

# Ancient Grace: The Lord of the Promised Land

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] let's pray father you've given us your word and lord we're about to open your word god would you open our hearts and our minds to help us to hear your word and to know what it is that that you are wanting to speak to us today and lord would you bless this time together and meet with us with your presence here and your people together in jesus name amen you may be seated so you may have noticed when ross was reading the text in deuteronomy that there's something about god destroying people and it really jumps out it jumped out to me anyway this week when i was preparing the sermon and if i'm going to be honest maybe i'm the only christian that's like that but when i read a text like that that talks about god destroying people it's like walking in a room and you hit your little toe on the side of a chair and then you remember that you have a little toe you forgot this whole time you remember for about two days and then you forget again until you hit it again and texts like that seem to be uh things that that are really you know they're part of the text part of the bible and the christian story but we don't really think about it too much and um but it's really interesting because i think that's that's a fear of a lot that a lot of people have is that god will destroy us if if we don't uh if we don't do the right thing or if we don't have the right thoughts or whatnot um i i'm reminded of uh of a movie that i that i watched um it's called blue streak i don't know if you've seen it but it and a lot of movies start this way but it starts with uh these bad guys going into a bank they're robbing a bank it's like two or three in the morning and uh there's probably a team of 10 people and there's obviously there's the person who's in charge of the whole thing and then there's all his hired hands and they're doing all the work and they're getting all the the money and the diamonds into the van and once everything's in the van the the mobster the lead mobster goes and he shoots everyone all of his hand all of his hired hands so that he can have all the money to himself then he runs away and uh reading a text like this it can make it sound as if is god one of those mobster people mobster types that that will get a people for himself that will hire a people and then all of a sudden he will just get rid of them he'll destroy them and they'll do all the work for him and he'll get all the glory at the end so is that how god is so let's look at deuteronomy chapter 4 you can turn in your bibles and we'll start reading at verse 1 so it says and now oh 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 your god is giving you is that right i was uh yeah i was giving you okay so let's just pause here for a second um so what's happening here it starts with the words and now so that's a a word that's like a transition there's the first three chapters that are talking about god and his people god made a covenant with his people and now he's leading them through the wilderness to go into the land that he promised them and so we're at a part where moises is gathered the people and it's kind of like a timeout in in like a playoff game your time out you're at the end you want to gather your troops and and give them a word of encouragement and kind of uh give them a new vision or renew the vision and say this is what we're this is what we're doing this is why we're here this is where we're going and this happens right before uh moises is going to give again the law that that god gave to moises to give to the people uh so it's it happens right in the middle it's kind of summarizing what happens what happened before and what's going to happen so again let's read verse 1 and now oh 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 so here um we have the words that you may live and the words that come right after that let's say and go in and take possession of the land so those are two things that this text is going to develop so first we're going to look at um that you may live and what what that looks like this is what the statutes and the rules are for it's for israel that they may live um so essentially the the what it's talking about here the the the statutes and the rules is summarizing it's just two words to say the law the law of god the the

ten commandments which we see later in in this next chapter after that but to give an example of what that looks like um i got engaged not too long ago and my fiance and i thought it would be a good idea to uh take an alpha pre-marriage course and so we did that and in that course we talked about uh expectations commitment communication things like that uh so that we can uh know what what we like and what we don't like uh what we what our tendencies things like that so it's just a really good vehicle for communication and so that we can understand one another before we get into the marriage so so we did that because we want things to go well um in our marriage and and i think this essentially this is what's happening here is that god is going to give them the the law so that they can know how to relate to him how to relate to their god now christians and non-christians i think i think it's a common thing that we fear obedience when we think of the christian faith and we think that people who are christians obey god's law are all of a sudden going to have to become like some type of religious fanatics whether it's our inclinations they need to change or uh the way that we are our instincts that they'll have to change and all of a sudden we're starting we're going to have to start not liking or or hating people that are different than us um and maybe uh even not liking some people of a certain uh social group or or religious group or ethnic group or whatnot um and um is that really what what it's moving us toward is that what god's law obedience to god's law is going to make us do well here's the first point so andrew if you can put up the first point god's salvation and moral law provide a basis for the sacredness of human life god's salvation and moral law provide a basis for the sacredness of human life see the bible teaches that god created all of humanity and so god understands humanity he understands us he knows how we function and so he gives us this this law so that we can function at the the best way possible so that we can flourish but a question that you might have is but haven't christians participated in acts of violence and hate and oppression like weren't there christian uh nazis that were soldiers working for for the nazi group and uh weren't there christian slave owners um who um who participated in the slave trade and what about even like the the irish and the the irish protestants and catholics who are always fighting like isn't that what what christians do isn't that what obeying god's law does to people well these are human problems that we run to uh when we abandon god's ways um so if we're going to look in these instances it's not because they followed god's law god's laws it's because their humanity came out their their sinful instincts came out and uh it's not because we're part of a religious organization that we affiliate with a certain uh denomination that that makes us right with god so what does that look like what does that uh walking with god look like let's look at verse 2 here in chapter 4 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 so here's talking about not adding words not removing words and but what's wrong with adding or taking away from from god's law why why can't we just do that i mean um i don't know like why why shouldn't we be able to do that if we if we please um just to give an analogy or an illustration uh my fiance and i we love uh to eat together it's the thing that we probably do the most and um so let's just imagine that she would invite me for dinner she says i'm gonna make dinner for you and she asked me to bring the dessert for the evening and she asked me to bring her favorite dessert and by this time i know what that is it's a pistachio ice cream and to be very specific the pc black label pistachio ice cream you should all try it it's really good so if she asked me to bring her favorite dessert and i go and i look at the all the different variety of ice creams and i and the desserts at the store on my way there but i see a different one i see oh the peanut butter and caramel like i kind of like this and uh or maybe i see another one which is uh it's mint it's green it's maybe similar so i choose one of those two and not the pistachio ice cream and i get there and i bring the ice cream and i say hey here's uh the dessert like we're gonna have a good time right and uh how do you think that's gonna go probably not so well right um not because she's uh she's she's impatient or unkind she's very very kind but because i didn't hear her word i didn't i didn't listen to what she said she gave me her word it was clear but i did something else and so what i did is that i projected something onto her an idea that that she would like this at this time that wasn't necessarily true it didn't come from her it wasn't a revelation that she gave me and i think this is what the bible is getting to when it talks about obeying god's word and idolatry is that in a verse like this that tells us to not add or take away anything from god's law um we uh in that case we are prevented from idolatry which is uh to worship an image or an ideal of god that we've created in our own minds and so that's why the word of god is important so here's here's the thing to add or to take away from god's word uh if someone were to say you know i i think god's law you know it's good but the adultery thing like i i i'm actually fine with with sleeping around with people um i don't know i i like to do this and i i think god's law is not relevant i think

we're we're past that i think we're more modern uh than that we know better now to do that is like it's like understanding that or it's like not understanding that god is the god who is infinite the bible makes the claim that god was not created that god existed from all eternity and so because he is infinite he has all knowledge he has all his infinite knowledge about all things and so to say to god that his word is not true is to actually put us in the same level as god to be to be able to say i have infinite knowledge i know that this is actually okay when god says that it's not and so that's the danger that we run into and so failure to worship god by his word leads us to dysfunctional relationship with god and the bible calls that death and destruction and we have an example of that in verse three so if you look there with me in verse three it says you shall sorry your eyes have seen what the lord did at balpeor for the lord your god destroyed from among you all the men who followed the ball of peor now in our modern context when we read something like that we think like why can't god just let us do what what we want to do like like he has given us freedom hasn't he like we can do those things right um and in the context here of the story we don't have all the details in deuteronomy but in numbers chapter 25 we see that some israelite men had sexual relations with moabite women that's that's what it's talking about here in the text and uh is possibly in a religious ceremony to the god of the god of baal so already there we we can think of of two commandments that were broken but um but why can't god just give us freedom like why does he have to uh to be so negative all the time i had a conversation with a co-worker uh a little while back and we were just talking about jesus you know we were just two uh workers working in this little room and we just you know spent hours together and it was in complete silence so we started talking and whatnot so we started talking about jesus and um and i like i talk about jesus love and all these wonderful things but at the same time uh his love only has effect if we don't actually understand his uh his understanding of sin so we need to understand and talk about sin and the consequences of sin so we got at that point in the conversation and that's when my my co-worker told me you know jonathan i i'm fine if you talk about the positive side of jesus the the positive uh god who who's loving and all that but i don't want you to talk to me about uh the negative god the god who's who's angry and all that i don't want to have that those types of conversations it makes me uncomfortable so uh i wish i could tell you that you know i came back with a a good zinger and i was able to you know have a really good answer i i that's not really my personality i'm not really good at having quick answers like that but i i thought about it later and i wonder what what my co-worker would say if i if i propose something like this you know what what if i uh took your lunch and i ate your lunch and uh not only that but i took your car keys after work because i really like your car and i took your car and i went home and then i told you you know what i don't want to hear the negative angry you i don't want to say a name but i don't want to i don't want that negative side of you i just want the positive side of you i want you to be okay with what i do see that that that doesn't make sense and that's that's actually called stealing and my friend wouldn't have all the rights to be angry with me see the bible claims that we are made in the image of god that we are made in his image and being made in his image we are made for relationship with god so to disobey god is to take that image with all of its functions the the the image that's imprinted in us the image of his likeness that we take that for our own purposes and our own advancement neglecting god pushing him away and in this text we see that both the men and the women who are involved in the story both sinned and fell short of the glory of god god has so much more for them than to be degraded in in such acts of false worship and that involves um adultery god has so much more for them so here's the next point uh martin i said andrew you're back there okay with our human abilities that reflect the image of god we rebel against god god gives us his image so that we can like any other relationship choose him or not see our love is only proven when we have the choice to love god and we use that choice and these abilities that he's given us to love him in return to render thanks and praise and worship to him so to obey god is to know life in the fullness now let's just take a bit of an aside here um i don't want to make this sound like like if you're if you're not a christian and you're here today and uh maybe your christian friend or family member invited you to come i don't want to make it sound like like christians just have it in them to obey god because here it's talking about how some people did not follow god and after that it says that some people did follow god and and sometimes we can think that in the categories that you know this is uh god's moral law um that fits with you but it doesn't fit with me and we don't think in those categories uh we're going to see that a little bit further it's not because people are born in a certain way that they are inclined to worship god so they do it that's not the way it works so we'll look at that a little bit further down so here's uh my next point martin the

law comes from god giving us a picture of new of a new humanity not tainted by sin the law comes from god giving us a picture of a new humanity not tainted by sin god gives us the ten commandments the moral law as an outline of sanity with this law we were able to see what what god created us for what he created us to be and what a society uh would look like a society that flourished in his presence would look like it's kind of like a divine ideal so so far we we've seen how the lord gave us his law so that we may live like it says in verse one but now let's look at the second part uh so we'll continue uh here we'll read verse four and then we'll continue verse five but you who held fast to the lord your god are all alive today 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 so just to pause here in verse four it says you held fast to the lord your god but you who held fast to the lord your god are all alive today and the word held fast here is the same word that is used when uh in genesis it talks about a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife hold fast to his wife so it's that same language there so the those who are still alive today is because they held fast to the lord and his goodness they remembered his testimony his acts and his word so continuing verse five 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 so here it's restating that the focus now is life on the land but notice something that salvation history is not over once israel is in the land we'll keep reading keep them and do them for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who when they hear all the 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 the law that i set before you today so here's my next point the promised land is the place where god dwells with his redeemed people the promised land is a place where god dwells with his redeemed people see all these these three things that this uh these last three verses talk about let's talk about there's going to be wisdom in the land that's perceivable by those who are outsiders there's to be righteousness that is not like anything that they've seen before and there's the presence of their god he's not a statue but there's a presence of of god that is alive moving through the people and this is quite unique to israel and so [20:16] that's why the promised land is a place where god dwells with his redeemed people there's from eden all the way to the new jerusalem there's that that flow of restoration of uh in in salvation history that that god is trying to bring his people back into his presence he's trying to bring reconciliation between humanity and himself so that they will be uh with god and he will be with his people so here it's talking about wisdom let's look at verse six again it says keep them and do them so it's talking about keeping the law follow the law do it don't just listen but do it because if you don't do it you haven't listened so listen and do and then for for that will be your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples who when they hear these statutes will say surely this great nation is wise and understanding when we think of wisdom canadians tend to to love wisdom so that it will help us to overcome something in life it will help us to pull ourselves out of our misery uh if we if we're depressed or anxious but we'll read maybe a horoscope or we'll read um some some type of uh fortune cookie uh you know i i used to do that before as a christian to be honest and um got pretty frustrated after a while because i noticed that there's a lot of concert contradictions in those things but then they weren't really helpful they just create a big burden uh on me but here canadians i think we love as canadians we love wisdom because it promises uh or it might promise to pull us out of our misery or grant us personal success but here we see that god's wisdom has redemption in view in verse six we saw that god has the nations in view so once israel enters the land it's not only to to take possession of the land to to enjoy it for themselves but it's actually to be witnesses to all people and so wisdom is god's and obedience to god's law is is god's way of of of evangelism and mission to the world to give us an analogy or a story some of you might know that i became a christian in university and what happened in university was that um i i became very anxious and and very very depressed there was a lot on my on my plate but i i was putting a lot of pressure on myself and um i started drinking more i started as i said i was reading these little pieces of wisdom that weren't good for anything but um i was trying to do anything that i could to to escape this this prison that i made myself and um but so so i started looking out for if there's if there's something good something greater a crutch that actually works that i that i could use so that i can overcome this misery that i that i'm into and i saw uh out of all my friends and all the people that were around me at that time and uh and even in my the people at my at my school because i was university uh of all these people uh there were people who were you know they were really

really smart um and they were um but yeah they were really smart but they didn't really have any joy and there's people who just you know they partied they had a lot of happiness but they didn't really seem smart too much so but there was one person that really stood out to me who had both uh wisdom like a self-control in in his life and joy that i hadn't seen in anyone else there was that combination and i think that that's really what wisdom uh is that's what it looks like is that there's there's uh there's a type of knowledge and there's a type of joy mixed together so i asked this uh this friend who wasn't who was my professor i i saw him maybe twice a week in a in a small group setting so i asked him uh you know do you have time maybe we can talk i i just i don't know what to do there's there's all this you know depression in my life and i don't even know

what to do about it and so my professor said let's go out for lunch and we went out for lunch and uh so i i asked him you know what should i do and he asked me to share a bit of my story so i shared what was going on and um he shared with me that he had struggles too very similar to mine there's one thing that's very different is that um is that he knows jesus um that he shared with me jesus he shared with me the gospel uh and and talked to me about how jesus is near how jesus uh when he reads the bible he gets to know uh jesus that jesus is talking to him talking to him uh through reading the bible and so um i think that's how wisdom really works is that there's an appeal that draws people uh to a life that is redeemed and that is lived out by example now israel in this in this text is supposed to be a light to the nations and they're supposed to to obey god's law because in obeying god's law they would receive the blessing of the covenant the mosaic covenant they would be able to inherit the land and have permanent security uh permanent uh prosperity and um and they would have eternal joy in god's presence but here's the thing god's law is a revelation of god's character and that's a problem it's a good thing but it's a problem because who in israel has god's character naturally we're all sinful so who out of this group of people would have god's character to be able to obey god's law perfectly and do god's law so that they could be able to enjoy the the promises of the covenant well here's the here's the good news that god sent his son he sent his son to be born a jew in israel to be one like israel so that he can uh in his perfect character perfect life be able to fulfill god's law and live a life of perfect righteousness so that uh his obedience would draw people i'll draw all the nations um some some people here are jewish some people here or probably many people here are not jewish and so this in this text we were talking about the king of israel who's drawing the people who are not from israel to be a part of that commonwealth and have the blessing of god's presence and so jesus lived a perfect life of obedience under the law given to mooses and israel because he was god in the flesh see god saw that it was wise to send his son to to live the perfect life to die on behalf when in in a time and a culture and still today in a world where people build their kingdoms and their dynasties on injustice on the blood of of the opposition on um on oppression and god sending his own son did not send him to destroy all these kingdoms of the earth no he he sent his son so that his son would shed his own blood in the face of that culture and in that uh context of the world and so jesus defeated death and sin in the flesh so that we could be free to set us free to so we can enjoy eternal life with god and therefore the the promises of the mosaic covenant would belong to christ and for all of us who put our faith and our trust in jesus we can enjoy uh that uh promise of the covenant that jesus will come to make a new uh new heavens and a new earth so here's the last point martin jesus is lord of the promised land jesus is lord of the promised land and will establish the new heavens and the new earth see that's the christian hope the christian hope is not that we can perfectly obey god's law and and fulfill god and win his affection for us that way no the christian faith is that jesus has done that that jesus lived the perfect life and his perfect obedience is uh is something that that he has done to to win by himself and to give to us to share with us so let us pray lord you've you've given us uh your law but even greater you've given us your son so that we can trust in him so that we can know you in an eternal life by faith in him lord would you draw our hearts more and more um wherever we are lord wherever we are at um with in relation to you lord would you draw our hearts even more and would you reveal to us jesus as more beautiful and more glorious than ever before in jesus name amen lord would you lord so lord so lord so lord lord so lord lord so lord so lord so l