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*Jesus the Healing Prophet*  
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The Gospels associate many different identities with Jesus. In some places, he is presented as a messiah. Pilate crucifies him as a king. Both angels and demons recognize him as the Son of God. He refers to himself, frequently, as the son of man. The people see him as a prophet and debate whether he is Elijah, Jeremiah, or the prophet like Moses.

As the early Christian Church loses its Jewish character and becomes more Greek, because the number of Greek converts quickly outnumber Jews, it loses the separate nature of these titles and mixes them together within Jesus' identity as messiah.

But if we want to understand the impact that Jesus had on the Galileans and other Jews who first followed him, we need to separate these out. The first thing that becomes clear is that Jesus tried to hide some of these identifications. The Gospels present Jesus as trying to limit discussions about his character as the messiah or the Son of God to the disciples. When the demons identify him as such, he shuts them up. When a crowd member links him to God or calls him the messiah (or the Christ, its Greek term), Jesus asks them not to tell anyone.

In the Gospels, Jesus' public persona seems to be that of a prophet. When he asks his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" they reply that the people are talking about him as a prophet. In Luke 9 and Matthew 16, they report how the people speculate which prophet he may be, perhaps Elijah, one of the prophets of old, or even John the Baptist. From the Gospels' perspective, John was a prophet. Even though John himself denied it (John 1), angels (Luke 1) and Jesus (Matthew 11) both insist on it.

Jesus himself seems comfortable with a public identity as a prophet. He even encourages it. In Luke

4, when Jesus appears in the synagogue at Nazareth, he reads Isaiah 61 which describes the mission of the prophet Isaiah. He then sits down and claims that prophetic identity for himself. The worshipers in the synagogue at first accept this, for they "spoke well of him." But then he goads his listeners and says "no prophet is acceptable in his own country." They then become angry and attempt to throw him off a cliff. In terms of the Gospel story, this rejection actually strengthens Jesus claim to be a prophet.

But what is Jesus' own perception of himself as a prophet? What does he think it means for him to be one? In Luke 4, Jesus indicates his models are Elijah and Elisha. This is interesting, for in identifying these two, Jesus passes up the prophets famous for their great oracles and predictions, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Malachi. Instead he focuses on two prophets who are more important for their deeds than their words. Jesus emphasizes this distinction when he describes the two prophets. Elijah was sent to a widow in Sidon during a famine, and there he raised the widow's son from death. Elisha, Jesus says, healed a Syrian leader of leprosy.

Interestingly, Jesus performs these actions himself. His healing of people ill with leprosy or other diseases is well known. Many Gospel readers can recall the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, but he raised two other people from death as well: a young man (Luke 7) and a young girl (Luke 8). Thus, in his own view, Jesus acts like a prophet when he heals people and raises the dead. He is then following in the footsteps of Elijah and Elisha. He does not see his preaching and his message as indicating his prophetic nature. His healings and his miracles reveal his prophetic character.