

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 6, Introduction, Part 6, 3 Offices of Christ [Prophet, Priest, King]

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 6, Introduction, Part 6, Offices of Christ [Prophet, Priest, King], Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture introduces the concept of **Christ's three offices: Prophet, Priest, and King**, as part of a broader study on Christology and his saving work. The lecture draws from **historical theology**, referencing Eusebius and extensively quoting **John Calvin's *Institutes*** to explain the nature and purpose of these roles. It also highlights the inclusion of these offices in the **Heidelberg Catechism** as a foundational Reformed belief. Finally, the lecture examines the **Old Testament roots** of these offices in the figures of prophets, priests, and kings, establishing them as **types that prefigure Christ**.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 6 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Christology).



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 6, Introduction, Part 6, Offices of Christ [Prophet, Priest, King]

Briefing Document: Christ's Three Offices - Prophet, Priest, and King

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 6, Part 6 of his teaching on "Christ's Saving Work." This session focuses on the Christological doctrine of the three offices of Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King, drawing from historical theology (Eusebius, Calvin, Heidelberg Catechism) and Old Testament foreshadowing.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Permanent Incarnation and the Two States of Christ:

- The incarnation of the Son of God is permanent. Even in heaven, Jesus remains the incarnate Son, retaining his humanity. Peterson clarifies a common misconception: *"I have heard Christians, perhaps without thinking about it too deeply, say, oh, he's no longer a man, as if he somehow shed his humanity when he died or in the resurrection. That is a mistake. The incarnation is permanent."*
- The difference between Jesus on earth and Jesus in heaven is understood through the doctrine of the two states: humiliation and exaltation.
- **State of Humiliation:** Begins with his birth and includes his life, sufferings, temptations, death, and burial. *"traditionally, the state of humiliation begins with his birth and then his life, including sufferings and temptations; his death and his burial are the final point in his humiliation, his ignominious death on the cross."*
- **State of Exaltation:** Follows his humiliation and encompasses his resurrection, ascension, sitting at God's right hand, and his future second coming. *"the state of exaltation follows it, and that involves his resurrection, his ascension, his sitting at God's right hand, and it will culminate in his second coming."*
- Despite the state of humiliation, Christ's glory was still present, exemplified by the cross being transformed into a "triumphal chariot" (referencing Calvin on Colossians 2:15). *"How could the cross possibly be glorious? Calvin comments concerning Colossians 2:15 that here, the cross is transformed into a triumphal chariot."*

- During his state of humiliation, while fully God, Jesus operated in accordance with the Father's will, exemplified by his statement that even the Son did not know the timing of his return. *"He is God, and he fully retains his divine properties when he becomes a human being, but he gives up not the properties themselves, not his divine attributes, but the independent exercise of them. He has them, he retains them, but he only uses them in accordance with the father's will."*

2. The Doctrine of Christ's Threefold Office:

- The concept of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King is rooted in the idea of him being the "Christ," the anointed one. *"They have to do with his being anointed as the Christ, the anointed one, and as such, God gave him three offices..."*
- **Historical Mentions:Eusebius:** First to mention the three offices, noting their significance among the Hebrews and predicting their abolition as a sign of Christ's presence. He referred to Jesus as *"the divine and heavenly logos of the world, the only high priest of all creation, the only king of the prophets, the only arch prophet of the father."*
- **Heidelberg Catechism (Question 31):** Defines why Jesus is called Christ, highlighting his ordination by God and anointing with the Holy Spirit for each office.
- **Prophet and Teacher:** *"to be our chief prophet and teacher who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance..."*
- **High Priest:** *"our only high priest who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of his body and who continually pleads our cause with the father..."*
- **Eternal King:** *"our eternal king who governs us by his word and spirit and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us."*
- **John Calvin (Institutes, Book 2, Chapter 15):** Developed the theology of the threefold office, emphasizing its importance for faith and salvation. *"The office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts, hence a three-fold office... For he was given to be a prophet, king, and priest..."*

3. The Prophetic Office of Christ:

- Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic line in the Old Testament. Even the Samaritans anticipated the Messiah as a teacher. *"when the Messiah comes, he will teach us all things."*

- Hebrews 1:1-2 highlights the transition from God speaking through prophets to speaking through his Son. *"in many and various ways, God spoke of old to the fathers by the prophets... in these last days, he has spoken to us through a beloved son."*
- Christ's anointing by the Spirit as a prophet is foretold in Isaiah 61:1-2 (quoted in Luke 4:18): *"The spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me because Jehovah has appointed, anointed me to preach to the humble..."* This anointing extends to his body, the church, through the continuing preaching of the gospel.
- Christ's perfect doctrine signifies the end of all prophecies. *"The perfect doctrine he has brought has made an end to all prophecies."*
- Paul refers to Christ as our wisdom, emphasizing that all true knowledge and understanding are found in him. *"he was given to us as our wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:30... in him are hid all the treasures of knowledge and understanding, Colossians 2:3."*

4. The Kingly Office of Christ:

- Christ's kingship is spiritual in nature, providing eternal efficacy and benefit to believers. *"it is spiritual in nature. From this, we infer its efficacy and benefit to us, as well as its whole force and eternity."*
- His eternal power guarantees the perpetuity and safety of the church amidst trials. *"whenever we hear of Christ as armed with eternal power, let us remember that the perpetuity of the church is secure in this protection."*
- Christ's kingship inspires hope for blessed immortality and a better life. *"Christ, to lift our hope to heaven, declares that his kingship is not of this world, John 18:36."*
- Through his kingly office, Christ enriches his people with all things necessary for eternal salvation, fortifies them against spiritual enemies, and provides for their needs. *"Christ enriches his people with all things necessary for the eternal salvation of souls and fortifies them with the courage to stand unconquerable against all the assaults of spiritual enemies."*
- The anointing of Christ as King is not with physical oil but with the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, and the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2, Psalm 45:7).
- Ultimately, Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15), at which point God will be the sole head of the church.

5. The Priestly Office of Christ:

- As a pure and stainless mediator, Christ's priestly office reconciles us to God, whose righteous curse and anger separate us from him. *"As a pure and stainless mediator, he is, by his holiness, to reconcile us to God. But God's righteous curse bars our access to him, and God, in his capacity as judge, is angry toward us. Hence an expiation must intervene..."*
- Christ performed his priestly office through the sacrifice of himself, expiating our sins and satisfying God's justice. *"the priestly office belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of his death, he blotted out our own guilt and satisfied our sins."* This is supported by God's oath in Psalm 110:4 ("You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek").
- Christ is also an everlasting intercessor, through whose pleading we obtain favor and peace with God. *"It follows that he is an everlasting intercessor. Through his pleading, we obtain favor."*
- In Christ, the roles of priest and sacrifice are united in one person, as no other adequate satisfaction or worthy offering could be found. *"in Christ, there was a new and different order in which the same one was to be both priest and sacrifice."*
- Christ's priestly role extends to receiving believers as his companions, making them priests in him who can offer themselves and their prayers and praise to God. *"For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God..."*

6. Old Testament Background and Typology:

- The historical offices of prophet, priest, and king in the Old Testament serve as types (prefigurations) of Christ. *"The prophets, the priests, and the kings are thus what we call types of Christ."*
- **Distinction between Typology and Allegory:** Types are historical persons, events, or institutions that foreshadow Christ. Allegory is different. *"Types are historical persons, events, or institutions that prefigure Christ."*
- **Examples of Types: Prophetic Office:** Instituted by God so his people would hear directly from him (Deuteronomy 18). Moses' prophecy of a future prophet like himself pointed to Christ as the ultimate prophet (Acts 3:22).

- **Kingship:** God's plan for Israel included a kingship (Genesis 49), ultimately fulfilled in Christ, the great son of David (2 Samuel 7). The Davidic line, despite its flaws, foreshadowed Christ's eternal reign.
- **Priesthood:** The Levitical and Aaronic priesthood, requiring lineage from Levi and Aaron, posed a "dilemma" for Christ, who was from the tribe of Judah. God resolved this by establishing a different priesthood in Christ, which will be addressed in the subsequent lecture.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's lecture provides a comprehensive introduction to the doctrine of Christ's threefold office, emphasizing its historical development, theological significance, and biblical foundations in both the Old and New Testaments. The session highlights the importance of understanding Christ as the divinely anointed Prophet, Priest, and King for a complete understanding of his saving work. The concept of typology underscores how God's plan unfolded throughout history, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 6, Introduction, Part 6, Offices of Christ [Prophet, Priest, King]

Christ's Saving Work: A Study Guide on the Three Offices of Christ

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **Christology:** The study of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Inseparability of Person and Work:** The understanding that what Christ does is inherently tied to who he is (the incarnate Son of God).
- **Doctrine of the Two States:** The post-Reformation theological framework describing Christ's state of humiliation (from incarnation to burial) and his state of exaltation (from resurrection to second coming).
- **State of Humiliation:** Christ's earthly life, marked by suffering, temptation, death, and burial. Despite this, there was still glory present (e.g., the triumph of the cross).
- **State of Exaltation:** Christ's resurrection, ascension, session at the right hand of God, and future second coming. In this state, Christ fully exercises his divine attributes according to the Father's will.
- **Three Offices of Christ:** The traditional understanding of Christ's roles as Prophet, Priest, and King, rooted in the Old Testament anointing practices.
- **Prophet:** Christ as God's ultimate spokesperson, fully revealing God's will and the way to salvation. His prophetic work extends to the continuing preaching of the Gospel.
- **Priest:** Christ as the one who offered the perfect sacrifice (himself) to atone for sin and who continually intercedes with the Father on behalf of believers.
- **King:** Christ as the eternal ruler of the church, protecting, governing, and providing for his people spiritually, ultimately leading to their eternal salvation. His kingdom is spiritual in nature.
- **Anointing:** The symbolic act of setting someone apart for a specific office or task. Christ's anointing is with the Holy Spirit and signifies his divine appointment to his three offices.

- **Typology:** The theological interpretation of Old Testament persons, events, and institutions as prefiguring Christ and his work. Examples include Adam, the Exodus, and the offices of prophet, priest, and king in Israel.
- **Historical Theology:** The study of the development of Christian doctrines throughout history, as seen in the contributions of Eusebius and John Calvin.
- **Catechism:** A didactic tool used for teaching the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith, exemplified by the Heidelberg Catechism's articulation of the three offices.

Quiz:

1. Explain the doctrine of the two states of Christ. What are the key characteristics and phases of each state, and why is this doctrine important for understanding Jesus?
2. According to the text, why is the incarnation considered permanent? What implication does this have for our understanding of the ascended Christ in heaven?
3. Describe Eusebius's contribution to the understanding of Christ's three offices. Why is his mention of these offices considered significant in the history of Christian theology?
4. According to the Heidelberg Catechism, what are the three aspects of Christ's anointing and the roles associated with each? Briefly summarize the function of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King according to this catechism.
5. Explain Calvin's understanding of the prophetic office of Christ. How does Christ fulfill this office in a way that surpasses the Old Testament prophets?
6. Why does Calvin assert that Christ's kingship is spiritual in nature? What are some of the benefits that believers receive through Christ's kingly rule?
7. Describe Calvin's understanding of Christ's priestly office, including both his role as a sacrifice and as an intercessor. Why was it necessary for Christ to fulfill this role?
8. What is the significance of the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king in relation to Christ? Explain the concept of typology in this context.

9. According to the text, why were the Israelites' desire for a king both understandable and problematic? How did God ultimately fulfill his plan for a king in Israel?
10. Explain the apparent "dilemma" God faced regarding the lineage of kings and priests in the Old Testament. How does the text suggest this dilemma is resolved in Christ?

Answer Key:

1. The doctrine of the two states describes Christ's state of humiliation, from his incarnation to burial, marked by his earthly limitations and suffering, and his state of exaltation, from his resurrection to his second coming, characterized by his glory and full exercise of divine power according to the Father's will. This doctrine helps reconcile seemingly contradictory biblical passages about Christ's power and limitations during his earthly ministry.
2. The incarnation is considered permanent because the Son of God truly became human, and this union of divine and human nature persists even in his glorified state. This means that the ascended Christ at the right hand of the Father is still the God-man, Jesus, who experienced human life and can sympathize with our weaknesses.
3. Eusebius is famous for being the first known Christian writer to explicitly mention the three offices of Christ (kingship, prophet, and high priesthood) in relation to Old Testament figures and prophecies concerning the Messiah. While he merely states them, his recognition of this threefold dignity is a significant early step in the theological development of this doctrine.
4. According to the Heidelberg Catechism, Christ is anointed by God the Father with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher, our only high priest, and our eternal king. As Prophet, he fully reveals God's will for our deliverance. As Priest, he delivered us through his sacrifice and intercedes for us. As King, he governs and protects us through his Word and Spirit.
5. Calvin understands Christ's prophetic office as the ultimate revelation of God's will and wisdom, surpassing the partial revelations of the Old Testament prophets. Christ, as the incarnate Word, brings the "full light of understanding" necessary for salvation, and the perfect doctrine he delivered has brought an end to all previous prophecies in terms of authoritative revelation.

6. Calvin states that Christ's kingship is spiritual because it primarily concerns the eternal salvation of souls and the inner strength believers receive to overcome spiritual enemies. While it has implications for this life (protection and provision), its ultimate focus is on the heavenly and eternal realm, offering hope for a better life.
7. Calvin describes Christ's priestly office in two main aspects: as the sacrifice who, by his death, expiated our sins and reconciled us to God, and as the everlasting intercessor who continually pleads our cause before the Father, securing God's favor for us. This role was necessary because our sin creates a barrier to God, requiring propitiation and ongoing mediation.
8. The Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king serve as types of Christ, meaning they are historical roles instituted by God that foreshadow and point to the greater fulfillment found in Jesus. Typology recognizes these correspondences between the Old Testament and Christ, revealing God's unified plan of redemption throughout history.
9. The Israelites' desire for a king was understandable because God had planned for a kingship in Israel, culminating in Christ. However, it was problematic because they desired a king "like the other nations," driven by a rejection of God's unique leadership rather than a desire for a king who would be faithful to God's law.
10. The text identifies a potential "dilemma" because, according to the Old Testament law, kings were to come from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David, while priests were to come from the tribe of Levi and the lineage of Aaron. These lineages were distinct. The text implies that God resolves this in Christ by establishing a different, superior priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, which transcends the Levitical order and is compatible with Christ's Davidic kingship.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the significance of the doctrine of the two states of Christ for understanding both his earthly ministry and his current role in heaven. How does this doctrine address potential misunderstandings about Christ's humanity and divinity?
2. Analyze the historical development of the doctrine of Christ's three offices, tracing its roots from Eusebius to its more elaborate articulation by John Calvin and its inclusion in the Heidelberg Catechism. What does this historical progression reveal about the church's understanding of Christ's work?
3. Explore the interconnectedness of Christ's three offices (Prophet, Priest, and King). How do these roles complement and inform one another in achieving Christ's saving work? Provide specific examples from the text to support your analysis.
4. Examine the concept of typology as presented in the text. How do the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king serve as types of Christ? What is the value of understanding these Old Testament foreshadowings for appreciating Christ's identity and mission?
5. Evaluate the lasting importance of the three offices of Christ for Christian faith and practice today. How do these roles shape our understanding of salvation, our relationship with God, and our life in the world?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Christology:** The branch of Christian theology concerned with the person, nature, and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Incarnation:** The theological doctrine that the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, became fully human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, while remaining fully divine.
- **Atonement:** The work Christ did in his life and death to reconcile humanity to God, making amends for sin.
- **Propitiation:** The act of appeasing or satisfying God's wrath against sin through the sacrifice of Christ.
- **Intercession:** The act of Christ, as our High Priest in heaven, pleading with the Father on behalf of believers.
- **Justification:** God's act of declaring righteous those who believe in Christ, forgiving their sins and imputing Christ's righteousness to them.
- **Sanctification:** The process by which believers are progressively made holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Trinity:** The Christian doctrine that God is one being in three co-equal and co-eternal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **Logos:** A Greek term used in philosophy and theology to refer to the divine reason or Word of God, often identified with the second person of the Trinity.
- **Messiah:** A Hebrew term meaning "anointed one," referring to the promised deliverer and king of Israel, fulfilled in Jesus Christ (the Greek equivalent is "Christos").
- **Didactic:** Intended to teach or instruct.
- **Expiation:** The act of making amends or atoning for sin, removing guilt and defilement.
- **Immutable:** Unchanging or unchangeable.
- **Perpetuity:** The state of lasting or continuing forever.
- **Epitome:** A perfect example of something.
- **Terminus:** The final point or end.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 6, Introduction, Part 6, Offices of Christ [Prophet, Priest, King], Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Christ's Saving Work and His Offices

1. What is the significance of the doctrine of the two states of Christ (humiliation and exaltation)? The doctrine of the two states helps us understand the chronological phases and corresponding conditions of Christ's earthly existence and heavenly reign. The state of humiliation spans from his incarnation to his burial, encompassing his earthly life with its sufferings and the ignominious death on the cross. The state of exaltation begins with his resurrection and ascension, continues with his session at the right hand of God, and will culminate in his second coming. This doctrine clarifies how the same person, the incarnate Son of God, could experience both earthly limitations and divine glory. It also addresses apparent paradoxes in Scripture, such as Christ not knowing the time of his return during his earthly ministry, as this limitation was part of his state of humiliation and submission to the Father's will. Even within his humiliation, however, Scripture reveals glimpses of his glory and triumph, exemplified by the cross being transformed into a triumphal chariot.

2. What are the three offices of Christ, and where does this concept originate? The three offices of Christ are prophet, priest, and king. These roles are understood as the divinely appointed missions or functions of Jesus Christ as the "Anointed One" (Christ or Messiah). Historically, the church father Eusebius first mentioned these three offices, noting their prominence among the Hebrews and their predicted abolition as a sign of Christ's presence. However, it was John Calvin who theologically developed this doctrine in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Heidelberg Catechism also enshrines the three offices as a key aspect of Reformed theology.

3. What is Christ's role as Prophet? As Prophet, Christ is the ultimate revealer of God's will and the secret counsel concerning salvation. He is the chief prophet and teacher, anointed by the Holy Spirit to fully disclose the truth necessary for our deliverance. While God spoke through prophets in the Old Testament, Christ represents the fullness and culmination of divine revelation. His perfect doctrine supersedes and fulfills all prior prophecies. Furthermore, Christ's prophetic anointing extends to his body, the church, empowering the ongoing preaching of the gospel. Ultimately, all true wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ, and the prophetic office in him guides us to this complete understanding.

4. What is Christ's role as King? Christ's kingship is spiritual in nature, signifying his eternal rule and protection over the church and his people. This kingship is not of this world but extends to the eternal salvation of souls, providing all things necessary for this end. As King, Christ fortifies believers with the courage to overcome spiritual enemies and patiently endure earthly trials. His eternal power ensures the perpetuity and safety of the church despite opposition. The blessings of his kingly office inspire hope for a better, eternal life. Christ's anointing as King is not with physical oil but with the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, and the fear of the Lord, enabling him to enrich his people with divine abundance.

5. What is Christ's role as Priest? As Priest, Christ serves as the pure and stainless mediator who reconciles humanity to God. His priestly work involves two key aspects: sacrifice and intercession. Through the one sacrifice of his body on the cross, Christ expiated our sins, satisfied God's righteous judgment, and obtained God's favor for us. This act removed the barrier of our guilt and appeased God's wrath. Additionally, Christ is our everlasting intercessor, continually pleading our cause before the Father, securing favor and peace for believers. In this priestly role, Christ not only makes the Father propitious but also elevates believers to be priests in him, enabling them to offer themselves and their praises as acceptable sacrifices to God.

6. What is the Old Testament background for the three offices of Christ? The three offices of Christ are foreshadowed in the Old Testament through the historical offices of prophet, priest, and king in Israel. Deuteronomy 18 anticipates a great prophet like Moses. The kingship was ordained by God, particularly through the line of David, with promises pointing to an eternal king. The priesthood was established through the tribe of Levi and the lineage of Aaron. These Old Testament figures and institutions serve as types, historical persons, events, or institutions that prefigure and point forward to the person and work of Christ.

7. How do the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king relate to Christ? The Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king serve as types of Christ, meaning they were divinely ordained prefigurations of his fuller and ultimate roles. The Old Testament prophets pointed to Christ as the ultimate revealer of God's will. The Old Testament kings, especially those in the line of David, foreshadowed Christ's eternal and spiritual reign. The Old Testament priests anticipated Christ's role as the perfect sacrifice for sin and the mediator between God and humanity. Christ embodies the perfection and fulfillment of all that these Old Testament offices represented.

8. Why was the Old Testament priesthood through Levi and Aaron insufficient, necessitating Christ's priestly office? The Old Testament priesthood was limited by its nature and the human frailty of the priests. Priests came from the tribe of Levi and the lineage of Aaron, while the Davidic line was designated for kingship in the tribe of Judah. This posed a theological challenge as the promised Messiah was expected to fulfill both royal and priestly roles. Furthermore, the Levitical sacrifices were repeatedly necessary and could not ultimately atone for sin. God resolved this by establishing a new and different priesthood in Christ, who is both the priest and the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. Christ's priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, a royal priesthood, transcending the limitations of the Levitical order and providing a permanent and effective atonement for sin.