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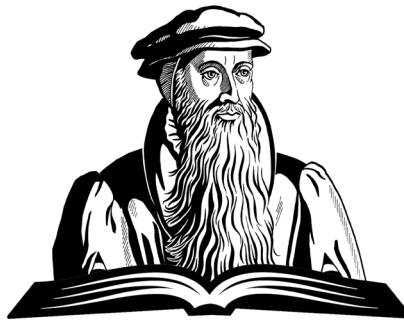
Shorter
CATECHISM

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

Lecture #17

Christ's Office of Prophet
Catechism Questions 23 and 24



The John Knox Institute
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Rev. Jonathan Mattull is minister of the gospel at Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, in St. Louis, Missouri, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

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VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

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Lecture #17

Christ's Office of Prophet

Question 23: *What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?*

Answer: *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.*

Question 24: *How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?*

Answer: *Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.*

In this lesson, we continue to learn about our Redeemer. In truth, we'll never reach the end of learning about him. We may master this *Catechism*, we memorize every single word, but we will never find out all there is to find out about our beloved Savior. Even eternity will never exhaust all of the beauties and wonders of so great a Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well, today we begin a section that focuses upon what Christ does, and what Christ has done. To do so, the *Catechism* dedicates a few questions to think about what Christ has been appointed to do. The *Catechism* uses the word "office." The word refers to what Christ has come to do. An office, in this sense, refers to a position of work and service. Today we have two questions. The first question, #23, introduces these offices that Christ carries out. Our second question, #24, focuses upon the first of these offices.

Notice Question #23: "What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?" The word "execute" simply means "carry out" or "accomplishes". So the question is asking, what are the primarily positions of service that Christ has come to carry out as our Redeemer? What has he been appointed to do? Notice the answer: "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." The answer identifies three offices—prophet, priest, and king. Now it also mentions the estate of humiliation and exaltation, which we'll get to in future lessons.

But notice, and let's focus upon these three words—prophet, priest, and king. They should be familiar to us if we've read through the Bible. Prophets like Isaiah and Elijah spoke the Word of God. And priests, like Aaron and Eliezer offered up sacrifices according to Christ's appointment. Kings like David and Josiah ruled God's people according to God's law. Well, what this answer teaches us is that Christ is a prophet, priest, and king. In fact, he is *the* Prophet, Priest, and King. The next three questions deal with each of these offices more fully. So we'll look in sequence at Christ being a prophet—that's this lesson; Christ being a priest—that's the next lesson; and Christ

being a king—the lesson after that.

So today, we look at Question #24, dealing with Christ as a prophet. Question #24 asks: “How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?” And the answer is: “Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.” The words are pretty clear, so we’ll simply note that this is telling us what Christ executes, or carries out, what he does, as a prophet. In our lesson, we’ll focus on, first, what Christ our Prophet does, and second, how Christ our Prophet does it.

So first, what Christ our Prophet does. Well, let’s remember that there are many things that Christ does. As the eternal Son of God, he rules over the whole universe. He’s the Maker of heaven and earth. He’s the sustainer of all that is. He’s the second person of the blessed Trinity. Of course, as our Redeemer, he died and rose again, and many other things, of course. However, this question is focusing upon what he’s been commissioned to do as our Prophet.

A prophet in general reveals God’s will. This was a supernatural calling. A prophet was given a supernatural gift to reveal what otherwise could not be known. Typically we think of prophecy as those pronouncements of what was to come to pass. They weren’t predictions, as we think of them. A prophet was not one who made a good guess at the future. Rather, he was the appointed mouthpiece of God, to declare to the people with authority what would certainly come to pass. This is why God gave, as a test of prophets, whether or not his words came to pass. Notice Deuteronomy 18, verses 21 through 22. It’s there we read, “And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” In other words, true prophets truly foretold what came to pass.

Well, this is one aspect of what is known as revealing something. To reveal something is to make something known that otherwise could not be known. You could think for a moment of a gift wrapped up in a box. You don’t know what’s in it until it is opened. And once it’s unwrapped and opened, then you see what the gift is. The gift has then been revealed to you. When we speak of revelation, we’re speaking of something far more important than a hidden gift, for a birthday or something else. We’re speaking about the revealing of God’s will—what God desires, what God wants, what God demands, what God promises, what God guarantees. And this is what a prophet revealed.

A prophet did not do this on his own. He didn’t invent these things. He didn’t think up these things. He didn’t come up with them on his own. Instead, the Lord miraculously worked in and by the prophet, and he did so to give us a true understanding of God’s will. Notice 2 Peter 1, verse 21. Peter writes, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” In other words, they revealed God’s will by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in and by them.

Now, we emphasize this to help us understand what Christ, as our Prophet, does. Notice the *Catechism* says, “he reveals.” He takes what is hidden from us, and what is unknowable by our own study, or intuition, or thinking, and he makes it known to us. But what specifically is it that he makes known to us? The *Catechism* tells us, “The will of God for our salvation.” In other words, as our Redeemer, Christ serves as our Prophet, declaring God’s way of salvation for us. As a Prophet, he’s focused on making us know the way of salvation that God has established. It’s true, of course, Christ knows everything. He knows every hidden fact of the universe. He knows the most difficult principles and axioms in mathematics and science. He knows all of the points of

history and language. He could teach any of these things better than anyone else in the world. The things which presently stump the best scientists, Christ knows, and could reveal instantly.

However, as a Prophet, he is focused on teaching us the will of God for our salvation. And think for a moment what a great privilege that is, because he's revealing to us the thing which is of the greatest importance—our salvation. This is what he focused on throughout his incarnate ministry. Everywhere he went, he was teaching and preaching about the way of salvation. This is what he continues to do while he reigns in heaven. He continues to use his Word to teach us the way of salvation; how we can be forgiven; how, as forgiven, we can be sanctified; and what assurances we have; and how we grow in faith, and hope, and love. He's revealing the way, and the will of God for our salvation. What a blessing to have this to be true, that Christ is our Prophet to reveal to us the will of God for our Salvation.

And second, how Christ our Prophet does this. Christ does not do so through secret knowledge of the constellations of the stars in the sky above us. He does not do this simply by planting in us, all of a sudden, this knowledge in our minds. Instead, as the *Catechism* says, he uses "his word and Spirit." Well, let's look at each of these, and how they work together.

First, Christ uses his Word to reveal the will of God for our salvation. We read of Christ that he came teaching and preaching the kingdom of God. That is, he came speaking words to instruct us, and exhort us, reprove us, rebuke us, encourage us, command us, promise us the things regarding God's kingdom, God's salvation. We saw earlier in a previous lesson that the Word of God is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God. We saw that it is called the Word of God, because it is God's revelation to man. Just as you and I communicate to others by our speech, or our words, so God communicates to us by his speech, his words. This is what we saw in 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." It's breathed out by God. It's God's Word. So the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, is truly God's Word. And necessarily then, it is Christ's Word, for Christ is God. Moreover, the Old Testament prophets were given the words. They spoke by none less than the Spirit of Christ. Notice 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 11, speaking of those prophets, Peter writes, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." In other words, prophets like Moses and Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel were revealing the words that the Spirit of Christ gave them. Their words are preeminently Christ's words. When you read the prophecy of Isaiah, it's true you're reading Isaiah's words, but Isaiah's words are there because Christ gave them to Isaiah. So they're Christ's words. The whole Bible is the revelation of Christ. It's the Word of Christ. This is what he uses to make us know the will of God for our salvation. If we are going to know the way of salvation, we will only find it in the Word of Christ. What a privilege then that we have been given access to read the Word—the very Word, the true Word, the inerrant Word of Christ. What a precious thing it is that we have his Word, for this Word that teaches us the will of God for our salvation.

Well, second, Christ uses his Spirit to reveal the will of God for our salvation. Christ uses his Word to make known to us that will, but there is something else needed—not different content, but rather, in order for us to know the will of God for our salvation, we need to understand it, we need to believe it. We think for a moment about a book perhaps of history. The book contains the information about that era of history, the facts, and figures, and so on. However, if we have that book and have never read it, we don't actually benefit by it. We must have eyes to read the book. That doesn't change the content. Our eyes are the vehicles by which we take in the words. We have to have minds to understand the meaning of the words. Well, similarly, the Bible is the Word of

God. It is the revelation of the will of God for our salvation. However, our souls must be enabled to perceive its truth. We need our souls to receive this truth. Well, since man is dead in his sin, this does not happen naturally. Just as a dead body will never learn anything, however many books are presented to it, neither will a sinner dead in his sin ever truly learn the will of God regarding salvation. He must first be given life. His soul must be made to understand the things that Christ has revealed in his Word, and this only happens as Christ uses his Spirit to give understanding to the sinner. Well, praise God, this is what Christ does for his people. He gives us his Word, and likewise to his people, he blesses by his Spirit that they would understand what he's revealed.

Notice the idea in Luke chapter 24, and verse 45. This is after Christ's resurrection. He's walking with two of his disciples, though they did not recognize him. Along the way, he spoke to them about himself from the Bible, however, it was only as he worked to give them understanding that they finally were brought to understand and embrace the truth. They needed his special work of grace by his Spirit. The passage says it this way: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Notice, it's not that he gave them something other than the scriptures. The scriptures are what he's talking about. That's the revelation. But they stood in need of their minds being opened to receive that. Paul says something similar, in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. Of believers, he says, "But we all, with open face"—that is, with unveiled face, no hindrance before us—"beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In other words, the Spirit of the Lord causes us to understand the Lord, his revelation, and to be transformed by him. We need to study the Bible. Without the Bible, we'll never know the truths of salvation. These truths are not found in other places. However, we must know the supernatural work of the Spirit, giving us understanding, making us to embrace these truths as the truths of salvation for us.

Well, this is what the Lord Jesus does. He uses his Word and Spirit to make us understand and embrace the will of God for our salvation. Jesus makes this point very clear, in John, chapter 3. Notice the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus, in John, chapter 3, verses 5 through 8. There we read, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Well, there's a lot in this exchange, but notice that the Spirit of God is what makes man see and enter into the kingdom of God. Without the Spirit's work giving life, and causing us to know the truth of Christ, without the Spirit giving us understanding and faith, the sinner never embraces the will of God for salvation. In fact, he cannot, he does not have the power. And so, it points out quite clearly how necessary it is, if ever we should know the will of God for our salvation, both having God's Word, but also God's Spirit working upon us, that he would cause us to know the truth of his Word unto salvation.

Well, this brings us to two points for our conclusion. The first is this: we must give diligence to studying the Word of God. The Word of God is Christ's Word to us teaching us, showing us the will of God for our salvation. He does so through promises of salvation. He does so through admonitions and warnings. He does so by teaching us of heaven and hell, and directing us to consider the end of sinners, and the blessings of faith. He teaches us these things by his Word.

He tells us about himself by his Word. And so we have four Gospels, which tell us the life, and ministry, and work of Christ. We have the Old Testament which prepares the way for it, and the rest of the New Testament which explains it and applies it. All of these things, where are they found? They're found in the Bible—the Word of God. It's the Word which Christ uses to teach us the will of God for our salvation. Well it that's the case, then we must study the Word, to understand the Word, to think through the Word. And this is exactly what the Bereans did. When Paul went and preached to the Jews in Berea, they responded by diligently studying and searching out God's Word. Notice Acts, chapter 17, verse 11. Speaking of the Bereans, we read, "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether they were so." Well, by God's grace, they were blessed in their diligence. We read just after that, "Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few." In other words, God blessed their diligent study that they then believed upon that message.

Well, there's something for us in our study. We need to approach the Bible in a similar way, with diligence. We don't just sort of carelessly and casually approach God's Word, because this Word tells us the way of salvation. It holds forth the most important of things. And yes, there are things in it that are difficult to understand. Peter mentions that himself. But the fact that they are difficult, first off, doesn't mean they're impossible to understand, nor does it mean that everything is difficult to understand. And if things are difficult to understand, how much more does that argue for our diligence in it.

So let me challenge you to examine yourself, and ask the question, "Am I diligently studying God's Word? Do I have a regular time where I am reading God's Word, and not just going over the words on the page, but thinking about them, praying about them, applying them as God gives help, inquiring with others, asking, "Help me understand this," speaking to your parents perhaps, or your pastor, or getting books that help you understand. That's what diligence is. And it's worth it, because there's no greater thing than to know the way of salvation, and there's no other way to know it but by the Word of God.

Well, second, we must seek the Lord's blessing by his Spirit, in order to gain understanding. This is exactly what the psalmist does throughout Psalm 119. If you read through that Psalm, you'll see again and again, the psalmist is praying that God would give him understanding. He's bound to God's Word. He searching, meditating, memorizing, reciting God's Word. And he's constantly asking, "Quicken me"—that is, enliven me. He's asking that God would give him understanding, and teach him, and enlighten him, in order that he might believe, and keep, and understand God's Word. Well, this is how we need to approach God's Word. We need diligence in our study, and thinking through the words, and how they relate to one another, and how this sentence relates to the previous and the following, and how this book relates to the other books of the Bible. But while we do so diligently, and we study a book that's full of words and sentences, it's not enough merely to understand the words intellectually. We need the Spirit of Christ to bless this truth unto our souls that we may embrace them, believing them unto salvation.

And this is where the truth of Christ as our Prophet is of great encouragement. He is our Prophet, who, by his Word and Spirit, reveals to us the will of God for our salvation. And so we go to him, and we say as we study, "Lord, before I read, I pray that you would"—in the words of the psalmist—"open thou mine eyes, that I might behold wondrous things from thy law." Indeed we have need of Christ to open our understanding, as he did with the two disciples mentioned earlier, that we may understand and believe. And so we approach the Bible with diligence, and with dependence—diligently studying the Word, and yet depending upon Christ mercifully, graciously,

by his Spirit, to cause us to understand and believe the truth. And so, may it be that you and I both grow in our approach to the study of his Word, and as we do, that we would better understand, and believe, and delight in this salvation from God.