

# Jesus as Prophet

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Preacher: Ali Sewell

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we live in a world, don't we, where we are kind of bombarded by information, by messages, by news, especially in the run-up to Christmas.

I'm sure you'll have seen these things all over the place. You know, this is the toy, this is the gadget, this is the party food, this is the look that you need to get it right this year.

This is what it's all about in Christmas 2023. But that's not unique to Christmas, is it? We're constantly being subject to alerts, notifications, 24-hour news, kind of agendas being pushed, messaging directed toward us, looking to shape us, to influence us, to direct us, really trying to mould how we see and think about our world, and as such, how we should live in it.

We live in this world of noise that it seems impossible to escape from, but also so often it seems impossible also to truly focus on. There's information overload, information directed at us all the time, and so often we just don't know what to do with it all, what's really important or what's irrelevant, what we should accept or what we should push back against, what we should find out more about, or what we should just ignore altogether.

The world in that way can be a confusing place as we hear so much. Well, a great encouragement above everything else I really want us to grasp this morning as we think about Jesus and his role as prophet, as we highlight that aspect of why Jesus came that first Christmas, the great encouragement is that God has spoken definitively and finally into this confusing world.

[ 1 : 49 ] That we have a God who speaks and who has spoken most clearly through Jesus himself, and it's through what God says in Christ that we're able to make sense of our world and live well in it.

God hasn't left us just kind of groping about in this sea of noise. He has shown us his truth. The God of the Bible is a God who speaks. That's great news.

And really that leads us to our first point this morning, which is this. What is a prophet? We said Jesus fulfills that role of prophet. What is a prophet? Because it is so central to how God speaks to his people.

So let's have a look at that. What is a prophet? As we said, these roles, these offices, prophet, priest, and king, which Jesus fulfills on new terms specifically for him, their tasks, their roles that God has laid out and provided for his people right through the Old Testament.

That's that part of the Bible before Jesus was born. And so we saw that in that passage we read in Deuteronomy, didn't we? Moses says there in verse 15, I notice he's not saying that God is going to do something completely brand new that you've never seen before.

[ 3 : 07 ] He's saying that there will be another who acts in this mold as Moses did, who carries out that role. So what is the role? Well, Moses carries on.

It is to him you shall listen, he says. Or it says even more clearly further down in verse 18. This is God speaking this time. God says, I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I have commanded him.

So that's a prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks God's words to the people. A prophet is God's spokesperson sent to deliver his message.

From the beginning, God has been sending out his spokespeople, these prophets, to speak his words to the people. Again, as we keep coming back to, the God of the Bible is a God who wants to be known and has provided a way for people to know him.

Again, that God has provided that is great news because it shows us right from the beginning that God is a God that desires a relationship with us. God is not a God hiding away somewhere.

[ 4 : 17 ]     God is not a kind of shy and retiring God who we have to try and coax out in order to know him. God is not just a mystery that we could never know and we just have to speculate or make our best guesses about.

God is a God who wants to be known. God is not hiding. God is a God who wants to be known. When I was younger, we used to go on holidays to various bits of the UK.

My parents were real suckers for a boat trip if it promised that you would see a whale or a dolphin or some kind of wildlife like that. I don't know if it was our family in particular or if the whole thing was just like a con, but we seemed to be the kiss of death for these tours because I spent many an hour sitting in a small cold boat in the rain not seeing anything except for seagulls which were there on the shore anyway before we would all kind of return disappointed after this trip.

And sometimes we kind of get that idea, well, God's a bit like that. We're kind of out there. We're doing all the effort. We're looking. And yet God doesn't want to be seen. God is hiding away. But the encouragement here is that that's not the case, is it?

That we have a God who speaks. We have a God who sent prophets. And that means that if we seek after him, that we will find him. What encouragement. Whatever your current state in terms of a relationship with God, whether you're a Christian or whether you're not yet a Christian, the fact is that God has made himself known.

[ 5 : 46 ]     He's not a God who hides, but he is a God who wants relationship with us, who wants to talk to us, and who we will find if we seek after him.

Now we see that from the start here with Moses who spoke to the people, God's words. And we see that we're all continuing throughout the Old Testament, God raising up prophets. Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Malachi, the list goes on and on.

Some famous prophets whose words we have recorded for us in the Bible where we're hopefully going to spend a bit of time looking at the prophet Isaiah, an incredible book next year.

But also some prophets whose names aren't recorded for us or who just make a kind of a fleeting appearance in Scripture. But all of them from God with his words in their mouth.

Thus says the Lord, they say, speaking God's word to his people. Now in what words did they speak here? I might be wrong, but often I think we probably tend to think of prophecy in terms of telling the future, things that are going to happen that haven't yet happened, a prophet being all about telling us what's to come.

[ 6 : 57 ]     And prophets in the Bible did that at times. They did that with remarkable divine accuracy. But actually far more of what they spoke about was in the present. Far more of their time and their speech was devoted to revealing to the people what God was like.

They gave God's perspectives on what was going on here and now. They called the people back to obedience in him. They reminded the people of what it meant to live for God as well as looking forward toward the judgment and the salvation that God has promised.

The point is that the prophets weren't just giving interesting facts about what was to come. It was God speaking to his people about what they should be doing in the present.

Hearing the message of a prophet was supposed to make a difference here and now as God spoke and people responded to him in order that they might know his salvation.

So that's kind of an introduction to a prophet. That's what a prophet did. He spoke to the people on behalf of God. The people had this great privilege of hearing from their creator. And along with that came that responsibility of responding rightly to him as he spoke through the prophets.

[ 8 : 14 ] The role of a prophet. But as we see here in Deuteronomy, as well as the role of a prophet, we also see the promise of a prophet. As we said, this office kind of stretched out throughout the Old Testament as God continued to send his spokespeople to his people.

But actually here in Deuteronomy, if you have a look, we see Moses is actually being more specific than that, isn't he? He says, God shall raise up a prophet like me.

It is to him you shall listen. And so we're not just speaking here about prophets in general. Already we're looking ahead to kind of the prophet par excellence that there would be one who will come to decisively speak God's word.

There'll be one who comes to fully reveal God to his people. There'll be one who comes to definitively call people to response, to lay out that judgment and salvation that God promises before them.

And of course, as we've said, it's Jesus, isn't it, who fulfills that role? It's Jesus who already, back in Deuteronomy, the whole Bible is looking towards, the one who's been promised. He is the prophet like Moses that God provides.

[ 9 : 32 ] We don't need to turn to it now, but in Acts chapter three, after Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension into heaven, the apostle Peter quotes those words from Deuteronomy.

He says this, Moses said, the Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me. And Peter then goes on to say, well, that has happened. That was Jesus. God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first.

This prophet has been, and this prophet is Jesus. It's important as we say that first, before we dig into what that means, to clarify that doesn't mean that Jesus was only a prophet.

As some other religions would suggest, that would be the kind of position of Islam, that yes, Jesus came, he was a real person, but he was just a prophet. The Bible is clear that Jesus is all of these offices, prophet, priest, and king, as God himself come to earth.

So we're not diminishing Jesus in any way here, saying Jesus was only a prophet. But we are saying that one of the reasons that he came was as the fulfillment of this prophetic role.

[ 10 : 37 ] Let's spell out to us in brilliant words at the opening of the book of Hebrews. It says, Long ago, at many times, and in many ways, this is speaking about back in the Old Testament. Long ago, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. Jesus, the true prophet. So let's spend the rest of our time listening then to Jesus, the fulfillment of all the prophets.

Again, it is to him you shall listen, as Moses said in Deuteronomy. So how does Jesus carry out this role as prophet, proclaiming God's word to us?

How is he able to carry it out more fully, more comprehensively, more finely than any of the prophets before? Well, two particular areas.

Two areas we've kind of touched on already, but we see them in their fullness in Jesus Christ. First, that Jesus reveals God to us. Jesus reveals God to us as he is God himself.

[ 11 : 43 ] Now, we think of those great words from the opening of John's gospel that we so often hear and remember at Christmas. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. The very fact that John describes him as the word emphasizes the idea that there is something about Jesus, which is God speaking.

There is something being communicated. It's this prophetic role. And those verses go on to say, don't they? And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth. Jesus comes, John says, as the revelation of God's glory.

Jesus makes God known. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the exact imprint of his nature. The Bible says, do you want to know what God is like?

[ 12 : 49 ] A huge question throughout history, a huge question still in our culture. Do you want to know what God is like? The Bible says, well, look at Jesus, because he has revealed himself.

The prophets described God. They described him accurately, faithfully, perfectly. The Old Testament prophets' words were God's words about himself. But in Jesus, we kind of move up a level, as in Jesus, God himself comes.

Imagine you're looking to hire someone for a job. You might get a CV. You might get a cover letter. You might get references. You get to know all about this person. You have a pretty good idea of what they're like.

But it's actually as you meet them, it's as you work alongside them. It's as you see them face to face. That's when you most fully get to really know them and what makes them tick.

In Jesus, the Bible says, we have met God face to face. Jesus, the true prophet, reveals God to us.

[ 13 : 51 ] And you might say, well, actually, I didn't get to meet him. None of us here have, because that was 2,000 plus years ago. We haven't seen Jesus face to face.

And that's a really understandable question. That's a good thing to think about. But that is why we have, in the Bible, Jesus presented to us. That is why we have not just one, but four different gospel accounts, the eyewitness accounts, explaining, laying out for us the life of Jesus, who he was, what he did, what he said.

And so we too can see him as he reveals what God is like. God has spoken through his son, and he continues to speak to his son as the whole Bible points us to him.

Again, we said earlier, if we seek after God, he's not hiding away, we will find him. We will be able to deepen our knowledge and our relationship with him.

How do we do that? Where do we seek him? Well, first and foremost, we do that by turning to his word, the Bible, as it shows us Jesus, who reveals God to us.

[ 15 : 03 ] We see what God is like as we see Jesus drawing tenderly alongside those who are broken, those who are pushed down in society, those who people had turned their backs on, but who Jesus shows love and compassion for.

Jesus is acting as a prophet, showing us that God cares for the lowly and the downtrodden. We see what God is like as we see Jesus in his anger at those who think they've got it all sorted, those who think through their own efforts that they are very much God's sort of people.

They know it all already and that kind of elevates them in their minds above other people, above the riffraff. But actually, Jesus says, no, you've got it all wrong. Jesus reserves his harshest criticism for these people.

Again, Jesus is acting as a prophet, showing us what God is like, that he opposes the proud and wants nothing to do with self-righteousness. We see what God is like most clearly as Jesus goes to the cross, willingly suffering and dying for the sins of his people.

Jesus is acting as a prophet. The cross itself is this revelatory act, showing us the holiness of God who will not ignore sin and wickedness, will not put up with all the things in our world that cause pain and suffering where things have gone wrong.

[ 16 : 39 ] But also a God who, in his incredible grace, will make a way to bring people back to him. Also a God who displays his incredible love to fallen people like you and me.

And that's not to say that that's all the cross was, that it was just a demonstration. The cross actually achieved something. It wasn't just telling us about a way back to God. The cross itself is that way back to God.

And we'll see that even more clearly, especially next week when we think about Jesus as priest. Remember, prophet is just one of these roles that Jesus carries out. But in everything he does, the very life of Jesus, especially at the climax of his ministry at the cross, is this prophetic revelation to us.

It's God revealing himself to us through Jesus. And so Jesus reveals God to us. But as we see as well, again, like the Old Testament prophets, but kind of through Jesus in some glorious technicolor, he shows us not just what God is like, but also secondly, how we are to respond to him.

Jesus carries out his prophetic work, not just in who he is, so that we can look and see what God is like, but also, of course, in what he says as he calls his people to a response.

[ 18 : 03 ] I've got a Bible where the words of Jesus are in red and there's no kind of theological significance to that. All scripture is breathed out by God. There's not more important bits and less important bits.

But one thing that these red words do highlight, if nothing else, is if you just flick through the Gospels in the New Testament, there is a lot of red. You know, Jesus spoke a lot.

Jesus taught a lot. Sometimes we often, I think, sort of fast forward from Christmas through to Easter as if Jesus didn't really do much in between. But he had this ministry of teaching people, again, acting as a prophet.

We read earlier, very briefly, from Mark's Gospel in chapter 1, the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. What is the first thing he's recorded as doing?

Well, verse 14, he's proclaiming the Gospel of God. He's carrying out that prophetic work of proclaiming, being a herald, declaring the Gospel, the good news of God.

[ 19 : 09 ] Later on in that same chapter, Mark chapter 1, Jesus says to his disciples who are wanting him to kind of get out there and heal more people and do more miracles and do more impressive things and build up a crowd.

Again, verse 38, he says to them, let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also. For that is why I came out. Again, that priority of Jesus, proclaiming a message and a message that requires a response.

Again, the prophets didn't just say, Jesus didn't just show, okay, this is what God is like and that's it. It's just a bit of information. No, the prophetic message is a call to action as well.

I spent a while recently speaking to my wife about space rockets because I kind of find that sort of thing quite interesting and Julie has become excellent at being very polite and sort of sitting and sort of listening, maybe even asking a question and I think she's probably, you know, learned something.

She didn't know much about them before so the bar was low but at some point we realise she's had enough. I normally realise that a while after she has realised it and that conversation ends and we go our separate ways and we just get on with our day as if nothing's happened.

- [ 20 : 29 ] It doesn't change anything. It's just this kind of information transfer. It's so important that we recognise that is not how the prophets speak. That is not what Jesus is all about.
- It's not just here just passing on some information but it doesn't really matter. That is not what the words of the Bible are. Jesus reveals God to us but particularly through his words he calls us to respond.
- Again, Jesus is opening words in Mark's Gospel. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. So what? So repent and believe in the Gospel, Jesus says.
- Jesus reveals a wonderful God to us. A God whose kingdom is at hand. Who has promised and who will bring about this perfect rule through his perfect King.
- We'll see that in a couple of weeks and again, of course, Jesus will be right at the centre of that. But it's a message that calls us to a response as well.
- [ 21 : 35 ] That response that Jesus lays out to repent and believe in the Gospel. What does that mean? Well, the word Gospel, we've said before, it simply means good news.
- And to repent really means to turn. It means to turn away from our old way of life. To turn away from trying to earn our salvation and earn a place in God's kingdom.
- It means to turn away from putting ourselves first and trying to build our own kingdom. And instead, it's that call to turn to God. To accept the good news of his kingdom.
- And that kingdom brought in by Jesus as king. That kingdom we have access to through Jesus as priest. And that kingdom announced and modelled and declared by Jesus as prophet.
- We read in Deuteronomy, it is to Jesus we should listen. And not only that, but also we heard there that warning from God in verse 19. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.
- [ 22 : 43 ] And we see there the seriousness of rejecting Jesus. As Jesus speaks as prophet, as he speaks the words of God himself as he is God himself. What Jesus is saying is not advice or a suggestion or here's something you might like to consider.
- Jesus speaks as a command that we repent and that we turn to him. Jesus is the prophet who speaks God's words to us, reveals God to us and shows us what our response to him needs to be and the incredible thing really, the thing that sets Jesus apart is that it's Jesus himself who is the content of his message.
- He's not pointing us elsewhere, he's pointing us to himself because he comes offering the good news that he alone makes possible. As he says there, God's kingdom is coming.
- At that first Christmas, Jesus bursts onto the scene as God himself comes to bring in the kingdom, to welcome us into his kingdom. God speaks that message of ultimate significance into our world.
- God speaks clearly and finally and finally through his son and revealing himself to us, inviting us to be his people and requiring that response of repentance and belief in him.
- [ 24 : 06 ] That's a challenging message to hear. It's a challenging message that Jesus speaks. It's a humbling message for us to repent, to turn to Jesus and to live for him rather than go in our own way, to accept our need of him.
- And yet it is this incredible gift that God speaks clearly into our confusing world. God declares what he is like and he lays out clearly how we're to respond and Jesus is at the very heart of that, the perfect prophet and the message that he comes to deliver.
- Let's pray together. Let's pray together.