

Jesus Our Prophet

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn together to Acts chapter 3. We're going to base our thoughts today on this morning on verse 22, but we'll draw in some other passages from scripture, including those we read, the one we read in the Old Testament in Jeremiah.

So Acts chapter 3 and verse 22, Moses said, the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.

Now, these words are obviously about Jesus. That's what Peter has been doing in explaining things since the day of Pentecost and since the arrival of the Holy Spirit, as you find in the previous chapter.

And after this miracle that happened with the lame man coming to be healed, he then again came to speak about Jesus in verses 11 through to 16.

There you've got an account there of Jesus and his death and how this was a fulfillment of what God had actually promised and how the people themselves were culpable, how they were guilty in respect to how they themselves had contributed to the death of Christ.

[1 : 1 4] Nevertheless, Peter went on to speak about how this was something that in Jesus God had actually promised in the days of the prophets and that all the prophets, in fact, had themselves spoken about this person that was going to come, including Moses, and that Moses said, the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.

You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. In other words, we're looking today at Jesus as a prophet. We've looked at him in terms of his being a king and last time a priest.

And you remember we traditionally are in the development of theology from Calvin onwards, especially it's customary to speak of the three offices of Christ, that he exercises these offices, functions of office as a prophet, priest, and king.

I mean, looked at the previous two, it wouldn't be right to leave this one out because it is itself also important. But it's not as clear from the scriptures as the other two.

It's much easier to find evidence and detail in the scriptures about Christ occupying and exercising the office of a prophet, of a priest rather, the functions of being a priest or a high priest and also a king.

[2 : 3 6] These things are fairly obvious to anyone really who reads through the account in the Bible of the person of Christ. But it's not as easy to actually look at and see where exactly it says that he is a prophet and how he exercises the office of a prophet.

And what does it mean that Jesus is a prophet? And what does that mean for us? How does it relate to our experience? And as you'll see from the end of our study today, what does it mean in terms of the implications this has with regard to our response to the Bible's teaching of Jesus being the prophet of his people or for his people?

And I think the best way to deal with it is, first of all, to ask what does it mean to be a prophet? What does prophet actually mean? And to do that, you need to go back into the Old Testament, where you find God establishing the whole matter of prophets and what prophets do and what their function was.

So that prophet and prophecy is something that you begin to look at in the Old Testament and then you carry through into the New Testament, including into the person of Jesus in the likes of this verse where he's obviously spoken of and referred to as a prophet.

So what is a prophet? What did a prophet do in the Old Testament? Many people think that a prophet was somebody who foretold the future, that there was some kind of sixth sense, if you like, by which people who were endowed or gifted with that kind of special sense of looking into the future and seeing into the future, that they were able to predict what would happen in days to come.

[4 : 28] Now that was sometimes, and indeed very often, a feature of prophets in the way they spoke. They did speak about things which were going to happen in the future.

But in fact, that's not the primary meaning of prophecy at all. If you turn with me to Exodus chapter 4, There's a very interesting account there in terms of God speaking to Moses and Moses being a prophet of God.

Exodus chapter 4 and at verse 15. This is what Moses was told by God in the previous verses there.

He was going to be sent by God to Pharaoh to speak for God before Pharaoh. And Moses in verse 10 there responds just similar to Jeremiah.

Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent. I had in the past or since you have spoken to yourself, but I am slow of speech. And the Lord said to him, Who has made man's mouth?

[5 : 34] Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. But he said, Oh my Lord, please send someone else.

Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. And he said, Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you.

And when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. And then he says this, You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do.

He shall speak for you to the people and he shall be your mouth. And you shall be as God to him. You shall be as God to him.

Now it's maybe not immediately obvious how that relates to what we're saying today. But Moses is being taught there what the office of a prophet entails.

[6 : 40] And as an illustration of it, God is saying, You know the way we used ourselves in our younger days, and probably still I would imagine, that you take on the persona or person of somebody famous.

For example, if you were playing football, you would say, Well, I'm Ronaldo and you can be so and so. And you built a team like that. And you took on this persona of being the person that your favorite football or whatever was.

And what God is saying to Moses is, For the purposes of illustrating this, you can be me. And Aaron will be your mouth and convey a message to the people.

In other words, God is saying, This is what a prophet is. I give the prophet words just as you're giving Aaron words. And these words are then conveyed to the people.

So the meaning of prophet is not so much somebody who sees into the future, and it's not somebody who has an ability themselves to predict the future, or has a sixth sense of some kind to see what the future is going to be and to bring.

[7 : 53] A prophet, as God defined it, that prophecy of the Old Testament, is actually a mouthpiece for God. A spokesman for God.

This is the pattern God is saying. I will begin the process. I will give the words to my prophet. And my prophet will convey my words to the people.

And that's why you often find, so very, very often find in the Old Testament, that the prophet begins the message that he was conveying to the people with, Thus says the Lord.

See, the Lord gave the words to the prophet. He was the spokesman. He was the mouthpiece for God. So that the words, Thus says the Lord, were immediately saying to the people, This is God's mind.

This is God's will. This is what God wants you and has you to know. This is what God is saying to you. They're not just human words, though human words are involved in it.

[8 : 59] It's a bit like the Bible itself. It was written by human beings, but it's the word of God. He gave them the words that they were going to write.

They wrote them, but they began with God, and it becomes therefore his word. And with the prophet, the prophet is someone chosen by God, appointed by God, and endowed by God, as a recipient, as a receiver of his words, of his mind, of his message.

And that prophet then becomes, as a prophet, that's his function, to convey the words of God. Not his own understanding of them, not his interpretation of them, but the actual words that God put in his mouth, and lay on his heart.

Thus says the Lord. That's what a prophet is. That's where you take your meaning of what a prophet is, and what a prophet does.

Now if you go back to Jeremiah, a passage we read in Jeremiah, just as an illustration of that, and as an example of it, we're picking this one up. There's others as well, of course in the Old Testament.

[10 : 06] But this is a fairly obvious one, in Jeremiah chapter 1. When you come there, verses 4 to 10, to have this interview that he had with God, as he was appointed a prophet of God.

The word of God came to me saying, in verse 4, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, Ah, Lord God, behold, I do not know how to speak.

See how similar that is to Moses. And one of the reasons for that, was that the prophet knew, what a responsibility, and a burden it was, to be the spokesman for God.

If you were going to be a prophet, it laid upon you, a specific burden, a specific responsibility, you were to those people, the mouthpiece of God.

You were conveying, the word of God, to these people. And so there was a natural reluctance to draw back from it in many cases, realizing, as Jeremiah did, this is what it's going to mean for my life.

[11 : 17] My life is going to be a life of being God's spokesman. How difficult that was going to be in days such as Jeremiah lived in. But this is what he said, Ah, Lord God, behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.

The Lord said to me, don't say I am only a youth. Don't be afraid of those I am going to send to you. But then in verse 9, this is the important thing. The Lord put his hand out and touched my mouth.

And the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you today over nations and over kingdoms. He touched my mouth and the Lord said, I have put my words in your mouth.

In other words, I have made you my prophet. I have made you my spokesman. You will be speaking my words to the people. In other words, for these prophets, Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea, all of these prophets in the Old Testament, what it was about was bringing a revelation.

And that's an important word. Revelation from God to the people. God revealing himself to his people. God saying to the people, This is what I am saying to you.

[12 : 39] This is what I am revealing to you of myself, of my plan for you, of my purpose, of the way that I am dealing with you and why I'm dealing with you the way I'm doing it.

All of that comes through the prophet as God's appointed spokesman. He's not allowed to give the people his own opinion.

And that's why you find in the likes of Jeremiah chapter 23, just refer to it in your notes and you can look at it afterwards. It's a chapter dealing by and large with the false prophets and God's accusation against the false prophets.

And in that chapter, other similar chapter, what God is saying through his appointed prophet Jeremiah is to the false prophets. I didn't send you, says the Lord.

You didn't stand in my counsel, says the Lord. And yet you're saying to my people, Don't be afraid. No disaster will come upon you. It'll be peace.

[13 : 44] Why were the prophets, the false prophets denounced so severely? Well, it wasn't simply because they were leading the people astray, serious enough though that was.

There was something even more serious. They were saying, I'm a prophet of the Lord and God had never appointed them. They were saying, this is the word of the Lord and it wasn't the word of the Lord.

And Jeremiah wept over that. He wept over that because he knew that these false prophets were claiming something they were not.

Something that he was. And that the outcome of that was that because their message was much more pleasant and much more comforting and much more encouraging to the people just to go on sinning in their idolatry, most of the people listened to them and not to him.

The prophet, the spokesman for God, whatever the circumstances, however difficult it was going to be for them, they had to go to the people and say, thus says the Lord.

[14 : 57] And that's the prophet in the Old Testament and something of what it means. We've skimmed over it fairly quickly but hopefully there's enough in that that you yourselves then can follow out and go into all the other passages in the Old Testament that deal with that and you'll see how it really brings out this emphasis that this is a man who speaks for God as God has put words in his mouth.

Now then, Jesus is a prophet. Jesus has the office of a prophet as we find in this verse in Acts chapter 3. Moses said, the Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me.

The first thing you say in that is that as a prophet God reveals, Jesus reveals God to us. Just as the prophet in the Old Testament through the words that God has put in their mouth so God is revealed to the people through that.

And in the person of Jesus in his person in his actions in his words God is revealed to us through Christ.

Therefore he is a prophet in that sense that he reveals God to us and these words in Acts 3.22 go back to Moses' words in Deuteronomy chapter 18 and 15.

[16 : 18] These words that were promised this coming of the prophet. And it's interesting if you go to John chapter 1 and John chapter 6 John 1.21 and John 6.14 you'll find the people asking a question in relation to this.

And it tells you as you look at that question that there was actually an expectancy among the Jewish people of that day that a prophet above all prophets that the prophet if you like was actually going to come and be sent by God.

And one of the questions asked of John the Baptist when he started his ministry are you the prophet? And he said that he wasn't.

Are you the prophet? And in chapter 6 of John a similar question is addressed in regard to Jesus. Can this be the prophet? He had just fed the multitude the miracle of the feeding and they had seen that.

Can this be the prophet? I wonder if this is the prophet. You see the expectancy was in the mind of people that the prophet was going to come as promised.

[17 : 33] That this person that Moses had spoken of would actually someday arrive in the world. And Jesus evoked that question. He brought that question out in people's minds.

And of course he was himself that question. Now we don't have time to go into all the detail but let me just remind you of what John in his opening verses and in chapter one of his gospel actually says with regard to who Jesus is.

He describes Jesus as the word. In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God which means the closest possible association and identity indeed with God.

And the word was God. Why does he describe Jesus as the word? word. Why does he use the word word to describe Jesus?

Well because a word or words are what you use to communicate. And even somebody who is profoundly deaf has to begin to learn words using sign language or whatever modern technology can give.

[18 : 52] But communication requires words. and what John was saying was that God used Jesus in his coming into the world as his great word of communication.

He revealed himself in Jesus in this prophet that Jesus is. And as a prophet God is revealed through Christ.

God communicates himself. You follow down through John chapter 1. You just read it through when you get a moment today. If you've got a spare moment in the afternoon. Read through John chapter 1.

And you'll find how it develops the thought not just of God sending Jesus as his word. But then it goes on to speak about Moses and contrasts Jesus with Moses.

The word became flesh. And we saw his glory. And then as you come through to verse 18. No one has seen God at any time.

[19 : 57] The only begotten one, that's Jesus, who is in the Father's bosom or heart, he has revealed him. He has brought him out for us to be seen.

In other words, there you have it. There's the pattern. The word that Jesus is, the communication from God, the revelation of who God is and what he's like, what his plan of salvation is about, it's there in Jesus, in his actions, in his miracles, in his words.

And what's happening in that, as John says, is that you're seeing right into the very heart of God. Because this person is in the bosom, he's in the heart, if you like, of the Father.

Which is why Jesus can say in John's gospel to one of the disciples, whoever has seen, me, has seen the Father. That was Philip's question to him, Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.

And he said to him, have you been with me so long, Philip, and you still don't understand this? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Because Jesus is the revelation of God to us.

[21 : 15] But there's something else. you need to go beyond what's in Christ himself as his person and the works that he did and the words that he used in his ministry on earth.

Because Jesus acts as a prophet in the gospel. And that's our next point. That Jesus is a prophet through the gospel and in the gospel. Now, here again is where our shorter catechism comes in very useful in question 24.

How does Christ exercise the office of a prophet? And the answer is Christ exercises the office of a prophet in his revealing to us by his word and spirit the will of God for our salvation.

That's pretty simple. Easily understood and easily remembered. He reveals to us. He exercises the office of a prophet. He's a prophet to us because he reveals to us by his word and spirit the will of God for our salvation.

That's a brilliant summary and really brings in the two major components of how Jesus exercises his office of a prophet in the gospel.

[22 : 30] It is by his word this Bible and his spirit the Holy Spirit that he reveals the will of God to us. And you need to both the word and the spirit kept together.

That's why the catechism puts them together that way. It's not just that Jesus uses his word to persuade us of the will of God and what the will of God is what his salvation is about.

It's not simply that the Holy Spirit comes and reveals to us something of God and opens our understanding. He doesn't do that without the word. He doesn't do that by leaving God's word entirely out of it.

The word and spirit are both used but you see the catechism reminds us there that it's Jesus who does this. He exercises the office of prophet in revealing to us or by revealing to us.

He reveals to us. He does this. It's his power. It's his authority that's behind the way the word and the spirit together bring the opening of our understanding to know the will of God for our salvation.

[23 : 42] And again you can go back to the Old Testament and a passage in the New Testament that are linked together Isaiah chapter 61 which is a prophecy about Jesus Christ a prophecy about him being our savior.

What does it say? The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor liberty to the captives and so on.

But you don't need to go beyond that for our present purposes. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me this is the person of the savior in that prophecy speaking he has anointed me to proclaim then you go to Luke chapter 4 where Jesus in the synagogue was given the scroll that was read on that day and he went to that passage in Isaiah and he read it out the spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim the and he gave back the scroll to the person in charge and he said today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing in other words he's saying I'm the one that the prophet Isaiah spoke about as anointed to proclaim the message of salvation Jesus is our prophet and then when you go to the likes of well just as an example you go to

Acts and chapter 16 the account of Lydia's conversion if you like it says quite simply and plainly but clearly the Lord opened her heart so that she gave heed to what was being spoken the Lord opened her heart who is the Lord who opened her heart Jesus is he's described that way throughout the book of Acts it's the Lord it's the Lord Jesus Christ it's this person who died and rose again and is exalted to the right hand of glory and who poured out his spirit on the day of Pentecost he has done this Peter says and he opened Lydia's heart he's exercising his office as a prophet his authority as a prophet he's exercising his powers as a prophet in using his word and his spirit to open people's hearts to open people's minds the Lord did it you're a Christian here today who made you a Christian who opened your understanding yes of course it's right to say the

Holy Spirit did it I couldn't do it myself wasn't the preacher who did it whoever the preacher might have been it was Jesus it was the Lord by his word and spirit who actually gave you this understanding this opening up of your mind to know the will of God for your salvation and in fact in John let me just read a few verses John 16 where he's teaching the disciples before they went out from that upper room which again is about the spirit and how he's going to send the spirit John 16 verse 12 I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now notice that I still have many things to say to you what does he mean I have many things to say to you they weren't going to see that much of him between that point and the death and in fact for all that they saw of him between then and his ascension there wasn't an awful lot that

[27 : 25] Jesus said to them what does he mean I still have many say to you but when the spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come in other words he says I am going to speak to you but it will be through the Holy Spirit when he comes he will guide you into he goes on then to say he will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you that's wonderful isn't it he will take what is mine Jesus is saying my things my truth my truth and he will declare that he'll make that clear to you he is a prophet by the word and spirit he reveals to us the will of

God for our salvation we thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit we pray for the work of the Holy Spirit we pray consciously that the spirit would come to bless us to open our hearts to further give us understanding because we know that it is the spirit who does that but we also have to remember that even behind that there is the great savior himself the Lord Jesus Christ whose spirit is actually called the spirit of Jesus in act 16 and verse 7 that same passage that deals with the opening of Lydia's heart the spirit of Jesus the spirit Jesus promised and the spirit Jesus sent from the father to his people that's the same spirit that still works in your hearts today but it's Jesus as a prophet who is actually behind that if you like or the one as prophet who's exercising his office as prophet so that he opens your heart opens your understanding sanctifies you gives you a further and clearer idea of the mind of

God what a great savior what a great combination what great mystery in many ways but isn't it wonderful that the Bible gives us all this information that you can actually bring together just like the strands of a tapestry that at first sight appeared to be just kind of scattered and then you can see how they really are coming together to form this beautiful picture of Jesus our prophet Jesus the one who reveals to us God's will for our salvation himself through the word and spirit well finally the implications of that for the church and I'm going to just leave that with you first of all it highlights our need our need for our mind to be renewed and opened and enlightened by the truth of God through the spirit that's something that Christ alone can do through his spirit us to know his salvation and it also demands our response and you can see that in two ways first of all that we submit to

Christ and you go back again to the Old Testament and take your definition of what a prophet is from that as we've done you'll also come across God speaking of how serious an issue it was not to obey the words that were conveyed through the prophets whoever does not do that shall be cut off from the people they will not be regarded as belonging to the covenant community anymore they will have denounced the spokesman of God and therefore because of that because he's God's spokesman they will actually have denounced God they're refusing his word well when the gospel comes to us in the message that it contains Jesus as a prophet is saying I am revealing to you in this the will of God for your salvation whoever will not obey will be cut off from my people if it was serious not to listen to

Jeremiah how much more is it the case when we don't listen to Jesus our prophet and heed and obey his word that he's bringing to us and then tonight we're going to pick up the final point at the moment is that we have to be prophets and that sounds terribly grand doesn't it as if we're going to be a Jeremiah or an Isaiah or someone like that but in a sense we are as Christians because the idea behind that is that we actually ourselves have a function as Christians all of us who are Christians have a function that we actually bring the gospel to people to hear about this Jesus about this God it's not an option God we we we are going to look at it the gospel having come to know

[32 : 56] Jesus for herself she immediately went to her own people in her town and spoke about this and conveyed this truth to them and invited them to come and see for themselves that this indeed was the Christ the Savior of the world let's pray Lord our God we acknowledge you as our prophet we acknowledge our need of your exercising of the office of your prophet to enlighten our hearts to familiarize ourselves with your will for our salvation we thank you for the way Lord in which you do that and for the way that we can come to pray to you as one who has this authority and this power and this capacity to reveal such a will to us we thank you Lord that as you do exercise your office of prophet that we come to experience the power of your word the power of your spirit as our savior and we ask oh Lord that you bless us now and bless your word to us for Jesus sake we pray amen amen Thank you.