

In what ways was Moses like Jesus?

In one of Moses' final speeches, he gave this messianic prophecy: "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" (Deuteronomy 18:15). The prophet whom Moses foretells bears these qualities: He will be raised up by God, He will come from among the Israelites, He will be like Moses, and He will be worthy of being heard and obeyed. The prophet who fulfills these words is Jesus Christ, the prophet like Moses.

On the banks of the Jordan River, the Jews questioned John the Baptist about who he was and why he was baptizing. Their question "Are you the Prophet?" (John 1:21) shows that they were looking for the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy. John plainly informed them that he was not the Prophet but pointed them to the One who was: "Among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie" (verses 26-27). John's description of the Messiah as one "among you" recalls Moses' prediction that God would raise up the Prophet "from among you" in Deuteronomy 18:15. The very next day, John specifically identifies Jesus as the One they were waiting for (John 1:29-31).

In his sermon at the temple, Peter affirms that Jesus is the prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22, quoting Deuteronomy 18:15). Stephen, addressing the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:37, also quotes Moses and applies the prophecy to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is like Moses in several ways. Moses was both a prophet and a lawgiver, and Jesus is, too. Jesus was widely recognized as a prophet who spoke the Word of God (Matthew 21:46), and He gave commandments for His followers to obey (John 13:34; 15:12, 17; Galatians 6:2). Both Moses and Jesus mediated a covenant between God and men—Moses the

Old Covenant (Exodus 34:27; Acts 7:44), and Jesus the New (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15). Both Moses and Jesus were born during perilous times, and both narrowly escaped a king bent on murdering babies (Exodus 1:22 and Matthew 2:16-18). Both Moses and Jesus had a connection to Egypt (Exodus 2:1-4 and Matthew 2:13-14). Moses was the (adopted) son of a king (Exodus 2:10), and Jesus is the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32). Moses spent forty years as a shepherd (Exodus 3:1), and Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14). Both Moses and Jesus were known for their meekness (Numbers 12:3 and Matthew 11:29).

Moses and Jesus were alike in that they both led God's people out of captivity. With great power, Moses led the Israelites out of physical bondage and slavery in Egypt, and Jesus, with even greater power, led God's elect out of spiritual bondage and slavery to sin. Moses stood before Pharaoh and said, "'Let my people go" (Exodus 5:1). Jesus came "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and . . . to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18). "In Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

Moses was also like Jesus in that he performed miracles—not all prophets did. Several of the miracles of Moses bear a resemblance to Jesus' miracles, most notably the provision of bread in the wilderness (Exodus 16:35), which is comparable to Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-13). In fact, after Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes, the people's thoughts ran immediately to Moses' prophecy: "After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world'" (John 6:14).

Another way that Moses was like Jesus is that he held intimate conversations with God: "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exodus 33:11).

Jesus also had a special relationship to God: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son” (Matthew 11:27); “The Father knows me and I know the Father” (John 10:15). When Moses stood in God’s presence, his face shone with a heavenly glory and had to be covered with a veil (Exodus 34:29-35), and this reminds us of Jesus’ transfiguration, when “His face shone like the sun” (Matthew 17:2).

Another important way that Moses was like Jesus is that he constantly interceded for his people. When the Israelites sinned, Moses was always standing by, ready to petition God on their behalf and plead for their forgiveness. After the blatant idolatry at the foot of Mt. Sinai involving the golden calf, Moses interceded twice for the people (Exodus 32:11-13, 30-32), and his intercession was needed at other times, too (e.g., Numbers 11:2; 12:13; 21:7). Moses’ intercession was temporary, but our Lord’s is everlasting. “If anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1). Jesus is right now “at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). Jesus “always lives to intercede” for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Not only was Moses an intercessor for God’s people but, like Jesus, he was willing to die for them. In Exodus 32:32, Moses offers his life in exchange for sinners. “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends,” Jesus said (John 15:13), and Jesus proved His love when He “laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16; cf. John 10:15).

Finally, Moses and Jesus were alike in that both were sent to people who, by and large, rejected them and would not listen. Moses led a rebellious people (Psalm 78:17-55; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13, 27; Acts 7:39). Numerous times, the people tested God rebelled against Moses (Numbers 14:1-4, 21-23; 16:1-3). Likewise, Jesus was sent to a people who

“did not receive him” (John 1:11), besmirched His character (Matthew 12:24), and eventually killed Him (Matthew 27:22-26).