

UNIT FIFTEEN

JESUS THE PROPHET

1 John Prepares the Way for Jesus

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' public ministry by what he said and did. He paved the way for Jesus, making the rough ways smooth and the crooked ways straight. John called people to repent of their sins in order to be ready for Jesus. It was John who baptized Jesus in the Jordan. Read Luke 3:1–22.

After being introduced to the people by John, Jesus spent the next three years doing the most serious part of His mission. These three years were the last three years of His life on earth, and Jesus made the most of them.

As we have learned, Jesus was a prophet, a priest, and a king. During the last three years of His life He revealed in a most powerful way what it means to be a prophet, a priest, and a king. He traveled from village to village, proclaiming the gospel, healing the sick, and forgiving sinners (see, for example, Matthew 4:23–25). Finally, He suffered and died on the Cross and rose from the dead.

Before Jesus, there had never been a person on earth like Him. And there never will be a person on earth like Him ever again, until Jesus Himself returns at the end of time. Jesus is unique. He is true God and true man. He is God the Son, Who took upon Himself our nature, while all the time retaining His divine nature.

It was because He took upon Himself our human nature, our humanity, that Jesus could *be* a prophet, priest, and king and *act* as a prophet, priest, and king. By acting as a prophet, priest, and king, Jesus revealed to us who we are and how we should act. In this unit, we will examine some of the important words and actions of Jesus that reveal our identity. In the next two units, we will examine the words and actions of Jesus that reveal our proper activity.

VOCABULARY

parable: a simple story that teaches a religious lesson.

2 Jesus Reveals Our Identity through Direct Teaching

Jesus revealed the identity of the human person as an image of God by exercising His office as a prophet. Recall that a prophet is someone sent by God to speak in His name. An authentic prophet always reveals the truth, because he is speaking in God's name, and God never lies.

Jesus not only speaks in God's name, Jesus is God. As God, He is the perfect Prophet. Consequently, what He reveals is the truth. When He reveals to us our identity as images of God, we can trust absolutely that He is revealing the truth. No one else is worthy of such trust. As one of the responses in *The Liturgy of the Hours* states: "I [God the Father] am sending my own beloved Son. He is truly the prophet who is to come into the world. He will tell them all that I command" (Third Sunday in OT, Response in OR).

The crowds to whom Jesus spoke knew that there was something extraordinary about Jesus' teaching. One day, Jesus taught them for a long period of time. St. Matthew tells us: "When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7:28–29). Even the Pharisees themselves were amazed at Jesus' teaching (see Mark 12:17).

The most important teaching session that Jesus conducted was His Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1–7:29). By studying the Sermon on the Mount, we gain a deep understanding of what it means to be an image of God. We learn the characteristics and attitudes that an image of God should possess and how one should act.

The first teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are called the **beatitudes** (Mt 5:1–12).

In the beatitudes, Jesus is teaching that an image of God should be poor in spirit, mournful (especially in the recognition of sin), meek, righteous, merciful, clean of heart, and peacemaking. These are the characteristics that we should try to incorporate into our lives. They are the attitudes that we should try to develop.



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Read Matthew 5:1–12 and the accompanying footnotes. Answer the following questions about the beatitudes.

1. To whom was Jesus preaching?

2. Who are the poor in spirit?

3. Who will comfort those who mourn?

4. What land will the meek inherit?

5. What does righteousness mean?

6. What is mercy?

7. Where will the clean of heart see God?
