

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)

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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).

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher's Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week's student assignments ("Your Life" and Your World!").
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Life often confronts us with situations that appear to offer only poor outcomes. How are we to respond when the seemingly impossible is asked of us? Following the command of God, the people

of Israel left Egypt under the leadership of a faithful prophet, Moses, who became a model for prophets to come.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

One might say that the belief in one God as the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things is like an island surrounded by an ocean of conflicting and competing religions, ideologies, and magical, superstitious practices. Some who profess to believe in the Bible also put their confidence in the predictions of horoscopes and psychics. The master of deception, Satan, energizes many “voices” to block or distract people from acknowledging God’s sovereignty and yielding their lives to Him in total trust. This is not a recent phenomenon. As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, they stood ready to cross over into a territory surrounded by strange abominable religious practices that threatened to lure them away from the God who was their only source of direction, provision, and protection. Facing the future with confidence required recommitting themselves to the God who had chosen and delivered them as His own. Through Moses, God assured them that He would raise up prophets from among them to provide messages of direction, encouragement, and hope.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

Moses had served forty years as God’s appointed leader. He had delivered Israel from enslavement in Egypt and was approaching the end of his life. Through him, God had instructed, protected, and provided for His chosen people through a long, difficult wilderness journey. The book of Deuteronomy, often called “the second Law,” records Moses’ final address to Israel as they prepared to enter Canaan. In these farewell speeches, Moses addressed the generation that was not old enough to remember the giving of the Law and the covenant made at Horeb (Sinai). He reminded them of the people’s rebellion against the Lord, the consequences of unbelief, and God’s faithfulness toward them. Most importantly, Moses called Israel to obey, fear, love, and serve God alone when they entered the land that God had promised to them in His covenant with Abraham. During his second address (see Deuteronomy 4:44–28:66), Moses reviewed and repeated the stipulations of the covenant made at Horeb. Moses gave a strict warning not to practice any of the detestable religious practices of the pagan inhabitants of Canaan (see Deuteronomy 18:9-12), and then reminded them of God’s promise to perpetually provide a prophet or messenger through whom He would give them direction, hope, and encouragement (see Deuteronomy 18:15-22).

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the items below)

1. How did God expect the nation to receive the prophet He promised to provide?
2. Why did God promise to provide a prophet from among them?
3. What was the penalty for failing to listen to the prophet whom God would provide?
4. How would Israel recognize God’s prophet?

INSIGHTS

Scholars have used both Old and New Testament passages to identify the prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15 as the coming Messiah who would proclaim divine revelation and lead God’s people. Jesus

came and fulfilled His mission as God's ultimate prophet (see Luke 4:18-19). God kept the promise to provide a divine messenger to deliver His words of encouragement, direction, instruction, and hope. Our responsibility is to pray for God to continue to provide servants after His own heart who will obey His Word and deliver sound, uncompromised biblical doctrine.

EXPLORATION

One approach to facilitating this lesson is to ensure that your students understand its immediate context and its similarity to today's world. Explain that the environment Israel was preparing to enter teemed with superstitions, idolatry, and other evils that could lead them into sin and idolatry. Each of these detestable practices had their own followers and practitioners who would tempt God's people away from their God. Lead the class in comparing this environment with today's society. Allow them to identify similar practices of the occult and false religion that are currently in practice. God assured that He would raise up His own prophet who would deliver His Word so that Israel could know His voice and listen to Him. Use the Print Passage to highlight God's expectation of obedience to God's messenger, the penalty for disobedience, and how Israel was to determine the validity of God's prophet(s). Discuss the responsibilities that individual believers have in the context of this lesson since we have the complete revelation of God's Word, including such responsibilities as becoming faithful students of the Word so they can discern truth from error and readily obeying sound biblical doctrine.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on 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.”

The older generation of believers has the responsibility to teach the younger the precepts and principles of God’s Word. In fact, asserting this responsibility and privilege should be the desire of those who have been blessed to grow older chronologically and stronger spiritually (see Psalm 71:18). With so many “voices” available to influence the younger generation through music, media, and social interaction in the world, such guidance and reassurance are needed. Young believers and many older ones must learn to hear God’s voice and trust Him as their only reliable guide for daily living. Moses was advanced in age and on the brink of death when God used him to deliver final words of direction for the nation as they prepared to possess the Promised Land. The polytheistic nations that would surround Israel practiced magic and superstition. God strictly forbade Israel from indulging in these practices. In Moses’ third message, he reminded Israel to avoid these abominations and told them that God would provide prophets to reveal His will to them (verse 15).

The prophet God promised would be an Israelite and not a foreigner. Like Moses, the prophet would speak for God. The place of the prophet in Israel is best understood in the nation’s experience at Horeb or Sinai (verse 16; see Exodus 20:18-21). Frightened by God’s spectacular manifestation, Israel had pleaded with Moses to commune with God on their behalf and bring His words back to them. Their wish for a human spokesperson was acceptable to the Lord (verse 17). He promised to put His words in the prophet’s mouth (verse 18). Because the prophet would deliver God’s Word to the nation, Israel was obligated to obey God without question, under penalty of punishment (verse 19). Moses set the standard for the prophet that God would provide for His people because of His close intimacy with God (see Deuteronomy 34:10). Not until John the Baptist was there a greater prophet than Moses. The ultimate prophet was in the person of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and mediator of the new covenant. He spoke only what His Father commanded Him to say (see John 12:49). His words are God’s and are to be obeyed without question. God still raises intermediaries—called and anointed servants from among His people—to speak for Him and to deliver words of encouragement, direction, deliverance, and hope. God expects that, like Moses, they will deliver His commands and emphasize His expectations for living holy (even in a corrupt world) and the consequences of disobedience.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**
Name some ways that Christians position themselves to obey those whom God sends to deliver His Word.
- **Young Adult Questions:**
(1) Think about the leaders in your life (religious or secular). Pinpoint a situation in which they have guided you through a seemingly impossible situation.
(2) At a time when so many are claiming to speak for God, discuss the command for God's people to listen and obey God's true Prophet.

Commentary on 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.

Moses predicted that false prophets would arise and speak in the name of other gods rather than in the name of the Lord. God expected immediate and unquestioning obedience to the word He sent by His prophet. Those who dared to prophesy falsely in God's name would be guilty of presumption for trying to take the place of God by speaking a message that God did not send. The penalty for doing so was death (verse 20). God gave two tests to help Israel accurately determine whether a prophet was genuinely speaking for Him (verses 21-22).

The first test was whether the prophet's words were consistent with the character of God and His revealed word. Speaking in the name of other gods was an obvious contradiction of God's words and the first evidence or indicator of a false prophet.

The second test was whether the prophecy was fulfilled or came true. If it did not, then the prophet was false. Although the possibility of false prophets' predictions' coming true exists, they are to be rejected if the prophecy failed. Because the Word of the God of heaven is always true, it never fails. False prophets were to be rejected and executed. Spiritual discernment is essential for every believer. Satan drives and enables false prophets; he is able to transform himself into an angel of light for the purpose of fooling and beguiling even the elect of God (see 2 Corinthians 2:11-14). Discernment is a spiritual gift, but each believer can become more spiritually discerning through the consistent study of God's Word and the practice of prayer. The ultimate responsibility for identifying and listening to God's prophet belonged to the people of Israel. Moses reviewed and repeated all the commandments God had given His people at Horeb. The people were then expected to act on what they knew and so are we. God still provides genuine preachers and teachers to deliver messages of instruction, warning, hope, and encouragement. We also have the infallible Word of God to help us face impossible and trying circumstances. It is the responsibility of the community of faith to prioritize the preaching and teaching of God's Word. It is the believer's responsibility to make himself or herself available to learn and be engaged in receiving the Word and remain safeguarded from ungodliness and every aspect of false religion.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

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

- **Young Adult Question:**

"When in doubt, not only check it out but wait it out." Apply this phrase and its meaning to false prophets/teachers of our day.

LIFE APPLICATION

- **Refer to Adult Book**

(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

— 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.

(See student lesson's "Your World" section.)

— 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.

- **Refer to Young Adult Book**

(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

— The test of a true word from God is whether the message lines up with the Scriptures. Sometimes, the people we love and hold in highest esteem misinterpret the Bible. To test someone's words without partiality you must know the Bible. Study God's Word so that you will know when the truth of God's Word is being spoken.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

— People rush to consult horoscopes, zodiacs, psychics, and other fortune-telling media because they seek to know the future. But God has a different plan for His people. God has raised up a prophet in Jesus Christ. Listen to Him and trust your future to God.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, March 14, 2021, is "Making Wise Choices." The Devotional Reading is Hebrews 11:23-31, the Background Scriptures are Joshua 5:13–6:27, and the Printed Text is Joshua 5:13-15; 6:1-5, 15-16, 20.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, we thank You that You still speak and reveal Your will for our lives. As we continuously study, apply Your Word, and engage in the ministry of prayer, increase our spiritual discernment. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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)