

JESUS THE MESSIAH AS PROPHESED BY MOSES

Extracted from the book:
DISSERTATIONS ON THE PROPHECIES

by

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Thomas Newton (1704 - 1782) was a noted evangelical Clergyman of the Church of England in the 18th Century. He was made Bishop of Bristol in 1761, and in 1768 was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, London. He edited the first critical edition of Milton's POETICAL WORKS published 1749 - 1752. Bishop Newton is however, most revered for his famous "Dissertations on the Prophecies" which he published in 1754 - 1758 in three volumes. This present article is in fact Dissertation VI extracted from the Thirteenth Edition of that work, published in one volume in 1823.

MOSES'S PROPHECY OF A PROPHET LIKE UNTO HIMSELF.

MOSES is a valuable writer, as upon many accounts, so particularly upon this, that he hath not only preserved and transmitted to posterity several ancient prophecies, but hath likewise shown himself a prophet, and inserted several predictions of his own. Among these none is more memorable, than that of another prophet to be raised like unto himself. He was now about to leave his people, and comforts them with the promise of another prophet. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hear-ken."- (Deut. 18 : 15). the same is repeated at verse 18, in the name of God,- "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him". It is further added at verse 19, - "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not

hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Plain as this prophecy is, it hath strangely been perverted and misapplied: but I conceive nothing will be wanting to the right understanding both of the prophecy and the completion, if we can show first what prophet was here particularly intended, if we show secondly that this prophet resembled Moses in more respects than any other person ever did, and if we show thirdly that the people have been, and still are, severely punished for their infidelity and disobedience to this prophet.

I. We will endeavour to show what prophet was here particularly intended. Some have been of opinion, that Joshua was the person; because he is said in Ecclesiasticus xlv. 1 to have been "successor of Moses in prophecies:" and as the people were commanded to hearken unto this prophet, "unto him ye shall hearken;" so they said unto Joshua "According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee." (Joshua 1 : 17). Some again have imagined, that Jeremiah was the person; because he frequently applies, say they, the words of Moses; and Abarbanel in the preface to his commentary upon Jeremiah, reckons up fourteen particulars wherein they resemble each other, and observes that Jeremiah prophesied forty years, as Moses also did. Others, and those many more in number, understand this neither of Joshua, nor of Jeremiah, nor of any single person, but of a succession of prophets to be raised up like unto Moses: because, say they, the people being here (Deut 18 : 20 - 22) forbidden to follow after enchanters and diviners, as other nations did, nothing would have secured them effectually from following after them, but having true prophets of their own, whom they might consult upon occasion; and the latter are opposed to the former. But still the propounders and favorers of these different opinions, I think, agree generally in this, that though Joshua, or Jeremiah, or a succession of prophets was primarily intended, yet the main end and ultimate scope of the prophecy was the Messiah: and indeed there appear some very good reasons for understanding it of him principally, if not of him solely, besides the preference of a literal to a typical interpretation.

There is a passage in the conclusion of this book of Deuteronomy, which plainly refers to this prophecy, and entirely refutes the notion of Joshua's being the prophet like unto Moses. "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face: In all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do," and etc. (Deut 34 : 9 - 11 ff.) We cannot be certain at what time, or by what hand, this addition was made to the sacred volume: but it must have been made after the death of Moses; and consequently Joshua was not a prophet like unto Moses, in the opinion of the Jewish church, both of those who made, and of those who received, this addition as canonical scripture. "There arose not a prophet *since* in Israel" (Deut. 34 : 10), the manner of expression plainly implies, that this addition must have been made at some considerable

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distance of time after the death of Moses; and consequently the Jewish church had no conception of a perpetual succession of prophets to be raised up like unto Moses; and if this addition was made, as it is commonly believed to have been made, by Ezra, after the Babylonish Captivity, then it is evident, that neither Jeremiah, nor any of the ancient prophets, was esteemed like unto Moses. Consider what are the peculiar marks and characters, wherein it is said (ref. Deut 34 : 9 - 12) that none other prophet had ever resembled Moses: "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do." And which of the prophets ever conversed so frequently and familiarly with God, "face to face"? Which of them ever wrought so many and so great miracles? Nobody was ever equal or comparable to Moses in these respects, but Jesus the Messiah.

God's declaration too, upon occasion of Miriam's and Aaron's sedition, plainly evinces that there was to be no prophet in the Jewish church, and much less a succession of prophets like unto Moses. Miriam and Aaron grew jealous of Moses, and mutinied against him, saying, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" (Numbers 12 : 2). The controversy was of such importance, that God himself interposed; and what was His determination in the case? "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numb. 12 : 6 - 8). We see here that a great difference was made between Moses and other prophets, and also wherein that difference lay. God revealed himself unto other prophets in dreams and visions, but with Moses he conversed more openly, "mouth to mouth", or as it is said elsewhere (Deut 34 : 10) "face to face": and Moses "saw the similitude of the Lord" (Numb. 12 : 8). These were singular privileges and prerogatives, which eminently distinguished Moses from all the other prophets of the Jewish dispensation: and yet there was a prophet to be raised up like unto Moses: but who ever resembled Moses in these superior advantages, but Jesus the Messiah?

It is likewise no inconsiderable argument, that the letter of the text favours our interpretation. The word is in the singular number, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a **prophet**;" and why then should we understand it of a succession of prophets? Why should we depart from the literal construction without any apparent necessity for it? Other nations hearkened unto enchanterers and diviners, but the Lord would not suffer them so to do; he had given them a better guide already, and would raise up unto them another prophet superior to all the enchanterers and diviners in the world: unto him they should hearken.

Moreover it is implied, that this prophet should be a lawgiver. "A prophet like unto thee;" (Deut. 18 : 15), not simply a prophet, but a **prophet like unto Moses**, that is, a **second lawgiver**, as Eusebius explains it. (Eusebius AD 260 - 340, Bishop

of Caesarea, in his work "Demonstration of the Gospel" Book 1 ch. 3, and Book 9 ch.11). The reason too that is assigned for the sending of this prophet, will evince that he was to be vested with this character. The people had requested, that the divine laws might not be delivered to them in so terrible and awful a manner as they had been in Horeb (Deut. 18 :16). God approved their request, and promised therefore, that He would raise up unto them a prophet like unto Moses, a lawgiver who should speak unto them his commands in a familiar and gentle way. This prophet therefore was to be a lawgiver: but none of the Jewish prophets were lawgivers, in all the intermediate time between Moses and Christ.

If we further appeal unto fact, we shall find that there never was any prophet, and much less a succession of prophets, whom the Jews esteemed like unto Moses. The highest degree of inspiration they term the **Mosaical**, and enumerate several particulars, wherein that hath the preeminence and advantage above all others, as shown in Smith's "Discourse of Prophecy" ch. 2 and ch.11, wherein it is shown from the famous Jewish scholar and Rabbi, Moses Maimonides,(AD 1135 - 1204) that Moses's inspiration excelled all others in four particulars, thus :

1. All other prophets prophesied in a dream or vision, but Moses waking and standing.

2. All other prophets prophesied by the help or ministry of an angel, but Moses prophesied without the ministry of an angel.

3. All other prophets were afraid, and troubled, and fainted, but Moses was not so, for the scripture saith, that "God spake to him even as a man speaketh to his friend" (Exod. 33 : 11)

4. None of the prophets did prophesy at what time they would, save Moses.

There was indeed, in consequence of this prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18 : 15, a general expectation of some extraordinary prophet to arise, which prevailed particularly about the time of our Saviour. The Jews then, as well as since, (according to the authorities cited in Bishop Chandler's "Defence of Christianity" Ch. 6, Sect. 2,) understood and applied this prophecy to the Messiah, the only prophet whom they will ever allow to be as great or greater than Moses. When our Saviour had fed five thousand men, (John 6 : 1 - 14) by a miracle like that of Moses, who fed the Israelites in the wilderness (Exod. 16 : 15ff.) then those men said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world," (John 6 : 14). St. Peter and St. Stephen directly apply the prophecy to Him, Acts 3 : 22 & 23; Acts 7 : 37: and they may very well be justified for so doing; for He fully answers all the marks and characters, which are here given of the prophet like unto Moses. He had immediate communications with the Deity, and God spake to Him "face to face", as He did with Moses. He performed "signs and wonders" as great or greater than those of Moses. He was a lawgiver as well as Moses. "I will raise them up a prophet," saith God; and the people glorified God, saying, "That a great prophet is risen up among us"- (Luke 7 : 16). "I will put my words in His mouth," saith God, (Deut. 18 : 18), in Hebrew will *give* my words; and our Saviour saith, "I have given unto them the

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words which thou gavest me," (John 17 : 8). "He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him," saith God; (Deut. 18 : 18) and our Saviour saith, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak," (John 12 : 49-50).

II. We shall be more and more confirmed in this opinion, when we consider the great and striking likeness between Moses and Jesus Christ, and that the latter resembled the former in more respects than any other person ever did. Notice hath been taken already of some instances, wherein they resemble each other, of God speaking to both "face to face", of both performing "signs and wonders", of both being "lawgivers", and in these respects none of the ancient prophets were like unto Moses. None of them were lawgivers; they only interpreted and enforced the law of Moses. None of them performed so many and so great wonders. None of them had such clear communications with God; they all saw visions, and dreamed dreams. Moses and Jesus Christ are the only two who perfectly resemble each other in these respects. But a more exact and particular comparison may be drawn between them, and hath been drawn by two eminent hands, by one of the best and ablest of the ancient fathers, and by one of the most learned and ingenious of modern divines: and as we cannot pretend to add any thing to them, we must be content to copy from them.

Eusebius treating of the prophecies concerning Christ, produceth (Demonstration of the Gospel : book 3 ch. 2) first this of Moses: then asketh, which of the prophets after Moses, Isaiah for instance, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, or Daniel, or any other of the twelve, was a lawgiver, and performed things like unto Moses? Moses first rescued the Jewish nation from Egyptian superstition and idolatry, and taught them the true theology; Jesus Christ in like manner was the first teacher of true religion and virtue to the Gentiles. Moses confirmed his religion by miracles; and so likewise did Christ. Moses delivered the Jewish nation from Egyptian servitude; and Jesus Christ all mankind from the power of evil demons. Moses promised a holy land, and therein a happy life to those who kept the law; and Jesus Christ a better country, that is, a heavenly, to all righteous souls. Moses fasted forty days; and so likewise did Christ. Moses supplied the people with bread in the wilderness; and our Saviour fed five thousand at one time, and four thousand at another, with a few loaves. Moses went himself, and led the people through the midst of the sea; and Jesus Christ walked on the sea, and enabled Peter to walk likewise. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go backward; and our Saviour rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm. Moses's face shone, when he descended from the Mount; and our Saviour's did shine as the sun in His transfiguration. Moses by his prayers cured Miriam of her leprosy; and Christ with greater power by a word healed several lepers. Moses performed won-

ders by the finger of God; and Jesus Christ by the finger of God did cast out devils, Moses changed Oshea's name to Joshua; and our Saviour did Simon's to Peter. Moses constituted seventy rulers over the people; and our Saviour appointed seventy disciples. Moses sent forth twelve men to spy out the land; and our Saviour twelve apostles to visit all nations. Moses gave several excellent moral precepts; and our Saviour carried them to the highest perfection.

Dr. Jortin (1698 - 1770, Archdeacon of London 1764) in his "Remarks on Ecclesiastical History", Vol. 1, pp.203 - 222, hath enlarged upon these hints of Eusebius, and made several improvements, and additions to them. Moses in his infancy was wonderfully preserved from the destruction of all the male children; so was Christ. Moses fled from his country to escape the hands of the king; so did Christ, when his parents carried him into Egypt: afterwards "the Lord said to Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead which sought thy life," (Exod. 4 : 19); so the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, in almost the same words, "arise, and take the young child, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life," (Matt. 2 : 20); pointing him out as it were for that prophet, who should arise like unto Moses. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction; Christ refused to be made king, choosing rather to suffer affliction. (John 6 : 15; Matt. 4 : 8 - 9). Moses, says St. Stephen, "was learned (Greek *επαίδευθη*) in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," (Acts 7 : 22), and Josephus, (Antiquities of the Jews ii. 9), says, that he was a very forward and accomplished youth, and had wisdom and knowledge beyond his years; St. Luke observes of Christ, that "he increased (betimes) in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," (Luke 2 : 52), and his discourses in the temple with the doctors, when he was twelve years old, were a proof of it. (Luke 2 : 46 - 47). Moses contended with the magicians, who were forced to acknowledge the divine power by which he was assisted; Christ ejected evil spirits, and received the same acknowledgments from them. Moses was not only a law-giver, a prophet, and a worker of miracles, but a king and a priest; in all these offices the resemblance between Moses and Christ was singular. Moses brought darkness over the land; the sun withdrew his light at Christ's crucifixion: And as the darkness which was spread over Egypt was followed by the destruction of their first born, and of Pharaoh and his host; so the darkness at Christ's death was the forerunner of the destruction of the Jews. Moses foretold the calamities which would befall the nation for their disobedience; so did Christ. The spirit which was in Moses was conferred in some degree upon the seventy elders, and they prophesied (Numbers 11 : 25); Christ conferred miraculous powers upon his seventy disciples (Luke 10 : 1 ff.) Moses was victorious over powerful kings and great nations; so was Christ by the effects of His religion, and by the fall of those who persecuted His church. Moses conquered Amalek by holding up both his hands; Christ overcame His and our enemies when His hands were fastened to the cross. Moses interceded for transgressors, and caused an atonement to be made for them,

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and stopped the wrath of God; so did Christ. Moses ratified a covenant between God and the people by sprinkling them with blood; Christ with His own blood. Moses desired to die for the people, and prayed that God would forgive them, or blot him out of His book; (Exod. 32 : 32); Christ did more, He died for sinners. Moses instituted the Passover, when a lamb was sacrificed, none of whose bones were to be broken, and whose blood protected the people from destruction; Christ was that paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5 : 7). Moses lifted up the serpent, that they who looked upon him might be healed of their mortal wounds; Christ was that serpent (John 3 : 14). All Moses's affection towards the people, all his cares and toils on their account were repaid by them with ingratitude, murmuring, and rebellion; the same returns the Jews made to Christ for all his benefits. (John 1 : 11). Moses was ill used by his own family, his brother and sister rebelled against him; there was a time when Christ's own brethren believed not in Him. Moses had a very wicked and perverse generation committed to his care and conduct, and to enable him to rule them, miraculous powers were given to him, and he used his utmost endeavour to make the people obedient to God, and to save them from ruin; but in vain; in the space of forty years they all fell in the wilderness except two: Christ also was given to a generation not less wicked and perverse, His instructions and His miracles were lost upon them, and in about the same space of time, after they had rejected Him, they were destroyed. (Forty years, from the crucifixion approx. AD 30 to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70). Moses was very meek above all men that were on the face of the earth' so was Christ. The people could not enter into the land of promise, till Moses was dead; (see Deut. 34 : 1 - 12, and Joshua 1 : 1 - 2.); by the death of Christ the kingdom of heaven was open to believers. In the death of Moses and Christ there is also a resemblance of some circumstances: Moses died, in one sense, for the iniquities of the people; it was their rebellion which was the occasion of it, which drew down the displeasure of God upon them and upon him; (Numbers 20 : 11 - 12); Moses went up, in the sight of the people, to the top of Mount Nebo, and there he died, when he was in perfect vigour, when "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated"; (Deut. 34 : 7); Christ suffered for the sins of men, and was led up, in the presence of the people, to mount Calvary, where He died in the flower of His age, and when He was in His full natural strength. Neither Moses, nor Christ, as far as we may collect from sacred history, were ever sick, or felt any bodily decay or infirmity, which would have rendered them unfit for the toils they underwent; their sufferings were of another kind. Moses was buried, and no man knew where his body lay: (Deut. 34 : 6); nor could the Jews find the body of Christ. Lastly, as Moses a little before death promised "another prophet"; so Christ "another comforter". (John 16 : 7).

The great similitude consists in their both being lawgivers, which no prophet ever was besides Moses and Christ. They may resemble each other in several other features, and a fruitful imagination may find out a likeness where there is none. But as the same excellent writer (Dr. Jortin) concludes, "Is this similitude and correspon-

dence in so many things between Moses and Christ the effect of mere chance? Let us search the records of universal history, and see if we can find a man who was so like to Moses as Christ was, and so like to Christ as Moses was. If we cannot find such a one, then have we found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God."

III. There is no want of many words to prove, for it is visible to all the world, that the people have been and still are severely punished for their infidelity and disobedience to this prophet. The prophecy is clear and express; "Unto him ye shall hearken: And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," (Deut. 18 : 19), that is, I will severely punish him for it, as the phrase signifies elsewhere. The antecedent is put for the consequent: judges first inquired, then punished; and the Septuagint translates it, "I will take vengeance of him" (Greek: *εγω εκδικησω εξ αυτου*). This prophecy, as we have proved at large, evidently relates to Jesus Christ. God himself in a manner applies it to Him: for when He was transfigured, (Matt. 17 : 5), there came "a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear ye Him**", alluding plainly to the words of Moses, "Unto him ye shall hearken", and so pointing him out for the prophet like unto Moses. St. Peter, as we noted before, directly applies it to our Saviour, in Acts 3 : 22 - 23, - "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you: And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people", which is the sense rather than the words of the prophecy. And hath not this terrible denunciation been fully executed upon the Jews? Was not the complete excision of that unbelieving nation, soon after Jesus had finished His ministry among them, and His apostles had likewise preached in vain, the fulfilling of the threat upon them for not hearkening unto Him? We may be the more certain of this application, as our Saviour Himself not only denounced the same destruction, but also foretold the signs, the manner, and the circumstances of it, with a particularity and exactness that will amaze us, as we shall see in a proper place: and those of the Jews who believed in His name, by remembering the caution and following the advice which He had given them, escaped from the general ruin of their country, like firebrands plucked out of the fire. The main body of the nation either perished in their unbelief, or were carried captive into all nations: and have they not ever since persisted in the same unbelief, been subject to the same punishment, and been wanderers, distressed, and miserable people in the earth? The hand of God was scarce ever more visible in any of His dispensations. We must be blind not to see it: and seeing, we cannot but admire, and adore it. What other probable account can they themselves give of their long captivity, dispersion, and misery? Their former captivity for the punishment of all their wickedness and idolatry lasted only seventy years (the Babylonian exile,

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approx. BC 605 - 535), but they have lived in their present dispersion, even though they have been no idolaters, now these seventeen hundred years (as of the late eighteenth century), and yet without any immediate prospect of their restoration (again, as of the late 18th century): and what enormous crime could have drawn down, and unrepented of still continues to draw down, these heavy judgments upon them? We say that they were cut off for their unbelief; and that when they shall turn to the faith, they will be grafted in again. (Rom. 11 : 17ff). One would think, it should be worth their while to try the experiment. Sure we are, that they have long been monuments of God's justice; we believe, that upon their faith and repentance they will become again objects of His mercy: and in the mean time with St. Paul, in Romans 10 verse 1, - "our heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved".

EDERSHEIM'S COMMENTS ON MESSIANIC PROPHECY

This organic unity of Israel and the Messiah explains how events, institutions, and predictions, which initially were purely Israelitish, could with truth be regarded as finding their full accomplishment in the Messiah. From this point of view the whole Old Testament becomes the perspective in which the figure of the Messiah stands out. And perhaps the most valuable element in Rabbinic commentation on Messianic times is that in which, as so frequently, it is explained, that all the miracles and deliverances of Israel's past would be re-enacted, only in a much wider manner, in the days of the Messiah. Thus the whole past was symbolic, and typical of the future - the Old Testament the glass, through which the universal blessings of the latter days were seen. It is in this sense that we would understand the two sayings of the (Jewish) Talmud: "All the prophets prophesied only of the days of the Messiah," (*Sanhedrin 99a*), and "The world was created only for the Messiah" (*Sanhedrin 98b*).

In accordance with all this, the ancient Synagogue found references to the Messiah in many more passages of the Old Testament than those verbal predictions, to which we generally appeal; and the latter formed (as in the New Testament) a proportionately small, and secondary element in the conception of the Messianic era. This is fully borne out by a detailed analysis of those passages in the Old Testament to which the ancient Synagogue referred as Messianic. Their number amounts to upwards of 456, (75 from the Pentateuch, 243 from the Prophets, and 138 from the Hagiographa, or Writings), and their Messianic application is supported by more than 558 references to the most ancient Rabbinic writings. (Large as this number is, I do not present the list as complete.)

There is, indeed, in Rabbinic writings frequent references to the sufferings, and even the death of the Messiah, and these are brought into connection with our sins - as how could it be otherwise in view of Isaiah 53 and other passages....

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.....extracts from Book 2 Ch. 5.