

Portrait of Christ as Prophet

An airline pilot who flies overseas routes also runs a small gas station near his home. Between trips to Europe and the Middle East, he enjoys the chance to do simple car repairs and to talk to neighbors while pumping gas.

One Saturday morning, dressed in his greasy overalls, he stopped at the local hardware store to pick up a wrench. “What’s new?” the store owner asked as he rang up the purchase. “Ah, I’m thinking of taking the Cairo run this month,” the airline captain said. “I enjoy flying to London and Frankfurt, but I think the change of pace will do me good.” He paid for his wrench and walked out.

Another customer who overheard their conversation asked the store owner, “Who’s the world traveler?” Rolling his eyes, the store owner said, “Oh, some nut who runs the gas station down the street. He thinks he’s an airline pilot!” Both men got a good laugh out of that one. ¹

So, who do you think Jesus is? Have you ever tried explaining Him to a skeptical friend? Today and over the next two weeks, we’re going to examine three essential descriptions of Jesus, using the Old Testament functions of a prophet, priest, and king as our models. We’ll see that those Old Testament roles are true portraits of Jesus Christ, no matter what some people might think. So first, let’s answer this question ...

I. What Is a Real Biblical Prophet?

To put it simply, a biblical prophet is one who reveals the truth and character of God. That’s what a prophet is and what a prophet does. And remember, in the Bible there are both male and female prophets. So, in the Old Testament there are 53 named prophets or prophetesses and in the New Testament there are 21 prophets or prophetesses. But there are over 140 unnamed prophets as well in the Bible. So, God sent out a lot of people to reveal who He is!

And how, exactly, did these prophets reveal the truth and character of God? Well, the first and most obvious way was by speaking. They told people what they had heard or seen about God. Most, if not all, of the prophets actually saw visions of God and His message to them. That’s why they were also called “seers;” they were the few in history who heard and saw a message from God.

But as they spoke of these revelations, they used various techniques. Yes, sometimes they simply repeated a message word for word. But other times they used poetry or visual aids. God instructed several prophets to do some pretty weird object lessons to reveal the truth or a prediction of the future. For example, God had Jeremiah wear an oxen’s yoke around his neck to be a visual message that the nation would be put under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon. And He had Ezekiel lie on his side for 390 days to symbolize the number of years that Israel had sinned. So, prophets often communicated God’s truth in unique ways.

But what about the messages themselves? What kind of messages does God have prophets proclaim? Well, some were good news and some were bad news. Many people today think of prophets as only being the “bearers of bad news;” “Behold, the end is near!!” And yes, prophets sometimes are directed by God to give words of judgment.

But they also give words of hope, of rescue, of reclamation. Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of Israel and that they would be taken captive into Babylon. But he also prophesied their return seventy years later:

“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel ... For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.” (Jer. 30:2-3)

But biblical prophets didn't only speak, they also took action that demonstrated God's truth and holy character. God acted through the prophet Moses to bring the plagues on ungodly Egypt. God acted through the prophet Elijah to bring holy judgment on the false prophets of Baal. God acted through the prophet Elisha to raise the Shunammite woman's dead son back to life. Through their actions the prophets revealed God in mighty, miraculous ways.

And finally, as most people know, biblical prophets made prophecies; they made predictions about what would happen in the future. But here's the key: all their predictions came true 100% of the time. In other words, if even one of their predictions didn't come true, they weren't a biblical prophet. In fact, they were labeled then and forever as a false prophet. This was by God's declaration. He said it in the second part of Deut. 18:

... when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him. (Deut. 18:22)

So, these are the distinctives of a biblical prophet. Now...

II. What's the Evidence that Jesus Was a Prophet?

As our video portrayed last week, Jesus was a “true and better” example of everything, including a “true and better” prophet. First, who identified Jesus as a prophet? Well, Moses did for one. Moses, himself a prophet, said:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen ... And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.” (Deut. 18:15, 18-19)

When He, God, says *‘I myself will require it of him,’* that means *‘I myself will call him to account.’* So, Moses prophesied that Jesus would be a prophet and have the trait of speaking God's words.

Then, people who saw Jesus and heard him teach, they said he was a prophet. The woman at the well said to Jesus:

... “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.” (John 4:19)

When Jesus healed the man born blind, they took him before the Pharisees who asked him: *‘What do you say about him since he has opened your eyes?’*

... He said, “He is a prophet.” (John 9:17)

Mark records the belief of many ... (Mark 6:15)

... And others said, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.”

And when Jesus raised the widow's son in the town of Nain, it says of the people...

Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” ... (Luke 7:16)

The people knew what the prophets of the Old Testament were all about. When they saw and heard Jesus, their first thought was, “This is a prophet.”

And last but not least, Jesus Himself claimed to be a prophet. When Jesus visited His hometown of Nazareth, He went to worship in the synagogue on the sabbath. He was invited to read the Scripture and it says, “*And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.*” In that day, there would have been a required reading from the Torah, the first five books of Moses, but any other reading would’ve likely been at the discretion of the reader. So, Jesus probably picked this passage of Is. 61, which is very significant because of what this passage represents. Jesus picked a passage that every Jew knew spoke of the Mashiach – the *anointed one*; the Messiah. Now here’s what Jesus read:

**“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:18-21)

Okay, let’s break this down. First, Jesus picked this passage. Secondly, at the end, He said that whatever this passage was prophesying, it was fulfilled that day. Thirdly, this passage is prophesying that one day a person would come who would:

1. Be anointed by God (a prophet or the Messiah himself would be anointed.)
2. This anointed one would speak like a prophet (three times it says he would ‘proclaim’ messages from God. Then it also says that he would proclaim the beginning of a significantly new era – the year of the Lord’s favor.)
3. This anointed one would do the works of a prophet (liberty for captives, recovering of sight for the blind, set at liberty the oppressed.)

That’s what this “anointed” one would say and do. Then lastly, Jesus said that this passage had all come true that day because He was that anointed one. So, by his own testimony, Jesus claimed to be a prophet and more than a prophet. He claimed to be the Messiah.

Now today, we’re not trying to lay out all the evidence for Jesus being the Messiah, just the evidence that He fit the traits of a biblical prophet. And I think He certainly fits that. In fact, even Mohammed believed and taught that Jesus was the greatest of prophets and that He was born of a virgin.² So, what about you? What do you say? You might ask...

III. What Difference Does It Make in My Life If Jesus Is or Isn’t a Biblical Prophet?

Well, if it’s true that Jesus is a biblical prophet, that means certain other things are also true, such as, the fact that then all His prophecies must be 100% true because that’s required of a biblical prophet. There are many so-called prophets today, even some Christians who claim to have the gift of prophecy, who say they don’t have to be 100% correct. But that’s a lie because it directly contradicts the Deuteronomy passage we’ve just studied. So, you should not believe anything those self-proclaimed prophets say, because they’re not speaking for God.

But Jesus IS speaking for God and He can be fully trusted. So, do you believe and take action on EVERYTHING that Jesus teaches? Let’s examine some of those teachings. For example, Jesus makes claims based on certain facts of history being true. Such as:

-Noah was a real man who built a boat to save human and animal life from a worldwide catastrophic flood. Jesus likened that disaster to the end of history when He comes back to judge the world. He taught: (Matt. 24:37)

“For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

Jesus is a prophet of God. Do you believe Him or not? If you do, then your belief in His coming again is dependent on your belief in a worldwide flood. But...

- Jesus also taught that Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish and was in the fish for three days. He equated this to the three days He would spend buried before His resurrection.

“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matt. 12:40)

If the fish story isn't real, then the resurrection of Jesus isn't real, and then your sins have not been REALLY forgiven. So, do you believe the Jonah story or not? Jesus is a prophet of God and He believed it. Lastly...

- Jesus taught that Adam and Eve were the first human beings, not mythic symbols for all men and women. He taught that they were individually created in two distinct genders by Himself and His Father on the sixth day of creation. He taught that they were married to each other and that this was God's intention for all people from the beginning of time. Therefore no one should do anything that would break a marriage apart. He says of husbands and wives:

“So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt. 19:6)

Jesus is a prophet of God, teaching the truth and character of God. Do you believe Him enough to obey Him or not?

Jesus Himself is speaking in John 12 where He says:

“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” (John 12:48-50)

Jesus is the “true and better” prophet. What He reveals about God and God's truth is 100% true and what He reveals about the future will be fulfilled with 100% accuracy. Are you living your life based on what Jesus says is true or upon what someone else says is true?

The last book of the Bible begins with these words:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. ... (Rev. 1:1)

Throughout the book, with all its symbolic images of what will come in the future, one truth is abundantly clear. After we die, we don't cease to exist. Instead, every human being will go to one of two places: either we go to live with God in heaven or we go to live without God in hell. And what determines which one we go to? It's whether we put our faith in the teachings of Jesus in this book or not. Jesus says in the last chapter ...

“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” ... Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (Rev. 22:7, 14-15)

We're not saved by what we do. We're saved by faith in the work of Christ. But what we do reveals our faith. That's why James said: (James 2:26)

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Where's your faith today? Connected to Godly behaviors or apart? You might ask, "Pastor, are you saying that if I sin, I'll lose my salvation?" No. I'm saying, if you're a true believer, then when you sin, the Holy Spirit will convict you of it and you'll quickly repent, asking Jesus to forgive you and wash you clean. The True and Better Prophet, Jesus, said, "*Blessed are those who wash their robes ... so that they may enter the city by the gates.*" What condition are your robes in today? Let's wash 'em right now. Let's pray.

¹ Bernie May, "Under His Wing," Leadership, Vol. 4, no. 3

² Quran 3:45-47, 49, 59; 4:157