

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 23. What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?

A. 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.

Scripture References: Acts 3:22. Luke 4:18-21. Heb. 5:5-6; 4:14-15.
Rev. 19:16. Isa. 9:6-7. Ps. 2:6.

Questions:

1. What do we mean by the term "office"?

The word "office" comes from the Latin "officium" and means any special duty or trust or charge laid upon or taken up by one person to perform for another. It is interesting to note that the term is never used to indicate what a person does for himself but is always implying what a man does for another. It is a term that is not used in Scripture, but is a Theological term used in our Standards.

2. What does it mean to "execute" an office?

To execute an office is to do or perform all that belongs to the office.

3. Was Jesus Christ ordained or appointed to these offices?

Yes, Christ was ordained to these offices from all eternity.
(I Pet. 1:20)

4. Why was it necessary for Christ to take upon Himself these three offices?

It was necessary for our salvation. Our salvation was revealed by Him as a Prophet; purchased by Him as a Priest; and applied by Him as a King. A wonderful way of putting this was the way used by the Rev. John R. Mackay of the Free Church of Scotland as quoted by Dr. William Childs Robinson: "When I looked into my own heart I could see nothing but darkness, guilt and pride. But then I remembered that Christ is a Prophet who can dispel my darkness. Christ is a Priest who can remove my guilt. Christ is a King who can humble my pride."

5. Is there anyone else in Scripture that had all three of these offices?
No, no one in Scripture had all three but Christ, not even those who were typical of Him in the Old Testament.

6. In what ways does Christ execute these offices?

He executes these offices in His state of humiliation here on earth and continues to do so in His state of exaltation now in heaven.

OUR REDEEMER

Every time I see the word "Redeemer" in print I think of the verse in Titus 2:14, a glorious verse for the Christian: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The fact of redemption is taught over and over again in the church. Our standards teach it and mean by it "the necessary, objective, voluntary, expiatory, propitiatory, substitutionary, and efficacious character of the act of Christ whereby He gave Himself for us." (Hendriksen). The result of redemption is sometimes neglected by the church.

Titus 2:14 gives us a good picture of what God expects to be the result of redemption. Surely the result of redemption is for the purpose of redeeming us from our iniquity. It is equally important that it be for the purpose of purifying unto himself a "peculiar" people, people that would have a real desire for good works. It is in this latter area the church of today seems to fail.

Not long ago I heard a man preach a sermon on the need for a twentieth century reformation. The point was brought out that in the church of today there are many more Christians than in the first century but there is a greater lack of power within the large group. I have often wondered if the answer to this problem of lack of power does not have something to do with the low standard approach used by the church of today. As is true in so many circles of education, mediocrity is the standard of the church. This means that there are always a few that will rise above the standard but the average person will fall below the standard set. The standard of the church today seems to have something to do with being a people of His very own and those with a zealous attitude of good works. The fact of redemption is taught and believed by many. The results of redemption are bypassed in so many cases. The church has almost reached the place of being afraid to speak up and out against the ungodliness and worldly lusts and is afraid to raise the standard to God's standards, not simply a standard that is above the reproach of the society of which it is a part.

If we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb we should thank God! But it does not end there. We must demonstrate the reality of our redeemed nature. (Ja. 2:17-18)

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