

R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.

PROPHET,  
PRIEST,  
& KING



The Three Offices of Christ



A profound exploration of  
the three offices of Jesus Christ:

# PROPHET, PRIEST, & KING



In this book, theologian R. Albert Mohler Jr. delves into the historical significance of the offices of prophet, priest, and king. He traces their origins in the Old Testament to their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Mohler presents a compelling argument: the three offices should not be compartmentalized. They are interconnected and essential for Christian faithfulness in the home, the church, and society. When Jesus Christ returns, the whole world will bow to him as Lord—Prophet, Priest, and King.

**BH**  
BHPUBLISHING.COM

RELIGION/Christian Theology/Christology  
979-8-3845-0442-9 \$22.99 USD  
Printed in China



9 798384 504429

PROPHET,

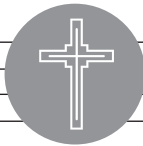
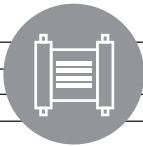
PRIEST,

& KING



R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.

PROPHET,  
PRIEST,  
& KING



The Three Offices of Christ

Copyright © 2025 by R. Albert Mohler Jr.  
All rights reserved.  
Printed in China

979-8-3845-0442-9

Published by B&H Publishing Group  
Brentwood, Tennessee

Dewey Decimal Classification: 232  
Subject Heading: JESUS CHRIST—ROYAL OFFICE /  
JESUS CHRIST—PRIESTHOOD /  
JESUS CHRIST— PROPHETIC OFFICE

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references are taken from the Christian Standard Bible. Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible®, and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers, all rights reserved.

Scripture references marked (ESV) are taken from the English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Cover design by Jennifer Allison, 513 TN LLC.  
Title fonts by Zakharchenko Anna and DaryaKoM,  
Shutterstock. Author photo by Trevor Wheeler,  
by permission of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

1 2 3 4 5 6 • 28 27 26 25

To my faculty colleagues at Boyce College and  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Thank you for more than thirty years of work together,  
teaching together, learning together, being faithful together,  
loving God's Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ together,  
serving the church together, and shaping a generation of  
wonderful students together, to the glory of God.

R. Albert Mohler Jr.





# Acknowledgments

I deeply appreciate the many people who have shaped my understanding and appreciation of the Three Offices of Christ. So many sermons, books, lectures, and conversations live in my thoughts and have shaped my own understanding. To all I am thankful. In my office, several people play key roles in my work and productivity. These would include Caleb Shaw, Chief of Staff, Carlo Cicero, Director of Strategic Research, Graham Faulkner, Director of Communications, and Nick Mottola, Digital Content Coordinator. Carlo has been especially helpful in this project, and I am thankful. I am also very thankful to Anna Thomas and Allison Moldenhauer, who have added so much to our team.

A group of outstanding interns worked in my office during this time and I deeply appreciate their energy, kindness, interest, and great promise for Christian ministry and leadership. They include Ben Pinkston, Alex Richey, William Wolfe, Jacob Page, Christopher Parr, Austin Puckett, J. P. Shafer, Caleb Green, and Marc Cogan.

## PROPHET, PRIEST, & KING

My sweet family has been both helpful and encouraging. As always, I am eager to thank my dear wife Mary, my constant and brilliant and faithful partner in all things. Her contributions to my life and work are beyond description, but not beyond my gratitude.

# Contents

Introduction	1
--------------	---

## **Christ as Prophet**

CHAPTER 1: The Prophet Today	11
CHAPTER 2: The Old Testament: The Messianic Prophet Foretold	15
CHAPTER 3: The New Testament: The Messianic Prophet Incarnate	19
CHAPTER 4: Christ's Miracles and His Prophetic Office	25
CHAPTER 5: The Messianic Prophet Fulfilled	35
CHAPTER 6: Christ as Prophet Today	39
CHAPTER 7: Christ's Word and Our Salvation	43
CHAPTER 8: The Local Church: The Setting of Prophetic Action	49
CHAPTER 9: Christ Against False Prophets	51

## **Christ as Our Great High Priest**

CHAPTER 10: The Roles of a Priest	55
CHAPTER 11: The Universality of Priests	57

## PROPHET, PRIEST, & KING

CHAPTER 12: Israel and the Priesthood	61
CHAPTER 13: The High Priesthood	69
CHAPTER 14: The Complexity, Multiplicity, and Insufficiency of the Sacrificial System	75
CHAPTER 15: New Covenant Priesthood	77
CHAPTER 16: Christ as Priest	81
CHAPTER 17: The Everlasting Order of Melchizedek	93

### **Christ as King**

CHAPTER 18: Kingship and the People of God	101
CHAPTER 19: The Ideal King	109
CHAPTER 20: The King Foretold	115
CHAPTER 21: The Long-Awaited King	119
CHAPTER 22: The King's Message	129
CHAPTER 23: The King on Trial	135
CHAPTER 24: The Judge	139
CHAPTER 25: The King's Reign Reflected	143
About the Author	149
Notes	151

# Introduction

**F**or Christians throughout all ages, having a personal knowledge of Christ is essential for faithful Christian living. This is because faithfulness in and of itself requires that we have real knowledge of Christ. In other words, one must know who Christ is and what Christ has done for us, in order to ground our faith in Christ. Add to that now, that faithful Christian living flows from faithful believing and thinking driven by a love for Christ. We know the way we live inevitably emerges out of our deepest *thoughts* and *beliefs* (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34–35), and thus the Christian must not only have knowledge of Christ but must also engage the disciplines of thinking about and believing the truths about Christ in order to be faithful.

As a theologian and professor, I believe teaching such spiritual disciplines as thinking, believing, and living calls for an explicit affirmation and exposition of the three offices of Christ. Jesus decisively fulfilled the offices of prophet, priest, and king in his earthly life. Even in our day, now two millennia from the time of Christ's earthly ministry, the implication of his work continues to reverberate.

Today, we experience the tensions of the post-Christian, secular environment framing the world around us. Yet, when our faith remains grounded in Christ and thoroughly informed by his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, we need not be shaken by the subversions of the modern world. Because of Christ's work, we need not lose our firm footing or our meditation. When we consider these truths, our confidence and conviction grow, fueled by what Christ accomplished in his fulfillment of these offices. The tumult of the world drives us to a further understanding of Christ's work, and an understanding of Christ's work helps us withstand amid the storms of an increasingly secular age—an age that threatens to subvert the church's obedience to Christ.

We might ask ourselves, What consequential realities now exist for the Christian since Christ is our prophet, priest, and king? Not only that, but how ought we to apply these truths in order to live more faithfully to God in our contemporary moment? The answer to these questions requires our careful attention.

In preparing to consider Christ's offices, we do well to recall that an important history undergirds why we even speak of them in the first place. As we look back to the earliest centuries of Christianity, we find that the early church made reference to these three offices. Eusebius, after establishing the historicity of the three anointed Old Testament offices,<sup>1</sup> wrote of Jesus:

But the great and convincing evidence of that incorporeal and divine power in him is the fact that he alone, of all that have ever existed to the present day, even now is known by the title of



## Introduction

Christ among all men over the world; and with this title he is acknowledged and professed by all and celebrated both among barbarians and Greeks. Even to this day, he is honored by his followers throughout the world as a King; he is admired as more than a prophet and glorified as the only true High Priest of God. In addition to all these, as the preexisting Word of God, coming into existence before all ages, and who has received the honors of worship, he is also adored as God.<sup>2</sup>

Our understanding of Christ as mediating these three offices is deeply rooted in the Scriptures but became particularly important during the Protestant Reformation. Specifically, John Calvin, the great reformer of Geneva, made some of the most meaningful advancements to our understanding of Christ's three offices in his magisterial work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Book II, chapter 15). In this sixteenth century theological treatise, he sought to offer the best biblical exposition of Christ's work, and in doing so, Calvin clearly defined Christ's three offices. He also showed the continuity of these offices between the Old and New Testaments, and he demonstrated how Christ ultimately and infinitely fulfilled each of these offices through his earthly ministry and his eternal kingdom.

Yet, in all of Calvin's explication, he did not go so far as to suggest that one may segregate Christ's offices into discrete and separate ministries. One cannot compartmentalize Christ's offices. An analogy with the person and work of Christ proves helpful here. When we consider the person and the work of Jesus

Christ, we rightly make a distinction in our theological thinking between the two, and at the same time, we realize that no ultimate or absolute division between the two exists. Said another way, when we speak of Christ's person, we necessarily speak of his work, and to speak of his work requires the affirmation of his person as revealed in Scripture—something the church has confessed throughout the ages. Similarly, when we speak of Christ's three offices, we cannot speak of them as if each or any exists entirely independent of the others. Rather, we rightly recognize something important in what Calvin identified as the threefold office of Christ. He said, "Therefore, in order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be a prophet, king, and priest."<sup>3</sup> So, interconnected within Christ's ministry, Calvin conceived of Christ fulfilling his prophetic, priestly, and kingdom work through a single office having three aspects. Though distinguished, they remain inseparable, even as Christ is indivisible.

Another important observation concerning Christ's offices that originated during the Reformation is that affirming the three offices of Christ does not merely provide a helpful—or even necessary—way of understanding and explaining the work of Christ. The affirmation moves beyond offering information. Rather, asserting that Christ holds the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King also makes a theological argument.

Martin Luther, another great Protestant reformer, plainly articulated this when he spoke of what makes someone a true a theologian. In his commentaries he declared, "Living, or rather dying and being damned makes a theologian, not understanding,

## Introduction

reading, or speculating.”<sup>4</sup> Luther meant that a Christian moves into the faithfulness of being a theologian not by ivory tower musings or hypotheticals about God but through a crucible. In that crucible we confront the reality of our own sin and recognize what is at stake in such matters—our absolute dependence on Christ for salvation. Luther said the theologian lives by assertions.<sup>5</sup> He does not content himself by making suggestions or merely offering explanations on matters of faith. Instead, he lives by making assertions about both what is true and what must therefore follow as a result of that truth. When we speak of Christ as prophet, Christ as priest, and Christ as king, we make the assertion that Christ is indeed the Prophet, that Christ is in every way our Great High Priest, and that Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. The implications of such truths cannot carry greater significance. There we see the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord displayed in triple magnificence.

Looking at the three offices collectively makes more of an argument than one might think. For instance, many associated with liberal Protestantism wanted to speak only of Christ as prophet. In the reductionism of Protestant liberalism, its practitioners denied Christ as priest or even the need for Christ as priest. They dismissed substitutionary atonement—redemption on a cross or “bloody cross religion,” as some of the liberals called it. They also turned Christ as king into something merely political. What they wanted to hold onto reduced Christ to a moral teacher because they could not bear the argument implicit in Christ’s existing as priest and as eternal king.

Another argument surfaces among some of those who do believe in an earthly priesthood. Think of the priestly churches and denominations in the world, with the Roman Catholic

church as prime example. The centrality of a human priesthood undermines the priestly role of Christ—a solitary role. Christ as priest made atonement for sin once for all. He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and is forever interceding for us, his saints. Make no mistake about it. Christ's fulfilling his office of priest makes an argument, and it is an argument basic and necessary to the faithful Christian faith.

On the other hand, evangelical Christianity sometimes neglects Christ as prophet and as king. Some evangelicals emphasize Christ as priest while diminishing the other offices. It is common to speak of the gospel, the cross of Christ, the empty tomb, and Christ's resulting priestly ministry without really understanding what it means to speak of Christ as our Great High Priest. And in this moment, still fewer evangelicals seem to grasp Christ as prophet and Christ as king. It is high time for a theological recovery.

One of the tensions we see in contemporary evangelicalism involves an unease over what it means for us to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, that Jesus Christ reigns supremely as King over all, and that we exist—even now—as citizens of his heavenly kingdom. This reality requires us to recognize our ultimate identity as citizens of the kingdom of God and that our most basic allegiance is to Christ as King. In a moment of all kinds of questions among evangelicals—including tensions and controversies about political responsibility—we can offer our fellow Christian brothers and sisters one of the healthiest means of encouragement in Christ by looking them in the eye and proclaiming that a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ recognizes only one King and only one eternal kingdom. We fundamentally and unconditionally commit ourselves to Christ and to his rule. In

## Introduction

light of his person and work, we need to consider Jesus, and we need to deepen and further develop our understanding of him as he fulfills his three offices of prophet, priest, and king.

The best way to approach each of Christ's three offices, or even the generalized structure of understanding the three-fold offices of Christ, is to move continually between the Old Testament and the New Testament and draw connections of promise and fulfillment between the two testaments. In other words, we embark on a biblical and theological examination of these offices. To speak of the three offices of Christ in the context of biblical theology means we refuse to unhitch the church from the Old Testament. Pursuing a biblical theology of Christ's three offices does exactly the opposite. We know this because such a course of study demonstrates how Christ defined his own ministry, person, and work from the totality of Scripture. Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament promise of the Messiah.

We do not hesitate to take this direction, for Jesus himself calls for it. He reminded his listeners that the Old Testament Scriptures bore witness of him (John 5:39). Then he went on to say that "if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me" (John 5:46). On yet another occasion, Jesus told the parable in Luke 16 of the rich man and Lazarus, in which the rich man crying out to Abraham, says, "'Father,' he said, 'then I beg you to send him to my father's house—because I have five brothers—to warn them, so that they won't also come to this place of torment'" (Luke 16:27–28). As Jesus tells the account, "Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them'" (Luke 16:29). And though the rich man said, "But if someone from the dead goes to them, they

will repent” (Luke 16:30), Abraham responds conclusively, “If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31). In Jesus’s self-declaration, the Scriptures have long spoken of his significance and ministry, and they continue to demand our careful consideration.

Our task, then, in grasping Jesus’s fulfillment of his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices must span the full scope of God’s Word. As we look at patterns of promise and fulfillment, type and reality, we will find ourselves unashamedly making an argument. We will also find ourselves drawn into a deeper worship of Christ. For through our meditation on his Word, we come to know him more fully, in his glory, power, dominion, and majesty.



## CHRIST AS



# PROPHET

While the Old Testament priest mediated before God on behalf of his people—as we will see in the next chapter—the prophet communicated the word of God to the people of God. An office inaugurated in the Old Testament, the prophet was called God’s messenger not simply for mankind in general but for God’s people, for *Israel*. Scripture foretells a messianic prophet who will declare the word of God to his people *and* save them from their sins. This is especially apparent in the Gospels, where Jesus both fulfills and transcends the biblical mandate of a prophet. He is the incarnate Word whom the prophets of old proclaimed.



## Chapter 1

# The Prophet Today

**O**f these three offices of prophet, priest, and king, the prophet is the one most commonly referenced in our contemporary moment. For many without a biblical worldview, the prophet offers a secular gospel of hope. The prophet declares an eschaton which contrasts with a disappointing, mediocre world. As one writer has observed, Steve Jobs is a quintessential example of a secular prophet in recent years, a man whose “most singular quality was his ability to articulate a perfectly secular form of hope.” Through his technological innovation, the apple with a bite taken out of it—formerly a symbol of man’s fall—became an icon of the fulfilled life.<sup>6</sup> Central to a prophet’s mission is his philosophy, a vision of the good life. For technocrats like Jobs, the prophecy is of a transhumanist world which transcends physical limitations.

Other secular prophets claim to confront social justice and oppression with truth, facing any cost. One thinker envisions a prophet who critically examines—then courageously

fighters—injustice. He summarizes the prophetic voice in this way: “For each of you, there is something inside, a voice that won’t let you hold your peace, something in the world that you want to be better. . . . Find that something more that lures us out of our earthbound clay feet existence and into truthful acts of courage.”<sup>7</sup> For some, social justice activists prophesy the message of universal virtues when they resist systems of power and oppression. Sometimes, in the name of tolerance, these activists elevate priorities like diversity, equity, and inclusion in such a way as to declare virtues of the Christian faith anathema.

Many evangelicals also misunderstand prophecy when they unintentionally limit the prophet’s work to prediction of future events. Perhaps the modern phenomenon which best illustrates this is the “prophecy conference,” where people gather to hear a teacher explain how the events of today’s front page align with prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. One such event describes itself as a “live prophetic event” where the teacher will describe what “the Lord is revealing to him at this time” regarding “the Word of prophecy, the last days, the return of Christ, and what the Holy Spirit is saying.”<sup>8</sup> An emphasis on prophecy in this way is unhelpful and misleading when it is disconnected from a commitment to the sole authority of Scripture.

A biblical understanding of the prophet’s role certainly includes the foretelling of future events, for Scripture is replete with predicative prophecies. These give rise to the general structure of *promise and fulfillment* recognized throughout the Bible. In fact, the entirety of the Old Testament fits within the pattern of promise just as the whole of the New Testament fits within the pattern of fulfillment. With that said, however, the most important responsibility of the Old Testament prophet did not

really entail *foretelling* so much as it entailed *forthtelling*. He was to profess, proclaim, and put forth God's message. God identified the prophet as his messenger, a teacher of truth and righteousness, and he made central to the prophetic responsibility not only declaring the truth but also calling all to repentance.

The words of Isaiah 40:5 poignantly exemplify the distinguishing voice of the biblical prophet: "And the glory of the LORD will appear, and all humanity together will see it, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Secular prophets attempt to speak their own truth to power, but the biblical prophets proclaimed divine revelation, *God's* message to *his* people. Secular prophets have no need of revelation, Scripture, or a Word from God. The prophets of today may have much to say, but the only guide they can offer is themselves. Yet for God's prophet, the Word of God from the mouth of God is the sure and sufficient message.

God has sent many prophets to his people over the course of biblical history. The apostle Paul goes so far as to identify those prophets, along with the apostles, as the foundation upon which the church is built. Nonetheless, as he continues, "Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:20–21). The final and ultimate prophet is the very Word of whom the prophets of the Old Testament spoke and foretold. In contrast to false prophets, Jesus does not speak of a new humanist worldview, or power gained in magical victory over perceived oppressors. Christ declares the word of salvation and the coming kingdom of God. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, Scripture consistently presents Christ's unique office as the messianic prophet, a vision that truly transforms and strengthens Christians today.

