

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

CHRISTOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ

UNIT 6: THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST — PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

Lesson 17

Christ as Prophet

The Final and Supreme Revelation of God

The Word Made Flesh Who Speaks the Words of the Father

Key Texts: Deuteronomy 18:15–18; Hebrews 1:1–2; John 1:1, 14, 18; Matthew 5:21–22; John 6:68

“God... in These Last Days Has Spoken to Us in His Son”

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SERIES VERSE

*“For we do not preach ourselves
but Christ Jesus as Lord,
and ourselves as your bond-servants
on account of Jesus.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:5, NASB 1995

INTRODUCTION

Of the three offices that constitute the *munus triplex*, the prophetic office is perhaps the most frequently neglected in pastoral preaching and theological education. The priestly office, with its rich vocabulary of atonement, sacrifice, and intercession, occupies the center of most evangelical preaching about the work of Christ, and rightly so: the cross is the pivotal event of redemptive history, and the priestly work that Christ accomplished there is the foundation on which every other dimension of the gospel rests. The kingly office, with its vivid imagery of sovereignty, victory, and eschatological reign, receives increasing attention in contexts shaped by kingdom theology and Reformed eschatology. But the prophetic office, precisely because it is the least dramatic and the most quietly pervasive of the three, is often treated as background rather than foreground, as the context for the priestly and kingly work rather than as a distinct dimension of the saving work of Christ in its own right.

This neglect is a significant pastoral impoverishment. The prophetic office of Christ is not merely the communication channel through which the priestly and kingly benefits are announced; it is itself a dimension of the saving work of Christ that addresses a genuine dimension of the human problem. As Lesson 16 established, the threefold problem of human sinfulness includes the problem of ignorance, the darkening of the human mind by sin, the inability of the natural person to know God as He truly is, to understand the human condition correctly, or to find the path of salvation without divine illumination. The prophetic office is the divine answer to this problem: not merely the provision of information, but the authoritative, personal, incarnate self-disclosure of the God who has spoken His final and supreme word in His Son. The prophet is not merely a teacher; he is the one through whom God speaks. And Christ as Prophet is not merely the greatest teacher who ever lived; He is the Word of God made flesh, the one in whom the divine self-communication reaches its most personal, most complete, and most salvifically effective expression.

This lesson examines the prophetic office of Christ under five headings: the fulfillment of the Mosaic prophetic promise (Deuteronomy 18:15–18), the identification of Christ as the Logos who is the Word of God rather than merely a bearer of the word, the Hebrews 1:1–2 declaration that the Son is the climax and consummation of the prophetic tradition, the authority with which Christ speaks during His earthly ministry (the Sermon on the Mount and the pattern of “You have heard... but I say to you”), and the continuing prophetic ministry of Christ through the inscripturated Word, the illuminating Spirit, and the preaching of the church.

I. THE FULFILLMENT OF MOSES: THE PROPHET LIKE ME

Deuteronomy 18:15–18 and the Messianic Expectation of the Prophet Greater Than Moses

A. Moses' Promise and Its Historical Context

The foundational Old Testament text for the prophetic office of Christ is Deuteronomy 18:15–18, in which Moses, at the end of his life, announces to Israel the divine promise of the Prophet who is to come: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15, NASB 1995). The promise arises from a specific historical context: Israel’s terrified response to the divine presence at Sinai. The people had trembled before the consuming fire and the thundering voice of the Lord and had begged Moses to serve as their mediator: “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die” (Deuteronomy 18:16, NASB 1995). God responds to their request not with rebuke but with provision: He will raise up a prophet who will stand between God and the people, receiving the divine word and delivering it to those who cannot stand directly in the divine presence.

The function of the promised Prophet is therefore precisely mediatorial: He stands between the divine Speaker and the human hearers, translating the divine word into human form without distorting, diminishing, or adding to it. Moses himself was the paradigmatic prophet in Israel, the one who spoke with God “face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11, NASB 1995), and the promised Prophet is explicitly described as “a prophet like me.” The comparison establishes continuity: the promised Prophet will stand in the same mediatorial relationship between God and the people that Moses occupied, fulfilling the same essential function of delivering the divine word with divine authority. But it also anticipates surpassing: no prophet after Moses fully fulfilled the promise, and the tradition itself looked forward to the eschatological Prophet who would exceed even Moses in the intimacy of the divine relationship and the comprehensiveness of the divine revelation (Numbers 12:6–8; Deuteronomy 34:10–12).

B. The New Testament Application to Jesus

The New Testament’s application of Deuteronomy 18:15–18 to Jesus is explicit and consistent. Acts 3:22–26 records Peter’s Pentecost-area proclamation in the temple: “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.” (NASB 1995). Peter identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of the Mosaic prophetic promise: He is the Prophet who was to come, the one to whom Moses pointed, the one whose words demand not merely the respectful attention given to a wise teacher but the absolute obedience owed to the divine spokesman.

John 6:14 records the crowd’s response to the feeding of the five thousand: “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (NASB 1995), the definite article “the Prophet” (ὁ προφήτης, *ho prophētēs*) identifying this as the specific eschatological Prophet of Deuteronomy 18, not merely one prophet among many. The connection to Moses is deepened by the context: Jesus has just provided miraculous food in the wilderness, echoing the manna that Moses provided in the wilderness. As

Moses fed Israel in the wilderness through divine provision, Jesus feeds the multitude in the wilderness through the same divine authority. The crowds' recognition is instinctive and theologically correct, even if their understanding of what it entails for the kingdom of God is still incomplete (v. 15: they attempt to make Him king by force, misunderstanding the nature of the messianic kingdom).

The Samaritan woman at the well provides perhaps the most theologically articulate confession of Jesus as the eschatological Prophet in all of the Gospel narratives. When Jesus displays supernatural knowledge of her marital history, she immediately recognizes the category: "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (John 4:19, NASB 1995). And when the conversation turns to the deepest theological questions, where is the proper place of worship, and what is the coming religious reality?, she invokes the Mosaic promise: "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us" (John 4:25, NASB 1995). Her instinctive association of the Messiah with the declaration of all things, the comprehensive prophetic revelation, reflects the tradition's own understanding that the Messiah would be, among other things, the supreme Prophet. Jesus' response is the most direct messianic self-disclosure in the entire Gospel of John: "I who speak to you am He" (v. 26, NASB 1995).

II. CHRIST AS THE LOGOS: HE DOES NOT MERELY SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD, HE IS THE WORD OF GOD

The Johannine Prologue and the Ontological Depth of the Prophetic Office

A. The Prologue as Prophetic Christology

The Gospel of John opens with a prologue (1:1–18) that provides the deepest christological foundation for the prophetic office: not merely that Jesus speaks with greater authority or greater clarity than any previous prophet, but that He is, in His own Person, the divine Word (ὁ λόγος, *ho logos*), the eternal, personal self-expression of God who has existed with the Father from before the creation of the world. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1, NASB 1995). The Logos is not a message that God sends; it is a Person who is God, the second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son through whom the Father has always expressed Himself and through whom the Father has now expressed Himself most fully and most personally in the incarnation.

John 1:14 brings the eternal Logos into contact with the temporal and the creaturely: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (NASB 1995). The incarnation of the Logos is the supreme prophetic act in the history of the universe: not the delivery of a message from outside the human situation, but

the personal entrance of the Messenger Himself into the human situation, the Word taking on the very flesh to which He speaks, so that the divine communication achieves its most intimate, most direct, and most transformatively powerful form. All previous prophecy was the word of God mediated through human instruments; the incarnation is the Word of God speaking in His own Person, through a genuine human nature that He has assumed, to the people He has come to redeem.

B. John 1:18: The Son Who Exegetes the Father

John 1:18 provides the most theologically precise statement of the prophetic function of the incarnate Son in the entire New Testament: “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (NASB 1995). The word translated “explained” (ἐξηγήσατο, *exēgēsato*) is the aorist of ἐξηγέομαι (*exēgeomai*), from which the English word “exegesis” is derived. It means “to explain,” “to unfold,” “to make known in detail,” “to lead out from.” The Son who is eternally “in the bosom of the Father”, in the most intimate, most immediate, most complete knowledge of the Father that is possible, has come to “exegete” the Father: to unfold, to make known, to explain the divine nature, will, and character to those who could not otherwise know Him.

This exegetical function of the Son is the deepest possible statement of the prophetic office: the prophet is the one who explains God to those who do not know Him. But the Son’s exegesis of the Father is not the interpretation of a text or the communication of information received from outside; it is the self-explanation of the one who is himself the Word, the one who knows the Father from the inside, from the bosom of the most intimate Trinitarian fellowship, and who now communicates that knowledge to creatures in the most personally appropriate and most fully effective way: by becoming one of them. The incarnation is the supreme exegesis, the definitive unfolding of the Father in the humanity of the Son.

“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 1:1–2, NASB 1995

III. HEBREWS 1:1–2: THE CLIMAX AND CONSUMMATION OF PROPHETIC REVELATION

The Son Is Not One Prophet Among Many but the Fulfillment of the Entire Prophetic Tradition

A. The Structure and Logic of Hebrews 1:1–2

The opening two verses of Hebrews provide what is arguably the most theologically precise statement of Christ’s prophetic office in all of Scripture: “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” (Hebrews 1:1–2, NASB 1995). The author constructs a careful contrast between two modes of divine speech: the former mode (“long ago”, “in the prophets”, “in many portions and in many ways”) and the present, final mode (“in these last days”, “in His Son”). Both modes are genuine divine speech, the God who speaks in both cases is the same God, and the speech in both cases is authoritative divine revelation. But the two modes are not equal in their completeness, their finality, or their personal directness.

The former mode, the prophetic revelation of the Old Testament, is characterized by two qualities that reveal its preparatory and incomplete character: “many portions” (πολυμερῶς, *polymeros*) and “many ways” (πολυτρόπως, *polytropōs*). The Old Testament revelation was given in portions, each prophet received a partial disclosure, a fragment of the larger whole; and each portion was given by a different means, visions, dreams, direct address, symbolic action, predictive oracle, wisdom utterance. The diversity and the partiality of the Old Testament revelation are not defects; they are pedagogical features of a preparatory revelation that was always pointing beyond itself toward the one in whom the whole would be gathered up and the final word would be spoken. The Old Testament is the symphony’s extended prelude; Christ is the symphony itself.

B. “In His Son”: The Qualitative Difference

The present, final mode of divine speech is introduced by the prepositional phrase “in His Son” (ἐν υἱῷ, *en huiō*). The Greek lacks the definite article, which is not an oversight but a grammatical choice that emphasizes the qualitative character of the mode of speech: “God has spoken in a Son.” The absence of the article draws attention to the dignity of the category rather than to a specific individual: the contrast is not merely between Jesus and the prophets as individuals but between the entire category of “prophet” and the qualitatively superior category of “Son.” A prophet receives a word from God and delivers it; the Son is himself the Word of God, and in Him God speaks not through a mediating human instrument but in the most personal, most direct, and most complete way available to the divine communication.

The qualitative superiority of the Son’s speech over the prophetic speech is then confirmed by the cascade of attributes that follows in verses 2–3: He is the “heir of all things” (kingly), the one “through whom He made the world” (pre-existent Creator), “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (ontologically identical with the Father in divine glory and nature), the one who “upholds all things by the word of His power” (cosmic Sustainer), and the one who “made purification of sins” (priestly). The prophetic announcement of Hebrews 1:1–2 is immediately surrounded by the evidence of the Son’s divine and royal dignity, because the authority of the Prophet is the authority of the one who is himself God, the Creator, the Heir, and the Priest. The reason His prophetic word is final is that the Speaker of the word is final: there is no higher divine Person who could speak a further word, because the Son who speaks is himself fully and unqualifiedly God.

IV. THE AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHET: “BUT I SAY TO YOU”

The Sermon on the Mount and the Absolute, Underived Authority of the Incarnate Word

A. The Contrast Formula and Its Christological Significance

The most dramatic expression of Christ’s prophetic authority in the earthly ministry is the antithetical formula of the Sermon on the Mount: “You have heard that it was said... but I say to you” (ἀκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη... ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, Matthew 5:21–22; 27–28; 31–32; 33–34; 38–39; 43–44, NASB 1995). The formula appears six times in Matthew 5 and constitutes the most concentrated display of prophetic authority in the entire Gospel narrative. What makes it christologically explosive is the specific nature of the contrast: Christ is not contrasting His own teaching with the teaching of a misguided interpreter of Scripture; He is contrasting His own word with the word of God delivered through Moses at Sinai. “You have heard that it was said” (ἀκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, the passive voice indicating divine speech) refers to the Old Testament law; “But I say to you” (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ego de legō hymin) asserts His own authority as the one who speaks the definitive word on the matter.

The contrast is not a contradiction of the Mosaic law; Jesus explicitly denies that interpretation: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17, NASB 1995). The antitheses do not set aside the Mosaic commandments but penetrate to their deepest intention, exposing the inner spiritual demand that the external command was always expressing. The sixth commandment prohibits murder; Jesus reveals that it prohibits the hatred and contempt that are the roots of murder. The seventh commandment prohibits adultery; Jesus reveals that it prohibits the lustful desire that is the root of adultery. The prophetic work of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is the definitive interpretation of the law by the one who gave it, not a rabbi deriving conclusions from the divine text, but the divine Author of the text revealing its final, authoritative, interior meaning.

B. The Amazement of the Crowd and the Nature of Christ’s Authority

Matthew 7:28–29 records the crowd’s response to the Sermon on the Mount with a precision that is itself a christological commentary: “When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (NASB 1995). The contrast with the scribes is the key to understanding the christological significance of the authority the crowd recognizes. The scribes taught with derived authority: they cited earlier authorities, appealed to the tradition, quoted the rabbis who had preceded them. Their authority was borrowed, mediated, and dependent on a chain of transmission that always led back to the Mosaic text and, behind the text, to the divine source. Christ taught with underived authority: “But I say to

you.” He does not cite authorities; He is the authority. He does not appeal to the tradition; He stands above the tradition as the one in whose person the tradition finds its goal and its final interpretation.

The crowd’s amazement (ἐξεπλήσσοντο, *exeplēssonto*, they were struck out of themselves, as if by a blow) is the appropriate human response to an encounter with the prophetic authority of the incarnate Son. It is not merely intellectual admiration for a gifted teacher or moral respect for a wise sage; it is the recognition of a qualitatively different order of authority, the authority of one who does not merely interpret the divine word but speaks with the voice of the divine Word Himself. John 7:46 reports that the temple police sent to arrest Jesus returned empty-handed with the explanation: “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks” (NASB 1995). The uniqueness of Christ’s speech is the uniqueness of His Person: no other human being has ever spoken with this authority because no other human being is the incarnate Word of God.

V. THE CONTINUING PROPHETIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST

Through the Inscripturated Word, the Illuminating Spirit, and the Preaching of the Church

A. The Prophetic Ministry Does Not End with the Ascension

A critical dimension of the prophetic office that is frequently neglected in presentations of the *munus triplex* is its continuity beyond the earthly ministry and the ascension. The prophetic office of Christ is not confined to the three years of the Galilean and Judean ministry; it continues, in a transformed mode, through the exalted ministry of the risen and ascended Lord through His Word, His Spirit, and His appointed messengers. Luke 24:27 provides the key: the risen Christ walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus “beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (NASB 1995). The risen Christ continues the prophetic work of explaining, the same exegetical function that John 1:18 ascribes to Him (ἐξηγήσατο), now in the context of the post-resurrection hermeneutic that reads the entire Old Testament as testimony to Himself.

The authorization of the apostles in the Upper Room and at Pentecost extends the prophetic ministry in its most immediate post-ascension form. John 16:12–15 records Jesus’ promise of the Spirit of truth who “will guide you into all the truth” and who “will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you” (NASB 1995). The Spirit who is given at Pentecost is the Spirit of Christ, the prophetic Spirit who continues the revealing work of Christ through the apostolic proclamation. The inscripturated product of this apostolic prophetic ministry is the New Testament canon, the authoritative, permanent, sufficient record of the apostolic testimony to Christ, through which the prophetic ministry of Christ reaches every generation of the church.

B. The Inscripturated Word as the Permanent Medium of the Prophetic Ministry

The primary medium of Christ's continuing prophetic ministry in the present age is the written Word of God, the canonical Scriptures, Old and New Testament together, which are the permanent, authoritative, sufficient record of the divine self-disclosure that reaches its climax in the Son. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 establishes the character of this written Word: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (NASB 1995). The "inspiration" (θεόπνευστος, *theopneustos*, literally "God-breathed") of the Scriptures is the extension of the prophetic activity of the Spirit through the human authors of Scripture: the same Spirit who hovered over the waters in Genesis 1:2, who anointed the prophets of Israel, who descended on Christ at His baptism, and who was poured out at Pentecost, breathes the divine word through the human authors of the canonical texts.

The cessationist conviction that the extraordinary prophetic gifts ceased with the close of the apostolic age does not diminish the continuing prophetic ministry of Christ through the canonical Scripture; it clarifies and protects it. The canon is closed not because God has stopped speaking but because God has spoken His final and sufficient word in His Son, and the canonical Scriptures are the authoritative, permanent, sufficient record of that final word. Every subsequent claim to prophetic revelation must be tested against this canonical standard (1 John 4:1–3; Galatians 1:8–9); the canon is the norm of norms, the authoritative measure against which every purported divine word is evaluated. The pastor who preaches the canonical Scripture is exercising a derived participation in the prophetic ministry of Christ, not as an independent prophet receiving new revelations, but as a steward and herald of the definitive prophetic word that Christ has spoken once and for all.

C. The Holy Spirit as the Continuing Prophetic Agent

The prophetic ministry of Christ in the present age is not exercised directly by the risen and ascended Christ in an unmediated way; it is mediated through the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11) and who applies the canonical word of Christ to the minds and hearts of those who receive it. John 14:26 records Jesus' promise: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (NASB 1995). The Spirit's teaching ministry is the continuation and application of Christ's prophetic ministry: not the addition of new revelatory content beyond the canonical deposit, but the illumination, application, and interiorization of the canonical word in the minds and hearts of those who read and hear it.

1 Corinthians 2:10–12 describes this illuminating work of the Spirit in terms of the Spirit's unique capacity for divine self-knowledge: "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God... even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God" (NASB 1995). The Spirit who knows the

depths of God, who has, so to speak, epistemic access to the divine interior that no creature can independently achieve, is the same Spirit who illuminates the canonical word so that those who receive it understand not merely the propositional content of the text but the divine personal reality to which the text testifies. The prophetic ministry of Christ in the present age is thus Trinitarian in its structure: the Father sends the Son who speaks the definitive prophetic word, and the Spirit applies and illuminates that word in the minds and hearts of the people of God.

VI. DOXOLOGICAL CONCLUSION: THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE

When the crowd began to leave Jesus following the hard saying about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:53–58), Jesus turned to the Twelve with the question: “You do not want to go away also, do you?” (John 6:67, NASB 1995). Peter’s answer is the most eloquent possible expression of the prophetic office’s pastoral significance: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68–69, NASB 1995). “You have words of eternal life”, this is the pastoral reality of the prophetic office stated in its simplest and most powerful form. The words of Christ are not merely wise counsel, not merely inspiring teaching, not merely the moral vision of an extraordinary religious genius. They are the words of eternal life: the divine word through which the Spirit gives birth to new life (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), through which faith comes (Romans 10:17), through which the soul is nourished and sustained in the life it has received (Matthew 4:4).

The prophetic office of Christ, properly understood, gives the pastor and the congregation the most exalted possible understanding of what happens in the reading and preaching of the Word of God. When the Scripture is opened, read, and faithfully expounded, it is not a human voice that ultimately speaks; it is the voice of the Prophet whose words are words of eternal life. The congregation that gathers under the preaching of the Word is gathering under the continuing prophetic ministry of the exalted Christ, who speaks through the canonical text by the illuminating Spirit to the minds and hearts of those who receive it. The preacher who opens the Scripture is not primarily a communicator delivering content; he is a herald of the living and active Word of God, through whom the Prophet of all prophets continues to speak, to illumine, to convict, to comfort, and to transform.

Peter’s question, “Lord, to whom shall we go?”, is the proper pastoral response to the encounter with Christ as Prophet. In a world of competing voices, competing authorities, competing visions of truth and reality, competing accounts of the human condition and its remedy, the prophetic office of Christ declares that there is one voice that is not merely louder or wiser or more persuasive than the others but qualitatively different in kind: the voice of the incarnate Word, the voice of the one who is in the bosom of the Father and who has come to exegete the Father to those who cannot see Him. To that

voice, and to that voice alone, there is ultimately no alternative. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.” To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Key Texts: *Deuteronomy 18:15–18; Acts 3:22–26; John 1:1, 14, 18; Hebrews 1:1–2; Matthew 5:17–22; 7:28–29; John 6:68–69; John 14:26; 16:12–15; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12*

THEOLOGICAL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Prophetic Office	The first dimension of the munus triplex: Christ’s office as the divinely appointed spokesman who receives and delivers the word of God to those who cannot stand directly in the divine presence. In the Old Testament, the prophetic office was held by those through whom the divine word came in portions and in many ways (Hebrews 1:1). Christ fulfills this office in its most supreme and final form as the incarnate Logos (John 1:1, 14), not merely a bearer of the divine word but the divine Word Himself made flesh. His prophetic ministry addresses the dimension of the human problem identified as ignorance: the darkening of the human mind by sin and its inability to know God without divine illumination and revelation.
Logos	Greek: ‘word,’ ‘reason,’ ‘meaning.’ Used by John in the prologue of his Gospel (John 1:1–14) as the title for the pre-incarnate Son of God, the eternal, personal self-expression of God who was with God and who was God from before the foundation of the world. The Logos is not a divine message or a divine attribute; it is the divine Person, the second Person of the Trinity, through whom the Father has always expressed Himself and through whom He has now expressed Himself most completely in the incarnation. As the Logos made flesh, Christ does not merely speak the word of God but is the Word of God, the prophetic office in its deepest ontological form.
Exegēsato	Greek: aorist of exēgeomai (‘to explain,’ ‘to unfold,’ ‘to lead out from,’ from which the English ‘exegesis’ is derived). Used in John 1:18 for the Son’s prophetic function: ‘the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has exegeted Him.’ The Son’s exegesis of the Father is not the interpretation of a text but the personal self-disclosure of the one who knows the Father from the inside, from the bosom of the most intimate Trinitarian fellowship, and who communicates that knowledge to creatures by becoming one of them. The incarnation is, in this sense, the supreme exegetical act, the definitive unfolding of the Father in the humanity of the Son.

Term	Definition
Polymeros / Polytropos	Greek: 'in many portions' and 'in many ways.' Used in Hebrews 1:1 to characterize the Old Testament prophetic revelation as partial and diverse in its mode: each prophet received a fragment of the larger whole, and each fragment was given by a different means (visions, dreams, direct address, symbolic action, predictive oracle). These two qualifiers identify the Old Testament revelation as preparatory and incomplete, not defective, but pedagogically designed to point beyond itself to the one final, comprehensive, personal word that God would speak in His Son. The contrast between <i>polymeros polytropos</i> (the old mode) and <i>en huiō</i> (the new mode, in a Son) establishes the qualitative superiority of the christological revelation.
Ego De Legō Hymin	Greek: 'but I say to you.' The antithetical formula that Jesus uses six times in Matthew 5 (the Sermon on the Mount) to set His own authoritative word against the Mosaic law: 'You have heard that it was said... but I say to you.' The formula is the most dramatic expression of Christ's prophetic authority in the earthly ministry: it asserts the underived, absolute authority of the divine Prophet against the derived authority of the scribes and teachers of the law. Christ does not cite earlier authorities; He is the authority. He does not interpret the Mosaic law from outside; He reveals its deepest interior meaning as the one who gave it. The formula is Trinitarian in its implication: only God can speak to the law of God with this kind of absolute authority.
Theopneustos	Greek: 'God-breathed.' Used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to describe the character of the canonical Scriptures: 'All Scripture is God-breathed.' The metaphor of divine breathing (from <i>theos</i> , God, and <i>pneō</i> , to breathe) describes the prophetic inspiration of the Scripture as the creative, life-giving action of the Spirit through the human authors of the canonical texts, the same Spirit who breathed life into Adam (Genesis 2:7) and who anointed the prophets of Israel. The <i>theopneustos</i> character of the Scripture establishes it as the primary medium of Christ's continuing prophetic ministry in the present age: when the Scripture is read and preached, it is the voice of the Prophet who breathed it through His Spirit that is ultimately heard.
Cessationism	The theological conviction that the extraordinary revelatory gifts of the apostolic age, including the gift of prophecy as new revelation, ceased with the close of the apostolic age and the completion of the canonical Scripture. In the context of the prophetic office of Christ, cessationism does not diminish the continuing prophetic ministry but clarifies and protects it: the canon is closed because God has spoken His final and sufficient word in His Son, and the canonical Scriptures are the authoritative, permanent record of that final word. Every subsequent claim to prophetic revelation must be tested against the canonical standard (1 John 4:1–3; Galatians 1:8–9).
Prophetic Illumination	The work of the Holy Spirit in applying, interiorizing, and making effective the canonical word of Christ in the minds and hearts of those who receive it.

Term	Definition
	<p>Distinguished from prophetic inspiration (the Spirit’s action in producing the canonical text through the human authors) as the present-tense, reader-directed dimension of the Spirit’s prophetic work. John 14:26 (‘He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you’) and 1 Corinthians 2:10–12 (‘God revealed them through the Spirit’) describe this illuminating ministry. The prophetic office of Christ in the present age is thus Trinitarian: the Son speaks the canonical word, and the Spirit illuminates it in the minds and hearts of the people of God.</p>
<p>The Prophet Greater Than Moses</p>	<p>The eschatological figure promised in Deuteronomy 18:15–18, identified by the New Testament as Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22–26; 7:37; John 6:14). Moses was the paradigmatic Old Testament prophet, the one who spoke with God ‘face to face’ (Exodus 33:11) and through whom the covenant law was given. The promised Prophet would be ‘like Moses’ in function (mediating the divine word to those who cannot stand directly before the divine presence) but surpassing Moses in the intimacy of the divine relationship and the comprehensiveness of the revelation. Deuteronomy 34:10–12 acknowledges that no subsequent Old Testament prophet fully fulfilled the promise, establishing the expectation of the eschatological Prophet who would exceed Moses.</p>
<p>Words of Eternal Life</p>	<p>Peter’s identification of Christ’s words in John 6:68–69: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.’ The phrase captures the pastoral significance of the prophetic office in its most concentrated form: the words of Christ are not merely wise counsel or inspiring teaching but the divine word through which the Spirit gives birth to new life (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), through which faith comes (Romans 10:17), and through which the soul is nourished and sustained in the eternal life it has received. The continuing availability of these life-giving words through the canonical Scripture and the illuminating Spirit is the present-tense expression of Christ’s perpetual prophetic ministry to His church.</p>

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. For the Mind: What Must We Believe?

We must believe that the prophetic office of Christ is not a secondary or peripheral dimension of His saving work but an essential one, the divine answer to the essential human problem of ignorance. The person who does not know God as He truly is, who does not understand their own condition as a sinner before the holy God, and who does not know the way of salvation is spiritually blind in a way that no amount of human wisdom, philosophical sophistication, or religious earnestness can

cure. The prophetic ministry of Christ is the only cure for this blindness: the authoritative, personal, final self-disclosure of the God who has spoken His definitive word in His Son. And the canonical Scripture, as the permanent medium of this prophetic ministry, is not merely a useful resource among others but the indispensable, authoritative, sufficient vehicle through which the living voice of the Prophet continues to address every generation of His people.

We must also believe that the cessationist conviction, that the extraordinary revelatory gifts of the apostolic age have ceased and that the canon of Scripture is the closed, complete, sufficient medium of Christ's prophetic ministry, is not a restriction on the Spirit's work but the proper theological understanding of its character in the present age. The Spirit still illumines, still applies, still makes effective the canonical word in the minds and hearts of those who receive it; but He does so through the word already given rather than through new revelatory additions to it. The canon's closure is not the Spirit's retirement; it is the completion of the prophetic deposit through which the Spirit now works with inexhaustible richness.

B. For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?

Let Peter's question become the governing question of your devotional and pastoral life: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" In a world that offers an endless abundance of voices, opinions, authorities, and competing accounts of reality, the Christian confession is that there is one Voice before which every other voice must ultimately bow: the voice of the one who is in the bosom of the Father and who has come to exegete the Father to those who cannot see Him. That voice speaks in the canonical Scripture. It speaks with the authority that amazed the crowd in Matthew 7:28–29 and left the temple police speechless in John 7:46. And it speaks the words of eternal life to every soul that receives them with faith.

Desire a deep, personal, daily encounter with the prophetic word of Christ through the canonical Scripture, not a perfunctory reading of the daily text, not a programmatic working through of a Bible reading plan, but the kind of attentive, receptive, prayerful engagement with the written word that expects to hear the living voice of the Prophet speaking through it. The Spirit who illumines is not withholding illumination; He is looking for the attentive heart that comes to the canonical word expecting to meet the one who breathed it.

C. For the Hands: What Must We Do?

- Preach the prophetic office of Christ explicitly in your preaching ministry. Before every sermon, remind yourself, and occasionally remind the congregation, that the preaching of the canonical Scripture is a participation in the continuing prophetic ministry of Christ: not the delivery of human wisdom or pastoral opinion, but the heralding of the living word of the living Prophet. The congregation that understands the preaching of Scripture in these terms will listen differently, receive the word differently, and respond to it differently than the congregation that treats sermons as useful religious instruction.

- Use Hebrews 1:1–2 as the theological lens through which you read the entire Old Testament in your preaching. The passage establishes that the Old Testament prophetic revelation is the preparatory, partial, diverse anticipation of the final word spoken in the Son. Every Old Testament text, every law, every psalm, every prophecy, every narrative, is a fragment of the *polymeros polytropos* revelation that finds its fulfillment in Christ. Preaching the Old Testament christologically is not an imposition on the text; it is the interpretive key that Jesus Himself provided in Luke 24:27 and that the New Testament writers apply consistently.
- Teach the congregation that Bible reading and prayer are not two separate devotional activities but two dimensions of the same prophetic encounter: reading is receiving the word of the Prophet; prayer is responding to it. The Spirit who illumines the word in reading is the same Spirit who intercedes through prayer (Romans 8:26–27). The devotional life that integrates attentive Scripture reading with responsive prayer is a devotional life shaped by the prophetic office of Christ.
- Engage the cessationism debate with pastoral precision and charitable firmness. The question of whether the prophetic gifts continue in the present age is not a peripheral one; it directly affects how the congregation understands the authority and sufficiency of the canonical Scripture, how they evaluate claims to prophetic revelation in their personal and corporate experience, and how they relate to the broader charismatic and Pentecostal movements. Know the biblical case for cessationism (the completed canon argument, the foundational role of the apostolic office in Ephesians 2:20, the testing criteria of Deuteronomy 18:20–22 and 1 John 4:1–3), present it clearly and charitably, and help the congregation understand that the sufficiency of the canonical Scripture is not a limitation on the Spirit’s work but the fullest possible expression of Christ’s prophetic provision for His church.
- Preach a sermon on John 6:60–69 as a pastoral meditation on the prophetic office and its implications for congregational faithfulness. The narrative of the disciples who found the hard saying too difficult and left, followed by Peter’s confession “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life,” is the most searching possible account of the decision that every believer faces in the encounter with the prophetic word: will you receive it, even when it is difficult, even when it challenges your prior commitments, even when its cost is apparent? The sermon would press the congregation: when you encounter a teaching of Scripture that you find hard, uncomfortable, or inconvenient, is your response to find a more palatable voice, or to say with Peter, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go?’

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTION

1. The lesson opens with the claim that the prophetic office of Christ is the most frequently neglected of the three offices in pastoral preaching and theological education. Do you agree with this assessment? What evidence from your own preaching, your congregation's understanding, or the broader evangelical culture supports or challenges it? What do you think accounts for the relative neglect of the prophetic office, and what would change in your preaching and teaching if you treated it with the same intentionality you give to the priestly office?

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DO THE TEXTS SAY?)

2. Read Deuteronomy 18:15–22. What is the specific historical context in which Moses makes the promise of the coming Prophet? What is the function of the promised Prophet, what will he do for the people? What is the divine standard for testing whether a prophetic word is genuine (vv. 20–22)? How do Acts 3:22–26 and John 6:14 identify Jesus as the fulfillment of this promise? What does the New Testament application of Deuteronomy 18:15 to Jesus establish about the relationship between Jesus and the entire Old Testament prophetic tradition?

3. Read John 1:1–18. Identify the specific claims the prologue makes about the Logos in verses 1–2 (eternal existence, personal distinction from the Father, full deity). What does verse 14 ('the Word became flesh') establish about the relationship between the eternal Logos and the incarnate Jesus? What is the specific prophetic claim of verse 18, what has the Son done, and what is the Greek word used for this function? How does verse 18 illuminate the prophetic dimension of the incarnation?

4. Read Hebrews 1:1–4. What two Greek words describe the character of the Old Testament prophetic revelation in verse 1, and what does each word indicate about that revelation's limitations? How does the contrast between 'in the prophets' and 'in His Son' establish the qualitative superiority of the christological revelation? What specific attributes of the Son are listed in verses 2–3, and how do they support the claim that God has spoken His final and definitive word in Him?

5. Read Matthew 5:17–20 and 5:21–22. How does Jesus describe His relationship to 'the Law and the Prophets' in verse 17? What does He mean by 'fulfill' in this context, abolish or accomplish? In verses 21–22, identify the contrast formula ('You have heard that it was said... but I say to you'). What is the specific content of the contrast: what was 'said,' and what does Jesus say? What does the contrast between the Mosaic commandment and the interior intention Jesus reveals tell you about the nature of His prophetic authority?

INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

6. The lesson argues that Christ's prophetic office is distinct in kind from the prophetic office of all previous prophets because He is not merely a bearer of the divine word but is Himself the divine Word (the Logos of John 1). In what sense does this ontological distinction matter for the authority and finality of Christ's prophetic revelation? If Christ were merely the greatest prophet, one who received divine revelation with greater clarity and greater faithfulness than any predecessor, how would His prophecy be different from what the Hebrews 1:1–2 framework describes? What specifically is lost if the ontological identification of Christ with the Logos is set aside?
7. The lesson presents the contrast formula of Matthew 5 ('but I say to you') as an assertion of underived, absolute prophetic authority, the authority of the one who gave the law, not the one who interprets it. How does Matthew 7:28–29 ('He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes') confirm this interpretation? How would you respond to the objection that the Sermon on the Mount antitheses show Jesus correcting a misinterpretation of the Mosaic law rather than asserting an authority equal to or greater than that of Moses?
8. The lesson argues that the cessationist conviction, that the extraordinary revelatory gifts ceased with the close of the apostolic age, does not diminish the continuing prophetic ministry of Christ but clarifies and protects it. How does the sufficiency and finality of the canonical Scripture as the closed prophetic deposit relate to the authority of Christ as the supreme and final Prophet? If the canon were not closed, if ongoing prophetic revelation were still being added to the deposit, what would this imply about the finality and sufficiency of the revelation given in the Son?
9. The lesson describes the prophetic ministry of Christ in the present age as Trinitarian in structure: the Father sends the Son who speaks the definitive prophetic word, and the Spirit applies and illuminates that word. How does this Trinitarian structure of the prophetic ministry guard against two opposite errors: the error of treating the Scripture as a merely human document that requires no spiritual illumination, and the error of treating the Spirit's illuminating work as providing new revelatory content beyond the canonical deposit?
10. Peter's confession in John 6:68–69 ('Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life') is offered in the context of disciples who found the hard saying of John 6:53–58 intolerable and left. What does the narrative of departure and confession reveal about the pastoral dynamics of the prophetic office, specifically, about the role of difficulty and costliness in the encounter with Christ's prophetic word? What does Peter's confession suggest about the proper response when the canonical Scripture presents teachings that are hard to receive?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DOES IT DEMAND OF US?)

11. The lesson recommends preaching the prophetic office of Christ explicitly, reminding the congregation that the preaching of the canonical Scripture is a participation in the continuing prophetic ministry of Christ. How would your sermons change in tone, in framing, and in the weight

they carry if you consistently communicated this understanding of what preaching is? Draft a brief (two to three sentence) way of framing the beginning of a sermon that communicates the prophetic character of the preaching event without being preachy or formulaic about it.

12. The lesson recommends engaging the cessationism debate with pastoral precision and charitable firmness. Where does your congregation currently sit on this question, and what is the most pastoral and most theologically grounded way to address it in your context? If your congregation includes members from charismatic or Pentecostal backgrounds who hold to ongoing prophetic gifts, how would you engage their convictions charitably while maintaining the cessationist position? What specific biblical arguments would you emphasize, and which would you de-emphasize, in that specific pastoral context?

13. The lesson recommends teaching the congregation that Bible reading and prayer are two dimensions of the same prophetic encounter: reading is receiving the word of the Prophet; prayer is responding to it. How does this framing change the way you would teach personal devotional practice, specifically, the relationship between Scripture reading and prayer in the daily devotional life? What practical guidance would you give to a new believer who asks how to integrate Bible reading and prayer in a way that is relationally alive rather than mechanically routine?

14. This lesson completes the first of the three detailed treatments of the individual offices in Unit 6. Looking ahead to Lesson 18 (Christ as Priest) and Lesson 19 (Christ as King), how does the prophetic office established in this lesson prepare the ground for the other two? Specifically: how does the prophetic revelation of Christ illuminate the meaning of His priestly sacrifice (the word explains the sacrifice)? And how does the prophetic authority of Christ relate to the kingly authority He exercises (the same absolute, underived authority operates in both the prophetic speech and the royal reign)?

PRAYER FOCUS

Open this lesson's prayer time with a reading of John 6:60–69, the narrative of the disciples who departed and Peter's confession that remains. Read it slowly, letting the weight of the departure press upon the group: these were disciples who had walked with Jesus, heard His teaching, witnessed His miracles, and they found the hard saying intolerable and turned back. Then let the weight of Peter's confession press equally: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." Let the group sit with the contrast between the two responses and ask themselves honestly: when has the word of Christ been difficult for you to receive? When have you been tempted to seek a more palatable voice? And what has brought you back to the recognition that there is nowhere else to go?

Spend time in adoration of Christ as Prophet, the incarnate Logos, the one who exegeses the Father, the one in whom the long, diverse, partial prophetic tradition of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment and its completion. Adore Him specifically for the character of His prophetic word: its

authority (He speaks as one having authority, not as the scribes), its finality (God has spoken His last and best word in His Son), its life-giving power (the words He speaks are spirit and life, John 6:63), and its inexhaustibility (the canonical Scripture through which He continues to speak is a word that cannot be exhausted by any amount of reading, study, preaching, or meditation). “Lord, to whom shall we go?” There is no other answer.

Pray specifically for the congregation’s engagement with the prophetic word. Pray for those who are finding specific teachings of Scripture hard to receive, who are tempted to set aside the hard word in favor of a more accommodating voice. Pray for those who read the Scripture but hear nothing, for whom the canonical text remains a closed book rather than a living voice. Pray for the illuminating work of the Spirit, who alone can open the eyes of the heart to see what the Prophet is saying through the written word. And pray for the preaching ministry of the church, that the pulpit would be a place where the continuing prophetic word of Christ is faithfully heralded, clearly proclaimed, and received with the attentiveness and the submission that the voice of the Prophet deserves.

Close with Peter’s confession spoken together as a corporate act of submission to Christ the Prophet, the commitment of those who have heard the words of eternal life and who have nowhere else to go:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

JOHN 6:68–69, NASB 1995

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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