

Longing for a Hero

December 19, 2021

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24

Session Outline

1. Christ Our Prophet (Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)
2. Christ Our Priest (Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)
3. Christ Our King (Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)

Theological Theme

Christ is the best of all leaders and heroes. He is a good and mighty King. He is a sacrificial and perfect Priest. He is a bold and truthful Prophet. Jesus Christ faithfully executes all of these roles on behalf of His people.



Leader Guide

Longing for a Hero

Introduction

- ❓ How much would you say you know about God? How does a person gain knowledge about God?
- ❓ Do you think it is possible for a person to fully know God? Why or why not?

There is an apocryphal story (which may or may not be true) about Augustine's quest to fully understand the Trinity. The story goes that Augustine decided he would spend three days in intense study and prayer to gain a complete comprehension of the natures of the Triune God. After three days, he slept. When he slept he dreamed that he saw a child playing on a beach. The child dug a hole in the sand and then began to run from the hole to the ocean with a seashell. The child would fill the seashell with water, then run to the hole and pour it in. "What are you doing, child?" Augustine asked. "I'm going to put the whole ocean in this hole," was the reply. Augustine smiled and said, "You can't do that." The child smiled back and said, "I can do this more easily than you can fully understand the object of your study."¹

The point is that God's nature and works are incomprehensible to man. This is because God is vast and eternal. His ways are higher than our ways. Man is finite and limited. We are weak and unable to behold God's fullness.

However, it's not as though we can understand nothing of God. After all, the child did put some water in the hole, though it was little. Those who seek knowledge of God will find it in the ways God has revealed Himself in His works (creation and providence) and in His Word. To the one who thirsts after God, this knowledge is more precious than silver. One line from holy writ contains more wisdom and life than all the writings of man.

The Bible makes plain that God has sent His Son to be the Redeemer of God's people. And, as Redeemer, Jesus Christ executes three offices, both

in His humbled state here on earth and now in His exalted state as the risen One. To God's people, Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King.


Session Summary

Jesus is mighty and victorious. He has overcome the devil and death (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). In His atoning death and resurrection, Christ “erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. . . . [God] disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him” (Colossians 2:14-15).

Because we live in a fallen, sinful world, we long for a leader or a hero to tell us everything is going to be okay. Christmas and Advent remind us that often what we think we need and long for is not what God has provided for us already. In examining the reality that God's ways are not ours, we pause, recognize, and joyfully embrace the reality that our Hero has come and is coming again as the ultimate Ruler of all.

1. Christ Our Prophet (Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)

After the death and resurrection of Christ, two of the disciples were traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They hadn't yet received the news of the Jesus's resurrection. As they walked, Jesus appeared to them, but they were kept from recognizing Him. As they recounted to Jesus all that had happened the said, “But we were hoping that he was the one who was about to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). They did not yet know that Jesus was truly the Redeemer and the promised Christ—the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).

 One of the roles Jesus plays for His people is that of prophet. What do you know of the role of prophet? What Scriptures help you understand the role of a prophet?

Ephesians 2:20 tells us that the church is built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles with Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Paul explained to the Ephesian church the importance of God's Word that has been delivered to the church and upon which the church should be built and remain firm. The offices of prophet and apostle among the people of God have ceased because the task that they were to carry out has ceased. They were to be the recipients and preservers of God's divinely inspired Word. Now that the canon of Scripture is complete, the foundation has been laid. Though the work of prophet and apostle has ceased, the prophets of the past still minister to the church today through the written Word of God that they were so instrumental in delivering.

Christ Crucified

To Jews, the message Christ crucified signaled weakness, indicating that Jesus was a false messiah. Jews looked instead for signs of Messiah's power (Is 35: 61); thus, the message “Christ crucified” was a stumbling block (Gk skandalon; an offense) to their expectations. To the Gentile mind-set, which held no “messianic expectations” but only general conceptions of what deity should be like, the message of “Christ crucified” was foolishness.

Prophets had the unique role of being the mouthpiece of God. During Old Testament times, God revealed Himself and His will to His people through the mouths of the prophets, beginning with Moses. Yes, they did have the Scriptures that had been written up to that point (for example, Isaiah had many Scriptures to read), but God was still giving new revelation to His people at that time. For this reason, He continued to call prophets through whom He spoke to His people. The prophets could rightly say, “Thus saith the Lord.”



How does Jesus fulfill perfectly the role of prophet for God’s people?

Although the office of the prophet among men has ceased, there is still a prophet among us. We no longer need human prophets because the true and faithful Prophet, Jesus Christ, executes this office among God’s people. He is, “The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him” (John 1:18). Just as the prophets of old revealed God’s character and will, Jesus does the same.

Christ ministers to us as a prophet by His Word. Paul exhorted the Colossian church to “let the word of Christ dwell richly among you” (Colossians 3:16). The Word of Christ refers to the Scriptures that were delivered to us through the mouths and pens of the prophets and apostles as our foundation, the cornerstone being Christ.


So, Christ reveals God the Father to God’s people through the Word of Christ. But He does this by the Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that “the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you” (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit indwells all of God’s people and illumines the Scriptures to them. This is why those who are not in Christ cannot truly understand the Scriptures. They can read the words and even comprehend the meaning of them, but these Words can never nourish their souls because they are spiritually dead. They cannot read the gospels and rejoice in the finished work of Christ. They cannot read the psalms and be moved to worship God in spirit and truth.



Application: How can you place yourself in a position to benefit from Christ’s ministry of prophet to you?


2. Christ Our Priest (Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)

Christ is also the priest of His people. Believers need a priest because they are guilty of sin and remain spiritually needy even after salvation.

 What was the role of the priest in the Old Testament?

After God rescued His people out of slavery in Egypt, he appointed Aaron's lineage to carry out the office of the priesthood among Israel. The priest's role was to enter into the presence of God to offer up a sacrifice to God on behalf of the people for the remission of their sins.

This was necessary because of the sin that was among the people. All of Israel sinned and fell short of God's glorious standard. They continually turned from God's ways to follow after their own desires and wisdom. According to Scripture, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" for sin (Hebrews 9:22), so animal sacrifices were continually made for sin. The priest was the one to carry out this practice.


 How is Christ the priest for the people of God? What enables Christ to be a superior priest over all other human priests?

First, Christ executed the office of priest in offering Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. The writer of Hebrews explained, "But now he has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment—so also Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him" (Hebrews 9:26-28). The Bible says the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:20). Jesus died the death sinners deserve to bring many to life. Many who were once under the just and righteous condemnation and wrath of God have been justified by Christ's sacrifice.

Second, as Priest, Jesus reconciled sinners to God. The Scriptures say, "therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). Not only did Jesus annul the penalty that was due sinners, but He also made them the friends of God. Jesus was uniquely positioned to mediate between God and man. He was fully God and fully man so He could lay His hand on both and, by His death, make peace between both.


Finally, Jesus is a priest to God's people as He makes continual intercession for them: "He is able to save completely those who come to God through him, since he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). What an incredible promise! Even now Christ is bringing the needs of those who trust in Him directly to God the Father. Paul wrote to the Roman church: "Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34).

Louis Berkhoff wrote, “It is a consoling thought that Christ is praying for us, even when we are negligent in our prayer life; that He is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds and which we often neglect to include in our prayers; and that He prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, and against the enemies which threaten us, though we do not notice it. He is praying that our faith may not cease, and that we may come out victoriously in the end.”²


 Application: In what situation or circumstance in your life do you need to remember Christ is praying for you today? How might that change your perspective?

3. Christ Our King (Luke 24:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)

Christ isn't only our prophet and priest; He is also our king. God's people need a king because they are weak and helpless apart from Him.

 What does it mean for Jesus to be our king?

The first way Christ is a King to His people is in the fact that He has subdued sinners to Himself. If you are in Christ it is because Christ has lovingly and graciously conquered you. Before salvation, all people are rebels and enemies of God (see Romans 5:10). It is a mistake to think that before coming to faith in Christ, people are simply innocent bystanders caught up in some cosmic battle. The fact of the matter is that all people are either friends of God through Jesus Christ or enemies of God and follow the will of their father the devil (John 8:44). Everyone who is now a child of God was once an enemy of God who has been subdued by King Jesus and made citizens of a new Kingdom.

 How does Jesus rule as King over God's people now?

King Jesus not only subdues sinners, but He also rules and defends them after they are under His authority. Be careful not to think that rebels who have been subdued and are now citizens of heaven remain unwillingly or begrudgingly. To the contrary, now that they have tasted the goodness of the Lord, these people would rather be doorkeepers in the house of God than of highest honors in the kingdom of darkness (see Psalm 84:10). This is partly due to the care and kindness that King Jesus shows them as He rules over them and defends them (Matthew 2:6; 1 Corinthians 15:25).

Finally, King Jesus restrains and ultimately conquers all enemies. God's people, for now, must contend against the flesh, the world, and the devil. In the midst of this battle, Jesus accompanies and strengthens Christians to overcome and endure despite the attacks of these foes. One day, King

Jesus will put an end to their schemes of destruction by putting an end to them altogether. In glory, Christians will no longer battle against the flesh—their old nature—for it will be fully subdued. Christ will bring about a new earth, in which no sin will reign. The devil and his angels will be cast into the Lake of Fire where they will be punished forever.

- Application: What enemies are you facing? How might knowing Jesus is your King who rules you and defends you change the way you face your enemies?

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of God's people. He is their hero and their hope. When Christ walked the earth, He executed the roles of prophet, priest, and king. Now, in His exalted state at the right hand of the father, He continues to carry out these roles faithfully and effectually.

All other authorities and leaders in our lives are finite and flawed. They can never fully serve us or satisfy us. They themselves are in desperate need of an unfailing hero. In Christ, we have a hero who never wearies or errs. He is perfect, sovereign, just, merciful, and faithful.

- How does the season of Advent remind you that Jesus is the hero you need? How does it give better perspective to the way you have sought false heroes and leaders in your life?
- How does it change our relationships within the church if we really live with Jesus as our perfect prophet, priest, and king?
- Who is God calling you to pursue a gospel conversation with? How might it be helpful to share with them about Jesus being your prophet, priest, and king?

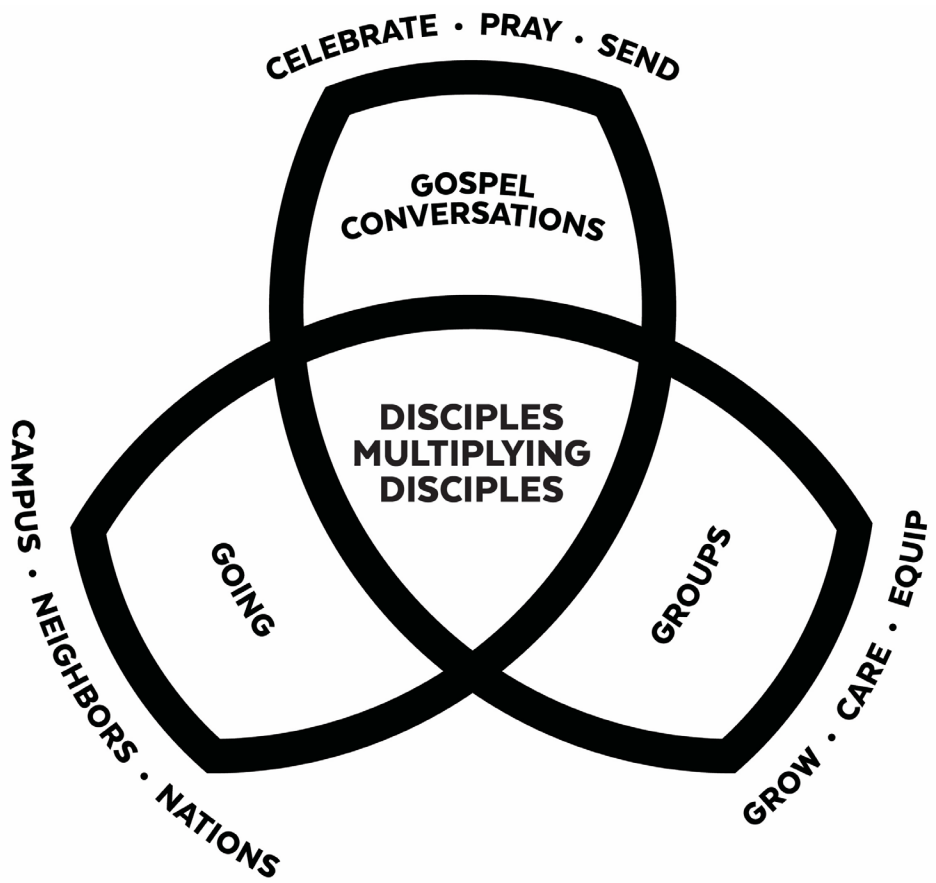
Prayer of Response

Ask God to help you remember and rejoice in the ways Christ ministers to you today. Pray that you will live under the authority, covering, and instruction of Christ who is your Prophet, Priest, and King. Ask the Lord to help you conduct all of your affairs with these truths in mind.

Additional Resources

- *Waiting Here for You* by Louie Giglio
- *The Christmas We Didn't Expect* by David Mathis
- *The Case for Christmas* by Lee Strobel

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



For Next Week

Memorize

For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

- 1 Corinthians 1:22-23

Historical Context of Luke

Purpose

The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched (1:3), selective presentation of the person and life of Jesus Christ, designed to strengthen the faith of believers (1:3–4) and to challenge the misconceptions of unbelievers, especially those from a Greek background. Its portrait of Jesus is well balanced, skillfully emphasizing his divinity and perfect humanity.

Author

The author of the Third Gospel is not named. Considerable evidence points to Luke as its author. Much of that proof is found in the book of Acts, which identifies itself as a sequel to Luke (Ac 1:1–3). A major line of evidence has to do with the so-called “we” sections of the book (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–37; 28:1–16). Most of Acts is narrated in third-person plural (“they,” “them”), but some later sections having to do with the ministry of the apostle Paul unexpectedly shift to first-person plural (“we,” “us”). This indicates that the author had joined the apostle Paul for the events recorded in those passages. Since there are no “we” passages in the Gospel of Luke, that fits with the author stating that he used eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus (1:2), indicating he was not such an eyewitness himself.

Setting

Traditionally, the Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written after both Matthew and Mark. Those who date Matthew and Mark in the AD 60s or 70s have tended to push the dating of Luke back to the AD 70s or 80s.

Since Luke wrote both the Third Gospel and the book of Acts (Ac 1:1–3), it is relevant to consider the dating of both books together. The events at the end of Acts occurred around AD 62–63. That is the earliest point at which Acts could have been written. If Acts was written in the early AD 60s from Rome, where Paul was imprisoned for two years (Ac 28:30), the Third Gospel could date from an earlier stage of that period of imprisonment. The other reasonable possibility is during Paul’s earlier two-year imprisonment in Caesarea (Ac 24:27). From that location, Luke would have been able to travel and interview the eyewitnesses to Jesus’s life and ministry who were still alive.

Special Features

The Gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament. Focusing on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, this Gospel is part one of a two-part history, the book of Acts being part two. Both were dedicated to “most honorable Theophilus” (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1).

Extended Commentary

Luke 24:21

24:21. Christ's death ended apostolic hopes. Here Cleopas in a very important passage summarized the hopes of Jesus' disciples before Jesus' death. They thought Jesus would redeem Israel. This Greek verb for redeem (*lutroo*) appears only here and in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 1:18 in the New Testament. It has a strong Old Testament background, appearing ninety times in the Septuagint, usually as a translation of Hebrew *gal'al*, "to set free, redeem." It is rooted in the Exodus story of God redeeming Israel from Egyptian slavery (see Exod. 6:6). Luke used a related noun as Zechariah prophesied the work of his son John. God is coming to redeem his people. Anna explained the significance of the child Jesus to those who waited for the "redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38).

The term is often used in the process of paying a ransom or price to gain the freedom of a slave. Luke sees Israel in captivity just as they had been in the time of the Exodus. In sending John and Jesus, God had repeated the miracle of the Exodus. He had paid the ransom price and freed his people from slavery. But the freedom was not through military victory as in Egypt but through the work on the cross, paying the price for the slavery to sin. Paul used a related verb to confess that by Christ's death we are set free, redeemed, ransomed from our slavery to sin and death. Christ is the one who sets us free, that is, redeems us (Acts 7:35). He came to give his life as a means of liberating or redeeming us (Matt. 20:26).

The disciples saw in Jesus the one who would bring a new Exodus and free the nation from its Roman captors. Instead Jesus proved to be something much more—the Redeemer who freed them from sin and death. But at this point the two on the road to Emmaus had no idea of this.

The third day was important in many ways for the disciples in this context. By the third day the body would start to decay (cf. the four days of John 11:39). Three days should have given the news about Jesus time to circulate for all people to know about it. And three days was the time Jesus set for his being raised from the dead (Luke 9:22).³

1 Corinthians 1:22-24

1:22. Paul expanded his assertion by pointing out particular ways in which the world's wisdom had been foiled by the preaching of Christ. First, he described the standards of human wisdom which Jews and Gentiles endorsed: Jews demand miraculous signs. The gospels record that the Jews repeatedly requested signs from Jesus to prove he was from God (Matt. 12:38–39; John 2:18; 6:30). Yet, even the miracles he performed did not satisfy them because he would not perform at their bidding. They reasoned that the true Messiah would provide whatever proof the Jews required. For this reason, many Jews rejected Jesus.

Paul also pointed out that Greeks look for wisdom. By and large, the Greeks (many Corinthian believers were Greek) did not demand miracles to corroborate the gospel. Instead, they exalted the standards of their pagan philosophies and poets. Ancient Greece was well known as the seat of many influential philosophers. The Greeks took great pride in their philosophical sophistication. Their loyalties were not primarily to the empirical, but to that which was rational

according to their own fallen standards. Many Greeks also rejected the gospel because it did not meet their standards of human wisdom.

1:23. In contrast to the standards of judgment used by Jews and Greeks, the apostle said he simply preached Christ crucified. Paul constantly used the word cross to represent the redemptive work of Christ. He was under direction from God not to reduce the Christian message to something acceptable to Jews or Greeks. In fact, the gospel of the cross was a stumbling block to Jewish listeners and foolishness to Gentiles.

The Jews understood the cross of Christ as a demonstration that Christ was cursed of God (see Deut. 21:23), not blessed as they expected the Messiah to be.

Many Gentiles, in turn, could hardly have imagined a more ridiculous religion than one that proclaimed salvation through the death of one man on a Roman cross. A God who could not overcome his human enemies and who died at their hands like a common thief was not a God one should reasonably trust for salvation.

1:24. Although most Jews and Gentiles rejected the true gospel because it did not meet their standards of judgment, one group of people joyfully accepted the gospel of the cross: those whom God had called to himself by the power of his Spirit. When God's grace touched their lives, their old standards of judgment fell away. They saw with new eyes and understood that the gospel of the crucified Christ was the power of God that could rescue them from the dominion of sin and from divine judgment.⁴

References

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Author Bio

Louis Berkhof (Systematic Theology)

Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) was born in Emmen in the Netherlands, and emigrated with his family in 1882 to Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1900, he graduated from Calvin Theological seminary and took up the pastorate of First Christian Reformed Church in Allendale, Michigan. Two years later, he went to Princeton Theological Seminary, and within two years had earned his BD degree. Then he returned to West Michigan to pastor Oakdale Park Church located in Grand Rapids. He was an outstanding teacher, and the author of some twenty-two books, including his magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*, first published in 1934.

Trent C. Butler (Luke)

Trent C. Butler is a freelance author and editor. He served ten years on the faculty of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and for twenty-two years as editor and editorial director for Holman Bible Publishers and LifeWay. He wrote the Word Biblical Commentary volume on Joshua, the Layman's Bible Book Commentary on Isaiah, the Holman Old Testament Commentaries on Isaiah and Hosea through Micah, and the Holman New Testament Commentary on Luke. He served on the editorial Board of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, and edited the Holman Bible Dictionary. Dr. Butler has a Ph.D. in biblical studies and linguistics from Vanderbilt University, has done further study at Heidelberg and Zurich, and has participated in the excavation of Beersheba.

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Louie Giglio (Waiting Here for You)

Louie Giglio is Pastor of Passion City Church and the Founder of the Passion movement, which exists to call a generation to leverage their lives for the fame of Jesus. Since 1997, Passion has gathered collegiate-aged young people at events across the U.S. and around the world, uniting millions of students in worship, prayer and justice. In addition to the collegiate gatherings of Passion Conferences, Louie and his wife, Shelley, lead the teams at Passion City Church, *sixstepsrecords* and the Passion Global Institute. Louie is the author of *The Comeback*, *The Air I Breathe*, *I Am Not But I Know I Am*, and *Goliath Must Fall*. Louie and Shelley make their home in Atlanta, Georgia.

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Lee Strobel (The Case for Christmas)

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