

## **Prophet, Priest, and King**

*Who is He in yonder stall, at whose feet the  
shepherds fall?*

Yes, who was that little baby born under  
such unusual circumstances?

Well, the shepherds knew.

They believed the angel's announcement, and  
they had come to worship "**Christ the  
Lord.**"

But what were Mary's thoughts as she looked  
down on that little bundle of life  
nestled in her bosom?

Well, like any young mother, her thoughts  
must have been filled with wonder.

But her meditations went much deeper than  
that.

Yes, she had also believed an angel.

In this case, it was the Angel Gabriel, and  
he had told her, your son will "**be great,**

**and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."**

And, you know, that message would have a particular significance for Mary.

You see, both she and her husband were descendents of David's line.

And yet, none of her relatives were kings, and Joseph was just a carpenter.

But now she knew, as she felt that little fist gripping her finger so tightly, that someday, it would hold a scepter of righteousness.

And although she probably didn't realize it, her Son was God's Prophet, and God's Priest.

And each one of these ministries is essential.

To put it in a nutshell, a prophet is God's representative with man, while a priest is man's representative with God.

And even though Christ would not appear until many years later, the moment God's people left Egypt; God provided a foreshadowing of both these ministries.

Yes, not only was Moses their deliver, but he would soon become their prophet.

And during those years in the wilderness, not only would God accompany them in a pillar of cloud and of fire, but He would establish the Levitical priesthood.

However, as you might expect, none of these foreshadowings were a substitute for the real thing.

Certainly the prophets were faithful men,  
but for the most part, they were ignored,  
and even killed.

And the Levitical priesthood was not without  
its limitations either.

Not only were they **"prevented by death from  
continuing,"** but over the process of  
time, they became greatly corrupted.

As you will remember, it was God's high  
priest who plotted the death of God's  
Son.

No, the shadow never replaced the substance.  
Indeed, it was never meant to.

But **"when the fullness of the time had come,  
God sent forth His Son, born of a woman,  
born under the law, to redeem those who  
were under the law."**

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Certainly, we must never forget God's  
indescribable gift to all mankind.

As He was foreshadowed in the Passover Lamb,  
so Jesus would be **"The Lamb of God who  
takes away the sin of the world!"**

And for that, we will never cease to praise  
Him.

However, this morning we will be meditating  
upon our Lord Jesus as God's Prophet.

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Certainly, Israel had been waiting for God's  
Prophet.

Remember the time when the Jews sent priests  
and Levites to check out John's  
credentials?

After they had established the fact that He  
wasn't the Messiah or Elijah, they asked  
an all-important question----**"Are you the  
Prophet?"**

But John wasn't their long-awaited Prophet,  
he was **"The voice of one crying in the**

wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD," as the prophet Isaiah said."

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And this expectation surfaced again after Jesus fed the 5000.

As John 6:14 records **"---those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."**

And certainly, some of the people continued to hold that conviction.

Remember the response Jesus received when He asked the disciples on the road to Emmaus, what things they were discussing?

They answered---**"The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."**

What a joy it must have been when **"their eyes were opened and they knew Him."**

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So what was the basis for this long-held conviction?

Well, it was founded on God's promise, as it is recorded in Deuteronomy Chapter 18.

But before we go there, let's take a look at the context in which this promise was made.

It all began three months after Israel left Egypt, and when they were encamped in the wilderness of Sinai.

God had delivered a message and a promise through Moses, as we see it in Exodus 19:3-5---**"Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you**

shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine.

'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

And when Moses delivered God's message, the people readily responded---"**All that the LORD has spoken we will do.**"

In a way, that was commendable, but it showed a complete lack of understanding, both for their own abilities and God's requirements.

Both of these problems were addressed three days later when God came "**down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.**"

Yes, as Exodus 20:18-19 tells us, when "---**all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and**



**when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."**

And from that day on, Moses became their *prophet*, standing between them and their God.

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At this point, we are going to fast-forward 40 years.

The next generation is about to enter the Promised Land, and Moses is rehearsing God's laws and ordinances in their ears. It would be Moses' final address, and it was meant to prepare this new generation for the days ahead.

However, as the people listened, there seemed to be something missing, or to be more specific, *someone* missing.

As far back as they could remember, their parents depended upon Moses to be God's spokesman.

When he was gone, who would reveal God's will, and who would enlighten them concerning the future?

Well, in Deuteronomy Chapter 18, Moses addresses both of these needs.

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 **"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, "or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. "For all who do these things are an**

abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. "For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you."

Yes, all these practices were an abomination to the LORD.

And no wonder, because all these things belong to Satan's kingdom.

And not only is he totally unqualified to reveal the future, but he is **"a liar and the father of it."**

No, God had something much better for His people.

V 15-19 **"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me** (that is, like Moses) **from your midst, from your**

brethren. Him you shall hear, "according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. '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.*"

Yes, God's Son would be their *Prophet*.

But in the meantime, God would provide a long line of faithful prophets unequalled in any other nation.

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So, what is the responsibility of a prophet?  
Well, first of all, he must deliver God's  
word to the people.

As it turned out, that was a difficult and  
dangerous task.

And not only would he reveal God's word, but  
in many cases he would reveal God's  
character.

For instance, Moses, writing in Genesis,  
revealed God's heartfelt grief.

Genesis 6:6 **"And the LORD was sorry that He  
had made man on the earth, and He was  
grieved in His heart."**

And in Lamentation 3:22-23, Jeremiah reveals  
God's compassion and faithfulness---

**"*Through* the LORD'S mercies we are not  
consumed, Because His compassions fail  
not. *They are new every morning; Great is  
Your faithfulness.*"**

But there is a third aspect to a *prophet's* ministry, and that is to tell the future. And because of Israel's rebellion, that was often a very black future.

However, not all prophecies were bad news. Sprinkled in here and there, God provided them with a message of hope.

In fact, over 300 times in the Old Testament scriptures, some aspect of Christ's appearance is referred to.

And one of these messages of hope is found in the passage before us.

Deuteronomy 18:18, where we were just reading, **"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 during Jesus' public ministry, He was careful to make the connection between Moses' prophecy and Himself.

John 5:45-47 **"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust. "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; (and here it is) for he wrote about Me. "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"**

And Peter, in his monumental address after the healing of the lame man, referred to God's promise in Deuteronomy 18.

Acts 3:19-22---**"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, "whom heaven must**

receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.'"

And Stephen, in the sermon that would cost him his life, made the same connection.

Acts 7:37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'"

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Yes, substance had finally replaced shadow, and as you might expect, Jesus fulfilled all the responsibilities of a *prophet*, and then some.



First of all, He spoke the words of God.

John 12:49 **"For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak."**

And not only did He reveal the character of God, but He is **"the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person."**

And then, of course, He foretold the future. One of His most extensive prophecies, which we call the Olivet Discourse, is recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, also in Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-38.

This morning, we will only be covering a small part of Matthew Chapter 24, and I'm afraid, in a very superficial manner, but I hope it will be enough to give us an appreciation for its scope and accuracy.

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However, before we begin Matthew 24, let's look at the days leading up to this event.

Matthew 21 records Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

And there's no doubt that the people who followed Him understood the prophetic significance of it, for they cried out---  
**"Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!"**

But to the dwellers in Jerusalem, He was only **"the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."**

They had missed their opportunity, and from that point on, things went downhill quite quickly.

Jesus cleansed the temple with these words ringing in their ears: **"My house shall be**

called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves!"

And a day or two later, He pronounced woe on their religious leaders.

Beginning at Matthew 23:13---"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

V14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."

V27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

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And then He touches on a very sore point in their history.

V29-38 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' *guilt*.

"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

"Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and

persecute from city to city, "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."

And then, quite suddenly, His righteous judgment is replaced by godly sorrow, as He cries out---"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! "See! Your house is left to you desolate."

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And it is in this context that we see Jesus leaving the temple with His four

disciples, Peter, James, John and Andrew following Him.

And by the way, Jesus would never visit the temple again.

Turn with me then to Matthew 24:1 **"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple."**

Certainly, there was much to appreciate in this magnificent structure.

It had been built by Zerubbabel and Ezra, but had been greatly enlarged by Herod. And not only was it larger, but it was much more elaborate, being constructed of white marble, with a great deal of gold on its exterior.

It had taken 46 years to complete the main structure, and it would take another 36 years to finish the temple complex.

Yes, it was a magnificent building, which made Jesus' response all the more shocking---"**Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**"

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It must have been a rather quiet walk up the mountain.

To say that the disciples were shocked would be an understatement.

However, after they were sat down, over looking the city and their magnificent temple, their curiosity got the better of them.

Matthew 24:3 "**Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"**

I'm sure the disciples never doubted Jesus' word for a minute, but **"when will these things be"** is an important question.

You see, back in Deuteronomy 18:22 God said--**"when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken."**

Well, Jesus had made a very definite prediction---**"not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."**

It was 38 years later, in 70 A.D., and a mere 7 years after the temple complex had been completed, that every stone was thrown down by the invading Roman army. And not only was the temple demolished, but Jerusalem with it.

Josephus tells us---*Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the whole city*



*and temple, except for three towers (and he names them)---and a part of the western wall. For all the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground, by those who dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.*

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Matthew 24:4-8 **"And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes**

**in various places. "All these are the beginning of sorrows."**

Jesus' words, "**All these are the beginning of sorrows,**" should be noted *carefully*.

Certainly, all these catastrophes must come to pass, and have come to pass, "**but the end is not yet.**"

However, they are "**the beginning of sorrows.**"

The thought here is like the beginning of labour pains.

So, when do you go to the hospital?

Not when the labour pains are far apart, but when they become more frequent and intense.

In like manner, when these catastrophes increase in frequency and intensity, they are a sign of the end of the age.

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And then, in V 9, Jesus talks about a period of great persecution---"**Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.**"

If we examine parallel passages in Mark and Luke, it appears that the Church of Jesus Christ is in view here.

Certainly history records a long line of persecution, from the early days of the apostles to this present hour.

But it will not last forever.

V 14 "**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.**"

And with the exodus of the church, the Jewish time clock will begin to tick once more, commencing with Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

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Matthew 24:15 "Therefore when you see the  
'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by  
Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy  
place" (whoever reads, let him  
understand) ."

Here we see an example of prophecy having  
more than one fulfillment.

Actually, Daniel prophesied 600 years before  
Christ, and he spoke of the abomination  
in three different places, but their  
content only indicates two separate  
events.

The first one is found in Daniel 11:31.

But before we read this verse let me refer  
to another of Daniel's visions.

In Daniel chapter 8, we find a he-goat with  
a single horn.

This animal represents the Greek Empire  
under Alexander the Great.

When Alexander died, his kingdom was divided into four kingdoms under his four generals.

In Daniel 8:9, a ruler, who is pictured as a little horn on the head of the he-goat, comes out of one of those kingdoms.

From history, it would appear that this little horn was Antiochus Epiphanies, and it was his blasphemy that Daniel wrote about in Daniel 11:31---"**And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.**"

It all began when Antiochus tried to impose the worship of his Greek gods on the nation of Israel.

In the process, he outlawed the Sabbath and circumcision, and greatly persecuted the Jewish people.

Finally, he erected an altar to Zeus inside their temple, and slaughtered a pig on it.

That abomination triggered the Maccabean rebellion.

After much bloodshed, the Jews took back their temple and cleansed it.

That historic event is still remembered in their celebration of Hanukkah, or the Feast of Dedication, as it is referred to in John 10:22.

This desecration occurred about 167 years before Christ.

So then, when Christ mentioned "**the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet,**" the disciples might have thought He was talking about this historical event.

But Matthew 24:15 is not about history.

No, what Jesus actually said was---"**when you see the *abomination of desolation.*"**

So, He was talking about the future.

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I wonder if the place Jesus chose that day was a favorite with His disciples.

Certainly it would have a panoramic view of the city and the rolling countryside beyond.

And when the conditions were right, and the air was dry and still, it almost seemed you could see for ever!

But that day, as Jesus continued to talk, a terrible scene came into view far beyond the capacity of human sight.

Yes, He was talking about another *abomination of desolation* that is recorded in Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11-12.

We will just read Daniel 9:27 **"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."**

This event transports us ahead in time to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, the seven-year period that begins after the church has been raptured.

And this abomination is connected with a person whom we call the Antichrist.

Not only does he appear here in Matthew 24, but in Daniel 9:27 he is referred to as the **"one who makes desolate,"** and in Revelation 19:26, he is called **"the beast."**



And, as Ted pointed out a few weeks ago in his message, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8, he is described as "**the man of sin.**"

And like Antiochus Epiphanies, he shows up in Daniel's visions as a little horn, but on the head of a *different* animal, representing the Roman Empire.

So then, after the church has been raptured, the Antichrist will make a peace covenant with Israel for seven years.

However, in the middle of this week, he will set himself up in the temple to be worshipped as God.

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But how is he going to desecrate the temple when there isn't any temple?

Certainly, Jerusalem has risen out of the ashes, and in a manner of speaking, so has the nation of Israel.

On May 14, 1948, the Jewish State of Israel was born.

But where is their temple?

Well, according to information I gleaned from the website, *CBN News/Christian World News*, preparations are underway.

Chaim Richman is the director of the Temple Institute in Jerusalem, which is actively engaged in research and preparation for the resumption of services in the temple.

According to Mr. Richman, operational blueprints for the construction of the temple, according to the most modern standards, are being prepared.

And the *menorah* is being created, covered with 95 pounds of pure gold, at a price tag of \$2 million.

Yes, piece by piece, the third Temple is taking shape with priests' garments, vessels of copper, gold, and silver.

A new generation of Levite priests are being specially trained for temple service.

Richman says, "We have enough in place now to resume divine service and to build the temple, but obviously a lot of things have to happen in order for this to happen."

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And so the Antichrist will enter the temple and demand to be worshipped as God.

As Jesus points out, the only option is to *flee*.

Matthew 24:15-20 **"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. "And let him**

who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."

Certainly, Israel is in view here, as the Sabbath and flat- roofed houses are very Jewish.

As you probably know, their flat roofs are often used as a sort of patio, and are accessed by an outside stairway.

So then, when they see the abomination of desolation, perhaps on television, or today, Smart phones, they should run down the stairs and not look back.

And the same urgency applies to those working in the field.

Any delay will mean destruction.

V21-28 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. "See, I have told you beforehand.

"Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*-----."

Well, our time has run out, and we must leave this little band of disciples looking down on their sparkling temple.

As we walk away . . . Jesus' voice grows ever fainter on the shifting breeze.

The last words we hear are, **"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."**

And His appearance will usher in a time of unparalleled bloodshed and destruction.

But I am so glad that this time, Israel will recognize their Messiah.

This time, they will look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and **"they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."**

And this time, and at long last, there will  
be peace in Jerusalem.