



## Deuteronomy 18:15-18

### A Prophet Like unto Moses

Man has a deep desire to know the unknown, and to seek out the forbidden.

Wouldn't it be great to know what the stock market will do over the next ten years? What companies will excel in growth and profits? Which ones will fail and would be poor investments? Wouldn't it be helpful to know when and how you will die and how to plan for it? What will be the greatest opportunity of your life and how could you maximize it to your greatest advantage? If you had a magic genie in a bottle, what would you ask for today?

How many people, like the children of Israel, seek to communicate with the supernatural world through forbidden methods? Deuteronomy 18:10-12 describes some forbidden methods of seeking to know the unknown. These were on the same level with child sacrifices. They were divination, the practice of witchcraft, those who interpret omens, sorcerers, or one who casts a spell, mediums, spiritists and those who call up the dead (vv. 10-11). Some of the pagan soothsayers read the entrails of slaughtered animals; others studied the planets, stars and comets. Some read tealeaves, studied the handprints of the wealthy and gazed into crystal rocks.

Why was it forbidden? Israel was God's chosen people. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). As His chosen people they would receive their understanding of spiritual things from the God who spoke directly to His appointed prophet. The pagan methodologies led only to self-centered, "do your own thing" and follow your own star manipulation of the gods. It ended in debased self-worship.

The LORD God has a better way for His people. He knows and wants what is best for them. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. . . And the LORD said . . . I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (18:15, 18).

Because God spoke His word directly to the prophet, to ignore that word would lead to divine judgment (v. 19). "And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him." Those who hear as well as those who choose not to hear the words are held responsible.

How would the people be able to distinguish between the true and the false prophets? Moses gave them, and us, a simple test in 18:20-22. "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet

come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (v. 22).

The words of the prophet must be in accord with what God has already revealed. True prophetic word will not contradict what God has already spoken. This is why the Scripture is its own best commentary. The false prophet would be discovered by the fact that his message did not follow what God had already revealed in the past. The second test is true prophecy will come to pass. The truth of the spoken and written word would lie in its historical fulfillment. Over the course of time in a prophet's ministry, the character of the prophet as a true spokesman of God would clearly emerge. False prophets would be discovered by their own unfulfilled predictions (vv. 21-22).

After the death of Moses, great changes would take place in Israel. Knowing the will of God was imperative for God's people to sustain their fellowship with Him. It was reassuring that Moses promised that God would send a prophet (18:15-18). The people would discern between true and false prophets (vv. 19-22), and have no need of superficial and false sayings. The people will find in Israel a sure word from Yahweh. The LORD said He would send a prophet "like unto Moses." He would resemble Moses in respect and leadership. He would act as a mediator between Yahweh and His people. He would make known the will of the LORD.

The expectation of the Messiah was not unknown to Moses and Israel in his time. This *ideal* prophet would be as perfectly equal to His calling as Moses was to his. He would carry out His prophetic office in the manner of Moses.

None of the Hebrew prophets was equal to Moses. Each of them built upon the foundation of Moses and the Law.

It has been satisfactorily proven that the messianic interpretation of Deuteronomy eighteen was the prevailing one among older Jews, and it was predominant during the time before the New Testament. Even if the modern interpreter sees a plurality of prophets in the passage, it is still the *ideal* Prophet who comes in to view. By the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Moses knew that at some future time a real person, in a sense, the *only* Prophet would appear. That Prophet is Jesus Christ. Indeed, all of the Hebrew prophets looked forward to the coming of the day of Christ. An individual, a Second Moses would be the representative of all the prophets par excellence.

What makes Jesus Christ the prophet like unto Moses?

***Like Moses He will teach God's people how to know God's will.*** Moses "taught" the people "statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me" (Deuteronomy 4:5). Jesus spoke "hidden things from old." He was filled with the Spirit of the LORD with "wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge" to show His people how to "walk in His paths" (Psalm 78:2; Isaiah 11:1-2; 2:3). At the very beginning of His ministry Jesus visited the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth. The scroll containing Isaiah 61:1-2 was handed to Him and He read Himself into His prophetic office. "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:16-19). Jesus spoke in parables and the people recognized Him as a man of integrity who had come from God (John 3:2). Just like Moses, Jesus gave the

recognized Him as a man of integrity who had come from God (John 3:2). Just like Moses, Jesus gave the law again as He proclaimed the great manifesto of the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Peter asked, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69). Yes, more than a prophet was among His people teaching them His Word.

***Like Moses, Jesus predicted future events accurately.*** His predictions bear a striking similarity to Moses foretelling the future. Moses spoke of grave consequences to disobedience (Deuteronomy 28-29) when the people would turn to "other gods and serve them" because he knew the intent of their hearts (31:20-21). Jesus prophesied of grave consequences to the Temple because of the apostasy of the people. "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Matthew 24:2; cf. Luke 19:41-44; 21:24). This prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. To this very day the ruins of the Temple are a witness to the veracity of Jesus as the Prophet of Yahweh. He was consistent, complete and final in His revelation. Everything previously announced led up to His coming and dying for our sins and rising from the dead. Jesus repeatedly taught in the Temple and synagogues, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day" (Luke 9:22).

***Moreover, just as Moses judged the people, Jesus will return as our judge.*** Moses was the Lawgiver and judge (Exodus 18). He stressed to those he delegated with the responsibility of discerning cases, "You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's" (Deuteronomy 1:17). Jesus said, "For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:22-23; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). Yes, the judge may soon appear. Are we ready to stand before His bar?

Contemporaries observed Jesus and concluded that He was the Prophet sent from God. Philip was one of the early witnesses. He said to Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (John 1:45). Even the despised Samaritans found their expectations of the Messiah in these words of Moses. "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare [announce fully, through out, from bottom to top] all things to us" because He is the Prophet (4:25). After Jesus fed 5,000 people they agreed, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world" (6:14). The common people were expecting the Prophet like unto Moses. Jesus told the Jews who were persecuting Him; "the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me" (5:45-46). Stephen recognized Jesus as the Prophet spoken of by Moses (Acts 7:37). The apostle Peter closed a great sermon by quoting Deuteronomy 18:15, 19. He reminded the people that Jesus is the Prophet like unto Moses, "and it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22-23).

Furthermore, God the Father spoke from the cloud at the transfiguration of Jesus and said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5). Do we dare listen to the many strident voices in our day? You, oh Lord Jesus alone have the words of eternal life.

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