

**Preaching Christ....  
...by the power of the Holy Spirit  
...and the authority of the Word of God**

**Date:** 06 August 2023  
**Services:** *Across the Diocese*  
**Series:** All about Jesus  
**Title:** Response to Grace  
**Passages:** Leviticus – Numbers – Deuteronomy  
**READING:** Deuteronomy 6:1-19

**Four key words:**

1. **Sacrifice**
2. **Atonement**
3. **Trust**
4. **Obedience**

- I wonder if your interest in the Old Testament has been raised in the first two weeks of the series....??
- We saw last week that God's people were **enslaved** in Egypt – in **Pharoah's grip**... just as once we were enslaved to sin and death – in **Satan's grip**
- We saw that God's people Israel were **rescued** by the mighty hand of God – just as **we** were **rescued** by the **mighty hand of God** – that the **shed blood** of the **lamb** – **Jesus** the **lamb** – and the **victory over death** which followed, means that **we** are **free**... //
- And we saw that as **God's** people Israel were **commissioned** as his **special possession**, a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**, so **WE** have been commissioned as his **special possession**, a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation** – : so that we might declare the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light! //
- How good is it to see those **links**...!
- ...to see how those Old Testament realities – point us to **Jesus** and **our redemption**...and thereby help us to understand and appreciate Jesus all the **more**! ///
- Have you ever seen a trailer for a movie – and thought – **oh – I must see that... !**
- ....my hope and prayer is that these first two weeks of our Old Testament overview series have acted as a kind of trailer – and that you're thinking – **I must see more**! //
- Now I'm sure I'm completely **mad today** – trying to show you **Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy** in just one sermon... but remember – I've tried to make this a **brief** overview.... to explain **big picture concepts**... and I think I've worked out how to show you an **edited highlights** package of these three books. //
- Did you stay up for the cricket during the Ashes series?  
There's no way I can stay up these days for overnight sport, but on 9-Play the next day - they offer a 15 minute highlights package. You miss a lot, but at the end, you have the **gist** of what **happened**. /
- that's what I hope we'll get today in this highlights package of Lev – Nu - Deut!
- But first... I have to tell you that after we left Exodus at chapter **19** last week... there was **good** and **bad**!
- God gave Israel the 10 commandments... **They** were to ensure the people knew how to **respond** to God's mighty rescue... and how to **live** out their commission as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation....

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- **BUT** – not all went **well**.
- Moses was still away – up Mt Sinai meeting with **God**.
- And **incredibly** – God’s people Israel – say – well – we don’t know what’s happened to Moses – we don’t know what happened to God – so they compel Moses’ offside **Aaron**, to make a **golden calf**, and then bow down to it and proclaim that **THIS WAS THE GOD WHO BROUGHT THEM UP OUT OF EGYPT!!**
- Can you believe it? //
- God was rightfully **angry**, but Moses **interceded** on behalf of the people, and disaster is **averted**.
- However - the golden calf is **destroyed.... and** 3,000 Israelites **die** as a result of God’s **immediate judgement** on their **sin** – the sin of **idolatry**. //
- Do you remember the **first commandment**? No other gods before **me!**
- And yet within 5 minutes, this was **broken!**
- It’s a **sure** sign that all is **still** not well with God’s **people...**
- **Rescued, commissioned**, and given the **law** – but in **NO WAY PERFECT!** //
- So let’s see some **big themes** as the story of God’s people **continues in these next three books:**

**Four key words:**

1. **Sacrifice**
  2. **Atonement**
  3. **Trust**
  4. **Obedience**
- 

- First

**1. SACRIFICE**

- sacrifice was basic to the way God’s people related to God.
- There were **burnt** offerings and **grain** offerings, and **peace** offerings and **sin** offerings and the **guilt** offering.... You can read the details in **Leviticus 1-6...**
- and – you may well ask – what was the **point** of all these **sacrifices**? And goodness – **SO MANY ANIMALS** must have been used in the **process!** //
- But here are a few things to keep in mind.
- The practice of animal sacrifice was a common feature of **all** the religions in the ancient world.
- What **God does** – is utterly **transform** them so that they are not – as in the religions all around – there to **GAIN God’s attention** or **EARN** his **favour!**
- They are **ALREADY** his people.
- He has already **REDEEMED** them!
- No – **sacrifices** are a **response** to grace already **received!**
- they demonstrate the holiness of God AND the **seriousness** of **sin**.
- And **ultimately**, **all** these sacrifices point forward to the **perfect** and **final sacrifice** of **Christ** on the

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**cross.**

- ...for we read in Hebrews 10:4 - *It is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*
- And then the writer says of Jesus in 10:14 - *For by **one** sacrifice he has made **perfect forever** those who are being made **holy**.*
- And 10:18 - *And where [**sins**] have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is **no longer necessary**.*
- Isn't that **brilliant!**
- Jesus has **done it all...**
- **the New Testament** speaks of sacrifice now as **praise** – Hebrews 13:15 - *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a **sacrifice** of **praise**—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name....*
- and... Romans 12:1 - *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, **to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice** -*
- Yes – the Leviticus sacrifices appear to us as completed and complex.... Even barbaric!
- But – the lessons are clear – God is holy - sin is serious!
- AND because those sacrifices are but signs – we need to see what they point to! - the one true sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ!
- Are you thankful for that today?
- You didn't turn up to the temple today with your sacrifice ready to present to the priest...!
- Jesus has done it all... in the offering of himself...
- Are you humbled by that? ///
- And that brings us to our next major theme...

## **2. ATONEMENT**

- We've seen that the sacrifices symbolised the **seriousness** of sin, the necessary **payment** for sin and the **forgiveness** for sin! //
- Yet **one particular day** each year, made **clear** how this **symbol** worked...
- **The day of Atonement ///** - the most solemn holy day in the Israelite calendar. (See Leviticus 16).
- It was a day when the High Priest made **sacrifices** to atone for his **own** sins and the **sins** of the **people**
- two **goats** were involved in this **significant day**
- The **sacrificial goat** – was sacrificed - and its blood then sprinkled on the **mercy seat**—the **cover** of the **Ark** of the **Covenant** - **located** in the **Holy of Holies**.
- This act represented the **payment** or **penalty** for sin - which is **death!**
- The **second** goat, often referred to as the **scapegoat**, was not **killed**, but was instead sent into the **wilderness**.
- The High Priest would lay his hands on the head of this **live** goat, confessing over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the people....
- ...which symbolically **transferred** the sins of the people onto the **goat**, which was then led **away** into the **wilderness**, signifying the **removal** of the people's sins!

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- **Both** goats provided a complete picture of atonement: the **payment** for **sin**, and the **removal** of **sin**.  
////
- Friends, as the perfect, sinless sacrifice... Jesus – God **himself** – you recall – meets **within himself** – the **penalty** sin **required**... the **wages** of sin – is **death!** // **Paid!** /// By God **himself** in the person of his **Son!**
- AND, Jesus **also** fulfils the role of the **scapegoat**.
- When he **bore** our sins in His own **body** (1 Peter 2:24), he **removed** our **sins from us** "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).
- the **payment** for **sin**, and the **removal** of **sin** – by Jesus!
- If you are a **Christian** here today – your sin is **paid for** – **AND** your sin has been **removed!** ///
- This back story in **Leviticus**... gives us all the more insight into **all** that this **means**... ///
- Now... two **further** themes more **briefly one each from Numbers and Deuteronomy**:

### 3. TRUST

- The entire **sacrificial system** and **day of atonement** – required great **trust** from **God's people**.
- Indeed – the invitation to have **OUR** sins dealt with by the one true sacrifice of Jesus, requires **trust** in **Jesus!**
- But the people of Israel had a **trust** problem.
- God had **powerfully** rescued them from the **Egyptians**...and yet some even wanted to **return** to Egypt because they assumed God had now **left** them to die in the **desert!**
- Lack of **trust** was also seen in the hurried way they **abandoned** God and bowed down to that **golden calf!**
- And it was seen when Moses sent spies **across** the **Jordan** into the promised land to bring a **feasibility report** on taking the land God had **promised**. (See Numbers 13.)
- They liked what they saw – **prosperous** cities – **fertile** land.
- But 10/12 spies were also **terrified** by the **people there**... and despite God's long-standing promise to **give** them this **land**, these spies said '**no way!**' We **can't do this**.
- They were **right**.
- On their **own**, they **couldn't**.
- But with **God's help** – if only they would **trust** his **promises** – they most certainly **could!** //
- only two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, stood against this wave of fear. "The land is exceedingly good. If the Lord delights in us, He will lead us into this land," they urged. But their words fell on deaf ears. Numbers 14:7-9
- God's judgment was **swift** and **severe**.
- The ten faithless spies **died** by **plague**, and because of their **lack** of **trust**, God decreed that the Israelites would wander in the **wilderness** for **40 years**, one year for each day the spies spent in the promised land. //
- Only Joshua and Caleb, **because** of their unwavering faith and trust, would live to **enter** the **promised land**. //

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- Do you have a **trust problem**?
- **Despite** God's rescue of **us** and making us his **people** – do you **wrestle** with **trusting him**?
- God in Romans 8 says – if God is for us, as he has proven himself to be in the gift of his Son, who can be against us!? And if he did not fail to give us his Son, will he not give us all things... ie – all that he has promised us?
- If he has given us a **promise** in his Word – who are we to doubt it?
- He's promised that our sin is gone and we are his children. **Trust him!**
- He's promised the free gift of eternal life. **Trust him.**
- he has promised to be with us to the end of the age. **Trust him.**
- He's promised to be with us in the valley of the shadow of death. **Trust him.**
- He's promised to be our refuge and strength in trouble. **Trust him. ///**
- Well, finally and briefly:

#### **4. OBEDIENCE**

- I have run out of time!
- And yes, I tried to do too much!
- But one last section from Deuteronomy 6 really sums up the message of the whole book: *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>5</sup>Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup>Impress them on your children...*
- As well as calling Israel to trust him, God also called Israel to obedience!
- They were to love God with all their heart and soul and strength – by placing his commands on their **hearts** and impressing them on their **children. //**
- Their love for God would be seen in their **obedience** to him!
- If they were to be a **royal priesthood mediating** his love to the **world**, they were to be his **distinctive** people.
- That's what all the laws in these three books were about... Israel's **distinctiveness!!** – SO that the world would know God there was one true God! **///**
- Jesus said in John 14:15 - *If you love me, keep my commands.*
- He also said in John 13:35 - *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
- Friends – if you love **Jesus** – obey Jesus!
- **Obey** him; by **loving one another! //**
- That's how we will stand out in a **loveless** world... as people see the profound way we love and obey **Jesus** as we love one another! **///**
- In too many **churches**, there is too little **love!**
- And our **witness** as God's people – goes out the **window! ///**
- **Obedience matters... love Jesus** – by **keeping his commandments** and **radically loving one another!**

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**Let me close...**

- **LEVITIVUS** - Sacrifice and atonement - point us to the sacrificial and atoning work of the Lord Jesus.
- And we humbly say – **thank you!**
- **NUMBERS** – the **failure** to **TRUST** – caused a world of trouble... even though God had already done mighty things for them in their **rescue....** Our call **too** – is to **trust** the one who **rescued** us... who is **utterly for** us and **always with** us...
- And **DEUTERONOMY** – reminded Israel to **love God** with all they **had** and show that love by **obedience!** - that they might be his **distinctive people!** **OUR CALL TOO** – is **love Jesus** and to **obey Jesus** – **fully** and **wonderfully** – because we ARE his special, chosen, people... //
- And as we trust and obey – WE **WILL** be his **distinctive people** – fulfilling **OUR commission** to be his **royal priesthood** and **holy nation**.
- “Trust and obey” as the old chorus goes, “for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey!” //