

Moses as a Similitude of Christ

Explanation

Several striking similarities exist between the ministry of Jesus and the life of Moses. Expanding beyond the typology of Joseph (see chart 8-7), parallels between Moses and Jesus have long been noted by Christian scholars and artists. The Gospel of Matthew, in particular, presents Jesus as a new Moses: both came out of Egypt, both spent forty years (or days) in the wilderness, and both delivered commandments and a covenant from a mountain. The basic elements shown in chart 8-8 can be expanded to include other events in the lives of Moses and Jesus, including the working the miracles, the feeding of multitudes, and their experiences of transfiguring theophanies.

Such elements corroborate the understanding that Jesus was a “prophet-like-Moses,” as God himself had told Moses he would some day send: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee” (Deut 18:18; compare 1Ne 21:20; 3Ne 20:23; D&C 133:63). The Sistine Chapel in Rome, most famous for its ceiling, also features a row of six exquisite paintings along the top of one wall depicting scenes from the life of Moses, with six matching paintings on the opposite wall showing parallel scenes in the life of Christ. These elements show that Jesus, the giver of the law, did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17).

References

- Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
- W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 10–32.
- Frank F. Judd Jr., “Jesus as the New Moses in the Gospel of Matthew” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, n.d.).
- Andrew C. Skinner, “Moses,” *EM*, 2:958–59.

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Escaped being killed as a baby when the decree of a king (Pharaoh) had condemned all male infants to death (Ex 1:8–22)

Was not an Egyptian, but lived among Egyptians (who preserved his life) when an infant (Ex 2:1–10)

Was raised with the legal right to become a king but belonged to a nation (Israel) oppressed by a pagan and foreign government (Egypt)

Freed his people from slavery through a “lamb ... without blemish, a male of the first year” (Ex 12:5)

Came out of Egypt (Ex 13:8–9)

Passed through the Red Sea (Ex 14:21–28)

Spent forty years in wilderness (Deut 8:2)

Fasted for forty days and forty nights (Ex 24:17–18; Deut 9:9)

While in the wilderness, was administered to by angels and was tempted (Ex 23:20–23; 17:2, 7)

Gave the law from a mountain (Ex 19–24)

Escaped being killed as a baby when the decree of a king (Herod) had condemned all male infants to death (Mt 2:1–16)

Was not an Egyptian, but lived among Egyptians (who preserved his life) when an infant (Mt 2:13–15)

Was raised with the legal right to become a king but belonged to a nation (Judah-Israel) ruled by a pagan and foreign government (Rome)

Freed his people from sin through his own blood, being the “lamb of God” without blemish (Jn 1:29; 1Pt 1:19)

Returned out of Egypt (Mt 2:14–15)

Passed through the waters of baptism (Mt 3:13–16)

Spent forty days in wilderness (Mt 4:1–2; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:1–2)

Fasted for forty days and forty nights (Mt 4:1–2)

While in the wilderness, was administered to by angels and was tempted (Mk. 1:12–13; Mt 4:8–11)

Gave the new law from a mountain (Mt 5–7)