

# What Child Is This?

*“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,  
for he will save his people from their sins.”  
(Matthew 1:21 ESV)*

*“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy  
that will be for all the people.”  
(Luke 2:10 ESV)*

## **A Prophet Like Me**

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023**

**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning Cornerstone! If you have your Bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to Deuteronomy 18:15-19; that’s on page 161 in the pew Bibles. This is the first Sunday in Advent. For those of you who are new to church, Advent is the season when we reflect upon the coming of the Lord. The word “advent” means “the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.”<sup>1</sup> People might talk about the ADVENT of democracy or the ADVENT of the internet – but here in church when we use that word we are talking about the ADVENT OF CHRIST. We are talking about his COMING because his COMING changes EVERYTHING.

The title for our Advent series this year is “What Child Is This?” and we’re going to look at several stories and passages in the Bible that will help us to answer that very important question.

This morning we are going to be looking at one of the most important prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. It IS a prophecy, but it is MORE than a prophecy; it is also a PICTURE or a PATTERN. The Bible says that the life and ministry of Moses is a sort of “illustration in advance” that helps us to identify and appreciate the Savior that God will send. Hopefully you have your Bibles open by now to Deuteronomy 18:15-19. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Languages online.

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— 16 just 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 are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. 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 listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.’” (Deuteronomy 18:15-19 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Alright, so in this passage God tells Moses, and Moses tells the people to EXPECT a PROPHET LIKE HIM. The story of Moses therefore established a sort of pattern that the Jewish people expected SOMEONE to come and fulfil. When John the Baptist came on to the scene, a number of people wondered if he was “the prophet like Moses.” They came and asked him:

“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” (John 1:21 ESV)

So people were looking! They had the life and the story of Moses like a sort of LENS or a set of CLUES and they were waiting and watching for the one who was COMING. The early church obviously, was CONVINCED that Jesus was the one who perfectly fulfilled and SURPASSED this pattern. Peter, in one of the first recorded sermons in the Book of Acts spoke about:

“Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.’” (Acts 3:20-22 ESV)

Stephen too spoke about this in his sermon in Acts 7:37 so the early Christians understood Jesus as having perfectly fulfilled this biblical pattern. He WAS the prophet like Moses.

Now of course, he was MORE than that – he was the new and better Adam, he was the Seed of Abraham, he was the Son of David, he was the suffering servant – yes, yes, yes!!!! But he was ALSO the prophet like Moses – and that’s what we’re going to talk about today.

There are 10 ways that Jesus distinctly FULFILLS and SURPASSES the PATTERN set by the life and ministry of Moses. I'm going to tell you all 10 but then for the sake of time, I'm going to unpack the 5 most significant of those. Here's the full list:

### **How Is Jesus "A Prophet Like Moses?"**

Jesus is the prophet like Moses in that:

- 1. He was an Israelite - a descendent of Abraham through the line of promise**
- 2. He escaped genocide as a child**
- 3. He did many mighty signs and wonders**
- 4. He set his people free from slavery**
- 5. He serves as a mediator between the LORD and his people**
- 6. He makes a covenant between the LORD and his people**
- 7. He speaks an authoritative Word from God**
- 8. He feeds his people in a dry and desert land**
- 9. He is resisted and rejected by many people**
- 10. He leads the faithful into their promised inheritance**

Alright, that's the FULL LIST, but for the sake of time, I want to unpack 5 particular aspects of this pattern. All 10 are important, but these 5 are especially significant in terms of our recognition and appreciation of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

So let's talk first of all about how, like Moses, Jesus sets his people free from slavery.

### **He set his people free from slavery**

In a sense this allows us to speak a little bit about #3 and #4 because the miracles that Moses did were associated with his role as the deliverer of Israel. God didn't give Moses miraculous powers so that he could amuse and entertain the masses, he gave him miraculous powers specifically SO that he would be recognized by the Jewish people and so that he could DEFEAT the human and demonic powers that had kept his people in bondage and slavery.

The same could be said about the signs and wonders that were done by Jesus. Like Moses, Jesus didn't do miracles to entertain the masses, he did miracles to defeat the power of the devil and to set God's people free. That's how he described it. He said:

“how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.” (Matthew 12:29 ESV)

That's what I'm doing, Jesus said! I'm **PLUNDERING THE DEVIL'S DUNGEON!!** And to do that, I've got to bind the strong man.

We don't talk nearly enough about this particular aspect of Jesus' work and ministry! As conservative evangelicals we focus **SO NARROWLY** on the **CROSS OF CHRIST** as an **ATONEMENT** for sin - which it was and which I believe and which I celebrate – but we talk so much about that that we sometimes **NEGLECT** to mention that it was also an important **VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL**. The Apostle Paul thought it was important to talk about both. He said:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:13-15 ESV)

That's wonderful balance, isn't it? **YES** the cross wiped out the record of your sins and transgressions – hallelujah!!!! **BUT IT ALSO** cut the hamstring of your enemy; it knocked the sword out of his hand and it decisively undermined his ability to influence and control your behaviour – are you celebrating that?

Christian, do you understand that because of Jesus Christ you can be **FORGIVEN AND YOU CAN BE FREE?**

So many Christians today only care about the first part of that. They are just happy that the blood of Jesus **WIPES** away their sins – so you know, you can do whatever you like, you can sin

however much you want, and then just pray a little prayer and it will all be washed away by the blood of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul HATED the fact that SOME PEOPLE thought that way about salvation. He said:

“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that **you who were once slaves of sin** have become **obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed**, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:15-18 ESV)

Do you see that? For the Apostles, the salvation of Christ was about MORE than JUST FORGIVENESS – it was about FORGIVENESS AND FREEDOM TOGETHER!

Why?

Because that’s the Biblical pattern!

God didn’t set the Jews free from Egypt so they could live like animals in the desert – NO! He set them free so that they could live like human beings UNDER HIS GOOD AND GRACIOUS LAW!

So too in the New Testament!

Jesus doesn’t set us free so that we can keep on doing the same sins we did before we were saved - NO!!! Jesus sets us free so that we can be faithful, obedient, wise, kind, generous, LOVING PEOPLE!

He heals our heart and he gives us his Spirit – and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is FREEDOM!!!

Can you say amen to that?

Amen!

That's probably the MOST OBVIOUS and perhaps the most IMPORTANT way that Jesus fulfils and SURPASSES this prophetic pattern – but there is more.

Like Moses, Jesus makes a covenant between the LORD and his people.

### **He makes a covenant between the LORD and his people**

A covenant is a mutually agreed upon relationship, usually between a greater and a lesser party. God says: “I will be your God and bless you and give you a good land and good harvest and lots of healthy, pudgy little babies and in return you will walk this way.”

That's a covenant.

Moses brokered a covenant between God and Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. He reminded them that God had mercifully and graciously SAVED them and was now offering them the opportunity of entering into a relationship with them. He gave them the 10 Commandments and said: “As God's people we will need to walk in these ways” and everyone said, “Yes, yes! That sounds wonderful. All that you say we will do.”

Then in Exodus 24:8 it says:

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” (Exodus 24:8 ESV)

So the covenant was SEALED in blood – well what does that sound like? It sounds EXACTLY like what Jesus said when he established the New Covenant. In Luke 22 Jesus took a cup of wine and said:

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:20 ESV)

So there Jesus is playing the role of MOSES. A prophet who is also establishes a NEW COVENANT between God and human beings – a covenant that he SEALS in his own blood.

Every time we take the cup at communion we are acknowledging that we are relating to God through the terms of the new deal established by Jesus. We are “covering ourselves in the blood of the new covenant”. We are splashing it on ourselves – or in ourselves – metaphorically speaking. We are saying: “I reaffirm my commitment to this deal. I want to come to my Creator through the blood of Jesus Christ. Please welcome and accept me on that basis.”

Remember that – because we’ll be doing that again at the conclusion of this service.

Jesus brokered a new and BETTER covenant between God and people. That’s not disrespectful of me to say – if Moses were here today he’d be the first to say AMEN. Remember Jesus fulfills the pattern of Moses AND SURPASSES IT. Everything he does is LIKE MOSES only BETTER. The author of Hebrews makes that point again and again and again. He talks about all the Jesus does and all that Jesus and then he says, with no hesitation whatsoever:

“This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.” (Hebrews 7:22 ESV)

Can you say amen to that this morning?

Amen – Jesus is the broker and the guarantor of a BETTER COVENANT – a better DEAL, a better ARRANGEMENT, a better WAY for human beings to enter into relationship with God. The Mosaic Covenant wasn’t BAD but the New Covenant IS BETTER.

Can I tell you one thing I like BETTER about the New Covenant as opposed to the Old? I could list 10 things, but again, we’re on the clock here, so let me just give you one. I like that the New Covenant gives us COMMANDS AND THE POWER TO FULFILL THEM.

The Old Covenant only gave commands. The Old Covenant said: here is the standard. Do it and you will live.

But no one could do it!

They were so diseased and diminished by sin that it was like saying to a prisoner at Alcatraz who hasn't eaten in 6 weeks: there is the mainland 2 miles away: go ahead and swim for it.

He'll drown before he gets off the beach!

But in the New Testament, we get commands AND the internal power to pursue those commands. We get a healed heart and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – so that, slowly but surely, we can become again the people we were created and intended to be. As St. Augustine prayed so many years ago: “O Lord, command what you will, but GIVE what you command.” And that's what the Lord has done to us, through Christ, in the New Covenant that he brokered – thanks be to God!

Alright, thirdly, in terms of the 5 aspects of this pattern we are covering today, like Moses,

### **He speaks an authoritative Word from God**

Moses was a prophet like nobody else in the Old Testament. He was categorically different. In fact, I don't know if you know this, but Moses isn't actually ever referred to as a prophet in the Torah – the first five books of the Bible. The Jewish commentator Jeffrey Tigay says here:

“Apparently, despite the status of the prophet as God's messenger, the title “prophet” was felt to be too narrow and too restricted ... to be applied to a figure as exalted and comprehensive as Moses.”<sup>2</sup>

Moses was such a significant character that to refer to him as “a prophet” was almost to be disrespectful. Moses was in a class by himself, in the Old Testament. Moses went into the Tent of

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 175.



Meeting and talked to God face to face, like a man speaks to his friend - nobody else did that. And if anyone EVER tried to put themselves on the same level as Moses – it wasn't MOSES that was offended, it was God. Do you remember the time when Aaron and Miriam thought that maybe they should be leaders ALONGSIDE Moses – maybe there should be a sort of 3 way thing, because, after all they were prophets too.

But God didn't like that.

He called Aaron and Miriam to step forward from the group – which is never a good thing – because he wanted to have a word with them. He descended in a pillar of cloud and voice came out from the cloud saying:

“Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. 7 Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” 9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed. (Numbers 12:6-9 ESV)

He departed – and Miriam was covered with leprosy, do you remember that? God wanted it very clear that Moses is in a class by himself. He doesn't share impressions – he speaks the WORD OF GOD.

That's a whole different thing – and people recognized that same thing when Jesus spoke. He would teach and people would say:

“What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” (Mark 1:27 ESV)

Did you hear that? A NEW teaching – because everybody since Moses had just repeated and applied what Moses said. That's what prophets like Amos did. They said: “Well, based on what I'm seeing here in Moses, if we don't get our act in gear than the curses Moses predicted are going to fall upon us.” Most Old Testament prophets are BUILDING on and APPLYING what Moses said – but here comes Jesus and he speaks the very ORACLES OF GOD. Listening to him

is like listening to GOD IN THE FLESH. No wonder people were so affected by Jesus' teaching. In John 7:40 it says:

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." (John 7:40 ESV)

No doubt.

This is the one that Moses said would come and speak and anyone who would not listen to him would find himself judged by God. This is the one whose WORDS function as the DOG WHISTLE OF THE KINGDOM. This is the one SPEAKS and dead people come to life.

Hallelujah!

And then fourthly, Jesus, LIKE Moses, feeds his people in a dry and desert land.

### **He feeds his people in a dry and desert land**

Moses, in the Old Testament, of course, is associated with the miracle of MANNA. When they grew hungry in the desert on the way to the Promised Land they grumbled against Moses and even accused him of bringing them out into the wilderness to starve them to death, so Moses prayed to the Lord and the Lord sent them MANNA. The Bible says:

"when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat." (Exodus 16:14-15 ESV)

So they gathered it up, pounded it into flat and cooked it into cakes that tasted like honey bread – it was a miracle! In a sense it was THE MIRACLE because God kept repeating it every day until their journey through the desert had come to an end.

Every Jewish person knew this story – which is why when a huge crowd of people had come out into the desert to hear Jesus teach, he told his disciples to have them sit down in groups. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes that a little boy had made available, he gave thanks over it, and he told his disciples to distribute the food to the crowd – and they did. They fed the entire crowd – over 5000 people and afterwards they collected 12 full baskets of leftover pieces!

It was a MIRACLE! Again, you might say it was THE MIRACLE – because it is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded by all 4 of the Gospel writers.

Why?

Because every single Jewish person knew exactly what it meant. John 6:14 says:

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:14 ESV)

Exactly that.

Like Moses, Jesus is capable of feeding his people – sustaining his people – in a dry and dusty land. That’s good to know, isn’t it? Anyone feeling a little tired this morning? Anyone feeling a little road weary? Anyone wondering if you’re going to make it?

Jesus can take care of that. You shouldn’t grumble, but you should ask. Go to him today and tell him that you are tired, and thirsty, and weary and you need help. And he will go to the Father on your behalf and give you the strength and sustenance that you need. He will not let you die in the desert. He will see you safely home.

And then lastly, Jesus is the prophet like Moses in the sense that:

**He leads the faithful into their promised inheritance**

Now you say, “Hold it a second Pastor! Moses DIDN’T actually get to do that! Moses DIED BEFORE he was able to lead the people into the promised land. Moses disobeyed God in striking the rock and as a result, it was Joshua who led the people into the land.”

And you are absolutely right!

Remember, Jesus FULFILLS and SURPASSES all these Old Testament types. The same is true with the pattern established by David. Jesus is like David in that he defeats our enemies, but David was a man of blood so it was actually David’s son Solomon who built the temple and who led the nation into a time of peace and prosperity – so it took TWO Old Testament characters to complete the pattern or type – same here.

Jesus fulfils and surpasses the pattern established by Moses, adding to it the parts accomplished by Joshua. Joshua, by the way, is the Hebrew pronunciation of the name Jesus – meaning at home Mary called him Joshua and at the market she called him Jesus – same name.

So it all fits!

Jesus is like Moses in the sense that he leads his people through a dry and dusty land, giving them food and water, protecting them from enemies, teaching them, forming them and preparing them but then, like Joshua, he also leads us into the fullness of our promised inheritance. The Apostle Paul loved this part of the Gospel, he said:

“In him we have obtained an inheritance” (Ephesians 1:11 ESV)

He said in 2 Corinthians 1:20:

“For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.” (2 Corinthians 1:20 ESV)

Isn’t that good?

Everything God wants to give to human beings is right there waiting for us now in the person of Jesus Christ and he is eager to share it with you.

This past week we lost our mail key and the kids were very anxious about that because our mailbox was filled with Christmas presents. We kept getting notifications from Amazon that packages had arrived but no one could get them. Finally, Mikayla found the mail key out where we walk the dog and all of the sudden, she was a very popular person in our household – because she had the ability to CLAIM all the presents that had arrived.

That's the Gospel!

The Gospel is the Good News that nothing that God has intended for human beings has been lost. It has all been claimed by Jesus Christ. He has it ALL and he is eager to share what he has claimed with his brothers and sisters. Just like Joshua conquered the land so that everyone could have their piece, so too Jesus has conquered sin and death. He has won back for us all that we lost through sin and rebellion.

That's Jesus!

Isn't he wonderful?

He can set you free from sin and addiction. He can take you back to your Father and Creator. He can teach you what is true, what is beautiful and what is good. He can feed you and sustain you in this world. And he can unlock for you your inheritance in the next world.

He's the Prophet like Moses – only better!

He's the Conqueror like Joshua – only better!

He is everything we need and everything we've been waiting for; thanks be to God!

Let's pray together.