

Jesus The Prophet

Who is Jesus? What do you feel when you hear the name Jesus? How is it that a name can cause so much controversy, discomfort, division, and at the same time bring peace, hope, and love to many?

Over the next weeks we are going to dive in to discover together who Jesus is. Whether you have known Jesus and learned about him your whole life or know nothing or little about him, I hope that together we all grow in our understanding and relationship with Jesus as we explore Jesus as a Prophet, Priest, and King.

In the story of Christmas there is this powerful event: Three wise men from the east brought gifts to Jesus. Those gifts were actual gifts, and they also represented the three key roles of Jesus' life and work. It almost like the gifts are setting the stage for what follows. They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gold represented Jesus' kingship as a gift like this was normally given to honor kings in that time. The frankincense represented Jesus' priesthood as this was a type of oil used in the temple by the priests to purify the elements of the temple. This gift highlighted Jesus' priesthood. And myrrh was an oil that was used for embalming – preparing a body for burial after death. This gift represented Jesus' prophetic ministry since death was the highest price that an Old Testament prophet had to endure as they walked in obedience in proclaiming God's message, which on many occasions it resulted in rejection and persecution by those who resisted the messages of the prophets.

So, as you can see, we are like the stores. It's only September and we are already putting out the nativity scene.

We are exploring today, what does it mean that Jesus is a prophet? And how is this relevant to our faith?

What is a prophet?

In general, *a prophet is a person that has been chosen by God to deliver a message under his authority.* And this is why we find the phrase “the word of the Lord came to me” when a prophet would speak to the people. For example, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah. The message of the prophets involved things like encouragement, hope, judgment, predicting the future, revealing a sin, etc.

A prophet is also *a person who acts upon God's instructions and under God's power to performs miracles and signs.* For example, Moses and Elijah.

About a third of the books of the Bible are prophetic and there is prophecy happening all the time in the other books. It seems that God is very interested about this office. And Jesus

himself was aware that his ministry was prophetic. Let's keep in mind that to be a prophet was to have divine authority.

So, how is Jesus a prophet? And how is this relevant to me today? Let's read from Luke 4

Luke 4:18-19

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

One day Jesus had the chance to read the Scriptures and teach at a synagogue, a place of meeting and religious life, like what church means to us today. So, he was a guest speaker that day. He read from the book of Isaiah and said that this passage was about him. This started to cause some issues among those in the synagogue. He also said other things that made angry everyone in the synagogue.

What Jesus read was considered a Messianic passage, meaning that people saw that passage from Isaiah in relation to the Messiah, and Jesus had just said that he was there to fulfill it. Jesus knew that he was getting himself in trouble and told them that he knew that "no prophet is acceptable in his hometown." He ended up having to escape because they wanted to throw him down a cliff. That is the context of this passage. What is the Bible telling us with passage?

This was Jesus' framework in which he did his ministry. Everything he did, he did it under the framework, "I am here to proclaim freedom"; "I am here to bring salvation". And all the miracles, healings, signs, his teachings, the discussions and arguments that he had with the priests and teachers of the law, were done under his prophetic office. So, when we read the gospels and see Jesus doing miracles and teachings, we need to understand that he is doing those things under the prophetic authority.

One of the unnegotiable characteristics of the Old Testaments prophets was their authority. People receiving the message would test the prophets to make sure they were actually speaking in the name of God. They had a high respect for this office because they expected God to be in constant communication with the people through the prophets. So, it was an office that required a high level of trust. Therefore, a prophet had divine authority.

This is why Jesus' authority was often questioned by the religious leaders, who tried very hard to demerit Jesus' authority. They knew that if people continued to regard Jesus as a prophet, there was no way to undo such an alliance. So, when reading the gospels we find religious leaders trying to trap Jesus with tricky questions in front of people. But Jesus was too smart for them.

Jesus prophetic ministry was announced by the most important prophet in the Old Testament - Moses

Deuteronomy 18:15

⁵The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

What this passage tells us is that there was an increasing expectation about this unique and special prophet like Moses among the Jewish people. And when John the Baptist appeared people asked him if he was *the prophet*.

Therefore, "a prophet like Moses" meant that this person would be at the minimum like Moses in that he would also bring salvation and God's word and revelation to them.

There are in the Gospels direct allusions to Moses. The most important is the sermon on the mount. As Moses gave the law to the Israelites, Jesus also gave them his teachings in the sermon on the mount. As Moses was instrument of provision to the Israelites in the wilderness, Jesus also fed thousands.

There is another Old Testament prophet that had a profound meaning for the Israelites – Elijah. There was an expectation about the return of Elijah and both John the Baptist and Jesus were asked if they were Elijah (**John 1:21**). What's the big deal about Elijah? He was a very powerful prophet that performed miracles, including resurrection, opening the Jordan river, causing the rain to stop for 3 ½ years, and being taken to heaven alive.

So, when you combine Moses and Elijah you have like the most powerful expression of God among creation. They represented both God's power and revelation.

Jesus fulfilled both Moses as the giver of the Law and Elijah as the representative of all the Old Testament prophets.

The invitation today is to grasp the Jewish sentiment and idea regarding the expected prophet and what they longed for - someone with God's authority, power, and message.

The fact that Jesus fulfilled the prophetic ministry of Moses, Elijah and all the prophets should create in us a basic but profound question. Am I a follower of such a powerful prophet? Jesus prophetic ministry should inspire to consider what kind of relationship we have with him.

The problem with many is not whether they believe or even admire Jesus, but whether they are willing to follow him. So, who is Jesus to you? The honest answer to that question will either leave you as a rejector, a believer, or a follower. And just to clarify, believing in something does not necessarily imply that you are a follower. Remember that even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). So, there is a difference between believing and following. The strongest case for someone's faith, religion, or spirituality is whether they are following what they believed in. Jesus said, "follow me", "learn from me", "take up your cross and follow me", "whoever follows me will not walk in darkness", "my sheep hear my voice... and follow me."

As The Prophet, Jesus' should be regarded as trustworthy. His words are divine truth, unnegotiable, and pure.

As Jesus came to proclaim freedom and salvation, we also have the responsibility to live a prophetic life, proclaiming the good news to the poor and setting the oppressed free.