Jesus – The Prophet and King

1. Introduction

John 6:14 *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"*

a. In Chapter 6 we read the very familiar passage where Jesus feeds the five thousand. We will consider this event and what Jesus shared with his disciples afterwards next week. This week we will consider the response of the people following this miracle – to declare that Jesus was "…indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

b. Clearly there was an expectation which they now saw being fulfilled. What was this expectation and where did it originate?

c. The reference to the Prophet points back to Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses prophesied.

Deut.18:15 *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.*

d. What does it mean that this prophet would be like Moses? There were many prophets in Israel after Moses. In fact, we probably don't really think of Moses initially as a prophet. In what way is Jesus like Moses and why did the people now begin to recognise him as the fulfilment of the promise God gave through Moses when Moses spoke to the people before they entered into the land?

2. A prophet

a. The prophet was a messenger and a preacher that God would raise up from time to time to boldly confront the nation of Israel in times where the spiritual (priestly) and political (kingly) leadership had drifted off course. The prophetic ministry re-established the "plumb-line" of righteousness by restoring a moral and spiritual standard for the people to respond to.

b. Prophets would consistently remind the people about the first things, which are the foundations of truth, and give a clear picture of the last things, which are the promises of God and the future of Israel. So the prophets were an extension of God's mercy to warn the people before the trouble so that they could get their lives in order and avoid the adverse consequences when things began to shake out as the prophets predicted. God judges because he is kind – in his mercy he will not allow man to destroy himself through addiction to sinful tendencies – he will intervene in the affairs of men with the desire that wicked men will repent and turn to Him

c. However, that Jesus is a prophet is a truth that is affirmed by liberal scholars, Muslim clerics, and evangelical Christians alike. So what makes the difference? If you believe that Jesus is God incarnate and the only way to eternal life, as the New Testament teaches, then Jesus's status as prophet is fundamentally different from those of other religions. How, though, do we describe that difference?

d. One way is to point out that Jesus isn't only a prophet; he's also a priest and a king. But another way is to look at how Scripture speaks of Jesus as a prophet. In this approach, Jesus isn't a prophet of our own making, as liberal scholars would have

him; or a prophet like the other prophets, as the Qur'an presents him—he's a prophet like Moses, and One whose ministry is unlike any other. But what does that mean—to be a prophet like Moses? To answer, we must begin in Deuteronomy 18 and see how Christ fulfils the words of Moses.

3. A prophet like Moses

a. When Moses died, he left behind a body of writing we call the Pentateuch. Sometime later, an editor added these inspired words to the end of Deuteronomy:

Deut. 34:10–12 *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, **11** none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, **12** and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.*

b. From this retrospective, the anticipation of a prophet like Moses only grew. Just as God gave Moses a vision of heaven that became a pattern for the tabernacle (see Ex. 25:9, 40), he also gave Moses a vision of the Prophet who would lead Israel on a new exodus. Indeed, this is the pattern we find in Moses. He's not just a spokesman for God, as Aaron was for Moses (Ex. 7:1), nor was he one who received dreams and visions from God like other prophets (Num. 12:6–8). Rather, Moses was a prophet who spoke face to face with Yahweh

Num. 12:7-8 *Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. **8** With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord.*

c. In this unique position, Moses is recognized as a deliverer (Ex. 3:7–10), covenant mediator (Ex. 34:27), priest (Ps. 99:6), and ruler (Ex. 2:13–14; Acts 7:27). Moses's larger-than-life status as prophet was designed by God as a template from which all other prophets would be measured.

d. But of course, Jesus would do more than bring a message from God. He would bring God to his people and his people to God.

4. Looking for and Listening to the Prophet

a. The rest of the Old Testament details the role of prophets in Israel.

Jer. 7:25 *From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day.*

b. Yet, despite their ongoing ministries, none is called the Prophet—not until we get to John the Baptist and Jesus. As we saw when we began to look at John's gospel, John is the first prophet since Malachi, which raised several questions for the Pharisees: "Are you Elijah? . . . Are you the Prophet? . . . What do you say about yourself?" (John 1:21–22).

c. John's answer is clear: Jesus, not I, is the one of whom the Law of Moses and the prophets wrote

John 1:45 *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

d. Indeed, according to the Samaritan woman, Jesus is "a prophet" (John 4:19)—and soon the people confess, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14).

e. Though the manifold identity of Jesus remained uncertain until his death and resurrection, it wasn't long before his followers saw him as the Prophet like Moses. Quoting Deuteronomy 18, Peter declares:

Acts 3:22–23 *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. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people."*

f. Peter's words reveal the chief significance of Jesus's prophetic office—only his word brings salvation. Those who listen to him will be saved; those who don't will be destroyed. Jesus isn't just another prophet; he's the prophet like Moses whose words offer life and invite people to follow him out of death into life.

g. Luke identifies Jesus's new exodus when Jesus is seen speaking with Moses and Elijah about "his departure" which in Greek is exodon (exodus)

Luke 9:30-31 *And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, **31** who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

h. This last imperative at the end of Deut.18:15 is echoed by the Father's instruction to Peter after witnessing the conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah.

Luke 9:15 *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"*

i. Jesus is the prophet like Moses, whose words must be heard, believed, and obeyed if one wants to be saved.

Deut. 18:18,19 *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. **19** And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.*

5. Receiving the prophet's words

a. To listen is not just to hear but to respond to what we hear. As Mike has been showing us in James – we need to be doers of the word not just hearers. This is the message for us today: Jesus's prophetic words bring forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. We must listen to him, because his words are the full revelation from God.

Heb. 1:1 *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*

b. Yet Jesus does more than simply reveal truths from God. He is God incarnate (John 1:1–5), the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and his message of grace is even greater than that of Moses (John 1:14–18). Jesus is a prophet who calls us to follow him from death to life, just as Israel followed Moses through the Red Sea and was baptized into his name.

1 Cor. 10:1-4 *For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, **2** and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** and all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*

c. And yet he's greater than Moses because his salvation does more than point to another; it points to himself. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14:6) and today his words still offer life to all who will listen

Eph. 2:17 *And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

d. Therefore, when we consider what it means for Jesus to be a prophet, we must understand how the whole Bible presents him as the Prophet like Moses. In this way, we discover that any other presentation of Christ as merely a prophetic teacher isn't only non-Christian, but also non-saving. For only when we hear Christ's voice as the incarnate Lord do we recognise who he is and how his words grant life.

e. Just as Moses delivered the people of Israel from Egypt to receive God's Word at Sinai, so Jesus has delivered his people from death in order to inscribe his law on their hearts. Truly, there is no prophet like him. And for that reason, in a world filled with competing prophets, we must listen to him above all others.

6. Prophet and King

a. However, the next verse in John 6 reveals the problem with these people recognising who Jesus was. For the Jewish people knew that this promised prophet was also their promised Messiah. Here was the one who would become king over Israel and rescue the people from their oppressors.

John 6:15 *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

b. Why would Jesus now walk away when they had recognised him for who he was? Surely he was the Messiah, the promised King! The problem was that they did not understand the nature of his kingship. Jesus explains this when questioned by Pilate in John 18.

John 18:33,36-37 *So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" **…..** **36** Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." **37** Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

c. In other words he is a king, but not in the way they thought. When Jesus says that, he doesn't mean that this world doesn't belong to him. It does. He made it. He will come again to claim it. What he means is that he has come into the world the first time to rule men's lives not by being their military captain, but by his word. He is going to triumph not by subduing armies, but by satisfying souls with his word. He is

going to conquer not with the power of armed forces but with the power of radically transformed lives who listen to him and feed on his word.

7. Not the King they thought

a. What we see back in chapter 6 is that the crowds did not understand this at all. Verse 26 is the key to why Jesus withdrew and would have nothing to do with their excitement about his kingship.

John 6:26 *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.*

b. They saw the miracles and the signs, they saw the power but they were not listening to the words. Even though they had declared him as the promised prophet they failed to listen to the prophet's words and sought to see his power fulfil their agenda and desires

c. Jesus didn't come into the world to lend his power to our agendas and desires. That's the fundamental mistake of the prosperity gospel. It leave people untransformed in what they crave, and simply adds the power of Jesus as the way to get it. That is not the gospel. It is the kind of acclamation that Jesus walks away from.

8. Conclusion

a. If we recognise Jesus as king then that is not so we can manipulate the power and authority that comes with his kingship to achieve our own desires. His kingship and his identity as prophet cannot be separated. To accept him as our king, to be transferred into his kingdom, is to receive his words and allow them to transform our lives.

b. During his first coming Jesus functioned as a prophet, warning His people of what was to come and calling them to live a kingdom lifestyle. As we feed on his word so we are transformed and prepared for what is yet to come when he returns and establishes himself as king over all the earth.

c. As we will see next week, the importance of what Jesus did with five loaves and two fishes was not the miracle but the demonstration that he is the bread of life on whom we need to feed. He is the prophet like Moses to whom we must listen and respond so that we will know the salvation that comes from the Father through the Son.

John 6:26-27 *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.* ***27*** *Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."*