

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28

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A PROPHET LIKE MOSES

Deut 18:15-20. “*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren -- him you shall heed --¹⁶just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’¹⁷ And the Lord said to me, ‘They have rightly said all that they have spoken.¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.¹⁹ And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.¹*”

- “*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet ...*” (v.15). These words, themselves prophetic, were spoken by Moses when the Israelites were east of the Jordan, poised to enter the Promised Land.

Christians have always believed the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled by the leaders and prophets of the Jews who came after him, beginning with Joshua, and fulfilled ultimately by Jesus Christ. Our discussion today is on why we believe this – that is, why Christians believe Jesus is the *prophet* spoken of by Moses.

The hypothesis is important because, for one reason, if it is true, it implies that certain events in the history of men are ordained – appointed by an intelligent God with a purpose in mind – as a ship is kept on course in order to reach its destination. It implies that the history of mankind is known and has always been guided by God who, in the days of Moses, said he would *raise up a prophet* for his people.

- “*... like me ...*” (v.15). If we take these words by themselves, we see room for doubt. Jesus and Moses are obviously different in many ways. Jesus is without sin; he is the Son of God. Moses was neither. Moses gave the law; Jesus fulfilled it. John’s gospel, in fact, contrasts Moses and Jesus: “*The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” (John 1:17). So how can Jesus be “*a prophet like Moses?*” Today we discuss four reasons for believing Jesus is that prophet.

- “*... from among you, from your brethren ...*” (v.15). Here is the first reason for saying Jesus is the prophet. He was born to Jewish parents, in a village of the Jews, and brought up under the law among his own people.

- “*... him you shall heed – just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb...*” In v.16-19 we have a second reason for believing Jesus is the prophet spoken of by Moses – a prophet *like* Moses. Namely, the people needed a *mediator* to negotiate between them and God. After the law was given, the people were afraid. No one wanted to be in the presence of God. They asked Moses to be their *mediator*.

Review Ex 20:18-19: “*Now when all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.’*”

1 Tim 2:5 says, “*There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” Thus, Jesus and Moses are alike in that both are mediators between God and men.

However, review the rest of Ex 20 and discuss several ways in which Jesus is different in the way he mediates between God and men. For example, Moses *went to* God on behalf of men; Jesus himself is the way to God. His prophecy, “*I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*” (John 14:3) isn’t meant to be read only at funerals. It is for the living. It is for you, today. Jesus *has* come again, into the hearts of believers. He *has* taken you to himself in this sense, so you can live with him.

Other prophets and priests also were mediators, but not like Moses and Jesus. In a way, even you and I are “mediators” when we pray for others, but because we sin and are not called by God as Moses was called, we may not come face to face with him. You and I, unlike Moses and Jesus, need a *mediator*.

When Jesus was praying (Luke 9:28ff), two men were sent to counsel with him, Moses and Elijah. Discuss how these two men of God would have been of one mind concerning the trial to come.

- “*They have rightly said all that they have spoken*” (v.17). God spoke these words after the people in the wilderness said, in effect, “We can’t face God any more. We need a mediator!” He knows we are all no different. We cannot come before a righteous God. We need a mediator, and we have one in Jesus Christ.
- A third reason we have for saying Jesus is the prophet spoken of by Moses is the affirmation of this fact by several NT writers, as well as Jesus himself. Discuss the following passages:

John 1:45. *Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

Matt 5:17-20 (in the Sermon on the Mount). *Jesus said, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them ...”*

Luke 24:21-27 (on the road to Emmaus). *... And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Acts 3:22-26 (Peter’s second sermon). *“Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up’ ... God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first ...”*

Acts 7:37 (Stephen, speaking of Moses before the high priest). *“This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.’”*

Stephen said Moses was referring to Jesus Christ when he said this. “*Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?*” he asked. “*And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it*” (7:52-53). The Jews, especially the high priest, did not like being told they had betrayed and murdered Messiah, and in their fury they seized Stephen and stoned him to death.

There is no doubt that NT people who accepted Christ accepted him as the Messiah, and believed him to be the fulfillment of Deut 18:15. Certainly God has raised other great prophets like Moses, who have spoken the words of God, but Christ remains as the final fulfillment of the words of Moses.

- A fourth reason for saying Jesus is the prophet spoken of by Moses is that Jesus and Moses had comparable roles in the world. Those who followed them were led from slavery to freedom – from lives of suffering and bondage to lives of freedom and hope.

Both fed the people miraculously, in body as well as in spirit. *The law* came through Moses, and he fed the people with manna in the wilderness. God explained his purpose in this in Ex 16:12: “*I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”*

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, and he fed thousands with bread and fish. After the feeding of the five thousand, after the people considered the great sign Jesus had done, they said, “*This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!*” (John 6:14). Not *a* prophet, but *the* prophet. In other words, the people were saying Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses in Deut 18:15 because he fed the people with bread from heaven.

There is more to Jesus Christ, of course, than just fulfilling the prophecy of Moses. Moses led the people to the banks of the Jordan, but not across. Jesus will take you across to the Promised Land. Moses said the manna – the bread of life – was from God. Jesus said, “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6:48).

Nevertheless, the arguments that say Jesus fulfills Moses’ prophecy, “*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you,*” are convincing. And since these words refer to a man born twelve hundred years after Moses, the implications for the world, and for our lives, are profound. We can safely trust the future – and ourselves as well – to the promises of Scripture. A loving God has sent his Son that we may be born again with life in him. Are you convinced enough to receive him today?