Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Let’s deal with the elephant in the room right at the start. My guess is that some of you are wondering why we are starting a sermon series on Leviticus? You may have heard this before or even experienced it yourself, but many people who decide to read the Bible from beginning to end give up when they get to Leviticus. Genesis is interesting and Exodus has lots of wonderful stories, but then you get this book with chapter after chapter about offerings, clean and unclean animals, childbirth, leprosy, bodily discharges, forbidden sexual activity, child sacrifice, Israel’s national feasts, Tabernacle items, Sabbath and Jubilee laws, blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, and laws about vows. It seems so OT and irrelevant for today. I mean, when you think about it, the Jews of today have no temple, no priests, and no sacrifices. So much of Leviticus is not even relevant to them. So how could we, as NT Christian believers, possibly benefit from a study of this book?

Well, today’s introductory sermon will attempt to answer that question. We want to see that there is great benefit for NT believers in reading and studying Leviticus. And this is so because the sacrifices and ceremonies of Leviticus have much to say about salvation in Christ. And the laws in Leviticus, understood in Christ, have much to say about Christian living. So the two major parts of today’s sermon will be several overview reasons why it is good to study Leviticus, and then as we look at vv1-2, we will already see a few ways that Leviticus points us to Christ.

1. So we begin with **five, general, overview reasons why it is good to study Leviticus**.
   1. And the first reason is relevant for every book and chapter and verse in the Bible. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** says, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work*.” So the Holy Spirit guided every word that Moses wrote down in Leviticus. And He saw to it that Leviticus was included in the Bible, throughout the centuries and millennia since it was written, so that we could benefit from it today. And because the Bible is the story of Jesus Christ, to properly understand who Jesus is and what He did for us, we need what every book of the Bible contributes to His story. So it is our privilege and duty to study Leviticus to see what it contributes to the story of Jesus Christ. And as we do that, we will benefit from how it reproves and corrects us, and trains us for righteousness, and equips us for every good work. So before anything else, it is good for us to study Leviticus because it is in the Bible.
   2. Well, the second reason why it is good for us to study Leviticus is that it **is smack, bang in the middle of the Pentateuch**. In Greek, ‘*penta’* means five and ‘*teuchos’* means books. So Pentateuch means ‘five books.’ And the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, all written by Moses, are known as the Pentateuch. And Leviticus is in the middle of these books.
      1. **Genesis** begins with Creation and the Fall and ends with the slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt. **Exodus** is about God delivering His people from slavery and bringing them to the Promised Land. Along the way, however, they rebel against the Lord and are forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. And we read about the time of wandering in **Numbers**. And then we get **Deuteronomy**, which is where the law of the covenant is given again as the people finally prepare to enter the Promised Land. And in the middle of all this is Leviticus. So what is Leviticus about? Why is the middle Book of the Pentateuch so important?
      2. Well, a few weeks ago we looked at a passage in Hebrews 10. And I explained then that the Bible begins with a temple and ends with a temple. The original temple was the Garden of Eden. That is where Adam and Eve lived with God. But because of their sin, Adam and Eve were banished from the temple/garden. Now, God’s ultimate goal is all of His chosen ones living with Him in the new heavens and new earth temple, which Rev. 21 speaks about. But the question is, if Adam and Eve’s sin meant they could not live in the presence of God, then how can this problem be solved? How do we get from Genesis to heaven? And because every other human being after them would be born a sinner, this problem affects all of us. How can sinful human beings live with God? Well, that is what the rest of the Bible is about. **And the short answer is by blood sacrifice**.
         1. Already in Genesis we see Cain and Abel and Noah and Abraham offering animal sacrifices.
         2. And then, when the children of Abraham become a people, God rescued them from slavery in Egypt. And do you boys and girls remember what happened on the night that they left Egypt? God said He would kill the firstborn of every house in Egypt unless what? Unless the blood of a **Passover** lamb was painted on the doorposts. So the blood of a lamb substituted for the firstborn of Israel; it was by a sacrifice that God established His relationship with these slaves.
         3. But still, God was in heaven and His people were on earth; they still did not dwell together. So in the middle of the Book of Exodus, the people arrive at Mt. Sinai. And there God establishes His covenant with them. And He gives instructions for how to build the tabernacle. And look at how Exodus ends: “*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*.” So do you see what has happened? God had returned to live with His people!
            1. Sky Tower – glows – see it from everywhere. But this was the ‘glow of God’s presence’! This was a massively important moment in His grand Temple plan.
         4. But there was still a huge problem; in **19:2**, God says, “*You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy*.” A holy God can only live among a holy people. So that is why there are pages and pages of rules for holy living – long lists of do this and don’t do that. But we know the story of Israel and we know ourselves, so we know that again and again they and we fail to do what we ought to do and we do what we ought not to do. So we cannot get the holiness we need to live with God from ourselves. So Leviticus is teaching us that we need someone who can keep all of God’s commandments and can give us His holiness. Who might that be, boys and girls? The Lord Jesus. But what about our unholiness/guilt? How is that dealt with? Well, Leviticus doesn’t just have pages and pages of commandments; it also has pages and pages about sacrifices and offerings. So Leviticus teaches us that it is by sacrifice that our sin and guilt is washed away.
         5. And at the centre of the Book of Leviticus we read about **the Day of Atonement**. Just one day a year the High Priest would take the blood of a lamb into the part of the tabernacle where the presence of God dwelled and sprinkle it on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. And then he would confess the sins of the people over another lamb and it would be taken away into the wilderness.
         6. And so, the middle book of the Pentateuch explains that we can only be made holy by the blood of a LAMB. Do you see how it all points us to Jesus? All of the symbolism and ceremony of Leviticus prepares us for Jesus’ first coming and the cross, and beyond that to face to face fellowship with God in the temple of the new heavens and the new earth! So the second reason why it is good to study Leviticus is that it is the middle of the Pentateuch!
   3. A **third** reason why it is good to study Leviticus is that it is **about the right worship of God**. The Second Commandment requires us to worship God the right way. God is so wonderful and glorious and holy and beyond our full understanding, that if it were up to us to figure out how to worship Him correctly, we would always get it wrong. And there is a story in ch. 10 that demonstrates the danger of worshipping God the wrong way. Does anyone know what story I am talking about? Nadab and Abihu. But positively, worshipping God is our highest calling and chief delight, so we should want to do it as He has commanded us to do it. Well, Leviticus will help us with that also!
   4. A fourth reason why it is good to study Leviticus is that it is **about what James 2:8 calls the royal law: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself***.” Jesus called this law the second greatest commandment. The Apostle Paul said, “*The whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*” So that means that Leviticus was important to the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Therefore, it should be important to us also!
   5. And that leads us to the **fifth** and last general, overview reason why it is good to study Leviticus, **which is the whole law of God**.
      1. How does **Psalm 1** begin, boys and girls? “*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night*.” The Apostle Paul said, “*So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good*.” Jesus said, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*.” And 1 John says that one evidence of our being a true child of God is that we will be eager to obey His commandments. So we should want to meditate on and obey God’s law in Leviticus.
      2. But Jesus also said, “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them*.” What does that mean? How has Jesus fulfilled the law in Leviticus? And **Galatians 3:24** says, “*Therefore the Law has become our school-teacher to lead us to Christ*.” In Lord’s Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we are told the three things we must know to live and die in the joy of the comfort of salvation. Can anyone tell us what the first one is? How great my sin and misery are. The next question asks: “How do I come to know my sin and misery?” Answer? “The law of God tells me.” So the law reveals our sin and leads us to the gospel – the forgiveness of sins in Jesus, as the solution. (We will say more about this tonight)
   6. So, at least five reasons why we will benefit from a study of Leviticus are that: Leviticus has something special and unique to contribute to the story of Jesus and Christian living, and it prepares us for the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world, and it is about the worship of God, and it is about the second greatest commandment, and it is a part of the law that leads us to Christ. So I hope that any doubts you may have had about the point of studying Leviticus are removed and that your appetite for discovering Christ in Leviticus is growing!
2. And your appetite will surely deepen as we zoom in now to vv1-2 and already see **three ways that Leviticus prepares us for and points us to the Lord Jesus**.
   1. And the first thing we encounter in v1 is the **Voice** of God: “*The LORD called Moses and Spoke to Him*…”
      1. So Moses heard the voice of God speaking to him. Boys and girls, do you wish that you could hear God talk to you? Many people do. But in **Exodus 19** we read about a time when the Lord spoke to all of the people of Israel from on top of Mt. Sinai. They had to consecrate themselves and wash their garments and wait three whole days before He spoke. Husbands and wives were not allowed to have sex during that time. A fence was put around the base of the mountain so no one would touch it and die. And then we read, “*Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain*.” And then He spoke the words of the Ten Commandments to the people. And here is what we read next: “*Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."*” So it seems that it is a terrifying thing for an unholy person to hear the voice of the Holy God. Now, the Lord made it possible for Moses to hear His voice and to pass on His words to the people and record them in Scripture. But congregation, we have something better than Moses; we have the Lord Jesus and the complete Bible.
         1. **John 1:1** says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*.” Jesus is the word of God; the voice of God. Jesus is the perfect revelation of God. **Hebrews 1:1-3** says, “*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son … He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature*.”
         2. So Leviticus teaches us that we need to hear the voice of God. But we don’t need to be terrified by the voice of God from a mountain, and we don’t need a prophet to hear God and pass on what He says. We have the Bible – the word of God, the story of Jesus – that we can read ourselves. And we have preaching, which is Christ speaking to His people! And that is what you have to remember every time you read your Bible and every time you hear a sermon – I am hearing Christ, the voice of God!
   2. So Leviticus points us to Christ as the voice of God, but it also points us to Christ as the **Presence** of God. “*The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting*.”
      1. Boys and girls, what is the other name for the tent of meeting? You can see it in the last verse of Exodus – v38. **Tabernacle**. So the Lord spoke to Moses from the tabernacle.
      2. Now, if I was to ask you, where is God? You would say? Everywhere. And yet, at this moment in history, God chose to live in this tent among His people. He was still everywhere, but they could see the bright glory of His presence in this tent! It is incredible!
      3. And later on, King Solomon said it was wrong that God lived in a tent while He, Solomon, lived in a palace. So Solomon built the magnificent temple. And the glorious presence of the Lord came down into the Most Holy Place of the Temple. But you know how that story ended. The Ark of God was stolen, the glorious presence of the Lord left the temple, and the temple was destroyed.
      4. But listen to **John 1:14**: “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory*.” And this verse is talking about the first coming of Jesus. And if I give it to you literally, it is: And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. As wonderful as it was to have the glory cloud of God in the tabernacle/temple, having Jesus, the Son of God, take to Himself a human nature and live among us, was way better! And it was way better because as a man He could represent us on the cross and as God He could endure the eternal punishment that we deserve, and reconcile us to God. So now, by faith, the Spirit takes your prayers and brings them to Christ in heaven who speaks them to the Father – you have direct access into heaven!
      5. And one day, after Jesus has returned again, we will live with God, face to face! **Revelation 21:3-4**, “*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God*.” Isn’t that amazing to ponder and pray for? And it is all foreshadowed in Leviticus!
   3. But thirdly and lastly, Leviticus also points us to Christ as the **Way** to God. V2, “*Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord…’*”
      1. For the people of Israel, going to the Tabernacle was not a tourist activity or a family hike; it was an act of worship; it was a drawing near to God. And the only way they could do this was by presenting an offering.
      2. And the next seven chapters will detail what offerings they needed to bring and how they were to be presented. And again and again we will read about killing the animals and doing this or that with the blood of the animal.
      3. You see, to present an offering was to confess that they and their houses and their lives and the priests and even the tabernacle were unclean and in need of cleansing. And the only way that God could live among this unclean people was for every thing and every person to be cleansed. And this was done by blood sacrifice.
      4. But as we read earlier in Hebrews 9, the fact that the offerings had to be presented over and over again, and the Day of Atonement needed to be observed every year, make it plain that these offerings did not actually cleanse the people. Instead, they pointed forward to one, perfect sacrifice that would truly cleanse God’s people. And that sacrifice is? The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. As **Hebrews 9:12** says, “*[Jesus] entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption*.”
      5. So what is the way to God, for you and me? Or, more correctly, **who** is the way to God? Jesus told us, didn’t He: He said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*.” And that message is already being developed in Leviticus.

So, just in the opening two verses of Leviticus, we are pointed to Christ as the voice of God, the presence of God and the way to God. I hope you are excited to study Leviticus. I hope you can see that Leviticus has something special and unique to contribute to the story of Jesus. But most importantly of all, I hope that you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. Amen.