

Core 52 – Set Apart – Week 6

Jesus and Moses

Moses' Big TED Talk

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. He led Israel to freedom. He was their great lawgiver, but I doubt he would ever be invited to do a TED talk. How many of you listen to TED talks? TED is a non-profit organization that hosts an annual conference featuring motivational and informational speeches from respected “thought leaders” and influencers. Just to attend the conference costs several thousand dollars and you have to go through a stringent screening process. But anyone can watch the videos of the TED talks. In 2012 these videos hit their 1 billionth view.ⁱ Today TED talks get more than 1 billion views per year.ⁱⁱ We love our motivational speakers.

Here's the thing. Moses wouldn't make a very good motivational speaker. Let me set the scene for you. Israel has spent 40 years in the wilderness— being tempted, tested, rebelling, grumbling, growing, dying, learning, and now she is about to enter the Promised Land.

Moses has been Israel's faithful shepherd leading them out of captivity. Moses is regarded as one of the greatest leaders Israel ever had. He led them to freedom. He brought the tablets down from Sinai and was the great lawgiver. And to top everything off, he looked like Charlton Heston. Israel established their natural identity under his leadership. He led them to the Promised Land. He was their George Washington and Martin Luther King Jr. all rolled into one.

In Deuteronomy 28 – 30 Moses gives his great TED Talk. This is his big motivational moment before Israel crosses over the Jordan and enters the Promised Land. This is also his farewell address. By chapter 34 Moses is dead.

Moses' address is often called Blessings and Curses as he lays before Israel two potential paths they could follow. Here's all the good things that will happen if you follow all the laws God has given them. If you follow God's law, your cities will be prosperous. Your harvests will be bountiful. Your flocks will increase, and you will be blessed with children. You will experience victory on the battlefield and friend and foe alike will respect you.

Moses then follows that up with all the bad things that will happen if they don't follow God's laws. It's pretty much the opposite of everything I just said. Their cities will suffer. Their fields will be fallow. Crops will wither and flocks will die. Disease will consume them. Friends will betray them, and foes will destroy them. One of the curses is this, “*the LORD will scatter you among all peoples.*” They would lose the land God have given them.

Moses breaks all the rules of a good motivational speaker. He ends with the bad news, not the good news, and he spends 4 times as much time talking about the curses as he does the blessings.

In chapter 29, Moses renews the terms of the covenant so everyone is clear what this is all about. There is no room for confusion here.

Then things take a surprising turn in Deuteronomy 30. Listen to what he says in verse 1,

“In the future, when you experience all these blessings and curses I have listed for you, and when you are living among the nations to which the Lord your God has exiled you, take to heart all these instructions.”

“When you experience these curses...when you are exiled among the nations” Do you hear what Moses is saying? In essence, Moses is saying, “You’re going to fail.” After spending all this time telling them what they should and shouldn’t do, Moses basically says, “You’re not going to do any of this stuff I’ve been talking about.”

He’s admitting right up front, “You can’t do it. You can’t follow all the rules. You can’t be good enough, religious enough, or spiritual enough. All these rules and the blessings and curses that try to force you to be right from the outside don’t work. It doesn’t matter how many rules. It doesn’t matter what the blessings are given as a reward, or what curses are threatened as a punishment. People are sinners and sinners will sin. That’s just who we are.

Way to rally the troops, Moses. If Israel is just going to blow it, what’s the point, then? Moses then looks to what God will do in the distant future. In Deuteronomy 30:6 Moses says,

6 And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

What it will take, Moses says, is for God to do something completely different. God is going to have to circumcise your heart. How does that work, exactly? I know what regular circumcision is, just what doctor do I see for this procedure?

Moses is giving them a glimpse of God’s endgame. So far in Core 52 as we’ve been looking at these 52 essential verses of Scripture, we’ve seen subtle hints of how God planned one day to rescue humanity. All the way back in the Garden of Eden, even as God was announcing the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin, there was this small clue of what was to come. This is what God tells Satan the serpent in Genesis 3, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* Just a subtle hint of what would happen on the cross, and then in an empty tomb.

There was another hint in His covenant with Abraham. God promised that one day the whole world would be blessed through Abraham. Not just Israel. Everyone. God keeps leaving these crumbs showing that this is all leading to something. This is going somewhere.

A Prophet Like Moses

This brings us to this week's core verse in Deuteronomy 18:18. You see this isn't the first time Moses has told the people that God is going to have to do something bigger and better in the future. Israel, and indeed all people, need somebody greater than Moses to lead us out of what really holds us captive and into true freedom. Moses promises one day that God will send a new leader, who is like Moses, but who's even better than Moses.

15 "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 (another name for Mt. Sinai) 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.

Moses is talking about what happened back in Exodus 19 and 20 when God first gave the 10 commandments. They are camped around Sinai and the whole mountain is covered in a thick cloud and there's thunder and lightning. It says that all the people trembled.

Exodus 19:17 says this,

Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

I picture this as kind of like Mt. Doom in *Lord of the Rings*, but instead of the evil Sauron it is the splendor and majesty of God. And what makes it so scary is not that God is scary, it's that the people are so sinful and hard hearted, they simply aren't capable of handling the greatness of God.

So God begins to speak, not just to Moses, but to everyone. They all hear the voice of God, and it sounds like thunder. This is like the thunder that has you grabbing the kids and heading straight for the basement. This is the kind of thunder that makes your big trained German Shepherd pee on the spot. All of Israel hears the 10 commandments directly from the voice of God, and...it...is...terrifying.

Afterwards, the people beg Moses, "*You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.*" They can't stand to hear the voice of God. From then on, everything is relayed from God through Moses to the people. The people are simply too hard-hearted to deal directly with God. And so God promises to one day send a new and better Moses who will be able to directly speak the words of God to the people.

Hmm, I wonder who he could be talking about?

What we have here is a messianic prophecy. Jesus is the one like Moses, but even greater than Moses, who spoke to us directly the words of God. Jesus is the true and better Moses. One of the things that the New Testament impresses on us again and again is that Jesus fulfills everything that Moses pointed to.

If you ever took a high school or college lit class, you learned about foreshadowing. This is when an author or filmmaker drops hints early on in a story about major developments that happen later in the story. For example, *The Incredibles*, supersuit designer Edna Mode goes on a rant about how capes don't really belong on superhero costumes. "No capes!" she insists. Sure enough, in the movie's climactic fight sequence, supervillain Syndrome is sucked into a jet engine by his cape. Foreshadowing.

Well, God does something very similar in the Bible. Even though the Bible is 66 different books written by more than 40 human authors, it is all tied together by the fact that God inspired the whole thing. All these human authors, though they were often writing many centuries apart in different cultures and in different parts of the world, they were all inspired by the same Holy Spirit to write what they do. And so God foreshadows a lot of things he plans to do later.

The big fancy word for this is called typology. You have types and antitypes. This actually comes to us from a Greek word in the Bible, *tupas*, which is a type or example. In 1 Corinthians 10:11a Paul says about all these things in the Old Testament, "*Now these things happened to them as an example (tupas, type), but they were written down for our instruction,*"

A type is a person or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows a New Testament or new covenant reality. The new covenant reality is called the antitype. These types or shadows become prophetic signposts foreshadowing what is to come. Hebrews 8:5 says these old covenant things are, "*a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.*"

The Bible points out a number of these. For instance.

- Noah's ark and the flood are a type of baptism (1 Pet. 3:21)
- Israel is a type of the church (Gal. 3:29; 6:16)
- The tabernacle and the temple were a type of heaven (Heb. 8:5)

The True and Better Moses

But more than anything else, the O.T. is filled with types or shadows of Jesus. Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah and many others, each in their own way, are types of Jesus. Listen to this one from the lips of Jesus himself, "*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" The Old Testament is all about Jesus.

In this morning's core verse, Moses is telling us that he's just a type or a foreshadowing of a true and better Moses to come. There will be a true and better Moses who leads us out of real

captivity. There will be a true and better Moses who leads us to true and eternal freedom. There will be a true and better Moses who gives a greater law that gives life.

Consider some of the similarities between Jesus and Moses:

- Both were saved as infants from tyrannical rulers. Moses saved from Pharaoh. Jesus was saved from Herod.
- Both found the place of their salvation in Egypt.
- Both came from Egypt to the Promised Land. Moses didn't enter, but Jesus did.
- Both survived testing in the wilderness after passing through the water. Moses – Red Sea. Jesus experienced his time of testing after his baptism.
- Matthew recorded 5 major sermons that mirror the first 5 books of the Bible which are the books of Moses.
- Both Moses and Jesus met God on top of the mountain. Sinai, Transfiguration
- Both instituted a special meal. Passover – Communion.
- Both are lawgivers and shepherds

None of this is coincidence. The New Testament is jam-packed with examples of how Jesus fulfills Moses. Jesus says in Matthew 5:17, *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.”* He is what the law was all about. The Old Covenant was pointing the way to Jesus the whole time. He was the whole purpose. He was the point.

The first sermon that Matthew records is what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon, Jesus envisions a new and better law. Again, not to contradict Moses, but to complete him. Six times Jesus says this, *“You have heard it said...”* and then he goes on to quote Moses and the Law. *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder.’” “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’” “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’”*

Then Jesus follows that up with, *“but I say to you.” “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.” “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”* Each time Jesus takes what Moses addresses on the outside and Jesus takes it further and deeper to deal with what's on the inside. Jesus addresses the heart of the problem. Jesus addresses the heart.

What Jesus is doing here is saying I come to you with an authority greater than Moses. No Jewish Rabbi ever claimed to have greater authority than Moses. Who could dare do such a thing? Only the true and better Moses who could speak the very words of God could do that.

The gospels are filled with Jesus fulfilling Moses. Take the Lord's Supper for example. Jesus took the Passover meal, that is the sacred meal that every Hebrew family had been honoring every year for 1,500 years. Jesus takes two key elements of this meal, the wine and the unleavened bread and he completely reinterprets them, but he leaves out the lamb.

Jesus says, from now on, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are not remembering the Passover that saved you from physical death, you are remembering me as the perfect lamb of sacrifice that saves you from eternal death. We do this remembrance every single week. Whenever you take communion, you're not just remembering Jesus broken body and shed blood for our sin, you are declaring that Jesus is indeed the true and better Moses.

Jesus is better than Moses, because he succeeds where Moses failed. Moses could tell us right and wrong, but he couldn't help us live right. He couldn't help us avoid wrong. The only thing Moses could do is show us just how badly we messed up. We could look at all the commands and say, "Yep, blew that one. Messed that one up. Broke that one too."

A New Heart

This is why Moses himself pointed forward and said one day we will need a new and better Moses. We would need someone who could change us from the inside out.

Listen to what Paul writes to the Colossians in Colossians 2:11-12,

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

There's that whole circumcision of the heart thing again. Circumcision of the heart is a metaphor for heart surgery. Not the kind done with a scalpel, but the kind where God changes a person from the inside out to do what no list of rules could ever do from the outside in.

Jesus circumcises our hearts by using his love to make an incision deep into our heart of hearts all the way down to highest hopes and deepest fears. His grace cauterizes our most painful wounds. His truth cuts away the scar tissue of our stubbornness and pride. His Spirit implants within us new hopes, new dreams, and new desires.

What makes Jesus better is that he can deal with our hearts. He can deal with our deepest desires, ambitions, dreams, and failures. He can change us from the inside out.

Not only could Old Testament Israel not do it. Neither can we. We are destined to fail too. There's no set of rules you can follow to fix your problems. Whether it's God's rules, your mom's rules, the government's rules or the rules of some self-help guru. No set of rules can deal with heart problems. The difference is you break your mom's rules you get grounded. You

break the government's rules you get a fine or arrested, but when you break God's rules, you are separated from the source of life.

Every single person has a heart issue, and that issue is what we talked about three weeks ago. It's sin. We have missed the mark. We have gone our own way and we have messed it up. Our hearts are separated from its true home with its Creator and Jesus is the only one who can do the necessary heart surgery. He can take the hardest of hearts and make it new again.

In Acts 13, Paul is in a town called Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath he goes to the local synagogue service. He was invited by the leaders of the synagogue to speak a word to the worshippers gathered there. He told them how everything in the Old Testament pointed the way to Jesus. He talks about Abraham, the prophets, and King David. He gets to his conclusion, what we would call the invitation or the altar call and here's what Paul says about Moses,

Acts 13:38-39

Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through (Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Jesus is the true and better Moses. Let me conclude with this – first to those of you who are already following Jesus.

There is a tendency in some corners of the church to want to go back to the old covenant, to live according the rules and regulations of the Old Testament. We want to roll things back to a time before Jesus came, and live like the grace of the cross and empty tomb never happened. With everything going on in our world, some Christians are tempted to think that things might be better if we simply went back. No, the answer is never in going back to the law. The answer is only and always Jesus.

To those of you who aren't yet committed to following Jesus I say this. Jesus is better. Not only is he the true and better Moses. He is better than anyone or anything you might compare him to. The answer to whatever your heart issues are this morning is always and only Jesus.

ⁱ <https://blog.ted.com/ted-reaches-its-billionth-video-view/>

ⁱⁱ Anderson, Chris 2016 "TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking" Mariner Books. NY, NY.