

Deuteronomy 18:9-19 ⁹ "When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. ¹⁰ "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ "or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. ¹² "For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. ¹³ "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. ¹⁴ "For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you. ¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, ¹⁶ "according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' ¹⁷ "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. ¹⁸ 'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ¹⁹ 'And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

It our text for the day, Moses is recounting to the people gathered around the experience they had had at Mount Sinai some years earlier when he first received the commands of God. They all remembered the story. When the Israelites had gathered around Mt. Sinai at Horeb, they saw a mountain covered in smoke, surrounded by lightening, and heard loud noise everywhere. A voice thundered out ten commands. At that point, the Israelites knew two things. One: God was present, and two, they likely shouldn't get too close. They knew that sinful humans and a holy and perfect God didn't mix very well. To be more precise, they knew that being in God's presence too long with their sin would only result in their death. So, the leaders of the people came up with a solution. They would talk to Moses and Moses could do the dealing with God. That way they wouldn't be killed. They knew that sinful people needed someone to stand between them and God, to make intercession for them on their behalf.

As Moses retold the story of the Lord giving him those two tablets of stone, he told them that what they had asked for was good. They truly did need one to stand between them and God and be a mediator. Sure Moses had played that role in part, but he knew they needed something even better. They needed someone who was perfect for that role. So Moses made a promise to those people. He said that God would send a Prophet like himself to them. He prophesied that after him who come a Prophet who truly could stand between God and man as the perfect Mediator. This Prophet would rise up from among their own people and would fill this role. He would come with God's words on His lips, and if anyone refused to listen to Him, they would have to answer to God directly. Those things would be the sign that a prophet like Moses had arrived.

Just as Moses had predicted, many prophets came after him. Some claimed to be prophets, but had only their own words on their mouth. But there were others. There were many other prophets that would follow Moses would truly would speak God's word. And surely at times, they did serve as a mediator between God and His people. They brought God's word to the Israelites and begged mercy on behalf of the people from Him when they had sinned.

There was Elijah. He prophesied a time of no rain and there was a drought. He announced the return of rain and it rained like cats and dogs. He called down fire from heaven and proved that Israel's God was the true God. He heard the small still voice. He left the earth by chariot of fire. He was so great a prophet that he often appears in the New Testament as the representative of all the prophets. But yet, he was not the prophet like Moses.

Then there was Isaiah, the mighty seer. He prophesied for over forty years. According to tradition, he was faithful even to death by being sawed in half. He rightly predicted the fall of Jerusalem in 701 BC to the Babylonians. He proclaimed both judgment and redemption to the people of God. Isaiah words were so well known that when the New Testament quotes them, they usually just say as the prophet said. His name isn't even needed. Isaiah was a great prophet, but he also was not the prophet like Moses. He like all prophets simply foresaw that prophet who would come to fulfill that prophecy which Moses first uttered.

And then there was the voice crying in the wilderness. Surely John the Baptist seemed like he might fit the bill. He indeed had God's word on his lips. He called the people to repentance. He was even out in the wilderness just like Moses was for much of his life. He stood in the Jordan between God and the people baptizing people so that they might receive the forgiveness of sins. In fact, John fit the bill so well that the people even asked him. Are you the prophet? But his answer was no. He was not the prophet. No, John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets up until his time, but he was not the prophet like Moses.

Yes, ask any of the ones anointed for the task of prophecy and they would tell you, they were a prophet because they were chosen by God to be so, but they were no prophet like Moses. They simply built on the foundation that he had been given to lay at Sinai. They were prophets indeed, but not the promised Prophet.

John the Baptist readily confessed the following truths, "I am not the prophet but one comes after me who was before me. I am not worthy of this one to even untie his sandals. If you are looking for the prophet like Moses, wait on the One coming after me. He will be the One who can stand truly between God and man as the true mediator, just like the people had desired back at Mt. Sinai. For, He will be the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. Only He can truly make intercession for us with God by not only begging for mercy, but having earned it for us. Yes, those who were baptized by John left knowing they had not yet met the prophet like Moses. But they knew He was coming soon. And so they waited for the One who was to come. And so also we wait. Amen.