

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

## DEUTERONOMY 18:15

**LISTEN TO THE RIGHT ONE AT ADVENT !**

*(NKJV) The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me, from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.*

*(KJV) The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; Unto him ye shall hearken.*

To send a child or young adult off into the world is somewhat disconcerting—whether it's high school, college, military, the work world—nearby or far away—the young man or woman so filled with youthful self-confidence, but surrounded by a whole new group of associates, friends, and beckoning voices with intriguing invitations, does stand in a precarious place. Parents pray to the Lord and trust that their children will stick with what they have been taught from Scripture, and encourage them to do so.

In our text for this evening the Children of Israel were in shoes somewhat similar to those of a young adult. They had been slaves in Egypt where they were closely watched and rigorously worked. They didn't have time or opportunity to pursue other ideas. God sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. For the next 40 years they turned to Moses for everything. As the one speaking and acting under God's direction, Moses lead them, guided them, informed them, corrected them, encouraged them. Plus, wherever they traveled in the wilderness, God fed them everyday. There was manna on the ground every morning except the Sabbath. Wherever they went, it was God leading them and protecting them. The Bible tells us that their clothes never wore out and their sandals never grew thin. They traveled as an organized group in an order specifically set by God. They camped as an organized group in an order specifically set by God.

Things were about to change. They would soon enter the Promised Land--Canaan. There would still be system to their life—each tribe assigned its land and territory, God's rules for worship life and political life. Yet each family would have their own land. Instead of manna, each could earn their daily bread in the godly manner they felt best. Another change was coming. Moses would not be there. He would die (age 120) before they entered the land. His familiar face and direction, faithful to the Lord, would be gone.

That is why Moses encouraged them, *The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me, from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.* Moses says, the Lord will give you a prophet, another prophet, who will bring God's truth and God's message to you for matters of life. The Lord will not leave you without His Counsel and Word and counselor. That's a great comfort for Christian congregations today too. Whether it's a resident full time pastor, or a shared pastor, or a fill-in pastor, or a vacancy pastor, or lay reader, the Lord does not leave His flock without Message or messenger.

Moses wanted the people to be faithful to God. Who is this God again? Moses says, *the "LORD."* "LORD" in all capital letters designates that special Hebrew name for God: "Jehovah, Yahweh, HE IS, or similarly I AM." The LORD, the HE IS, operates outside of time, He always has been and always will be. He is subject to none. He makes a promise because He wants to, He keeps that promise because He wills to, He does not lie or deceive because lies and deceit are things that are false and actually "are not." God, the "He Is," is the enduring faithful Truth. He loves even fallen and disobedient man, because God is Love. Hate brings about destruction and death, God "WHO IS" gives life. He reaches out to save His people—physically when in His wisdom He knows it is best, and spiritually through His dear Son, the Lord Jesus. . When the Children of Israel were captive in Egypt He said to Moses, *Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land. I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD' (Exodus 6: selected verses).*

The “LORD” with His almighty “arm” is the God of Rescue and Deliverance. The Rescue and Deliverance from Egypt was a great event, but it was not a stand-alone event, in the history of the world. It was but a picture of a greater rescue and deliverance to come. The LORD with outstretched arm and great judgments, through His holy Son Jesus would force Satan into submission. Jesus would free His people from the bondage of sin, the punishment of death, and the eternal suffering of hell. He would lead His people through the “wilderness” of life, to the promised land of Heaven!

Do you see the deeper meaning when Moses said in our text *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken* ? The Prophet is Jesus! In Acts 3, Peter clearly identifies “the Prophet” as Christ. Moses tells the Israelites, when they get into their land, not to stray away from the Rescuer of souls, from the promised Deliverer who gives eternal salvation!

There was a particular danger that was on Moses’ mind. In the verses before the text, Moses spoke of the witchcraft, sorcery, and devil-service so prevalent in Canaan among the idol worshiping people. These practices were an abomination to the LORD and would bring His wrath. Moses is saying, Don’t you dare listen to the godlessness and satanism common among Canaanites. In fact, God told Israel to drive every last one of the Canaanites out of the land, for their own good. Moses was saying, listen to the Prophet who truly has your best welfare at heart.

I don’t know that any of you will be tempted to dabble in witchcraft and sorcery in the weeks ahead—if the devil could get you to do it, he would. But during this Advent and Christmas time, there are lots of voices-apart-from-God calling out to you in your celebrations to abandon the HE IS and His salvation provided in Christ. Do you say, “It’s not a problem, how we celebrate. God didn’t command that we must celebrate the birth of His Son into life on this earth in the first place, did He?” No. We don’t even know the exact day or the year it took place. But early Christians chose a celebration of His birth on earth, and picked a day, December 25, and considered it an appropriate day of worship and rejoicing, just as the shepherds worshiped the Christ child and rejoiced. The holiday is about Christ the Savior from sin. And the devil does not want you to celebrate this man-chosen holiday. Christ’s arrival on earth was the “beginning of the end” for Satan. When God’s eternal Son took flesh and blood as our brother, *from among your brethren, like unto me*, as Moses said, He walked in our shoes to pay our debt. In that sense, He is like Moses in yet another way. Just as Moses was the intermediary, the middle man, between God and the people, so Jesus intervenes for us. *There is one God and mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all* (I Timothy 2:5-6). Christmas is about salvation in Jesus.

If Satan can’t stop the celebration of the Birth of Christ on earth, he will do whatever he can to make sure it’s just a big festival having nothing to do with salvation from sin. “Make it only about presents, and make it about presents-given-as-a-reward for being good. Instill some work-righteous motivation into children’s hearts. Get them to think, that’s how God operates too—do good to get a reward.” If that’s the case, the “presents” are really not presents, are they? They are payments! Satan also says, “Let’s make the festivities about snow, about reindeer, even about love and peace; but not about the love of God in Christ to free sinners from hell, not about the peace of God that passes all understanding.” There are many Christmas slogans about the “true” meaning of Christmas which actually miss the mark. I once read a Christmas saying which sounds good at first--it was probably on a Christmas page in a newspaper trying to tell me what real Christmas is about—but sadly missing the point. It stated: “Christmas is not about what’s under the tree, but about who’s around the tree.” Sounds so good. Part of it is true. Christmas is about family, friends, peace, and love. But the statement says nothing about Jesus! Nothing about the gift of forgiveness and everlasting life that Jesus gave us, at the price of His own life. Life ever-lasting! That is what the ever-green Christmas tree, so brightly decorated, is all about.

*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken!* All the voices trying to camouflage and hide the Savior at Christmas are but simplified forms of witchcraft! enticingly inviting you to “trust Satan, not the Lord. “

But the Truth is, TRUST JESUS, NOT SATAN! Listen to the Right One at Advent! Hymn 103 vv. 3-4 sums it up well:

Oh, then rejoice that through His Son  
God is with sinners now at one;  
Made like yourselves of flesh and blood,  
Your Brother is the eternal God.

What harm can sin and death then do?  
The true God now abides with you.  
Let hell and Satan rage and chafe,  
Christ is your Brother, ye are safe!