

Epiphany 4  
January 29, 2012

Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
353-395-329

Listen to Jesus!

- I. He is like Moses, but better.
- II. He speaks with divine authority.

Dear Christian friends,

Listening. It's an important part of our lives. It can also be a BIG PROBLEM. Parents wonder if their children **are listening** to them. Teenagers complain that their parents **never listen** to them.

We can joke about that – but it is SERIOUS. **Parents**, do you know what music your children are listening to or who their friends are? **Sometimes** parents wonder where their children **get** such a BAD ATTITUDE. You can **often trace it back** to what they are LISTENING to or **watching** on TV. Adults are also influenced by what **they listen** to. Our ATTITUDES – our BELIEFS and **morals** and PRIORITIES - the **language** we use are often shaped by the TV shows we watch – the people we **work** with.

***“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me,”*** Moses told the Israelites. ***“You must listen to Him.”*** God faces STIFF COMPETITION for our attention. Yet God's will is **so clear!** LISTEN TO JESUS! Listen to Jesus because 1)Jesus is like Moses, but He's better. And 2)Jesus speaks with **divine authority**.

**I. Jesus is like Moses, but better.**

These verses take us to the end of Moses' life. He was taking leave of God's people – people he had served for **40 years**. There had been some DIFFICULT DAYS and ROCKY SPOTS along the way – but Moses wasn't bitter or **resentful**. Moses loved these people. So he didn't simply say, “GOOD-BYE – GOOD LUCK!” Moses encouraged them to BE FAITHFUL to their Lord and to continue to LISTEN to their God.

You won't find another prophet in the OT who can COMPARE to Moses. Deuteronomy closes with this remark – ***“Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.”***

What a ministry Moses had had! Oh, there were plenty of ORDINARY **days** – but there were also the plagues on Egypt – the exodus and crossing the Red Sea – the manna and miracles in the wilderness. Now HERE THEY WERE at the border of the **Promised Land** of Canaan.

LISTEN TO JESUS because He is like Moses – but BETTER! Jesus **is better** because of who He is. Our Prophet is ***“like Moses, from among your own brothers.”*** Our Lord Jesus is a Jew – a **Son** of Abraham and David. Our Prophet is a true man – YET MORE than a man. As we heard in the gospel reading Jesus is ***“the Holy One of God.”*** LISTEN TO JESUS because He is the eternal Son of God **born** our Brother.

LISTEN TO JESUS because He proclaims a BETTER MESSAGE than Moses. Moses explained, ***“This is what you asked of the LORD when you said, ‘Let us not hear the voice of the LORD nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.’”***

Moses takes us back to the GIVING OF THE LAW at Mt. Sinai. The **people** were under strict orders not to GO NEAR the mountain under pain of death. We're told, ***“There was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mt. Sinai***

***was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like a furnace, the mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of the LORD answered him.***

With all of that God was impressing on His people that He MEANT BUSINESS. God was **telling** the Israelites, “I mean it when I say, **‘Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’**” God was **telling** us, “If you think you can PLAY GAMES with Me – I guarantee you that you **will lose**. If you think I’m KIDDING around – you better think again!” The people GOT THE MESSAGE. They were afraid they would die ON THE SPOT if Moses didn’t speak to God for them.

LISTEN TO JESUS **because** He is like Moses but better! Jesus also takes us to a mountain – to Calvary. We see NOT SMOKE and fire but a bloody Jesus hanging from a cross. We hear NOT BLARING TRUMPETS but Jesus saying, **“Father, forgive them – My God, why have You forsaken Me? – It is finished.”** The message of **Calvary** is the EXACT OPPOSITE of Sinai. Sinai pronounced death and damnation on all who disobey God EVEN ONCE. Calvary pronounces forgiveness and **cleansing** to the FOULEST SINNER through the shed blood of God’s Son.

John wrote in his gospel, **“the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”** LISTEN TO JESUS with His gospel message of pardon and peace through faith in Him. Jesus does not tell us to IGNORE the Commandments – but that He has obeyed them all **perfectly** for us. Jesus does not excuse our sins as NO BIG DEAL but He tells us He died in our place to take them all away. Jesus does not tell us to CLEAN UP our acts and we might make it to heaven. Jesus tells us to TRUST in Him and we will go straight to heaven when we die. LISTEN to Jesus **because Jesus tells** us, **“Whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned.”**

This was a critical turning point in Israel’s history. For the past 40 years they had been OFF BY THEMSELVES in the wilderness. **Now** they were about to take possession of the Promised Land. But other people were **already living** there. Those other people had OTHER GODS. They had different religions – different morals and values. So just before this Moses told the Israelites, **“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. The nations you dispossess LISTEN to those who practice sorcery or divination. But the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so.”** They were to LISTEN to the coming Prophet – to Jesus – because...

## II. He speaks with divine authority.

We better understand the ROLE of a prophet. The basic job of a prophet was NOT TO PREDICT the future but to SPEAK FOR GOD. The prophet received a message from God and then passed it on to the people. **For example**, God told Jeremiah, **“You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.”** The people were to receive the message – NOT as the **opinion** of the prophet – but as GOD’S WORD – coming straight from God Himself. That is why so often in the OT the prophet proclaimed, **“This is what the LORD says!”** The prophet spoke BY DIVINE INSPIRATION and he spoke with DIVINE AUTHORITY. The people were to LISTEN and take to heart whatever the prophet said.

God here emphasizes that about Jesus. It might sound weird to us to hear God say, **“I will put My words in His mouth, and He will tell them everything I command Him.”** Jesus is TRUE GOD and by Himself He speaks WITH DIVINE AUTHORITY. But because Jesus is also a man it would BE TEMPTING for the people to just brush off whatever Jesus said. **In fact** that’s just what many of them

did. Many still do that with God's Word. So God added, ***"If anyone does NOT LISTEN to MY words that the Prophet will speak in MY name, I MYSELF will call him to account."***

No one HAS THE RIGHT to ignore anything in God's Word. No church – no pastor – no individual – HAS THE OPTION of changing or ignoring anything God says in His Word. No person or court or country HAS THE AUTHORITY to overrule what God has said. To do that is to sin against the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandments. People may think they can GET AWAY with that God promises, ***"I Myself will call him to account."*** To refuse to believe Jesus and **what He says** is to bring God's condemnation on oneself. ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned."***

All people WITHOUT EXCEPTION are to listen to Jesus. God deals with the COMPETITION HE FACES. ***"But a prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say, or who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."*** In the OT to teach false doctrine – to preach false gods – carried the death sentence. That's HOW SERIOUSLY God takes false doctrine. That's how seriously WE today should still see it. **False doctrine** – false TEACHINGS – lead a person to IGNORE and DISOBEY God and **so sin**. False gods lead a person TOTALLY AWAY from the **one true** God.

God hammers home that **warning** in BOTH the OT and NT. Through Jeremiah God said, ***"I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in My name – who prophesy the delusions of their own minds. I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.' They lead My people astray with their reckless LIES, yet I did not send them."*** Jesus tells us, ***"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing (they can look and sound pretty good), but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."*** Through Paul God ORDERS us, ***"Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the doctrine you have learned. KEEP AWAY (note that well!) from them."*** Through John God warns us, ***"Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."*** We can't stop anyone FROM TEACHING false doctrine or false gods but we are NOT TO LISTEN to them. We are to LISTEN TO JESUS because He speaks with divine authority.

**Actually this competition** for our attention is a TEST of our faith and our loyalty to God. **Earlier** in this book God spoke to His people about false prophets and told them, ***"You must not listen to the words of that prophet. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow."*** Being faithful to God and ALL of God's Word will not win you any **popularity contests**. But our concern is **not** to BE POPULAR with the world but BE FAITHFUL to our Lord.

Listening is an IMPORTANT PART of our lives. Just as important is TO WHOM we are listening. God's will is CLEAR: LISTEN TO JESUS! Amen.

Sunday – "We Praise You, O God" – pages 48-49

Wednesday – Hymn #356