

Lesson 3

Jesus Christ, The Greatest Prophet

Bible Lesson: Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Luke 4:14-30

Memory Verse: God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son. *Hebrews 1:1-2a*

Enrichment Memory Verse: The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed. *Luke 4:18*

Catechism Memory Work: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; . . .

TEACHER PREPARATION

Prepare to Teach:

- ✚ The students will state what a prophet is and tell what the work of a prophet is.
- ✚ The student will know that Jesus is the great Prophet who teaches us God's will.
- ✚ The students' hearts will be prepared to listen to and believe God's message in the lessons they study

Prepare Materials:

Along with the regular materials needed for class, you will need the following items for this lesson:

- ◆ Scroll fashioned from paper glued to a dowel and rolled up. On the scroll should be written the verses Luke 4:18,19.
- ◆ Optional: Teaching pictures of one or more Old Testament prophets preaching to the people. Picture of Moses in the basket in the Nile River.

- ◆ Quarter-long project materials (listed in Introductory section)

Prayer Preparation

1. Pray that God's Spirit may prepare you to teach and share with your pupils the importance of listening to the message God has for them.
2. Pray that your pupils' hearts may be opened and prepared for the lesson during the week as they complete their assignments and learn the memory work.
3. Pray that through this lesson your pupils might be led to daily sorrow and repentance and assurance of salvation. Pray that those who are not now trusting in Jesus as Savior might be prepared in heart for the work God would do in them.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

A. Bible Study

The Old Testament is filled with the clear and consistent communication of God with people. Paging through the prophets we hear the phrase, "Thus says the Lord," repeated dozens and dozens of times. Each time it reminds us that without God's communication to us we would be in spiritual darkness without hope. As we consider the New Testament, we see very clearly that Jesus Christ is the Word of God. Jesus is God's message to us. John tells us that the Savior is the Word who took on flesh (John 1:1, 14). When someone asks about what God would have us know about Him and His disposition towards us we can point to Jesus Christ. As it says in Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many

ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

In the Old Testament, prophets who claimed to speak for God had certain criteria to show that they indeed were speaking for God. Consequences were also given for those who were proved to be false prophets. Jesus was no false teacher or false prophet but the Son of God sent to proclaim that the Kingdom of God has come.

The prophet is given the job of "forthtelling" or speaking forth God's word. Jesus fulfilled this over and over again as He proclaimed God's Word of truth. We see this as Jesus extensively quotes from the writers of the Old Testament. We also see Jesus speaking of the future or "foretelling." Jesus said many things that if not true, were blasphemous and therefore deserving of punishment. For example, in John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." He also spoke to His disciples before His death that He would be crucified and rise again on the third day (Matthew 26:2, Luke 9:41, 18:31-34). His Words were not blasphemy, they have been shown to be true as the Gospel accounts declare.

In the second article of the creed, we confess that Jesus our Savior descended into hell. We find this taught in 1 Peter 3:18-21. This was a time in which Christ continued to proclaim God's truth. This was the proclamation that the work of bringing about redemption was finished (John 19:30). In His descent into hell, He was not giving a second chance to those who were there but was making clear that His sacrifice was sufficient. He was not sent there to suffer further humiliation. It was the first stage of His exultation which would be followed by His resurrection, ascension, being seated at the right hand of God, and finally His awaited coming again. This descent was a proclamation of God's power, that death itself was no match for the Savior Jesus Christ. Indeed all will kneel before Jesus Christ as it says in Philippians 2:10, "at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

B. Creed Study

Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is the one mediator between God and man, "who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (I Timothy 2:5,6). As the Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus had to accomplish three distinct works:

1. He had to *teach* men the way of salvation (Luke 4:18; John 1:18)
2. He had to *reconcile* the world to God (II Corinthians 5:18,19; Romans 5:10)
3. He had to *rule* over the Church as its Head and over all things as King of kings (Ephesians 1:20-23)

These three "works" describe the three offices of Christ: prophet, priest and king. The three offices were never divided, or separated, in Christ. The work of each overlaps the other. But by looking at each separately, we more clearly see the full ministry of Christ.

The Prophetic Office

Throughout the Old Testament, God spoke to His people through prophets. The prophet would reveal to the people the will of God by speaking the word that he received from God. Such knowledge of the will of God was always incomplete, however, for God could never make Himself fully known through sinful men. Only the Son could reveal the Father and the Father's will because He came from the Father and would have a Son's knowledge of the Father (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:2). Only Jesus could say, "he who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

What is Christ's work as prophet? The catechism says, "He teaches us the will of God concerning our salvation." (#163) As prophet, Jesus tells us about God the Father and God's way of salvation. The role of the prophet was to speak on behalf of God to the people, telling them the word of God which would lead to salvation. The prophet represents God before the people.

Jesus also pointed out how dependent we are upon Him for our knowledge of the Father. He said no one knows the Father, "except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27; 16:17). But Jesus furnished all the knowledge of God that any of us needs to know in our life. Now the revelation is complete in Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). His words are the highest authority and settle all questions concerning what to believe and how to live in order to be saved.

The Old Testament Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:9-22)

Moses was considered the greatest prophet in the Old Testament, but here we read that God will raise up another prophet like him, and he will speak the word of God (18:18). It is helpful to understand this in the context in which it is spoken (18:9-22).

Forbidden practices (18:9-14)

These warnings can only remind us again how relevant Scripture is for our day, and that we need to pay attention to the "prophetic word" (I Peter 1:19-21). When Israel enters Canaan, God's people are to be sure not to listen to or adopt any of the heathen ways. These practices are detestable to God (18:9,12) and are forbidden by God to members of the covenant family. These evil practices were man's way of discerning the will of their gods. God has another way to make His will known to His people; He will speak through His prophets. In doing so, the initiative also remains with God rather than man, and God is able to communicate His word and will clearly do so.

Note that many of these forbidden practices are still with us today—witchcraft, omens, sorcery, mediums, spiritists. Many such practices have become "acceptable" even to the Christian community. The occult is featured prominently in TV shows, children's cartoons, video games, etc., that are popular with children (and adults). These things are not only detestable to God (and what God hates His people must hate), but they are also dangerous and deadly. Attention to these things robs us of the prophetic word of God that draws people to Christ—the only way to God.

The people of the land who practice such things will be driven out before Israel (18:12). But anyone today (and then) who practices such things is in danger of being "driven out," that is, losing the promised land and the inheritance in Christ.

God would raise up a prophet (18:15-18)

The will of God would be made clear through a prophet and not by divination, omens, sorcery, or by mediums or spiritists. God would raise up a prophet from among the people; He would not be a foreigner. He would be like Moses in the sense that He was God's spokesman and the people were to listen (18:15). The place of the prophet in Israel would be understood in terms of the experience at Sinai (18:16,17). At Sinai the people pleaded with Moses to meet God on their behalf and bring the word of God to them from the mountain (Deuteronomy 5:22-31; Exodus 20:18-21).

God's method with His prophet was to "put My words in his mouth" (18:18). It is God who commissions the prophet, and for that reason the prophet can say, "Thus says the Lord."

The test of the prophet (18:19-22)

Israel was obligated to listen to and obey the word of the prophet because his was the word of God. The prophet's word was reliable and powerful. In speaking of the future, God's word would come to pass because it was God's word. A prophet's word must also conform to previous prophetic revelations to show that it has been tested and proven by Scripture. False prophets and psychics today have a very low success rate, if any success at all, in predicting the future.

These words of Moses are clearly intended to be a promise of Christ, and they are expressly applied to Christ (Acts 3:22,23; 7:37). The people were aware of this when they said of Him, "This is the prophet..." (John 6:14)

Christ, the Prophet (Luke 4:14-30)

When Jesus preaches in the synagogue at Nazareth, He places Himself in the role of prophet as He reads and proclaims the word of God and the way of salvation, and states that this prophecy is now fulfilled in Him (4:21).

Jesus goes into the synagogue as was His custom (4:16). There He was asked to read a scripture text and make some brief comments on it, a customary part of the service. He read from Isaiah 61:1-2. This passage refers explicitly to the Messiah, and the people knew that. You can imagine how shocked they were when Jesus boldly said that it was written about Him and that He had come to usher in the "favorable year of the Lord." In doing so He was showing them the way of salvation and presenting Himself as that way.

The "favorable year" is a reference to the "year of jubilee" described in Leviticus 25. Every seventh year was a "sabbatical year" for the nation, in which the land was allowed to rest. Every fiftieth year (after seven sevens) was set aside as the year of jubilee. The main purpose of this special year was to balance the economic system: slaves were freed and returned to their families, property that had been sold was returned to the original owner, and all debts were cancelled. The land lay fallow and man and beast rested and rejoiced in the Lord.

Of course, God was teaching a greater truth, that of spiritual rest and freedom. And Jesus applies this "favor" of God not in a political or economic sense, but in a physical and spiritual sense. Jesus brought the good news of salvation to poor sinners, healing to brokenhearted and rejected people, deliverance from spiritual blindness and bondage to sin and death. The salvation of God is to be a spiritual "year of jubilee" for all people.

God expected people to listen to the prophet because he spoke the word of God which leads to salvation. Many of the listeners here would not listen or believe. One reason was that they knew Jesus only as the son of

Mary and Joseph, the hometown boy. They wanted Him to perform miracles in Nazareth as He had done in Capernaum, but He refused (4:23). Jesus acknowledges His role as prophet here (4:24), but is not welcome among His own people (John 1:11).

The people admired the way Jesus taught, but their admiration soon turned to antagonism when Jesus began to remind them of God's goodness to the Gentiles (4:25-27). The prophet Elijah didn't help any widow in Israel but helped a Gentile widow. (I Kings 17:8-16). His successor Elisha healed a Gentile leper from Syria (II Kings 5:1-15). Jesus' message of grace was hard to take for the proud Jews, and they would not listen or repent. Their hometown boy was saying that Jews had to be saved by grace just like the pagan Gentiles.

The people were so angry they took action to kill Jesus. St. Augustine said, "They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate truth when it accuses them." That is true of many congregations and individuals today. They want "gracious words" (4:22) but don't want to face the truth (John 1:17) of sin and grace, the truth that works repentance.

Even now Jesus remains the true Prophet and Teacher of His Church (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 4:10-12), so that His word alone should be preached to all men (John 8:31,32).

"All modern prophecy that is true is but the republication of Christ's message, the proclamation and expounding of truth already revealed in Scripture."

BEGINNING YOUR CLASS HOUR

Welcome

Show acceptance and concern for each student by visiting informally with each one as they arrive. Enlist the help of early arrivers in preparing the room and materials. Make an attempt to get involvement of students who do not participate or who cause problems.

Open with Prayer

Ask students to pray and thank God for a Savior Who is a person like us, Who knows what we need and cares for us.

Pray for the students, that they may listen to Jesus as He speaks to them.

Recite Memory Work

Listen to students recite their memory work:

From the Bible: John 1:14

And

From the Catechism: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead and buried;

Review

Ask the class to recite John 1:14 together. *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Ask one or two students to recite it alone. Or have one student begin, and another continue at a signal from you. A third student could give the reference.

Have the class recite the Second Article through *...was crucified, dead and buried...*

Review last week's lesson using the following or other questions: Who is the Son of Man? (*Jesus*) How did Jesus show He was a human person like us? (*He was hungry, thirsty, got tired, knew what pain was, became happy, sad, lonely, was hurt, died*) What does Jesus know about us? (*When we are sad, lonely; He knows our sins*) What does He want most for us? (*He wants us to confess our sins, trust Him as our Savior*) In last week's lesson, who came to know Jesus as Savior? (*Samaritan woman*) What did the Samaritan woman do then? (*Told other people about the Savior*)

Ask these questions quickly, one after the other. Give students a few moments to think of the answer, but then go quickly to the next question, with no time lost and no opportunity to lose control of the class.

Introduce Wall Words

Prophet—
synagogue—
Sabbath—
fulfilled—
rage—
mob—

Introduce the Lesson

SHOW the scroll. Ask if anyone knows what it is. **SAY** It's a book. When Jesus lived on earth and even before that, God's Word was written down on scrolls. Prophets sometimes wrote God's message on scrolls and then read it to the people. What if you had heard Him read this from the scroll? **READ**

Luke 4:18-19 from the scroll. Then what if you had heard Him say, "This word is about Me. I am the prophet you must listen to?" **ASK** What would you do if that happened? Would you sit up and listen up with both ears? Would you be sure to remember what you heard so you would know it and do what it said? Or would you be like one of the Old Testament kings who heard God's message? The prophet came to the king's house and read God's message. The king didn't like it because it told him about his sins and so he cut up the scroll and burned it in his stove. Today's lesson will tell us how well people listened to Jesus the greatest Prophet.

Teach the Lesson

SAY Open your books to Lesson 3. Let's read the lesson title together. **ASK** Who is the greatest Prophet? (*Jesus*) Let's read the lesson to learn what that means.

Display a picture of the baby Moses being taken from the river by Pharaoh's daughter. (If you don't have this picture, you could ask the students if they remember a story about Moses being put into a basket in the river to save him from being killed by the King of Egypt.)

SAY This picture reminds us of Moses, a special child. **READ** the first paragraph to see why God saved Moses from the Egyptians. (*God had chosen Moses to save His people from the Egyptians and lead them to the promised land.*) The next paragraph tells us what Moses became when he grew up. (*The leader of God's people, a great prophet*). **ASK** Who can read a sentence that tells what a prophet is? (Call on a student to read, "God spoke to him and gave him a message for the people.") Why couldn't the people read God's message in the Bible? (*They didn't have the Bible.*) Can you find part of a sentence that tells what the message of salvation means? (*God's way of saving them*) If you have a picture of Moses speaking to the people, display it.

SAY Moses taught the people about what God wanted them to think and say and do. He gave them two tablets of stone that God wrote for them. Who knows what was written on the stone tablets? (*The Ten Commandments*) **SAY** The people respected Moses as a great prophet. Maybe some thought he was the greatest prophet. But Moses told them something that might have surprised them. Read and learn what it was. (*God would send another prophet greater than Moses*) God wanted the people to listen to the greater prophet, because He would teach them all of God's message of salvation. □

ASK Who was the greatest prophet of all? (*Jesus*) What Moses taught them is written down in the Old

Testament part of the Bible. Find it in Deuteronomy 18:15. Lead the students in reading the verse. Moses told the people to listen to the Greatest Prophet.

SAY Today's New Testament lesson tells about when Jesus, the Greatest Prophet, stood up with an Old Testament scroll in His hands and read what another prophet had written about Him. Let's find that in Luke 4:18-19. Follow along while I read it. (Or ask a good reader to read the passage.) **SAY** The next part of the lesson in our student book explains more about what that means. **TELL** or **READ** the story as told in paragraphs 3 and 4. Then **ASK** Where was Jesus in this lesson? (*In Nazareth, His hometown, in the synagogue*) What day was it? (*The Sabbath or seventh day when the people went to the synagogue, their house of worship*) The words written by the prophet Isaiah are what we read from Luke. What did Jesus mean when He said, "God sent Me to proclaim release to the captives." Who knows what that is? (*That He would set the people free from sin and bring God's grace to them*) That is really Good News. We call that the Gospel. Then Jesus sat down and said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." He meant, "Today you have heard these verses come true."

SAY Let's read on and find out if the people listened to the message of salvation. (After the students have read silently) Did the people listen to the message of salvation? (*No, they became angry*) You see, Jesus went on to tell them about their sins. Jesus would set them free, but they must repent of their sins and believe that Jesus was their Savior. They didn't want to do that. And so what did they do? They took Jesus and tried to throw Him off the cliff. The people had given up their chance to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as their Savior. Wasn't that sad? **ASK** Does Jesus, the Greatest Prophet, speak to us today? **ASK** When can we hear God's message of salvation? (*We can read it in the Bible anytime, hear and learn it in Sunday School and church worship services.*) **ASK** Do people become angry today just as the people in Nazareth did? (*Yes*) Why do they become angry? (*Because God's Word tells them they are sinners and they need to have Jesus save them*) When Jesus tells you about your sins, you should not be stubborn. **ASK** Have you heard Jesus talking to you today? When we study the lessons, does it seem as though the lesson is just for you? Are you like the angry and stubborn people? Do you say, "I don't want to listen to Jesus?" Maybe you love Jesus and trust in Him. Maybe you have loved Him all your life. God's Word teaches us that Jesus wants you to confess your sins every day and ask Him to help you turn away from sins. He wants you to tell Him

you need Him as your Savior now and every day. SAY Paragraph 5 asks you some very important questions. Read it again silently and carefully. Then answer those questions to yourselves. Allow enough

time for students to read, reflect, and respond. Teacher read the last sentence. *Invite the students to talk with you if they have any questions about asking Jesus to be their Savior.

APPLYING THE BIBLE LESSON

Memory Work

BIBLE VERSE—Hebrews 1:1-2a

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.

CATECHISM—READ

. . . He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; . . .

Introduce the word, “descended”. Descended means went down. After Jesus died, He went down to hell, the place where people who had lived and then died had gone. He went there to tell those people He had died for sins and had paid the price for everyone's sin. He had beaten Satan, and won the victory.

Activity Pages

Activity 1—Jesus Said

ANSWERS

1. Mark 5:19: "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you."

2. John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."
3. Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
4. Luke 15:10: "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
5. John 14:6

Activity 2—Important Words

ANSWERS

1. Prophet
2. Moses
3. Promise
4. Isaiah
5. Scripture
6. Jesus

CLOSING THE LESSON

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for being our Great Prophet. Thank you for teaching us that our Heavenly Father wants us to confess our sins and ask You, our Savior, to take them away. Thank you for your Name, Jesus, which means, Savior. Help us to confess and turn away from sin every day. Help those who do not yet believe in You to confess their sins and accept You as their Savior. Amen.

Assignment

1. Challenge your pupils to tell someone this week about the Greatest Prophet and about what He teaches us.
2. Remind your pupils to complete and review the lesson at home with their parents, and to finish memorizing Hebrews 1:1-2a and the Catechism portion.

3. Make sure pupils take the activity sheets home with them.