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**Introducing the Prophets** by Ben M.

## **Deuteronomy 18:14-22**

Deuteronomy 18:14-22 gives the 'Job-spec' for the prophets: their service, function and purpose. The Hebrew word for prophet denotes men and women who has been appointed and trained to speak for God. God chooses ordinary human beings and puts his words into their mouths. The maker of heaven and earth speaks through them. On Mount Sinai the presence of God struck such fear into the people's hearts that they pleaded that God would give them an intermediary in a comfortable familiar body rather than his awesome immediate presence. It is clear from verse 18 that what comes out of a prophet's mouth is what God is saying, not what the person is thinking. This position can be open to abuse so God puts checks and balances in place so the people cannot be deceived by any well-meaning but misled person, or some scoundrel who is looking for power.

**Listen to God:** In every single prophecy there will be a predictive element that could not be predicted by any human and when it comes to pass you'll know that message comes from God. God is a jealous God who wants to make sure that we listen to him and no other. If a person dares to take God's name in vain and gives his own opinion as if it is God's words he must die. You can see in verse 20 how terribly important this is. Moses is a true prophet because the things that Moses prophesied came true. There is a prophecy within this passage that says God will raise up prophets for his people in the future. God sent prophets as Moses said he would. They come spaced out all through the historical time-line of the Bible. We have their (e.g. Elijah and Elisha) stories recorded in the Bible's history books and we also have whole books written by the prophets (e.g. Isaiah) that slot together into the historical narrative which when taken as a whole makes a lot more sense.

"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," (Hebrews 1:1-2) It is God we are to listen to. Here God is speaking to us through the apostles. Christ Jesus himself, is exceedingly greater than a prophet but he is a prophet none the less. He is the king of the prophets and it is God we hear through him. God is communicating with us. He speaks and his word comes to pass. His word is absolutely reliable. It won't break. It won't fail. It won't fall. It is sure and certain. Are you listening? Are you receiving what God is saying to you? Are you opening this book, the word of God and hearing him?

In Luke 11 Jesus talks about how the prophets lost their lives because they spoke God's words. The first to suffer was Adam's son Able. Right from the beginning God has been speaking through people, Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, were all prophets. There were schools of prophets where the prophets learned to hear God and have the courage to prophesy. They brought the truth to kings and the people of God, to foreign nations who had never heard of God. The message was often a warning. 'This is the projectory you are on. If you don't change this is where you will end up'. Or a word of encouragement, 'This is the good thing you are doing. Keep on this projectory and this will be the blessing. The prophets point out what is false and praise what is true. Remember God is speaking through the prophets. Preachers and pastors take words of the Bible and apply them. They preach two things: impending judgement and a way of escape: an opportunity for grace. They are not fortune tellers where there is no moral calling. But when God speaks he calls to your heart to trust him and walk in his ways. Sometimes

it turns you inside out to do what he is calling you to do but when you do it you walk in fellowship with him and you know his blessings as you go. We have to know as we read these things that God is speaking. Ask for help to understand how it all fits together and what it means for you in the here and now so you can hear God. Peter quotes the prophet Joel when he was speaking to the crowd in Acts 2:17. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." It is important to recognise that every person will be able to have a relationship with God without having to go through an intermediary like a prophet. You can come into his presence and you can hear God speaking to you yourself. In short you will be able to bring his word into your world and you too may become a prophet. We should all go in obedience and faith and declare to the world what God says.

**Know God:** God is calling people to know him. Are you part of this prophetic people Joel is speaking about? Are you just listening to what the prophets are saying or do you know God and are you listening to him for yourself so you can pass on the message? The difference is to be with the prophets looking out rather than on the outside looking in. Be in a joint endeavour with the prophets because you too know God and have a desire to bring the word of God into the world around you.

**Have you turned and found this wonderful grace?:** The purpose of this series is to encourage you believers to deepen your love and affection for the prophets and to bring the word of God to the world. It is for you sceptics to come in and learn to know and hear him. You will find God is gentle and lowly. He will receive you and bring you in. The Christian church is a church full of prophets taking the word to the world wherever he sends you.

Some prophets warned before the exile, some encouraged after the exile. There are the Major and Minor Prophets, the Old and New Testament prophets. I want to elevate the name Jeremiah because of all the prophets he is the most denigrated. He is seen as negative and pessimistic. But it was Jeremiah who prophesied the New Testament. He made the largest single contribution to the scriptures. He wrote Jeremiah, Lamentations, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and possibly Joshua and Judges. He is a towering genius who reviewed the whole history of his people showing what God had done for them going back over centuries. His influence stretches on into Daniel and 1 & 2 Chronicles. In Matthew's gospel Jesus asked, "Who do people say that I am?" the answer came back maybe he's John the Baptist or maybe Jeremiah. Jesus reminded them of Jeremiah. Again and again the New Testament points to the prophesies of Jeremiah as one we can trust. We read in Matthew 2 that it is Jeremiah's prophesies that came to pass in the life of Jesus. He is able to tell the people that God is a God of grace. He is a messenger of hope. If we refuse to acknowledge our sin the consequences only get worse. But the moment we accept the definitions of sin in our lives and listen to God's conviction of sin, as we turn to God in repentance (though there are still consequences of those sins) we will find the mercy and grace of God. He will bring us to maturity and blessing, There is no hopeless situation. God is gracious to those who come to him broken and in need of restoration. One of the great prophesies is the ten commandments. (Exodus 20) The eleventh commandment is to make an altar, a place of atonement and forgiveness. (V24) We have a place of repentance for all our sins at the cross of Christ. God makes a high calling on our lives but that doesn't mean we are ever going to be perfect. But there is no sin that is greater than the love of God.