



*the*  
**Golden**  
*Candlestick*

**JESUS – PROPHET, PRIEST  
AND KING**

**Part 2**

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*Volume 179*

## CHAPTER 3 (CONTINUED)

Now we want to take up what we have just said and recognise one or two other factors as to Christ's priesthood.

Firstly, *the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is related supremely to God's full purpose.* (We come to the second point in the following message.) Perhaps one of the most important things to recognise in a statement like that is that the Gospel of our salvation, whether considered in any one or in all of those terms just used — made nigh, reconciled, redeemed, forgiven, made alive — is not something in itself. We may preach the wonderful and blessed truth that in Jesus Christ we who were far off are now made nigh by the blood of His cross, and we may preach reconciliation, redemption, justification; but let us remember that none of these, nor yet all of them put together, are an end in themselves. Salvation, which compasses them all, is not something in itself. It is all related to God's full purpose, and has to come up to that for which Jesus as Prophet stands. It is to bring back to a place, to take things up again where they broke down, so that there can be a going straight on to that purpose which was fixed originally.

So the full work of the Lord Jesus as Priest brings us only to the beginning of things. We mean by that, that it just brings us back to where God can get on with what He intended at the beginning, a new creation.

Christ's priestly work relates to that full purpose of God. We take note of the fact that the letter to the Hebrews bears that out. You have in chapter 3:1 these words: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling ...". A heavenly calling! That takes you right back to the beginning, right into those divine counsels, the thoughts and intents of God concerning man. What is the heavenly calling? It is to be in fellowship with God for the manifestation of Himself. So the apostle starts there. In the first two chapters he has given us a wonderful introduction in relation to the person of the Lord Jesus, who He is, and what He is. Now the apostle goes on with the work, the office, the function of the Lord Jesus, and at this point he says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of (or partners in) a heavenly calling ...". In the letter to the Ephesians Paul uses another phrase in exactly the same connection when he prays that we may "know what is the hope of His calling". You know quite well that you are in the heavenlies in Ephesians. To believers, the Lord's people, the apostle has said some amazing things. He has taken you right back into those counsels of the Godhead. He has spoken about "His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ", and our being "chosen in Christ", and being

“foreordained unto the adoption of sons”. Then, as though he realised how hopeless it was for him to speak of such immeasurable things, he drops on his knees and prays that we might be given “a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of (y)our heart being enlightened” that we might “know what is the hope of His calling” (Eph. 1:17,18). If you read through the Ephesian letter you will have the explanation of this heavenly calling, and you will discover in that revelation of the church being the fulness of Him that fills all, that His manifold wisdom is manifested unto principalities and powers. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partners in a heavenly calling ...”. There you are back with the supreme thought of God concerning man.

In the second part of this first verse you have to come down to things as you find them, “... consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”. How can you come to the heavenly calling? Consider your High Priest; take account of your High Priest. What do we mean when we refer to “the High Priest of our confession”? It is related to what we have already said. These Hebrew Christians confessed Jesus as their Apostle and High Priest, and now, says the writer of this letter, they are to consider Him whom they have confessed as Apostle and High Priest. In other words, he says, “You have made a confession, you have recognised Him, you have acknowledged Him, you have seen something as to what He is, but it is quite evident that you have nothing like the full content of the meaning of that. You have confessed Him as High Priest; now you need to see what that means.” All the rest of the letter is an unfolding of Jesus as High Priest.

God wants to show us what a Christ we have and to bring us into the knowledge and enjoyment of Him whom we know as Prophet, Priest and King. This letter makes it perfectly clear that that inner and fuller knowledge of Him is of very great importance. What warnings and pleadings there are in this letter in view of the consequences of not knowing Him as Lord! In Hebrews chapter three the apostle goes on to show how Israel fell in the wilderness, and that these Christians may do the same. That is the point. The reason is not because they did not know the Lord, not because they had not acknowledged the Lord, but because they did not know the meaning of the Lord as they should. They had not come to see God’s full thought for them as expressed in Christ, and therefore they fell short. At the end of chapter 5 he speaks to them as those who, when by reason of time they ought to be teachers, have need of someone to teach them the first principles. The Lord wants us to go on to full understanding.

In chapter 3:1 we read of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, and yet this needs to be contemplated in order to enter into its full meaning. Now you pass immediately into chapter 4 and you read: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should be deemed to have come short.” What, then, is the first thing about the inner knowledge of Christ as our High Priest? (This is the point at which we finished our last meditation.) It is coming into rest.

Here is a very precious and blessed thing. Do you notice in the Word of God that when Israel entered into the land, it is put in this way, that they entered into rest, and then they began to take possession? The rest does not lie at the end of all the campaigns, when all the fighting has been done and they settle down in their inheritance. The two things go together, and here in this letter to the Hebrews, rest is mentioned first. It is the work of the High Priest. If you look back to the book of Joshua you will see that it was through the function of the priest that they entered into the land. The priests’ feet stood in the bed of the river and they stood fast until all the people had passed over. It was the priestly function to bring the people into the land. They came into rest on the ground of priestly ministry, and then they started the campaign. If ever there was a campaign characterized by sheer rest it was the campaign against Jericho. It is almost like going out for a daily stroll and going home again. You see what the Lord wants to teach us. He is saying quite clearly, Now look here, all this work that is to be done is not going to be on the ground of your striving, effort, or anxiety; it is going to be on the ground of what I have done, and your resting in it. Now go and walk round quietly on that ground, and do it again, and again, and recognise that all that follows throughout the whole of the campaign is on that ground. If ever you depart from that ground disaster will overtake you. And at the very next step it did, for whatever Achan may have done, it resulted in the reverse of Jericho at Ai.

When they said, Let a few of the people go up — there is no need for *all* the people to go up against Ai — they met with a reverse. They said, Let a few go up and the rest stay at home. You notice when Achan’s sin was dealt with and was put out of the way, then the Lord said to Joshua, “Let all the people go up against Ai.” What was the sin there that brought disaster? It is true that it was Achan-ism, but it was this attitude: *We* are able to do this, and even a few of us can do it. It was coming onto the ground of human confidence, self-sufficiency, and the great lesson that the Lord had taught at Jericho was this: Here is the massive city, which had disconcerted a whole generation and caused them to perish in the wilder-

ness; a mighty, walled-up city, which was narrowly shut up, you might call it the very citadel of the land. You might say, 'If we could get over Jericho we could get over anything.' That is just where they failed. The Lord was saying, 'The whole campaign is represented by Jericho; it is the key to the situation. The lesson you learn there is the lesson which is to govern all the rest. The lesson is that I have done it all, and you go in and possess by simply resting upon what I have done and that is where the priestly element came in.' Enter into rest on the ground of His priestly work, and then you go on from victory to victory.

If there is not rest in us the enemy will score every time; we shall be turned back in the fight, disconcerted and disintegrated. It is essential that you and I first of all enter into rest; and when we have entered into rest what does that mean? It means that the door is open for all the fulness of God's thought. We are in the land when we are in rest, for that is what it means. Now go up and possess all. The land is simply a type of the fulness that is in Christ for us all. The priestly work brings us to the gate of God's full thought, to the place where we begin in relation to all that God ever intended. Oh, that we might consider our High Priest, with the result that we first of all enter into rest, because of all that He has done. He has by His blood made us nigh. Then why stand far off, stand back wondering if perhaps we dare? That is dishonouring to God. That is saying, in effect, 'God has not done what He says He has done.' So that everything else — reconciled, redeemed, delivered, forgiven, justified, made alive — is in Christ our High Priest. Faith brings us into that position, and when you and I have really by faith grasped Him, and what He means as our High Priest, that in Him we are made nigh, and can never be made nearer. Then the fellowship between the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father, is our fellowship. John says, "We have fellowship ..."; "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son" (1 John 1:3,6).

The variance, the enmity is done away in Christ; we are redeemed in Christ, everything that was lost is recovered in Christ. We are delivered in Him. So we could go through all that He stands for in His priestly work. When we grasp it by faith, the first thing is to come to rest of heart, and then the whole land is open before us. There will be battles, conflict, resistance, pressure, and the enemy will try and give us a very bad time, but it is only to try and get us off our ground of confidence, to rob us of our rest; "... consider the apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus".

May He write that word in our hearts: "O rest in the Lord."

## HIS NATURE AND THE OFFICE AS PRIEST

(CONTINUED)

*Reading: Hebrews 3:1; 4:1.*

We now come to another factor as to Christ's priesthood.

The second point about Christ's priesthood is its *universal, heavenly and eternal character, and its values for us*. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews brings us to a consideration of a comparison and a contrast between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20 KJV). "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:1-3 KJV).

Wonderful word! You notice there is an amazing reversing of the order. The first statement is that the Lord Jesus is declared to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and the last statement is that Melchizedek is made after the order of the Son of God. It puts the Lord Jesus right back in priority even to Melchizedek. Melchizedek and his priesthood is constituted after the Son of God. That is a remarkable statement.

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood ... what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law ... For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood ... who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For

he testifies, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:11-17 KJV).

“For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things ...” (Heb. 8:4-5 KJV). That brings us to see the universal, heavenly, and eternal character of Christ’s priesthood and its value for us. The contrasts are clearly recognised in these passages between the earthly and the heavenly, the temporal and the eternal, the local and the universal.

The government of what is heavenly in relation to this dispensation is a thing of primary account to the Lord’s people. You see what the apostle is saying all along in this letter about the heavenly side of things. We read that first word in chapter 3: “... partners (partakers) in a heavenly calling”, and then, “We have a High Priest, who has passed through the heavens”, “who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”; “If He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all”, for those things are only a shadow of the heavenly things. The priesthood of Christ is taken right outside of the limits of this earth and is established in heaven, giving us one more note in connection with the universal purpose of God which is in view.

We saw in our former meditation that the prophet has to do with the universal, the heavenly, and the eternal thought of God for man; that he stands to represent that, and to keep it in view, and to demand the constituting of all things according to that. Now we see Christ’s priesthood being carried right out of those dimensions, carried out of Israel, the local, the limited and the earthly, and out to the heavenly, to the universal.

It is just there that you have the specific difference between Melchizedek and Aaron. I do not think that this letter is intended to teach that there was nothing in Christ’s priesthood according to the Levitical order. Certainly there was. All that is set forth in the Levitical priesthood, the offerings and so forth, is taken up in the Lord Jesus. The apostle does not mean that the Lord Jesus has no connection whatever with the Levitical order, but what he means is this, that while He takes up that order and fulfils all that type, He goes beyond that and links with something else. Now note the difference. In the priesthood of Melchizedek you have nothing that is according to the Levitical order so far as you can trace. We mean this, that the priesthood of Melchizedek is not the priesthood of bloody sacrifice; it is the priesthood of offerings to God. In Aaron and his order it is the sacrifices made by the shedding of

blood. In Melchizedek it is the offerings to God without blood.

There are offerings to God apart from the shedding of blood, apart from the slaying and the death, but when you get into the realm of such offerings you have got back to a place of direct communion with God. You have got outside of the time realm, because it is into that that sin has come, and the sacrifices made by blood are required in a propitiatory way. When you leave that realm, and get to the place where, without the shedding of blood, you can offer to God, you have got back into the eternal, back into the heavenly, you have got away from the earthly.

Here the Lord Jesus in His priesthood comes down to the Aaronic level, and in the shedding of His own blood and the offering of Himself as a burnt-offering He meets the demand of the time conditions. But that is only incidental to the whole thing that has come in because of an awful necessity. When He has done that, then He carries it out into the eternal priesthood and sees there man offered to God for God's pleasure, man standing in God's pleasure in eternity, according to God's eternal thought. That is the place of this statement, "... made like unto the Son of God", reversing the whole thing, a priesthood which means a perfect acceptance with God, a priesthood which means God is well satisfied. It is an awful story of bloodshed in propitiation. You have come away from that scene of death, suffering and sacrifice for propitiation, and you have come into the heavens. You have come away from what is temporal and you have got back into the eternal; away from what is just local as in Israel, into the realm where everything is universal, according to God's mind.

That is the great point of difference between Aaron and Melchizedek, and when it is all summed up it just means that Christ's priesthood stands related to the universal purpose of God. And that universal purpose of God comes in when that which was local and earthly rejected God's Son and set Him aside.

We pointed out in our previous meditation that the Lord Jesus adopted the title of Son of Man in view of His rejection. His first usage of this title was when He called His disciples to follow Him, and said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Surely that is in view of His rejection. He is not accepted; He has no place. He came to His own, and they received Him not; "... the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head". That is the Prophet, and it is when the Prophet is rejected by Israel that the universal comes in, and then, to realise the universal, He fulfils the priesthood of Aaron and carries it out to what is eternal and heavenly in the thought of

God. It is just the difference between Israel and the church. One is local, earthly, temporal; the other is heavenly, universal, eternal; and it is into the value of the priesthood which is related to that that you and I are brought.

Now there is this further thing that comes in in that connection. It is the finality of Christ's priesthood and of His priestly work. This letter lays a finger of stress upon that note: "... He ever lives to make intercession". Then there is that word "perfect". If the Levitical priesthood had made things perfect, why should another order of priesthood be necessary? That is the argument and the question. Such another is required, and the explanation is that the priests of the Levitical order could make nothing perfect because they died. They carried their work so far and then died, and someone else had to take it up; then that one died, and someone else took it up and they were never able to reach finality. The argument of the apostle here is that He, after the power of an indissoluble life, exercises His priesthood. He ever lives, and therefore He is able to save to the end, or to the full. It is not necessary to remind you that that statement, "... He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him ...", as it is commonly used in evangelistic work today is limited; it is used to mean that He is able to save right down to the depth of your being. Well, that is true, but that is not the meaning here. The context points out that because He never dies, the Son of God, after the power of an endless life, has a perfect work. He can go right on with His work to the end. He ever lives. It is the finality of Christ's priestly work that is stressed. What does that mean? It means that everything that hinders God's purpose being realised has been fully and finally met in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. It has all been dealt with, and He holds it as something which is eternal, that cannot pass, that cannot die. The Priest and His work are one; they will not have an end and will continue for ever.

We are forbidden to entertain the idea of there ever being a time when the work of the Lord Jesus as Priest would cease to be available to us, or, putting that in another way, cease to be efficacious for us while we are looking to Him. He holds that work beyond all the power of death to touch it, beyond all the power of sin to corrupt it, beyond all the power of earth to change it, beyond all the power of time to limit it. He has taken it right outside of all those things which belong here, and it goes on. We are commanded to consider Him as One who holds a work that is final and perfect on our behalf. Everything has been dealt with.

You can follow that more closely in this letter, and see that it is

worked out in this way. In chapter 9 you have the statement that those priests of the Levitical order had, year by year, to bring new sacrifices, because these offerings never made anything perfect, and there had to be a constant repetition of sacrifice and offering, and nothing ever got to an end. Now the Lord Jesus, by one offering for ever, has made perfect. It is what we call the finished work of the Lord Jesus upon which we are bidden to rest.

Let us come back to what lies behind this letter, and see what is the ground of our entering into all that God has intended, reaching the fulness, getting through to the ultimate. How shall it be? What is our assurance? By what means shall we attain? The answer is, not by effort and striving of ourselves, but by resting upon that which is perfected for ever in Him, resting upon an eternally accomplished work.

The wonder of this is seen in this special emphasis that that perfect work is taken by Christ into heaven where it is beyond the reach of all earthly things, all time influences, and that it continues in heaven in the power of an endless life. The work goes on in the power of an indissoluble life. The value of that is that there is a subtle peril of regarding the Lord Jesus as having died on Calvary and having paid the price, atoned for our sins, so long ago, and we come and put our faith in that, and accept that as something done so long ago. There it took place, and there it ended. In viewing things in such a way there is a very serious loss and a great danger. What this letter says is this: That was a timeless thing, outside of time, and is today just as new, fresh and throbbing with vitality as it was nineteen hundred years ago. It is as though the Lord Jesus died today for you and for me, and tomorrow and the next day, and all the days. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever". The impressive thing is that when you get right through to whenever those times are in the book of the Revelation, they are unveilings of end times, and some of them are unveilings of times beyond the end, you still find a Lamb. The exact words in the original are these: "... as though it had been newly slain". It is not a Lamb that was slain two thousand years before, but as though it had just been slain. He is outside of time.

You and I will still fail. We have not yet attained, neither are we already perfect. But we are not going to accept failure, and say, 'Well, we shall fail to the end; we don't have to try, we can be careless.' Imperfection will be found in us right up to the end. Oh, that is most disconcerting! Yes, but the priestly work of the Lord Jesus goes on beyond that, and is new every day. If we lived according to the old Levitical order, after we

sinned, we would bring a sacrifice, and then we would be at rest as far as any ritual could bring rest. It brought that sense of satisfaction that you had obeyed God. Well, the next day you sinned, and you brought another offering, and so on, day after day. But this sacrifice of the Lord Jesus does something more than that. It abides as an eternal, present thing in value, not only as a bit of ritual but as an entire relief for the conscience. It is a power, not an outward, objective observance. It is a power in the life when we have real faith apprehension of the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. It brings rest of heart and a peace which abides while we rest upon what that sacrifice stands for continually. "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "If we walk in the light as He is in the light ..." (1 John 1:7). How shall we walk in the light? Just that way: "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive ...". "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son keeps on cleansing (that is the tense there) ...". It is something that is living all the time, every day, and it goes right on. How shall we get through? We shall be brought to God's full purpose by realising that Christ's priesthood continues in its value until the last bit of sin in the redeemed is removed, until the last call for cleansing has been answered, until the whole work of God has been accomplished and He gets man according to His thought. Until then, the priestly values of Christ's work will continue. They are outside of time. They are outside of the earth. They are universal. They are heavenly.

Now, of course, the strong emphasis in this letter, finally, is upon faith. We tend to take up the great faith chapter of Hebrews and make faith something in itself. Oh, yes, by faith all these people triumphed, from Abel onwards. It was their faith that did it. We begin to ask the Lord to give us faith, and we concentrate upon the idea of faith as some *thing*. We detach faith, and make faith a thing in itself. You have to read that chapter as an accumulation of all that has preceded, and see that all the universal, heavenly, eternal work of the Lord Jesus as High Priest connects with the original thought of God to have man for the expression of Himself, and to realise it means that you have to have faith in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. Faith is not something in itself. The value of faith is in the Object upon which faith is set. Remember that; otherwise we begin to talk about faith in degrees. There may be more or less faith, but the value of faith finally is not so much the degree of the thing called faith, it is the apprehension of the Person in whom faith rests. It is the

result of faith that makes faith small or great.

You may have what you would call a small faith, but if what you would call small faith fastens upon the Lord Jesus so tenaciously that you have no other object or ground of hope but Himself, that is not little faith, that is great faith, and the Lord has always called that sort of thing great faith. Little faith is just that which is not absolutely anchored to Him. It is looking round for something else to support it if He should fail. Great faith is that which has no alternatives but Himself, and it simply takes Him as the last word. That is greatness of faith. You notice that there are instances of that in the Gospel, where surprisingly the Lord Jesus says, "Great is thy faith." When you look to see what this great faith was, it was simply that someone said, 'Lord, You are my last hope, and I count on You, and I am sure You will not fail.' That is great faith.

In Hebrews 11 faith is simply that. Here is the purpose of God. Oh, it is such a great purpose as to disconcert you as you contemplate it, and make you feel how hopeless you are. Yet it is God's will, it is God's intention. It is something that you have got to lay hold of as God's thought for you, that eventually you shall be one in whom and through whom God is manifested. That is the cumulative affect as seen in the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, which is the church, having the glory of God. That is the end. Oh, here you realise it. "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." That is the purpose. "... the new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10,11). That is the church. That is God's intention. Shall we ever attain? Will it ever be realised that we shall have the glory of God and reach all the matchless thought of God? How can it be? Only by faith in the High Priestly work of the Lord Jesus. That will do it. That High Priestly work takes you right back to God's full thought and deals with all that has intervened to hinder and destroy God's thought. Then your faith lays hold of Him and His High Priestly work. By so laying hold of Him you come eventually to that place God purposed before times eternal, having the glory of God.

We cannot pass from this without remembering that the central element in the High Priestly work of Christ is His blood, and the blood is always represented as something which abides eternally in its efficacy, as though it were shed every moment afresh. It is set forth as living now, not something done and past, but the Life which is in that blood, and that blood which is the Life, is incorruptible, indissoluble, indestructible. There is a vitality in that blood which is not subject to anything that

belongs to this earth. He has gone through with His own blood, and that blood is speaking in the presence of God. It is audible, it is vital, and so we are called upon to stand in the abiding value of the blood of Jesus every day, against all that which has intervened in the life of the race to hinder God's purpose. The precious blood of Jesus Christ testifies against sin, Satan, the flesh, and everything that rises up to hinder the reaching of God's end in living power. Faith in the blood destroys the power of that for us, and delivers us from all that has come in to prevent the realisation of God's purpose.

We can understand why Satan and all that is Satan-influenced hates the blood of Jesus Christ and would eliminate it from testimony. For the simple reason that in the final issue, when heaven is seen to be stripped and empty of all the powers of Satan, and he is cast down, no more place being found for him in those heavenly realms, it is because of the blood of the Lamb. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony..." (Rev. 12:11). It is understandable why the enemy is against the blood. It is the secret power of his destruction, and the destruction of all his work, his deposing, and the writing of utter futility over all his age-long efforts against God. Wonderful will be the story that that blood will tell at the end. Here is the marvellous purpose of God, then a coming in of forces to destroy it, and prevent it; and what a story this is of the operation of those forces and all the sin that this world has ever known, (and there is enough sin in one little corner of this world to cause you to despair if you realised it all). The cumulative sin of all the ages, all the diabolical evil activity of the power of Satan operating through the ages, all the misery, suffering, wretchedness and everything else that Satan has done in the effort to defeat God's original purpose, at long last will fail, and God's purpose will be realised. The earth shall be filled with the glory of God, which says that all this story of satanic activity has proven vain, been rendered nil; it has utterly failed and God has achieved His end. The blood of Jesus Christ, the testimony of the blood, is the secret of God's triumph. That is the heart of the High Priestly work of the Lord Jesus. We are commanded to fix our faith upon the fact of His blood, and to rest in the fulness of His priestly work on our behalf.

## HIS NATURE AND THE OFFICE AS KING

*Reading: Philippians 2:5-11; Psalms 105:16-22; Hebrews 2:5-10; John 5:20; 13:3.*

“He sent a man before them ...” (Psalms 105:17).

From Joseph we move to Him who is known to us as the Son of Man, the Man Christ Jesus, albeit the Son of God. The first thing that has impressed itself upon me in connection with that clause is the wonder of what is bound up with it, “He sent a man before them ...”.

You read the story of Joseph, and what you read is of a certain young man who dreamed some wonderful dreams, which put him in a place of advantage over his elder brothers, and put them at a great disadvantage. He was tactless enough to tell them his dreams, and as the result got what he might have expected — a desire put into action to get him out of the way. They first put him into a pit, then, being fearful as to what might happen to him, took him up and sold him to some traders, who took him away to Egypt, where he was sold again and became a servant in the house of a certain nobleman. Trouble developed, and he was sent to prison. You know the rest of the story.

Over all that this is written: “He (that is, God) sent a man before them ...”. God was the instigator of the whole thing. God initiated it, and carried the whole thing through, and not one fragment of it was outside of the divine, sovereign control. The whole thing was according to purpose, and is summed up in this amazing statement of a very few words, “He sent a man before them...”. God recognised a need; and, to meet that need, required a man who was perfected according to His own mind through suffering. So God fixed a cross of suffering, with a throne at the end, for that man, and when He brought him through the suffering to the throne He met the need, and the need was no less a need than that of life itself.

There is the story. In type, Joseph; in Antitype, the far higher and

more eternal fulfilment, the Man Christ Jesus. But there is much more than that in it. We want to look closer, and we can take Joseph, to some extent, as our interpreter to lead us to Christ.

First of all, we find that Joseph in a peculiar way was the son of the father's love. More than all his brethren he was that, and that very title is given to the Lord Jesus. There were wayward ones at a distance from the father, brethren who were very far morally and spiritually from the father's thought. Joseph's brothers broke their father's heart, and were far away, out of touch. The father commissions the son of his love to go down to look into the condition of those brothers, with an anxious and earnest solicitude for their well-being. The son of his love is the sent one, the apostle of the father.

You will see before we get very far that we are moving in the letter to the Hebrews, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partners in a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus" (Heb. 3:1).

Joseph went with his commission in relation to the state and the need of those brethren afar off, but they knew that he had intimated to them certain claims. He had told them of his dreams, which, if they came true, would see him in exaltation, in a place of power and dominion, high and lifted up, with his brethren as his subjects, acknowledging him as lord. They knew his claims, and when he came to his own they that were his own received him not. They called him, "this dreamer", and they hated him for his dreams.

We pause to say that unless you have fears you do not hate. I also venture to say that if you were a big brother who had a little brother who told his dreams you would say, All right, little man, get on with your dreams; when you get older perhaps you will not dream like that. What big brother would turn upon his little brother and hate him and want to get rid of him because he had dreamed something like that? But you see they were afraid. They had some kind of registration in them that there was something in this, and they hated him for that.

There is a little fragment which the evangelist puts in his narrative of the trial of Jesus before Pilate, when the Jews and the rulers and the high priest had brought Him to Pilate and accused Him. Pilate takes a certain attitude, concerning which the evangelist says, "Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him up" (Matt. 27:18). That finds them out. They were afraid of losing something.

Joseph, rejected and cast out by his brothers, is slandered and misrepresented in the world, suffering years under misrepresentation. And yet

there resides in the heart of that one who is hated, rejected and misrepresented, the very wisdom by which the greatest problem that has ever confronted men should be solved, and the greatest need that ever men have known should be met, the need of life when death is everywhere. The wisdom to solve that problem was there as a secret in the heart of that one all the time. Eventually that wisdom came out, as you know, and proved the salvation of those brethren and of multitudes more.

Consider this: “Christ (crucified), the wisdom of God and the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). There resides within the very person of the crucified Lord, the rejected One, the slandered One, the misrepresented One, the One who has suffered for generations under a lie, the secret, the wisdom to solve the deepest problem of this universe, the problem of the overcoming of death by a Life which cannot be touched of death. Oh, how men have applied themselves to solve the problem of life. Life is wrapped up in one Person, and there is no life apart from Him, and, strangely enough, that wisdom is in Christ crucified.

Now, if we get to the heart of this thing, the truth is that it was Joseph’s visions that caused all the trouble. In the case of the Lord Jesus it was the fact that by a divine ordaining, settled in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, He was to be Lord of all that every knee should bow to Him, all things in heaven and on earth. That caused all the trouble. How similar to the story of Joseph that is! You remember Joseph’s two dreams. Firstly he saw all the sheaves doing obeisance to his sheaf, and secondly he saw the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars, bowing to him. We read that every knee shall bow to the Lord Jesus, “things in heaven, and things on earth ... and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ...”. It is that vision, that divinely determined destiny for the Son of God’s love that is the cause of all the trouble. There is something satanic behind this rejection and hatred.

That is why we said that the brethren of Joseph were stung. You may have thought that was an exaggeration, a straining of things, but we were implying something more. When men do not take things like that benignly and in good spirit, but are moved to hatred and malice, you may be sure that there is more than a human sensing of a situation, and the Lord Jesus dragged that out into the light. He told the Jews that they were of their father the devil, and he was a murderer from the beginning. There is something sinister behind all this.

What is the nature of the malice and hatred that was behind it? There is one who knows that Joseph is destined to be lord, and he moves every-

thing to frustrate that, to prevent that being realised. So he will throw him into a pit, he will slander him and bring him under misrepresentation; anything to rob him of the fulfilment of that design that he should be lord. Yes, it is the vision that is the cause of all the trouble. Yet in the shadows behind it all God is sending a man before them; through it all the man is going on. They may seek to frustrate the course and cut it short, to impede, to entangle, anything rather than that that end should be reached; and yet the Sovereignty is using their very interference to reach the end. That is the marvel and that is what we want to get at. The very cross itself achieved the end which God planned, while the devil and men intended it to be the very thing that hindered and prevented God's purpose. Men in league with the devil said, "Crucify Him"; "We will not have this Man to reign over us"; cast Him out, destroy Him. God stands over it all and uses that to reach the end which He has purposed. Oh, the wonder of that word: "... He emptied Himself ... became obedient unto death ..." (Phil. 2:8). He is not falling victim to the adversary. He is obeying the Father, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. For that very reason, simply because He was obedient unto the death of the cross, "... God hath highly exalted Him ...". That is another side to the story. Read Hebrews chapter two again in the light of what God is doing as He sends a Man before them. Let these words come home to us in a new way: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour ...". But what is more, "... that He by the grace of God should taste death in the behalf of every man". That is the reversing of the satanic intention. Satan meant Him to suffer death, to die, and He did not refuse to go into death, and in tasting death He did so in the behalf of every man. The apostle Paul tells us elsewhere that His tasting of death was in the nature of a swallowing up of death: "O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55). It is gone, swallowed up in Him who tasted death on behalf of every man! That is how God sovereignly sends a Man before them, governing all that the opposing forces meant for destruction, and turning those very things to realise the end which they were intended to hinder.

So we find that Joseph's suffering was all governed by God in relation to his reign and his service. The value of the Lord Jesus as exalted is derived from His suffering. He is able to occupy that position and to serve us in the power of His endless, indestructible, incorruptible life, because of His suffering. His service springs out of His suffering, and it is the service of One who is exalted, and His exalted service as the Giver of life

issues from the very fact that He has suffered.

We can stop there with Joseph for the moment, to gather this all up into a few comprehensive words. In these meditations we have moved all too imperfectly over the ground of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King, and when you come to the King you take up all that the Prophet and the Priest represent, and put that in the throne of glory. When you look at Hebrews two you see all three aspects in one statement. Look at it again in its context: “Not unto angels did He subject the inhabited world to come whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? (I think it is Rotherham who gives the more perfect translation of those words: ‘What is man, that thou makest mention of him? Or the son of man that thou puttest him in charge?’ That carries you further). Thou madest him for a little while lower than the angels; thou crownedst Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet ... But we see not yet (not realised yet so far as man is collectively, as constituted according to God’s mind. It is the divine intention, it is only a matter of a little postponement) all things put under Him. But (as an earnest of that) *we see Jesus* (it would have made a difference if the writer had said, ‘We see the Son of God.’ It would have been quite true, but would have missed the point. We see Jesus of Nazareth, the Man Christ Jesus; the man-ward aspect is in view) crowned with glory and honour (He sent a man before them: they are following on) ...” (Heb. 2:5-9).

That is the Prophet. We have seen that the prophet is the one who embodies the full thought of God concerning man, and that great Prophet of mankind and of the Lord has been sent on before. There in the presence of God the Man Christ Jesus, in the capacity of the Prophet, sets forth God’s thought in fulness. He is the embodiment of it. So that there is the Prophet in the throne; that is, God’s realisation concerning man is there in the throne.

The Priest is the one who comes down to deal with all that has come in to interfere with and ruin God’s intention concerning man — sin with all its consequences and power. Here we see Jesus, who for the suffering of death tasted death in the behalf of every man. That is the Priest. And the Priest is in the throne. He is “crowned with glory and honour”. How does Hebrews begin? “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Heb. 1:8).

Read Psalm 45 again in the light of that. He is sitting there in kingly

majesty. Gathered around Him is the court, “all thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces ... Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women; upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir ...” (Psalm 45:8,9 KJV). That Psalm is quoted here in the letter to the Hebrews.

There is the Prophet, Priest and King in this one portion. It is man gathered up into the Man as God intended man to be. There he is in his Representative. “He sent a man before them” and in that Man is the very life by which the others will come.

We could go back to Joseph and see his threefold office. The prophet is the visionary, the one who has the vision of man’s dominion when man is according to God’s mind. Then with regard to the priest, you follow Joseph and see him interceding on behalf of his brethren, making intercession for them that they shall be brought into the goodly land. In connection with the king, there he is upon his throne.

Joseph is a faint picture of the Lord Jesus, the greater Joseph. Everything is gathered up into that Man, Prophet, Priest and King, because God is superintending, sovereignly over all, working according to a divine design. Our life depends upon Him. Our fulness depends upon Him. Our reaching of God’s intended end for us, the end which is set forth in these marvellous words of Psalm 8: “What is man ...?” “Not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come whereof we speak, but one in a certain place hath testified saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou make mention of him?” In what connection? Dominion over the inhabited earth to come. It is all gathered up in the Lord Jesus, and we can only come to God’s intention as we are in Christ Jesus by faith. But only by being in Christ by faith, upon the ground of His work as the great Prophet, our Representative, the great High Priest, our Mediator, the great King, our Lord, shall we come to God’s full thought. In other words, on the ground that He is our Representative, our Atonement and our Atoner, that He is Lord and Sovereign of our lives, King, having absolute dominion over us, we can and shall most assuredly come to God’s thought in the end, to be as God intended from eternity that we should be. “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” “He was made perfect through suffering”, and we are to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, perfected and glorified.

“Jesus, my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend, My Prophet, Priest, and King; My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End.” Can we, shall we say, “Accept the praise I bring”?

## **THE EXPRESSION OF JESUS AS PROPHET CONTINUED IN THE CHURCH**

The book of the Acts opens with an implication; "... all that Jesus began to do and to teach ...". The implication is that His work was not finished, there was a sense in which it was but the beginning, and therefore a continuation would follow. The beginning was in Himself in person on the earth; the continuation is by His Spirit in the church. If it were true that in His person He took up and fulfilled all the divine thought and idea of the prophet, the priest and the king, and He leaves this earth not having finished, then surely He continues in that threefold capacity in the church. So it is for us to recognise the ministry of Christ and the function of Christ in that threefold capacity in the church.

### **A word of introduction**

Let us look at one or two introductory things before we come immediately to that consideration. The first is concerning *the abiding value of the revelation of the church*. We should recognise that that revelation abides in its value in spite of all that has happened. There are quite a lot of people who, because of what they see as to the disappointing history of the church, and what is called the state of the church, have abandoned that ground and adopted a course of what they would call evangelism: "Let us get on with the simple work of soul winning, for the church is in ruins, and irreparably so!" I do not see anything in the Word to warrant such an attitude. The revelation of the church has been given for the dispensation, and it holds good today as much as it did when it was first given, and is as important as ever it was. We must not be moved away from it, and from the importance and value of it, because of the conditions which we see around us. The fact is that in the realm of spiritual life the values of the revelation of the church are as potent, as mighty, as helpful as ever they were, and they still operate. Those values

are far deeper than perhaps we have yet come to realise.

So it is important to remind ourselves that the revelation of the church has an abiding value which is undiminished right to the end. There is a great peril attached to an evangelism divorced from the church, and the weaknesses consequent upon that course are seen everywhere. We must remember that evangelism proceeds from the church and comes back to the church. It is the church doing the work, and all the work of the church is for the building up of the church. You cannot divorce a function of that kind any more than you can take some function from your Body and separate it and send it out into the outside objective realm apart from your Body. It is there to do its work in relation to the Body. Evangelism is essential unto the building up of the Body, and it is the Body building itself up. To divorce that or any other function of the Body from the whole is to mean a large measure of weakness and failure.

Another thing that we want to point out here is the importance of giving God credit for meaning more than we see and more than He says. It is a thing that is lost sight of and forgotten. It is a mark of our superficiality, carelessness or thoughtlessness. If there is one thing that is characteristic of a life which really goes on with God, it is that it is constantly discovering that God meant more than was realised when first that thing was seen. It means more and more, and when you go on into the greater fulnesses of God's meaning about things you are tremendously impressed; you come to a state of awe. So we must give heed to things, not according to what we apprehend and understand as to their meaning, but because God has said it. And we may take it that if God says a thing all the fulness of infinite wisdom lies behind that utterance. If you could measure God's thoughts, God's mind, God's intent, then you might come to limitation. But that is not possible, and so within every statement of the Lord there is a universe of meaning. If we could get behind the simplest statements we should discover they led on deeper and deeper.

The apostle Paul said concerning his being caught up into the third heaven, that he saw unspeakable things which it is not lawful for a man to utter; therefore there was much that Paul could not utter. He knew things which he could not, dare not speak. Were they, therefore, things which were of no value to the Lord's people? If they were of value to the Lord's people surely they ought to be brought out. Or was the restraint upon Paul because of something else, that if those things were spoken, because of their condition men would find them difficult, and would be put under too great a responsibility? I think that is the explanation. I believe that there

are many things that the Lord would say, but you and I are not prepared to accept them; men are not willing to have them; and the Lord holds them back because of the responsibility of knowledge, and it is not lawful to speak of them for that reason.

If you and I could come to the place where, at any cost (and that is saying a great deal), we are willing to go on with all the revealed mind of God, we shall get a very much larger revelation than the average believer. I verily believe that was just what Paul represented and that it was because of his utterness and his willingness to pay the full price, not just of laying down his life in one act but going on throughout years of living martyrdom, that he could have such full revelation. Very largely that was the explanation. There is revelation for those who would pay the price, but for those who are not prepared to do so there are things which it is not lawful to utter; they cannot be revealed, they have to be held back.

The point is this, that there are things which cannot be made known to us because we are not ready for them, but we have got to give God credit for meaning much more than He says. We must not give to things the value which we see that they hold, we have got to take the attitude towards the Lord of openheartedness: ‘Lord, You may mean a great deal more in that than I can see and accept at the moment. As far as I can see I cannot go all that way; nevertheless my heart is open. If I cannot accept it at the moment, my heart is open to You to reveal to me the truth!’ That is a real openness and teachableness, which makes so much possible.

The third thing is this, that when we come to the church side of this truth — not a departing, separate thing, but the other side of the truth — we must recognise that we come into *the realm of the infinite and unspeakable grace of God*. So often when we speak about the church, people think of it as truth, as teaching, as something in itself which is optional. But, oh, we have seen the Lord Jesus a little, what He is, and what He stands for in the presence of God on our behalf. As we have contemplated Him our hearts have gone out and we have said, “Jesus ... my Prophet, Priest and King”. Now, in relation to that, the church is brought in, and all that which is true of Him is to be expressed in and through the church. What is our reaction? Is it the reaction that that is teaching, that is truth, or is it, What unspeakable grace!

So it is when you come to open the letter to the Ephesians, where more than anywhere else the church is unveiled and that word “grace” is repeated: “the riches of His grace”; “unto me who am less than the least was this grace given” (Eph. 3:8). What grace? To proclaim “the unsearch-

able riches of Christ". That is the calling of the church, "according to the riches of His grace, ... that we should be unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:7,12). We are not dealing with truth, we are dealing with the grace of God to us, that we should constitute that Body in which, through which all that Christ is, is to be manifested and displayed to the universe. Let us remember that as we go on, and all the time seek to keep before us that this is not some truth, but this is some grace. This is not some teaching, this is the infinite grace of God to usward. This is not some way that we are called to take. It is some realm of grace into which we are called to stand and are privileged to stand.

Having said that we now come to at least the beginning of the other side of this great revelation of Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, and we work to that perhaps by a somewhat lengthy process.

We first come to the prophet, and we have seen as to the prophet that the deepest and innermost significance of the prophetic function is the representation of God's full thought, and the maintenance of that full thought. The prophet comes forth in a living expression of all the thought of God concerning men, and he stands there uncompromisingly to demand that that thought shall govern, and that everything shall be constituted according to that comprehensive and perfect thought or mind of God. That simply means that all the spirit of prophecy heads up to Him. He stands as the full-orbed revelation of the mind of God, and challenges everything in relation thereto, and this in Man-form, as centred in a Man, so that in Him God has the Man according to His own mind. We have to work to that in relation to the church, by recognising what has come in in a special way as to the Body of Christ. In this matter, I think it is of primary importance that we know exactly what did come in through Paul. I am not sure that people are able to recognise or clearly define just exactly what did come in through Paul, so it will be of value and much help to see where Paul differed from the other apostles.

Before you can touch the differences you have to recognise the similarities. There was no difference between Paul and the other apostles on a great many points. As to Christ, there was no difference. There was no difference between them on the matter of sin, repentance, justification, regeneration, sanctification, the supernatural world, baptism, the Lord's Table, the Lord's coming again as a truth; on evangelism or fellowship, the Gentiles admitted to the Gospel, and the church as a reality. On all those matters they were all one, and there was no difference at all. There may have been on one or two of those points a larger emphasis, or perhaps

a little fuller understanding between them, such as on the matter of the Lord's coming. Paul says many things about baptism that are not said by the others, but I do not think there was any difference in their position.

Now you have to see the *difference* between Paul and the others. The difference was not as to salvation, but it was as to the saved; that is, it was not as to the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. The difference was that both Jew and Gentile disappeared. The others were seeking the salvation of Jews, and Gentiles being admitted to the Gospel, and they still saw them as Jews and Gentiles. But Paul differed altogether from that position, and in what he called "my Gospel", his revelation, in which Jew and Gentile, and indeed all other earthly distinctions, disappeared. And the saved were not saved Jews and saved Gentiles, saved barbarians, Sythians, bondmen, freemen, but the saved were one new man apart from all those distinctions and differences. Paul stood apart from the twelve on that ground, and that is a major difference between him and them.

Then Paul differed on the matter of the heavenly nature of the church as the Body of Christ, as to its timelessness and its universality. His position demanded the breaking altogether of the earthly system, and what he saw and was occupied with was a period, a dispensation, in which God had ceased to be occupied with the earth as such, and to be wholly occupied with the heavenly. It is a revolutionary thought. That will make some upheavals if it is true. As such, God is not concerned with the nations, nor with doing anything on this earth. He is not building or planning or constituting anything on this earth throughout the dispensation. God is constituting a heavenly thing, and when He has finished that the earth will be abandoned to judgement. By the development of His plan in different stages eventually it will be swept clean, and that which has been done in this dispensation, having been suspended from the earth for the time being, will come to it and occupy it. That is a point where Paul's revelation differed.

He further saw that that church which was being taken out from the nations and made heavenly, had as its destiny the government of the world. The government of this world is bound up with the church, and it is to be the administrative Body in the ages to come. The other apostles went so far, and then stopped short of this full revelation given to Paul.

It is true that John gave us some visions which seem to be entirely in keeping with this. In the book of the Revelation you have this, but John gave them as visions, not as teaching. Paul gave them as a heavenly system of truth, to be applied in practice in the dispensation; John gave them as a vision of realisation at the end.

We are wrong, of course, in speaking of ‘Paul’ and ‘John’ when we touch things like that. We should say ‘the Holy Spirit through Paul and John’ was working with the same thing in view, but we are noting the uniqueness, the peculiarity of the revelation given to Paul. So Paul stands alone, and that by divine ordination. It is quite wrong to say that a mistake was made and Paul ought to have been the twelfth apostle. Not at all. You cannot fail to see the difference in the revelation given to Paul. Theirs was one line; it was true as far as it went, it was of great value up to a point, but then it stopped. Paul alone went on, and he remains alone to the last. They could not follow him. They tried. Peter said, “Even as our beloved Paul hath said in all his letters ... things hard to be understood” (2 Pet. 3:15,16). He tried to follow, but he could not go all the way. Paul remains alone to the last.

His attitude and position as to the earthly and heavenly order resulted in his being alone. He was not out for Israel ultimately; he was not out for an earthly church, either of Jews or Gentiles or a combination of both; his whole value was the heavenly. He was governed by a heavenly calling, a heavenly vocation, a heavenly vision, a heavenly purpose. Unless you have realised that you have failed to understand the secret of Paul’s endurance, that which supported him when everything around was crashing, and what might have been called his life work was going to pieces. He seems unshaken. In the days when, so far as the earth was concerned, all that had come into being through him was breaking down, he seemed to be most triumphant. This proves that Paul saw the heavenly side of the work of God in the dispensation, and that the earthly was merely a passing phase. God was taking up, as it were, into heaven, out of the earth, that which would abide, and that which would not abide would break down. Governed by that heavenly conception he stood alone. It was that very fact that caused his aloneness.

*To be continued.*