

## Listen to the Prophet

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*“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. <sup>16</sup> This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: ‘If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.’ <sup>17</sup> Then the LORD replied to me: ‘They are right in what they have said. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. <sup>19</sup> Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. <sup>20</sup> But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.”* (Deuteronomy 18:15-20).

### 1. David Koresh

In April 1993, hundreds of FBI agents engaged in a 51-day standoff with a religious group called the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. In the end, 76 members of the Branch Davidians were killed or committed suicide. The event remains one of the most tragic events in American religious history.

The leader of the group was a man named David Koresh. Koresh told his followers that he had come from God and that he could speak to God and prophesied the soon to be end of the world. Koresh convinced 100 people to join him at his compound in Texas. Among the few survivors, I wonder if the members of the group still believe that Koresh was a prophet or they see him now as a false prophet, using the group for his own benefit.

### 2. God will Raise Up a Prophet

In today’s scripture Deuteronomy 18, Moses says, ***“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet”*** (Deut. 18:15).

Why does Moses talk about a prophet in the passage? In verses 9-14, Moses says, ***“when you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery interprets omens, engages in witchcraft.”***

Moses was concerned that the people would adopt the practices of the people around them in the Promised Land including child sacrifice, divination, soothsaying, sorcery and seeking oracles of the dead. Moses stresses that the people should not look for spiritual guidance other than from the Lord. In verses 15-20, the Lord tells the Israelites where they are to find spiritual direction. God wants them to listen to the prophet that God would raise up for his people.

### 3. Who is a Prophet like Moses?

In what way will the future prophet be like Moses? “Like Moses” means that the prophet would speak the word that the Lord gives. And the prophet would be faithful to the call.

How was Moses faithful to the call? According to Exodus 32, when the people made an idol cast in the shape of a calf, God was very upset and said, **“I may destroy them”** (Exodus 32:10). But Moses sought the favor of the Lord. He said, **“Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. <sup>32</sup>But now, please forgive their sin-but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written”** (Exodus 32:31-32).

According to Exodus 32:19, Moses was angry when he saw the people dancing in front of the calf. He threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking the Ten Commandments. Yet when he prayed for the people, Moses asked for God’s forgiveness. If God did not forgive His people, Moses was willing to die. Moses so loved the Israelites and was ready to do anything to save them. It is very likely that is why God chose Moses to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt.

It is likely that the “prophet” here would also mean the coming of a Messianic character. Moses might have been predicting the coming of the true prophet. John 6:14 says, **“When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”**

When the five thousand men were fed by Jesus, they were reminded of what Moses said in Deuteronomy 18. As Moses helped the people in the wilderness to be fed by God’s power, Jesus fed the hungry men, women, and children in the crowd. Probably more than 10,000 people were fed on that day.

The similarity between Moses and Jesus is also found in their forgiving love. As Moses asked God for forgiveness of the sins of the Israelites, Jesus prayed on the cross for the forgiveness of those who killed him. Luke 23:34 says, **“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what**

**they are doing.**” Jesus asked the Lord to forgive the Jewish leaders, Roman politicians, soldiers, and bystanders.

#### 4. How to know True Prophets

How can we distinguish between true and false prophets? Matthew 7:15-16 says, **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?”**

Jesus warns us about false prophets. He says we can find out whether a person is a false or true prophet by the fruit they produce.

To this day, people claim to be prophets of God. They say that they have messages from God. They may use the Bible when they prophesy. How can we know whether these people speak for the Lord or not? Jesus teaches us how to distinguish true prophets from false prophets. It is simple. We look at the fruit of the people to see who a true prophet is.

David Koresh had many wives including a 12-year-old girl. We may not know the details of his prophecy or teachings, but his lifestyle does not convince us that David Koresh was a genuine prophet from God.

#### 5. Why is Listening to the Prophet Important?

After we identify the prophet why is it important that we listen to him? In Deuteronomy 31:2 & 3, Moses says, **“I am now one hundred twenty years old. I am no longer able to get about, and the LORD has told me, ‘You shall not cross over this Jordan.’ <sup>3</sup> The LORD your God himself will cross over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua also will cross over before you, as the LORD promised.”**

Moses was with the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness. When they learned that they were going to cross over the Jordan without Moses, they would be terrified. Moses assured that God and Joshua would cross over the Jordan before them. They do not need to worry about anything.

Let us take a look at what happened to the disciples. Jesus says, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.”** In verse 27, Jesus also says, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you”** (John 14:1).

When Jesus said to the disciples that he would die on the cross soon, the disciples were so shocked. Jesus says to the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them always. As long as the disciples and we believe that the Holy Spirit is with us, we can have Christ’s peace. We

do not need to fear the present and the future. When we listen to the Lord, we can have true peace in our heart in any circumstances.

## **6. Conclusion**

Moses told the Israelites to listen to the prophet. And the New Testament writers urge us to listen to Jesus who is our true prophet. God sent his son Jesus to the world as the prophet to tell us how much God loves us and to teach us how to live our lives. We see God's love and ultimate sacrifice in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

How often do we listen to Jesus? Do we focus on his teaching once a year, once a month, once a week, or every day?

## **7. Application**

Because of the pandemic, we are very careful about almost everything. We have prioritized safety as a key part of our daily lives. Safety is important. But remember what people say, "a ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." An airplane at airport is safe, but that is not what airplanes are built for. A person at home is safe, but that is not what we are born for. We did not become followers of Jesus for our safety. Many Christians lost their lives because of their faith. We are called to listen to the Lord. We do not need to worry because our lives are in God's hands.

I am glad that our church is open today for in-person service with zoom and Facebook Live. As we gather today for service, we join together to listen to the Lord as a community. We give thanks to God for sending us his son Jesus as the true prophet to forgive us, save us, and protect us. May the listening to the Lord remind us of the presence of the Holy Spirit and fill our hearts with the peace of Christ so that we are free from fear and anxiety in our daily lives. Amen.