28 January 3 February 2024 How we discern what comes from God

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

**15**The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. **16**For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb, on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”

**17**The Lord said to me: “What they say is good. **18**I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. **19**I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.**20**But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.”

**Bible notes**

In the middle of a section outlining various laws to do with boundary markers and sacrifices, the compiler of Deuteronomy inserts this word from God about sending a prophet like Moses. It is almost as if God and Moses knew that the people would not be able to follow all this guidance without a person present with the authority to speak for God. It’s what the people asked for when the Law was given on the mountain. God honoured this promise with a string of prophets, starting with Samuel, many of whose words we have in the text of the OT. But the final fulfilment of this word came in Jesus as the crowd in John’s Gospel noted in 6:14, 7:40. God always sends word in the form of a person.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Moses tells the people that God commands them to heed the words of the prophet who will be sent and warns them against false prophets. Jesus is seen as authoritative, in contrast to the scribes. How do we discern genuine and reliable authority? Some of you may have seen the famous April fool stunt pulled by the BBC in 1957 (and shown many times since) when they ran an item on the ‘Swiss spaghetti harvest’, showing spaghetti-draped trees and giving other authenticating information. Many believed the item to be true. Why might this have been, and what issues does it raises, particularly in the modern media world? How does this relate to spreading the ‘fame’ of Jesus in the world today?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What is this and what is it supposed to do?
* How do you know what is truth?
* How do we know what comes from God?

**Prayer**

Adapt to your local context.

**A prayer of praise**
Living God, we praise you for the people you have called to speak your words of power to us and to our world – words of life and death, of opportunity and risk, of comfort and challenge, of wisdom and clarity. Help us to step out to the rhythm of their beat, the beat of justice, of compassion, of reverence for you,
so that we might grow in wisdom and confidence, and sing our life’s story to the music of your gospel. in Jesus’ name.
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Lord, like your first disciples
you send us out as sheep among wolves.
Teach us to be wise as serpents
as well as innocent as doves.
Remind us that your peace comes with us
and your hand is there to guide and encourage.
**Amen.**

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