

Jesus the Prophet, Part 2

In Deuteronomy 18:15-18, Moses prophesies that God will raise up a prophet in the future:

“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— just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”

While the Israelites knew that multiple prophets came and went throughout their history, they understood that this passage was foreshadowing a great prophet in the future. One as great as Moses. When John the Baptist started prophesying, he was asked if he was “the Prophet” (John 1:21). They were asking if John was the fulfillment of this prophecy in Deuteronomy 18. He rightly says that he is not. This helps us understand that they were hoping to have the great prophet come in their lifetime.

Jesus was the great prophet that they were anticipating. We see that Jesus spoke on behalf of God. It constantly surprised those who listened to Him that He spoke with such authority (i.e., Matthew 7:28-29). He came and taught them the will of God. He was God in the flesh. No longer was God an unapproachable great and terrifying fire. Instead He had come in the form of man and was now teaching the will of God perfectly and completely.

Let us look back at the characteristics of the Prophet and see how Jesus matches them:

Seer:

Jesus was indeed someone who was able to see things that others could not. Mark 2:6-8 relates that Jesus was able to see into the hearts of scribes and know their thoughts and doubts. This is something that could only be known by the power of God. Furthermore, we see that Jesus was able to predict the future. The clearest example of this is His prophecy that He would die and then be raised again on the third day. Deuteronomy 18:22 tells us that if a prophet were to prophesy something like that and it did not happen we would know that they were a false prophet. Yet what Jesus said came to pass.

Prophet:

We also see that Jesus acted as the Father’s mouthpiece. As noted above He spoke authoritatively. It is especially striking in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus repeatedly would say, “But I say to you...” (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). Jesus is not someone explaining or discussing what another prophet has said. He is declaring outright that He is speaking on behalf

of the Father. Furthermore, Jesus is able to prove His authority by performing miracles. These miracles would often be performed by the prophets as proof of their message and that God was indeed with them. Jesus was able to perform miracles that proved His message. In fact, we see a lot of similarities between the miracles of the powerful prophet Elisha and Jesus. Yet Jesus' miracles are even greater and more powerful. For example, compare Elisha feeding a hundred men in 2 Kings 4:42-44 and Jesus feeding five thousand in Matthew 14:13-21. Elisha raised an axe head out of the water (2 Kings 6:1-7), but Jesus walked on the water (Matthew 14:25). Elisha healed Naaman of leprosy, while Jesus healed the lepers and more in city after city, with crowd after crowd. While both performed incredible miracles, there is no doubt that Jesus was pre-eminent. His great miracles help to illustrate that He is not just a prophet, but *the* Prophet.

He Taught God's Will for the People:

As God's mouthpiece, it follows that He then would be teaching God's will for the people. When Jesus gives the authoritative statements listed above in Matthew 5, He is helping the people understand more clearly what God desires them to do. While others may have misunderstood or even taught wrongly about God's precepts in the Old Law, Jesus addresses what God truly meant when He was saying such things. Those meanings had been missed by the teachers of the day, and Jesus prophesied the truth for them.

He Brought a Message of Judgment:

John 5:19-29 is a good example of Jesus preaching the coming judgment of God. Jesus proclaims that He is the One who will bring judgment. There is a contrast however in the judgment that Jesus bring compared to the judgment preached in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the prophets warn of a judgment coming against the nations. These judgments came about by the Assyrians capturing the Israelites and the Babylonians subjugating the Kingdom of Judah. Jesus' judgment is much more personal. Instead of a reckoning for an entire nation, He preaches of judgment for each and every individual. It is an eternal judgment, and so His warning should be heeded all the more.

He Brought a Message of Repentance:

Jesus preached often about judgment. This was not because He wanted the people to receive the judgment that their sinful acts had earned. He was preaching to them so that they would repent and be able to escape judgment. In Matthew 4:17 we see that Jesus preached to the people telling them to, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Father's desire, as seen through Jesus' message, was that His people return to Him. It is a message of love, hope, and yearning. God's desire has never been for the destruction of His people. He will only do so at their insistence. Instead He desires that they turn back towards Him and obey His will.

His Message was often Rejected:

Matthew 23 is a great example of Jesus preaching His message of judgment and repentance. Here he preaches to the leaders of Judah, and He describes the judgment that awaits them. He points out their sin and tells them what is needed in order to repent. At the end of this declaration of judgment, Jesus points out that they held the previous prophets in high regard (v. 29-30). However, the irony that they missed is that they now have a Prophet that is greater than the ones before in their presence, and they are rejecting the message just as their ancestors had done in times past (v. 31). Jesus' message was no more popular than the warnings preached by prophets in the Old Testament. Just as we saw that they were persecuted and afflicted for their messages, so was Jesus. His crucifixion was because they hated His message and they could not bear to hear it anymore.

Conclusion:

Understanding Jesus as a prophet is an incredibly important part of understanding His work, His life, and His death. After His resurrection, it is obvious that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the King that rules over His spiritual kingdom. However, when you look at His life through the Gospels, you do not see many of the normal associations with kingship. He was not rich, nor did He command an army that conquered nations. Instead He was an itinerant traveller who did not have a place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20). He travelled around preaching, sharing the will of God, pronouncing judgment and sharing a way that leads to repentance.

Looking back at John 1, we see that John the Baptist was not only asked if he was the prophet, but also if he was the Christ (John 1:19-21). In New Testament times, they expected a Messianic savior. They also expected a Prophet. What they did not expect was for those to be one and the same. It is why Peter was so adamant that Jesus would not die (Matthew 16:22). When one reads Isaiah 53, they do not see a King. They see a prophet. In the resurrection of Jesus we see His kingship. In His crucifixion, we see the result of His work as a prophet.

Furthermore, we see that understanding Jesus as the ultimate prophet gives us insight into our theme for this study (Hebrews 1:1-3). Other prophets were given a portion of the picture. God spoke to them in various ways. But it was through Jesus, the ultimate Prophet, that God made known His will for mankind. Because of Jesus we are better able to understand God. We understand better what repentance is and what it accomplishes. We have a message that was delivered through Jesus at one time for all people, the message of salvation. All people have had it made known to them who God is, what judgment He brings and most importantly, how they might be saved from it.

\Questions:

1. What does Deuteronomy 18 predict will come in the future?
2. Were the Israelites expecting another great prophet even after having prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah and Daniel? How do we know this?
3. In what way did Jesus speak that might make someone assume He was a prophet?
4. What were things that Jesus could see that uninspired people would not have been able to see?
5. What are some good examples of Jesus being a prophet on behalf of the Father?
6. What type of judgment did Jesus proclaim was coming?
7. In what way did the Jews reject the message of Jesus?
8. What is the irony that Jesus mentions in Matthew 23 about their rejection?
9. How does Jesus being the antitype of the prophet help us to better understand His life and ministry?
10. How does this lesson tie in with Hebrews 1:1-3?