

A Prophet Like Moses

Acts 3:22-26

Today's sermon continues the conclusion to the sermon which Peter preached after the lame man was healed, and we focused on the first part of that conclusion last week, particularly,

v.19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Peter also proclaimed the promise of Jesus, a promise that Peter emphasized was found in the Old Testament.

v.20 "...and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before."

So Jesus was revealed before his incarnation as a man. In fact, Peter refers to eternity past, before the creation of the world. In order to emphasize just how clearly that promise of Jesus was revealed in the Old Testament, we read of Jesus in,

v.21 "...whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

That idea, of course, was not new when Peter spoke those words. Remember the great prophet of Zecharias, John the Baptist's father,

Luke 1:68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, 71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham."

The point is that God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets, since the creation of the world. And those prophets have spoken about redemption, about salvation, they have spoken about a Messiah who was to come. Surely one of the great Old Testament prophets was Moses, perhaps the greatest of them all. And so Peter, preaching the gospel of salvation on the occasion of Pentecost, makes reference not simply to Moses, but to one whom Moses described with these words,

v.22 "For Moses truly said to the fathers, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you."

God will raise up for you a Prophet like Moses. That is a quote from Deuteronomy 18, a passage in which the Lord is warning his people not to listen to false prophets who attempt to speak about or predict the future.

Deut. 18:9 "When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. 10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. 13 You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. 14 For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you."

Strong words, followed by this great promise,

Deut. 18:15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the LORD your God

in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.”

Him you shall hear, and heed, that prophet like Moses. And then Moses gives us the great biblical definition of a prophet.

Deut. 18:17 “And the LORD said to me: What they have spoken is good. 18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

That’s prophecy. God will put his words in the mouth of the prophet, so that when the prophet speaks, God speaks! We see that expressed with reference to the distinctiveness of the prophet Moses in,

Num. 12:6 Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8 I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD.”

So there is the preeminence of Moses above even the other prophets. “I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings.” Face to face could be translated “mouth to mouth,” which makes the meaning so very obvious. The breath of God enters the mouth of the prophet, so that the prophecy is God-breathed. The mouth of the prophet Moses becomes the mouth of God. God’s words were spoken through his mouth. And that is the emphasis of our text this morning, that God will raise up a prophet like Moses for his people, one in whose mouth God would put his own words. And while any faithful Jewish believer would quickly recognize those Old Testament references I just read from Deuteronomy and Numbers, Peter applies all of that to

Jesus. Peter is proclaiming salvation through faith in Jesus! Jesus is the one whom God the Father has sent, that he would suffer for our sins.

v.19 “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

That’s the apostolic, pentecostal message of the gospel, as we studied last week. This morning, let’s look at what Luke has recorded for us in the book of Acts as the conclusion to this great sermon by Peter. Beginning with the declaration of,

I. JESUS THE PROPHET.

Note again the words of verse 22, quoting Deuteronomy 18. “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren.” Then, immediately, the application of that. “Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.”

Him you shall hear, to him you shall listen. And pay attention. To his words you must give respect, and submission, and obedience. Thus the idea is,

A. The authority of Jesus’ words.

Jesus’ disciples would likely remember the great event we call the transfiguration, when God so explicitly revealed Jesus and the authority of his words as well.

Mat. 17:1 “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5 While he was still speaking,

behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

There were the great Old Testament representatives of the law and the prophets, Moses and Elijah. Peter didn’t understand it at the time, thinking he needed to build three tabernacles for them to live in. But the abiding presence of Moses and Elijah wasn’t the point, rather the superiority of Jesus was the point. The fulfillment of the Old Testament law and prophets with Jesus is the point. And the identity and authority of Jesus was the point. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

That same authority of Jesus the son stands out in, Psalm 2:7 “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’” 10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

Hear him! Listen to him! He is the only begotten son of God. He is the word of God, now in the flesh. And Jesus the prophet is exalted in authority far above even Moses! That’s what Hebrews 3 is all about.

Heb. 3:1 “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. 3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who

built the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, 6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

So hear him, submit to him, and obey his words. With a warning attached as Peter preaches in Acts 3.

B. A warning to those who rebel against Jesus’ words.

It’s a severe warning, to be sure. A warning of judgment, of condemnation, of rejection.

v.23

That warning is made clear as well in,

Heb. 12:25 “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.”

Likewise,

Heb. 2:2 “For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”

This warning needs to be made plain in our own day, when so many people wish to claim to have faith in Jesus for salvation but refuse to listen to his word in obedience. You can’t have it both

ways. God raised up Jesus the prophet in order that we would listen to him, and obey him. We cannot pick and choose among his words, nor set ourselves up as an authority over him, deciding for ourselves in our own autonomy how we shall live. Rather, God thunders, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” “Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.”

Notice, then, Peter’s next point regarding this prophet like Moses whom the Old Testament prophets proclaim to us. Peter makes mention of the great covenant between God and his people.

v.24-25

Here we see,

II. JESUS THE COVENANT HEAD.

All the prophets are in agreement, and Peter identifies Samuel by name without any specific Old Testament quotation. And Peter emphasizes the unity and consistency of those prophets, all of them. So that now, after Pentecost, with the existence of the New Testament church, Peter says to the people in verse 25 that “You are sons of the prophets.” That’s covenant language, for God’s covenant, in its very essence, is generational. The covenant promises of God are always given with that generational perspective, the promises are to you and to you children, to you and your descendants.

God’s covenant is a covenant of grace, by which blessings are promised to those who enter in and embrace that covenant. A covenant is a bond, or a relationship, which God establishes with his people, and the essence of that relationship, the essence of that covenant blessing, is well expressed by the words, “I will be your God and you will be my people.” It is,

A. A covenant promise of blessing

The clarity of that covenant promise is so very prominent during the time of Abraham, thus Peter preaches,

v.25 “You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

That promise takes us all the way back to

Gen. 12:1 “Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great.” I will be your god and you will be my people.

Then further,

Gen. 17:1 “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in

which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

It is a covenant promise of blessing, and that blessing, Peter preaches, is given to the New Testament church to whom he is speaking. They are the heirs of that great covenant promise. They are the sons of the covenant!

v.25 “You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

In other words, God’s blessing is,

B. A covenant promise fulfilled by the New Testament church.

As the Apostle Paul would later put it,

Gal. 3:26 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

And a few verse earlier,

Gal. 3:7 “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

Why is that so important? Because it allows you to read and to study all of God’s promises in the Old Testament, and realize that they are meant for us, the church. Those promises are not meant for the political state which we call Israel today, and though the nation of Israel today is a vital ally of our country, in no way do

the covenant promises of God related to land in the middle east apply to that godless and irreligious nation of Israel. Those promises are for us. And the land, ultimately, is the whole of the earth, which we as Christians will inherit in the age to come, the new heaven and the new earth. Because Jesus is our covenant head, and we are sons and daughters of that covenant God made with Abraham, we who believe in Jesus. “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” So now, in this age, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

And to you, to those to whom Peter preached as well as to you to whom I am preaching today,

v.26 “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

So Peter’s sermon ends with this reference to,

III. JESUS THE SERVANT OF GOD.

Peter is preaching Christ and him crucified, and we’ll see in the next chapter just how much that offended the Jewish leaders.

Acts 4:1 “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

Why were they so offended? Because they understood what Peter was preaching but they didn’t believe it. They did not

believe and would not acknowledge that,

A. The servant whom God sent was his Son.

We saw reference to Jesus the servant earlier in,

v.13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.”

The word for servant there is really the word for child. Even with reference to a small child. And that child was clearly proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets.

Is. 9:6 “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

And that child is Jesus! And he would be born by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

Is. 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

That son, that child, would be great suffering servant of,

Is. 53:3 “He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our

iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

And Peter says to you first, to the people of the nation of Israel first, to the Jew first, God sent his servant Jesus to suffer for your sins. He sent his son, his only begotten son.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Note again Peter’s words in verse 26. God “sent him to bless you.” And notice what that blessing is all about, as Peter’s sermon ends.

B. The blessing God sent was repentance.

v.26 “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

Repentance is attributed to us, we repent of our sins, and turn from them in faith to trust in Jesus for salvation. But repentance, before it is what we do, is a work of God in us. In the language of our Shorter Catechism, referring to that work of God by which God gives us a new heart, what the Bible refers to as being born again, listen to the blessing of God’s grace in that work of salvation and conversion. “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”

So the blessing of repentance is this, that when you repent, when anyone truly repents of sin, then God has been at work “convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills.” And thus Peter’s words in,

v.26 “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

The call to repentance is a blessing from God. The brokenness of heart by which you repent and turn from your sins, is a blessing from God. So when you hear the call to repent, even as I preach now and even as you prepare to partake of the Lord’s Supper, when you are urged to repent, turn from your sins with confession and godly sorrow. With grief and hatred of your own sins, plead with the Lord for the forgiveness of your sins. Knowing this, with gratitude in your heart toward God, that...

v.26 “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”