

**“A Prophet Like Me”
(Deut. 18:18)**

Intro: In our study of Deuteronomy we read in Moses’ second sermon an interesting statement concerning Israel’s future. Moses reports a promise the Lord gave to him about Israel’s future guidance. Let’s hear it again:

*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.
(Deuteronomy 18:18)*

Why did the Lord make this promise? Who was this promised prophet like Moses? Is it a prophecy of Moses’ prophetic successors? Is it a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ? Let’s think about it together.

Hearing it in the context of Deuteronomy

Moses spoke shortly before the Israelites would take possession of the land of Canaan. Here he warns them not to adopt the practices of the Canaanites in how they sought to find guidance for their lives.

When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.” (Deuteronomy 18:9–14)

Presumably this text summarizes the various ways that the wicked Canaanites sought to extract information from the gods they served.

They practiced child sacrifice, presumably to compel their deities to respond to their requests.

In addition, they took advantage of various people who professed to predict the future or to extract information from the unseen spirit world.

Such things were forbidden to the people of God.

But rather the Lord promises to send prophets to speak His word to 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. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’ And the LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well. 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. 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. (Deuteronomy 18:15–19)

Just as in the past the people had asked Moses to speak in the Lord's behalf to them rather than hear the voice of God, so also the Lord would in the future raise up prophets to speak in His name.

As the ancient Hebrews read this text, he might have justly concluded that this promise was fulfilled in the long line of prophets who spoke to Israel.

The Scriptures certainly acknowledge that God continued to speak through the various prophets that arose in His name throughout OT history. Samuel was considered the beginning of a prophetic era in which God spoke through various people through the generations. *Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, Because I am a youth." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak. "Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD. Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant. "" (Jeremiah 1:4–10)*

In Jeremiah's call we hear the language of Moses' prophecy. So without a doubt, God raised up many prophets like Moses through Israel's generations.

However when the apostles read this text they saw in it a prophecy of Jesus.

Hearing Moses' words in the context of the NT

Though the Jews were aware that the Lord had raised up many prophets since Moses, they likewise looked for a single prophet that would most perfectly correspond with Moses. The Jews that lived in Qumran gave such an interpretation to Moses' words; and we see those beliefs reflected in questions people asked John the Baptist:

*And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he *said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." (John 1:21)*

Apparently they thought there was a specific person in mind in the Lord's statement to Moses.

Likewise the apostles read these OT Scriptures christologically. That is, they read them in view of what they knew about Jesus. Hence Deut. 18 took on new significance for them.

Peter in his sermon in Acts 3 sees the promise of a prophet like Moses being fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED in everything He says to you. ' 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)

Peter's point is that Jesus is that prophet of whom Moses spoke.

Steven likewise works from this same paradigm, showing that Moses had a corresponding prophet like him in the future.

This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. '

(Acts 7:37)

Jesus was that prophet like Moses.

But were these writers justified in applying the Lord's promise of a prophet like Moses to Jesus?

The correspondence between Moses and Jesus is striking.

Like Moses, Jesus sent by the Lord to His people.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)

Like Moses, Jesus performed miracles to authenticate His divine calling.

Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him. (John 3:2)

Like Moses, Jesus was faithful to His prophetic task.

He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. (Hebrews 3:2)

Like Moses, He was rejected by His people.

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11)

Like Moses, Jesus delivers God's people from slavery (to sin).

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, (Ephesians 1:7)

Both were mediators of a covenant.

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5)

In fact we could say there was no prophet more like Moses than Jesus!

Moreover Jesus indicated that Moses "wrote of him."

Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; 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. (John 5:45–46)

Was Jesus thinking of passages like Deut. 18 when He said this?

Surely we can see that the apostles were fully justified in seeing Jesus as the prophet *par excellence*, the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic ministry of Moses.

What are the implications of Jesus' fulfillment of this promise?

Jesus is the Lord's last great spokesman.

God has spoken in His Son

GOD, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (Hebrews 1:1–2)

The Hebrew writer wants us to see that Jesus the ultimate voice of God, the final spokesman who inaugurates the last days.

He is not as Islam suggests one of a series of prophets that precede Mohammed, who is Allah's last great prophet

The words that Jesus spoke are the words of God!

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me. (John 12:48–50)

Jesus is not merely like Moses; He is greater than Moses.

"For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house." (Hebrews 3:3)

"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises." (Hebrews 8:6)

Those who hear Jesus have an even greater responsibility to obey His words and a greater judgment in rejecting them.

As the Lord's spokesman we must listen to Him. The Hebrew writer was well aware of the consequences of setting aside the Laws of Moses. Twice in the book he reminds his readers of the consequences of so doing; but in both texts, he makes those observations in order to point out that if we reject the words of Jesus, can we expect to escape God's judgment? No!

FOR this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard... (Hebrews 2:1–3)

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God,

and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:28–29)

There is nothing to suggest that living under a covenant of grace frees the believer from the obligation to listen to the words of Jesus and remain committed to them.

It is as God had spoken to Moses long ago: *whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.*

Conclusion: Finally we may note that Moses' words may contain a hidden meaning not originally heard by the listeners: "*I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you*"

The words "raise up" take on even greater significance in the case of Jesus. He not only raised up among men to speak for God like the OT prophets, but He was "raised up" from death itself to establish his unique role as the last great prophet of God.

The consequences of rejecting Jesus are too great for you to ignore or to put off obedience to Him until later. Come to Him today while you have the time and the opportunity.