

FPFWC Christian Development



Faithful Prophets

March 2021

Spring Quarter

March 6, 2021

Lesson #1 –Prophet of Deliverance

Scripture Focus – Deuteronomy 18:15-22

ICE BREAKER –

1. How can we distinguish between true and false teaching today?
2. What strategies can you implement to ensure that you speak words that have God's approval?

Key Verse: 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 hearken.— Deuteronomy 18:15

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson begins a new quarter of studies titled "Prophets Faithful to God's Covenant." Often when people think of the prophets, they think of prophetic books of the Old Testament. These are frequently divided into Major Prophets (5 books) and Minor Prophets (12 books), based on the length of these books (except Lamentations, which is "major" by association with the prophet Jeremiah).

There were, however, many other prophets besides those who wrote books that are part of the Bible. Today's study comes from the book of Deuteronomy, the fifth and final book of what is often called the Pentateuch, the Torah, or the five books of Law. (See the Lesson Context of lesson 2 for a discussion of the 5-12-5-5-12 arrangement of the Old Testament books. Moses spoke the contents of the book (Deuteronomy 1:1) and recorded it (31:9, 22, 24). This same book concludes with the declaration that since the book's writing, "there arose not a prophet ... in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (34:10). Thus Moses was a prophet of the Lord as well as the lawgiver to God's covenant people.

The title "Deuteronomy" comes from the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It means "second [giving of the] law." This is fitting because the book witnesses to Moses' farewell speech to the second generation of Israelites. He was preparing them to cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land, and they needed to hear the law for the context of their generation (Deuteronomy 1:1–8).

In its function as "second [giving of the] law," Deuteronomy repeats contents from previous instruction to the people (compare Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:1–21). At the same time, some of the material had special

relevance to those who were to enter the promised land and drive out its inhabitants (see chapter 20).

Deuteronomy 18, from which today's lesson is drawn, is the climax of a series of instructions concerning various leadership positions that would offer guidance to God's people. Reading the directives for a king gives a sense of how different a king in Israel was to act compared to those who ruled other nations (17:14–20).

LESSON COMMENTARY

18:15–22. Instead of relying on diviners, the people could receive spiritual guidance from a **prophet like Moses** whom the **LORD** would **raise up from** their **countrymen** (v. 15). Some consider this to be a prediction of a future order of prophets (just as the previous sections established orders of priest/judges and kings, 17:8–20). Others understand this to be a progressive prophecy, beginning with the order of prophets and culminating in the final prophet, the Messiah. In both of these interpretations, the word “prophet” (*nabi*) must be understood as a collective noun. However, Delitzsch notes that generally, if *nabi* is intended to be understood with a collective sense, it is common to interchange singular and plural forms within the passage, but this passage only uses the singular sense (F. Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession*, trans. S. I. Curtis [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1891], 61).

A more likely interpretation is that Dt 18 is predicting a future eschatological and messianic prophet (Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 456). The primary objection to this interpretation is that the discussion of the presumptuous prophet (18:20–22) is speaking generically and not of one particular false prophet. Hence, this contrast assumes that the prophet like Moses must also be a generic prophet and not one in particular. In response to this, first, the conjunction **but** (Hb. *’ak*, 18:20) is a mild adversative, short of a full antithesis. What is actually being contrasted is that the prophet like Moses will indeed speak in God's name, while the presumptuous prophet will only presume to do so. Second, in vv. 15–19 the word “prophet,” when speaking of the one like Moses, does not have the definite article, but it does have the article when used of the presumptuous prophet. When used without the article (vv. 15–19) it is a simple singular defined by being “like Moses.” But when used with the article (vv. 20–22), it is a generic use of the article, referring to any false prophet. By this slight change of form, the text clearly distinguishes the two uses of prophet: there will a particular prophet one day, who is defined by being like Moses; there will also be generic prophets who speak in their own name and should be disregarded.

Two other passages in the Torah clarify the meaning of the prophet like Moses. First, Nm 12:6–8 indicates that Moses is unique among all prophets, speaking to God directly (“mouth to mouth”). Thus, a true prophet like Moses will practice direct communication with the Lord. Second, Dt 34:10, written much later and likely near the close of the canon (see comments there), states

that “no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.” This indicates that at the close of the Hebrew canon, the prediction of Dt 18:15–19 remained as yet unfulfilled and directed the reader to keep looking for that messianic Prophet like Moses. (For a full discussion of this messianic prediction, see Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Messianic?* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010], 56–64). Likely, this is the reason Ac 3:22–23 refers to Jesus as the direct fulfillment of this prophecy.

This is important contextually in that the nation was not to rely on divination of any sort (18:10). The nation was to execute any prophet who spoke **presumptuously** what the Lord had not revealed to him or who spoke **in the name of other gods** (v. 20). To speak presumptuously was to speak without authorization or to claim rights that are not legitimately possessed. In this passage it refers to a false prophet who espouses an attitude or behavior that rejects God’s authority. To determine whether a prophet spoke in the name of the Lord, people were to see if the prophet’s words came true. If they did not, then that prophet had spoken presumptuously, and the people were not to be afraid of what he predicted (vv. 21–22).

LESSON NUGGET – God’s people must be a discerning people, listening to the Word, receiving it and obeying it. The Prophet mentioned here is Jesus Christ (Acts 3:18-23), but when He came, they did not recognize Him or receive Him (John 1:10-11; 5:43). The mark of a true prophet is that everything predicted comes to pass. The prophet is not 75% correct, but 100% correct!

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament*