



## **Allegiance to the True Prophet**

Small Group Discussion Guide

Week of September 13, 2026

Primary scripture text: Deuteronomy 18:15-22

Secondary scripture texts: Hebrews 1:1-4; John 6:14-15, 35-40

**Learning outcome:** Participants should have a fresh awareness of Jesus as not merely a messenger or a prophet but the eternal Word and Image of the Father incarnate, someone to whom to truly listen means entrusting one's whole life to him as Lord.

*Questions that are marked with an asterisk (\*) are priorities. If you are worried about having enough time, focus on these questions and skip those that are unmarked.*

### **LOOKING BACK (5 MINUTES)**

Begin by asking group members to return briefly to the “threshold moment” that they identified last week as a daily opportunity to make a confession of allegiance. Invite anyone who wishes to share:

What moment or object did you choose? What did you find helpful, difficult, or surprising as you sought to embrace this practice?

### **DISCUSSING DEUTERONOMY (12 MINUTES)**

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-22 aloud in the group.

*Invite listeners to notice:* Who is it that will raise up the promised prophet? How are the people commanded to respond to this prophet? What guidance, if any, is given for determining a true prophet from a false prophet?

1. \*According to verses 16-17, Israel needs a prophet to stand between God and the people. Why is this necessary?

2. \*God says of this promised prophet, “It is to him you shall listen.” What kind of authority does this prophet have, and what does listening to him require?

3. Why do you think that people are sometimes attracted to voices that claim to speak for God even when those voices are false? What forms of discernment does this passage commend to us?

### **OPENING THE CATECHISM (8 MINUTES)**

The assigned reading for this week was Qs. 48-83.

1. Did anything in the assigned catechism questions strike you as encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

Ask three participants to read Questions 48, 50, and 52 aloud.

2. \*Question 50 says that Jesus Christ perfectly fulfills the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. How does Question 48 tell us that Jesus' prophetic ministry is different from any other prophet before him?

### **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (15 MINUTES)**

The excerpt below is from §§13-14 of *On the Incarnation* by St. Athanasius (translated by John Behr, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011).

Athanasius was a fourth-century bishop in Alexandria, Egypt and one of the great defenders of the faith we confess in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

In the text Athanasius raises the question of why God could not restore humanity by simply sending another human messenger or even a prophet. Throughout *On the Incarnation* his answer to this question depends on his understanding of salvation as the restoration of God's image in human beings. Human beings were created "in the image", but Jesus Christ is himself the perfect Image of the Father. Only the Image could restore the image; yet to restore it from within, the Image had to assume our mortal nature, healing it and overcoming its bondage to sin and death.

Either read the passage aloud in the group or give participants time to read it silently. As they follow along or read, ask group members to (a) underline something the passage says about who Jesus is, (b) put a box around something that Jesus came to do, and (c) circle anything that is difficult or seems unclear.

What then was God to do? Or what should be done, except to renew again the "in the image" so that through it human beings would be able once again to know him? But how could this have occurred except by the coming of the very image of God, our Savior Jesus Christ? For

neither by human beings was it possible, since they were created “in the image”; but neither by angels, for they were not even images. So the Word of God came himself, in order that he being the image of the Father (cf. Col 1:15) the human being “in the image” might be recreated. It could not, again, have been done in any other way, without death and corruption being utterly destroyed. So he rightly took a mortal body, that in death might henceforth be destroyed utterly and human beings be renewed again according to the image. For this purpose, then, there was need of none other than the Image of the Father.

For as when a figure painted on wood has been soiled by dirt from outside, it is necessary for him whose figure it is to come again, so that the image can be renewed on the same material—because of his portrait even the material on which it is painted is not cast aside, but the portrait is reinscribed on it. In the same way the all-holy Son of the Father, being the Image of the Father, came to our place to renew the human being made according to himself, and to find him, as one lost, through the forgiveness of sins, as he himself says in the Gospels: “I came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). Therefore he said to the Jews, “Unless one be born again” (Jn 3:5), not referring to the birth from women, as they supposed, but indicating the soul being born again and recreated in that which is after the image. But since the madness of idolatry and godlessness held firm the inhabited world and the knowledge of God was hidden, whose was it to teach the inhabited world of the Father? A human being, one might say. But humans were not able to traverse everywhere under the sun, nor by nature were they able to run so far, nor were they sufficient to become credible regarding this, nor were they able by themselves to withstand the deceit and illusion of the demons. For everyone smitten and troubled in soul from demonic deceit and the vanity of idols, how was it possible to convert the human soul and the human mind, when they cannot even see them? How can one convert what one cannot see? But perhaps one might say that creation was sufficient. But if creation sufficed, such evils would not have occurred. For there was creation, and human beings wallowed no less in the same error regarding God. Who again was needed, except the God Word who sees both soul and mind, who moves everything in creation, and through them makes known the Father? For he who by his own providence and ordering of the universe teaches about the Father, his it was to renew the same teaching.

Discussion questions:

1. Does anyone want to share something they underlined, boxed, or circled, and why?
2. \*Athanasius makes a distinction between human beings, who are created “in the image” and Jesus Christ, who is himself “the Image” of the Father. What do you think the meaning of this distinction is? In light of this notion of Jesus as Image, why could another merely human messenger not accomplish what Jesus came to do?
3. \*Athanasius says that the material upon which the portrait of the image was painted is not discarded but rather renewed. What does this tell us about our sinful humanity and what happens to us as we come to know Jesus Christ?

### CONCLUDING ACTIVITY (5 MINUTES)

The Athanasian Creed was almost certainly not written by St Athanasius himself. Rather, it bears his name because it summarizes his authoritative teaching about the Trinity and the Incarnation. Article VIII of the Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles* identifies this creed (together with the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds) as one the three creeds that Anglicans receive and believe because their teaching can be proved directly from scripture.

The full text of the Athanasian Creed appears in Appendix 4 of *To Be A Christian*. It is traditionally said by Anglican churches on Trinity Sunday and other important feast days.

In closing, invite participants to stand and confess the following portion of the Athanasian Creed together.

**Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;**

**God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of his Mother, born in the world;**

**Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.**

**Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood;**

**Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;**

**One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the  
Manhood into God;**

**One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person.**

**For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ.**

me as your child through the Holy Spirit. Grant me the grace to know the fullness of your fatherly love, that I may delight in the promises of your eternal Kingdom, both now and in the age to come. **Amen.**

## THE APOSTLES' CREED, ARTICLE II

### "I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST"

#### 48. Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is the eternal Word and Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He took on human nature to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the only Mediator between God and fallen humanity. (*Psalm 2; Malachi 3:1; John 1:1-18; Philip-  
pians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 2:5-6*)

#### 49. What does "Jesus" mean?

"Jesus" means "God saves" and is taken from the Hebrew name *Yeshua* or Joshua. In Jesus, God has come to save us from the power of sin and death. (*Joshua 1:1-9; Psalm 20; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 8:1-2*)

#### 50. What does "Christ" mean?

*Christos* is the Greek term for the Hebrew title *Messiah*, meaning "Anointed One." Old Testament kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil. Jesus the Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit to perfectly fulfill these roles, and he rules now as Prophet, Priest, and King over his Church and all creation. (*Exodus 40:12-16; 1 Samuel 16:11-13; 1 Kings 19:15-16; Psalm 89:19-29; Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-21; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 4:14-5:10*)

## “HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD”

### 51. Why is Jesus called the Father’s “only Son”?

Jesus alone is God the Son, coequal and coeternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He alone is the image of the invisible Father, the one who makes the Father known. He is now and forever will be incarnate as a human, bearing his God-given human Name. The Father created and now rules all things in heaven and earth through Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Psalm 2:7–12; John 1:14–18; Colossians 1:13–15; Hebrews 1:1–5; see also Athanasian Creed*)

### 52. What do you mean when you call Jesus Christ “Lord”?

I acknowledge Jesus’ divine authority over the Church and all creation, over all societies and their leaders, and over every aspect of my life, both public and private. I surrender my entire life to him and seek to live in a way that pleases him. (*Daniel 7:13–14; Matthew 7:21–23; Luke 9:23–26; Ephesians 1:15–23; Colossians 1:16–18*)

## “HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY”

### 53. What does it mean that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit?

Jesus was conceived not through a human father but by the Holy Spirit coming upon the Virgin Mary in power. (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–20; Luke 1:26–38*)

### 54. What happened at Jesus’ conception in Mary’s womb?

The eternal Son, whom God named Jesus, assumed a fully human nature from his mother, the Virgin Mary, at the moment of conception in her womb. (*John 1:1–3, 14; 8:56–58; Philippians 2:6–8; Colossians 2:9*)

**55. Why is it important to say that Jesus was born?**

It is important to affirm that he is one of us: truly human, born to a human mother, and raised in a human family. (*Luke 2:41-52; Hebrews 2:17-18*)

**56. Was Mary the only biological parent of Jesus?**

Yes. While still a virgin, Mary submitted to the will of God and bore the Son of God. Therefore, she is held in high honor. However, in obedience to God, Joseph took Mary as his wife and raised Jesus as his son. (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; 13:55*)

**57. What is the relationship between Jesus' divine and human natures?**

At the moment of Jesus' conception, the divine nature of the one eternal Person of the Son was united to our human nature. Therefore, Jesus Christ is fully and truly both divine and human, but without sin. His two natures are united without division, separation, mixture, or change. (*Luke 1:26-38; John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:10-16; 1 John 4:2-3; Definition of Chalcedon*)

**58. What does the union of Jesus' two natures teach you about his ministry?**

All Jesus does as a human being he also does as God. His human words and deeds are saving because they are the words and deeds of God the Son. (*John 5:19-29; Romans 8:1-4; Colossians 1:19-23; Hebrews 4:14-16*)

**“ HE SUFFERED UNDER  
PONTIUS PILATE ”**

**59. Why did Jesus suffer?**

Jesus suffered as a sacrifice for our sins so that we could have peace with God, as prophesied in the Old Testament: “But he was

pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” (*Isaiah 52:13–53:12, see 53:5; John 1:29; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4*)

**60. In what ways did Jesus suffer?**

On earth, the incarnate Son shared physically, emotionally, and spiritually in the temptations and sufferings common to all people, yet without sin. In his agony and desolation on the Cross, he uniquely suffered in my place for my sins and, in so doing, revealed God’s love and compassion for fallen and suffering humanity. (*Psalm 22:1–24; Matthew 4:1–10; 27:26–50; Hebrews 4:14–16*)

**61. How do Jesus’ sufferings help you?**

Jesus has experienced our sufferings, understands our sorrows, and is able to sympathize with our weakness. Therefore, I should bear my sufferings with perseverance and hope, for my Savior is with me in them, and through them I will come to know him more fully. (*Job 9:32–35; Psalm 22:22–26; Isaiah 53:4–7; Luke 4:1–13; Hebrews 4:14–5:10*)

**62. Why does the Creed say that Jesus suffered under the Roman governor Pontius Pilate?**

The Creed thus makes clear that Jesus’ life and death were real events that occurred at a particular time and place in Judea in the first century AD. (*Psalm 2:1–6; Luke 3:1–2; 23; Acts 4:24–28*).

“WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED,  
AND WAS BURIED”  
“HE DESCENDED TO THE DEAD”

**63. What happened at Jesus’ crucifixion?**

Jesus was executed as a common criminal. He was scourged, mocked, and nailed to a Cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. Though

humanly a miscarriage of justice, his execution fulfilled God's plan of salvation. (*Psalm 22:1-21; Isaiah 53:8; Matthew 27:22-26*)

**64. What did Jesus accomplish on the Cross?**

Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures by dying on the Cross as a sacrifice for sin in obedience to his Father. He thereby showed the depth of the love of God for his fallen creation, satisfying the justice of God on our behalf and breaking the power of sin, Satan, and death. (*Leviticus 23:18-21; Psalm 34:15-22; Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 10:11-14*)

**65. What does Jesus' death mean for you?**

Jesus bore my sins and died the death that I deserve, so that I could be saved from sin and eternal condemnation and reconciled to God. (*Psalm 32:1-2; Isaiah 53:10-12; Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21*)

**66. Why does the Creed make a point of saying that Jesus died?**

The Creed makes the point to emphasize that Jesus died a real, bodily death such as all people face because of our sins. (*Psalm 22:14-15; Isaiah 53:8-9; Matthew 27:45-50; John 19:30-35*)

**67. Why does the Creed emphasize Jesus' death in this way?**

The Creed emphasizes Jesus' death to counter suspicions that Jesus did not truly die on the Cross, to celebrate the fact that he died there to secure our salvation, and to prepare our minds to grasp the glory of his bodily resurrection. (*John 19:31-34; 1 John 5:6-8*)

**68. What does the Creed mean by saying that Jesus descended to the dead?**

That Jesus descended to the dead means that he truly died and entered the place of the departed. (*Psalm 16:9-10; Acts 2:25-32; Ephesians 4:9-10; 1 Peter 3:18-19*)

## “ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN”

69. **What does the Creed mean when it affirms that Jesus rose again from the dead?**

It means that Jesus was not simply resuscitated; God restored him physically from death to life in his resurrected body, never to die again. His tomb was empty; Jesus had risen bodily from the dead. The risen Jesus was seen by his apostles and hundreds of other witnesses. (*Psalm 30:1-5; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8*)

70. **What kind of earthly life did Jesus have after he rose from the dead?**

Following his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days visiting and teaching his followers. He appeared to his disciples, spoke to them, invited them to touch him and see his scars, and ate with them. (*Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-29; Acts 1:1-8*)

## “HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN”

71. **How should you understand Jesus’ ascension into heaven?**

Jesus was taken up out of human sight and returned in his humanity to the glory he had shared with the Father before his incarnation. There he intercedes for, and receives into heavenly life, all who come to him in faith. Though absent in body, Jesus is always with me by his Spirit and hears me when I pray. (*John 17:5; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:23-25*)

72. **What resulted from the ascension?**

Jesus ascended into heaven so that, through him, his Father might send us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, Christians together are united to Christ, the living Head of his Body, the Church. (*John 14:15-17, 25-26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33-36; Ephesians 4:7-16*)

**“AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT  
HAND OF THE FATHER”**

73. What does it mean for Jesus to sit at God the Father's right hand?

The throne on the king's right hand was traditionally the seat of one appointed to exercise the king's own authority. Ruling with his Father in heaven, Jesus is Lord over the Church and all creation, with authority to equip his Church, advance his kingdom, bring sinners into saving fellowship with God the Father, and finally establish justice and peace upon the earth. (*Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6-7; Acts 2:33-36; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 1:3-14*)

74. What does Jesus do for you as he sits at the Father's right hand?

Because Jesus intercedes for us as our great high priest, I may now boldly approach the Father and offer my confessions, praises, thanksgivings, and requests to him. (*Exodus 33:7-17; Psalm 80; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:24-8:2*)

75. What does Jesus' heavenly ministry mean for your life today?

I can rely on Jesus always to be present with me by the Holy Spirit as he promised, and I should always look to him for help as I seek to serve him. (*Joshua 1:9; Psalm 3; Matthew 28:20; John 14:15-20*)

**“HE WILL COME AGAIN TO JUDGE  
THE LIVING AND THE DEAD”**

76. What does the Creed mean when it says, “He will come again”?

Jesus promised that he would return (*Luke 21:27-28*). His coming in victory with great glory and power will be seen by all people and will bring this age to an end. The present world order will pass away, and God will usher in a fully renewed creation to stand

forever. All the saints will be together with God at that time. (*Proverbs 30:4; Daniel 7:13-14; Luke 21:27-28; Acts 1:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:3-13; Revelation 21:1-4*)

**77. Can we know when Jesus will return?**

No. We cannot know when Jesus will return. Jesus patiently waits for many to repent and trust in him for new life; then he will return unexpectedly, which could be at any moment. (*Matthew 24:36-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3*)

**78. How should you live in anticipation of Jesus' return?**

I should anticipate with joy the return of Jesus my Savior and be ready to stand before him. His promise to return encourages me to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to live a holy life, and to share the hope of new life in Christ with others. (*Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Matthew 25:13-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11; Titus 2:11-14*)

**79. How should you understand Jesus' future judgment?**

All people, whether living or dead, will be judged by Jesus Christ. Those apart from Christ will receive eternal rejection and punishment in hell, while those who are in Christ will receive eternal blessing and welcome into the fullness of life with God. (*Psalms 50:1-6; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10*)

**80. Should you be afraid of God's judgment?**

The unrepentant should fear God's judgment, for "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness" (*Romans 1:18*). But if I am in Christ, I need not fear God's judgment, for my Judge is my Savior, Jesus Christ, who loves me, died for my sins, and intercedes for me. (*Psalms 130; Proverbs 28:13-14; John 5:24-30; Romans 8:1, 31-34*)

**81. What does Scripture mean when it tells you to fear God?**

It means that I should live mindful of his presence, walking in humility as his creature, resisting sin, obeying his commandments, and reverencing him for his holiness, majesty, and power. (*Exodus 20:18–20; Psalm 25:12–14; Proverbs 9:10; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Peter 1:13–21; Revelation 14:6–7*)

**82. How do you rightly live in the fear of God?**

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I examine my conscience according to the Word of God. Particularly useful are the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, as well as the godly counsel of fellow Christians and the moral teaching of the Church. (*Exodus 20:1–17; Psalm 139:23–24; Matthew 5–7; 1 Corinthians 4:1–5*)

**83. How does the Church exercise its authority to judge?**

The authority Christ gave to his Church to judge is most often exercised by declaring God's forgiveness in absolution. However, a priest, acting under the authority of the bishop, may suspend a person from receiving Communion because of scandalous and unrepented sin, in order to draw them to repentance and restoration. (*Psalm 32; Matthew 16:19; 18:15–17; John 20:21–23; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13*)

*A Prayer for the Son's Mission*

O Jesus, God the Son, in your incarnation you manifested your heart of mission in the world: Help me so to know and practice your presence, that I may always live for your glory and the spread of your Kingdom; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**