



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7.1.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Office of Jesus as a Prophet

The greatest of the Old Testament prophets was Moses. When Moses died, the record in Deuteronomy says: **“Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”** (Deuteronomy 34:10). Over and over again we read in the books of Moses: **“The LORD spoke to Moses”** (Numbers 31:1 and many other places). When Moses’ sister Miriam and Moses’ brother Aaron (who were both older than Moses) complained that Moses had more authority than they did, the Lord said to them: **“If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD”** (Numbers 12:6-8).

The duty of a prophet was to receive messages from the Lord and relay these messages to the people or to certain persons chosen by God. Because Moses did not consider himself a good speaker, God gave Moses his brother Aaron as his spokesman. God said to Moses: **“Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well... Now you shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God”** (Exodus 4:14-16).

God is the source of the message, and a faithful prophet speaks only the words that God has put into his mouth. The prophet Jeremiah pointed out the difference between a true prophet of God and the many false prophets. Of these false prophets Jeremiah said: **“They speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD”** (Jeremiah 23:16). On the other hand, God said through Jeremiah: **“He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully”** (Jeremiah 23:28). The apostle Peter was speaking about these faithful prophets when he wrote: **“Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:21).

God told Moses that at some future time He was going to send them another Prophet greater than Moses: **“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him”** (Deuteronomy 18:17-19). On the basis of this word from God, Moses announced to the people of Israel: **“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear”** (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Later prophets enlarged on this prophecy. Isaiah, in particular, spoke concerning this future Prophet: **“I will put My Spirit upon Him; ... He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench”** (Isaiah 42:1-3). This Prophet would not primarily condemn of sin, as the Old Testament prophets often did, but He would bring a sweet message of comfort to the troubled and sorrowing. Again, Isaiah said of this Prophet: **“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary”** (Isaiah 50:4). In Isaiah 61:1-3 we hear this description of the great Prophet: **“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to**

the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

To some extent, the Son of God functioned as a Prophet already in the Old Testament age. From time to time the LORD Himself spoke to His people directly. In such cases He appeared as the Angel of the LORD, who was Himself the LORD. The Angel of the LORD appeared to Sarah’s maid Hagar (Genesis 16), to Jacob (Genesis 31), to Moses (Exodus 3), and to Samson’s parents (Judges 13), among others. The identity of this Angel of the Lord is finally revealed by the last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi, who prophesied: **“Behold, I send My messenger (angel), and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger (Angel) of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.’ says the LORD of hosts”** (Malachi 3:1). Notice that the prophet speaks of two messengers (angels): one to prepare the way for the Other. The second is the Messenger or Angel of the covenant, that is, the Angel of the LORD. This is clearly a prophecy of God’s messenger, John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way for the second Messenger, the Angel of the LORD: Jesus Himself. Thus, from time to time in Old Testament, the Son of God, the great Prophet to come, functioned as a Prophet by speaking the Word of God Himself. Even then He was the Angel of the Lord, the Messenger of the covenant. But most often God spoke to the people by means of chosen prophets. Now, however, Jesus is our Prophet: **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”** (Hebrews 1:1-2)

There can be no doubt that Jesus is the Prophet of whom Moses and the Old Testament prophets spoke. The apostle Peter identified the crucified and risen Jesus as the great Prophet in his speech to the people after healing in Jesus’ name the crippled man at the temple (Acts 3:20-23). Jesus Himself read the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2) at a synagogue service in Nazareth and then announced to the startled audience: **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”** (Luke 4:21). Peter, James, and John heard the testimony of God Himself on the high mountain when God spoke from above and said of Jesus: **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”** (Matthew 17:5). Surely in the words **“Hear Him,”** we have a reference to God’s words to the people through Moses: **“Him you shall hear”** (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Again and again Jesus claimed that the words He spoke were words given to Him by God. Even the Pharisee Nicodemus was willing to say of Jesus: **“We know that You are a teacher come from God”** (John 3:2). After just a few minutes of conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman at the well said to Him: **“Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet”** (John 4:19). Many of the five thousand who were fed by Jesus with five loaves and two fish said of Him: **“This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world”** (John 6:14). The officers who were sent by the Pharisees to arrest Jesus came back with the report: **“No man ever spoke like this Man!”** (John 7:46). Jesus said in plain words that His words came from God. **“I have not spoken on My own authority,”** He said, **“but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”** (John 12:49-50).

In His prayer to His Father on the night before His death Jesus said: **“I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me”** (John 17:8). **“I have given them Your word”** (John 17:14). On the next day, when Jesus was on trial before Governor Pontius Pilate, He called attention to His function as a Prophet, not an earthly king: **“My kingdom is not of this world. ...You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”** (John 18:36-37). Jesus is God’s Prophet who accomplishes His task as a Prophet by means of His voice – by His words speaking the truth of God. **“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him”** (John 1:18).

It did not take long for the Jewish people to realize that Jesus was not the same kind of teacher as their scribes. **“They were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”** (Mark 1:22). When the Pharisees accused Jesus of lying, Jesus responded: **“Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going”** (John 8:14). Jesus said: **“He who sent Me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him”** (John 8:26). That is exactly what a prophet is supposed to do. Again, Jesus said: **“As My Father taught Me, I speak these things”** (John 8:28). **“I speak what I have seen with My Father”** (John 8:38). Jesus called Himself **“a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God”** (John 8:40). Finally, Jesus challenged them with these words: **“If I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God”** (John 8:46-47).

In the days of His flesh, Jesus, for the most part, limited His preaching activity to the people of Israel. In fact, He told His disciples to do the same: **“Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”** (Matthew 10:5-6; see also Matthew 15:24). The time was not yet right for the good news of Jesus to go out into all the world.

But the Old Testament prophets already knew that the teaching of Jesus was intended to go out into all the world. The Lord God says to His great Prophet: **“I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth”** (Isaiah 49:6). To the Israelites God said: **“The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising”** (Isaiah 60:3). Jesus recognized that His teaching was for the whole world. He said: **“I am the light of the world”** (John 8:12), and: **“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice”** (John 10:16).

Many have recognized that some of Jesus’ law teachings are similar to the law teachings of other religious teachers, such as Confucius, the Buddha, or even Mohammed. But this is not surprising. The law of God is not found only among Jesus and His followers. The law of God has been written in men’s hearts (Romans 1:32; Romans 2:14-15), and therefore it is natural for earthly teachers to reflect this law in their moral and ethical teachings. Killing and stealing and committing adultery have been condemned by most cultures, even as most cultures understand that there is a supreme Being (or Beings) out there who demand our worship.

But it is indeed blasphemy when Jesus, the Son of God and Teacher of the world, is considered to be on the same level as other religious leaders. Non-Christian religious teachers may know something about the law of God, but they know nothing about the Gospel – the Good News of God’s plan of salvation for the world through Jesus. That is unknown territory, and it is truly sad and soul-destroying when supposedly Christian leaders, such as the pope, claim that followers of other religions may attain eternal life without knowing or confessing Christ. They may claim that Christianity is the best religion, but they fail to say correctly that Christianity is the only saving religion, and that Christ is the only Savior for the entire world.

Jesus taught God’s law, but that was secondary to His main purpose of preaching the Gospel. The Gospel of Mark summarizes Jesus’ teaching with these words: **“Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’”** (Mark 1:14-15). When John the Baptist in prison sent two of his disciples to Jesus, asking whether He was indeed the promised Messiah, Jesus said to them: **“Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them”** (Luke 7:22). In His teaching Jesus promised: **“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live”** (John 5:24-25). Jesus’ Gospel words were words of life, converting the spiritually dead and bringing them eternal life.

Questions

1. Who was the first great prophet of God?
2. What is the duty of a prophet of God?
3. What is the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet?
4. What did Moses say about the great Prophet who was to come?
5. What did Isaiah write concerning the great Prophet to come?
6. In what special way did Jesus Himself talk to Hagar, Moses, and others?
7. Show that the two messengers spoken of by Malachi refer to John the Baptist and Jesus.
8. Why can we be sure that Jesus is the great Prophet of whom Moses spoke?
9. What did Jesus say about the words that He spoke?
10. For the most part in His ministry, Jesus limited His preaching and teaching to whom? Why?
11. Why do some people say that Jesus is just like any other religious teacher? Why are they wrong?
12. What is the main teaching that Jesus wanted to bring to His people?
13. What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?