

*The unfolding of your words gives light.*

## A Prophet Like Moses

---

### Deuteronomy 18

The first eight verses of this chapter review how the Levites and the rest of the priests were to be supported. Those who were engaged in tabernacle and temple service lived off the offerings the people gave to the Lord. These verses rightly fit the context of this section of Deuteronomy. Moses was just talking about leadership in chapter 17. He is about to address those who carry the prophetic word. Priests in Israel like Moses, Aaron, Samuel and others served as both rulers and prophets.

Moses proceeds to tell the people not to imitate the "detestable things" of the nations who inhabited the Promised Land. Leaving nothing to the imagination, he gave the people a list of detestable practices:

- Making a son or daughter pass through the fire
- Divination
- Witchcraft
- Interpreting omens
- Sorcery
- Spell-casting
- Acting as a medium
- Spiritism
- Calling up the dead

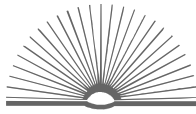
Something that reveals the day in which we are living is that, with the exception of the first detestable practice on the list, these deeds do not appear to us worthy of the death penalty. Are fortunetellers and trance channelers really hurting anyone? The real issue behind these practices is long term, not short-term. At issue is affection. God alone is worthy of our affection. Each of these practices turned attention away from God.

- God alone is worthy of our sons and daughters. People brutally sacrificed to their children to the god Molech.
- God alone holds the information we need about the future and other hidden things. Divination is rebellion because it seeks to bypass God.
- God alone gives us the lenses through which we should view the world. Seeking extra revelation by making unfounded judgments based on current events is demanding more information than God has chosen to give us.
- God alone has the authority to judge men. Controlling or hurting others for personal benefit usurps the authority only God has.
- God alone tends the gate between life and death. Attempts to contact the dead are an assault on his rule.

We often emphasize the importance of hating the sin but loving the sinner. Notice, however, the words of verse 12: "For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord." From a worldly standpoint, it looks like Israel is just one more aggressive nation stealing land they want through acts of violence. The Scripture reveals a very different picture. Israel was God's hand of judgment on the people who practiced such horrid acts.

Verses 13 and 14 once again emphasize the distinction God wants between his people and the people of the world. We are to be blameless. This does not simply

A message by Steven L. Svendsen, Sr.  
Rice Lake Baptist Church



*The unfolding of your words gives light.*

include shunning the wicked activities listed in this chapter. Verse 14 says the people of the nations in Israel would dispossess, "listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners." The problem was not just doing these things but listening to those who do them.

Having told the people who not to listen to, Moses gives an example of someone they should listen to. Moses said the Lord would one day raise up "a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." The immediate fulfillment of the prophecy may have been in Joshua, but ultimately would be found in Messiah. The words of Jesus carry authority.

When the Lord descended to Mount Sinai the people were afraid to hear from him. He chose, then, to speak through human instruments. This is why the office of prophet is so important and why the warnings of this chapter exist. Anyone who claims to speak on behalf of God had better get the message right. There can be no manipulation or dabbling with truth. This is why the minister of the gospel must stick to preaching the word of God.

Verses 19 and 20 offer two reasons God's message does not get through the prophet to the listener. The first problem is bad listeners. God said, "whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him." The second problem is bad prophets. God said, "...the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."

The question that is answered in verses 21 and 22 is important. It asks *how do we know when God is not speaking?* The answer is simple. The predictions of false prophets do not come true. They only have to miss once to identify themselves.

The age-old problem of a faulty "epistemology" (where we go to find Truth) goes back to the Garden of Eden. Satan has always sought to get people to doubt God's word and to crave more revelation than God has chosen to give. Satan said to Eve, "Indeed, has God said..." The deception began there and continues to this day. Consider what Moses says will keep you from being deceived:

1. Do not crave more revelation than God has chosen to give you.
2. Seek God more than you seek to show.
3. Become an expert at what God has already said.

©Rice Lake Baptist Church, 104 East Barker Street, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 54868 – <http://www.ricelakebaptist.org> – 715.234.1966

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and that you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.