

LESSON 1

March 7, 2021

Unit I: Faithful Prophets

Following True Leaders

Devotional Reading: Psalm 77:11-20

Background Scriptures: Exodus 12:28-50; Deuteronomy 18:15-22

Print Passage: Deuteronomy 18:15-22

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, KJV)

.....

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. (Deuteronomy 18:15, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Study Moses' role as a prophet of God in leading the Israelites out of Egypt.
- Reflect on leaders who guide us through seemingly impossible situations.
- Completely rely on God in resolving challenging situations.

KEY TERMS

Message (verse 21)—Hebrew: *dabar* (daw-baw'): speech; utterance; "word" (KJV).

Moses (Exodus 12:50 [Background Scripture])—Hebrew: *Mosheh* (mo-sheh'): a great Israelite leader, prophet, and law giver.

Prophet (verse 15)—Hebrew: *nabi* (naw-bee'): a spokesman, speaker.

Raise up (verse 18)—Hebrew: *qum* (koom): rise up; stand; "raise . . . up" (KJV).

INTRODUCTION

Discerning believers might conclude that the apostle Paul's words have come to fruition: "But understand this, that in the last days dangerous times [of great distress and trouble] will come [difficult days that will be hard to bear]" (2 Timothy 3:1, AMP). War, rumors of war, tragic environmental phenomena, hatred, selfishness, unrestrained immorality, corrupt governments, and senseless killing and murder are rampant in our world today. It is difficult to imagine a world free of such problems. In the midst of trouble, God's people have always found strength and encouragement in God's Word. Nothing takes our omniscient God by surprise; His Word warns

us of the inevitability of difficult times coming. We may take heart in knowing that God is still in control. This is not the time to be fearful or doubtful; this is the time for faithful church leaders to provide messages of encouragement and hope. Throughout history, God has comforted His people with words of assurance during difficult or uncertain times. As Israel prepared to cross over into the uncertainties of the Promised Land, Moses assured them that despite the many false voices they would hear, God would give them a true spokesman to lead them according to His will.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The book of Deuteronomy is a series of addresses delivered by Moses to the nation of Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. Moses reviewed and repeated previous instructions and focused on what God expected of Israel as they entered and occupied the land. Rather than being a “Second Law,” Deuteronomy is a retelling or expansion of the original Law received at Sinai. Moses’ audience was the generation of Israelites who were either children or not yet born when God first gave the Law at Sinai. Moses admonished this new generation to remember the consequences of disobedience and the blessings of obedience to God. As the people prepared to enter the land, Moses reminded them of what God had done for them, emphasized the principles of godly living, and called for renewed commitment to God. Moses’ series of messages included a review of God’s law, including the Ten Commandments and other laws related to loving God, relating to others, proper worship, and governing the nation. Moses concluded his message by emphasizing the various consequences of obeying and disobeying God.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Request for the Lord’s Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)

KJV

15 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;

16 According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

17 And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

18 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.

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.

.....

NIV

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

16 For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”

17 The Lord said to me: “What they say is good.

18 “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.

19 “I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.”

Following his instructions regarding the obligation to support the Levites (see Deuteronomy 18:1-8), Moses warned the people to avoid the superstitious and occult practices of the polytheistic nations that would surround them (see Deuteronomy 18:9-14). God had judged these practices and those who practiced them as abominations—that is, outrages, disgraces, or revulsions. God required that their focus and the voice to whom they listened for guidance and direction be His alone and not that of the soothsayers among these nations. So that this would be true, God promised to raise up an Israelite, not a foreigner, to be His prophet (verse 15). The prophet Moses spoke of would speak messages from God just as Moses had done. At Horeb (see Exodus 20:18-21), the people had pleaded with Moses to be their mediator with God and God had honored their request (verses 16-17). The place of the prophet among the nation of Israel would ensure an ongoing line of mediation and intercession between God and His people (verse 18). Refusal to obey the Lord’s prophet carried the consequence of God’s punishment (verse 19). Many believe that the prophet to whom Moses referred was none other than Jesus Christ, the ultimate mediator between God and His people.

God speaks to us through the Word as we read, study, and hear it. God also gives direction, correction, and revelation through the human agents He has divinely called and commissioned to speak on His behalf. It pleases God when those who are blessed to receive His Word choose to obey Him.

What Do You Think?

Name some ways that Christians position themselves to obey those whom God sends to deliver His Word.

The Test of the Lord’s Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

KJV

20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

.....

NIV

20 “But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.”

21 You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?”

22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.

Jesus called the devil “the father of lies.” Many naïve and unsuspecting persons have fallen prey to his deceptive tactics. In ancient times, the devil energized the work of Canaanites who came in the name of false gods and others who claimed to speak for Israel’s God. Many false prophets would arise in Israel presuming to speak in the Lord’s name (verse 20). The penalty for this presumption was death. Because God demanded that the people obey His prophet without question, He provided two tests for discerning a true message from God (verses 21-22). First, the message had to be in accordance with God and His Word. Second, the prophecy had to come true. If these two requirements were not met, then the people were not to listen to or be alarmed by the false prophet’s message.

Today, God’s people are still exposed to a myriad of voices that claim to be of God. False prophets and teachers speak of other gods, ideologies, and philosophies that have no basis in biblical truth. There is a dual responsibility inherent in this reality for believers today. One is the absolute necessity of having a personal, committed relationship with God. This kind of relationship activates the Spirit-led discernment that enables believers to separate biblical truth from erroneous or misinterpreted doctrine. Second, every true believer must be engaged in a consistent study of God’s Word. Just as a starving person can be tempted to eat anything, the believer with no or very little knowledge and understanding of God’s Word will fall prey to all kinds of false doctrine. This suggests that the attendance and participation numbers for the local church educational ministry (e.g., Sunday school and Bible study) should closely correlate with the number of persons who claim church membership and attend Sunday worship. Satan easily tempts, fools, and deceives those who have no solid grasp of God’s Word.

At Horeb, Israel “prayed” for a legitimate prophet to speak God’s Word to them. Likewise, today’s church should pray for God to send, equip, and inspire pastor-teachers who will rightly divide His Word. Our present and eternal future depends on what we know about God’s Word and how we respond to it.

What Do You Think?

Why must there be a balance between inspiration and information in the presentation of God’s Word?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Israel’s new generation faced the challenge of dealing with false prophets as they prepared to enter and engage the unknown in Canaan. God assured them that He would continually provide true prophets from among them to deliver messages of hope and direction. Their responsibility was to obey His voice—delivered through His chosen messengers. One of God’s greatest blessings to His people has always been a timely “word from the Lord” for instruction, direction, and encouragement in difficult times.

YOUR LIFE

At some point in our lives we will confront difficult, challenging, or hopeless situations. For those walking in an obedient relationship with Him, God often speaks messages of comfort, deliverance, and encouragement to help us along the way. We should be thankful for God’s willingness to speak to us through His Word, whether through the study and spiritual discernment or through those He has divinely called to speak to us on His behalf.

YOUR WORLD!

God protected the ancient Israelites by warning them not to engage in forbidden spiritual practices. Oddly, many of the practices God forbade them to adopt are quite popular in our world today: the occult, superstition, divination, sorcery, and spiritism. People who are ignorant of God’s teaching fall into the trap of such things as tarot card reading, Ouija boards, seances, witchcraft, and psychic readings, thinking them to be harmless when they are spiritually dangerous. The church must continue to teach the necessity of knowing, obeying, and relying on God’s Word as the only true source for living right and pleasing God in a morally corrupt world.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, help us to continuously develop the power of discernment through prayer and the study of Your Word so that we can hear and obey Your voice as the only source of truth. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

The key to making wise choices is following God's agenda even when we do not understand it. Next week, we will see this played out in the leadership of Joshua as he unquestioningly follows God's unique strategy for conquering Jericho.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(March 8-14, 2021)

Joshua: Prophet of Conquest

MONDAY, March 8: "Rahab Rewarded for Her Faithfulness" (Hebrews 11:23-31)

TUESDAY, March 9: "Jesus Heals Blind Man from Jericho" (Luke 18:35-42)

WEDNESDAY, March 10: "Enjoying the Manna and Local Produce" (Joshua 5:8-12)

THURSDAY, March 11: "Marching Around the City of Jericho" (Joshua 6:6-14)

FRIDAY, March 12: "Rahab and Spies Confirm Rescue Plan" (Joshua 2:15-24)

SATURDAY, March 13: "Rahab Is Saved While Jericho Is Destroyed" (Joshua 6:22-25)

SUNDAY, March 14: "Joshua's Successful Conquest of Jericho" (Joshua 5:13-6:5, 15-16, 20)