

Truly Exclusive Worship

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Date: 07 May 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Good. Let's turn on now to Deuteronomy. And Willie is continuing his series in expounding this great Bible book to us. Deuteronomy chapter 12 is our chapter for this morning.

Moses continues to address the people of Israel and to prepare them for life in the promised land, which they will be soon entering as they cross the Jordan. So Deuteronomy chapter 12 and verse 1. Page 156, I should have mentioned that in our hardback Bibles. These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess all the days that you live on the earth.

You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods. On the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree, you shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. You shall not worship the Lord, your God, in that way. But you shall seek the place that the Lord, your God, will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. And there you shall eat before the Lord, your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the Lord, your God, has blessed you. You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes. For you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord, your God, is giving you. But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord, your God, is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around so that you live in safety, then to the place that the Lord, your God, will choose to make his name dwell there. There you shall bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the Lord will choose in one of your tribes. There you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns as much as you desire, according to the blessing of the Lord, your God, that he has given you. The unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and as of the deer. Only you shall not eat the blood, you shall pour it out on the earth like water. You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain, or of your wine, or of your oil, or the firstborn of your herd, or of your flock, or any of your vow offerings that you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution that you present.

But you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place that the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your towns. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all that you undertake.

[4 : 1 1] Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land. When the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you, and you say, I will eat meat, because you crave meat, you may eat meat whenever you desire. If the place that the Lord your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock, which the Lord has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your towns whenever you desire. Just as the gazelle or the deer is eaten, so you may eat of it. The unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. You shall not eat it, you shall pour it out on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that all may go well with you and with your children after you, when you

do what is right in the sight of the Lord. But the holy things that are due from you and your vow offerings you shall take, and you shall go to the place that the Lord will choose, and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the Lord your God.

The blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but the flesh you may eat. Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, take care that you be not ensnared to follow them after they've been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods, that I also may do the same?

You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the Lord hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may it be a blessing to us today.

Turn with me to page 156 of your other church Bible to Deuteronomy chapter 12. I want to ask, what does true and faithful and real spiritual worship of God look like?

In Romans 12 verse 1, after 11 chapters of expounding the richness of the depth of the gospel of God's grace made fully known in Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul sums it up like this.

[7 : 16] Therefore, he says, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God. That is your spiritual worship. That is bodily life in every part, he says, not conformed to this age, but transformed by renewal of mind and heart that comes through God's grace, so that you live according to the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God all the time.

The true worship for the believer is living out the reality of a character that has been shaped by the grace of God.

That's all there is to it. But of course, Paul doesn't stop there, does he? He goes on for four chapters, laying out in detail what that means in terms of how we relate to one another so our community life is shaped by God's grace.

Our citizenship in the world is to be shaped by that grace in our lives. And in just the same way here in Deuteronomy, Moses is doing that too.

Back in chapter 5, he reminded us what God said to Israel at Sinai. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of slavery, all by his redeeming grace.

[8 : 32] And therefore, you shall have no other gods before me. That's the first commandment. And in a sense, it's the only one needed, isn't it? But we've seen chapter 6 to 11 flesh that out.

Moses tells us that it means an act of remembering. But they are called to be a holy people, to be a humble people because at heart they know they are hardened. And so they're to be always remembering, always repenting, always living out lives of obedient faith, showing the fruit of real repentance.

That is true worship of the one true God, bodily life, a living sacrifice, showing the character that is shaped by grace. And that's all you need.

But the rest of the Ten Commandments, of course, are simply filling out and showing in real life what keeping the first commandment looks like. And in what follows in chapters 12 to 26 of the book of Deuteronomy are an exposition and an application of the rest of the Decalogue, showing the implications of these seminal commands of God for all parts of our lives.

It's not exhaustive. We're not to read this as though it was an exhaustive rule book with every single detail that we need for life. Of course not. It's what it is. It's a sermon. It's a series of sermons preached by Moses, a real preacher.

[9 : 58] And in his sermon he gives many applications to real life so that we see not only those, but how in the same way we're to apply that to all aspects of our life, all the varied situations that we will encounter in our lives together as God's people.

And we'll see. It's all about how people in a right relationship with God are to live in terms of their corporate religious life, you might call it, in terms of marriage and family life, in terms of taking seriously the sanctity of human life, fairness and justice, cherishing the truth, caring for the needy, and so on and so forth.

In fact, when you read Romans 12 to 16, in fact, when you read any of the New Testament letters and you've understood Deuteronomy 12 to 26, you begin to understand where they get it all from.

Not just the apostles, the Lord Jesus himself. It's all here. And they're taking it and applying it to the New Testament church. But as always, of course, God and relating to God is the matter of first importance.

And so here in chapters 12 and 13, there are these commands which thresh out, if you like, the theme of the second commandment.

[11 : 13] Because that's the first thing implied by the first commandment. If God alone is the Lord, then there are to be no idols. There's to be no false worship. And as chapter 13 will show us, there are many and powerful lures to us to worship falsely.

And so in chapter 12 here, we have a very clear instruction to Israel about the exclusivity of true worship of God. Something that they must be absolutely in no doubt about and something that we likewise must not be in doubt about today.

The Lord our God is the only God. He is one. There is no other. And so worship that is faithful, that is spiritual, that is real, first of all, must be truly exclusive worship.

And I want us to see in this chapter that it shows us, above all else, this clear emphasis on exclusivity in terms of the sole place of true worship, in terms of the singular joy of true worship, and also the simple purity of worship of the one true God.

First, notice this emphasis all through the chapter on the sole place of true worship of the real and living God. Look at verses 1 to 4 and the great contrast there with verse 5.

[12 : 30] There's a great necessary negative there. Do you see? Verse 4, You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way. That is, in the many and varied ways of the pagan Canaanite nations.

There are high places up on the mountains, the hills. There are shrines under the trees. There are pillars. There are idols. There are visual representations of the gods. No, not that way, verse 5, But this way, you shall seek the place, the sole place, that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes, to put his name, to make his habitation.

There you will go. And there you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes and contributions and so on. You see, over against the pagan worship of man-made gods, where worship can be in any place, any way, to any old gods, any names, the people of the one true God are to order their whole life of worship according to what he says, according to his sovereign direction.

Not, verse 8, everyone doing what's right in their own eyes, but rather, the one true God can be worshipped only one true way.

And it is God himself who decides that and dictates to us what it must be. That's what Jesus said, wasn't it, to the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4.

[13 : 58] You Samaritans are worshipping what you don't know. But we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. The God of Israel is the only God.

That's what Jesus is saying to her. And of course, Jesus stood before her and said, I who speak to you am he. And to worship God truly, he's saying, in spirit and in truth now, means to worship and bow down only through the name of Jesus Christ.

There's an absolute exclusivity about worship of the one true God. It must be his way, and that is one exclusive way.

And this emphasis on one way and one place, according to his sovereign direction, it's something you see all through this chapter, six times. It's there again in verse 11.

You see the place the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there. It's there in verse 14. The place the Lord your God will choose. Again in verse 18. You shall bring offerings and eat before the Lord your God and the place the Lord your God will choose.

[15 : 05] The place he chooses, to put his name there. Verse 26 again. The place the Lord your God will choose. I think we get the point, don't we? God chooses, not us.

God decides how and where he will be worshipped, not us. Why is this emphasis on the soul place so important? Well, above all, because our God is real.

He is the living God. He is the maker of heaven and earth. He is not a dumb idol. And so we really can meet him and encounter him and engage with him in worship.

Worship of the one true God is not just an empty religious experience like it is for all other man-made religions. God is actually present on this earth and we can meet him and encounter him where he chooses to dwell.

But only there. That's why there's this emphasis again. You'll see it in verse 5. You'll see it also in verse 11 and verse 21 about him putting his name, making his name to dwell at the place of his choosing.

[16:17] Because where his name dwells, verse 5, that's where God makes his habitation, his home. He really is present there. If you worship Baal, if you worship the Asherim, if you worship Moloch or any of these other ancient Canaanite gods, or indeed if you worship Buddha or Krishna or any of the other man-made gods of false religion today, it doesn't matter where you set up your shrine.

It doesn't matter where you have your altar because they don't exist. Because wherever you go, it's just an empty ritual. None of these so-called gods exist. They're just figments of the imagination of man.

But the Lord, our God, is the maker of heaven and earth. He is real. And you can't find him where he isn't, where he isn't present. You can't control him.

You can't just conjure him up by building an altar or deciding, oh, God, appear here to me. No, he's the sovereign Lord of earth and heaven. He chooses where on earth he may deign to make his name dwell so that he may be found.

And, at first, he made that dwelling in the tabernacle where he tabernacled with his people in the tent, in the tent of meeting as they traveled through the wilderness. As Israel came into the land of Canaan and became settled, that place was first of all Gilgal where it was settled.

[17:40] And then it was Bethel and then it was Shiloh and then ultimately, of course, it was Jerusalem that became the permanent place where the temple was built under Solomon, the place, God said, where I will make my name dwell.

And you remember in the dedication of the temple in Solomon's great prayer, he spoke about God's eyes being open and his ear open all the time, always, towards that place and to those who prayed prayers to that place, he would hear and he would answer because God is really there.

He's to be found. He's real. And he answers the prayers of his people. And so all through our Bibles, there's this emphasis on the exclusivity of the worship that is real and true and faithful because God says through Isaiah, I am God.

There is no other. Trust me and be saved. Turn to me and be saved. All the ends of the earth. And to turn to him, you must seek him where he can actually be found, where he really is, where he has chosen to dwell, where he can be encountered as the living God.

There is no other God besides me, a righteous God and Savior. There is none beside me. And in Moses' day, what that meant was that to encounter the living God, you had to go to the place where he sent his name because where his name dwells, there he has his habitation.

[19:09] He lives. And in our day, of course, it is just the same. If anyone is to truly worship the one and only God of heaven and earth, they must do it the only way God himself has directed us to do.

They must go to the sole place where he has made his name dwell. And that, of course, is in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because as the opening chapter of John's gospel tells us, in him, the everlasting God became flesh and tabernacled among us. And in John 17, Jesus prays, doesn't he, to his Father, this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

I have manifested to them your name, to the people that you gave me. Keep them in your name.

That's what Paul says to Philipppians, to the Philipppian church in Philipppians 2, isn't it?

That God has bestowed upon Jesus the name that is above every other name that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

[20:24] That's why the apostle Peter is adamant in Acts chapter 4 when he says, there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we may be saved.

And so we have to be clear today, don't we? To truly worship God, you cannot do that through any other religious path. There is no interfaith confusion.

There are no other paths that lead to the true God of earth and heaven except through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is real. And through him alone can you find salvation.

There is one God, says Paul, and one mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2 verse 5. That's the simple truth.

And secondly, also as Christians, we must be careful we don't misunderstand what it means that we worship God through Jesus alone in whom God's name dwells and not through some earthly holy place.

[21 : 35] Because it does mean that we can worship God in any place, but it doesn't mean that we can worship God in any old way that's right in our own eyes.

Those people say that, don't they? They'll say, well, I don't really like going to church. I worship God all the time everywhere, so I don't need to go to church to worship God. So on a Sunday, I prefer to go hill walking because I feel really close to Jesus up on the hills.

Or maybe today, people will sometimes say, well, you have so many things to do, to listen to online. I can listen to great Bible teaching online. And I don't need to go to church because I get everything I need there or there's so many good Christian books.

Because I'm worshipping God all the time, I don't need to go to a special place. But God says, no, no, no. You're not to just do whatever seems right in your own eyes.

Paul the Apostle says to us, don't you know, you, plural, speaking to the church, that you are the temple of the living God, that God dwells in you? That's what he says to the church in Corinth.

[22 : 39] We are the temple of the living God. And God says, I will dwell among them and I will walk with them. That means his church. And Jesus himself said, didn't he, that even when a few are gathered together in my name, notice, there I am in the midst.

There I make my habitation. He is really present with his people in a very special way when they are gathered in his name as the church, as the temple of the living God.

And that's why Paul actually, when he writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11, look it up later, he makes the same distinction that Moses makes in this chapter. You'll see it all through, you'll see it especially in verses 20 to 27, a distinction between ordinary eating and drinking, as it were, to satisfy hunger.

It could be done anywhere, he says, wherever you like, whenever you're hungry. A distinction between that and what he says in verse 26 about the special times, the holy times, when everything must be done together according to God's sovereign direction.

Now Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 says, when you come together as the church, it is the Lord's supper that you eat. It's not just the same as having your dinner at home.

[23 : 58] Because he says, and he said this earlier to them, when you assemble together in the name of the Lord Jesus, the power of the Lord Jesus is present among you. You see, his sovereignly directed presence is to be found still in his temple and his temple is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you want to meet with God, if you want to engage with his presence, if you want for his ear to be open to your prayers, if you want for his hand to be strong in answering your prayers, you need to seek him where his name dwells.

You need to seek him where his people are gathered, where his power is present in the midst. And you're not going to find that up a mountain, even on a lovely day like today, up Ben Lomond.

You're not going to find that on the golf course. But you will find that when God's people are gathered around his word, praising his name in the name of Jesus Christ.

And if you want your friends, if you want your loved ones to encounter the living God, then you know where to bring them, don't you? Not the top of Ben Lomond, but the church of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 16] Paul says to the Corinthians, doesn't he, in 1 Corinthians 14, that it's when God's people are gathered and when a stranger, an outsider, comes in among the people of God and the word of God is being spoken, that they will be convicted, that their hearts will be touched, that they will say, God is really among this people.

And they will fall down and worship him. There is a sole place that the true God of earth and heaven may be found and truly worshipped.

You cannot just find him in any place under any name in any way. There is one way and only one name. But when you do worship him truly and gather with his people under his true direction, you will find, according to this chapter and the whole Bible, you will find that it is a matter of great rejoicing.

And that's the second thing I don't want you to miss in this chapter, the great emphasis on the singular joy of true worship of the real and living God. When you gather, verse 6, bringing sacrifices and tithes and contributions and vow offerings and free will offerings.

By the way, notice here, it's interesting, isn't it, how the tithes are just the very beginning, the starting point of God's people's giving to God. There are all sorts of additional giving with offerings of all kinds when a people is truly worshipping.

[26 : 36] That's important, isn't it? It's worth noting that today. Sometimes people think today as Christians, well, if we could aspire to giving a tithe of our wealth to God, we would have reached the pinnacle of spiritual dedication.

It was the very beginning in the Old Testament because we don't have nearly as much to be grateful for as those people then, do we? Or do we? But anyway, when you gather, verse 7, to bring all this, there you shall feast before the Lord your God and you shall rejoice, you and all your household.

Look at verse 12, same again, rejoice. And notice how it includes everyone in the household including the servants, male and female servants, and the Levites, that's the ones who were set apart to be teachers of the law of God.

They didn't have a portion in the land. They couldn't make the living from the land and business as other people did, so they had to be provided for. And again, verse 18, together all shall rejoice before the Lord your God.

None neglected. Those with no wealth or possessions, the servants, the Levites, the clergy, if you like, they're not to miss out on the corporate joy when others are whooping it up.

[27 : 47] It's very like what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, isn't it? When you come together as a church, he says, each one's just pleasing himself, one going hungry, the other's overindulging.

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? There's other places for ordinary eating and drinking so that you don't have to deny those with less that their needs will be properly met when you gather as a church.

Or do you despise the church of God, he says? Do you humiliate those who have nothing? Be careful, Paul's saying, unless the selfish, self-regarding behavior in the church's corporate life will bring judgment on you.

In fact, he says it already has. Some have become ill because of this. Some have even died because of your lack of care in this corporate rejoicing. That's how God, that's how seriously God takes it.

When the joy of his presence among his people is quenched or when it's denied to some in the church, particularly to those who have the least. the Lord wants joy in his presence for all his people.

[28 : 58] And that means that there has to be care, that means there has to be compassion, provision for the needy to share that joy. Because again, notice everything that in these verses is telling us is that all this is done not just among themselves but before the Lord.

He is present, he is really there. And it's an insult to the presence of God not to rejoice when he is there. So please note that.

Biblical religion, when it's real, is a religion of joy, of generosity, of compassionate care.

Now notice that does not mean a free-for-all. It doesn't mean that if worship is real, it has to be totally unstructured and so on. No, remember verse 4. Remember verse 8. Remember verse 31. Not like that.

Not like that. Not like that. God directs. There is order. But nevertheless, real worship, whether it's in the daily lives of service that we lead day in, day out, or when it's as we come together as the church, as Paul says, and the power of the Lord Jesus is present, real worship must be filled with joy.

[30 : 20] So let me flag up the importance of this. First of all, beware the church where there is no sign of such joy. And beware lest we should become a joyless church like that.

According to the Bible, it is a mark of great spiritual pathology. It was what flagged up to Paul what was going on in Galatia. Remember, what does he say to them? What's happened to all your joy? That was a cardinal sign that this church was deviating from walking in the truth of the gospel.

And that is nearly always the same today, friends. It is not a sign of a very sound church when there is not a whiff of the joy of the Lord. It's a sign of a very dead church. I don't mean, of course, you've got to be dancing in the aisles or swinging from the chandeliers.

In some cultures, perhaps much more exuberance is a natural and a real thing. More often, I think, in our culture, it is a sign of immaturity. It's a sign of lack of understanding.

But before you say here, here, and tut, tut to that, let me say very plainly, I would rather myself have the genuine joy and delight in the Lord of immature, charismatic, but enthusiastic Christians than the joyless misery of sound, but censorious Pharisees of the kind of people who are so mature they're going off.

[31 : 44] They're beginning to putrefy. No! We need to take seriously, don't we, Jesus' rebuke to the elder brother mentality. Read Luke 15.

Repeatedly, he's saying, rejoice with me. Rejoice with me. There's more rejoicing among the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents than 99 righteous people who don't need to repent. Rejoice! my son was dead and is now alive. He was lost. He was found. How can we not rejoice? Are we rejoicing because sinners are finding salvation through Jesus Christ?

Is there joy among us like that? Like the angels in heaven? I don't mean are we all dancing in church and all of that sort of thing. The day you see me up here dancing in church will be the day you know I need to see a psychiatrist.

Let me tell you. Well, I suppose I see a psychiatrist every day but you know what I mean. But is there joy in the Lord?

[32 : 51] In his gospel? Is what God has done for us and what he is doing for others among us is it bringing joy to our hearts and are we expressing that? Does our joy in that eclipse our moons about the things that we don't find so perfect in our own lives or the things we don't find so perfect in our church life?

That's a question isn't it we need to ask ourselves. You shall rejoice before the Lord in all that you undertake. That is God's command here through Moses not optional.

And it's God's command through the apostles as well. Rejoice always. Again I say it in case you didn't hear me the first time. Rejoice! Beware the joyless church.

Beware the joyless Christian. Don't become one. And let's not become that. But second beware also the elitist sort of separatist sectarian tendency that wants you to go off and worship only with them only with people like us only with the in crowd only with those of us who have something special.

No, no, no, no, no. Real biblical worship includes all in the household of God. All classes all roles all peoples that's what's very clear here. So beware the kind of splinter groups that want to focus in another place other than the local church.

[34 : 20] A lot of parachurch organizations have often done that to the great detriment of the local church. Let's get together a little group of like-minded like people. No. Together before the Lord is how we're to live and worship according to the Bible.

Also beware the church where there's no evident care and compassion for those who are marginalized no effort to include the vulnerable the weak the poor those who are misfits those who don't have those who are needy those who are difficult.

It's a mark isn't it of a real church that attracts all kinds of people. The apostle calls us in the old version the Lord's peculiar people. Well that's true in more than one sense.

And the Lord Jesus gathered around himself didn't he? All sorts of misfits. And many censorious people scoffed at that scorned them and scorned him. But Jesus loves all kinds of people and he is still in the midst gathering people of all kinds around him.

And if he's really in the midst of us he will attract people that some of us find difficult to deal with. But he loves them and they love him often they love them much more than you do.

[35 : 39] And so we must love them we must share and show them love. That's a reminder of the fourth thing beware a church that thinks of its corporate worship only in purely horizontal terms.

In other words it so focuses on the fact that worship is yes all of our daily life our living sacrifices but it forgets or even denies that when we come together as the church as Paul puts it the power of the Lord Jesus really is in the midst and the Lord Jesus by his spirit really is in the midst of us.

And that what we're doing really is before the Lord. That everything we do our prayers our praise and everything he is actually listening and we are actually talking to him not just to one another.

He's in the midst in his temple and we are his temple. So don't let's be a church where we think that all we're doing when we gather together on Sunday is to learn about God or to learn about the Bible or for somebody to come up and explain what the Bible says.

Of course it's never going to be anything less than that but it's much more. If even way back then in this age of promise Moses commanded the people from God to rejoice because God was truly in

the midst of them to bless them and to be blessed by their praises as they praised him.

[37 : 01] How much more should we rejoice in the presence of the spirit of the living Lord Jesus who's in our midst who's with us to bless us to fill our hearts with joy and gladness and to hear from us the praises of our lips the fruit of lips that praise his name.

When we are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Paul says we are in the presence of the power of the Lord Jesus and that is the singular joy of real Christian worship.

But lastly then notice the last few verses verses 29 to the end because the chapter ends exactly as it begins in verses 1 to 4 with an emphasis on the simple purity of the true worship of the real and living God.

Israel was not to think that it could gain new and helpful spiritual insights borrowing things from other religions looking at the cultures living around them checked by jowl and saying oh what can we learn from them?

No verse 30 do not inquire of their gods saying how do these nations worship so we can do the same? Sounds very liberal you see sounds very progressive very intelligent we hear it all around us don't we?

[38 : 21] Oh we mustn't be so narrow there's so much that's true and valuable in all these other religions so let's just let's just enrich our Christian worship by borrowing some of the best traditions Eastern meditation Buddhism Hindu chanting all sorts of things no says the Lord you shall not worship the Lord your God in that way indeed these things are not only not novel insights look they're abominations for every abominable thing that the Lord hates they've done for their gods even burning their sons and daughters in the fire to the gods child sacrifice was one ghastly abomination if you read through the law of Moses you'll find that word that abomination word it's a very severe word you'll find it used mainly of things like that or outright worship of idols it's there in chapter 13 verse 14 or frequently it means many of the sexual perversions that often went along with that type of religious culture

Leviticus chapter 18 you'll see it referring to cult prostitution to incest to homosexuality to bestiality in Deuteronomy 22 verse 5 it explicitly singles out cross-dressing men trying to be women and women trying to be men it sounds very contemporary doesn't it all around us today the hottest issues in our culture our culture which is descending again into unbridled paganism it's all these sorts of things widespread acceptance of sexual perversion not only to be permissible and normalized but to be promoted to be celebrated and everyone must join in again the extraordinary business of denying the plain biological facts of male and female sexuality in order to try and promote this illusion of gender fluidity and again the increasing disdain for human life especially the life of the young abortion on demand that's the mark now of a civilized society isn't it according to our world more and more experimental embryos and so on well think about the acute the incredible irony of the outrage right outrage against the practice of female genital mutilation mutilating young girls in that terrible way and yet at the same time we now think it's a good thing on the NHS to provide genital mutination through drugs and even through surgery in order to take children and make them think they're a different gender from the sex that they're born with what an irony what confusion it's all around us and the church will say we must adapt to the times that we live in not so with you says the Lord our God let me say this very clearly intolerance of falsehood is an essential part of true worship of God according to the Bible and that's what these verses tell us does God really have to warn us against such awful things surely we would never never stoop to things like that you can probably hear the Israelites saying that sort of thing why on earth are you saying this to us Moses but you need to read on in the story of Israel's history read on into the books of kings and you'll see just how sadly necessary this was even Solomon the greatest king of all led by his gonads and his foreign wives into all kinds of idolatry

Ahaz we read offered his son according to the deplorable practices of the nations the Lord drove out before the people of Israel come to Manasseh in 2 Kings 21 and you read that he led the nation in the whole lot everything here that is condemned so that we read Israel did more evil than the Canaanites that the Lord destroyed way back here isn't that extraordinary Moses friends was a realist doesn't begin there does it with that terrible idolatry and horrific obscenity it begins here in verse 30 asking the questions what seems innocent inquiry let's just broaden out a little let's just let's just learn from the culture there are lots of things surely that will help us be more relevant to the culture let's take the best things from other religions from modern thought from philosophy from all of these things we mustn't be left behind goodness God forbid that we should be left on the wrong

side of history have you heard that term all the time

Moses says no never mind about being on the wrong side of history don't put yourself on the wrong side of God and on the wrong side of eternity that's what matters we need to heed very carefully verse 32 don't we it's when you start to add to God's word some of the accretions of the world or subtract from his word the things that our culture in the world doesn't like that's when we begin on that path to inevitable shame and ultimate disaster so don't even start quench that desire right from the very beginning remember James says desire gives birth to sin when it's conceived and when it's full grown it leads to death that's what we're witnessing today all over the world in the western world in the church just look at where the national church in Scotland where the national church in England has got to today it's so far down that road that's where it began ignoring verse 32 not to add not to subtract from the word of God we need to heed that warning friends far better to be thought simple and simplistic in our allegiance to God to be patronized by others more clever in their own eyes than to begin down that road of experiment to embrace apparently the world's enlightened ways no the New Testament is just as plain again and again it says be warned don't even begin to go there

Derek Kidner's words have his usual succinct clarity he says there's no limit to the deliberate cultivation of evil once the light of God has been quenched man then grows to love and even revere every abominable thing that the Lord hates friends we have to be real as soon as we begin to depart from God's true testimony we're already we're already starting out on that road to ruin don't go that way that's God's cry to us in these words and don't let your friends go in that way don't let your brother and sister go that way step in rebuke them stop them plead with them pull them back exhort one another daily says the apostle so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin the sheer deceitfulness of our own hearts friends your heart and mine are the most deceitful things on this place planet remember true worship of the one true and living God must be truly exclusive worship why on earth why on earth would we ever even seek another way or other gods when the Lord our God loves to bless us commands us to eat and drink and rejoice in his very presence sharing his joy sharing the joy of his father's house and promises us that until he comes he is there in the midst with us never to leave us or forsake us but to give us life in all its fullness so let's heed verse 7 now right now as we come together as the church to the table of our Lord to eat and drink before our Lord

[46 : 41] Jesus by his spirit and to rejoice in all that he has done for us in his name you therefore shall eat before the Lord your God and you shall rejoice you and all your household in all that you undertake in which the Lord your God has blessed you his name and he will make you wrestling so let's first over but together as we are to shape Sound in which he is over and took and through the Lord done that to sing and what didn't he will