

STUDY GUIDES



Identifying and Responding to False Prophets

Deuteronomy 18:9-22

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About TGH Study Guides

The Greater Heritage *Study Guides* are concise yet thorough booklets that shed light on important Biblical truths, as well as significant moments and figures in church history.

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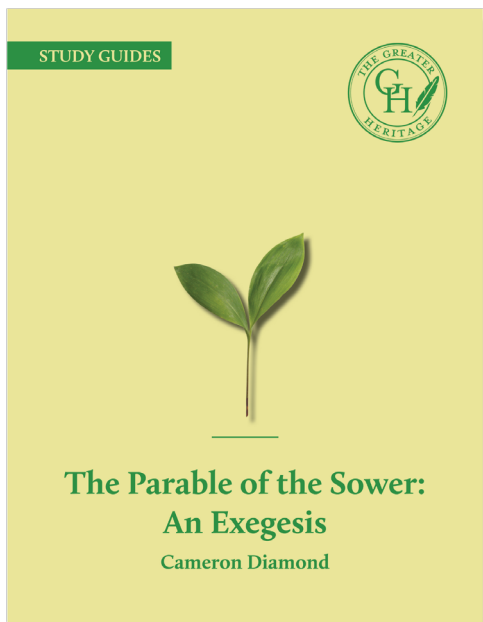
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(Deuteronomy 18:9-22)

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Introduction

God saved Israel from centuries of Egyptian slavery only to punish them in the desert for their lack of obedience in order for their next generation to rise up in bold faithfulness for entry into Canaan; the land promised to Abraham in Genesis 15. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 are the recorded words of Moses and God as He described the nature of prophetic leadership in the nation; a topic that was rarely handled in the Pentateuch. This was a sensitive subject because the neighboring cultures had social and religious customs that were counter to righteous living with prophets of their own to lead them.

Knowing that His chosen people could be led away in disobedience, God gave the Israelites criteria to confirm the divine call of a prophet and how to relate to him or her. Moses instructed the Israelites to not imitate the pagan cultures surrounding them, gave them a promise that the Lord would provide a prophet who would faithfully lead them, and God gave them a method for determining true prophets from false ones. When these criteria are properly understood in their original context, they can be reasonably used for Christian living today.

Throughout this Study Guide you're going to learn how to both identify and respond to false prophets and teachers in a biblical manner. This is especially important today since many men and women in the twenty-first century claim to be divinely sent by God with revelation beyond the Bible that contradicts it. In addition, there are others who claim to have new revelation that undermines the credibility and authority of the Bible.

Evangelical Christians must look to Scripture to understand how to interact with these dissenting voices in a way that honors God and brings salvation to the lost and misguided. The rest of this Study Guide will teach you how to do just that. Before we jump into the main lesson, let's take a look at look at Deuteronomy 18.

Outline

Deuteronomy 18:9-22 describes the instructions given to the Israelites regarding false prophets. Moses instructed the people of Israel not to imitate the sins of foreign cultures (Deut. 18:9-14). Moses relayed a promise from God; that He would raise up another prophet (Deut. 18:15-16). God promised a prophet and explains how they can know who it is and is not (Deut. 18:17-22).

Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (CSB)

⁹⁻¹⁴“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you,
do not imitate the detestable customs of those nations.

No one among you is to
sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire,
practice divination,
tell fortunes,

interpret omens,
 practice sorcery,
 cast spells,
 consult a medium or a spiritualist,
 or inquire of the dead.

Everyone who does these acts is detestable to the LORD,
 and the LORD your God is driving out the nations before you
 because of these detestable acts.

You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

Though these nations you are about to drive out listen to fortune-tellers and diviners,
 the LORD your God has not permitted you to do this.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers.
 You must listen to him.

This is what you requested from the LORD your God at Horeb
 on the day of the assembly when you said,

‘Let us not continue to hear the voice of the LORD our God
 or see this great fire any longer,
 so that we will not die!’

¹⁷⁻²² Then the LORD said to me,

‘They have spoken well.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers.

I will put my words in his mouth,

and he will tell them everything I command him.

I will hold accountable whoever does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name.

But the prophet who presumes to speak a message in my name
 that I have not commanded him to speak,
 or who speaks in the name of other gods—
 that prophet must die.’

You may say to yourself,

‘How can we recognize a message the LORD has not spoken?’

When a prophet speaks in the LORD’s name,

and the message does not come true or is not fulfilled,

that is a message the LORD has not spoken.

The prophet has spoken it presumptuously.

Do not be afraid of him.

Context

Historical-Cultural Significance

The Deuteronomy was written by Moses as an “amplification and advancement” of the covenant text that was given forty years earlier at Mount Sinai.¹ While some people since the Enlightenment have disagreed with the primary authorship of Moses concerning the Pentateuch, the Old Testament and New Testament agree with his role in such a capacity.² Deuteronomy 1:5 claimed the content was spoken, and thus written, near the time of Israel’s conquest of Canaan just after wandering in the wilderness for forty years.³

Joshua 1:7 states, “Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go” (CSB). When Joshua mentioned the whole instruction given by Moses, he referred to the Pentateuch which includes the whole of Deuteronomy. Similar attributions to the authorship of Moses in the Old Testament can be found in Judges 1:20, 1 Kings 2:3, and Ezra 3:2. The New Testament affirmed his authorship in Matthew 19:7, Mark 12:19, Luke 20:28, Acts 3:22, Romans 10:19, and 1 Corinthians 9:9.

Kitchen remarks, “...there is absolutely no objective evidence that compels a late provenance for the book; in fact, the available data point more strongly than ever to Moses as the author not only of Deuteronomy, but of the entire Pentateuch.”⁴ To disagree with the authorship of Moses is to take issue with the God-inspired authors of the Old and New Testaments, including words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels.

The proper dating of Deuteronomy is disputed because the dating of the exodus is still debated at length by biblical scholars and archeologists alike⁵. 1 Kings 6:1 firmly states that, “Solomon began to build the temple for the LORD in the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of his reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month” (CSB).

Since the initial date for the construction of Solomon’s Temple is commonly agreed to be 967 or 966 BC, then it is logical to place the exodus in 1446 or 1447 BC and the writing of Deuteronomy to 1406 or 1407 BC.⁶ Further, Judges 11:26 supports the internal dating of the exodus with 1 Kings 6:1. Therefore, a high view of Scripture would subscribe to the dates given by the biblical authors despite the attempts of modern scholars and scientists to cast doubt on the data given by the historical texts.

Concerning the purpose Moses had to write Deuteronomy, Merrill states,

Few books of the Bible have a more clearly articulated occasion than Deuteronomy. The opening statement declares that “these are the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River” (1:1). To this setting is added the explanation that “forty years after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses addressed the people of Israel, telling them everything the LORD had commanded him to say” (1:3). Thus, the geographical setting is the Transjordan, the chronological setting is 40 years after the Exodus and the giving of the law at Sinai, and the purpose of the writing is to communicate what God revealed to Moses at the plains of Moab.⁷

Deuteronomy was not merely a reiteration of the earlier events and laws given to the Israelite people in the prior four books of the Torah, but it was a sending of the new generation of Yahweh’s chosen people into the land he had promised their forefathers. Previously, the Israelites had been nomads for forty years and, prior to that, slaves for four centuries. God, through Moses, had to give them a renewed

vision of what life would be like in a permanent land that was theirs and make clear the covenant expectations He had in mind for them in that land.

Literary-Rhetorical Features of the Passage

The book of Deuteronomy primarily functions as a homiletical text and farewell address from Moses. However, it also uses covenant language, “itineraries, parentheses, hymns, and other poetic material.”⁸ Deuteronomy 18:9-22 is contained within the section of the book which expounds upon the Decalogue and the other laws provided from Deuteronomy 5-11; providing clarity and application to the obedience required by Yahweh.

According to Block, this section concludes a chiasmic structure concerning the priests and administrative officials of Israel; of which the chiasm began with Deuteronomy 16:18-17:7. However, Block states that the section does not solely concern the leaders, but rather the righteousness of all the people of Israel.⁹

The first section of the chiasmic structure, Deuteronomy 16:18-17:7, begins with the appointment of judges and officials by the people and for the good of the people. The passage was addressed to the people; the focus of the section did not change towards the appointed leaders. Of particular importance in the passage was forbidding partiality, bribery, and pagan worship.

This section is notable because the instruction to stone perpetrators to death is preceded by Yahweh requiring two or three witnesses to testify about the wicked person and, if the person is found guilty after thorough investigation, then they are stoned to death; the witnesses are required to be the first to pick up stones to begin the execution.

The second section of the chiasmic structure is contained within Deuteronomy 17:8-13. Once again, the section addresses the common people even though it references the priests and judges. The people were to take difficult cases of civil misconduct to their leaders and trust them with the final decisions. In addition, anyone who took a case to the Levites or judges but did not abide their verdict was condemned to death. According to verses 12 and 13, this was to purge Israel of their arrogance.

The third section of the chiasmic structure is Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Of note, this passage is concerned with the monarchy. Yet, Israel would not have a king for about another four-hundred years. When the time came for the people to elect a ruler, they were to choose a male Israelite who regarded the Lord highly; did not desire worldly, materialistic gain; and who would copy the Law for themselves in front of the priests and read it continuously their entire life.

In other words, the choosing of a leader was to be by the will of the Lord and the obedience of the people to the Lord. Not by military power as in other cultures, but by the holy obedience of God’s chosen people.

The fourth section of the chiasmic structure is Deuteronomy 18:1-8. It regards the relationship between the tribe of Levi and the rest of Israel. They had no allotted land given to them, instead God was their portion, and they were commanded to live among all the other tribes of Israel as priests and intercessors. In exchange, the other tribes of Israel were commanded to honor the Lord by giving the Levites the shoulder, stomach, and jaws of the animals they sacrificed to Him.

In addition, the Levites were to receive the first of the grains, wines, oils, and wool produced by the community they were involved in. This instruction was for the common people to understand their relationship with the tribe of Levi.

These sections that precede and form a unit of text with Deuteronomy 18:9-22 are addressed to the people of Israel so they would know how the Lord expected them to relate to their leaders and how they should expect their leaders to relate to them. The structure is completed by giving the Israelites a strategy to know whether someone was sent by God as a prophetic messenger or as a pagan pretender. The section that proceeds from Deut. 18:9-22 then refers to the destruction of the peoples who live in Canaan and how the Israelites should claim the land as their own. Therefore, the Lord was giving them explicit instruction about how to relate to the leaders and promises of God and how to guard themselves against the pagan culture and temptations proffered by the surrounding cultures.

Content

Moses instructed the Israelites not to imitate the sins of foreign cultures. (Deut. 18:9-14)

The word translated as enter in verse nine is the Hebrew word **בוא**; it means to, “enter, come (to); bring, lead in, gather in; be brought.”¹⁰ While enter is an acceptable translation of the word, such as the CSB made use of it, the broader understanding of the word must be considered. The Israelites had been wandering around in the desert for forty years waiting on the Lord to bring them into the Promised Land.

When Moses used this word, not only were they entering into the Promised Land, but they were being led into Canaan by Yahweh. Understanding the first part of verse nine this way is important because it does not allow for the Israelites to claim credit for the end of their generational exile due to their disobedience to the Lord.

The word translated as imitate in verse nine is the Hebrew word **למד**; it can mean to, “gain knowledge or skills.”¹¹ This act of gaining knowledge or skills from others was referring to the Israelites becoming reliant on the Canaanite cultures for religious and social instruction.¹² The Lord had a specific social and religious paradigm in mind for the Israelites and the other cultures defied every moral act God upheld as righteous. Therefore, He did not want the Israelites to associate themselves with these other people and accept their evil practices as their own.

These two verbs form a cause-and-effect clause in verse nine; when you enter, do not imitate. The Lord anticipated the Canaanite culture to be problematic for His chosen people. Therefore, so as to make His point clear, specific detestable acts were listed in verses ten through fourteen; these were, child sacrifice, divination, tell fortunes, read omens, practice sorcery, cast spells, consult a medium, or talk to the dead. These sins were not an exhaustive list of sins that offended God of which the Canaanites practiced; rather, these sins were those their leadership exhorted among their peoples.

This can be reasonably known because the passage at large is giving instruction for how the Israelites are to be in relationship with their own leadership. Instead, God wanted them to live blamelessly and only give heed to the words from Himself provided through His chosen prophets.

God, through Moses, in this passage also refers to the usage of the Israelite army as a divine tool of judgement against the pagan cultures, as mentioned in verse fourteen, because they have committed detestable acts in the sight of the Lord. It is important to understand that these pagan Semitic cultures shared ancestors with the Israelites, as all cultures do, and that their ancestors knew the truth of God and denied Him Lordship over their societies (Gen. 11).

In other words, God’s judgement was born out of a time of patient endurance during which these cultures could have turned back to the Lord in repentance. Yet, when God determined they had enough time to change and they were not going to do so, He used His chosen people to bring judgement upon the Canaanites.

Moses relayed a promise from God; He would raise up another prophet. (Deut. 18:15-16)

The word translated as raise up in verse fifteen is the Hebrew word קָוַם; it means, “arise, stand up, stand, or establish.”¹³ Moses said that God will raise up a prophet from among the Israelite nation for the purpose of divine communication after the death of Moses. For God to raise up someone meant that He would empower and establish them as His mouthpiece of encouragement and judgement for the people. It is important that Moses signified that the prophets would come from their own nation and not from outside the chosen people of God. Once again, God was making clear that their only permitted influence for religious and social conduct was to be from Him.

For an outsider to be allowed to come into the nation and give words of instruction, encouragement, prophesy, or judgement would have brought physical and spiritual ruin to the nation. This instruction, and implied warning, provided by Moses was eventually ignored by the nation and led to its division and demise more than four-hundred years later after the reign of Solomon and the invasion of the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The word translated as listen in verse fifteen is the Hebrew word שָׁמַע; it means, “to hear, understand, give heed, and to obey.”¹⁴ After commanding the Israelites not to adopt the evil civil and religious customs of the nations Israel was to come into contact with in the Promised Land, Moses relayed a promise from God that He would send them a messenger who would give them instruction and guidance from Heaven.

This person was going to come from inside the nation and be uniquely qualified to lead them as Moses had been. Once this promise was made, a command was given. This command was to hear, understand, and obey the prophets sent by the Lord. These prophets, a succession of messengers beginning with Moses, were granted by God to the Israelites because of their fear of Him at Mount Horeb (Ex. 20:19).

Therefore, God gave them explicit instruction not to listen to the pagan leaders of the Canaanite nations or accommodate their practices, but instead live blamelessly under the spiritual leadership of prophets sent by God. To listen to him or her and do what they said because of their divine calling.

The word translated as requested in verse sixteen is the Hebrew word שָׁאַל; it means, “ask, interrogate, consult; claim, demand, wish, or beg for.”¹⁵ This verse quickly recounted the event described in Exodus 20:18-20 in which the Israelites were afraid of hearing God speak to them because of the thunder, lightning, fire, and clouds descending on the mountain and the sound of trumpets announcing God’s arrival. Their request was not a formal request for change, but it was instead an insistence for distance from the Lord out of fear.

God was not put off by this reaction; instead, He supported their fear of Him and set up rules and boundaries for their benefit. Since God is the Creator and King of the Universe, fear and awe are the natural and right reaction to coming into contact with Him. Therefore, having an intermediary between the people and Himself signified His authority as their King.

God explained how they can know who a prophet is and who is not. (Deut. 18:17-22)

As God began to speak on His own behalf in verse eighteen, He said He would put His words into the prophet’s mouth. This passage reveals God’s method for using a prophetic messenger and the circumstances surrounding the calling of prophets are described later in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 1:9-10 was written about one such event,

Then the LORD reached out his hand, touched my mouth, and told me: I have now filled your mouth with my words. See, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant.

Another calling of a prophet was described in Isaiah 6:8,

Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking: Who will I send? Who will go for us? I said: Here I am. Send me.

Just as Jeremiah and Isaiah had authentic encounters with the Lord who called them into prophetic service, Israel was given a clear idea in this passage about how God would call prophets and in what capacity they would serve. When a prophet spoke, it would not be their own words or ideas, but messages given to them directly from God intended for the people of Israel, “For that reason the prophet could say ‘Thus saith the Lord.’”¹⁶ Block writes, “Moses hereby assures the people that they will never need to resort to manipulative divination, because YHWH will provide for a succession of prophets, all of whom will command obedience.”¹⁷

This promise from the Lord was a repeated promise given from Moses in verse fifteen. While the immediate fulfillment of the promise was to be prophets such as Samuel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, the reader should not read into the text a messianic fulfillment, according to Block,

To claim this text as support for the view that the Torah points to a future Messiah is both gratuitous and tendentious. This image is entirely in the eye of the beholder, and represents the result of forcing evidence to suit a conclusion pre-established on other grounds.¹⁸

However, while Moses may not have had a messianic figure in mind when writing the text, the Holy Spirit knew of the coming Savior. Even though Block states that reading any messianic promise into the text is forcing the evidence, Christians ought to read the Old Testament in the knowledge of the New Testament.

Jesus revealed everything in the Law and the Prophets concerning Himself in Luke 24:27 to the disciples on the Emmaus Road. Even though that passage does not reveal which parts Jesus referred to, the implication is that He used much of the Old Testament. This would have included passages like Deuteronomy 18:9-22 which have an understanding that is fulfilled in two ways: now and not yet. The Lord promised prophets for each generation, and later God would send His Son as the ultimate fulfillment of the promise still paired with the command to listen and adhere to whatever He said (Matt. 17:5).

In verses nineteen and twenty, God outlined the expectations and consequences for His people and those who were or pretended to be prophets of the Lord. Those who did not listen and obey the divine words from the mouth of the prophet would be held accountable. Woods remarks, “This meant that any rebellion against such words was to be treated seriously, and God himself would call to account any who refused to listen to his words.”¹⁹

Likewise, any prophet who pretended to be sent from the Lord or who purported to be sent from other gods was to be put to death; their message would have been dangerous to the Israelites. Merrill states,

Responding to the fear of the people at Horeb, Yahweh not only allowed Moses to be a prophetic mediator (18:16), but he promised a line of succession after Moses—spokesmen for God whose mouths would speak only what God commanded (18:17–18). Those who failed to heed the prophetic word must suffer the consequences (18:19). However, others would claim prophetic revelation for themselves and would either speak falsehoods in the name of Yahweh

or deliver messages on behalf of other gods. In either case, such prophets must be executed (18:20) because they aid and abet disloyalty and sedition.²⁰

Being on the cusp of leaving the wilderness for the Promised Land, Israel was poised to be successful in following the Lord and claiming His promises to Abraham. However, all of it could have been undone if the pagan influence was allowed to fester and grow inside their culture.

Eventually, the influence of the pagan religions did gain a foothold in the culture of Israel and God allowed Israel to be defeated by outside invaders. This happened first within Judges 2:11-12 when, “The Israelites did what was evil in the LORD’s sight. They worshiped the Baals and abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them” (CSB).

For a time God let them suffer at the hands of their own iniquity and then He rescued them. However, when Solomon was king over Israel, he built temples to many pagan gods for his hundreds of wives. Due to his sinful leadership, the people of Israel were led astray by all manner of false teaching, and they grieved God. Within a few generations they were given over to the Assyrians and Babylonians (2 Kings 18). These were the consequences of the Israelites paying heed to civil and religious leaders who were not from the Lord and God held them accountable for their misdeeds.

Verses twenty-one and twenty-two were God’s last proof of veracity of any person claiming to be a prophet. If what the prophet claimed would happen in the future did not happen as they said it, then they were not sent from God and should be put to death. Further, God told the people to not be afraid of the false prophet. This is important because it implied that the people should fear the prophet who is sent from the Lord. Fear of the prophet would have been appropriate because they were messengers with direct connections to God.

The authenticity of the prophet would have been proved by the fulfillment of prophecy within his or her own lifetime to prove the veracity of the revealing of future events beyond their lifetime. Merrill states,

The true prophet, then, would have to validate his calling by inerrantly speaking of events in both the near and distant future. Only at the end of history could he be fully vindicated, but unflinching fulfillment of his predictive word where testable would certainly give him the benefit of the doubt.²¹

These proofs were necessary so that the Israelites could have confidence in their prophetic leaders and know when to deal with those who tried to lead the nation astray.

Conclusion

The Israelites coming out of the wilderness were a new generation of God’s chosen people. Deuteronomy was spoken and written by Moses to recast the vision for what God wanted from His people so they would know what to expect and what was expected from them. In the chapters and verses leading up to Deuteronomy 18:9-22, Moses explained the nature of the roles of leadership within the community. He addressed those roles, not as job descriptions for the leaders, but as expectations the people should have of them. This God ordained government was for the flourishing of His chosen people.

Deuteronomy 18:9-22 specifically referred to who the Israelites should listen to and who not to listen to. Instead of assimilating into Canaanite social and religious practices which were detestable to God, they were to listen to and obey the prophets Yahweh would send them.

They would know if Yahweh sent a prophet if he or she was born an Israelite, spoke His words, and if their prophetic messages were proven true even beyond their time on earth. Any prophet who did not pass these tests was to be ignored; and if there were false prophets who pretended to speak by Yahweh's name, they were to be put to death.

Application

Deut. 18:9-22 contains instructions and commands from Moses and God concerning prophetic leaders within the nation of Israel. These instructions included the command to kill any person who pretended to be a prophet on God's behalf and any prophet of another god.

However, despite these instructions being given more than three thousand five hundred years ago to a culture that preceded Jesus and the new covenant, they are pertinent to Christian life today.

While Christians should not kill those who seek to lead others astray due to false testimony or sinful motivation, Christians should metaphorically put to death their teachings and reveal the error of wrong thinking to unaware and less mature believers who could possibly be susceptible to false teaching (Matt. 7:13-21).

The criteria that God and Moses used for determining true prophets from false ones are able to be used today with false teachers of doctrine and modern-day prophets. If the teacher or prophet proclaims doctrines and applications which are consistent with God's word, then they are from the Lord. However, if they presume to speak on God's behalf concerning ideas He has not said nor revealed in His word, then they have sinned against the Lord and the church.

In the same way, for those who claim to have divine revelation from gods or belief systems not supported by the Word of God, Christians ought to not pay them heed other than to refute them.

In either case, Christians should boldly stand up to false teachers and prophets and not be afraid of them. If they are not from God, then they are spiritually powerless to stand against Jesus and His community of believers. When Christians are emboldened to counter false prophets and teachers in the marketplace of ideas, then the veracity of the Gospel can be spread to those with cultural and intellectual objections who otherwise would not entertain Jesus as their Savior. Likewise, it protects Christianity from taking on sinful cultural beliefs and practices by offensively handling sinful ideas.

Appendix: Teaching Synopsis

We live in a world that is commonly referred to as “post-Christian.” There are many leaders in the world who identify themselves as Christian and yet teach ideals and model behaviors that are contrary to Scripture and historic Christian ethics and doctrines.

In recent years, there have even been an abundance of former Christian influencers who have denounced the faith and encouraged their followers to do the same. What are we to do as faithful followers of Jesus? Of course, we must first look to Scripture. Even as we desire to react angrily, burn bridges, and go on Twitter tirades, we should resist those desires and see what God has to say instead.

When the Israelites were at the end of their forty years of wandering in the desert, God gave Moses special instructions for them; it is called Deuteronomy. This book is the fifth book in the Bible and was the last written by Moses. Much of it reads like a speech he gave to the twelve tribes of Israel sometime before the leadership role was passed down to Joshua. Our text for today is Deuteronomy 18:9-22. Moses is giving the Israelites the information they need in order to thrive in the Promised Land because it is still ruled by pagan kings and prophets.

The tribes needed to know what to do, what to avoid, and who to listen to once Moses was gone. Moses instructed the Israelites to not imitate the pagan cultures surrounding them, gave them a promise that the Lord would provide a prophet who would faithfully lead them, and God gave them a method for determining true prophets from false ones; when these criteria are properly understood in their original context, they can be reasonably used for Christian living today.

I. Do not imitate the cultures around you that practice what God says is evil.

-This point shows how the Israelites were to interact with the surrounding cultural sin and then how to relate it to Christians and modern day cultural sin.

- a. Deuteronomy 18:9-14
- b. Child sacrifice
 - i. Abortion
 - ii. Euthanasia
 - iii. Gender Affirming Care
- c. Practice Divination, Tell Fortunes, Interpret Omens
 - i. New Age practices found in popular culture.
 - ii. New Age practices found within the church.
- d. Practice Sorcery, Cast Spells
 - i. *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne
 - I. Manifesting desires
- e. Consult Mediums, Inquire the Dead
 - i. Saul and Samuel (1 Samuel 28)
 - ii. Lack of respect for the wisdom of God.
 - iii. Demons masquerading as helpful spirits.

2. God will raise up a prophet from among you to give you my words.

-This point demonstrates how God calls men and women into ways they can serve the Kingdom of God and reach the lost through their unique abilities and talents. Each Christian has the calling and ability to reach some lost people where other Christians cannot. Just as God called the prophets to serve, God calls Christians to serve in various ways.

- a. Deuteronomy 18:15-16

- i. God works through called men and women to do His will.
 1. The succession of called prophets from Moses and Joshua to Samuel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.
 2. 1 Samuel 3:10
 3. Jeremiah 1:9-10
 4. Isaiah 6:8
- ii. He provides the
 1. Talent
 2. Opportunity
 3. Passion
- iii. You provide the obedience to the call.

- b. My reluctant obedience to the call of ministry

- i. I knew two things
 1. I had to obey
 2. I did not want to go into the ministry
- ii. God has blessed my decision to sacrifice my original dreams

3. You can know the prophet is from God if he is from among you, speaks the Lord's words, and his message is proven true with the passing of time.

-Everything the church and its members do and teach must be led by Scripture.

- a. Deuteronomy 18:17-22

- i. The prophet from among you
 1. Had to be an Israelite
 2. Our leaders need to be long-time, mature, committed, ethical, spiritual followers of Jesus.
- ii. The prophet who speaks the Lord's words
 1. Everything had to come from God, nothing original
 2. Everything taught by our leaders must come from and never contradict the Bible.
- iii. The prophet who is vindicated by the passing of time
 1. God would not embarrass His prophets, everything they prophesied was truth.

2. Our commitment to Jesus and to the spiritual health of our local community will have a lasting effect on our neighbors.
 - a. God will use our faithfulness to draw people to repentance beyond our time here on earth.

As you can see, God's Word does not return to us void; no matter which testament we read from. While we must always read the Old Testament in the light of Jesus's New Covenant with us, the Old Testament is important for us to learn from. After all, the first century Christians only had the Old Testament, and it was more than enough for God to use then, and it still has relevance for us today.

The Israelites had to be aware of what the leaders of the foreign cultures were teaching and practicing so that they knew what to avoid in their efforts to please God as a holy nation. Today, we must do the same.

We are required as Christians to be intimately familiar with God's Word and the foreign cultures around us so that we may know where to go and where not to go. God's standards of holiness for His people are the same today as they were thousands of years ago, and because of the indwelling Holy Spirit we can be sanctified and justified unto good works.

No matter how bad our culture around us may get, or how deep a foothold Satan gets in this country, God will always provide His faithful with capable leaders and His inerrant, infallible, incorruptible Word.

Therefore, we must aim to be the spiritually capable leaders that God will choose to use by resolving to say yes when He calls us into various types of ministries. We must resolve to speak only God's words when we are dealing with people on the day to day.

Finally, we must be knowledgeable where our culture has deviated from God's design and boldly speak into it with truth and love so that people will hear the Gospel, be convicted, repent, and be saved.

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