

**Advent Sermon Series: “A Brief History of Salvation”**  
**“A Lawgiver to Come”**  
**Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.**  
**Sunday, December 6, 2020**

There are times in life when the anticipation of someone’s arrival is very great. E.g., we call the song, “Here comes the bride. . .” By the way, I have never heard that song played at a wedding— I think it is only on TV weddings! E.g., on September 11-13, 1987 Pope John Paul II visited New Orleans, part of a nine-city tour of the U.S. He did quite a lot of things, and in one day he did the following: he visited with 3,000 clergy and religious in St. Louis Cathedral; addressed representatives of black Catholics, young people and educators in three Superdome sessions; celebrated Mass before 130,000 rain-drenched people at the University of New Orleans; and spoke about higher education at Xavier University. In a Times-Picayune survey after the visit “75% of the respondents said that seeing John Paul provoked a spiritual renewal in their lives” (from a [NOLA.com/300/article](http://NOLA.com/300/article) from February 10, 2017). It always puts us on our toes and making sure we are ready when someone great is coming. We will see how important that is to do in our text today.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (p. 174)

**CONTEXT:** Moses is warning the people of Israel about some things they should not do— such as child sacrifice, consulting mediums to contact the dead, and casting spells.

“Deuteronomy is, in a sense, a summary/repetition of Moses’ teachings and a note of farewell.” We find some similar things we have heard earlier in the other four books of the Pentateuch, like the 10 commandments re-appearing (chapter 5), as well as note of the second making of tablets for the 10 commandments (chapter 10) and instructions on celebrating the central festivals of Israel (chapter 16). We have some new information like the blessings and curses (chapters 27-28) and Moses commissioning Joshua to replace him (chapter 31), and Moses’ final blessings to each of the tribes of Israel (chapter 33). Interestingly, we do have an account of Moses’ death and burial (chapter 34). Have you ever heard a person’s final thoughts as they knew their life was coming to an end. E.g., I recall asking a gentleman toward the end of his life about his advice on investments since he had a lot of good success, and he said, “I always invest in the bluest of the blue chip stocks!” E.g., I recall a very good friend of mine in Monroe named Tim Allen, and he was working on a book of his ideas on life, and he allowed me to edit what he had written, and I recall a piece of advice he had in there that I thought was cleverly written— he said, you cannot fly with the eagles if you hang around with turkeys! Moses also had some great advice to the Israelites as his life is coming to an end, and he said in 28:1-2, “If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth; all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God. . .”

READ vv 15-17. “Moses promises that there will be a prophet to come who will resemble him. Why? Cf. 5:22-33.” READ 5:22-27. Have you ever been nervous in front of a great person, someone whom you admired and respected a

great deal? E.g., back after the first season Drew Brees played for the Saints there was a chance to meet him at Dillard's if you bought something, and Gray Goudeau and Jay and Norwood and I went there and stood in line for probably about an hour, and it was awesome to get our first few seconds of attention with him! E.g., I recall when I was in Scotland and I was at a social event at a great New Testament scholar's house and I was nervous just being in his presence, and as I was talking with him and drinking my tea in a cup with a saucer under it, my hands started to shake uncontrollably and rattled the cup against the saucer, and the person with whom I was speaking was concerned— about his tea cup and saucer, that I would break them! Imagine going before the God who created not only all the great athletes and scholars, but even the entire universe— if we are thinking correctly, that would be more intimidation one could talk on his or her own. That is what the people feel, and God acknowledges they have a point.

READ vv 18-19. “Moses promised that this person would speak God's words and everyone is to give complete obedience. So, who is this person? Cf. John 1:21; 6:14; Acts 3:17-26; 7:37; 1 Corinthians 9:21.” I would like to make two points here. First, please notice that in vv 15 and 18 the word “prophet” has a letter footnote by it and if you go down to the bottom of the page you will see the words “or *prophets*”. I want you to know I have looked at several modern translations— RSV, ESV, NIV, NASV, TEV, and REB, and none but the NRSV has this footnote. The original language has singular “prophet”. The idea the NRSV translators are trying to say is that Moses is here likely speaking of a type of person— prophets— whom God will send to Israel in the course of their history. Second, while that may be true, what is noteworthy is that this word “prophet” is singular and this person is to be specifically like Moses. The early followers of Jesus noticed Jesus was just like the person described by Moses. For instance, in Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus speaks of taking up His yoke, not the yoke of the Law (like in Sirac 51:26), and in John 6 Jesus feeds the 5,000 and the people

see how this resembled Moses feeding the Israelites with manna. In Deuteronomy 34:10 we read, “Never since has there arisen a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face-to-face”. Apparently, Moses was a degree different from the other later prophets in Israel. In John 1:17-18, “The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.”

READ Acts 3:19-26 and 1 Corinthians 9:21. And it is significant that God says that when He raises up such a prophet, the people are to obey his words, for God will hold them accountable. Have you ever known an authority figure whom you were to obey? E.g., I recall a recent Advent Devotional Book article from the past, from Joann Bowles, who shared that as a nurse she could go into a hospital room and stick a thermometer in a patient’s mouth and tell the patient not to talk until the temperature is read, and the patient would be obedient! We have probably all been through such experiences in life where an authority figure asked us to do what we did not want to do, and we did not understand why we had to do it, but we knew we had to obey the authority figure. I think such experiences are training grounds for us to learn to obey the Lord. As we delight ourselves in the Lord, as in Psalm 37:4, He will give us the desires of our hearts. E.g., I recall a friend who was in college, and he felt that God was asking him to lead a Bible study, but he felt he was too busy, but he prayed about it and obeyed the Lord, and the Lord blessed him that semester with surprisingly good grades and important ministry was done.

“How are we to respond to this prophet like Moses?” What Jesus brings us is not a new law, but grace. In John 14:15-17 we read Jesus’ words, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” Basically, if we could

make Jesus the prophet like Moses' message a formula, it would be: obedience to God + the grace of God= a relationship with God. Jesus brings a "law" of mercy and grace, of forgiveness and of sanctification. Thus following Jesus is not like just following someone who gives us the rules and the laws to obey, but rather a relationship with a God who loves us and desires us to know His mercy as we obey. E.g., I recall seeing this in another instance of my childhood with my Dad. Our family was on one of the month-long vacations we occasionally took— my Mom, Dad, two older sisters, and me. I did something wrong, from what I recall, bothering my sisters or being disrespectful, and I got a punishment of no swimming for the rest of the trip. This punishment was truly harsh! And toward the last week of the trip we stayed at a hotel near a beach. I was obeying my parents and not going in the water, and I was behaving better, so my Dad said I could go swimming— the punishment was lifted! What I experienced was the right judgment of the law, but also grace as I surrendered to the law. The result of this was to make me love my Dad more— he gave me what I did not deserve, he had mercy on me. That's what this prophet like Moses, Jesus, is bringing you and me. Not another law, but grace and truth to help us follow God's will, and be changed. It is this Jesus we are to obey, because we want to and we love Him, and are so very thankful that He loves us!