

"Christ, Our Great Prophet"
(Acts 3:22-23)

Introduction: We don't often think about the idea of office in the Scriptures, nor of its importance in our lives. The Scriptures recognize a variety of offices. The husband has an office as the head of his wife and family. The parents have an office of authority over their children. There are offices in both the state and the church as well. In the church, there are presently two offices, that of deacon and elder. The deacons have authority to minister in the area of mercy and material needs on behalf of Christ. The elders have authority to represent Christ to His people in the area of faith and morals. Offices are important; offices are ordained by God; they are the authority structures which God has placed in His church and society in order to bring harmony and order among the differing groups.

In the Old Testament, there were offices as well that the Lord had established which do not continue in the New Testament in exactly the same way. They were the offices of prophet, priest and king. The king was vicegerent, or co-ruler with Yahweh over His covenant people. He had authority over the functions of the state. The priest was a mediator who had the authority to stand between God and man, who would carry the people before the Lord upon His heart and make intercession for them. And the prophet was a man, especially chosen by God, to be His mouthpiece before the people, to declare to them His will, and to warn them when they broke the covenant and to call them to repentance. These offices were very important in the Old Testament economy, and without them the nation of Israel could not have functioned as the covenant people of God.

Up to this point in the evening messages, we have been looking at our Covenant Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, He who is both God and man, He who came forth from God in order to redeem a people unto Himself as His peculiar possession, He who merited the grace of God and from whom that grace went forth from all ages, even to the very first of sinners, to save them from their sins. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His work as the New Covenant Mediator, also has entrusted to Him from God these three offices of prophet, priest and king. Tonight, we will be looking specifically at His office of prophet. And what the Spirit of God is saying to us in this text tonight is,

The Lord Jesus Christ is our great prophet sent from God and therefore it is of the greatest importance that we pay special attention to His words.

I. First, I Want You to See What the Office of a Prophet Is, and How Christ Fulfills this Office.

A. A Prophet Was a Man Sent from God to Speak His Will to His People.

1. A prophet was one who is like Moses. "MOSES SAID, 'THE LORD GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME.'"

a. Moses is the paradigm prophet. that is, he models for us what the prophetic office is.

b. When we examine his life, we see that a prophet is one who has been raised up from the midst of the covenant

- community, one who has stood in the council chamber of God, and one who stands before the people as the mouthpiece of God, declaring to them His will.
2. A prophet was one from the covenant community. This prophet shall be raised up "FROM YOUR BRETHREN."
 - a. A prophet was not a foreigner, but one from among the people of God.
 - b. Moses, of course, was an Israelite. All of the prophets through whom the Lord spoke to His people were from the midst of the covenant community.
 - c. And this was no less true in the New Testament covenant community. John the apostle, as he was introducing the revelation which the Lord Jesus gave to him to give to His church, said, "I, JOHN, YOUR BROTHER AND FELLOW PARTAKER IN THE TRIBULATION AND KINGDOM AND PERSEVERANCE WHICH ARE IN JESUS, WAS ON THE ISLAND CALLED PATMOS, BECAUSE OF THE WORD OF GOD AND THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" (Rev. 1:9).
 3. A prophet was one who had stood in the council chambers of God.
 - a. Moses had entered those chambers on many occasions, such as his standing before the Lord at the burning bush, his standing before the Lord on Mt. Sinai, and his standing in the cloud of His glory in the tabernacle.
 - b. Isaiah as well stood in God's holy councils. In the year of king Uzziah's death, he was caught up into the heavenly court, and beheld the Lord and heard the deliberations of it.
 - c. Even the apostles Paul and John were caught up into the heavenly realms where they heard inexpressible words.
 4. And, of course, the prophet was one who stood before the people as the mouthpiece of God to declare His will. "TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED IN EVERYTHING HE SAYS TO YOU."
 - a. He came with all the authority of God, therefore when he spoke, he had to be heard.
 - b. A prophet would sometimes foretell some event which God was bringing about in his redemptive plan, such as the birth of the Messiah, in order that when it came to pass, the people would know that the Lord is God and that this is His prophet.
 - c. Sometimes the prophet's message was not a future event, but rather a straight forward declaration of the will of God, such as when he comes to the people of God and tells them of God's anger in their disobedience.
 - d. Today the office of prophet has been done away with because the full revelation of God has been given and there is no more that God desires to add to His Word, but the function of forthtelling, or declaring His Word and will already given has been entrusted to His ministers of the Word to declare unto the people the

full will of God for their salvation, and it is to be heeded because it is the Word of God.

5. A prophet was one who, meeting these qualifications, and being called by God, would enforce God's covenant upon the people.
 - a. A covenant is a gracious agreement made between God and His people.
 - b. God is the sovereign Lord and so it is His right to require of His people whatsoever He wants.
 - c. God had expressed His will to them in His Word in many commandments, statutes and ordinances.
 - d. God promised His people that if they kept His commandments, then He would give to them blessing. To the Old Testament community, He said through Moses, "NOW IT SHALL BE, IF YOU WILL DILIGENTLY OBEY THE LORD YOUR GOD, BEING CAREFUL TO ~~NO~~ ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY, THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL SET YOU HIGH ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH. AND ALL THESE BLESSINGS SHALL COME UPON YOU AND OVERTAKE YOU, IF YOU WILL OBEY THE LORD YOUR GOD" (Deu. 28:1-2).
 - e. But He also gave them warnings of curse if they did not keep His Word. To the Old Testament community, He continued through Moses, "BUT IT SHALL COME ABOUT, IF YOU WILL NOT OBEY THE LORD YOUR GOD, TO OBSERVE TO DO ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS AND HIS STATUTES WITH WHICH I CHARGE YOU TODAY, THAT ALL THESE CURSES SHALL COME UPON YOU AND OVERTAKE YOU" (v. 15).
 - f. His promise of blessing and warning of curse is true in the New Testament as well.
 - g. When the covenant was broken, God would send His officer, His representative the prophet. to warn His people of their disobedience, to call them to repentance and renewal of their fidelity to the covenant.
 - h. A modern day example of this would be of a lawyer who prosecutes someone for the violation of the law of the state. If someone committed murder, it would be his obligation to rightly interpret the law, review the evidence, and seek to make the charge stick.
 - i. In the same way, the prophets of old sought to rebuke the unfaithfulness of God's covenant people, and call them to repentance and faith.

- B. The Main Point in What We Have Been Saying Is This: The Lord Jesus Christ Is Our Great Prophet.
 1. He is the prophet spoken of by Moses.
 - a. "AND LIKEWISE, ALL THE PROPHETS WHO HAVE SPOKEN, FROM SAMUEL AND HIS SUCCESSORS ONWARD, ALSO HAVE ANNOUNCED THESE DAYS. IT IS YOU WHO ARE THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS, AND OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD MADE WITH YOUR FATHERS, SAYING TO ABRAHAM, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT, AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS" (vv. 24-26).

- b. Moses predicted the coming of the Christ.
2. He is from the covenant community.
 - a. He was the One who was born in the Old Testament covenant community. He was the Son of Mary and the step-son of Joseph.
 - b. Christ became one with His people, being born into a covenant household and sealed with the sign of circumcision.
 - c. He is the One who was raised up "FROM YOUR BRETHREN."
 3. He came from the council chambers of God.
 - a. Jesus does more than just gain entrance into the council chambers of God, like the apostles John or Paul, or like Isaiah who were lifted up into the heavenlies to hear words which were inexpressible.
 - b. He is the One who dwelt in the council chambers of God from all eternity.
 - c. He sits on the throne, and the deliberations of that place were His as well as that of His Father's, which the prophets were present to hear.
 4. And He speaks to us the words of God, for He is the Word incarnate.
 - a. Christ revealed to His church the greatest revelation of God. "GOD, AFTER HE SPOKE LONG AGO TO THE FATHERS IN THE PROPHETS IN MANY PORTIONS AND IN MANY WAYS, IN THESE LAST DAYS HAS SPOKEN TO US IN HIS SON, WHOM HE APPOINTED HEIR OF ALL THINGS, THROUGH WHOM ALSO HE MADE THE WORLD" (Heb. 1:1-2).
 - b. He has done so throughout all the ages by His Spirit and His Word. "AS TO THIS SALVATION, THE PROPHETS WHO PROPHESED OF THE GRACE THAT WOULD COME TO YOU MADE CAREFUL SEARCH AND INQUIRY, SEEKING TO KNOW WHAT PERSON OR TIME THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST WITHIN THEM WAS INDICATING AS HE PREDICTED THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST AND THE GLORIES TO FOLLOW. IT WAS REVEALED TO THEM THAT THEY WERE NOT SERVING THEMSELVES, BUT YOU, IN THESE THINGS WHICH NOW HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED TO YOU BY THOSE WHO PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO YOU BY THE HOLY SPIRIT SENT FROM HEAVEN--THINGS INTO WHICH THE ANGELS LONG TO LOOK" (1 Peter 1:10-12).
 - c. He revealed the whole will of God. Jesus said to His disciples, "NO LONGER DO I CALL YOU SLAVES, FOR THE SLAVE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HIS MASTER IS DOING; BUT I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS, FOR ALL THINGS THAT I HAVE HEARD FROM MY FATHER I HAVE MADE KNOWN TO YOU" (John 15:15).
 - d. And He did so for the salvation and perfection of His saints.
 - (i) **John, in giving to us the reason for the writing of His Gospel, said, "THESE THINGS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD; AND THAT**

BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME" (20:31). Revelation is given for the salvation of His saints, "SO FAITH COMES FROM HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF CHRIST" (Rom. 10:17).

- (ii) And it is given for the perfection of His saints in holiness, "AND HE GAVE SOME AS APOSTLES, AND SOME AS PROPHETS, AND SOME AS EVANGELISTS, AND SOME AS PASTORS AND TEACHERS, FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE, TO THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST; UNTIL WE ALL ATTAIN TO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD, TO A MATURE MAN, TO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE WHICH BELONGS TO THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST" (Eph. 4:11-13).

- e. *Christ is the prophet of God par excellence, for He is the Word of God come to earth revealing to us in terms we can fully understand, the will of God for our salvation.*

II. *Secondly, Having Seen that Christ Is the Greatest of all the Prophets, I Want You to Hear the Warning which the Scriptures Give to Those Who Will Not Heed His Words. "AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERY SOUL THAT DOES NOT HEED THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE."*

- A. *Those Who Do Not Listen to the Words of Jesus Shall be Destroyed. When God speaks to His covenant servants, and to all mankind in general, He expects to be heard. To not give heed to the words of the covenant Lord is very dangerous indeed.*
1. *Judgment fell upon those of the covenant community of Israel, who did not listen to God's words.*
 - a. *When God told the Israelites that He was going to bring them into the promised land, many did not believe and take heed and consequently were destroyed in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb.*
 - b. *When Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On, would not heed God's verdict that the descendants of Aaron were to be God's chosen priests, and rebelled against God, they were subsequently destroyed along with their families.*
 - c. *When Achan did not listen to God, and took some of the things from Jericho which were under the ban, he and his family were stoned, burned, and had a huge heap of rocks raised over them.*
 - d. *God is a God to be reckoned with, and when He speaks, He is to be obeyed.*
 2. *The Israelites to whom Peter was speaking these words, who did not heed, were subsequently destroyed.*
 - a. *Many of the Israelites heeded the words of Christ as spoken through His apostles and were saved, though many had in fact cried out for Him to be crucified.*
 - b. *But in 70 A.D., the armies of Titus came against the city of Jerusalem to bring about what Christ*

had declared concerning it, "O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM, WHO KILLS THE PROPHETS AND STONES THOSE WHO ARE SENT TO HER! HOW OFTEN I WANTED TO GATHER YOUR CHILDREN TOGETHER, THE WAY A HEN GATHERS HER CHICKS UNDER HER WINGS, AND YOU WERE UNWILLING. BEHOLD, YOUR HOUSE IS BEING LEFT TO YOU DESOLATE! FOR I SAY TO YOU, FROM NOW ON YOU SHALL NOT SEE ME UNTIL YOU SAY, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (Matt. 23:37-39). They would not heed His Word and were therefore destroyed.

- c. And even within the New Covenant community, the wrath of God fell on those who did not heed His word, but sinned against Him. Ananias and Sapphira were both killed by the Lord for breaking His ninth commandment by lying to the Holy Spirit.
 3. They were destroyed because of their sinfulness and rebellion. Jesus declared to them the right way by His Word and Spirit, but they would not give heed because of their wickedness.
- B. We Must Take Heed as well that We Listen to all that He Tells Us, and not Turn Away as Many of Them Did.
1. When Peter spoke these words, he was targeting the covenant community specifically.
 - a. "And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE."
 - b. The people are the people of God. To them were entrusted the oracles of God, the revelation of His Will.
 - c. And, of course, we are the New Covenant people of the risen Lord, to whom is entrusted that revelation as well.
 2. God's Word tells us what our Sovereign commands us to believe and to do.
 - a. Jesus has revealed by His Spirit and Word, the whole will of God for our lives.
 - b. He has entrusted them to us to study and to obey.
 - c. We study them not only that we might know how to live, but also that we might know what to believe.
 - d. And what He says to us obligates us to believe no other way than what He has revealed, and to live no other way than what He commands.
 3. We are bound to absolute and perfect obedience to those commands all of our lives in all areas of our lives.
 - a. Whenever we become convinced that the Word of God says that we ought to do anything, we are bound by God to do it. Luther recognized this at the Diet of Worms, where, when he was asked to recant of his teachings, said, "My conscience is captive to the Bible, and I cannot go against conscience. To do so would be neither right nor safe."
 - b. If you know and believe that God has said you are not to murder anyone, and that even to be angry with your

- brother in your heart constitutes murder, then you are bound to fulfill it in your heart and in your actions.
- c. If you believe that the commandment of your Sovereign Lord to keep the Sabbath Day holy includes refraining from all recreation, and secular work, as well as all thoughts and conversations concerning it, and to spend the whole day worshiping God and speaking of the things concerning Him, then you are bound to do these things on the Sabbath.
 - d. If you believe anything to be the will of Christ as revealed by Him in His word, then you are bound to do it.
4. The Lord tells us that if we submit to His Lordship and strive to obey, He will save us and sanctify us and graciously reward our efforts.
 - a. He will forgive us when we sin, and graciously cleanse us from all of our iniquities.
 - b. He will even graciously reward us for our efforts to keep His commands, even though our best works are riddled with sin.
 5. But if we kick against His authority and do not listen to His words, so as to render whole-hearted obedience to it, we will also be destroyed.
 - a. Listen carefully to the author the the Hebrews, where he writes, "FOR IF WE GO ON SINNING WILLFULLY AFTER RECEIVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, THERE NO LONGER REMAINS A SACRIFICE FOR SINS, BUT A CERTAIN TERRIFYING EXPECTATION OF JUDGMENT, AND THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ANYONE WHO HAS SET ASIDE THE LAW OF MOSES DIES WITHOUT MERCY ON THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. HOW MUCH SEVERER PUNISHMENT DO THINK HE WILL DESERVE WHO HAS TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT THE SON OF GOD, AND HAS REGARDED AS UNCLEAN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT BY WHICH HE WAS SANCTIFIED, AND HAS INSULTED THE SPIRIT OF GRACE? FOR WE KNOW HIM WHO SAID, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' AND AGAIN, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.' IT IS A TERRIFYING THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD" (Heb. 10:26-31).
 - b. To know God's will and not to act upon it, though claiming to do so, is an act of hypocrisy, and no hypocrite has the life of God in His soul.
 - c. This does not mean that if you are a true believer, struggling with some besetting sin, and fall into that sin, that you will be destroyed by the Lord.
 - d. Rather, this is referring to someone who knows that God has revealed His will on some matter, and yet is either not taking Him seriously, or simply does not care what God says.
 - e. This is ferreting out from the covenant community, those who are not in Christ.
 - d. We must never forget, that the covenant community is composed of both elect and reprobate, and that

*inclusion in the visible church does not equal
inclusion in the invisible church of Christ.*

6. *People of God, listen to Christ, and give heed to His words. They are not given merely for your information, but that you might frame your life according to them, that they might be for you a manifesto for living. It is the light to enlighten your path, so that you might avoid the spiritual pitfalls and dangers, the quicksand, the tar pits, the swamps in this world, and to guide you straight down the path of life, into the gates of the heavenly realms for eternity. Listen to the great prophet of God, give heed to the words of the incarnate Word, keep your feet on the path of His righteousness, and be saved! Amen.*