Jesus and Moses (Deuteronomy)

Hello, my name is Stephen Sizer. Apart from Jesus, who would be your hero in all of world history? Of all the Old Testament characters, Moses stands out as the greatest. He was a prophet, a politician, mediator, lawyer, historian and leader, all in one. Probably no name has ever stirred the heart of a nation as his has done. It is impossible to overrate the place of Moses in the Jewish nation. His Hebrew family; his forty years education in the Egyptian royal family, his forty years of solitude with God herding sheep in the wilderness. All these combined to prepare him to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt at the sprightly young age of 80. Yes, 80 years old. And then what? The first 80 years equipped Moses to lead his people through the desert for the next 40 years before they entered the Promised Land. In the Book of Deuteronomy we meet Moses at the end of a long life, still full of energy. God's people are about to enter the Promised Land without him. Yet there is no trace of bitterness in his heart. Instead he rejoices that they will enter the land under the leadership of Joshua.

The Lord's final instructions to Moses are found in Deut 32

"Go up ... to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people." [Deuteronomy 32:49-50]

But a greater honour awaited God's faithful servant.

Scripture records that Moses did subsequently visit the Promised Land. A day came when he stood with Elijah beside the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, within the Land, and talked with his Lord about his role: "They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. [Luke 9:27-31].

So, what is the relationship between Jesus and Moses?

1. Jesus the Successor to Moses

In Deuteronomy 18 God promised to send another Prophet like Moses.

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. The LORD said to me: ... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him." [Deut. 18:15-18] In what ways would Jesus like Moses? The parallels are remarkable. The hand of God preserved both as a baby, in their years of silent training, in their willingness to leave the palace of a king to deliver his people from bondage, in being tempted in the desert, in their work as a mediator between God and the people, in their communion with God face to face; in completing the work God has sent them to do, in all these Moses was a picture of the Son of Man who was to come. No wonder Jesus refers to and compares himself to Moses. In John 5, Jesus warns,

"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (John 5:45-47)

The irony is that when John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness, the people asked if he was 'the Prophet'

"Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed—he did not deny but confessed—"I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No" [John 1:19-21].

Jesus disciples recognized him as the one Moses promised:

"On the next day Jesus ... found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." (Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.) Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" [John 1:43-45].

After Jesus commenced His public ministry, it did not take some long to conclude that He was "the Prophet." When He fed the 5,000, the crowd concluded that Jesus was indeed "the Prophet,"

"So when the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus performed, they began to say to one another, "This is certainly the Prophet who is to come into the world." Then Jesus, because he knew they were going to come and seize him by force to make him king, withdrew again up the mountainside alone [John 6:14-15].

Most of the Jewish religious leaders however believed Jesus was an imposter. In part, this was because they failed to understand in what way "the Prophet" was to be "like Moses." They expected "the Prophet" to agree with their interpretation of the Law, and He did not. Jesus had not come to reject the law as the Jews accused, but to fulfil it. The problem with the Pharisees was that they neither taught the law correctly, nor kept it. That is why they rejected Jesus despite his miracles and teaching.

Jesus insisted that Moses testified of Him, and that it was Moses who would accuse them in the judgment:

"Do not suppose that I will accuse you before the Father. The one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what Moses wrote, how will you believe my words?" [John 5:45-47].

The Pharisees repeatedly set Moses against Jesus.

"They heaped insults on him, saying, "You are his disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God has spoken to Moses! We do not know where this man comes from!" [John 9:28-29].

Here is where the religious leaders went wrong.

But beyond this, the Jews failed to understand the significant ways in which Jesus was not "like Moses." Jesus was vastly superior to Moses. This is the core of the message of the Book of Hebrews. Jesus was not only the successor to Moses,

2. Jesus is Superior to Moses

In the eyes of the Jews no one was as great as Moses.

Moses was superior to all other men, for he had been used so greatly by God and had been so faithful to God. So the

writer to Hebrews begins by comparing them, but insists we fix our eyes on Jesus not Moses. Please turn with me to Hebrews 3.

"Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house." [Hebrews 3:1-2]

The expression "fix your thoughts" (katanoeō) means to focus or concentrate your thoughts, your attention, your eyes upon Jesus Christ and learn from him. We can learn from Moses but we trust in Jesus, for he has come with the full authority and power of God. Hebrews 3 goes on to say,

"Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house," bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. [Hebrews 3:3-5] Moses pointed to Jesus. Moses teaching was not an end in itself. The Law exposed sin and the sacrifices temporarily covered sin. When people truly understood the message of Moses, they recognised Jesus to be the one Moses promised.

All that we learn about the Lord Jesus from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy was revealed by God through Moses, so that he could help prepare us to recognise Jesus. Where as Moses was only a servant in God's House, Jesus is the son and heir. Verse 6,

"But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory." [Hebrews 3:6]
You see God's House was not the Tabernacle or even the Temple. These were temporary. God's house was and is a building under construction, a building made of living stones in which Jesus is the cornerstone. The apostle Peter understood this.

"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." [1 Peter 2:4-5]

You see Jesus is not only the successor to Moses. Jesus is not only superior to Moses. Jesus is indeed the saviour of Moses and you and I too. One final comparison between Moses and Jesus – between law and grace. In his book

"Improving Your Serve" Charles Swindoll tells a parable to describe the importance of what Christ has done:

"Think of yourself as living in an apartment house. You live there under a landlord who has made your life miserable. He charges you exorbitant rent. When you can't pay, he loans you money at a fearful rate of interest, to get you even further into his debt. He barges into your apartment at all hours of the day and night, wrecks and dirties the place up, then charges you extra for not maintaining the premises. Your life is miserable. Then comes Someone who says, "I've taken over this apartment house. I've purchased it. You can live here as long as you like, free. The rent is paid up. I am going to be living here with you, in the manager's apartment." What a joy! You are saved! You are delivered out of the clutches of the old landlord! But what happens! You hardly have time to rejoice in your new-found freedom, when a knock comes at the door. And there he is - the old landlord! Mean, glowering, and demanding as ever. He has come to collect the rent. What do you do! Do you pay him! Of course, you don't! You confidently tell him, "You'll have to take that up with the new Landlord." He may shout, he may threaten.

You just quietly tell him, "Take it up with the new Landlord." If he comes back a dozen times, and makes all sorts of threats and arguments, waving legal-looking documents in your face, you simply tell him yet once again, "Take it up with the new landlord." In the end he has to. He knows it, too. He just hopes that he can bluff and threaten and deceive you into doubting that the new Landlord will really take care of things. Now this is the situation of a Christian. Once Christ has delivered you from the power of sin and the devil, you can depend on it: that old landlord will soon come back knocking at your door. And what is your defence! How do you keep him from getting the whip hand over you again! You send him to the new Landlord. You send him to Jesus."

Fix your thoughts on Jesus. Or, as one song writer put it:
"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful
face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the
light of His glory and grace." God bless you.