

Introduction: The Words of Eternal Life

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our reading this morning, and you'll see that on the screens there we're reading in a number of different places. First of all, in Deuteronomy chapter 4, that's page 148, and then you might also want to put your finger into page 809, that's Matthew chapter 5.

We're beginning a new study this morning in the book of Deuteronomy, and so we're really dipping our feet in the water this morning. Wagging on the T, whatever metaphor you want to use, we will be dotting around a little, trying to get ourselves oriented in this book.

And so, rather than dive in at the beginning of chapter 1, we're going to read in one or two other places. And we're going to read, first of all, in chapter 4, and then a few verses from chapter 26.

And then, for reasons which I hope will be obvious, as we read them, moving to Matthew chapter 5, to read some of the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5 and chapter 7.

So, first of all, in Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 1. And, of course, here is Moses addressing the people of Israel after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness because of their sin, and on the brink of a new stage in the history of God's great saving purposes.

[1 : 21] As they're about to cross over the Jordan under Joshua shortly and begin the conquest and the possession of the promised land, the land so long ago promised to Abraham and to his offspring.

And so, the people are regrouped, a new generation is gathered, and Moses is putting to them their great task for a second time.

Forty years have elapsed in Sinai, forty years that should never have been. And here is a fresh start, a new beginning. And every new beginning for the people of God begins with the word of God.

So, here is Moses chapter 4 verse 1 saying, And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them that you may live and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor, for the Lord your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor, but you who held fast to the Lord your God are still alive today.

[2 : 43] See, I have taught you statutes and rules as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, the nations, who when they hear all these statutes will say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

For what great nation is there that has a God so near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law, this instruction that I set before you today?

Turn over a little bit to chapter 26 and verse 19. And here these words come at the end of the main heart of the book, chapters 5 to 26, which expounds all the great commandment of God.

And Moses here wraps it up and gives the ultimate purpose of it all. This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall be therefore careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.

You have declared today that the Lord is your God and that you will walk in his ways and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules. And will obey his voice.

[4 : 14] And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession as he has promised you. So that you keep all his commandments.

I'll just read that again because it's a little different to our translation here. The Lord has declared you today to be a people for his treasured possession as he has promised you.

So that you keep all his commandments. And that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made.

And that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God as he has promised. Now turn over with me to the New Testament to Matthew chapter 5.

I think that's page 809 in the church Bibles. And reading here at verse 13 says, The Lord Jesus to his people, You are the salt of the earth.

[5 : 18] But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand. And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others.

So that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Do not think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets. I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

For truly I say to you, Unless heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever does them and teaches them, will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

[6 : 28] Turn over to chapter 7. At the end of Jesus' instruction about the way of life, the way of righteousness for his people.

This warning, verse 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?

And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who builds his house on the rock.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

[7 : 55] Amen. May God bless to us his word. May God bless you.

Young Christians, certainly many of those were an enormous influence to me and to many others. And I think it's rather a shame that you don't get so much of it today because something about the immediacy and the personal challenge of a word preached to real people is lost, really, in the more flattened prose of most books.

But what we have before us today, as we begin this study in Deuteronomy, is indeed a book of sermons. It's the last three recorded sermons of a preacher who was some 120 years old.

It might not sound that inspiring, but these were the last three sermons of Moses. If you look at the very first verse, it says, These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel.

And that sermon takes the first four chapters, more or less, of the book. And chapter 4, verse 44, again, we have a similar phrase. This is the law. This is the instruction that Moses set before the people of Israel.

[9 : 32] That was a bit of a beaver of a message. That goes right the way to the end of chapter 28. And then the beginning of chapter 29, once again, these are the words, the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel.

These are the words Moses spoke from God to his people, the words of the covenant, the words of eternal life. Take to heart all these words, Moses said to his hearers at the end of chapter 32, for this is no empty word for you, but your very life.

These are the words. That's the title of the book in the Hebrew Bible. And they are the words of life because they are the words of God himself. Moses says at the end of chapter 30, he is your life.

So we don't really need much more motivation, I think, to study this book of Deuteronomy, if that's so. But in fact, the Bible, I think, gives us many more incentives to take this particular study seriously.

I think there's a very good case to be made that this book was one, if not the one, of the favorite books of our Lord Jesus Christ. He quotes for it, for example, three times, doesn't he, in his wilderness temptation, suggesting that had been his meditation in the desert.

[10 : 52] From chapter 6, verse 13, it is written, you'll serve the Lord, your God, alone. Or verse 16, you will not put the Lord, your God, to the test, is what he said to the devil.

And from chapter 8, verse 3, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. And when you read Jesus' own teaching, not least his parables, you see so clearly that so much of it is lifted directly out of this book of Deuteronomy.

And much of the Sermon on the Mount comes directly from Moses' teaching in this book. And so secondly, in that light, it shouldn't surprise us at all that Deuteronomy is one of the most quoted books of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

There are more than 80 direct quotations and many, many more allusions to the book. All of the apostles quote from it and indeed apply its ethics directly to the New Testament church.

The apostle Paul derives what seems to be a whole philosophy of ministry payment and support from one of the most obscure verses of Deuteronomy, chapter 24, 25, verse 4, about the ox treading out the grain.

[12 : 07] And in fact, Paul's whole missionary theology of the gospel going to all the nations. It is drawn, what he expounds in Romans 9 to 16, it's drawn principally from Moses' understanding of history in his great song in Deuteronomy, chapter 32.

I could go on, but there's no doubt that Deuteronomy is therefore one of the key books for understanding the whole of the New Testament message. And of course, that is so because it's also one of the most influential books for the whole of the Old Testament.

It's the basis for interpreting and understanding everything that comes after it, what we call the former prophets, Samuel through to the end of 2 Kings. All of the history of Israel right through to the exile.

Everything that happens to Israel was as a result of whether the people and the leaders were loyal to God's covenant or whether they were disloyal and rejected the covenant that Moses laid out in this book.

So Deuteronomy also is the basis for all the later prophets in the Old Testament. Prophets are the messengers of the covenant. They are sent by God calling people back to the covenant faith and warning about judgment if they refuse to do that.

[13 : 28] Moses was the great prophet. He's always called the man of God and every subsequent prophet as Moses himself says in Deuteronomy chapter 18 will be in his image like him speaking the same covenant word to his generation and pointing people to what God is going to do at last in the latter days in the days of judgment and of blessing.

So you really can't begin to understand the rest of the Old Testament far less than New Testament without understanding this book of Deuteronomy. So you might be saying well why on earth have we taken so long to get to Deuteronomy and start teaching it and study it?

Well, Josh and Paul and others have been on at me for quite some time and at last we've got here. But this book is all about the very words of life.

They're about the covenant way of life through the covenant promise of life from the covenant Lord of life revealing himself in these covenant words of life.

Paul tells us doesn't he that all scripture is God breathed. It's God breathing out words which reveal himself to us as the living God and as the life giving God.

[14 : 46] He reveals to us his nature in his name. His name is the Lord Yahweh the covenant Lord. God. And that means that the true God is not a distant God not an unknowable God a mysterious God but he's a God who draws near to know and to be known.

He's real and personal and therefore to know him is not merely to know about him but it's to know him by relating to him in a real way in a real relationship. If you see a beautiful girl or maybe a handsome man across some crowded room some enchanted evening as the song says well your heart might miss a beat mightn't it?

Your interest might be aroused but you don't know that person you might find out about them afterwards but you don't know them but wind the clock forward and come and be standing at the front of this room at a marriage service taking marriage vows on your lips binding yourself to that person in a covenant of marriage with all that that means all that that entails and not only do you now know them you come to know them deeply and intimately and permanently and you see to know God is to know him in this relationship this relationship that the Bible calls covenant of course a covenant relationship with God is not a mutual relationship of equals because God is the maker of heaven and earth and we are his creatures and so to be in a proper relationship with him means that he is the master and we are the servants he is the ruler we are the ruled and that's the shape always of a true relationship between God and man and the covenant is a covenant of a great king made with subjects who are bound to him because they belong to him in fact the whole shape of this book of Deuteronomy actually reinforces that very clearly the book is clearly seen to be in the shape of a covenant treaty if you like between a great king and the people that he has offered his peace and protection to while requiring them in return to give him their absolute love and their loyalty because now they belong to him so in chapters 1 to 4 there is a bit of history a preamble laying out the relationship between God and this people then in chapter 5 to 11 we get the real deal

I am the Lord your God who has redeemed you and you are my people you will love me with all your heart and soul and mind and strength now from chapters 12 to 26 we have a lot of detail laying out well what does that actually look like in real life then in chapters 27 and 28 it's all wrapped up by saying well look this is how things will go if you keep to the covenant there will be blessing but if you rebel against it there will be punishment and then at the end there is the urging of Moses do this choose life not disaster go with this God that's the shape of the book and of course that's the shape of the gospel isn't it all through the Bible God reveals himself in grace and mercy but that revelation demands response there must be heart response to the call of God Paul the apostle calls it the obedience of faith that's the only real and living faith there is don't say

Lord Lord says Jesus and don't do what I tell you to do the wise man the one who will stand in the judgment hears the word of God and does them says Jesus revelation demands response because it's covenant revelation so at the end of chapter 29 Moses sums things up and says the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this instruction this law Moses reveals the God who's the creator of all things who's the maker of heaven and earth and therefore who is the Lord of creation and the ruler of all men who must be obeyed or else the only way is utter disaster I mean there is no getting away from that but of course our task as we read this book is to discover what kind of covenant Lord and ruler this great book of the covenant reveals to us and so by way of introduction today

[19:25] I want to just get clear in our minds that the Lord the covenant Lord that Moses proclaims is a gracious ruler and one who is determinedly working a glorious redemption for all nations of this earth and in doing so he grants his chosen people great responsibilities as they journey with him towards the climax of his great purpose for the world so I want to think about these three things in turn first of all the Lord God of Deuteronomy is a gracious ruler Moses proclaims the covenant rule of a gracious redeemer it's a real pity I think in our minds that the word law immediately conjures up thoughts of annoying rules or even worse of sanctions and penal punishments but the Hebrew word Torah really just means at its most basic instruction this is the instruction

Moses set before the people of Israel and it's instruction for life from a heavenly loving father that's the tone look at chapter 1 and verse 31 where God says that all through the desert he carried Israel as a man carries his son but again at the end of the book he talks about him being like an eagle fluttering over his young in the nest giving them birth suckling them with honey from the rock and you see the son that God loves he instructs with wisdom with gracious care just as in the book of Proverbs it's all about a father giving instruction to his son to give him knowledge and wisdom for the way of life my son do not forget my teaching my Torah my law my instruction but let your heart keep my commandments for length of days and years and peace they will add to your life says Proverbs 3 and he goes on my son do not despise the Lord's discipline or be wary of his reproof for the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father the son in whom he delights and so he says trust in the Lord with all your heart don't lean to your own understanding of things trust in the Lord's

Torah trust in his instructions in his commands now that's just exactly what Moses is saying all the way through this book of Deuteronomy know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son the Lord your God disciplines you he says in chapter 8 verse 5 out of the same love out of the same desire for your good and for your blessing in life his rule is a good and gracious rule that's what you come to know when you come to know God as your Lord and Master and you come to know and trust him more the more you come to trust and obey these gracious commands for your life again just as Proverbs 3 says in all your ways acknowledge him fear the Lord turn away from evil and it will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones you see it's as we respond in obedient faith and trust to

God's words that we come to know him but that's so in any relationship isn't it as you respond that that relationship can develop and we come to know God as we hear and respond to his gracious and good instruction his word is life he speaks he calls us in grace and we respond in obedient faith so that God's promises and purposes may be revealed in our lives and that's what God is saying to Israel here in chapter 4 verse 35 to you he says it was shown that you might know the Lord is God and there is no other out of heaven he let you hear his voice that he may discipline you or disciple you teach you truth for life therefore he says in verse 40 you shall keep his commands that it might go well with you and that's a repeated refrain all the way through this book

God's words are for life they're to lead you in a way of blessing look at the end of chapter 5 verse 29 where after God has given his commandments through Moses he says they're right in all this that oh that they had a mind as this always to fear me and keep my commands that it might go well with them look down to verse 33 Moses says walk in the Lord's way that you may live and it may go well with you again in chapter 6 verse 3 hear O Israel and do do this commandment that it might go well with you in the land the Lord your God has promised your land flowing with milk and honey does that sound harsh verse 4 the Lord our God the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and might do you see what he's saying he's saying to know God is to love God is to obey him because it is he above all others that you trust you trust that his word is life to you and grace and peace

[25 : 04] I hope you can see that all of this talk of obeying God is nothing whatsoever to do with works righteousness this is nothing to do with legalistic religion unless Jesus himself taught legalistic religion it's Jesus who said don't say Lord Lord it's doing the will of the father that matters in my kingdom it's Jesus who said my mother and brothers and sisters are the ones who hear the word of God and do it of course because whoever has my commandments and keep them as Jesus says he it is who loves me and I will love him and manifest myself to him because Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation in the flesh of God our gracious covenant ruler of the God whose service is perfect freedom to use Thomas Cranmer's wonderful phrase take my yoke upon you and learn of me says the

Lord Jesus for I am gentle and lowly of heart my yoke is easy and my burden is light but you see it's always been that way the God of the Old Testament is not a different God to the God who took flesh in the person of the Son the Lord Jesus he's the same God and you only have to read Moses words in this book to see that we're reading about a gracious ruler and redeemer to Israel one who loved them despite all their hardness of heart the early chapters tell of his extraordinary blessing his extraordinary provision as a man carrying his son and as we read earlier on in chapter 26 the goal the purpose of it all is so that he would have a people who he would set in praise and in fame and in glory above all peoples as his treasured possession does that sound harsh Moses proclaims the covenant rule of a gracious redeemer whose words are the words of life because he is their life and in thus speaking the words of the one true

God the covenant Lord of life Jesus says plainly doesn't he Moses spoke of me likewise Jesus said to his followers the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life the words of the same gracious covenant ruler and redeemer and to know his life to know the life of the great redeemer is to know his lordship he is both redeemer and ruler if anyone loves me he will keep my word says Jesus whoever does not love me does not keep my words you need to see how personal that is you can't ever separate a real relationship with God from the real rule of God you can't ever have the one without the other the redeemer is the ruler there's no such thing in the bible as cheap grace there's no such thing as a grace that cleanses from your sin but does not command your life that's what happens when people try and depersonalize

God's grace try and separate God's grace from that covenant relationship that's what leads to the error of antinomianism oh let's sin so that grace may abound never says Paul because you have a master the gracious redeeming God you are under his perfect rule now if you've been redeemed but of course neither must we ever separate God's law his instruction from that covenant relationship because the ruler is our gracious redeemer and we obey his commands not so that somehow that might impress him that he might save us but just because he has saved us because he has been our great redeemer and therefore we will have no lord or master or ruler beside him and because we know and we trust him who gave his own blood for our salvation surely the way he teaches us will be the way of blessing and of beauty never the way of harm and forfeit we can trust this lord with all our hearts and know that if we do acknowledge him in all our ways he will make straight pass for our feet so friends don't fear the commands of god for your life his law is his instruction for a life of blessing

Jesus tells us the father's commandment is eternal life he tells us that to trust him and to obey him is to love him back in answer to his great love for us for this is the love of God says John that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome and this book is in the Bible so that we as the church of Jesus Christ today can know more gracious ruler in the covenant rule of a gracious redeemer and there's no more comprehensive place in the whole Bible of what it means for a community of light to live as a pillar and buttress of truth in this dark world than here in this book of Deuteronomy that expounds so fully the instruction of God for the life of his people so I trust that we'll learn much about the covenant rule of our gracious redeemer

[30 : 56] God but secondly the book of Deuteronomy is also a book about a glorious redemption Moses is prophesying the covenant road to God's glorious rest Deuteronomy is not just a book about ethics not just teaching the life of the redeemed it's giving us a theology of history which is all about the story of God's redemption in this world it's perfectly evident just from chapter 1 that this is a story about a journey with the God of promise by God's people of faith and immediately we're taken back to the wilderness wanderings to the Egyptian slavery in fact right back to the promise of God to Abraham chapter 1 verse 8 speaks of the promised land the land God swore for Abraham and his seed after him and all the way through the book there's the anticipation of that promised land the land which is called the land of God's rest it's all about the covenant road to

God's glorious rest that's where this story is heading that's the great inheritance that awaits that word inheritance is very important all through this book that inheritance where the Lord will grant rest from all your enemies when you possess the inheritance that the Lord has promised you that's how Moses puts it in chapter 25 verse 19 so this is a story about a journey and that journey has a definite end in view and yet even Moses is very clear that the land of Canaan isn't actually the ultimate goal it can't be because of course the promise to Abraham was that through him and his descendants through his seed all nations all peoples all lands would come to know the blessing of God and as we'll see Moses himself never actually entered personally the land of Canaan now he was disappointed by that but he was not devastated by that because

Moses knew Hebrews 11 tells us plainly that he knew that his reward was the riches yet to be revealed in Christ his true homeland was not this earthly city but a heavenly country Moses was awaiting the coming of God's ultimate promise and he's absolutely at one with the apostle Paul who reminds us in the Christian church remember in his letter to the Galatians that the future of this present world is not focused on the earthly Jerusalem but on the Jerusalem above she is our true mother that's a very important thing for Christians today to remember some Christians are far too taken up with the present earthly Jerusalem the land of Israel and Canaan and not with the heavenly Jerusalem but even Moses knew far better than that and he warns Israel doesn't they all through this book that disobedience to God's covenant will lead them to rejection to expulsion from the promised land at the end of the book he says that the nations will see

Israel cast out of the land and they will say it is because they rejected the Lord their Redeemer but of course Moses also says that somehow God's amazing grace will supervene even in the disobedience of his people and bring about a great reversal in his great song in chapter 32 he says that the Lord will vindicate his people when he sees their power is gone and the extraordinary result of that will be somehow that all the nations will rejoice with his people and they too will bow before the one who is God alone in heaven and earth and that's why Paul the great missionary apostle founds his missionary theology here in a theology of history that is propounded thousands of years before by the man Moses the man of God Paul in in Romans chapter 15 quotes from Moses song in Deuteronomy 32 and he says plainly this is fulfilled in none other than Jesus

Christ he became the servant of the circumcision in order to confirm God's promise to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentile nations might glorify God also for his mercy and so although the land of promise is central to Deuteronomy as a place of promised rest and inheritance all the commands all the commands that picture the people in that land in perfect rest and harmony and so on is clearly not yet the ultimate fulfillment the substance of all that is promised that's absolutely plain just reading through the book and reading all the laws which are there to mitigate human sin this is not going to be a land of sinlessness otherwise these laws wouldn't be needed and that's why there's a tension as we'll see as we study the book between what ought to be in God's holy society of his people and what actually is still the sad reality so just one example in

[36 : 20] Deuteronomy chapter 15 Moses says there will be no poor among you if you truly obey the Lord your God then just three verses later he says if one of your brothers should become poor don't harden your heart against him well you see you can hardly read that can you without saying well clearly all is not yet as God has ultimately promised it will be this cannot be as good as it gets well no it isn't there's still a future to this promise and the theology of history of this book points us to an ultimate theology of heaven of a better land that is still to come of a rest that still remains for the people of God by the way that's one of the reasons why Deuteronomy makes so much of the Sabbath see in the wilderness when the people were wandering all through the desert waiting for the land of rest that was promised you can understand can't you that the Sabbath was a prefiguring of that that every week they were given a reminder that the rest of God's inheritance is still to come and you would think wouldn't you then that once you've entered the land of rest well you don't need the Sabbath anymore why would you have a token a symbol when you're living the real thing every day and every day is Sabbath but you see that's wrong isn't it because it's true even for us who live in these days of fulfillment in the latter days that as Hebrews chapter 4 says there remains still even for us a greater

Sabbath rest to come for the people of God and we are to strive to enter that rest so you see we too just like Moses people we are living in the now the already but waiting for what is still not yet we're waiting for the great destination of ultimate rest we are in the same journey as the people that we're reading about in this book of course we're much further on than they are we have far greater blessings we have far better promises because the Lord Jesus has come and fulfilled his great salvation he's risen he's ascended he will come soon to make all things new and bring them to their conclusion but we today are still part of that great story of redemption and that means that we today as the Christian church also are still called to play our part as we walk the covenant road to that glorious rest as we lead others to find that path as well and that brings me to the final thing because you see this book is teaching the people of God in every generation that we have a great responsibility

Moses presses home in this book the covenant role to be played by God's redeemed people I said that at the heart of this book chapters 5 to 26 they expand the covenant way of life that God's people were called to under Moses what it meant to live as the people of the God of grace as the Lord of heaven and earth but we mustn't miss a crucial thing about the purpose of that life of holiness that God's people are called to live living the life of the redeemed of God was in order to shed abroad to the whole world around the light of the redeemer himself in other words God's law has a great missionary function look again at the verses we read in chapter 4 verses 5 to 8 I can't I can't overstate the importance of this text here in chapter 4 for understanding what it means to be

God's people here on this earth look at verse 6 keep God's commands and do them for that will be your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples in the sight of the nations they'll see you and they will say who is a God like their God you see that was Israel's calling wasn't it to be God's servant people to bring light to the world to shine the glory of God to all the pagan nations round about to witness the goodness and the glory of God through their lives to the world and in his law God set before them a vision of the beauty of holiness and set before them his promise of that ultimate future and he called his people to live now for that kingdom that is yet to be fulfilled now you might say well what does that have to say to us today in 2017 we're not living in the Old

Testament anymore that year is over surely Jesus came to fulfill the role of God's servant Israel surely he came and fulfilled all his purposes of salvation well yes but there's more to it than that isn't there we don't have time now to go into all of this but suffice to say that the prophet Isaiah that Bob is teaching us all about at the moment Isaiah spoke didn't he of the great purpose of the ultimate servant of the Lord the true Israel who at last would come but he never ever envisaged that that would mean the end of the role of God's people as a missionary people in this world quite the reverse the servant of the Lord would come and do his work in order to bring to fulfillment the purpose of God's people in the world that at last they would bring his gospel to the very ends of the earth the spirit of the Lord is upon me says the servant in Isaiah 61 because the

[42:18] Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor but you he's speaking to his renewed people you will be called the priests of the Lord ministers of our God you are my witnesses he says in Isaiah 43 the people I form for myself that they might declare my praise and you see because of the triumph of our great redeemer Jesus Christ he has sent his holy spirit the spirit of obedience and absolute trust and faith in God he has sent his spirit into our hearts upon his church so that we he said should receive power to be witnesses of his great mercy of his redeeming love to the very ends of the earth and that's why Jesus said what he said in Matthew chapter 5 that we read earlier before he expounds the great holiness that his followers are called to live out in this world to show that righteousness to the world you are the light of the world now he's saying let your light shine before others so they'll see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven which speak of

Israel's missionary calling and witness to the one true God throughout the whole earth I've not come to abolish that purpose I've come to fulfill that so that through my saving work and through my renewal of my holy spirit you can be the light to the world a holy people declaring the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into light as Peter says you see what it means for us friends we are a people of far greater privilege than Israel under Moses we have so much more don't we this side of the coming of Christ and that means we have far greater responsibilities also to obey God to glorify him far greater opportunity as well to witness for him to the very ends of the world what a wonderful spur that should be to us to live in obedience to God's commands on our lives to live in his way to live evidently under his lordship our obedience isn't just a moral duty to

God as our creator and lord of course it's that he's our master he's our maker we owe him everything absolute obedience but our obedience is part of a missionary dynamic our lives of obedience to his gracious and good and perfect rule can be light in this dark world to live as he calls us to will adorn the gospel of God our savior to live as he calls us to live will show his church to be a pillar of buttress of truth and health and beauty in this world of course we don't just reflect God's goodness to this world just as Israel living under his lordship means that we proclaim his uniqueness to the world we'll see that's a prominent thing in Deuteronomy chapter four also I am the Lord there is no other our message to the world is to reject him his disaster and

Jesus was just as clear as that wasn't he and that's why in Matthew five just after in the same breath as it were of saying these words about people seeing us and glorifying the father in heaven he says also they will revile you and they'll persecute you if you speak for him and call people to obey him alone and the apostles discovered that truth didn't they in the beginning of Acts you read about it when they said there's no other name under heaven by which we must be saved there's no other rule under heaven we must obey God rather than men they were put in prison and beaten and flogged well in a pluralist culture if we dare to proclaim there is one name alone one savior alone if we dare to proclaim there is one way alone obeying his commands for our life for the way then yes we will find reviling we will find persecution just as they did but at the same time the light of the gracious ruler who is our

God and the liberation of his glorious redemption which is his gospel it will shine in this dark world and the darkness will not overcome it just as in the earliest days of the acts that's what we saw isn't it the opposition to the spirit of God was great but great grace was upon them all and the word of God continued to increase and to grow and the Lord added to their number constantly those who were being saved that's what we long to see isn't it in Glasgow today in our city and our nation well that's why these ancient books like Deuteronomy are in our Bible for our instructions says Paul to give us encouragement and hope in the power of the gospel of God our Savior the only God in heaven above and earth beneath so my prayer which

[47 : 54] I hope will be your prayer also is that as we study this book together we will be captivated more and more by our gracious ruler and by the wonder of his great redemption so that we will grasp more and more our great responsibility to live out the word of life to live out the beauty of his holiness and to speak clearly about his unique rule so that we will lead many also to find the life and he who is our life in our great and gracious redeemer made known to us now fully and supremely in our Lord Jesus Christ so friends will you join me in praying as we study this book that God will use it to bring light through us and from us to this great city in which we live that the numbers of those who love him might be added to us here and elsewhere to the praise of his glorious grace well let's pray heavenly father how we thank you that you are a great and gracious redeemer and a trustworthy ruler to lead us in the path of righteousness to lead us on the way to your great promised inheritance which is kept for us in heaven imperishable and undefiled waiting for the coming of our great savior help us we pray to be a people in the eyes of those around us of wisdom and of righteousness that the fragrance of our lord jesus might more and more permeate from us through this city that many with us might join to praise you in the name of jesus christ your son to the praise of your glorious grace and we ask it in jesus name amen