisation of God's full thought concerning man? By what means shall we come to that divine end? What is essential for God's achievement of His purpose? Basically it is that we have life in and from His Son, that the Son gives life to us. That becomes the basis of everything, for it is in that life which we share with Him that all the potency of the divine thought resides, and if that life is in us and is free to function, that life which is by the Holy Spirit will itself constitute us according to God's mind. In other words: that is the life, the dynamic power in the hands of the Holy Spirit, of the new creation, of which Christ is the sum total.

If you want that made clear, or carried further, look again at very familiar words in 1 Corinthians 15. In John 5 reference is made to resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 is almost entirely to do with resurrection, and it brings us to the very heart of things. Verse 45 says: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam a quickening spirit."

In John 5:21 we read: "... even so also the Son gives life to whom He will". First Corinthians 15 goes on, in verses 46-49: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual ... as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

That clearly sets forth the new creation, a heavenly order of man; Man according to a heavenly kind, and the first of that race is this last Adam, the Lord from heaven. He initiates the new creation by giving life to whom He will. There we have the Man who is God, who is the Son of Man, giving life to whom He will, in order to have other men according to God's thought. God formed man and breathed into him the breath of life, and the first Adam became a living soul. Now there is another creation, a new creation in Christ. God breathes into him, not this time the breath of life, but the Spirit of life in Christ who is a life-giving Spirit. That is the work of the prophet, who, like one of old, comes down and stretches himself upon that which is without that life, has become dead, and imparts as from himself life, and brings that dead one up in his own life. That is a type, a figure of exactly what the Lord Jesus is and does. He comes as Son of Man in the power of new creation life where there is an exercise of faith. He spreads Himself upon that which is dead, and gives His own life, and brings out into a new life the sharing of a common life with Himself.

That is the beginning of everything, and the basis of everything. His life, the same life as He possesses, with all its qualities, nature, characteristics and forces, as it is nurtured, cherished, watched over and obeyed in all its laws, produces Christ-likeness and issues in conformity to His image. So by that life God peoples His new Kingdom, secures His new creation, and realises His first thought when He said, "Let Us make man in Our own image, and after Our own likeness."

The point is this, that Christ as Prophet is not the only one who proclaims God's mind, sets forth God's thoughts and imposes upon us the demands of heaven and of God. He is more than that. As Prophet He identifies Himself with us in order to identify us with Himself in His own life; or, in other words, He is more than a spokesman for God. He is the dynamic of God, "Christ the power of God ..." (1 Cor. 1:24). Union with Christ is not upon the basis of truth, teaching, doctrine or creed. It is upon a basis of a mighty life, the intent and purpose of which is to constitute us according to Christ. Our failure in Christ-likeness is traceable somewhere to a hindrance to the free operation of His life in us, and therefore there should always be exercise to discover where that hindrance is, and what is

the nature of that arrest. It may not always be in sins. It may be that there is some specific thing that is the arresting of the Spirit, something which the life cannot get over because it has got to be dealt with. It would be quite impossible for anyone to catalogue all the things that arrest the Spirit of life in us. That is for our exercise before the Lord. It may be the comprehensive sin of unbelief. There are various things which interrupt, arrest and hinder, but too commonly it is unbelief.

That brings us to the Prophet. When you come to study the work of the prophets you find that the main thing with which they had to do was unbelief. Jesus, as Prophet in His own day on the earth, found Himself up against unbelief as the major thing which made it impossible for Him to give life. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." The "not coming" was unbelief.

In what way does unbelief manifest itself in relation to the Prophet? Just along the line of failure in the practical application of what we have just said. Here is the Lord Jesus, who as Man fully and completely satisfies the thoughts of God concerning man, establishing the fact that God has got in a Man all that ever He thought of having, all that ever He purposed to have, and God has reached His satisfaction in a Man. That Man, the Man Christ Jesus, has been accepted by God in a representative way for all who will believe, so that faith in the Lord Jesus, and faith in God on the ground of the Lord Jesus, of what He is, means our acceptance. God freely gives us all that pertains to Christ, and puts to our account all the perfections of Jesus Christ, all His own satisfaction with the Lord Jesus Christ, and says, Now, if you will not stand on your ground of what you are in the old creation, but by faith on My ground in the new creation, I will mediate to you the power of that new creation to conform you to it. Every bit of unbelief means in practical outworking that we are remaining on our own ground and not abiding on His ground. Follow that through, and you will see that is true. All our failure is due to our getting onto some other ground than the ground of what Jesus is. There is plenty of other ground to get onto. The enemy sees to that. You can go so far as to believe that you are veritably devil possessed, although you are not; yet all your feelings and symptoms point to that. There can be such an operation of the enemy's power of death and evil insinuation upon a broken-down nervous system as to give you all the symptoms of being positively in the power of the devil. He sets up a situation like that, and all he asks you to do is to step across onto that ground and accept it. If you do, you have stepped away from your ground of faith in what Jesus is,

onto the ground of insinuation made by the enemy through conditions and circumstances. You can get plenty of evidence, if you want it, that what the devil says is quite true. The Prophet calls you off your own ground onto His ground.

Look at Elijah, and see if this is not the outworking of his ministry. His challenge is that God's ground should be taken. His great crisis challenge was this, "Why limp ye between two opinions?" (1 Ki. 18:21). The word "halt" in the King James' Version is a little misleading. I used to think it meant standing, halting between two things; but really the word is what we mean when we say, 'He is halt or limp.' It is like a man who is limping first on one side and then on the other, he is crippled by indecision and uncertainty. Today you will find him on one side, and tomorrow on the other. So he alternates day by day in his position regarding the Lord. Faith takes one ground and stays there; faith holds on in the dark. Elijah's challenge was to take God's ground and thus prove God. When they took God's ground they proved God. The prophet says, "Come over onto my ground, for my ground is God's." Oh, the strength of Elijah on that point. There was no question about God with Elijah. He was not afraid to put God to the greatest test. He told them to build the altar, dig a trench, pour in water, and do it again, and again. He made things as difficult as he could for God, knowing that God could stand up to it. See the faith of this man. Make it as hard as possible for God, and Elijah does not flinch. That is the Prophet. That is the Lord Jesus who stands there and says, "Come over onto My ground, stand with Me, and slay this unbelief which cripples, and you will find your peace, your rest, and God can go on with His work. While you are taking any other ground life is arrested, and therefore the end of God is rendered impossible of attainment." The Son, because He is a Son of Man, in order that He might bring many sons to glory, gives life and quickens whom He will. Everything begins there, and everything is gathered up in that.

The last Adam (not the second Adam, for there is not a third one; this is final, it is this or nothing) is a life-giving Spirit, and there is no hope for you if you do not take His ground. The prophetic element is inherent in Man according to God's mind.

In 1 Corinthians 12 there is much said about spiritual gifts, and in the second chapter of Hebrews there is a reference to spiritual gifts. "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; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers

miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit ...”; “God ... bearing witness (the writer is pointing back to a past time) ... with gifts of the Holy Spirit”.

We are not discussing all the gifts, but among them (1 Cor. 12:28) there is the gift of prophesy, the prophetic function, first constituted by the Holy Spirit. If you look closer you will find that everything is very rigid and strictly governed. The apostle is seeking to bring in governing factors because the governing factors were not at Corinth. Things were running wild, and therefore missing the mark, and not attaining God’s end. Even gifts of the Holy Spirit may be diverted from the end for which they are given, and so the apostle seeks to introduce great governing factors in relation to spiritual gifts. What is the great governing law in 1 Corinthians 12? Everything is unto “edifying”. ‘Edifying’ is the word in our translation. Literally it means ‘building up’. What are you building? Look again at chapter 12 and you will find it is the Body of Christ. It is the collective, corporate expression of Christ. It is, then, in the Body of Christ, an increase of Himself. You come back to the same principle in the prophet. The prophet brings into conformity to God’s thoughts for man. Everything is challenged by this. Does it lead to an increase of the Lord Jesus? If not, it has missed its way, it has been misapplied, it has been diverted. Everything is governed by this purpose of God. God has fixed it from eternity, and He is ruling everything. Even gifts of the Holy Spirit are given under this one governing law, that they shall issue in an increase of Christ in His Body; not gifts for themselves, not gifts for the sake of experience, but gifts for an increase of the Lord Jesus.

“Jesus ... my Prophet ...”. That means He stands on behalf of me to satisfy God in all. I, by faith, stand in Him and enter into that satisfaction of God, that peace. What is the peace of God in your heart and in mine? It is just our coming to the place where the Lord has no controversy with us, where the Lord is well pleased. It is a glorious thing, and I am sure your heart leaps to it as you respond to the thought that you and I should be in the place where it is possible for the Lord to say, “I am delighted with you, My child!” How far off we are from that, and how often we are leagues away from that. The enemy is always trying to make us feel that God is against us, or has some controversy with us, to rob us of our peace. When you and I take the ground of the Lord Jesus as our Prophet, we have the peace of God in our hearts which is just that attestation of the Holy Spirit that we are on ground acceptable to God, with which He is quite pleased. After that He simply says, “Stay there and see what I will do; stay there and I will do the rest.”

All this the Lord Jesus set forth in His parable of the Vine and the branches. “Abide in Me ...”, and if you do that you do not need to worry about anything else. What is abiding? It is faith settled, remaining on the ground of what Jesus is. The Lord knows that you and I cannot be other than we are by any effort of our own, and we cannot do other than we do, but He has achieved all, and done all, in a Man, and that is put to our credit through faith, and then that is made good in outworking progressively while we remain there. It is the secret of rest. You and I will never be any good whatever until we have got the first secret, and that is rest, the rest of faith. God does not go on with His work until we have got there, and *we* cannot go on with our work until we have got there. We cannot fight the Lord’s battles until we have got the battle settled in ourselves, we cannot do the Lord’s work until we have come to the place of rest in ourselves. It all begins from rest, and rest is the result of occupying the ground of what Jesus is as our Prophet.

We must say one closing word to conclude this part. It is in John 5:22: “For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son.” Jesus as Prophet takes charge of the whole question of judgement, and judgement is bound up with Him. All judgement is taken up in and by the Son of Man. There are several practical values about that.

The first is this, that judgement entirely rests in One who is Himself God’s standard. That is why you and I must not take judgement into our hands. We are not to judge one another. If you and I were God’s standard then it would be right to judge, but until we are, judgement is not given to us. It is in the hands of One who is God’s standard. All judgement is given to the Son, because He satisfies God. You notice how in this chapter the utterness of Christ with the Father is stressed and emphasised. Take these typical words: “Verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do ...” (verse 19); “I can of Myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge ...” (verse 30). “There is another that bears witness of Me ...” (verse 32). Such words show the perfect oneness between the Son and the Father. That is the prophetic feature. It is the complete expression of divine thoughts, and it is a constituting wholly according to the mind of God. Because there is obedience in the case of the Son of Man, He is constituted wholly according to God’s thoughts. There is perfect oneness between Him and God, therefore, judgement is committed unto Him, and, more than that, all the work of the Holy Spirit is related to the Lord Jesus. There is that great statement concerning the advent of the Holy Spirit: “When He is come, He shall convict the world

in respect of sin, of righteousness and of judgement. Of sin (now note) because they believe not on Me, of righteousness because I go to the Father, of judgement because the prince of this world hath been judged” (John 16:8-11). Consider those three things and, “They believe not on Me.” In other words, they do not take My ground as representing God’s mind for them. They refuse to accept Me as their ground.

“I go to the Father.” No one ever went to the Father unless God was fully satisfied with them. No one could ever be in the Father’s presence unless he fully answered to the Father’s thoughts. There is a way through for Him, and that fact settles the whole question of righteousness. If He were the slightest bit unrighteous He could not go to the Father, but His going to the Father makes it plain that that whole question of righteousness is settled, and the Holy Spirit is coming to convict in respect of righteousness.

“The prince of this world hath been judged.” How was he judged? What was the basis of his judgement? who brought him to judgement and overthrew him? The Son of Man. The basis of judgement is that men prefer to remain on the ground of the judged prince of this world than to take the ground of the Son of Man. That is what brings them into judgement. Judgement is not upon the basis of whether we are more or less sinners, for if you commit one sin and another commits a dozen you will be judged alike. It never is a question of how good you and I may be to escape judgement. A lot of people are carried away with that idea, that if they do not do so many bad things as someone else they will pass in the judgement. The whole ground of judgement is whether we are alive to Satan or alive to Christ. One is judged, condemned for ever; the other is righteous and accepted for ever. That is the ground on which we are by deliberate choice and an act of faith.

We come right back to the whole of this truth, that here the Holy Spirit is doing this work in this threefold way, and the point is that the Holy Spirit is working in relation to the Lord Jesus all the time. And He is dealing with men, He is dealing with us on the basis of what Christ is, and where Christ is, and what He has done. The Lord says, Now, you stand entirely free of judgement or under judgement by your relation to the Son in whom all judgement is gathered up. Let us not think of the Lord Jesus as sitting like a judge in court, weighing up evidence against anyone. That is not the point. Judgement is related to a Person, and God sets the Lord Jesus forth as His standard and says, Now, that is what I require, nothing less. If you will, in faith, take your position on that, then for you

judgement is past, there is no judgement, you shall not come into judgement; but if you do not come in a living way by faith into relation to what He is you come under judgement; the Holy Spirit sees to that. It is all related to the Person.

See how the Lord upheld the prophets. It says concerning Samuel that all Israel knew that he was a prophet, and God did not let one of his words fall to the ground. There you have the principle. Here is the Lord Jesus as Prophet, and the Holy Spirit making Him the beginning and the end of all matters of judgement, sin, righteousness, and saying that those who stand in a faith relationship to Jesus as their Prophet, their representation, do not come under judgement. But those who do not stand there come under judgement by the Holy Spirit, because they are not in Him. You and I have not to commit a lot of sins in order to come under judgement; we have only to stand on our own ground and that happens. I think it was Henry Drummond who, speaking on “How shall we escape if we neglect ...” said, “Here is a man who has taken poison, and the doctor prescribes an antidote and puts it in a glass beside his bed. The man does not have to take that glass and smash it to the ground in order to die, he will die right enough by neglect.” If we stay where we are, take our own ground, we shall come under judgement.

All this is a setting forth of what the Lord Jesus is as our Surety. You may think that this overlaps very much with His priestly work, but there is a stress in His priestly work which is not this, although it may include this. Here is “Jesus, My Prophet”; that is, He who for me satisfies God; the One who brings God pleasure on my behalf as I stand by faith in Him; and the One who mediates to Me the energy of His own divine life to constitute me according to Himself as I trust, believe and abide. The simplicity of that may cause us to stumble, but there are many of the Lord’s people who have struggled on as children of God for many years before they have come to the rest of simple trust in the Lord Jesus. Their Christian life has been a disappointing thing, an up-and-down thing, and they have not come into real rest until they have belonged to the Lord for many years. In meeting them you do not meet one who is at rest, satisfied; you meet a striving, straining, anxious, burdened, troubled one. They tell you emphatically that they trust the Lord Jesus for their salvation, but they are not in the enjoyment of it. Many have known that, so that the burden has rested upon them, broken them and worn them out, and they have come to the place where they have wondered whether the Christian life was a success or whether all that they have had said to them about belonging to

the Lord was true. The fault is with ourselves. After many years of belonging to the Lord, many of His children have only just discovered rest. What is the secret of rest, out of which everything else springs? It is contentment with the Lord Jesus; not contentment with what you are at the moment finding Him to be, but what your faith fastens upon Him as being. You are going to prove what He is, not before you believe, but as you believe. The Lord's purpose at the moment is this, to set forth before us His Son, "Jesus my Prophet".

That may not be your experience. You may not know Him like that. You may not be in the enjoyment of that. He is presented to be that; God's Word declares Him to be that, God's satisfaction with you through faith. God takes up the work of the new creation to conform us to the image of His Son only at the point where we begin to believe. We are never a new creation either at the beginning or in any other measure until we believe. The new creation is wrought out to the full along the line of faith, and every fresh test of faith is an increase of Christ as we go through with it. That is what it is meant for.

If you are restless, crippled, unable to lift yourself up, let me tell you there is a Man who can help you. Oh, I like this so much in this Gospel by John. You remember the pool with the poor impotent, lame folk there, and the Lord Jesus came among them, and on seeing one poor fellow who had been there thirty-eight years, He said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man replies that he has no man to put him in when the waters are troubled. What he wanted was a man; if only he could find a man then it would be alright. In that chapter the Son of Man is brought out. There is your Man. You are made whole by that Man, by what He is, by your faith in Him as what He is. It is the Man we want, the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Very God, the Man who makes us whole.

Are you seeing this? Try to get through all the language and ideas, to the truth. I hope that in the future we are going to sing with something of deeper appreciation in our hearts,

'Jesus, my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend, My Prophet, Priest, and King.'

The Lord open our hearts to see Him, who has been raised from among His brethren, a Prophet before the Lord.

## HIS NATURE AND OFFICE AS PRIEST

*Reading: Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:1-6; 7:11-17; 8:1-6; 9:11.*

Before we proceed with a consideration of Jesus as Priest, there is an added word to be said in relation to the Prophet.

I am hoping that as we go on we are getting away from Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King, to Jesus, *my* Prophet, Priest, and King. That is, that it is not something contemplated as a great, wonderful, blessed truth, but something apprehended, something entered into, not a mind matter but a heart matter. We should quietly, alone with the Lord, enter into the blessedness of the truth by personal appropriation, kneeling and saying, Jesus, *my* Prophet! Jesus, *my* Priest! The Lord grant that it may be so.

There is a sense in which with the Prophet there is no coming down; that is, he remains apart and above. That applies, of course, both to his nature, his person, and his office. He may be among men, but he is apart from men. He may be in a sense on the level of men, sitting where they sit, and yet he is above men. With the prophet in this sense there can be no coming down, because he takes things up at the point where God's full thought is first introduced, and he never comes down from that point, but stays there all the way through. Whatever may happen among men in the loss of that thought, the prophet never accommodates himself, he never compromises, he never lets go one iota of that divine intention. He keeps the exactness of God's thought held firmly and fully and uncompromisingly throughout. A prophet is the most uncompromising being that you could ever meet. He may weep, he may plead, he may be suffering, but he cannot compromise, he cannot let go a little bit. He stands in the place, if need be, of isolation in relation to God's full thought.

All that that means we cannot stay with now. It carries us a very long way. If we followed it out we should see how all those who are going to stand for God's full thought will know a great deal of isolation, will find it

impossible to compromise and to accept a lower level, and they will have to pay a very great price, because they are the prophet of the Lord. We are thinking of the Lord Jesus particularly, and therefore as Prophet He takes things up, before ever there was a lapse, before ever there was a failure or a breakdown, before all the tragedy of human history entered. We find Him at the end with that full thought secured through His having maintained that position, and not having for one instant or in one iota descended to any lower level.

When you come to the priest you have another position. The priest is entirely connected with man's failure. The priest has to recognize it. The priest, without being involved in it; that is, without becoming a part of it and accepting it, without being compromised by it, nevertheless has to come down to it. Priesthood means that something has happened, and you have to get down and meet with something and deal with it. It is something which is not in the original plan of God.

Now we must guard that. Of course, God foresaw everything, and arranged the whole plan of redemption, but God did not predetermine that man should sin and be redeemed. He determined that man should be redeemed if he sinned. Here is something which is not ordained of God, but which has come in, and therefore a special provision has to be made for a new situation. That provision is the priest.

The function of the priest, then, is to deal with that which has come in to make the realisation of God's thought impossible. That is where the priest is related to the prophet. The prophet stands for the full thought, but now it has been violated and lost, and the priest must work with the prophet to deal with that which has come in to hinder and render impossible of realisation.

God's purpose governs everything. We have said that God's purpose, the purpose issuing out of those counsels of the Godhead, was the manifestation of God, and that through man — "Let Us make man ...". You ask, What for? Why? The answer is in the rest of the statement, "... in Our image, and after Our likeness". Why that? To express Ourselves, to reveal Ourselves, to manifest Ourselves. Man was made to reveal God, to express God. Man has failed in the purpose of God. The image and likeness have been at least marred, if not entirely lost, but, more than that, and worse than that, another image and likeness has been struck. The deeper you go into human nature the more you are aware of something which is not only the absence of God but the positive expression of something not God. It is all very well to talk about noble

humanity, but there is something there which, when it really is drawn out, is not only the lack of God but the presence of something altogether the opposite of God, something evil.

That is what has happened, and when you come to look at the state of man in his failure you find that sin (for that is the root thing) has put man in a place altogether the opposite of what God intended. First of all sin has put man in the place of alienation. Then sin has put man in the place of variance with God. Then sin has put man in the place of dispossession of his inheritance in God. Further, sin has put man in the place of bondage, so that he is no longer free. Again, sin has put man in the place of guilt before God. Yet again, sin has put man in the place of judgement. Finally, sin has put man in the place of death. Here are seven things. This is where you find man and it is in relation to all of those that the priest is brought in. The prophet stands where none of those things obtain. He looks down on them, he recognises them, he denounces them, but his function is to declare that God does not and cannot accept this state of things. This is God's thought, and the prophet keeps the vision of God and His thoughts before men. He is a seer. He sees and keeps in view what he knows as to the mind of God. But the priest not only recognises all that, he comes down to deal with it. The function of the priest begins at the point of man's alienation from God, and he functions with the result that from this point man is made nigh to God.

The Lord Jesus takes things up there, and the very first thing that His priestly work says to us is this, that we are made nigh by the blood of His cross. He goes on, and He deals with the variance of man to God. The next thing which the priestly work produces, and Christ declares for us as Priest, is that we are reconciled by His death. From being at variance there is reconciliation. He deals with the matter of our being dispossessed of our inheritance by sin, and His great ministry effects our redemption and the redemption of the purchased possession.

Further, His priestly work touches the state of human bondage. From that ministry there issues the glorious declaration that we have been delivered out of the bondage and kingdom of Satan. As to guilt, the Priest declares to us remission of sins. As to judgement, He secures a basis for our being justified, freed from judgement. As to death, that state into which man is finally brought by sin, He declares that we are in Him, and by His blood made alive again unto God.

You see the sevenfold work of the priest has to do with man's condition, as contrary to God's thought, and as impossible of realising that

thought; and as made nigh, reconciled, redeemed, delivered, forgiven, justified and made alive. Those are all the elementary things of the Gospel of our faith. Every one of them is a great matter in itself. That is where you begin when you contemplate the Priest.

*To be continued*