

The Better Prophet

Hebrews 3:1-6, Deuteronomy 18:18-19, Deuteronomy 18:15

Slide 1

I am going to give you 5 true statements about a Bible character, and then I'll ask you to WHOM I'm referring.

- When he was born, the people of Israel were under the control of a foreign nation.
- When he was a newborn, his life was in danger from a powerful King.
- He came to save his people.
- He went down to Egypt.
- And... at one point in his life he fasted for 40 days and nights.

To whom I'm referring? That's right Jesus... but not just Jesus, Moses, too. All 5 of those statements applied to both Jesus and Moses! This makes sense because God had promised Moses:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19, "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. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name."

Jesus was the prophet God had promised. Even though He was a prophet like Moses, there was a significant difference between these two men.

While Jesus was like Moses, He was also greater than Moses. That's what our passage we read this morning is saying. Listen to it again.

Hebrews 3:3, *“Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.”*

Throughout the book of Hebrews we’re repeatedly told that Jesus is better than anything else.

Jesus offered a better hope (7:19); Jesus offered a better covenant (7:22; 8:6); Jesus offered a better resurrection (11:35); and Jesus offered a better sacrifice (9:22).

He Himself was better than any angel; better than any Old Testament Priest; and of course, He was better than Moses.

Now, to say Jesus was better than Moses would be hard for many Jewish believers to swallow, because Moses was a pillar in Jewish society.

One commentator noted, *“The Jews thought Moses was a far better prophet and leader than anyone else and he had been protected by God from his birth through his death. Between those two dates Moses life was filled with miracle upon miracle upon miracle, and while God spoke to the prophets in visions, God spoke to Moses face to face.”*

The Jews had great confidence in the Law of Moses. The Old Testament commandments and the rituals were their highest priorities, and, for the Jews, Moses and the Law were one.

In fact, in the New Testament, the commands of God were often referred to as the “Law of Moses.”

Moses not only brought the Ten Commandments down from the Mountain, he also wrote the first 5 books of the Bible which laid out all the laws that governed everything in Jewish life.

Because of all this, some Jews believed Moses was even greater than the angels.

However, in Hebrews 3, the writer of Hebrews called the people to look to Jesus, not Moses because, while Moses was great, Jesus was greater.

Moses was great, but Jesus was greater? Think about it this way: Back in 1972, NASA launched a space probe called Pioneer 10.

The satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons, and then beam all that data back to earth.

It was a bold plan. At that time no earth satellite had ever gone beyond Mars, and they feared that the asteroid belt would destroy the satellite before it could reach its target.

But Pioneer 10 not only reached Jupiter, it did a lot more! In November 1973, scientists used Jupiter's immense gravity as a kind of slingshot and Pioneer 10 was hurled toward the edge of the solar system.

At one billion miles from the sun, Pioneer 10 passed Saturn. At some two billion miles, it hurtled past Uranus; at nearly three billion miles, Neptune; and at almost four billion miles, Pluto.

By 1997, twenty-five years after it was launched, Pioneer 10 had traveled more than six billion miles from the sun, continuing to beam back radio signals to scientists on Earth.

Radio communication was lost with *Pioneer 10* on 23 January 2003, because of the loss of electric power for its radio transmitter, with the probe at a distance of 12 billion miles from the sun.

Someone called it “*The Little Satellite That Could.*” Perhaps the most remarkable fact was that those signals were sent from the spacecraft’s 8-watt transmitter. That’s roughly the same wattage as a bedroom night light.

And Pioneer’s computing power? The key fob to your car has more computing power than Pioneer 10 and it used a reel-to-reel magnetic tape to store data.

My point is: Pioneer 10 accomplished a phenomenal task. It was the first of only five man-made space craft to ever leave our solar system.

But as much as that “*Little Satellite that could*” did, today’s spacecraft are built far better and far more powerful, except for Boeing’s Starliner.

Slide 2

In the same way, Moses was good, and he did mighty things for God, but Moses can’t compare to the power and might of Jesus. Now, as Christians, I think we’ve that figured out.

But this idea that Jesus was a prophet, and a better prophet than Moses, I don’t believe we think about that very much.

I mean, Jesus being a priest and king, we’ve got down that pretty well, but Jesus being a prophet? That doesn’t seem to be a popular topic. I mean, why should we care whether Jesus was a prophet or not?

God cared, that’s why! God told Moses He’d raise up a prophet like him; and since that prophet was Jesus there has to be something to it. But what? Why is that important?

Well first, by definition: “*A prophet was someone who declared God’s will to His people.*”

In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses said, *“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.”*

“You must listen to him,” that’s what God said when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Matthew 17:5b, *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”*

When Jesus spoke, He declared the will of God to us, because that’s what a prophet does, but Jesus was different than all other prophets.

Throughout the Old Testament, prophets would say, *“Thus saith the Lord,”* in other words, *“This is what God says!”*

But when Jesus spoke, He declared *“I say unto you,”* and that’s one of the things that amazed Jesus’ audiences.

In Matthew 7:28b-29a we’re told *“the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority...”*

Jesus had something to say. He was superior to every prophet who ever lived, including Moses, because He didn’t have to say, *“Thus saith the Lord.”* He was the LORD!

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Prophets also had a message. What message, as a Prophet, did Jesus come to give us? Well, there was the standard stuff that most prophets preached.

Jesus preached repentance. Matthew 4:17, *“From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

Every prophet preached that people needed to repent/turn away from their sins because people often thought they were okay the way they were.

That's why God had to repeatedly remind people, NO, YOU'RE NOT! You're not okay. You've all sinned and fallen short of glory.

No one stands before God based on their own righteousness. You need to repent; you need to change your life. Jesus also preached judgment.

Matthew 13:47-50, "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There's going to come a day of judgment, and you're going to want to be ready for that day. Those were the types of things every prophet said.

But, what prophet ever said,

Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Did you catch that? *"Come unto Me!" "I will give you rest!" "Take my hoke upon you!"*

No prophet could ever have said anything like that. No wise man; no philosopher; no person of wealth and power, and definitely not Moses.

But Jesus could, because there was something about Jesus that changed people. Jesus hung out with drunkards, prostitutes and outcasts.

By the time Jesus was finished with them, they weren't drunkards, prostitutes, or outcasts anymore. Jesus promised in John 10:10, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

The very presence of Jesus changed people. Do you remember the time when Jesus had been invited to Simon the Pharisees house?

Simon invited Jesus, but deliberately snubbed him. He didn't give Jesus a kiss of greeting, or wash His feet, or anoint His head with oil.

These were common courtesies that Simon chose to ignore, perhaps with the intention of creating a scene if Jesus had shown anger in this.

But then, a woman comes into the room. She wasn't invited. She's not even the kind of person you'd invite to a gathering like this. She's a prostitute, a lady of the evening, a pavement princess.

I doubt she wanted to do nothing more than simply be in the presence of this prominent Rabbi.

Remember, Jesus would've been considered the rock star of the age; an important person who everyone would have wanted to meet.

I doubt she came to be changed by Him, but she was. As she stood near Jesus, do you what she did first? She cried!

She wept tears of shame and guilt. Her tears wet Jesus' feet, and she began to wipe his feet dry with her hair. There's something about just being near Jesus that changes people.

Slide 4

Conclusion

Just knowing the story about Jesus has changed many people's lives. In 1979 there was a movie called, "*The Jesus Movie*."

It was translated into numerous languages and used an evangelistic tool. Missionaries would set up a bed sheet for a screen and show the movie out in the fields.

It was a movie about Jesus. Even though the actor wasn't the real Jesus, that movie touched lives.

Johnny Olsen of Oslo, Norway was known as a neo-Nazi, He was one of Norway's most notorious criminals.

In the late 1990s he walked into the offices of a Norwegian newspaper and confessed to bombing an anti-racism center in Oslo in 1994.

His lawyer said, "*It was the film that made him realize that he had to show his hand. It has been a long process, but the Jesus film made the difference.*"

Then there was a man named James Anderson who walked into a sheriff's office in Palm Beach, Florida and confessed to having robbed a bank in the city two years earlier.

He had gotten away with \$25,000, and police had no leads on the case at all. Anderson said he decided to come clean after seeing the movie.

There's something about the very story of Jesus that changes lives. And, speaking of movies, have you ever seen the movie "*Ben Hur*."

The best-known version stars Charlton Heston, and won 11 academy awards, but there've been about 5 movies with that title.

All of the movies were based on a book by Lew Wallace. There's a story circulating that Wallace had been on a train one time with a renowned agnostic named Ingersoll.

Neither Wallace, nor Ingersoll believed in the Jesus of Bible, but on their train ride Ingersoll convinced Wallace to write a book about Christ without all the miraculous nonsense they both rejected.

Ingersoll commented, *"Tear down the prevailing sentiment as to His divineness and paint Him as He was - a man among men."*

Wallace took the challenge and began researching the Gospels to create the plot, but what started out as a skeptic's reworking of the Gospel story turned out to be a reworking of the heart of the skeptic.

By the time Wallace was done writing the book, Jesus had changed him. He discovered that Christ was more than just a man, He was God in the flesh.

You see, Jesus WAS a prophet, and His message was Himself!

Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

That is the same question Jesus is asking today. If you've never answered that question, today is the day.

"Do you believe this?" Do you?