



THE PROMISE OF TRUTH

Movie newsflash for you: *Matrix 4* is on its way (apologies if you already knew that)! Anyone here seen *The Matrix* movies? Admittedly, in my opinion there's only one *Matrix* movie (the first), and the reason I say that is not Keanu Reeves' acting, it's the premise: that the world is not all it seems. *The Matrix*, in a nutshell, is all about truth (hence the presence of so many worldviews in one movie).

And that's the subject of the Jesus-prophecy we're going to look at today, this one made by the greatest, most famous prophet in the OT: Moses. Let's take a look at:

Deuteronomy 18:9-22

A bit of historical background for you: Israel is camped on the edge of the Promised Land, and here Moses gives them his final speech. And in a nutshell he says, "Israel, you're about to enter Canaan, and you're going to encounter a whole lot of different takes on the truth. You need to know what is true and what is not." And in the process, he talks about the greatest 'truth-bringer' of them all.

Just like Israel, we live in a world of different 'truths.' How are we to know what is of God and what isn't? In this prophecy Moses gives us 3 guidelines:

1) Be Cautious (vs9-13). Moses warns the Israelites to steer clear of the practices of the Gentiles – stuff like human sacrifice, fortune-telling, astrology.

Now it's kind of obvious why human sacrifice is frowned upon (I'm assuming you've all realised this). But what's so dodgy about these other things? Simply this: they tap into spiritual realities other than the God who put us here.

And that's a pretty good description of our own society, isn't it? Where people will say "I don't do established religion, but I am spiritual" – a bit of New Age mysticism here, a bit of old-school superstition there. The reason 'DIY spirituality' is so popular is it meets our desire for safe isolation. But Moses says, "As God's people, you've got to be different." And that means discerning: wary of anything that is different to Judeo-Christian belief - even if it appears to work sometimes. Let's face it: you can wire up a house so the lights come on, but that doesn't mean it's safe.

As a church, we are to be a place where every-*one* belongs, not every-*thing* – belief, philosophy, or lifestyle.

2) Be Consistent (vs20-22). Moses tells us to beware of false prophets. And he gives us 2 criteria to take into consideration: 1) The message has to line up with what the Bible says about God; 2) It has to come true.

Moses here is talking 'truth-bringers', whether that be in the form of a prophet, or a religion. Now the common perspective on religions is that they are different paths to the same God; different parts of the same elephant.

E.g. consider this quote from Mahatma Gandhi:

"The need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the different religions. The soul of religion is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. Truth is the exclusive property of no single scripture."

I.e. there are no absolutes (which is ironic considering it's an absolute statement). So Gandhi might have been a great diplomat and peacemaker, but not a true prophet.

Now that doesn't mean there's nothing good to be found in the world's religions - I believe there's an element of truth to most of them, because they flow from a memory of God. But 100% truth is about God's revelation of Himself to us – not our attempts to 'find' Him. I should also say that you can apply this principle to certain 'Christian' traditions, too, whether Catholicism, the Name-it-and-claim-it, Blab-it-and-grab-it brigade, or Emergent Church.

It all falls short of Scripture. It all fails to be consistent.

3) Be Christ-Centred (vs14-19). Broadly speaking, Moses is saying, "Be heedful of a true prophet." But specifically, he's talking about one Prophet in particular – the Messiah – and he's saying, "The Messiah will be a prophet like me." And there's only ever been one viable candidate: Jesus of Nazareth.

Why do I say that? Here are the parallels between Moses and Jesus:

- They were born into poverty and oppression
- They were nearly killed by tyrants

- They spent time in Egypt
- They both took a Gentile wife
- They were born to rule
- They delivered God's people from slavery
- They were shepherds
- They performed signs and wonders like no one else
- They introduced a new sacrificial system
- They supernaturally fed God's people
- They supernaturally watered God's people
- They fasted for 40 days and 40 nights
- They were lit up by the glory of God
- God spoke directly to them from heaven
- They interceded for God's people
- They gave God's Law to His people
- They were rejected by the Israelites – for a time
- Angels guarded their tombs (Jude 9)

That's why the NT regards Jesus as the fulfilment of this prophecy. And if we're going to know God, really know God, we need to listen to that greatest Prophet of all.

Jesus Is The Answer

So where can we find 'truth'? In this prophecy given on the east of the River Jordan, and in the One the prophecy is about: not Neo, but Jesus of Nazareth. That's why Jesus referred to Himself, not as *a way, a truth, a life*, but *the* (John 14:6). Jesus is the yardstick; the acid test.

A little story to end on: a couple of months ago Abi was doing a physics paper and came across a question that had her completely stumped. So in a moment of extreme cheekiness she wrote: "I'm not sure, but I think Jesus is the answer." When she got the paper back, the teacher had written, "Not today, Abi."

But in a way, Abi's answer was right. Essentially, ultimately, Jesus really *is*. Jesus is the answer to *everything*.