

We Believe in Jesus

Lesson 3

The Prophet

Lesson Guide



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**

- **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
- **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.

- **While you are watching the lesson**

- **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
- **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
- **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.

- **After you watch the lesson**

- **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
- **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:28)

Prophet: God's covenant ambassador who proclaims and applies God's word, especially to warn of judgment against sin and to encourage the kind of loyal service to God that leads to his blessings.

II. Old Testament Background (3:05)

A. Qualifications (3:55)

Old Testament prophets were ambassadors or emissaries of God's covenants.

False prophets used trickery, superstition and demonic powers to represent their false gods.

Four qualifications for true prophets of God from Deuteronomy 18:17-22:

- Called by God
- Given God's word to speak
- Demonstrated loyalty to God
- Authenticated by the fulfillment of their message

1. Called by God (8:27)

God called many people to serve him as prophets.

God frequently issued prophetic calls directly to the prophet.

God also commissioned prophets indirectly.

2. Given God's Word (10:47)

The Holy Spirit inspired prophets to speak whatever God commanded.

The Holy Spirit utilized the prophets' personalities and perspectives as he presented his message.

The Holy Spirit guaranteed that the words of true prophets were authoritative and infallible.

3. Loyal to God (13:14)

The Holy Spirit did not give prophets complete freedom to say whatever they pleased.

Prophets had to ensure that their prophecies agreed with God's existing revelation.

4. Authenticated by Fulfillment (15:03)

Prophets' predictions had to come true.

Prophets accurately relayed the words of God.

Some prophecies:

- Relatively quick fulfillment.
- Fulfillments were not so immediate.

Sometimes the words of true prophets did not come to pass precisely as they stated them.

- Warned of the curses that would come *if people persisted in sin*.
- Offered the blessings that would come *if people acted faithfully*.

The outcomes of true prophecy are consistent with God's covenant and character and authenticate the ministry of his true prophets.

B. Function (20:48)

1. Authority (21:05)

In the ancient Near East, suzerains (powerful emperors):

- Ruled over vassals (smaller nations).
- Imposed a treaty or covenant on vassals.
- Employed ambassadors to administer and enforce their covenants.

God often described his relationship to his people in terms of a suzerain-vassal covenant. He appointed prophets to:

- Be his authoritative ambassadors.
- Remind his vassal people of the terms of his covenant.

2. Task (23:39)

Covenants between suzerains and vassals detailed the arrangement between them:

- The suzerain's benevolence in the past
- The loyalty the vassal was required to render
- The consequences of the vassal's obedience or disobedience
 - Blessings if the vassal obeyed
 - Curses if the vassal disobeyed

Prophets were assigned the task of reminding God's people of the details of his covenant.

- In good standing: encouraged Israel to remain faithful.
- Not in good standing: charged Israel with rebellion and disloyalty.

3. **Methods (25:50)**

The most common method the prophets used to accomplish their task was speaking:

- Accused people of sin
- Commanded them to obey
- Encouraged them to persevere
- Warned them of judgment
- Offered them blessings
- Told parables
- Foretold the future
- Prayed
- Interceded for God's people
- Wrote down their words

Prophets also used other methods that relied more on special actions:

- Prophetic signs and wonders
- Symbolic actions and spiritual encounters

C. Expectations (28:59)

1. Historical Development (29:24)

As God's kingdom shifted and grew throughout history, the role of prophets adjusted to meet its changing needs.

- Pre-Monarchy: The period of God's covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses.
 - Adam and Eve: received God's revelation by walking and talking with him.
 - Noah: prophesied covenant judgment against the world.
 - Abraham: directly received God's plans for the future.
 - Moses: administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant by:
 - Explaining it to the people.
 - Governing them according to its terms.
 - Exhorting them to be faithful to God.

- Monarchy: The nation of Israel had settled the Promised Land and was living under the rule of a king.
 - The office of prophet became focused on the central arenas of power.
 - The primary role of the prophet was to remind the kings and their courts to serve God faithfully.
 - The prophets reminded the people of the Lord's covenant requirements and the consequences of their behavior.
- Exile: The people of Israel and Judah did not obey and were exiled from the Promised Land.
 - The prophets' emphasis was on restoring the king and the kingdom.
 - Prophets encouraged God's people to repent of their sin and return to covenant faithfulness.

- Restoration: A partial end to the period of exile beginning around 539/538 B. C.
 - Still no king in Israel or Judah.
 - Relatively few prophets, but faithful prophets encouraged people to be faithful to God.
 - Expectations that God would fulfill his promises and return one of David's heirs to the throne.
 - Hoped that God would have compassion despite their sin, and restore the kingdom for his own name's sake.

Prophets were always God's authoritative ambassadors who were to hold God's people accountable to his covenant.

Expectations for the office of prophet in the New Testament were drawn primarily from the post-exilic restoration.

Future prophets would herald and accompany the messianic king.

2. Specific Prophecies (39:30)

- Herald of the Lord: Would announce the Lord was coming to conquer all his enemies and to restore the Davidic monarchy.
- Prophet like Moses: Would rise up to lead the people in righteousness, just as Moses had done.
- Restoration of prophecy: False prophets would be purged from the land and true prophets would increase.

III. Fulfillment in Jesus (44:47)

A. Qualifications (45:25)

1. Called by God (45:52)

Simeon revealed that Jesus was called to be a prophetic revelation and sign to his people.

At Jesus' baptism, God the Father and the Holy Spirit showed that he had been called as a prophet.

The action that most clearly identified Jesus as a prophet was his transfiguration.

2. Given God's Word (50:22)

Jesus stated that he had been given God's word to speak.

3. Loyal to God (52:48)

Jesus insisted that he was carrying out the Father's will.

4. Authenticated by Fulfillment (54:14)

Jesus' prophecies were fulfilled.

- Sometimes his words came true immediately.
- Other times, his prophecies were fulfilled later.
- Not all of Jesus' prophecies were fulfilled in his lifetime.

We can and should be utterly confident that Jesus will eventually fulfill all his promises.

B. Function (59:48)**1. Authority (1:00:34)**

Jesus had authority to speak on behalf of his Father.

Jesus' authority from the Father is evident:

- Whoever received him also received the Father, and whoever rejected him also rejected the Father.
- Those who turn away will eventually recognize the authenticity of the message.

2. Task (1:02:47)

In his role as prophet, Jesus' task was the same as the prophets before him:

- Proclaimed the truth of God's kingship and authority.
- Confirmed that the terms of the covenant were still in force.
- Affirmed the consequences of the covenant.

Jesus specifically identified himself as the announcer of the restoration of God's kingdom that had been prophesied in Isaiah chapter 61.

3. Methods (1:07:35)

Jesus' primary method for accomplishing his prophetic task was speaking.

- Accused people of sin.
- Commanded them to repent and obey God's will.
- Encouraged them to persevere in faithfulness.
- Warned of coming judgment.
- Offered blessings to the faithful.
- Told parables.
- Foretold the future.
- Prayed.
- Interceded for God's people.

Jesus did not write down his teachings; his disciples did this for him.

Other methods:

- More miracles than any other prophet in the history of God's people.
- Symbolic actions:
Received baptism from John the Baptist
- Spiritual encounters:
 - Triumphed over the Devil's temptation
 - Exorcised demons

C. Expectations (1:10:44)

All the prophetic expectations came to fulfillment in the person and ministry of Jesus.

1. Herald of the Lord (1:11:16)

The special prophet foretold was to announce the arrival of the Lord.

John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus.

John fulfilled his prophetic mission by identifying Jesus as the Son of God.

2. Prophet Like Moses (1:13:43)

Jesus was the prophet like Moses whom the Old Testament had anticipated.

- Performed miracles on a scale that hadn't been seen since Moses.
- Prophesied with greater knowledge than anyone since Moses.
- Knew God face to face.
- Ensured that all who responded in faith would be counted as perfect covenant keepers and inherit God's kingdom.

Jesus was the greatest prophet of all time.

Jesus is the fullest and clearest revelation of the Father's identity, will and salvation.

3. Restoration of Prophecy (1:18:02)

The Old Testament anticipated a day when false prophets would be eliminated and true prophets would multiply.

The multiplication of true prophets:

- Began when Jesus ordained his apostles to preach the word.
- Continued on the day of Pentecost.

The end of false prophecy:

- Began to be restrained by the multiplication of true prophets.
- Eventually, Jesus will completely do away with false prophets.

IV. Modern Application (1:21:59)

The Westminster Larger Catechism, answer number 43, summarizes Christ's prophetic work in terms of his revelation to the church.

A. Extent of Revelation (1:23:20)

Christ is the one who speaks to us through all of Scripture and true prophecy.

The whole Bible is Christ's prophetic word to his church.

Jesus' prophetic ministry preceded his incarnation.

Jesus' prophetic ministry continued after he ascended into heaven

All Scripture is authoritative and relevant to the life of the modern church.

B. Content of Revelation (1:29:05)

The whole Bible was delivered to us by Christ.

- God's will is the terms of his covenant and its application to our lives.
- Our edification is our proper understanding of the terms of that covenant.
- Our salvation consists of covenant blessings.

1. Interpret Scripture (1:31:16)

A proper understanding of Jesus' office of prophet can help us interpret all of Scripture.

The words of Scripture are the covenant messages of the great King that require an obedient response.

The best way to interpret Scripture is according to the structure of the covenant:

- God's benevolence
- Required loyalty
- Promised consequences

When reading the Bible we should always ask questions like:

- How does this passage reveal the benevolence of God toward his people?
- How does it reveal the loyalty he requires of his people?
- What does it say about the curses that come on those who refuse to be faithful?
- What blessings does it offer to those who hear and obey?

2. **Submit to Scripture (1:35:18)**

Understanding Christ's role as prophet can help us submit to Scripture.

- Repentance:

Prophets threatened covenant curses in order to drive sinners to repentance.

- Part of Jesus' ministry.
- One of the most common themes in Scripture.
- The act of turning from rebellion against God and submitting to his will.
- Initially takes place when men and women first come to Christ in saving faith.
- Should be a daily practice.

By practicing daily repentance, believers honor Christ's prophetic work and pursue the blessings of God's covenant.

- Faith

Jesus and other biblical prophets encouraged continued faith in God and obedience to his covenant.

God's promises are sure, and Christ will eventually return to finish what he started.

Until Jesus returns, believers are to be characterized by repentance from sin, and by perseverance in faith.

V. Conclusion (1:43:23)

Review Questions

1. What are the qualifications of true prophets of God?
2. Describe the function of prophets in the Old Testament.

3. What expectations did the Old Testament create for future prophetic ministries?
4. How did Jesus meet the qualifications of a prophet?

5. How did Jesus fulfill the functions of the office of prophet?
6. How did Jesus fulfill the Old Testament expectations for the future of the prophetic office?

7. Describe the extent of Christ's prophetic revelation and its implication for our lives.
8. What is the content of the prophetic revelation we receive from Christ, and what obligations does this place on our lives?

Application Questions

1. How can you be a faithful ambassador for God in your current areas of influence?
2. How should we respond to the seriousness and urgency found in the words of God's prophets?
3. What ministries are you currently engaged in and how are they promoting God's covenant and encouraging others to worship him?
4. What comfort does God's fulfillment of past prophecies bring us as we wait for God to fully establish his kingdom?
5. How does knowing that Jesus is the greatest prophet of all time help you in your present circumstances?
6. What encouragement and hope can we draw from the fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic messages?
7. How can you remain loyal to God in your present circumstances and ministry?
8. What are some specific things that can motivate us to stay faithful to God?
9. How does Christ's role as prophet influence the way you interpret Scripture?
10. What benefits have you experienced from the regular practice of confessing and repenting of your sin?
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Abraham – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

Adam – The first man; husband of Eve; man with whom God made the covenant of foundations in which humanity was to fill and subdue the earth

Beatitudes – Jesus' statements in Matthew 5:3-12 that each begin with the phrase "Blessed are"

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

David – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

Elijah – Old Testament prophet who appeared along with Moses at the transfiguration of Jesus

euangelion – Greek word (transliteration) for "gospel"; literally "good news"

exilic period – Era of Israel's exile from the Promised Land

Ezekiel – Old Testament prophet who ministered in Babylon among the exiles from around 597-586 B.C.

Isaiah – Prophet from Judah who ministered from approximately 740-701 B.C. during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah

John the Baptist – New Testament prophet who called for true repentance and proclaimed that the arrival of God's kingdom was near; identified Jesus as the Messiah and prepared the way for Jesus' public ministry

Luther, Martin – (1483-1546) Sixteenth century German monk and Protestant reformer who initiated the Reformation when he posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg church in 1517

monarchical period – Era when kings ruled Israel

Moses – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national "covenant of law" and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

Noah – Man who, under God's direction, built an ark and survived the Flood; individual with whom God made a universal covenant that promised the enduring stability of nature

organic inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit used the personalities, experiences, outlooks, and intentions of human authors as he authoritatively and infallibly guided their writing

Origen – (ca. A.D. 185 - 254) Early Christian theologian from Alexandria; his works include: *On First Principles*, in which he defended the Scriptures as our final authority for Christian doctrine, and the *Hexapla*, a comparative study of various translations of the Old Testament

pre-monarchical period – Era before kings arose in Israel

prophet – God's emissary who proclaims and applies God's word, especially to warn of judgment against sin and to encourage loyal service to God that leads to blessings

repentance – A heartfelt aspect of faith whereby we genuinely reject and turn away from our sin

restoration period – Era after Israel returned from exile to their ancestral land; also called "post-exilic" period

suzerain – A powerful emperor or king that ruled over smaller nations; the more powerful party of a covenant – the one to whom it was necessary to submit

vassal – A king or nation that must submit to a more powerful emperor or king (suzerain)

Westminster Larger Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647, more comprehensive than the Shorter Catechism