

The Eager Expectation of God's People Eager to Hear the Prophet

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

Imagine you are an Israelite, one of God's chosen people, living in 1406 BC. Your people had once been captives in Egypt. It has been 40 years already since Moses had led them out of slavery there as God parted the waters of the Sea and gave them an escape route that collapsed on the Egyptian army. Your people have been wandering in the desert since that time. Now as you stand ready to take the Promised Land, Moses gives you his farewell speech. He recounts the history of the Lord's blessings upon your nation and reiterates the laws God had given to you.

He also speaks of the importance of prophets and of one future prophet in particular. He gives you this promise and instruction: **The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.** Imagine how you and the rest of the Israelites would have looked forward to the fulfillment of this prophecy as you realized that Moses would not be going with you into the Promised Land. This was a consequence he would have to bear for his sin before the Lord. Though they did not always show it (sinful natures being what they are), the Israelites appreciated the fact that Moses was their leader and that God spoke to them through him.

That's really what a prophet was—someone who spoke a message from God. We often think of a prophet as someone who told the future—and that sometimes happened—but really, a prophet was simply a spokesman for God and the message may or not have been about the future. The prophets of old received their messages straight from the Lord—in visions, in dreams or spoken directly to them.

Moses was God's spokesman for his people through some difficult times and during dramatic events. For 40 years he had served in this role and now he would no longer be with them. Imagine then how the Israelites must have looked forward to the fulfillment of these words from God through Moses here at the end: **The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.**

What exactly would he be like, this prophet that God's people eagerly expected and waited for? Well, let's look at the promise. He would be raised up by the LORD God himself and would speak with divine authority. That would make him someone to whom

God's people must listen. This prophet was not to be ignored or rejected. He would be raised up from among the "brothers" of Israel. He would come from God's family, from those who had a covenant relationship with the LORD. Moses said that this prophet would be like him. In what ways would he be like Moses? He would receive the messages for God's people directly from the LORD himself. This would be no part time job; being a messenger for God would be his constant role. Just as Moses was to be respected as God's prophet and the Lord's anger burned against those who questioned his role as spokesman, so too the Lord would insist that this Prophet be respected and listened to. Moses was a mediator between the Lord and his people. He was the go-between and intercessor at the time of the Golden Calf and Ten Commandments for example. This future Prophet would also be a Mediator like Moses.

All of the things the people had come to rely upon Moses for would be found in the Prophet who was to come. God's people were EAGER TO HEAR THE PROPHET but had no way of knowing how long they would have to wait to do so. So I imagine they lived in a state of expectation and anticipation, always longing to see and hear this prophet. And as the Lord sent spokesmen from time to time, I suppose they wondered if this next one was the One Moses had foretold.

It is probably not much of a secret to those of us assembled here today/tonight that the Prophet Moses spoke of was Jesus. And if you didn't know that before this service started, you learned about it in our Scripture lesson from Acts where the Apostle Peter identified Jesus as the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy. Maybe you recall that when Philip found his brother Nathanael to have him come and meet Jesus, he eagerly told him **"We have found the one Moses wrote about (John 1:45).** In the account of the Feeding of the 5,000, we read this: **After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world (John 6:14).**" They were expecting this Prophet and they knew what to expect from him! At a religious festival in Jerusalem months before his death, his enemies were already trying to kill him because Jesus was explaining to the people who he was. **On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet (John 7:40).**"

THE EAGER EXPECTATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE was evident! They were EAGER TO HEAR THE PROPHET because they knew Moses' prophecy and understood that this was a Prophet even greater than Moses. This in fact was the Christ of God! They saw in Jesus God's promised Prophet, but more than that—this was their Messiah.

You and I see him as the Messiah, the Savior, as well. We see that Jesus fulfilled the words of Moses' prophecy. We hear in the Christmas gospel that the LORD God sent his divine Son—born by the power of the Holy Spirit. The promised Savior would grow up and speak with a divine authority that was not to be ignored. Jesus also came from the Jewish people, as promised. His human descent was from the line of Mary, which

traced its roots back through the family tree of King David. And he was like Moses because he spoke the Word of God—but did it with power and authority even greater than the great Moses. And just as Moses was a mediator between God and his people, so was Jesus—but on a whole other level! While God established the Old Covenant through his servant Moses, he established the New Covenant of sins forgiven through Jesus. Even now, Jesus serves us as our Mediator in heaven based on all he did as our Redeemer while in this world. Jesus perfectly fulfilled this prophecy of Moses.

You may recall that in John's gospel, he calls Jesus "the Word." Jesus is the Word of God to the world. He is the messenger of God's love and salvation to sinners. It says in Scripture that we would not know God's love if Jesus had not come into the world. Is it any wonder that Christmas is an anticipated celebration for Christians?! We celebrate the message of God's love and the promise of salvation that became a reality when Jesus was born into the world. And through the pages of Scripture, we hear Jesus himself speak to us. We turn the pages of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and Jesus himself speaks! If you have one of those Bibles where everything Jesus said is in red letters, it is even easier to recognize his voice!

Though Jesus was born in Bethlehem and later died in Jerusalem and after that rose from death and ascended into heaven where he is right now, he *still* comes to us through the pages of the Bible and he speaks to us. God's people today still are **EAGER TO HEAR THE PROPHET** who is even more than a prophet. Christians gather in worship and in Bible study. They read their Bibles at home. All of Scripture points to Jesus, the great Prophet and world's Savior and it is only in Scripture that we hear him speak to us.

Just as those Israelites sometimes sinned by disobeying their prophet Moses and not listening to him, so we too are often guilty of not spending the time in God's Word so that we can hear Jesus talk to us. We also sometimes disregard and disobey what he tells us. For those sins, we repent today/tonight and look to Jesus for forgiveness and the assurance that he still has reserved a place in heaven for his forgiven brothers and sisters, you and me.

The day will come when our Prophet-Savior returns. With eager hearts, we look forward to that day. We expect it at any time, but until that day arrives, we want to renew our efforts to hear Jesus speak to us. Just as those believers of old eagerly expected Jesus and were eager to hear him, we too want to listen to our great Prophet and Savior. Often our lives are quite busy and perhaps at no time more than these days before Christmas. But I encourage you to not let other things distract you now or at any time from hearing the Prophet, because you know that he is even more than that—he is your Savior. Amen.