

PREFACE

Since the title of this class is *Prophet, Priest & King*, I decided it was just about time that we dug into the first word of that title: **Prophet**.

These three offices—prophet, priest and king—were ordained by God, and responsible for leading the nation of Israel. What ties them together under a study of the Messiah is that they all were *anointed* to their office. Thus all three could be termed, in a generic sense, messiahs, christs—i.e., “anointed” (*mashiach*). But also recall the essential *differences* between the three, as we see represented in the logo for this class:

- the king ruled the people **for** God
- the priest represented the people **to** God
- the prophet spoke to the people **from** God

And only *the* Messiah could and would be all three.

DEUTERONOMY 18

The principal OT reference for a systematic prophecy of the Messiah as prophet—and, by the way, the last Messianic prophecy in the Pentateuch—is found in Deuteronomy 18. Here Moses, a prophet in his own right as well as a type of Christ, speaking to the people words from God, tells Israel that “The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me.” And from the passage we glean specific requirements that will identify and validate the Messiah.

Not all agree that this is a Messianic prophecy; some scholars say this just refers to the prophets that would come later. But textually it seems to refer to just one (“a” prophet), and centuries later the people of Israel certainly interpreted it that way. Look at what they said at the feeding of the 5,000:

Read John 6:13-14.

And recall what the Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist in John 1:

And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." (John 1:20-21)

Though they delineated between the Prophet and the Christ, they obviously referred to just one specific prophet. And (as you see in the handout) the apostle Peter in Acts 3 connected this passage with Christ Jesus. So, all in all, we are in good company interpreting Deuteronomy as a Messianic prophecy.

Our passage is preceded, in vv9-14, by the command that when the people of Israel come into Canaan, the Promised Land, they should not “listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners,” as the people of Canaan did. No, “the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this.” (ESV) Instead, He would send them a prophet like Moses:

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

So let's get right to it. **On the second page of the handout** we have a list of eight characteristics, gleaned from the text, that the Prophet must have. Our purpose in this session is to validate each one of these in Jesus the Nazarene.

1. Called by God (v15)

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet

This prophet—indeed, any *true* prophet—must be called by God Himself. As William Varner puts it, “No self-ordained preacher could claim this role.” One cannot speak *for* God if one is not called *by* God. That is a pretty high calling, a pretty high standard. But Jesus went one better: He was not just *called by* God, He was *sent from* God.

Read Galatians 4:4.

The starting point was heaven itself, and from that pristine dwelling the Son was dispatched: sent out on a mission to earth. And once here, on at least two occasions the Father validated that connection.

2. An Israelite (v15)

a prophet from among you, from your countrymen

We have already covered extensively the lineage of the Messiah, so we needn't dwell here long. But note the contrast of this with the preceding passage.

Read Deuteronomy 18:9.

Yahweh insisted that Israel get its teaching and guidance straight from “the horse's mouth.” The Lord would speak to them through the men of His own choosing, not the Canaanite pretenders. This is one piece of evidence showing that, as in others we have examined, Moses' prophecy had immediate, as well as far-future application.

3. Like Moses (v15)

a prophet like me

As I have stated, Moses was a prophet in his own right as well as a type of Christ. In fact, his role as a Messianic type would make for a fascinating in-depth study of its own.

This cuts both ways: if Moses prophesied a prophet like himself, then that means that he, Moses, would be like the Messiah—a type of Him. That is, Moses already met every requirement he was listing for this future Prophet. And if this future Prophet would be like Moses, then, in addition to the characteristics already on our list, he would also be

- **uniquely intimate with the Father**

When the Lord was dressing down Aaron and Miriam for speaking against His “servant Moses,” in Numbers 12, He said to them,

With him I speak mouth to mouth,
Even openly, and not in dark sayings,
And he beholds the form of the Lord.
Why then were you not afraid
To speak against My servant, against Moses?" (Numbers 12:8)

- **a lawgiver**
Moses brought down from Mount Sinai God's Law; Christ Jesus, in Matthew 15, said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." So Jesus, as it were, *completed* the Mosaic Law. But in addition, He brought His own laws. For example, the apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians wrote,
Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)
- **a mediator**
Moses mediated between Yahweh and the children of Israel, and, as Paul writes in 1 Timothy,
There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5)
- **a deliverer**
Moses delivered the Israelites *from* bondage and *to* the Promised Land; Christ Jesus delivers believers *from* the penalties of sin and *to* an eternity with Him.
- **a judge**
During the exodus Moses sat as the highest court in the land, judging disputes between the people. The risen Christ Jesus sits on His throne judging "the sheep from the goats."

Read Matthew 25:31-33.

4. Authority (vv16-18)

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

When, as it is recounted in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, the Lord came down to Mt. Sinai before all the people of Israel, the sound and fury of it was, not surprisingly, terrifying. And the people cried out to Moses, as it were, *Please don't make us go through that again!* In Deuteronomy 5:27, the people said,
[You] **Go near and hear all that the Lord our God says; then speak to us all that the Lord our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it!**

They were saying, in effect, *We want to hear the true word from the Lord, but we just can't take it first-hand. We need a go-between, someone with the authority of God, but who won't scare us to death.* And God's answer to that request was, *You have chosen wisely, grasshopper.*

5. Be Obeyed (v15)

you shall listen to him

It goes without saying that if a prophet speaks *ex cathedra* [lit., *from the chair, i.e., speak with authority (infallibly) for God*], then his words must be obeyed. This is one of the reasons for the Transfiguration of Christ before the three disciples. With Jesus revealed to them in all His heavenly glory, the Lord God said,
"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5)

6. Speak only God's Word (v18)

I will put My words in his mouth

This does not mean the prophet can't discuss the weather with his friend, but that he cannot replace the Lord's prophecy with his own.

Read Deuteronomy 18:20.

It is a form of idolatry for a prophet to claim he speaks for God, when he doesn't, in that he is setting his own opinions above the thoughts of God. It is blasphemy in that it reveals his contempt for God; it is heresy because his words are not those of God; it is sin because he is a liar.

One might argue that, being God, this would have been impossible for Him. But when He came to earth He gave up some of His godly privilege, and became subservient to the Father.

7. Obedient to God (v18)

he shall speak to them all that I command him

This is related to #6—speak only God's word—but goes beyond just what the prophet speaks. If one characteristic of this Prophet is that he must be obeyed, then it follows that he must, in turn, be obedient to God himself. Beyond the words, he must *live* in obedience to God. Jesus Himself delineated between the two:

In John 12:49 He said,

“For I did not **speak** on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to **what to say and what to speak.**”

In John 14:31 He said,

“...so that the world may know that I love the Father, I **do** exactly as the Father commanded Me.” (emphases added)

Jesus, *the* Prophet, was obedient to His Father in all things, both in word and deed.

8. Certify Himself (vv21-22)

How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?

Finally, the prophet like Moses must certify himself—that is, quite simply, his prophecies must be true.

Read Deuteronomy 18:21-22.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, this was his starting point:

this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2)

The way for a prophet to certify his long-range prophecies was for his short-range prophecies to prove true. And this Jesus did. For example, He told His disciples precisely what would happen regarding His arrest, His trial, His execution, burial and resurrection. It all came true, just as He said.

GREATER THAN MOSES

Let's close by reading how the writer to the Hebrews compares Jesus to Moses. Deuteronomy 18 declares that a prophet *like* Moses will come. The writer of Hebrews shows in Hebrews 3 how Christ is *superior* to Moses.

Read Hebrews 3:1-6.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

15 “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

16 “This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’

17 “The Lord said to me, “They have spoken well.

18 ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

19 ‘It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.’”

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

20 ‘But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’

21 “You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’

22 “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”

*A Prophet Like Moses (1)***Acts 3:22-26**

22 “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you.

23 ‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’

24 “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

25 “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

26 “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

*Eight Characteristics of the Prophet***1. He must be called by God**

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet (v15)

2. He must be an Israelite

from among you, from your countrymen (v15)

3. He must be like Moses

a prophet like me (v15)

4. He must have the authority of a prophet

“This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ The Lord said to me, ‘They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.’” (vv16-18)

5. He must be obeyed

you shall listen to him (v15)

6. He must speak only God’s word

I will put My words in his mouth (v18)

7. He must be obedient to God

he shall speak to them all that I command him (v18)

8. He must certify himself

You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (18:21-22)

*A Prophet Like Moses (2)**Characteristics Fulfilled in Christ Jesus***1. He must be called by God**

Matthew 3:17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Luke 9:35 Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!”

2. He must be an Israelite

Matthew 1:1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

3. He must be like Moses

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

4. He must have the authority of a prophet

Matthew 7:28-29 When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

5. He must be obeyed

Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

6. He must speak only God’s word

John 12:49 “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.”

7. He must be obedient to God

John 8:29 “And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

8. He must certify himself

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—”