

Messiah in the Books of Moses: Lesson 7 – Deuteronomy 18:1-22

NOTES: The Introduction

The promise of Messiah progressively unfolds throughout the Old Testament. *Messiah* became the proper name associated with the promised Anointed One of Yahweh Who would come to deliver, redeem, and restore Israel. Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God has kept the hope of His people alive through the promise of Messiah. The Hebrew term *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) literally translates *Anointed One*. The Greek equivalent of *Mashiach/Messiah* appearing in the New Testament is *Christos* (χριστός). Each time the word *Christ* appears in the New Testament, it is a reference to the office of Jesus as the Messiah.

In the study of *Messiah in the Books of Moses*, six Old Testament prophetic predictions will be explored: *The Edenic Prediction* (Gen. 3:15); *The Noahic Prediction* (Gen 9:25-27); *The Abrahamic Prediction* (Gen 12:1-3); *The Judaic Prediction* (Gen 49:8-12); *The Balaamic Prediction* (Num 24:15-19); and, *The Mosaic Prediction* (Deut 18:15, 18). Each prophecy will be studied within its historical context and in light of its fulfillment in the Person and work of Messiah Jesus as recorded in the New Testament.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, opening their minds to understand all that was written concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27). A study of Luke 24 introduces *Messiah in the Books of Moses*, establishing the primary importance of studying messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. This study focuses on the first six predictions of Messiah in the Pentateuch.

Genesis 3 – The Edenic Prediction (Gen 3:15): Humanity of Messiah

Genesis 3 records the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Before casting the man and the woman from the garden of Eden, God gives the woman a promise that includes the first predictive prophecy of Messiah in the Bible. Genesis 3:15 has commonly been called the *protoevangelium* (“the first gospel”) because it is the first prophecy in the Bible, revealing the promise of a future Redeemer Who will crush the head of Satan.

Genesis 3:15 is the “mother prophecy” that launches the promise of redemption for fallen humanity through the Messiah Who is the “seed/offspring” of the woman. The Edenic Prediction establishes the humanity of Messiah, the promised “seed/offspring” Who becomes the central figure of God’s unfolding kingdom plan.

Genesis 9 – The Noahic Prediction (Gen 9:25–27): Divinity of Messiah

Based on the genealogies in Genesis 5, at least 1500 years pass between creation and the great flood in the days of Noah. With the assumption that the seven days of creation took place around 6000 BC, some biblical scholars tentatively propose, and evidence supports, 3800 BC as the estimated time of the flood.

In the millenniums that follow the entrance of sin into the world through Adam and Eve, wickedness multiplies exponentially until the whole earth becomes corrupt in God’s eyes. “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). Genesis 6–9 records God’s execution of judgment on the earth by a flood that destroys all living things except for Noah, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, their wives, and the animals God preserved on the ark.

When Noah and his household disembark after the flood waters receded, God blesses them and commands them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). Genesis 9 records the sin of Ham, Noah’s son, against his father, resulting in the blessing of Shem and Japheth, and in the cursing of Canaan, the son of Ham. Within this prophetic passage of blessing and cursing, the second prediction of Messiah occurs in Genesis 9:25-27, predicting God’s dwelling in the tents of Shem.

As Genesis 3:15 establishes the humanity of Messiah, Genesis 9:25-27 establishes the divinity of Messiah. The human and divine converge for the first time in the advent of Messiah Jesus, the unique God-Man, the Word of God Who became flesh and made His dwelling among humanity (cf John 1:1-18).

Genesis 12 – The Abrahamic Prediction (Gen 12:1-3): Seed of Blessing

From among the *Shemitic* or *Semitic* people, who are descendants of Noah’s son Shem with whom God had promised to dwell (Gen 9:27), Yahweh selects a single man, Abram, from whom Messiah would descend. Yahweh calls Abram to depart from his native country and to go to a land that Yahweh would show him. Abram then goes out of Ur with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot to go to the land of Canaan.

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When Yahweh calls Abram to the land of Canaan, He enters into an everlasting, unconditional covenant that initially included seven promises (Gen 12:2-3): (1) “I will make you a great nation” (2) “I will bless you” (3) “make your name great” (4) “you shall be a blessing” (5) “I will bless those who bless you” (6) “the one who curses you I will curse” (7) “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” After Abram’s arrival in the land of Canaan, Yahweh changes Abram’s name to Abraham, and He covenants an eighth everlasting promise: (8) “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen 17:8).

The Abrahamic Prediction of Messiah occurs in one of the initial seven promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Genesis 12:3, “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” The pronoun “you” is a singular masculine pronoun that refers to Abraham, representative of his collective offspring through Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the covenant, who carried the Seed in whom all families of the earth would be blessed.

The apostle Paul explains, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in You’” (Gal 3:8). The loins of Abraham carried the human seed of the divine Messiah through Whom salvation comes to bless all nations.

Genesis 49 – The Judaic Prediction (Gen 49:8-12): Messiah of Tribe of Judah

Yahweh establishes His covenant with Abraham that includes eight promises of blessing to Abraham and his descendants, including the promise of Messiah in his seed through whom all nations would be blessed. Yahweh then promises to give a son to Abraham and to barren Sarah in their old age. Abraham questions Yahweh about bearing a child in their old age and proposes that He bless Ishmael instead. “But God said, ‘No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him’” (Gen 17:19-20).

When Abraham was 100 years old (ca. 2065 BC), Isaac was born and established as the heir of Yahweh’s covenant. Isaac and his barren wife Rebekah bear twin boys. Before their birth (ca. 2005 BC), Yahweh tells Rebekah that her older son (Esau) will serve the younger son (Jacob). Esau later sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, and Jacob tricks his father to bless him in place of Esau. Yahweh establishes His covenant with Jacob as heir of His promises to Abraham. Jacob’s name is changed to Israel (Gen 32:28).

Jacob/Israel bears twelve sons with his wives Leah and Rachel and their concubines Zilpah and Bilhah. The names of Jacob’s twelve sons are – (of Leah): Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; (of Rachel): Joseph and Benjamin; (of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid): Dan and Naphtali; and (of Zilpah, Leah’s maid): Gad and Asher. Before his death, Jacob/Israel gathers his twelve sons to tell them “what will befall you in the days to come” (Gen 49:1). Jacob/Israel speaks a prophetic message to each of his twelve sons.

Each son would become a tribe, and the twelve tribes become the nation of Israel, the nation which God first covenanted with Abraham to make great (Gen 12:2). Israel is the nation created to carry the human seed of Messiah. In Genesis 49, Jacob prophetically reveals the kingdom destiny of each tribe. The royal tribe chosen by God to carry the seed of Messiah is Judah (Gen 49:8-12). Judah is granted the right to rule over Israel as kings until the coming of Messiah, the One to Whom the kingdom of God belongs forever.

Numbers 24 – The Balaamic Prediction (Num 24:15-19): Signs of the Conquering Messiah

The seventy-person household of Jacob leaves Canaan because of a great famine and goes down to Egypt in 1876 BC. While living in Egypt for 430 years, 400 of those years in bitter bondage, the family of Jacob becomes a great nation. In 1446 BC, God delivers His people through the leadership of Moses.

On their way from Egypt back into the Promise Land, the Israelites fail to trust God at the border city of Kadesh-Barnea when He commands them to “go up and possess the land which I have given you” (Deut 9:23). As a result, God judges that generation to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who had brought back a good report of the land and urged Israel to trust God, would be allowed to enter the Promise Land. All of the other Israelites who stalled at the border of Canaan for fear of the large, fierce people living in their land die during the nation’s forty years of wilderness wandering.

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In the fortieth year of their wilderness wandering (1406 BC), for what would only have been an eleven-mile journey from Mount Sinai, the nation of Israel arrives on the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho in preparation for entering back into Canaan for the first time in 470 years.

Balak, the king of Moab, hires the prophet Balaam to curse the nation that had crossed into his territorial boundaries. But God restrains Balaam because His blessed covenant-people could not be cursed. Yet because of Balak's promise of riches, the prophet Balaam attempts to thwart God and cast a spell on Israel.

Three times, Balaam attempts to curse Israel, but actually speaks oracles of blessing. On his fourth attempt, Balaam is overcome by the Spirit of God to prophetically reveal the coming of Messiah Who would arise from Israel to gain victory over all of the nation's enemies. Balaam reveals the symbols of the reign of this "ruler" are a "star" and "scepter." The fulfillment of this conquering King awaits Messiah's second advent.

Deuteronomy 18 – The Mosaic Prediction (Deut 18:15, 18): Messiah the Great Prophet

Like the *Balaamic Prediction*, the *Mosaic Prediction* is given at the end of the Israelite's forty years of desert wandering on the eve of their entrance into the land of Canaan after a 470-year absence from the land that God had covenanted to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession. Moses is giving them final instructions before they enter to take possession of the land from the foreign nations.

Moses himself would not cross into the Promise Land with them because of his failure to treat God as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. When the sons of Israel had assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron because there was no water to drink, Yahweh instructed Moses, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink" (Num 20:8). Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses speaks directly to the people, saying, "Listen now, you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock" (20:10).

As a result, Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num 20:12). It would be Joshua, not Moses, who would lead the Israelites into the Promise Land.

So as the new generation of Israelites prepare to enter the Promise Land under the leadership of Joshua, Moses gives them final words of exhortation and instruction before climbing to his death on the top of Mount Nebo, which is opposite Jericho east of the Jordan River. While Israel is still camped in the plains of Moab listening to Moses, the people begin to mournfully dread the death of their beloved leader Moses whom Yahweh "used to speak . . . face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend" (Exod 33:11).

Into the midst of their fearful mourning over Moses' impending death on the eve of their conquest of Canaan, Yahweh comforts His people and quiets their anguish by further unfolding the promise of Messiah. Through the final words of His servant Moses, Yahweh promises that He would raise up for them a prophet like Moses from among Israel. Yahweh would put His words into the mouth of this prophet, and he would speak all that Yahweh commanded him. The greater prophet like Moses would be Messiah Himself.

BIBLE TEXT: Deuteronomy 18

Deut. 18:1 "The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the LORD'S offerings by fire and His portion. **2** "They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them.

Deut. 18:3 "Now this shall be the priests' due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep, of which they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach. **4** "You shall give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first shearing of your sheep. **5** "For the LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of the LORD forever.

Deut. 18:6 "Now if a Levite comes from any of your towns throughout Israel where he resides, and comes whenever he desires to the place which the LORD chooses, **7** then he shall serve in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand there before the LORD. **8** "They shall eat equal portions, except what they receive from the sale of their fathers' estates.

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Deut. 18:9 “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. 10 “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 “For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. 13 “You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. 14 “For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.

Deut. 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 “This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ 17 “The LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well. 18 ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 ‘It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20 ‘But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ 21 “You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ 22 “When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Who has no portion or inheritance with Israel? What will they eat? (18:1) Instead of an inheritance among their countrymen, Who is their inheritance as He promised them? (18:2)
2. What is owed to the Levitical priests from the people’s offering of a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep? (18:3) What are the Levitical priests to be given from the grain, new wine, oil, and first sheep shearing? (18:4)
3. Why are the priests due these portions from the people’s offerings? (18:5)
4. How is a Levite who comes from any of the towns throughout Israel where he resides supposed to serve in the place which the LORD chooses? (18:6-7) What is the only exception to the receiving of equal portions among fellow Levites? (18:8)
5. What are the Israelites NOT to imitate when entering the land which the LORD their God gives them? (18:9)
6. List 9 examples of these pagan practices that the Israelites were NOT to imitate. (18:10-11)
7. (A) What are examples of detestable practices of the world that Christians are NOT to imitate?
8. How would an Israelite who practices these things be considered to the LORD? Why does the LORD promise to drive out these nations before the Israelites? (18:12)
9. (A) What is friendship with the world considered toward God? Who is considered an enemy of God? (James 4:4) What is your relationship with the world? With God?
10. What word describes the way that the Israelites are to be before the LORD their God? (18:13)
11. (A) How is a person reckoned blameless before God under the New Covenant?
12. To whom do the nations that Israel will dispossess listen? (18:14)

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13. (P) Prophecy: (Mosaic Prediction – Deut 18:15, 18)

Who does Yahweh their God promise to raise up for them from among Israel's countrymen? How are the people of Israel to respond to Him? (18:15)

(OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)

14. Why does Yahweh their God promise to raise up for them a prophet? What had the Israelite's asked of Yahweh their God in Horeb on the day of the assembly? (18:16) How does Yahweh evaluate their request? (18:17)

15. (P) Prophecy: (Mosaic Prediction – Deut 18:15, 18)

What would the LORD their God place in the mouth of the prophet? What would he speak? (18:18)

(OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)

16. What will happen to whoever will not listen to the words of Yahweh spoken by the prophet in His Name? (18:19) What will happen to the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in the name of Yahweh which He did not command him to speak, or if he speaks in the name of other gods? (18:20-21)

17. How is Israel to know the word which the LORD has NOT spoken? How are they to respond to a prophet who has spoken a word presumptuously? (18:22)

18. What do you learn about God in Deut 18? What do you learn about Messiah in Deut 18:15, 18? How could these truths transform your life?

Write a prayer response to Deut 18.