

Jesus Christ Prophet, Priest, and King

During the past 2000 years, many great men have played important parts in the affairs of the world. But none have exercised such a prodigious and enlightening influence upon the human race as the one known as Jesus Christ. It matters not where we look--into religion, politics, the arts or literature--we see a far-reaching change since the days when Jesus walked throughout the land of Judea. When he appeared upon the scene, the Jews, although living in the land of Israel, were subject to the power of the Roman Empire. A few years after his crucifixion, the nation was punished for rejecting him. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people were scattered among the nations. In this condition they have remained for almost 1950 years. But during the first World War, their land was freed from the Turk, and opened up for colonization under the protection of Britain.

When Jesus appeared, the whole Gentile world was in a state of idolatry. The results of his teaching were so wide-spread, and so lasting that, within three centuries most of the pagan temples were either converted into churches for Christian use, or were removed and replaced by buildings designed for that purpose. Other pronounced effects of the work of Jesus are that wars have been fought, kingdoms have been overturned, and--sadly--countless thousands of people have been put to death.

The whole civilized world has become so permeated with the traditional reverence for the name of Jesus, that it is impossible to determine where his influence begins or ends. This is particularly true of the English speaking nations, where the influence of his moral precepts is reflected widely, though distortedly, in our educational systems, and the literature of our day. The vast distribution of the Bible, during the past century, has caused the name of Jesus to become virtually a household word in all parts of the civilized world.

Most people seem to think that if we are born in what is considered a "Christian" land, we are qualified to be called "Christians." But this is altogether wrong, for you will find that most of the existing knowledge of Jesus is extremely shallow, and is greatly corrupted with erroneous views with respect to his teaching, and also his mission. Even the various religious leaders do not agree as to who he was, or why he appeared.

Therefore, is it not reasonable that if we would have a true conception of the Anointed Jesus, we must lay aside any notions that we may have learned since childhood, and turn to the Bible with an unbiased mind and search the Scriptures in a persistent, determined effort to find out just what they do teach about him.

If we will do this, we will find predictions concerning Jesus that were given long before his birth. In the New Testament we will find a record of his sayings, and the things he did. And not only so, but we will discover many promises of what he will do in the future. The record is sufficiently complete so that the knowledge obtained will make one wise unto salvation.

But this knowledge cannot be obtained by a single reading of the Bible, or an occasional attendance at a meeting where the Truth is taught. There must be a continual daily application of the mind to that which is written, if we are to have even a modest share of success.

Religious leaders call upon the people to "Hope in Jesus," to "Trust in Jesus," or to "Take him as their personal Savior;" but little, if anything, is ever said about "Knowing Jesus." But it is essential that we do know him, for he has said--

"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

To know God and Jesus, is not simply to be aware of their existence, but to know the attributes and purposes of God, and the nature, character and mission of Jesus.

The vital importance of knowledge is revealed in many places in the Bible. Here is one from the prophet Hosea--

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" (4:6).

But there is one in the Psalms even stronger--

"Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (49:20).

Coming to the New Testament, we have this from Paul--

"We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

"That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:9-10)

It is amazing to talk to professed Christians and see how superficial their knowledge is of Jesus. Therefore let us look into the Bible that we may learn of him. First, let us examine his Name. "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, and means a savior.

The angel, addressing Joseph, said:

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

The word "Christ" is not a name. It is a Greek word transferred into the English language, and means "Anointed." Jesus Christ, therefore, means "The Anointed Jesus." The anointing of Jesus took place when he was 30 years of age, at the time he was baptized by John. Of this, said Peter--

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38).

This was a three-fold anointing. Like Elisha, he was anointed to be a prophet; like Aaron, he was anointed to be a priest; and like David, he was anointed to be a king. They were anointed with oil, but Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. They were types, but Jesus was the anti-type.

That Jesus was to fulfill these three offices, was clearly foretold by Moses and the prophets, as we shall see. The New Testament confirms all of these predictions.

Therefore, to truly know Jesus in the Bible sense, we must know what he taught as a Prophet. We must understand the sacrifice he offered as a Priest, and the ruling he will exercise as a King.

Strange, is it not, that in the churches of Christendom we hear nothing of these things? Especially in evangelical, or revival meetings, where all we hear is, "Jesus saves. Give your heart to Jesus, and take him for your personal Savior." They quote Paul's words in Acts 16:31--

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Unfortunately, however, they tell us nothing about what we are expected to believe. They do not follow Paul's example. If they did, they would do as Paul did in Rome and other places:

"And when they had appointed him a day; there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening"--

- (Acts 28:23).

JESUS AS A PROPHET

When the people in his own neighborhood would not believe him, Jesus declared (John 4:44) that--

"A prophet hath no honor in his own country."

Therefore he departed and went into Galilee.

That the Messiah should appear to Israel as a prophet was predicted very early in their history. Through Moses, God said:

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18-19).

They were not left in doubt as to the character of this prophet. He was to be like Moses, and would therefore fulfill similar functions. Moses was a prophet, a mediator, a lawgiver, and a ruler, or king. Being like unto Moses, Jesus must fulfill all these. That he is the only one in whom this expectation can be realized, is proven by Peter in Acts 3:20-24--

"He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed.

"Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days."

With these words in mind, let us follow the New Testament record briefly. On the occasion of one of his miracles, we read--

"And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God had visited His people" (Luke 7:16).

John records, at the beginning of his testimony--

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth" (John 1:45).

After his resurrection, on the way to Emmaus, he met two of the disciples, who said unto him (Luke 24:19)--

"Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

"And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." The greatest example of Jesus as a prophet is found in Luke 21 in what is known as the "Mount Olivet Prophecy." In this chapter, Jesus outlines the future from the day he was speaking, until he comes the second time, when he will assume the power of a king. He tells the disciples of the persecutions that would come upon them. The days of vengeance were rapidly approaching when the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the people would be led away captive into all nations.

From that day forth Jerusalem would be under the power of the Gentiles; but not forever - only until their times should be fulfilled. He spoke of the signs that would indicate the time of his return to the earth, and pressed upon their attention the vital necessity of watching for him, saying--

"Watch therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

During the days of his ministry, Jesus performed many miracles--wonderful works that were far beyond the power of men to do. The object of this was, of course, to prove that he was what he claimed to be, and that he was the one of whom Moses and the prophets had written. Those who listened attentively, and observed narrowly, were "astonished at his teaching" (Matt. 7:28, etc.); even some of the officers of the chief priests admitted: "NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN" (John 7:46).

That it is essential we know what Jesus taught, and understand the purpose of his mission, is evident by what he said--

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:48- 49).

Therefore, to reject Jesus' teaching is to disbelieve God, for--

"He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar" (1 John 5:10).

How, then, can anyone expect to find favor with God if he denies Him, or if he pays no attention to the words Jesus spoke?

JESUS AS A PRIEST

In the Old Testament there are two orders of priests that come to our attention--the Meichisedec and the Aaronic. Of the former, there is very little information given; but what is said of it is highly important. In Gen. 14:18, we read--

"And Meichizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God."

If it were not for the letter to the Hebrews, we could not get very far in our understanding of this brief passage. Of course David, in one of his prophecies of Christ, did say--

"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4).

But even then we have to depend upon Paul, who does much for us. Here in Hebrews 5, he explained the relation of Christ to this great man--

"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto him, Thou art My Son, today have I begotten thee.

"As He said also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (vs. 5-6).

And again in verses 8 to 10, Paul says--

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Meichisedec."

Of the Aaronic, which existed during the administration of the Mosaic law, full particulars are given. The principal duties of the priests were to--

1. Offer gifts and sacrifices.
2. Bear before Yahweh the names of the tribes of Israel.
3. Enquire of God on behalf of Israel.
4. Make atonement in the Most Holy Place once each year.

Jesus was not a member of this priestly order, because it was of the tribe of Levi. He was of the tribe of Judah. But we will find that the Aaronic priesthood was a type of Jesus in the capacity of high priest, and the various things connected with the Mosaic Law, such as the altar, the animals that were sacrificed, the temple and its furniture, were all types of Jesus.

Therefore, united in him were the functions of a priest, and the requirements of a sacrifice--something which has never been done by any other person.

The necessity for either priest, or sacrifice, is evidence of the existence of SIN, and it was for that very reason that Jesus was manifested, that he might "take away the sin of the world." In Rom. 5:12, Paul informs us that--

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by (or on account of) sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

This directs our minds to the record of the creation and the introduction of sin into the world because of transgression of Divine law. The Mosaic account of the creation of man is brief, but clear (Gen. 2:7)--

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

The breath of life which man received merely constituted him a "living soul," or "living creature." It had no relation to immortality. This is plainly revealed in the report of the effects of the flood, as we read in Gen. 7:21-22--

"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all in the dry land died."

No special training or ability is required to understand this plain statement. We go back now to Gen. 2:15-17, where we read of man being placed under Divine law--

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

After this the woman was formed, and they continued obedient until tempted by the serpent--not the devil. Paul, commenting on this incident in 2 Cor. 11:3, says--

"The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty."

As an inducement to our first parents to partake of the forbidden tree, the serpent said (Gen. 3:4-5)--

"Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

This was the first religious lie ever told; and like nearly all others, it was a mixture of truth and falsehood. The first part was false, and a direct opposite of what God had told Adam. The serpent said they would not die. This theological fable has continued to this day, and most of the world's inhabitants believe it. The doctrine of the natural immortality of man is nothing more than the continuance of the serpent's lie.

The second part was true, as we see by vs. 22-24--

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

"Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

"So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

The Divine law having been violated, and sin brought into the world, the sentence of death was pronounced--

"Because thou hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it:

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

The principle upon which this punishment was inflicted is stated by Paul in Romans 6:23-

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"The wages of sin is death."

Sin, being the cause of death, it is obvious that before death could be abolished, sin must be removed. This is the work of Jesus, as John the Baptist said (John 1:29)--

"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Or as Paul expressed it in Heb. 9:26--

"He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Under the Mosaic system, animals were sacrificed; but they were only types and could not take away sin. So says Paul--

"It is not possible that the blood of bulls, and of goats, should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

It was therefore necessary that a member of the race which had sinned, should manifest that perfect obedience which Adam failed to do, and then have his blood, or life, poured out, that he might undergo the penalty of death brought upon the race by sin, and that he should be raised from the dead on account of his righteousness, and become the author of immortality for other members of the same race.

These requirements are found in no other person than Jesus Christ. Jesus, being born of a woman, partook of our nature as Paul testifies in Heb. 2:14-18--

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

If possible, in his letter to the Romans, Paul puts more strength into his words (8:3)--

"For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (or by a sacrifice for sin) condemned sin in the flesh."

If Jesus had possessed a nature superior to ours--

1. He could not have tasted death for every man.
2. He could not have become perfect through suffering.
3. God could not have condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus.

The principle on which the perfect sacrifice of Jesus was based is easily discovered--

1. Death is only inflicted as the result of sin.
2. Jesus committed no sin, for he never transgressed Divine law, or any other law.
3. But he possessed our nature which had been sentenced to death in Eden. It was therefore necessary that he should suffer death.
4. Being free from transgression, death could not hold him.
5. Because of these things, he was brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and now "death has no more dominion over him."

Therefore he could say to John in Rev. 1:18--

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of hades."

But in all this Jesus has only destroyed the sin principle in himself. If he had put away sin and abolished death completely, there would be no sin now, nor would there be any death. However, he has accomplished the purpose of his first appearing, and will achieve his work in its completeness when he appears the second time without sin unto salvation to assume his duties as a king.

JESUS AS A KING

Of all the things concerning the Name of Jesus, there is none more beautiful, nor is there any so plainly taught in the Bible as that of his kingship. When preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, in the capacity of a prophet, he made known to Israel that he would be their king. It should be specially noted that in the offering up of his perfect sacrifice on the cross, in the capacity of a priest, it was brought about by his claims as a king.

"Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?"

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.

"Again Pilate said, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered,

"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth, everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:33-37).

Because of this claim of Jesus, we turn first to the prophets and consider the covenant God made with David (2 Sam. 7:12):

"When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee . . . and I will establish his kingdom.

"He shall build an house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

"And thine house, and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

There was no misunderstanding on the part of David. He knew that the time would come when his throne would be established for ever; he did not look to heaven for salvation--

"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

"And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

"Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow" (2 Sam. 23:5).

The throne of David continued until the days of Zedekiah when it ceased to exist, and has remained so unto this day. Here is the word of God to Zedekiah--

"And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord:

"Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him" (Eze. 21:25).

Six hundred years pass by until the days of Herod, the Roman king of Judea, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary of the seed of David, and said to her (Luke 1:30-33)--

"Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

The disciples of Jesus understood this clearly; and when he was about to leave them, they said unto him (Acts 1:6)--

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

The answer of Jesus shows they were not mistaken, except in the time appointed--

"It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1:7).

After the Holy Spirit had been given on the day of Pentecost, we hear Peter speaking--

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:29-30).

Since the days when they asked Jesus if he would restore the kingdom at that time, further revelation had been given them, for we have Peter speaking again, in Acts 3:20-21--

"And He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

Jesus, then, is to return to the earth, and assume his position of king over Israel on David's throne in the city of Jerusalem Here is one of the many prophetic pictures in the Bible--

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder:

"And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God (or the Mighty One) the everlasting Father (or the Father of the future age), The Prince of Peace.

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:6-7).

The reward promised to the disciples (Luke 22:29-30)--

"I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

His last promise (Rev. 22:12)--

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

If therefore we would attain unto salvation, we must, like Paul:

"Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Yea, we must "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth," so when Jesus returns, we may share--

1. In the blessings revealed by him as a Prophet,
2. And obtained by him as a Priest,
3. And the rewards he will bestow as a King.