

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## Video Lecture Series

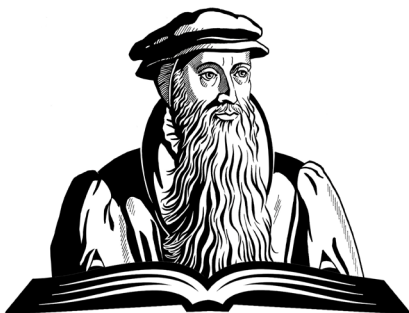
by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

*Module 4:*

### CHRISTOLOGY— THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

*Lecture 6*

### THE OFFICES OF CHRIST



The John Knox Institute  
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# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## Video Lecture Series

by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

### *Module 4 ~ Christology*

Lectures by Dr. Stephen Myers:

1. Introduction to Christology
2. The Divinity of Christ
3. The Humanity of Christ

Lectures by Robert D. McCurley, ThM:

4. The Hypostatic Union
5. The States of Christ
- 6. The Offices of Christ**
7. The Necessity of the Atonement
8. The Nature of the Atonement
9. The Extent of the Atonement
10. The Preeminence of Christ

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

## *Module 4 ~ Lecture 6*

# The Offices of Christ

When you meet someone for the first time, one of the questions they will ask you is, What is your name? Your name identifies who you are, and it distinguishes from other people, even people who may be of similar age and background, and family, and appearance to you. Your name sets you apart. In the Bible, names have even greater significance. They were more than a label by which a person was called. Sometimes they described a person's character, their role. And a change in name usually marks something important. Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah. Jacob, which means "deceiver," is called by God, Israel prince of God. In the New Testament, Simon becomes Peter, which means "rock." And there are many other examples we could give.

Well, when we turn to God's names, we learn that they are a revelation of who he is. His name refers to everything by which he makes himself known, in his names, titles, attributes, Word, works, worship, and so on. This explains the importance of the 3rd Commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain. And it explains the importance of the 1st Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." To know the name of God is to know who God is, and what God does. As we will come to see, this helps us to understand the significance of the name of the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and how he executes the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

This series of lectures in this fourth module on Systematic Theology is devoted to the study of the Doctrine of Christ. As you've seen, the purpose is to explore what the Bible teaches about the person and the work of Christ. In these last few lectures, we've learned that Christ is God and man in two distinct natures and one Person forever, in both his states of humiliation and exaltation. Well, we now turn to the work he performs in those two estates of humiliation and exaltation. So in this lecture, we'll explore the doctrine of Christ's three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

Following our normal pattern, we will first of all begin by looking briefly at a passage of Scripture, to open up our consideration of the doctrine of Christ's three offices. In 1 Timothy 2, verse 5, we read these words, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." A mediator is one who stands between two opposing parties, in order to reconcile them, to bring them together. Well, the greatest enmity in the world lies between the holy God and sinful men. So in order to remove this hostility, God took the initiative by supplying a Mediator in the person of his Son, in order to redeem and reconcile his sinful people to himself. In order to accomplish this, the Mediator himself had to be both God and man. So when we refer to the Mediator in this context, we refer to the God-man. The Mediator is the God-man, the eternal Son of God, who took to himself a human nature.

Well, we have explored what that entails in the last few lectures. So the question is, why, in 1 Timothy 2:5, is the Mediator called "Christ Jesus." Well, the name "Lord Jesus Christ" does not refer to his first and last name, like Mr. John Smith. "Jesus" means "Jehovah saves." So he's given the name "Jesus," because he came to save his people from their sins, as we see in Matthew 1, verse 21. The Mediator is Savior, the one who accomplishes salvation. The word "Christ" is equivalent to the Old Testament word, "Messiah." So John 1, verse 41, says, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." So the words

“Christ” and “Messiah” both mean, “the anointed one.” Christ and Messiah means “anointed one.” Now you think about this. We sing of Christ, therefore, in Psalm 45, verse 7, “God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” And we read in the New Testament that Isaiah 61, verse 1, was fulfilled in Christ. What does that passage say? “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.” Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure. The concept of anointing is drawing on a familiar Old Testament practice. Men were anointed at their public inauguration to office. More specifically, we learn that three Old Testament offices—prophets, priests, and kings—were anointed to their offices. So it does not surprise us when we turn to the New Testament, to discover that Christ—God’s anointed one—serves as the great and final Prophet, Priest, and King, thereby fulfilling what these Old Testament offices depicted. He was set apart by God and furnished with all authority and ability to carry out these offices.

So to summarize, every time you use the word “Christ,” it is an abbreviated way of speaking of him as Prophet, Priest, and King. In 1 Timothy 2, verse 5, we learn that there is one mediator between God and man, and that that Mediator is the God-man, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord—that is, his divine nature. He is Jesus, because he is the Savior. And he is Christ, because he is the anointed Prophet, Priest and King. He brings about the salvation of his people, and their reconciliation to God, through the execution of three offices, in his estates of both humiliation and exaltation. And so it is Christ’s three offices that we’ll consider in this lecture.

Secondly, let’s consider some of the doctrinal details regarding Christ’s three offices. *Shorter Catechism*, question #23 says this regarding this doctrine: “Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.” So we’ll consider each office in order.

First of all, the office of Prophet. The prophet was the official messenger of God—an ambassador sent with a word from heaven. They served as the inspired mouthpiece and spokesman of God to his people. They came from God, declaring, “Thus saith the Lord.” Now, when some people hear the word “prophet,” they think primarily of prophetic predictions about the future. Well, it’s true that prophets told about future events, but that was only a part of their ministry. They were sent to reveal the whole will of God to his people. Indeed, the primary emphasis in their message fell upon what God’s people needed to hear in their present circumstances—comforting them in their sorrows; exposing their sins; calling them to repentance and back to God’s law; requiring of them the keeping of the covenant; pointing them to the gospel of salvation; and much more. The purpose of the office of prophet was revelation—God revealed his words through them. The word of the prophets came by his Spirit, and it came regarding everything that concerned his people’s edification and salvation. So this revelation included written, inspired writings, which, of course, the Lord placed in our Bibles. We have the prophecies of Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and so on.

Well, Moses was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He alone spoke with God face to face. You read about this in Numbers 12, verse 6 to 8. But God told Moses of another prophet greater than himself who was to come. In Deuteronomy 18, verse 18, God says, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee”—speaking to Moses—“and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” Well, Peter, when he’s preaching, in Acts 3, verses 22 to 24, proclaims that this text was fulfilled in Christ. He said, “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 from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.” All the prophets pointed forward to Christ.

But not only did they point forward to him, Christ became God’s last and greatest Prophet. Christ is the fulfillment of all that the prophetic office represented. The Lord Jesus Christ reveals God’s mind and will to us. He reveals our sinful misery, his provision of salvation, and the fruit of thankfulness born in the life of the believer. He serves as God’s final word to the world. We read, in Hebrews 1, in the opening words,

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” This is why Jesus is called “the truth”—John 14, verse 6. He is called “the Word,” or the *logos*, as you see in the opening of John 1. He is the messenger of the gospel, as we see in Luke 4, verses 18 and 19. He is the one who is “the giver” of the Old Testament, and we could go on and on.

And as with the other two offices, Christ continues as our Prophet in heaven. We read about this in several places. He continues to reveal to us the whole will of God by his Word and Spirit. And this is carried out through the means he’s appointed for the church. We see the exercise of Christ’s prophetic ministry whenever the Bible is read, and preached, and sung. Christ is present by his Spirit, in the church, as our last Prophet. Whenever we hear the inspired Scriptures, we hear the voice of Christ our Prophet. Hebrews 2, verse 12 quotes Psalm 22, verse 22, which says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” And Hebrews 2 tells us that these words are fulfilled in Christ, that he’s in the midst of his church. He’s singing even his praise in the midst of his people. So the words spoken from heaven to the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration remain just as relevant to us today. Remember the words from heaven, “This is my beloved Son in who I am well pleased; hear ye him”—Matthew 17, verse 5. We’re to hear the voice of Christ in the ministry of his Word, executing the office of Prophet.

Secondly, we have the office of Priest. The priest was also a mediator. The Old Testament priest’s role was to represent the people before God. So if you compare the office of prophet with the office of priest, I’ll give you one way of remembering the difference—the prophet primarily comes from God to the people, declaring God’s word to them; the priest primarily goes from the people to God, presenting sacrifice and intercession on their behalf before the Lord. In both cases, we observe the work of a mediator. So man’s sin bars man’s way into God’s favorable presence. So what’s necessary then to gain access? The answer is twofold: a sacrifice, and one to offer the sacrifice. The priest was appointed to present gifts and offerings, sacrifices, and intercessions, and the people themselves before God in pursuit of reconciliation and the expiation of sins. So how can a sinful people approach a holy God? The answer is, through a God-appointed priest offering an acceptable sacrifice, and this is beautifully fulfilled in Christ. He is both the sacrifice offered, and the Priest himself who presents the sacrifice. Both are brought together in him. Hebrews 7, verse 27 says, “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” Hebrews 10, verse 12 says, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

So how does Christ exercise the office of a Priest? First, by his once offering up himself as a sacrifice without spot to God, in order to secure reconciliation for the sins of his people. He did this in his substitutionary atonement on the cross. Christ’s work as a Priest is devoted to our complete redemption. Well, you might think to yourself, “Well, that’s all in the past. Christ offered himself as the one and final sacrifice for sin, which is complete—never to be repeated. So does he continue as Priest in heaven?” The answer is, “Yes, he does.” The New Testament sanctuary and Holy of Holies is not found in a room anywhere on earth, like it was in the tabernacle and temple. We now have the true sanctuary, which is located where our High Priest is found in heaven itself—Hebrews 4, verse 14: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” So he appears, as the Lamb of God that was slain, before the Father in heaven, presenting the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth, which is applied to all believers. Christ, in heaven, answers all accusations against them, and obtains for them access with boldness to the throne of grace, and the acceptance of their persons and services.

But secondly, he exercises the office of Priest in making continual intercession for his people. Christ continues to serve as the High Priest of his people forever. He intercedes continually, and he does so with compassion and sympathy. Hebrews 2, verse 18, “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 4, verse 15, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” God’s people are preserved and perfected through the heavenly prayers of Christ as their High Priest. Well,

we'll actually explore Christ's priestly ministry in his atonement for sin in the future lectures.

Thirdly, we have the office of a King. The king was the sovereign, the ruler, and the protector of the people. In the Old Testament, priests and kings were distinct offices. But we read in Psalm 110 of one to come, who would both reign as king and serve as priest. The New Testament repeatedly cites Psalm 110 as fulfilled in Jesus. God revealed that kings were to represent the Lord himself to his people, and therefore, to have God's heart. So David—David provided the model of a king who reigned under the Lord, pursuing God's interests, God's glory, ruling by God's law. God says David was one who, "kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes"—1 Kings 14:8. But David also had his sins and his imperfections.

In the Old Testament, we read of one king after another, after another, and we're forced to conclude, he is not the one. He is not the great king that is promised. We're left waiting and looking, until at last, Christ appears in the pages of the New Testament, as the true and ultimate heir to David's throne. Christ is the only King who is truly after God's own heart, because he is the divine Messiah. He succeeded in bringing about God's dominion. We see this in the ascension of Christ, foretold in Daniel 7, verses 13 and 14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Well, this text stands behind Christ's great commission, wherein he calls us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and to disciple the nations, as we read in Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20. Christ is the King of kings, Messiah the Prince. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. His kingdom will extend throughout the earth. We read in Revelation 11, verse 15, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Well, how does Christ execute the office of a King? I'll give you a handful of examples. First of all, by calling people, his people, out of the world. So with the authority, the divine authority of a King, he commands and calls a people out of the kingdom of darkness and bondage under the rule of Satan, and brings them, liberates them, and draws them into the kingdom of light and of himself. Christ, as a King, subdues his people to himself. You know, we begin in a state of sin, and we say with those in the New Testament, "We will not have this king to reign over us." That's where we would be left if Jesus wasn't King. He comes and conquers our hearts, and he subdues us to himself.

We see him exercising his office as King in his kingdom. A king has a kingdom, and he supplies for his kingdom officers, now ministers in the gospel, elders in the church, and so on. He supplies laws for his church. He supplies censures in church discipline in order to govern them. In all of these capacities, as these things are being carried out according to the Word of God, Christ is actually exercising his kingship within the church.

We see him exercising his kingship by bestowing saving grace, and rewards to his people. He's a King who's generous, unlike the kings of this world who fleece the people in order to get for themselves, Christ comes and gives all. And so he bestows grace, and he furnishes them with rewards in this world, and in especially the glory to come. He corrects them, he hems them in, he upholds and sustains them in all of their trials, and in all of their temptations.

As King, he is restraining and overcoming the enemies of God's people, the enemies of Christ himself. He prohibits them, he puts boundaries around what they can do and can't do. And he triumphs over his enemies, whether it's Satan and sin, or hell and death, or whether it's the enemies of this world. He's a victor. He's a triumphant King.

But also, as King, he takes vengeance on those who know not God. And so, in the end, those who resist him and rebel against him, those who oppose him, those who wage war against him, he will defeat utterly and entirely, for his own glory. And so, as Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ executes the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King.

Thirdly, we need to turn to the polemical consideration of this doctrine, assessing very briefly some

errors related to Christ's three offices. First of all, as Prophet. Christ is God's final Word, and he's given to us, through the apostles and New Testament prophets, the Bible, the New Testament Scriptures. The office of prophet has ceased on the completion of the New Testament. And so those who claim to be prophets in our own day are deceivers, perhaps deceived themselves. We have one Prophet, and he is the Mediator who reigns in heaven. And so we should beware of those who come claiming to be prophets, with new revelations of the Spirit. They're giving us revelations of God that are extra-biblical, outside of the Bible. We dealt with this in greater detail in an earlier module within Systematic Theology, dealing with the holy Scriptures. But we need to beware now, in connection with all that we learned in that module about no new revelations of the Spirit. We need to see how it's tied to the supremacy, superiority, and glory of Christ as Prophet. We don't want to detract from that.

Secondly, with regards to Christ being Priest, we need to reject Roman Catholicism. They claim to have priests, and they have all sorts of priestly ordinances and worship. This is what we call judaizing. They're going back into the Old Testament ceremonial ordinances, and importing them into the New Testament, which is a grievous sin, because those things pointed to Jesus. And with Christ coming as our final High Priest, all of those things are fulfilled in him. And so to bring those things back, the ordinances of sacrifice—Rome refers to the mass as “the fresh sacrifice of Christ”—that's abhorrent to the gospel. And they have all of their priestly robes, and incense, and other priestly actions and worship. These things are not appropriate. They detract from the glory of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. We need to resist them.

Thirdly, there is his kingship. Remember, Christ is King, the King of kings. Some will speak of Jesus as, “Well, someday he will become king; that when he returns he will be king.” No! A thousand times, No! Christ is King right now. Christ is reigning with all power and authority right now. Christ is at work in his kingdom right now. He's extending his kingdom right now. And so, that must be affirmed as well.

Fourthly, and briefly, we can draw a few practical applications for ourselves. When we think of Christ as our Prophet, it should reinforce in our minds the centrality of the ministry of the Word, both in private and public. God's Word is to be read, memorized, meditated upon, studied. God's songs, his Book of Psalms, those inspired songs are to be sung. We do this in our private worship, we do this in our family worship. The centrality of the ministry of the Word. Christ is executing the office of Prophet through these means. And in public, the preaching of the Word. This is central. We never, ever, ever allow the centrality of preaching to be removed from public worship and replaced with all sorts of other nonsense. Christ is coming as Prophet in the preaching of his Word, to declare by his Word and Spirit his will for his people.

Secondly, as Priest, we can derive a great deal of comfort from this doctrine. Not only has Christ secured our salvation in the offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin, but it's especially helpful for the Lord's people to also think of Christ's sympathetic intercessions. What is he doing? He's at the right hand of the Father, praying for his people, efficaciously, right now, right here. What comfort there is in all of our losses, and sorrows, and struggles, and trials, and difficulties, to be able to come by faith, and set our minds in heaven, and by faith to behold Christ, who, with sympathy, and tenderness, and pity, and compassion, and love, is praying for his people to uphold and sustain them. There's great comfort in that.

Thirdly, with regards to Christ as King, the Lord Jesus Christ must be Lord of your life. He is the Savior, but he must be Lord. He is to reign as King over your life. You are to bring yourself in subjection to him. And so that means submitting to his reign, acquiescing in his providential dealings with us. But also, receiving with meekness all that he says. When God comes to us in his Word and says, “Thus saith the Lord,” we're not to resist it, we're not to sidestep it, we're not to excuse ourselves of it. We're to come under it. We're to submit to the reign of the great King.

Well, building on the previous lectures regarding Christ's person, in this lecture, we've learned that Christ, as Mediator, executes the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. In the next lecture, and the ones that follow, we will learn how Christ's person relates to Christ's work, especially focusing our attention on the doctrine of the atonement.