

## The Prophet Like Moses

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For my friend AH

### The Promise

Moses promised the children of Israel:

Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee **a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me**; unto him ye shall hearken; 16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that* which they have spoken. 18 I will raise them up **a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee**, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.

Note three qualifications: the promised one was to be

- “a prophet,” one who speaks forth the word of God
- “from the midst of thee, of thy brethren,” one descended from the twelve tribes of Israel
- “like unto me,” resembling Moses.

Three passages in the New Testament teach that Jesus is this prophet.

### The Gospel of Matthew

The first gospel draws numerous parallels between Jesus and the promised Prophet.

#### ***The Word of God***

Moses wrote five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Matthew records five major sermons by the Lord Jesus that remind us of Moses' prophecy, one for each book.

- In Chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches how his people should live. Moses received the law from God on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19-20.
- In Chapter 10, Jesus sends out the twelve disciples throughout the land of Israel. Moses sent out twelve spies to explore the land of Israel in Numbers 13.
- In Chapter 13, Jesus tells stories illustrating the kingdom of God. Moses recorded the stories of Israel's history in Genesis, showing God's rule over the world in choosing his people.
- In Chapter 18, Jesus teaches how believers are to live with one another and worship God. Moses gave instructions for Israel's worship in Leviticus.
- In Chapters 24-25, Jesus predicts how the future would unfold. Moses gave just such a

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prediction for Israel in Deuteronomy 32.

### ***Of thy Brethren***

The promised prophet must be one of the children of Israel. Matthew begins his gospel (1:1-17) with a genealogy showing that the Lord Jesus is descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

### ***Like Moses***

The promised prophet must resemble Moses. We have already seen strong similarities between the teaching of the Lord Jesus and the law of Moses. In addition, the history of the birth of the Lord Jesus emphasizes his similarity with Moses.

The table below shows many points of similarity between the opposition of Herod to the baby Jesus and the opposition of Pharaoh to Moses. Most of these parallels are clear from the history in Exodus 1; some of them are drawn from Jewish traditions preserved in the Targum (the pre-Christian Aramaic translation of the Old Testament) and Josephus (a Jewish historian of the first century AD).<sup>1</sup>

	<b>Exodus 1, Targum, Josephus</b>	<b>Matthew 2</b>
Jealous king	Pharaoh	Herod
The rival	Moses	Jesus
Source of information about rival	Dream (Targum, Josephus)	Wise men
Interpretation of the information	Magicians (Targum, Josephus)	Chief Priests and Scribes
King's response	Kill all the male children	Kill all the children
Notification of (adoptive) father in a dream	Amram (Josephus)	Joseph
Deliverance of the rival	Adoption by Pharaoh's daughter	Adoption by Joseph the son of David

In Matthew 2, God tells Joseph to take Jesus into Egypt to escape from Herod, and Matthew points (2:15) out that this visit to Egypt means that Jesus himself returns from Egypt to Israel, just as Hosea describes the return of the Jewish people from Egypt to the promised land in Hosea 11:1,

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

## **The Gospel of John**

John's gospel draws an explicit comparison between Moses and the Lord Jesus:

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John records how the Jews came to instigate the preaching of John the Baptist (a different person than the gospel writer), who was preaching and baptizing in the wilderness.

John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the

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<sup>1</sup> For more on these parallels, see my notes on Matthew 2: <http://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/matt/notes/Matt2.pdf>.

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Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. . . . 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

They asked him about his relation with three people promised in the Old Testament:

- The Christ, that is, the Messiah, who would die and rise again to save his people from their sin (Isaiah 53)
- Elijah the Prophet, who is to return before the day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5)
- “That prophet,” the prophet promised by Moses in Deuteronomy 18.

The Baptist denied being any of these three individuals. Then, in the following verses of John 1-2, the writer shows how Jesus fulfills each of these prophecies.<sup>2</sup>

- In 1:35-42, some of the Baptist’s disciples recognize that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.  
John 1:41 We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.
- In 1:43-51, Philip realizes that Jesus is the prophet whom Moses promised:  
John 1:45 We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.
- In 2:1-12, the Lord Jesus performs a miracle that involves miraculously filling vessels, described in a way that echoes Elijah’s miracle in 1 Kings 17 (see notes on John 2a for details).

## The Book of Acts

In Acts 3, after Jesus has died, risen, and ascended to heaven, Peter is preaching in the temple, urging the people to repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. He concludes his address by claiming that Jesus is the prophet whom Moses promised.

Acts 3:22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall **the Lord your God raise up unto you** of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 **Unto you first God, having raised up** his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Note how Peter repeats the words of Moses in verse 26. Moses promised that “the Lord your God shall raise up unto you” the promised prophet. Peter says that God raised up unto them his Son Jesus. Jesus is the prophet like Moses.

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<sup>2</sup> See my notes on John 1-2 (<http://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/john/notes/John1b.pdf>; <http://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/john/notes/John2a.pdf>) for details.