



JESUS: THE PROPHET LIKE MOSES

Following the Resurrection, two disciples of Jesus left Jerusalem, walking to the town of Emmaus about seven miles away. As they walked together, a stranger joined them and intruded into their conversation. The stranger was the Prophet Like Moses.

BY DR. JIM SIBLEY

Following the Resurrection, on the afternoon of that same day, two disciples of Jesus left Jerusalem, walking to the town of Emmaus about seven miles away. These disciples were at the end of their hope, for their hopes died with Jesus on the cross. They knew their Master was a prophet "mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19), yet as far as they knew, he was dead and buried.

As they walked together, they were talking about the humiliation and crucifixion of Jesus when a stranger joined them and intruded into their conversation. He asked what they were talking about, and they answered his question with a question. Could he be the only one in Jerusalem who did not know what had happened? As he continued to question them, their despair could be heard as they answered: "But we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel" (v. 21).

They rebuked this stranger for his apparent lack of knowledge of recent events. He, in turn, rebuked them for their failure to understand how these very events had been prophesied in Scripture. In the midst of their confusion about Jesus, the stranger became their Teacher and took them to Moses and the Prophets. They knew Jesus as a prophet, but not as the Prophet like Moses. They knew him to be the Messiah, but their only concept of a messiah was that of a king.

The stranger, of course, was Jesus who became their teacher (once again) as he began with Moses. Perhaps he began with the promise in the Garden of Eden that the seed of a woman would crush the head of



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the serpent. Surely, he opened their understanding of the prophecy of the Prophet like Moses, of his suffering, death, and resurrection in Psalms 16, 22, and 118. Even as Moses had suffered opposition from the leaders of the people, so must he. [1] Just three days earlier, at the Passover seder, they had all sung Psalm 118 as one of the Hallel psalms, which spoke of the rejection of Messiah by the leaders. As Moses had been willing to offer his life for the people of Israel, so must Messiah. [2] He also must have shown them Scriptures which taught that this same Prophet would come as the Suffering Servant. [3] The main point of his instruction was that all that had happened—all that had caused them such despair and confusion—had already been predicted in Scripture. It was all a vital part of God's plan.

The disciples had probably left Jerusalem at about 3:00 in the afternoon and arrived at their destination at about 6:00. They invited this stranger to stay with them. Quickly, however, we see a reversal of roles as the guest becomes the host; he is the one who is blessing the meal and breaking the matzah, the unleavened bread.* If these disciples were slow to recognize Jesus' identity or to understand exactly how the events of his life, death, and resurrection related to prophecy in the Scriptures, it was because "their eyes were prevented from recognizing him" (v. 16). But we also read that after he blessed the bread, broke it, and passed it around, "their eyes were opened and they knew him." [4] This statement may be an allusion to Genesis 3:7. [5] Speaking of Adam and Eve, following their eating of the forbidden fruit, "their eyes were opened and they knew" their nakedness. It was in the act of eating that the eyes of this original pair were opened to a world of nakedness, shame, guilt, and death. In contrast, the eyes of this pair of disciples were opened to a world of joy, hope, redemption, and eternal life!

They had learned the significance of the Prophet like Moses! And with that, they also learned that Messiah had to suffer, die, and rise again in order to offer redemption to Israel and to all who placed their trust in him. The earthly ministry of Jesus could not be understood apart from his identity and function as the Prophet like Moses. Once they understood, is it any wonder that they "arose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem," and exclaimed, "The Lord has really risen"! [6]

Footnotes

1. See Num 14:10–11.
2. Exod 32:11–14.
3. Isa 40–55. See G. P. Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretations of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 119. Far from a novel view, it may be found in b. Sota 14a. Other evidence, both ancient and modern, of this view may be found in Hugenberger, 119–20. See also Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 142.
4. Luke 24:31 but see also v. 35.
5. For a full defense of this thesis, see Dane C. Ortlund, "'And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew': An Inter-canonical Note on Luke 24:31," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society [JETS]* 53 (2010): 717–28.
6. Luke 24:33–34.

* **Editor's note:** As the author states, Jesus and the Emmaus disciples would have been eating unleavened bread as it was still the Feast of Matzah. Yet most Christian artists -- such as Caravaggio -- miss this detail and depict Jesus breaking a leavened loaf -- evidence of how much of the Church forgot the Jewishness of the Gospel story.