

The Book of Deuteronomy

Lesson 12: Priests, Prophets, and the Prophet to Come -- Deuteronomy

18:1-22

Some people in Israel owned no land. While their neighbors measured out fields and counted herds, the Levites had nothing to call their own, and God said that was exactly the point. "The Lord is their inheritance" (18:2). They would live off the offerings of God's people and find their portion in God Himself. There is something deeply searching in that arrangement for all of us who are tempted to find our security in what we own.

Then the text grows urgent. As Israel entered a land soaked in occult religion, God drew a hard line. No one was to make a child "pass through the fire", or practice divination, sorcery, or omens, or be a medium or a necromancer who consults the dead. "Whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord" (18:12). The nations were being driven out for these very practices, and Israel must not learn their ways.

Why such severity? Because behind every charm and séance is a hunger to know and control the future apart from God, to find guidance somewhere other than His voice. So God makes a promise that towers over the whole chapter: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers... And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him" (18:18-19). God would not leave His people groping in the dark. He would speak.

That promise reaches its fulfillment in One the apostles named without hesitation. Peter and Stephen both stood up and said: this Prophet is Jesus, and "every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed" (Acts 3:23). This chapter, then, is not a museum piece. It tells us where to turn instead of the occult, and it sets before us the Prophet to whom every one of us must listen, on whom everything hangs.

Group Discussion: God forbade Israel every form of occult guidance and then promised a Prophet who would speak His very words, the One we must listen to above all. Why is the human craving to know and control the future so spiritually dangerous, and how does Christ, the Prophet to whom we must listen, satisfy what the occult only counterfeits?

Personal Reflection: God's answer to Israel's hunger for guidance was not a technique but a Person who speaks His word. Where are you tempted to seek direction, control, or comfort in ways that bypass listening to God's word, and what would it mean to truly listen to Christ, the Prophet, in those places?

Read Deuteronomy 18:1-22

Study Questions

1. What does God's provision for the Levites, who had no inheritance because "the Lord is their inheritance", reveal about Him as the true portion and security of those who serve Him (18:1-8)?
2. The Levites were to find their security in God rather than in land or possessions. Where are you tempted to root your security in what you own, and what would it mean to make the Lord your portion?
3. Why does God so severely forbid the occult practices of the nations, child sacrifice, divination, sorcery, mediums, and necromancy, calling them an abomination (18:9-14)?
4. The occult promises knowledge and control apart from God. In what subtle or obvious ways are you tempted to seek guidance, control, or comfort from sources other than the Lord?
5. God promised, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you", and required that the people listen to him. What does this promise reveal about God's commitment to speak to His people and to guide them by His word rather than by the occult (18:15-19)?
6. God's people are called to listen to the Prophet He sends. How well are you actually listening to and obeying God's word, and where have you been treating it as optional rather than as the voice you must heed?

7. What test did God give to distinguish a true prophet from a false one, and what does this teach about the importance of measuring all teaching against God's confirmed word (18:20-22)?
8. We are surrounded by competing voices claiming to speak for God. How carefully do you test what you hear, teachers, books, and influences, against the confirmed word of God, and where might you be listening uncritically?
9. The promise of "a prophet like me" is one of the great messianic prophecies, and the apostles proclaim its fulfillment plainly in Jesus. How is Christ the Prophet like Moses, why must every soul listen to Him, and what is at stake in refusing Him (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37)?
10. Looking back across this chapter, name one specific way Jesus is forming you through it, whether in where you find security, what voices you reject, or how fully you listen to Him as the Prophet.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Acts 3:22-23, where Peter declares Jesus the prophet like Moses whom all must heed or be destroyed; Acts 7:37, where Stephen names Jesus as that promised prophet; Hebrews 1:1-2, where God who spoke through prophets has in these last days spoken by His Son; 1 John 4:1, where we are to test the spirits to see whether they are from God; Isaiah 8:19-20, where seeking mediums is rejected in favor of the law and the testimony

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