

The Name and Address of Worship

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[0 : 00] God our Father, we thank you that you reveal yourself so clearly and fully and finally to us in the scriptures. And we pray tonight that as we come to your word, you will give us not only understanding, but hearts to follow, to obey, so that we may honour you not only with our lips, but in our lives.

And we pray this for the sake of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Well, Deuteronomy 12, I think, is a highly relevant passage for the 21st century.

You may not have thought that as you read it through or heard it being read for us, all the details and thinking this is very old and old-fashioned and so on. But it seems to me there's a high degree of relevance here for us.

We live in an age of multi-faith pluralism. I think this passage speaks to that context. We live in an age of growing paganism. I think this passage speaks to that context as well.

We live in an age of religious immorality. That is, where even under the name of religion, all sorts of immoral things take place. This passage speaks to that context.

[1 : 18] We live in an age where there are arguments within the Christian church about worship and what is valid worship and all sorts of forms of worship. I think this passage speaks to that sort of argument to an extent.

We live in an age of New Age syncretism where there's a sense in which we can add all sorts of bits into our worship of God. This passage certainly speaks to that.

And we live in an age where the occult and astrology and things like that are on the rise and in popularity. And again, I think Deuteronomy 12 is highly relevant for those sorts of contexts.

And though I won't deal with each one of those as we go through, hopefully the principles that we understand from this passage will speak to that sort of context in which you and I live in the 21st century.

Chapter 12 begins a new section in Deuteronomy, more or less. It's still the speech of Moses. It's still really the second speech of Moses. But it does begin a new and major segment within the book.

[2 : 19] Up to chapter 11, there's a sense in which the first 11 chapters are the general stipulations or the general ideas of how to respond to God.

So we see in those chapters in particular an emphasis on love God, fear him, serve him, cleave to him, obey his laws, general sorts of all-encompassing types of terms.

And we saw that last Wednesday night, for example, when we saw chapter 10 verses 12 to 13, which typifies the sorts of characteristics of the first 11 chapters, especially chapters 5 to 11.

The first few chapters sort of with a historical prologue leading into that. But now in chapter 12, we begin a new segment. The end of 11 and the beginning of 12, in a sense, function as a heading or an introduction, a transition into this chapter.

And from now to the end of chapter 26, so significant part of the book of Deuteronomy, we have what we could call specific laws. So we're not dealing now with the general love God, serve God, fear him, hold fast to him.

[3 : 26] We're dealing now with specific topics of obedient faith in response to God. Tonight, it's dealing with worship. And then beyond this, we deal with, in chapter 13, for example, what happens if somebody tries to lead you astray into idolatry.

Chapter 14 is about what foods are clean and unclean that ancient Israel could or could not eat. In chapter 15, there are laws to do with the year of release when slaves are released and interest debts are cancelled and so on.

In chapter 16, there's the major feasts of Israel. And then beyond that, the leadership of Israel at the end of 16 through the end of 18, the judges, the priests, the prophets and the kings.

And then there are laws of cities for refuge, laws of warfare, laws of sexual morality, and a whole host towards the end of bits and pieces, what to do with neighbor's property and tassels on your cloaks and all that sort of stuff.

So we're dealing now with the beginning of the section of specific laws from chapter 12 through to chapter 26. Chapter 12, verse 1 is, in a sense, not only the heading then for this chapter, but indeed for all the chapters up to the end of 26.

[4 : 38] These are the statutes and ordinances that you must diligently observe in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has given you to occupy all the days that you live on the earth.

These are the laws. Some argue, and I think there's some validity in this argument, though it doesn't work, I think, at every verse, that 12 to 26, the chapters 12 to 26, and we're beginning that tonight, in a sense the laws therein have the flow of the Ten Commandments.

Not every law fits one of the Ten Commandments, obviously or easily, but I would say that 90% of chapters 12 to 26 fit the general flow of the first, second, third, up to the tenth commandment.

And so we're dealing here with attitudes of worship. Excuse me. And so keep in mind the first commandment about you shall have no other gods before me.

Because that's in effect what's going on. It's like a commentary on the Ten Commandments or a fleshing out in some detail of what the principles of the Ten Commandments mean in practice.

[5 : 48] It's not a full exposition. So the law is not, in a sense, the total of what Israel is and is not to do. It is full of examples or samples.

There will be a whole range of other things. From these laws, the principles would then be applied into other sorts of circumstances and situations. The laws then begin with worship.

In the context of you shall have no other gods before Yahweh, the God of ancient Israel. The first things about this are negative.

How you are not to worship God. And verses 2 to 4 give us that. In particular, verses 2 and 3 give us the detail. You must demolish completely all the places where the nations whom you are about to dispossess served their gods.

On the mountain heights, on the hills and under every leafy tree. Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles with fire and hew down the idols of their gods.

[6 : 54] And thus blot out their name from their places. A few things to note there. Apart from it being drastically negative and what you've got to do by way of destruction.

It is to apply to all their places and every idol and pillar and so on. That is, it's not just some but all.

Every one of them in every place. Notice here for now the emphasis, which will become clearer of its significance in a minute. You must demolish completely, verse 2 says, all the places, plural.

Canaanite worship, Baal worship or pagan worship as it really was, occurred in all sorts of different places. Especially on the tops of hills or mountains. And especially under big green trees.

Those signs of fertility, the green trees and on tops of hills. Probably have the connotation of being somehow closer to the gods in the skies and so on. And there seems to be a whole plethora of places where the Canaanites worshipped.

[8 : 02] Those places themselves and the paraphernalia in them are to be totally destroyed. Demolished, burned, smashed, depending on whether it's made out of rock or wood.

The pillars that are referred to in verse 3 would have probably been symbols of male god, Baal. Possibly a phallic symbol made of stone to be smashed. The poles that are mentioned in verse 3 would have been representing the female gods, the Asherah gods.

They would have been made of wood. Again, fertility symbols, probably covered with carvings of breasts. They are to be burned and totally destroyed as well.

And the sense of all this is that at the end of verse 3 you blot out their name, that is the name of the gods, from these places. So it's to cancel out the name or evict the name in a sense from out of the land, one might say.

And verse 4 summarizes then, you shall not worship the Lord your God, literally Yahweh your God, in such ways. That is, with poles and pillars and altars like theirs.

[9 : 10] Israelite altars were to be unhewn stone and altars of other religions were cut stone. And not to worship in those places either is part of the emphasis of this passage.

Now we might think, well, is this a bit of an overreaction? After all, it's one thing to say, well, Israel, you're not allowed to worship in that way. But why not let the others worship in their way?

I mean, that would be our society's view these days. We live in a very different multicultural, multi-faith sort of society. There's a mosque nearby, there are synagogues down the road and so on.

Surely that's okay so long as we don't go there. Why destroy them? I mean, isn't it okay to let others worship there or even just to let them stand? Well, there are a few points in response to this.

One is, remember that the inhabitants of the land are to be destroyed. We saw that a couple of Wednesday nights ago in chapter 7. If the inhabitants have been destroyed, so is all their paraphernalia.

[10 : 10] There's no point in keeping it anymore because the people who use it will have been gone if the law's been obeyed to the full. So, in a sense, that's got to be destroyed along with the people who are the pagans, the Canaanites, etc., as we saw in chapter 7.

Remember that the whole structure of Israel's life in the land was that it was to be completely set apart or pure or cut off from geographically other pagan nations.

They were to be killed and kicked out of the land and so on. Secondly, pagan worship in its form and structure is fundamentally different from the worship of the God of the Bible, Yahweh, as he's called in the Old Testament, or Jehovah, Lord in capital letters.

You see, yes, pagan worship had sacrifices and altars, but they are very different sacrifices and altars from those that are commanded by the God of Israel for Israel.

Not only in the style of how you make an altar, cut stone, uncut stone, and so on, but the whole function of sacrifice is actually quite different. Yes, in one sense, pagan religions have a sense of some offering to appease the gods, but the instructions by God about sacrifices are not all about appeasement.

[11 : 31] We'll make some comment about that later on as well. And though there is atonement in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, there is a different sense of offering those sacrifices for atonement than there would have been in pagan worship, where you could never be sure are the gods actually happy with this offering or not.

There is a clarity about the worship through sacrifice in the Old Testament because of God's word to Israel. So the argument that, well, they've got an altar to make sacrifices, we might as well offer our sacrifices there.

After all, we've been commanded to make sacrifices. In a sense, in the end, doesn't hold because they're different sacrifices and certainly different sorts of altars that are meant to be made.

In addition, of course, there is no place at all for idols in the worship of the God of Israel. Remember back to the argument of chapter 4, which we saw, I think, I can't remember whether that was a Sunday or a Wednesday earlier in the month.

In chapter 4, the argument was particularly strong that at Mount Sinai, Israel saw no form of God, no visual form of God or representation of God. Therefore, they can't make an idol or an image or a graven image of God.

[12 : 40] Worship of God is, as a technical term, is aniconic. That is, you don't have a visual representation of God as an idol. So another reason why all these idols must be totally destroyed.

And, of course, the high places that were so significant for the pagans, for the Canaanites, have no significance at all for God, who is the God of all the land. And you're no closer to Him on top of a hill than you are in the valley, etc.

And also, of course, the green trees which may symbolize fertility. Yes, Yahweh actually is the God of fertility. We saw that last Sunday night in chapter 11, quite strikingly and mockingly, of the fertility gods of the Canaanites.

But that doesn't mean you have to get under a green tree either. Thirdly, syncretistic worship is abominable. Syncretistic literally means bringing together different faiths or beliefs.

As though somehow you can put on your sort of spiritual mantelpiece your idols of different religions and add some form of Yahweh, God, along the mantelpiece.

[13 : 47] You can't combine and mix the different religions for the Canaanites there with the worship of God. God is jealous about the exclusivity of the relationship He has with His people.

And so they can't, in a sense, worship God along with others or even bringing in bits and pieces of other religions as a sort of hybrid version. It's an abomination to God.

Fourthly, it's not clear in these verses, but it is later in the chapter and elsewhere through the Old Testament. Canaanite worship was immoral.

The end of the chapter, chapter 12, verse 29 onwards, When the Lord your God has cut off before you the nations whom you're about to enter to dispossess them, when you've dispossessed them and live in their land, take care that you're not snared into imitating them after they've been destroyed before you.

Don't inquire concerning their gods saying, how did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same. You must not do the same for the Lord your God. Sorry, you must not do the same for the Lord your God because every abhorrent thing that the Lord hates, they have done for their gods.

[14 : 56] They'd even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. Well, there's immoral religion. And so you can't, in a sense, try to incorporate Yahweh into that. It's an explosive mix.

The worship of God is a moral worship of God. That's part of whole access to God is through moral grounds, as the Bible, both Old and New Testament, makes clear.

We have access only by the dealing of sin. So the worship of God, the access to God, the relationship we have with God is always and only ever a moral relationship.

And pagan worship is immoral. Child sacrifices here are listed as the worst of the things. But I've mentioned in past talks the temple prostitution that was so common in the pagan Canaanite worship and so enticing for ancient Israel.

Fifthly, it seems that in the ancient world it was very tempting and easy to associate a God with a place. And so it was easy for the Israelites to fall into the trap of thinking we're now in the land of the Canaanites and therefore we've got to worship their gods.

[16 : 05] But, you know, when in Rome do as the Romans do, when in Canaan do as the Canaanites do, is a sort of religious philosophy that the Israelites were tempted to adopt. It would be easy to think that Yahweh is the God of the wilderness or maybe just the God of the exodus and wilderness.

Powerful though he may be, he's done his job. His portfolio has ended, so to speak. Because in pagan worship it's polytheistic. And the gods have different portfolios, a bit like a government in a way.

And so you get shunted from one department to another. Well, it would be tempting to think that as you go into the land across the Jordan, you've moved from one department or portfolio into the portfolio of the Canaanite gods.

Now that, of course, doesn't work. Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the God of the whole world, the God of the heavens and the earth. Deuteronomy 4, amongst other places in Deuteronomy, makes that clear.

It's clear throughout the scriptures, of course, as well. Well, monotheism, which is biblical, has no place for this sort of moving from one God's domain to another God's domain.

[17 : 08] But polytheism was the norm in the ancient world. As far as I'm aware, apart from the Old Testament and the people of the Old Testament, for a short time there was one so-called heretical pharaoh, Akhenaten, who was a monotheist.

Monotheist, but virtually all the ancient world was polytheistic. And of course, if you've been to Italy or Rome and seen all the statues and so on around the ruins, you realize just how polytheistic they were, even in the time of Christ and after him.

Finally, pagan worship, Canaanite worship is enticing. I made this comment in an earlier talk as well, but it's worth making again. Again, we are, because we're fallen sinful people, attracted to things that are less demanding morally.

Pagan worship was immoral. It didn't have high ethical standards at all. And so it's attractive. It's easy. It's sensuous. It's greedy.

It's all about trying to get more crops, grain, animals, children, etc. So the easy religions are actually attractive. And you look around our world today, and that's certainly the case.

[18 : 19] The attraction of Eastern mysticism and Eastern religions is because their morality standards are quite low. You can actually engage selfishly and individualistically without worrying about anybody else, for some sort of spiritual high or experience or whatever, without any moral demands virtually placed upon you.

That's why it's so attractive. And often why Christianity, of course, is less attractive and so often despised. So people are weak in the face of temptation to sin.

I think today we con ourselves that we're actually strong. We're not. We're still weak. And so for all of those reasons, we get this strong instruction here to destroy absolutely the paraphernalia and the places of Canaanite worship, along with the people, which was chapter 7.

That is, even leaving empty shrines, temples, altars, high places, and pillars and idols, even leaving them there would be too much of an attraction, an enticement, or as verse 30 says, a snare for the people of Israel.

They've got to be destroyed. You see, part of this law of destruction is the preservation of Israel's holiness, to get rid of temptation. It's along the same sort of lines of Jesus saying, if your right arm causes you to sin, chop it off, etc.

[19 : 42] Well, so here. These are temptations to sin. Get rid of them. Don't think that you're strong enough to walk past them on your way to your farm every day. You'll be lured by them.

And you'll ask yourselves, well, I wonder how they worship their gods. Let's try and worship Yahweh that way. That's the hypothetical that would actually be quite real. Because keep reading the Old Testament, and we know very quickly and very frequently, Israel fell into the snare of worshipping the Canaanite gods.

Well, there are the negatives, verses 2 to 4, and then comes the positive from verse 5 onwards. Verse 5 is a very important verse, actually, in Deuteronomy. It says, But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation, to put his name there.

There you shall go, is literally what it says. Now, here we get what I've called the name and address of worship. There is one place.

It is a singular in this verse. This place singular, you shall seek out, and there you shall go. And the contrast is, the Canaanites had a whole range of places all over the country.

[21 : 00] One place from all your tribes God will choose. Now, some suggest that it may be one for each tribal area, but the language more tends towards one for the whole country.

Out of all the tribes of Israel, God will choose, not you even to choose, God will choose one place, singular. And there he shall place his name.

In contrast to blotting out the name in verse 3 of all the idols or the gods that those idols represent of the pagan or Canaanite religions. Those names go.

But God places his name as a symbol of his presence, indeed as his actual presence there. And this is a very important theme in this chapter. The name, the word place, referring to the place that God will choose, occurs not only here in verse 5, but in verses 11 and 14.

And the word there, which is also in verse 5 a couple of times, there you shall go, referring to the place, occurs in this chapter alone, in verses 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, and 14.

[22 : 08] And the name also occurs not only in this verse, but later in verse 11. And those terms occur later on in subsequent chapters on a few occasions in this book as well.

The emphasis is on not what the place is, not where it is, no Melway's about finding it. The emphasis is on God chooses the place.

It's his choice. It's not Israel's choice, nor was it a Canaanite choice. The name is not given to us here. And it's a singular place.

This is the place that is, as verse 6 says, to be the location of the sacrifices. Therefore, we know it's to be the place where the tabernacle will be put up, where the sacrifices would be made.

And the altar, subsequently, it became a temple. But for the time being, it was the tabernacle that they'd been carrying in the wilderness. And it's going to be that place. Because, as verse 6 says, you are to, or there you shall go, bringing there your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.

[23 : 20] Now, that list presupposes knowing Leviticus, where the sacrifices are dealt with in detail, how they're to be conducted, and so on.

It's not a complete list, either. But it presupposes that. It presupposes that it's the location of the tabernacle, as I said, which has been a movable place up until this point.

And it's presupposing, then, that crossing into the land, conquering the land, and settling in the land, it will become a permanent place or fixed location in the land.

It's also, as verse 7 says, a place of eating. You shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God. So it's not just a name posted on a doorpost. God's actually present in this place.

You and your households together rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you. Now, if you remember back a couple of Wednesday nights, I tried to give you a model, without a diagram, of lifting out the principles in the laws of the Old Testament and then trying to see how the New Testament modifies or strengthens or rejects them, and then reapplying them.

[24 : 40] There are some principles here that are important to note. We'll pick up some of the application a little bit later. Worship is personal.

It's in the presence of the Lord your God. So it's not relating to an unknown God or an impersonal God. It's actually in the presence of God.

There is a personal nature about worshipping the God of the Old Testament, as indeed, of course, there is the worship of the God of the New Testament. And his presence is picked up by the expression, putting his name to dwell there.

The name of God, of course, is Yahweh, going back to the revelation of that name to Moses in Exodus chapter 3. But it's not just a name as though it's like a magic code.

It's the name that denotes the character of God, the purpose of God. I am who I am, or I will be who I will be, is literally what the name Yahweh means, as explained in Exodus chapter 3 to Moses.

[25 : 46] So the first thing is that worship is personal. It's a meeting with God himself. And that's, of course, what Moses did at the burning bush, and hence the revelation of the name there.

Secondly, worship is corporate. It's not an individual who drifts up to this place when he or she chooses, but there's a corporate nature of it.

You see that in verse 7. And you shall eat there with all your household. Everybody's included in this worship. Indeed, there's special mention in this chapter of those who are landless.

Landless people were vulnerable to poverty, and landless people usually would have no animals, and therefore nothing to offer or little to offer. And they are to be incorporated because part of the worship is eating and festivities.

And so, for example, verse 12, fleshes it out a bit more. You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns.

[26 : 50] And verse 18, the same sort of thing, although a slightly expanded list again. You shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God at the place that the Lord your God will choose, you together with your son, your daughter, your male and female slaves, and the Levites resident in your towns, rejoicing in the presence of the Lord your God in all your undertakings.

And then in subsequent chapters relating to this, there is also the inclusion of widows, orphans, and the resident aliens, or the sojourners who come from other countries, all of whom are landless categories.

So worship is corporate, and there is a particular acknowledgement of the need to include those who are vulnerable to being poor included in this. Thirdly, worship sacrificial, which is probably obvious, but it's worth remembering that that's a principle of worshipping God.

So there are a list, or is a list of sacrifices in verse 6, a full list in Leviticus, of course, by way of instructions. Worship is sacrificial, it's costly.

You bring something to offer God, whether it's for a burnt offering for atonement for sin, or whether it's some form of offering by way of a vow, or some freewill offering, or a fellowship offering, or sacrifice.

[28 : 06] Worship is sacrificial in its nature. It's also important, I think, to grasp here the emphasis on worship being joyful. So they are to eat in verse 7, and verse 7 goes on to say, rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you.

And the theme of rejoicing occurs again down in verse 18 as well. We might take that for granted.

We might just skip over it as we're reading it. But think about pagan worship. It's very hard for pagan worship to be joyful, because you never know where you stand with God, who is fundamentally unknown.

With the God of Israel, you know where you stand, because he's given instructions for how to approach him, he's given instructions for sacrifices and how they're to be done and why they're to be done to an extent.

And so if you fulfill all those commands, we're actually instructed to be joyful in the presence of God. That is, this eating in verse 7, not every sacrifice was food for the offerer.

[29 : 16] The burnt offerings were totally consumed because they were for sin. But having offered a burnt offering, you'd then offer a fellowship offering or peace offering, different translations give. And most of that you would eat, along with the landless people who are brought into the festivities to celebrate the ongoing relationship with God now that sins are atoned for.

So worship is joyful, which is very different from pagan worship. Indeed, today, the same. It's an enjoyment of the blessings of the land and the blessings that God has undertaken for his people, as the end of verse 7 says.

So it's rejoicing in what God has done, but it's looking forward to the rejoicing in the goodness and prosperity of the land itself. Fifthly, and a flip side of what I said earlier, worship is moral.

So these laws of worship are embedded in obey all the commandments and all the statutes that I am giving you. And they're also, of course, contrasting with the prohibition of pagan immoral worship at the end of the chapter.

And lastly, of course, worship is determined by God. He's the one who gives the instruction for how to do it, where to do it, and in many senses, when to do it as well. You see, we're not free to worship as other people worship their God.

[30 : 32] That's the argument of verses 2 to 4. Nor are we free to worship God on our terms either. Verse 8 picks that up. You shall not act as we're acting here today, all of us according to our own desires.

Now, it seems that the wilderness has been a bit of an interim period. Now the bar gets raised when you enter the land. We're to worship in the way that God determines us to worship.

Not that God picks the hymns that we sing sort of stuff. But He gives us enough principles to guide us, and He's the one who determines that, not us. We're to be obedient in worshipping Him.

So we're forbidden to worship as the pagans do. We're forbidden to worship on our own terms. We're commanded to worship in God's terms. And all those principles apply by and large in the New Testament, of course.

So in the New Testament, as we think about worshipping God, the same principles basically apply. We still worship God and it's a personal worship. Of course, the personal nature of worship in the New Testament is actually strengthened from the Old Testament.

[31 : 37] That is, our approach to God is even more intimate than even the high priest could have in the Old Testament because of the blood of Jesus shed for us. It's personal relationship with a known God.

Secondly, of course, worship in the New Testament is still corporate. And yes, it's true that an individual, of course, can pray to God and read the scriptures and worship God and so on.

But there's still a fundamental corporate nature of belonging to the people of God. Something we actually should emphasize because our age is so individualistic. And earlier ages were not so.

So we belong together as the corporate people of God. Where I think that means that we may need some correction is on our attitude to being part of church.

See, periodically, I guess I see or meet people who sit quite loose to church life. If I don't like it, well, I might go somewhere else. But actually, I think we actually should endure the difficulties of church life much more than on the whole we do.

[32 : 48] The image I've used before is that we're rough stones. And as we're thrown together and stay together in a church worshipping God, the roughness actually becomes more smooth.

But to the extent that we pick and choose and go here or there and don't get our hands, in a sense, dirty with all the difficulties of any one church, we actually are not maturing as we ought.

And we're thinking individualistically and not as the Bible does corporately about belonging to the people of God. Worship is still sacrificial at two levels.

One is the only means by which we have access to God is through sacrifice, but it's not one we make. It's what has been made for us in Christ through his death. So whenever we worship God, Christ's death is actually what enables that to happen.

But there is still sacrifice because our worship of God is to be the offering of ourselves as living sacrifices. And that also is a part of the New Testament principle that builds on this Old Testament principle.

[33 : 54] Worship, of course, is still to be joyful. In the New Testament, we have even more reason to be joyful than Old Testament Israelites had to be joyful. So our joy is to be grounded in grace.

It's not an emotional joy or how we feel. It's a joy that is actually objective, more than subjective. It's a joy that is grounded in the clear, indisputable grace of God for us in Christ.

And it's a joy that means that we can celebrate being in God's presence, whatever, in a sense, our feelings are, and so on. Remains a moral worship in the New Testament.

We're to be pure and holy and blameless in God's eyes, etc. Sin is dealt with. And it's still determined by God. Fundamentally, of course, God determines that you only worship Him in spirit and in truth and that's through the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Clearly, though, the principle here in Deuteronomy 12 is that this place is going to be in the land. And so whilst I've drawn out some of the principles of worship, does this added, or this extra principle of in the land at the place God will choose mean that this building was a waste of time?

[35 : 09] should we all be flying over, zipping over to Israel, somewhere in Israel, to a nameless place for our worship? In verses 9 to 11, we begin to get a sense of building up to the revelation of that place.

You have not yet come into the rest and the possession that the Lord your God is giving you. When you cross over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is allotting to you, and when He gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety, then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for His name, your burnt offerings, sacrifice, etc.

Then, notice the link to rest. The sequence that's anticipated is that Israel will cross over and conquer the land.

That may take some time as we saw in chapter 7. It's not an instant full process anticipated. And when you have rest from your enemies, when you've conquered the land and settled in the land, then you'll bring what God commands you to the place that He chooses.

It's a sense as though until you've settled in the land and conquered the enemies, that place will not be revealed. But then, God will command you and you'll bring your offerings and tithes and sacrifices, etc.

[36 : 34] to that place. Then. That importance is reiterated in verse 13 and 14. Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place you happen to see, but only 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 everything I command you. Well, where is it? Why isn't it named?

It doesn't need to be named. Scholars get into all sorts of tis about all this and they all think that it's really written after the place was revealed but it's sort of a secrecy about not naming it here and stuff.

Is it Gilgal? Shiloh is actually called the place where God chose to reveal his name for a time. In Jeremiah it's called that and Shiloh, of course, is where in the first book of Samuel the tabernacle is for a time.

Of course, we know that the place really is Jerusalem and it's clearly Jerusalem for a number of reasons. Jerusalem and that's where the temple is erected under instruction from God after the rest in the land.

[37 : 48] So David was forbidden from building the temple because of blood on his hands from war but his son would enjoy the rest and his son Solomon would build the temple as he did. And of course, as the temple is dedicated in 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 29 for example but in a number of verses in that dedication of the temple the language is used there of God's name dwelling there clearly fulfilling this very chapter of Deuteronomy.

So the temple in Jerusalem is the place that God chose when there was rest in the land to make his name to dwell there. One of the big changes for Israel after it had entered the land is distance.

It is a sense in which it's a compact community in the wilderness but once they settle in the land they become much more far flung nothing like Australia. but you can drive from one end to the other of Israel today in a day but it's still a big distance by comparison with the wilderness and in the land having spread out including across the Jordan as well in the Transjordanian area it would not be quite so quick to dash up to the place that God chooses and so the instructions of verse 15 and 16 which are paralleled in verses 20 to 22 some say expand the view of eating meat whenever you desire you shall slaughter and eat meat when you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns according to the blessing that the Lord your God has given you the unclean and the clean may eat of it as they would of gazelle or deer the blood however you must not eat you shall pour it out of the ground like water we might think that's slightly odd but basically what it's saying is you're allowed to eat meat so if you want to have a barbecue in Dan or Megiddo or somewhere have your barbecue kill a lamb eat it's okay you don't have to be ritually clean to eat but it's not a sacrifice it's not anything sacred at all because as verse 17 and 18 say nor may you eat within your towns the tithe of your grain your wine your oil the firstlings of your herd of flocks any of your votive offerings etc that is all the sacred things that you make as offerings or sacrifice you can't do that at home that can only be done in the place that God chooses but you're still allowed to eat meat eating meat doesn't mean that the animal has to be sacrificed just kill it and eat it but if you want to make something religious out of it by way of an offering or a sacrifice one place only is where that can happen and so important is this it's actually in effect repeated in verses 20 to 22 eat meat wherever you like in the land because you'll be pretty much far flung but 26 and 27 if it's a sacred type of meal only in the central place can you eat that again these verses include a concern for the landless not least the Levites not only were widows and orphans and sojourners from other countries landless they couldn't own land

Levites couldn't own land the tribe of Levi occupied cities within the tribes but no land for tilling farming grazing cattle etc they were dependent on the offerings of others the tithes of others for their own livelihood etc so there's a particular concern for them as I've said the landless were vulnerable to poverty and so that's why I think they're emphasised both in verses 7 as well as in I think it's 12 and 18 and 19 where does this leave us some of those principles I've already shown still apply in the New Testament but let's get back specifically to the place that God chooses to make his name dwell there how do we read and apply this in the light of the New Testament that is the trajectory from Deuteronomy 12 to us today is not a simple step we can't bypass the New

Testament so the trajectory from Deuteronomy 12 or anywhere in the Old Testament must go through the cross in effect the New Testament where does that leave or modify or shape what's being said here for us because after all you and I of course are not running off to Jerusalem to kill a lamb periodically we've never done it we don't need to do it why don't we need to do it when this is the instruction that's given here for God's people well of course we know we don't have to offer sacrifices because Jesus is the sacrifice offered for us but still why isn't this place geographical location why is that not crucial in our own Christian lives even if we don't have to offer a sacrifice the place of God's name dwelling is picked up best of all in the New

[43 : 11] Testament by the emphasis on the name that is above every name the name not just of Yahweh as revealed to Moses at the burning bush and there became the privileged intimate name of God used by God's covenant people in the Old Testament but the name of Jesus takes preeminence in the New Testament the name to which every knee shall bow true worship is worship of the name of Jesus Christ but what about the place clearly by the time of Solomon 950 BC thereabouts Jerusalem is it indisputably through the rest of the Old Testament and indisputably in the pages of the Gospels as well at least in the eyes of the Jews and indeed in the eyes of Jesus when he speaks with a Samaritan woman in John 4 and rejects the view that the place is Mount Gerizim what does the New

Testament do with this place where God chooses to make his name dwell the place is really the temple as much as it is the city of Jerusalem the temple though is the heart of the city of Jerusalem the New Testament tells us that the whole idea of temple finds its fulfillment not in bricks stones or mortar but in a person the living temple destroy this temple in three days I'll raise it John chapter 2 he was speaking of his body after the resurrection that is the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the temple and yes Paul in letters to the Corinthians for example has the idea that we believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are temples or part of the temple 1 Peter 2 about living stones built together Ephesians 2 the same sort of idea in effect not because it's a contrasting view with

John 2 but because you and I are in belonging in the risen body of Jesus Christ as believers so the risen Lord Jesus is the temple and we are in the temple as believers in the risen Lord Jesus Christ Jesus said to the woman in John 4 worship in spirit and in truth that's what matters most what's he saying about that well he's saying worship the spirit give worship the one who is the truth Jesus Christ Jesus is the name where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in their midst what place what doesn't matter what place it's the gathering together of God's people in the name of Jesus that guarantees the presence of God and of course in Hebrews 12 believers are those who have come not to Mount Sinai or really to a place but have come really to Jesus you see there are no holy places in the New Testament what matters is Jesus so both the name and the address or the name and the place of Deuteronomy 12 is one and the same thing it's Jesus the name and the place of worship he is the one in a sense whom God chooses to make his name dwell there of course he's more than that he's the incarnate son of God but there's a sense in which he is the fulfillment of verse 5 of Deuteronomy 12 the place where God chooses to make his name dwell there that is it's to him that we are to go not to Jerusalem anymore acceptable worship is only the worship of the

Lord Jesus Christ and his father and his spirit and false worship is anything other than the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ Christ so whether it's Islamic or Jewish today whether it's Sikh or Buddhist whether it's mystic whether it's Eastern or Western pagan Hari Krishna JWs Mormons worship of an unknown God it's illegitimate worship of the real God for it's not worship that is focused on the Lord Jesus Christ and the same with the worship of the idols of our age which are not often made of stone or timber but the idols of sport family wealth property houses holiday houses cars money investment portfolios overseas trips whatever all of that worship is also equally abominable to God and illegitimate for it is not the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ you can't worship

[48 : 19] Jesus plus something else just like in the Old Testament here you can't worship the God of Israel plus something else it's exclusive in both Testaments so the trajectory of Deuteronomy 12 lays crucial principles for us for understanding worshiping God most of those principles still apply in fact they all still apply really but see how the New Testament sharpens the focus it's not a geographical place it's Jesus Christ he is the one who is the fulfillment of these words the name high overall the center and focus of our worship he is the it is his sacrifice that enables the worship of God the father to happen at all well let's pray God our father we thank you for this reminder and challenge to us that our worship of you is only acceptable through and because of the

Lord Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection for us we thank you that your presence is not limited to one particular geographical place but that wherever people gather in the name of your son there you are in our midst we thank you that you are present with us now not because of the building but because of believing in the risen Lord Jesus Christ we thank you for this immense privilege far beyond the privilege even of Old Testament Israel in coming into your very presence to your throne of grace help us to do that consistently with confidence and with joy as we celebrate the incomparable blessings that are ours in Christ we pray this in his name Amen