

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CHRIST THE MEDIATOR**

### **Christ's Appointment to the Office of Mediator**

1. *To give effect to His eternal purpose God chose and ordained the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, in accordance with the covenant into which they had entered, to be the mediator between God and man; also to be prophet, priest, king, head and saviour of His church; also to be the heir of all things and judge of the world. From all eternity God had given to His Son those who were to be His progeny, and the Son engaged in time (as distinct from eternity) to redeem, call, justify, sanctify, and glorify them.*

- (a) The **Father** appointed Christ to the office of mediator. Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:21-22.
- (b) The Father gave **Christ** a people to save as mediator. Isaiah 53:10, John 6:37,39, 17:2,6,9,11,12,24.

### **Christ's Qualifications for the Office of Mediator**

2. *The divine Person who made the world, and upholds and governs all things that He has made, is the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is true and eternal God, the 'brightness of the Father's glory', of the same substance (or essence) as the Father, and equal with Him.*

*It is He who, at the appointed time, took upon Himself the nature of man, with all its essential characteristics and its common infirmities, sin excepted. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Virgin Mary, a woman who belonged to the tribe of Judah, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her and the power of God most High overshadowing her. And so, as the Scripture tells us, He was made of a woman, a descendent of Abraham and David. In this way it came about that the two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the divine and the human, were inseparably joined together in one Person, without the conversion of the one nature into the other, and without the mixing, as it were, of one nature with the other; in other words, without confusion. Thus the Son of God is now both true God and true man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.*

(a) **He is God**, fully equal with the Father (lines 1-4). Everything that is true of the Person of the Father is also true of the Person of the Son. He "made the world" (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16), and "upholds and governs all things" (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3). He is "eternal" God (Hebrews 1:10-12). He is the "brightness of the Father's glory" (Hebrews 1:3), which means that He is all God is. The use of the word "substance (or essence)" comes from the definition of Chalcedon in the early church.

(b) **He is man**, all that we are as men, but without sin (lines 5-9). Whatever is true of man is also true of Christ. He "took upon Himself the nature of man" (Hebrews 2:14-18, 1 John 1:1-2). Note the following things that are true of man and of Christ as man, but not true of God.

- 1. Christ died (Hebrews 2:14); His spirit was separated from His body (John 19:30).
- 2. He had human feelings and emotions: He wept (John 11:35), He was full of sorrow (Matthew 26:37-38), He needed comfort and sympathy from His disciples (Matthew 26:36-43).
- 3. He was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 4:15, see James 1:13).
- 4. He experienced spiritual and moral growth (Luke 2:40,52, Hebrews 5:8-9).
- 5. He knew human limitations: hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (John 4:6), sleep (Luke 8:23), ignorance (Mark 13:32).

6. He was subject to the effects of the curse of God upon man, because His body was in the “likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). He suffered unto death which is the curse of God because of His broken law (Hebrews 2:10,18, 5:8, Galatians 4:4). Yet He was completely without sin (Hebrews 4:15, 7:26, 9:14).

Christ became a man being “conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary” (Matthew 1:18,20, Luke 1:34-35). So He was a Jew (= descendent of Abraham), and of the tribe of Judah, a descendent of King David (see the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, and Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:32).

(c) **He is one Person**, both God and man (lines 10-14). He is always referred to as one Person, never as two. He is the eternal Son of God (John 1:14). The two natures are not mixed so as to form a third nature different from them both; neither is the human absorbed into the divine. When the Son of God became man (= the incarnation), nothing was taken away from His full deity, and His true manhood was not transformed into something divine (see Philippians 2:5-8).

(d) **Heresies** about the Person of Christ. In the early church there were many such heresies that has to be fought, resulting in the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds. The most important heresies were:

- *Docetism* – Christ is not a real man (see I John 1:1-4).
- *Arianism* – Christ is not God (so Jehovah’s Witnesses).
- *Appollinarianism* – the divine word replaced the human soul, so He does not have a full human nature.
- *Nestorianism* – Christ is two Persons, both a human Person and a divine Person.
- *Eutychianism* – Christ has only one nature, the divine and human fused together.

3. *The two natures, divine and human, being thus united in the person of God’s Son, He was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit to an unlimited extent, and in Him are found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is replete with all that is pleasing to the Father, being holy, harmless, untouched by sin, and full of grace and truth. Thus He has become thoroughly qualified to execute the work of a mediator and surety. He did not take this work upon Himself uncalled, but was commissioned by His Father so to act. His Father also conferred upon Him full powers of jurisdiction and commanded Him to pass judgment on all.*

Christ was prepared for the office of mediator, not only by the incarnation (His becoming man with two natures), but also by His being anointed with the Holy Spirit (John 3:34). So He is described as being the Anointed One (Acts 10:38, Luke 4:18). It was at His baptism that He officially began His work, the time when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16-17). Therefore, everything that Christ did, He did with the power of the Holy Spirit, His teaching and preaching (Luke 4:18), His mighty miracles (Matthew 12:28), His self-sacrifice (Hebrews 9:14).

## **An Outline of His Work as Mediator**

4. *The Lord Jesus most willingly undertook the office of mediator, and in order that He might discharge it He became subject to God's law, which He perfectly fulfilled. He also underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have born and suffered, for He bore our sins and was accursed for our sakes. He endured sorrows in His soul severe beyond our conception, and most painful sufferings in His body. His death was by crucifixion. While He remained in the state of the dead His body sustained no decay. The third day saw His resurrection in the same body in which He had suffered. In the same body also He ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of His Father, interceding for His own. At the end of the world He will return to judge men and angels.*

(a) **He obeyed the law of God** (lines 1-2). He was not only “born of woman”, but “born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). It is the law of God that we have broken, and to be our Saviour He had to perfectly keep that law. His whole ministry can be regarded as one of ‘obedience’, including His death on the cross, His last great act of obedience to His Father (Philippians 2:8, Romans 5:19, see John 17:4). If He had not obeyed He would have been a sinner like us.

(b) **He died for our sins** (lines 3-6). He did not die for His own sins, as He had none, having perfectly kept the law. He died for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 9:28, 1 Peter 2:24, see Isaiah 53:5-6). How did He bare “our sins in His body”? The Confession explains that “He underwent the punishment due to us”. The offerer laid his hands upon the head of the sacrificial animal in the Old Testament as a symbol of transferring his sin; and then the animal was killed instead of the offerer who had sinned. So Christ is called the Lamb of God who takes our sins away (John 1:29, see 1 Peter 1:18-19). When Christ died, He was under the curse of the law that we had broken (Galatians 3:13); this is why there was darkness when He was hanging on the cross, and why He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:45-46). So we say that His death was ‘penal’ = He was judged; and it was ‘vicarious’ = He was being judged in the place of others, as our representative. It is noted in the Confession that He died by crucifixion, a most painful death. But the emphasis in the Bible is upon the sufferings of His soul which cannot be described. So He was in great agony in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37-38). Who can understand what it meant for Him to be forsaken by His Father in those three hours of darkness on the cross? It must be said that He suffered the torments of hell for us on the cross; for hell is darkness, the place of separation from God (so Matthew 8:12). According to the prophecy, “His body sustained no decay” (Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:24-28). As with the soul of the believer at death, He went to be with His Father; so He could promise the repentant thief that on that very day they would be together in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Do not think that He went to hell, as some mistakenly teach from 1 Peter 3:19.

(c) **He rose from the dead** (line 7). This was a bodily resurrection, “in the same body in which He had suffered”. Read 1 Corinthians 15, the great chapter on the resurrection. So the risen Lord could challenge Thomas to use his fingers to feel the nail marks in His hands, and to place his hand on the spear wound on His side (John 20:27). If Christ had not risen from the dead He could not be our Saviour, because death is the wages of sin, and to remain in death is to be conquered by sin (1 Corinthians 15:17).

(d) **He ascended into heaven** (lines 8-9). He also ascended “in the same body...into heaven”. This is how the apostles saw Him go into heaven (Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9-11). Now He continues to wear His glorified body “at the right hand of His Father”, the basis on which He is our sympathetic High Priest (Hebrew 4:14-16). His great ministry for “His own” in heaven is His intercession (Romans 8:34, Hebrew 7:25). For the content of His intercession for us, see Christ’s High Priestly prayer on John 17. By this we shall be finally saved.

(e) **He will return to judge all creatures** (line 10). Christ has been appointed the final judge of both men and angels (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:22, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:16). By this judgment He will welcome into His eternal kingdom all those for whom He is mediator.

## **The Accomplishments of His Work as Mediator**

*5. By His perfect obedience to God’s law, and by a once-for-all offering up of Himself to God as a sacrifice through the eternal Spirit, the Lord Jesus has fully satisfied all the claims of divine justice. He has brought about reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those given to Him by His Father.*

The essence of Christ’s work as mediator is summarized in two things, what is often called the active and passive obedience. His ‘active obedience’ is His “perfect obedience to God’s law”, by which He did everything God required of Him (Matthew 3:15, John 17:4). His ‘passive obedience’ is His “offering Himself up...as a sacrifice”. Although it is called ‘passive’ note that it was a deliberate decision on His part (John 10:18). Because it is the sacrifice of the perfect Son of God, it is “once-for-all”, never needing repetition (Hebrews 10:10,14,18). Three things have been accomplished by this work:

(a) **The claims of divine justice are satisfied.** God has given man His law and threatened punishment upon disobedience. Justice demands that the sinner be punished. Christ has both perfectly obeyed the law of God and has given Himself to suffer the punishment for the law we have broken. So justice has been satisfied in Christ, the sinner’s substitute. For example: If your friend is fined a sum of money in court and you pay it on his behalf, justice is satisfied and your friend is set free. Through Christ, the law of God has no more claim against us; there is no possibility of condemnation (Romans 8:1,33-34).

(b) **God is reconciled.** Our biggest problem as sinners is not that we hate God; rather it is God’s anger with us because of our sins (Psalm 5:5, Ephesians 2:3). The work of Christ as mediator not only removes our enmity towards God but, more importantly, it removed God’s enmity towards us. Read the following verses: Romans 5:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Colossians 1:20-21.

(c) **Our everlasting inheritance is purchased.** Christ’s work not only starts us on the road to salvation, but also guarantees the final salvation, the “everlasting inheritance”. If Christ has satisfied all the claims of divine justice on our behalf, so that God is now reconciled to us, there is nothing that can prevent us from receiving all that God has promised us for eternity. See Romans 5:1-2, Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 1:3-5. Now you can better understand why salvation is in Christ and Him crucified alone, and why we should always rejoice and have confidence in Him!

For whom has Christ obtained these blessings? “For all those given to Him by His Father.” This is the language of Scripture in John 6:37,39, 17:2,6,9,12,24. God has chosen a people from amongst sinners, and He gave them to His Son that He might redeem them (see further section 8 of this chapter in the Confession).

## **Christ's Work as Mediator and Salvation in the Old Testament**

6. *The price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after His birth in this world, but the value, efficacy and benefits of His redemptive work availed for His elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world. This was accomplished by the promises, the types and the sacrifices in which He was revealed, and which signified Him to be the woman's 'seed' (offspring) who should bruise the head of the serpent (the devil), also 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. As the Christ He is 'the same yesterday, and today, and for ever'.*

Many people are troubled by the question of the salvation of the saints in the Old Testament, people like Abraham and David. The Confession simply states that they are saved by Christ exactly as we are. Paul writes in Romans 3:25 that God really forgave sins under the old covenant on the basis of the sacrifice that He had planned Christ should make (see also Hebrews 9:15). Christ was promised in the Old Testament (e.g. Genesis 3:15, 49:10, Numbers 24:17, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 52:13-53:12, Micah 5:2). Christ was typified in the Old Testament in all the various religious ceremonies, and especially the sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1, see Romans 5:14). Christ is often called the Lamb of God looking back to the Passover lamb by which there was redemption out of Egypt (John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7, 1 Peter 1:19, Revelation 5:6, 13:8). Everyone who has been saved from the beginning of this world, has been saved because of Christ who sacrificed Himself (Revelation 5:9). To Him be the glory!

## **Christ is Mediator in Both Natures**

7. *In His work as mediator between God and men, Christ acts according to His two natures, one divine, one human, in each nature doing that which is appropriate to it. Yet by reason of the unity of His Person, that which is appropriate to one nature is, in Scripture, sometimes attributed to the Person denominated by the other nature.*

This paragraph is against the Roman Catholics who teach that Christ is mediator only in His human nature. Obviously, each nature does "that which is appropriate to it" – for example, it is because He has a divine nature that He can raise the dead; and it is because He has a human nature that He dies. But because the two natures are united in one Person, that which is appropriate to one nature is referred to the Person as viewed from the other nature. So, it is God who purchased the church with His own blood, yet God does not have blood except as the Son has united to Himself a human nature (Acts 20:28). Again, it was the Lord of glory who died on the cross (1 Corinthians 2:8). The value of Christ's work as mediator depends on the union and communion of the two natures of the one Person, Jesus Christ.

## The Application of Christ's Work as Mediator

8. *Christ certainly and effectually applies and communicates eternal redemption to all those for whom He has obtained it. His work of intercession is on their behalf. He unites them to Himself by His Spirit; He reveals to them, in and by the Word, the mystery of salvation; He persuades them to believe and obey, governing their hearts by His Word and Spirit; He overcomes all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom, using those methods and ways which are most agreeable to the wonderful and unsearchable appointments of His providence. All these things are carried out in His free and sovereign grace, and unconditionally, nothing of merit being foreseen by Him in the elect.*

(a) **Christ's work as Mediator cannot fail.** This is the emphasis of the paragraph: "certainly and effectually". All those for whom He died will certainly be saved eternally. Consider the following passages – John 6:39, Romans 8:28-39. The teaching that Christ died for all men with the purpose of saving them all actually denies the efficacy of His death, unless it is believed that all men will be saved in the end (= universalism). This is false because there will be many inhabitants in hell.

(b) **Christ Himself applies His saving work.** It seems that many people think Christ's work finished when He died upon the cross; they say now is the age of the Holy Spirit. True, it is now the age of the Spirit, but the Spirit is sent by the risen Christ Himself, the gift of the Father to Christ (Acts 2:33, see John 15:26, 16:7). It is false to make a division between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. When Luke introduces the book of Acts he writes that the Gospel (of Luke) was what "Jesus began to do and teach" (1:1), implying that Acts is what Jesus *continued* to do and teach. All that the Spirit does is what Christ is doing by the Spirit. By the Spirit Christ is effectually applying His saving work.

(c) **Christ's work of application.** Five things are listed:

1. Christ *intercedes* for those for whom He died (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25). In the Old Testament the High Priest bore the names of the 12 tribes on two stones and on his breastpiece, and with them he went into God's presence (Exodus 28:12,29). The requests Christ makes for us are revealed in John 17, the great High-Priestly prayer (see also His prayer for Peter in Luke 22:31-32).
2. Christ *unites* us to Himself. We were not only in Christ as our representative when He died upon the cross. We are also united to Him in a living union by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27). His powerful and holy presence is the guarantee of our full and final salvation.
3. Christ *reveals* the truth to us. It is by the Spirit that Christ sends to us that we have the gospel revealed to us in power. Without this revelation no one can experience salvation (Luke 24:45, John 6:45, 14:16-17, 16:8-11, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, Ephesians 1:17-19, 4:17-21). So we are convinced of the truth and will never stray from it (1 John 2:20,27).
4. Christ *works* in our hearts. We are given new hearts (the new birth) by the powerful work of the Spirit within us (John 3:3-8, Acts 16:14, Titus 3:5). As a result we are able to believe in Christ and to walk in a path of obedience to His will, because the Spirit within inclines our hearts to the Word.
5. Christ *overcomes* all our enemies. Christ has been given power over everything (Matthew 28:18, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, Ephesians 1:20-22, Philippians 2:9-11). Christ is head over all things "to the church". Here again is the guarantee of our salvation. Who can pluck us from His hand?

(d) All this is by His **grace**, nothing at all being deserved by any one of us.

## Christ's Threefold Office as Mediator

9. *Christ, and Christ alone, is fitted to be mediator between God and man. He is the prophet, priest and king of the church of God. His office as mediator cannot be transferred from Him to any other, either in whole or in part.*

10. *Christ's threefold offices are necessary for us.*

*Because of our ignorance we stand in need of His **prophetical** office;*

*because of our estrangement from God and the imperfection of our services at their best, we need His **priestly** office to reconcile us to God and to render us acceptable to Him;*

*because we have turned away from God and are utterly unable to return to Him, and also because we need to be rescued and rendered secure from our spiritual adversaries, we need His **kingly** office to convince, subdue, draw, sustain, deliver and preserve us, until we finally enter His heavenly kingdom.*

(a) **Christ is the only mediator.** This is clearly stated in 1 Timothy 2:5. Our mediator must be a true *man* in order to represent us before God (remember Hebrews 2:14-18). He must be truly *God* if his work is to have power to accomplish anything. He has not delegated His work as mediator to anyone else, even in part. The Roman Catholics call Mary the 'mediatrix' (feminine word for mediator); they claim that even saints can intercede before God as mediators; the Pope is called Christ's representative on earth (or vicar of Christ). All this is a blasphemous denial of Christ's uniqueness as the only One "fitted to be mediator".

(b) **Christ's threefold office as mediator is necessary for us.** Christ occupies the office of "prophet, priest and king" on behalf of His people. Each is necessary because of the situation of our sin. We shall consider the three aspects of His mediatorial work in turn.

(c) **Christ's PROPHETICAL office is necessary for us.** A prophet is one who brings God's words to men. All the writers of Scripture are prophets. Christ is our great Prophet, to whom all other prophets point. Read Deuteronomy 18:15,18, Acts 3:22-26, Hebrews 1:1-2. Christ not only brings God's words to us, He Himself is a revelation of who God is (John 1:18, 14:7-9). In Christ's day there was the expectation that this great Prophet would come (John 1:21, 6:14, 7:40). All the prophets were inspired by the Spirit of *Christ* (1 Peter 1:10-11) so that all the Scriptures can be regarded as the revelation of God through Christ Himself. Without such revelation we could know nothing about the way of salvation for we are in the darkness of ignorance by nature (see Jeremiah 17:9, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 4:17-18).

(d) **Christ's PRIESTLY office is necessary for us.** A priest is one who represents men before God. Hebrews is the book of the Bible that refers much to Christ as our Priest (see chapters 4:14 – 10:18, and especially the summary statement of 8:1). The priests of the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ as our great Highpriest. They had the work of sacrifice for sin and intercession for the people of God, just as Christ has (5:1-3, 7:25, 10:12). God's elect can only be reconciled to God through the priestly work of Christ (2:17-18). Those who are saved continue to need His priestly work because of "the imperfection of our services at their best". Not even the best things we do as Christians are acceptable except through Christ and the cleansing of His blood. His priestly office is necessary because we are sinners.

(e) **Christ's KINGLY office is necessary for us.** A king both rules and defends his people. The kings of the Old Testament pointed forward to the coming King, the Lord Jesus. David and Solomon specifically point forward to Christ as shown in Psalms 2 and 72. Christ sits on the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33, Acts 2:33-36, see also Matthew 2:2, 21:5, 27:11,37, John 1:49, Acts 17:7, Revelation 17:14). Remember that the kingdom of God came with the coming of Christ (Matthew 12:28, John 18:36).

*First*, we need His kingly office so that by His power He might bring us back to God. Never forget that our conversion is a work of Christ's power by enabling us to believe and repent. *Second*, we need His kingly office to be protected from our spiritual adversaries, the world, the flesh and the devil. He is able to do this because He is "head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22). Here is the guarantee that we shall be kept "until we finally enter His heavenly kingdom".

Conclusion:

- A study of Christ's work as mediator ought to make us to **praise** Him for His grace. Who could have expected Him to do such things for we who are so unworthy? Who can count what it cost Him to become man and to suffer on the cross for us? Who can measure the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18-19)?
- At the same time it ought to give us **comfort**. As mediator, Christ has done everything from beginning to end that we sinners need. We know the will of God for our complete salvation. We have a sacrifice that cleanses us from all sin. We have a Lord who will keep us to the end. May the Lord help us always to look to Christ and to depend on Him.