

Lesson 15: Question 26

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In our recent lessons we have traced a careful path through the catechism. We considered Adam's federal headship (Q15), the estate of sin and misery into which mankind fell and the sinfulness and misery of that fallen estate (Q16-22), and then the mercy of God in not leaving His people to perish there (Q23). Last time we saw that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ (Q24), the eternal Son of God Who became man for us and for our salvation (Q25). That naturally brings us to the next question: having come as our Redeemer, what does Christ actually do for us? The catechism answers by teaching us that He executes 3 offices — Prophet, Priest, and King — and that those offices help us understand the fullness of His saving work.

Question 26: What are Christ's offices?

Q. What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?

A. Christ as our Redeemer executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.

This answer gives us one of the great organizing categories of Christology (the study of Christ) and soteriology (the study of salvation) in the Reformed tradition. It does not merely list titles. It teaches us how to think about Christ's saving work as a whole. Christ is not only a Redeemer in some vague or sentimental sense. He redeems by executing offices.

He acts for His people in ordered, appointed ways.

He is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King.

That threefold structure matters because it answers the whole ruin of man. Fallen man is ignorant, guilty, and rebellious. He needs light for his darkness, atonement for his guilt, and rule for his disorder. He needs truth brought to him, peace made for him, and power exercised over him and for him.

Christ meets that need perfectly.

As Prophet, He reveals God to us and speaks the words of life.

As Priest, He offers Himself for us and intercedes for us.

As King, He rules over us, defends us, and subdues His and our enemies.

The catechism will unfold those 3 offices more fully later, but here it gives us the broad frame.

It is important to notice that the catechism says Christ "executeth" these offices. That present tense matters. It does not say merely that He once executed them, as though His work were only past. Nor does it say merely that He will execute them, as though His work were only future. He executes them. Christ is not a retired Redeemer. He is the living and active Christ, carrying out His appointed work for His people now. Some aspects of His work are finished in one sense, especially His once-for-all sacrifice. But His office-bearing is not dormant. He still speaks. He still intercedes. He still reigns.

The answer also says that He executes these offices "both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation." That line is important because it tells us that these offices are not limited to one phase of Christ's work. He carried them out in His earthly ministry, and He carries them out still in His risen and exalted glory.

- In His humiliation, He spoke as the Prophet, offered Himself as the Priest, and came as the King in meekness and obedience.
- In His exaltation, He still speaks from heaven, intercedes before the Father, and reigns as the exalted King on the throne of the universe.

His Humiliation spans from His birth through His earthly ministry to His death, burial, and resurrection.

His Exaltation spans from His resurrection and ascension into Eternity Future.

The form of His office-bearing differs across those estates, but the offices remain His.

Before Christ, no one united these offices in one person; not Abraham; not Moses; not David.

The Prophetic Office

Acts 3:22 cites Moses (from **Deuteronomy 18:15**) saying, *“The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.”* Peter applies that promise to Christ. Jesus is not one more prophet in a long series merely. He is the Prophet like Moses, the climactic Revealer sent from God. And **Hebrews 12:25** presses the urgency of hearing Him: *“See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.”* The point is striking. Christ is not only the One Who **once** spoke in Galilee and Judea. He is the One Who **speaks** from heaven. His prophetic office did not end at the ascension. Refusing Him is still the great danger.

2 Corinthians 13:2-3 adds another dimension. Paul warns the Corinthians that when he comes again, he *“will not spare them”*, and then explains why he speaks so firmly: they are seeking *“proof that Christ is speaking in me.”* The Corinthians demanded Paul’s “credentials”, and Paul answers in a way that asserts Christ is truly speaking through his apostolic ministry in both Word and authority.

That shows that Christ’s prophetic office did not end with His earthly ministry. The risen Lord **continued** to execute His prophetic office through the men He appointed. That gives us a helpful bridge to the church today. Christ **continues** to execute His prophetic office through His Word and Spirit. When Scripture is faithfully preached, Christ speaks.

The Priestly Office

The priestly office is brought into view in **Hebrews 5:5-7** and **Hebrews 7:25**. Christ did not seize this honor for Himself. He was appointed by the Father: *“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”*, and *“You are a priest forever”* (**Hebrews 5:5-6**; both cited from **Psalms 110**). His priesthood is not self-assumed. It is divinely ordained. And **Hebrews 5:7** reminds us that this priestly work was carried out in the days of His flesh, with real suffering, tears, reverence, and obedience. Christ’s priesthood is not cold or abstract. It is costly, personal, and incarnate.

Hebrews 7:25 then shows the ongoing glory of that priesthood: *“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”* There is the present tense again. He always **lives**. He **makes** intercession. Christ’s priesthood did not end when He offered Himself on the cross. The sacrifice was completed once for all, but the priestly ministry continues in His intercession. He is still our Priest in heaven.

The Kingly Office

Then the kingly office comes into view through **Psalms 2**, **Isaiah 9**, and **Matthew 21**. **Psalm 2:6** says, *“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”* Christ is not merely prophetic and priestly. He is royal. God has enthroned Him. **Isaiah 9:6-7** speaks of the child born and the Son given, and says, *“of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.”* His kingship is not symbolic and fleeting. It is everlasting, righteous, and effectual. **Jesus Christ reigns, now and always**. **Matthew 21:5** shows Him entering Jerusalem as the promised King: *“Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey”*, fulfilling a prophecy given in **Zechariah 9:9**. Christ does not **become** King **after** the resurrection. He **comes** as King, though His kingship is veiled in meekness and crowned through suffering.

Psalm 2:8-11 then fills out the scope of His reign: the nations are His heritage, the ends of the earth His possession, and kings are warned to *“serve the LORD with fear”*. Christ’s kingship is therefore not narrow or tribal. It is universal in scope. He is not merely King of inward religious feeling. He is the enthroned Son to Whom all rulers owe allegiance.

Notice how all 3 of the Messianic offices are spoken of in the New Testament by using citations from the Old Testament. There is more to be said than we can cover right here, but there is a beautiful continuity from the types and shadows of the Old Testament to the work and ministry of Christ.

The Unity of the Offices

Now if we step back, we can see why this answer is so rich. It teaches us not only what Christ is called, but how He saves. Consider the ruin described in earlier lessons.

Because of sin, man is alienated from God and darkened in understanding and needs a Prophet.

Because of guilt, wrath, and curse, he needs a Priest.

Because of corruption, bondage, and rebellion, he needs a King.

If Christ lacked any one of these offices, our salvation would be incomplete.

Suppose Christ were only a Prophet. Then He could teach us the truth, but who would atone for our sins? Light alone cannot remove guilt.

Suppose Christ were only a Priest. Then He could offer sacrifice and intercede, but who would subdue our rebellious hearts and conquer our enemies? Forgiveness alone does not govern the church.

Suppose Christ were only a King. Then He could rule with power, but who would make God known savingly and who would reconcile us by blood? Authority alone is not atonement.

We need all three.

This is one helpful application of this Scriptural doctrine. It keeps us from shrinking Christ to one favored theme. Some people speak of Jesus almost entirely as Teacher. Others speak of Him almost entirely as Sacrifice. Others speak of Him chiefly in terms of rule and kingdom. But the catechism helps us confess the whole Christ. He teaches, atones, and reigns. He reveals, reconciles, and rules. He is not less than any one of these, and He is never only one of them.

It is also worth noticing that these offices belong to Christ “as our Redeemer”. That phrase gives the answer its warmth. The catechism is not just handing us doctrinal categories for sorting theological data. It is telling us what Christ is for us.

He is not merely a Prophet, but our Prophet.

He is not merely a Priest, but our Priest.

He is not merely a King, but our King.

Every office is covenantally and personally directed toward the good of His people.

His prophetic office is not merely informative. He speaks to save. He reveals the Father, exposes our sin, comforts the weary, and makes known the way of life.

His priestly office is not merely ceremonial. He gives Himself, bears our guilt, and pleads for us before God.

His kingly office is not merely political imagery. He actually reigns over His church, restrains and conquers His and our enemies, and orders all things for the good of His people.

We should also think more carefully about the phrase “both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.” The catechism is preparing us for categories it will unfold later. Christ’s humiliation includes His incarnation, low condition, suffering, death, and burial. His exaltation includes resurrection, ascension, reigning at the right hand of God, and coming again in glory.

And in both estates He executes the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

Christ’s Humiliation

In His humiliation, He is the Prophet Who teaches with authority, the Priest Who offers Himself in suffering obedience, and the King Who enters Jerusalem meek and lowly. There is something especially beautiful about seeing all three offices under the shadow of humiliation. His prophetic office, priesthood, and even His kingship are all marked by gentleness. Matthew 21:5 is not accidental. Your King comes humble. He is no tyrant. His reign begins in the path of obedience and sacrifice.

Christ’s Exaltation

In His exaltation, those same offices appear in heavenly glory. As Prophet, He speaks from heaven and by His Spirit illumines His church. As Priest, He appears in the presence of God for us and ever lives to intercede. As King, He is enthroned above all rule and authority and will reign forever and ever. The offices are the same, but the mode is heightened in exaltation. What was once veiled in weakness is now displayed in glory.

Application

This matters pastorally because it keeps us from treating Christ as though He were relevant only to the past. Some people think of Jesus chiefly in historical terms. He *once* taught. He *once* died. He *once* rose. All of that is gloriously true. But Scripture wants you to see that the Redeemer is alive and active *now*. He executes these offices *now*. He is the *living* Christ of *present* faith.

That should affect the way we hear His Word. Christ is our Prophet, so we must listen to Him with reverence. **Acts 3:22** says, “*You shall listen to him.*” **Hebrews 12:25** says, “*See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.*” There is no safe neutrality toward Christ’s prophetic word. To neglect or resist His voice is not a small error. It is *rebellion* against the One appointed by God to reveal Him.

It should also affect the way we deal with guilt. Christ is our Priest, so we must not try to make atonement for ourselves. We do not need a new priesthood, a fresh sacrifice, or a human mediator alongside Him. **Hebrews 7:25** is enough to steady the conscience: He is able to save *to the uttermost*. The priestly work of Christ is *complete* in its *sacrifice* and *continual* in its *intercession*.

And it should affect the way we think about obedience and the Christian life. Christ is our King, so faith is not mere *admiration*. It is *allegiance*. His kingship comforts us because He *defends* His people, but it also confronts us because He *rules* His people. Christ does not bow to *us*. We bow to *Him*. **Psalms 2:10-11** is not only for pagan rulers. It is a word of warning and wisdom to all: “*Serve the LORD with fear*”.

There is also a beautiful coherence to these offices when held together.

Christ’s *prophetic* word directs us to His *priestly* sacrifice.

His *priestly* sacrifice secures our pardon and access to God under His *kingly* rule.

His *kingly* rule protects and governs those whom He has

reconciled by His *priestly* work

and instructed by His *prophetic* word.

The offices are *distinct*, but do not *compete*.

They harmonize in the one saving work of the one Redeemer.

And because this lesson is a launching pad for the next, it is helpful to say clearly what this week is doing. We are not yet unpacking each office in detail. We are learning the frame. We are standing back far enough to see the whole Christ in His mediatorial work. Next week the catechism will slow down and consider how Christ executes each office specifically. This week we are laying the beam that will support those later walls. If you understand this answer well, the next lesson will feel coherent rather than scattered.

Conclusion

Question 26 is short, but it opens up a great deal. It teaches us that Christ’s saving work is not vague. As our Redeemer, He executes the offices of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King. He does so in both His humiliation and exaltation. The *whole* Christ answers the *whole* need of fallen man.

This answer also prepares us well for what follows. It tells us that Christ is not merely one thing for His people. He is the *Prophet* Who speaks God’s truth, the *Priest* Who reconciles sinners to God, and the *King* Who rules and defends His people. If we understand that structure now, we will be ready next week to consider each office more carefully and more fruitfully.

So take this lesson with you this week in two ways.

- *First, believe* that Jesus Christ is not a *partial* Savior for *part* of your need, but the *full* Redeemer God has given for His people: your Prophet to teach you, your Priest to atone and intercede for you, and your King to rule and defend you.
- *Second, live* accordingly. *Read* the Scriptures and listen to faithful preaching knowing that Christ teaches His people through His prophetic office. *Draw near* to God through Christ your High Priest, resting in His finished atonement and present intercession. And *live consciously* under the authority of Christ your King, bowing to His rule above every earthly power.

Hear Him. Trust Him. Obey Him.