

The Last Battle-cry of Moses

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 August 2014

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Let's turn to the second passage that we read briefly this evening Deuteronomy chapter 33 and from verse 26, these verses 26 to 29 This concludes the song of Moses here in his final blessing on the people of Israel prior to his own death and prior to them entering into the land of Canaan This is how he rounds it off There is none like God, O Jeshurun, or there is none like the God of Jeshurun who rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in his majesty the eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms and so on Down through the course of history there have been many famous pre-battle speeches given by commanders, generals, captains, whoever it was leading troops into battle and some of these have been recorded as among the greatest speeches ever given by human beings and we can say that that really is the nature of this particular speech by Moses as the people here are gathered ready to go through into their inheritance in the land of Canaan

Moses, prior to his own death which is in the next chapter actually pronounces this blessing on the tribes and then summarizes it here as he blesses and seeks further blessing on God's people as a whole So you can say that it is in fact as they are about to launch this invasion of Canaan as they are about to take on the forces that will meet them in Canaan the people that are going to fight against them and resist them the people that in many respects are better defended in human terms and better armed in human terms than themselves so here is Moses in this great speech actually rousing the people to their duty rousing them to their confidence in God and to consider what they themselves now are as the people of God and that is what Moses concentrates on in these final verses as he sums up this great statement he concentrates on leading the mind of the people to their God and who he is and what he is like but he does not leave it there he also includes what the people themselves are as the people of God and how he describes them here as a people that are themselves unique as they are in relation to their unique God and we need to do that we need to do that frequently in fact we need to do that really daily if we are honest because daily we face challenges and daily we face the temptation to rush into those challenges without really having thought of these two great issues who our God is what he is like and what he has done and secondly who we are as his people and what he has made us into if we don't stop and take account of these regularly it is like someone or a people just rushing into battle having left most of their equipment behind because the Bible tells us how important it is to have our minds geared up as Peter puts it in his first epistle to gird up the loins of our mind so that as we think upon those things that pertain to our God the attributes of our God we are only going to just look at the ones mentioned in these verses but you know yourselves throughout the Bible you find the various attributes and qualities of God specified for us why are they there?

not just so that we can cram our heads with theology and knowledge good though that is but so that we will see all of that as God's preparation of us for battle for the battles of the Christian life for the service of God in the context in which we are set and that means in the face of our enemies in the face of the opposition that we face in terms of the world the devil and within ourselves the workings of sin so here is a passage that we need to look at as something that contains a principle as well as details that we can use elsewhere in scripture to remind ourselves of the importance of understanding and increasingly understanding who our God is what is our God like what has he done what is he doing now why is he different to any other being and who are we what has he made us into what have we become what is our destiny what are we heading for as we live in relation to him well these are the two things we are really looking at and four or five points under each of these as the passage emphasizes them first of all the God of these people there is none like

God or Jeshurah Jeshurah is a name for Israel it has to do with well the root of the word has to do with uprightness from one of the Hebrew words for being upright and so there is a reminder there in the very use of the name Jeshurah you also find it earlier on in the chapter in verse 5 where you find the Lord became king in Jeshurah there is a reminder there is a reminder not only of the people as God's people but that they are an upright people and as they face the prospect of entering a land filled with idolatry and filled with debauchery that is tied to that idolatry they are reminded in their very name that they are to be an upright people that they are to be a people like their God that they are to be the same in outlook as far as sin is concerned as far as holiness is concerned they are called Jeshurun the upright ones and that's something that I'm sure they would have come back to and the prophets reminded them of in the days when they did decline and when they had departed from that standard so what does it say about God well it says there is none like this God of Jeshurun the first thing about him is that he is incomparable and it's an emphasis all the way through the Bible in one of the Psalms we sang tonight

Psalms 96 all the gods all the idols the gods of the nations they are like they are idols dumb but our God is the Lord well these are very simple statements but they contain such profound truth that our God is incomparable that he is not like any other being that he is different and distinguished from ourselves and from the gods that people make for themselves and that's one of the great emphases of scripture remember that Moses here is preparing the people to enter into a context of mass idolatry and he is saying to them you have an incomparable God he is not like the gods of these Canaanites he is not like the things that people invent for themselves by which they seek to live their lives and base their lives on your God is God he is the true God he is the living God he is the creator God he is the saving God what makes them different well the verses here actually remind us of some of the things that make God incomparable and different to all others for Astarte is eternal the eternal God is your dwelling place in other words

[8 : 20] Moses is reminding the people you are going to face idols what are called gods by these peoples of Canaan but they are the work of their own hands they are created gods they are gods that they have fashioned as images of what they regard wrongly and mistakenly as spiritual beings that they cannot see but this is all created by human beings by human minds your God is eternal no beginning uncreated unique in his being and we can't get our puny minds found a being that has not had a beginning a being that is creator that is eternal as our creator a being that is unchangeably the same in himself and has always been that from all eternity we cannot think of our lives and our world we cannot think really of anything without taking in this idea of having a beginning it's a beginning to your life it's a beginning to your career it's a beginning to where you began to follow the Lord it's a beginning to all the things that feature in your life including yourself but God is eternal and along with his eternity as the passage here shows us are his majesty his sovereignty his creative power they are all built into these great references here where the eternal God has thrust out the enemy before you this God who rides in the heaven to your help through the skies in his majesty this eternal being how often we have to remind ourselves that God is not like us though he created us in his image though we are remade in the image of God in Christ yet he is God and our being in his image is not the same as being exactly like him in his being he is God majestic and as the similar passage in Exodus 15 put it glorious in holiness absolutely spotlessly pure in his being and how does he use that eternal glorious majestic being of his for his people well here is something quite amazing isn't it that the eternal

God here who is so incomparable he rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in his majesty in other words he uses and has used this great power and majesty and eternity of his being for the salvation of his people he is incomparable he is eternal he is saving in his relationship to his people and you notice side by side here two things which are quite unlike each other first of all there is God himself in terms of his majesty and then there is his people as he comes for their help he rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in his majesty you have side by side the majestic nature of God and the purely and weak beings that we are that need help and the picture there is quite astounding that here we are in our need of help but what happens

God himself rides across the heavens in his majesty to our help now just imagine if you were in Ranachmoor big long stretch far from the nearest place nearest house the nearest garage the nearest town even and you get a puncture and then you discover your spare wheel is not really what it should be either so what do you do you are stuck you phone the REC you phone the AA you phone whoever it is you want to come and you wait and then you look out and along the road is this amazing motorcade there is this procession of cars and lights and outriders and you ask yourself what is going on and as it comes near you you realise it is a royal motorcade there are bodyguards there and there is the royal daimler and the queen herself at the head of the procession and out come all of these people in her service to help you change your tire and get you on the way bit fanciful I know you don't expect that to happen on Vanochmoor but it happens spiritually because when you ring out for help when you actually cry to the heavens for your help God doesn't send someone else in his place

God comes himself he actually puts his own hand to the task he comes as he puts it here he rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in his majesty what's he doing riding through the heavens and through the skies in his majesty what business is he on what is he actually going to do when he's riding through what is his objective it is to your help isn't that such an amazing thing that tonight you and I people like we are small and purely and to ourselves so insignificant and so weak and sometimes so unable to help ourselves out of predicaments we cry to God does he not then come to our help are you not yourself aware of the fact that when God comes to help you he comes in his person through the Holy Spirit it is God who is there he has come personally because that's what he's like this amazing majestic glorious God that you might think would never stoop down to touch the life of someone like you and me would never actually get his hands dirty so as to enter into our predicament but that's what he did and that's what Calvary demonstrates and that's what the

Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry is really all about as we've been seeing in Luke especially the last few chapters of it where we've come to the cross and come to the Lord's sufferings and come to what he said of the cross and what he himself shows by his ministry in committing himself to the cross this is God coming across the skies in his majesty to our help he is the saving the saving God incomparable eternal saving and then fourth least protecting and leading his people and both of these actually go together if you notice there in verse 29 a people saved by the Lord the shield of your help and the sword of your triumph an army is not going to get very far if it's simply well defended but has nothing much above being defended an army to actually be successful needs to be both well defended and well equipped to attack to push the enemy back to gain ground to reclaim ground and what

[16 : 23] Moses is saying is this is in fact what God is to his people he doesn't just protect them he's not simply the shield of their help he's also the sword of their triumph you want to be protected against Satan you need to be protected against Satan against the many ways in which Satan seeks to attack your life on a daily basis you need to be protected against the ways and the wiles of the world you need to have your soul built up against the deceitfulness of sin that's existing in yourself and God is that to you he's the shield of your help he's your protector isn't that what Job what the devil's complaint was when he was indeed invited by God to consider God's servant Job one of the things Satan came to God with was the fact that

God had put a fence around him and he couldn't get access to him without God himself intervening and giving him the access well like the psalmist says as the mountains surround Jerusalem so the Lord encompasses his people to be in Christ is to be defended to be protected but he also says he is the sword of your triumph in the letters that you have in Revelation the first few chapters the three chapters at the beginning you have the seven letters to the churches and each of them ends with these same words to him who overcomes in other words to him who is victorious the only way we're going to be finally in heaven is to be victorious over ourselves over sin over the devil over the world and it's to him that overcomes that the promise is given that they will have all the things that are mentioned there including the final one which is to sit with

Christ in his throne even as he overcame and is set down with the father in his throne how do we overcome through the fact that God is the sword of our triumph that's what you have in verse 27 the eternal God has thrust out the enemy before you and said destroy there's a very obvious solemnity about that where God thrusts out the enemy before his people the word destroy is what he utters and whenever God speaks what he speaks is done the salvation of his people involving their protection carries with it the destruction of his and their enemies that's what Christ as king in the office of king occupies that's what he is actively engaged in in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies the restraining of them but also the conquering of them because it's not enough for us that Christ restrains our enemies that he keeps them on a leash that he controls their activity we need to overcome we need to actually gain victory and the

Lord is our victory that's the amazing thing about that he is the sword of our triumph our overcoming is in himself and the final thing about him that's mentioned is that he is the supporting God incomparable eternal saving protecting and also leading attack and also finally supporting the eternal God is your dwelling place of refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms they are underneath what do you mean what does he mean underneath underneath what well underneath Jeshurun underneath his people underneath them in all their circumstances doesn't matter how much you fall and how much you actually have in your own Christian experience when you know that there have been lapses or falls or things that you have done or left undone the everlasting arms are underneath

Jesus said to Peter as we saw in Luke's Gospel Simon Simon Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you all as wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith does not fail why did Peter not fall away altogether why did his faith not fail completely because underneath were the everlasting arms because underneath the everlasting arms of Jehovah through the intercession of the Savior kept him up held him up supported him took his weight I'm sure you saw something of the Commonwealth Games and maybe in the Commonwealth Games at the very beginning of the week that you saw some of the weightlifting and the weightlifting of course is something where everybody tries to outlift the others going by not only the weight of the bar but the weight of their body as well but you know what it's like when you just see them coming to the limitations of their strength and their ability and up goes the weight and even if they lift it right above their heads and their arms lock out and they've made the lift they very soon begin to tremble and they've got to put it down very quickly because they can only carry that weight for just a very very short time and then they're spent but underneath of the everlasting arms it's never too heavy for God his arms never get tired he never has to let you down because he can't cope anymore he never has to leave you so to move on to someone else and he'll come back to you some other time the everlasting arms are beneath all his people and that means every individual in every circumstance and all his people together at any one time he is the supporting

[23 : 03] God the one who will at all times be sufficient to keep them up to uphold them and to give them to know that he is beneath them so there is that God that's what they have to take into Cain and with them and the more they dwell upon the nature of their God and what he is like and who he is the more confidence they are going to have in facing these enemies because they can go against these enemies and with their minds set upon this they can say what are these and what are their gods look what I've got look what we've got and you can do that against all that stands between you and your progress remember who your God is remember his uniqueness always think of his eternity and the fact that he is the savior of his people consider him as the one who always protects and the one who goes before you into the attack that you need to make against your enemy remember that he's always the supporting

God that the everlasting arms the untiring arms are always beneath you you will never get below them but secondly he speaks about God's people and we've seen already how he refers to them as Jeshurun and there are four or five things that he mentions there about the people as well that some of them we've crossed into when we've been thinking about God himself such as the fact that he's the saving God well obviously they are saved people but let's look at them first of all they are themselves also just as God is incomparable so the people of God are incomparable in relation to other people there is none like you he says in verse 29 happy are you always feel who is like you a people saved by the Lord it's interesting that here and in describing God he is going back to what happened in the crossing of the

Red Sea because the language here is very similar and it's really one of the ways in which Israel is being encouraged by Moses to go forward into the land of promise with confidence because he's saying effectively think about what happened when you left the land of Egypt and needed to cross the Red Sea and the Egyptians pursuing you isn't this what you sang when you got to the other side who is like you O Lord and isn't it true that there is none now like God's people why are they so incomparable why are they different and so different to other people because they are the saved people in verse 28 there where God has saved the people so Israel lived in safety Jacob lived alone I think that really means that what Moses was setting out for them was that alone in the sense of being above other people and being different to other people alone in the sense there are no other people like the saved people of

God due to the fact that he has saved them and saved them so as to make them his people the psalmist has the same thing and very often in the prophets you find it repeated what nation is like this nation whom God went forth to redeem to be a people for himself to make for himself a great name how often do we get up in the morning and think I am so different to any other type of person in the world because I am a Christian I am different because God has made me different because I am recreated in Christ that is not boasting in yourself that is not something that makes you really proud in the sinful sense of being proud but how often the apostle Paul boasted in the Lord and what the Lord had done for him and made him into and what he had done for his people and made them into a people saved by the Lord a people like

Jacob dwelling alone or living alone being distinct and distinctive because of what God himself had made them into so they are incomparable and they are incomparable as a saved people but they also are God's people who dwell in God verse 27 the eternal God is your dwelling place and that also has the idea of refuge in it there is a great truth that we have a home in God and that God makes his home in us nobody can fathom that out it is even too much for ourselves to understand and comprehend fully and people who are not Christians think it is just madness that you can say such a thing of a being that you cannot see and that you claim to know by faith and through his word that you know from the teaching of his word that you dwell in him that you are in fact by his grace making your home in God himself and that's why it says here it's a dwelling place which means a home but also a refuge a place where you are actually looked after now you look in your

[29 : 09] TV screens at the horrors that happen in wartime and you go to places like Syria or Gaza or wherever it is the devastation of war is seen even in our own day and you find people coming back to what was their home what was their home district and it's just in ruins the wreckage of their home is there you'll find chairs and furniture scattered around amongst the rubble of the home that's collapsed it's a tragic sight it's terrible your heart goes out to them they're sitting there amongst the ashes and the stones and the rubble and they're crying and they don't know what to do and they don't know who to look to home should be a place of comfort a place of feeling secure a place where you're regarded as your own space where you feel at home and these people can't now do that but the contrast you find here is quite acute

God is the home of his people and that home will never be damaged never be destroyed you will never have to leave it you'll never be a refugee by having to move to another home once he's your home he's always your home whatever happens in your life will not shift that there's no collateral damage even if Satan hurls however many bombs at you it doesn't matter it's not going to shift this it's not going to dislodge you from being in this home you know that your home is in God it's where you feel at home it's where you know you're at home it's where your refuge is it's where your security is if any man be in Christ how often you find these two words in Christ we saw on Sabbath evening there the wonderful words of the Lord to the criminal on the cross who was saved and who cried out to him Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom truly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise you'll be at home with me you'll be wherever I am you'll be in me whatever Satan can do to try and dislodge the thought of that from your mind and he may be able to dislodge the thought of it from your mind and he may be able to get into your attitude and really cause some havoc there he cannot dislodge you from your home the Lord is my shepherd grace and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the

Lord forever what is the house of the Lord it is the Lord himself ultimately because he gives us through Christ to abide in him and he correspondingly is in us so they are incomparable as a people because of what God has made them into it doesn't make them proud indeed it makes them humble the more they realize it they are a people saved by God they are a people dwelling in God he said home and a refuge but they are also people nourished by God you see there in verse 28 again Jacob lived alone Israel lived in safety in a land of grain and wine whose heavens drop down due one of the things that God mentioned again and again to the people in anticipation of their inheritance was that they were going to a land flowing with milk and honey there was a wilderness in between there were giants to face there were kings and other peoples and nations to overcome but this was the inheritance this was the destiny a land flowing with milk and honey a place of nourishment and plenty and God nourishes his people he doesn't make us his people and say you're now a unique people but I'm now going to leave you to fend for yourself you have to find your own food you have to look after your own nourishment no God is the great shepherd of his people

God is the supreme pastor and indeed it's one of the most wonderful features of that picture you have at the end of Revelation chapter 7 the lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them shall pastor them and lead them to living fountains of water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes there is the master shepherd there is the pastor supreme and this is eternity this is glory this is the pasture land of eternity without end what's happening in eternity what's it like well it's being nourished by God as much as you can take that's your destiny think about that every day when you get up and you're feeling blue or you're feeling well it's not going to be a very nice day I've got so much on my plate today I've got to face so and so and I've got to face such and such who are you what's God made you into what's your destiny what's at the end of this period of wilderness traveling it's eternal nourishment and even now you're being nourished and nourished through his word nourished through experiences nourished through fellowship with his people nourished through communion with himself a land of grain and wine whose heavens drop down due what a beautiful picture and that's what it is for you and for me too

God looks after his people God feeds them even through adversity testings trials pains but God is their shepherd and then he talks about a victorious people your enemies shall come fawning to you and you shall tread upon their backs or their high places we've seen already God going ahead of the people he's the sword of their triumph he causes them to be victorious he is the great victor for them but you see here even their enemies have come to admit the fact that these people of God are superior to them they can't compete with them that's what you're going to find on the last day the day of judgment the day of glory for God's people every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father the people who arrogantly dismissed God and died without Christ and persecuted his people they shall come fawning to you they shall come in obeisance to you they shall come admitting you were right and I was foolish and I was wrong and you shall tread upon their backs in this life it's difficult for us to rejoice in such a thing to rejoice in the defeat or even in the death of

[36 : 47] God's enemies but you will rejoice in it you will rejoice in it on that day when your mind is perfectly attuned with God's when you will ride upon the backs of your enemies and you will triumph in Christ gloriously because victory is one of the great characteristics of what you are as a people you are a victorious people an overcoming people tell that to the devil when he tries to get you down when he actually seeks to persuade you that you are really pretty useless that there is nothing much significant about your life that you are just a waste of space that you are not effective in your life tell him I am going to actually be higher than you one day you are going to be beneath my feet you are victorious and your victory is guaranteed and supreme in Christ and it makes them finally a happy people happy are you oh

Israel who is like you well who wouldn't be happy with such a God as their God and being such a people by his grace by his salvation who would fail to be happy Thomas Watson I think it was who said one of the Puritans in one of his books somewhere the most difficult task in preaching the gospel is to make sinners sad and to make Christians happy that's true to make sinners sad so as to come to repentance to see their sin for what it is to cry out to God for forgiveness only God can do it it's so difficult and to make Christians happy to rise above your adversities to actually see beyond the present difficulties to see clearly the state that you have in

Christ because this is not just the emotion of happiness this is actually a state of blessedness not just talking about an emotion on being happy in an emotional sense that of course is part of it but it's only part of it it's only an element of it it's an element that should be seen in our lives undoubtedly the happiness the emotional happiness the joy of the Christian as again Paul said to the Philippians rejoice in the Lord and again I say to you rejoice yes he was including the emotion of happiness in that don't let anyone try and persuade you but he was only talking about a state it's a theological thing it's not to do with emotion it's everything to do with emotion why did God give us emotions when he created us wasn't it to glorify him as well as every other part of our being well if we can't glorify him with our emotions and joy there's something wrong with us when you think about who this

God is and what he has made his people to be rejoice show your gladness that you are his that he is yours but it's more than emotion it's more than the emotion of happiness it is in fact the state of blessedness as Jesus said in the seven on the mountain the beatitudes blessed are the meek blessed are the poor in heart blessed are so and so as he went through the list and blessed means really being placed in a state above where death can take a hold of you that's essentially what being blessed is being set above the grip of death and even when you die isn't the bible true when it says blessed are the dead who die in the Lord why are they blessed because death is not a victor over them they are a victor over it they die in the

Lord they die awaiting the resurrection of their bodies happy are you oh Israel blessed are you oh Israel a people saved by the Lord you have a great God as Spurgeon said I am a great sinner but Jesus Christ is a great saviour and it's that great saviour that makes us into a great people for himself let's pray Lord we thank you for the confidence your word brings us it is not of ourselves and we cannot create it ourselves but we give thanks that in the assurances that your word provides that you bring us to that consideration of what you are as a

[42 : 35] God to your people and what they are as you have made them by your grace to be oh help us Lord we pray to gather our strength from all of these great truths and to enter into each day with the confidence of one who could say that he could do all things through Christ to strengthen him so bless us now we pray hear our prayers accept our worship for Jesus sake Amen