

# A better way to fulfil God's purposes for us

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Date: 15 November 2020

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] Well good morning and welcome to this pre-recorded service for the 15th of November 2020 for Calvary Church here in Brighton.

! We're just in the middle now of lockdown number 2 and as you can see we're meeting by YouTube and Zoom. But we are doing our best to plan and prepare for limited meetings together in our building when it's safe and responsible to do so.

So welcome to you if you're regular or if you're just dropping in. For those who are dropping in let me say the usual introduction. We're a church based in the UK, an independent Baptist church in the seaside town of Brighton on the south coast directly south of London.

My name is Philip Wells. I work for the church full time as an elder and I'm leading and speaking this morning. And the topic of our service later on will be the New Testament letter to the Hebrews. And this time we'll be looking at some of the background of this letter by thinking about the Old Testament book that it refers back to. That is to say the book of Leviticus. And if you're just tuning in you might actually know a little bit about the book of Leviticus.

[1:23] You might have the impression that it's full of rules and regulations about the Old Testament which is a fair enough observation. And the second thing that it's famous for is if you've ever tried to read through the Bible starting at the beginning.

This is probably the bit where you got stuck because of all the rules and regulations. So we'll try and address those thoughts as we go through. So don't be put off and please stay tuned and follow us through to that.

And if you're thinking how on earth will some ancient book help me with my spiritual questions and my spiritual issues. Then again I say stay tuned because God may surprise you.

He actually loves to do that sort of thing through his word. Now our plan is up on the screen by my head there. We're going to do the things that we usually do as Christians.

Hear God's word, pray, sing as best we can under these conditions and hear God's word to us. And I've entitled this a better way to fulfil God's purposes for us.

[2:35] Not a very snappy title is it? But worth knowing about. How does God want to fulfil his purposes for us and in us? So as we come now let's bow before God and talk to him in prayer.

We pray to almighty God. We come in the midst of the bind and weariness of this lockdown. And many of us find that this is wearing and unwelcome.

But you are the God of hope. So please show us something hopeful and uplifting. Lord we can hardly get away from this virus in any of the news or any conversation.

But surely you sent this virus for a reason. And we pray that we might all be willing to learn all the lessons you want us to learn. As a human race. As a human race.

As a nation. As your church. And as individuals. And maybe some have tuned in for a special reason this morning. Please show that person what it is you want them to learn.

[3:47] And please send them away with burdens lifted. Joy replenished. Joy replenished. Because Jesus has met us. The redeemer.

The one who gives eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. So we pray through Jesus Christ. Amen. Well we are going to start by thinking about the place God has put us as human beings in his world. And we are very small. And we are very small. But amazingly he still notices us. And cares about us. And has plans for us. So we are going to read a psalm.

And sing a psalm. And the psalm we are going to read is 1, 4, 5. Psalm 1, 4, 5. And the psalm we are going to sing is Psalm 8.

So let's read. Or I will read out Psalm 1, 4, 5. I am just giving you a moment to find the place.  
[4:49] This psalm focuses on how wonderfully good God is. How wonderfully generous he is. And how wonderful he is.

So let's hear this psalm together. And ask God to put an echo of it in our own souls and spirits.  
Psalm 1, 4, 5.

A psalm of praise of David. I will exalt you, my God the King. I will praise your name for ever and ever.

Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.

His greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another. They will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty.

[5:45] And I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works. And I will proclaim your great deeds.

They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and compassionate.

Slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all. He has compassion on all he has made. All you have made will praise you, O Lord.

Your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom. And speak of your might. So that all may know of your mighty acts.

And the glorious splendour of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And your dominion endures through all generations.

[6:44] The Lord is faithful to all his promises. And loving towards all he has made. The Lord upholds all those who fall. And lifts up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you. And you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

The Lord is righteous in all his ways. And loving towards all he has made. The Lord is near to all who call on him. To all who call on him in truth.

He fulfills the desires of those who fear him. He hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him.

But the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will sing in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name.

[7:44] For ever and ever. Amen. God is great. His works are great.

And as we think about them. If we think about them properly. We will be moved to praise also. Well, may the Lord help us to do that. Psalm 8, which I mentioned, says, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have set in place. What is man that you are mindful of him? That God is mindful of us.

So let's sing then. Psalm 8. Psalm 8. CONGREGISTICIST In all the earth, O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name.

For you have set above the hands your glory and your fame.

[9:24] From heaven's hand, from children's lips, you ordered praise to sound.

To silence all your enemies, the wicked to confound.

When I regard the hands you made, your fingers works by trace.

I see the storm and shining stars with you have set in place.

I ask myself, what then is that that you should give him thought?

[10:36] The Son of Man, that you to him such gracious care have brought.

You set in jars below the ones who dwelt in heaven above.

And you have crowned and honored him with glory and with love.

You gave him charge of all the works created by your hand.

And everything that you have made, you gave him to command.

[11:49] All flocks and birds and birds and fish, all bees both wild and tame.

In all the earth, O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name.

And now we're going to pray. And now we're going to pray. And our prayer will be, we'll start off with this, what's called the General Confession.

It's from the historic prayer book. And it's one of the most well-known, perhaps famous prayers that comes from the prayer book.

So as we come to pray to God, we will begin by saying, allow this confession. Let me just say there's one bit where it says there is no health in us.

[12:56] I don't think that means that we're all unfit. I think it means that the solution to our spiritual problems doesn't lie in us. It lies in God and his mercy and his promises and his generosity.

So let us say together the General Confession. Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done.

And we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us. But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.

Spare those, O God, who confess their faults. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous and sober life.

[14:11] To the glory of your holy name. Amen. And let's continue to pray. To praise God for his goodness. To thank you, Lord, for every good and generous thing you give.

We don't deserve that you should be so kind to us. But so very consistently, and so very, for many years, for many of us, you give us health and strength.

You give us friends and family. You give us a large degree of security and comfort. For very many of us, we never lack food.

We never lack warmth. We never lack security. And it is you, O Lord, who is so good to give us these things out of your fatherly goodness.

So we want to lift up our hearts to thank you. We come to pray for our nation and our world.

[15:16] And we pray that as we still are experiencing this pandemic, that our governments would be given wisdom far beyond their own. And that you would teach them humility and integrity.

We know, Lord, that human bluster and pretense is no match for you. Even the little movement of your little finger is too strong for them.

So we pray that our nations may learn humility before you. So we pray for our nation and our world, particularly our own government here in England, for Boris Johnson and his cabinet, for the Queen and the Royal Family, and for the negotiations about Brexit, which are looming large at the moment. Please have mercy upon us, O Lord. And we pray for ourselves. Some of us have experienced bereavement.

And we pray for comfort for those who mourn. Many of us find this weary, wearisome, and pray that you will uphold each of us with, give us fortitude, courage, patience, resilience.

[16:40] Help us to keep on keeping on. And, Lord, for ourselves as a church, help us at this time to keep trusting you and keep looking to you.

Please see us through these times which are difficult. And lead us on, Lord, into a future time of fruitfulness and blessing.

So we pray for all the things that need to be arranged and decided upon and planned. Help our elder and deacons team in this.

We pray, Lord, for every individual who might be finding this a difficult time. Please uphold each and every one because you are the heart-knower. And as we come to you in prayer, we offer to you any particular prayers that are in our own hearts and minds at this time.

We pray our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen. As you can see from the screen, our next thing is we're going to have a reading from Hebrews. This one is a little bit out of sequence, but it's the one that particularly speaks about the connection of this New Testament letter with the Old Testament.

[18:06] It refers back to the Jewish system of priests and a meeting place where God lived, a tent. And it gets known by the Latin word



Thank you so much, Corinne. Let's read. Do not make idols or set up an image or sacred stone for yourselves, And do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it.

[25:14] I am the Lord your God. Observe my Sabbath and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord. If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit.

Your threshing will continue until grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until planting. And you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down, and no one will make you afraid.

I will remove wild beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country. You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you.

Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, And your enemies will fall by the sword before you. I will look on you with favour, and make you fruitful, and increase your numbers.

I will keep my covenant with you. You will still be eating last year's harvest, when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you.

[26:21] I will walk among you, and be your God, and you will be my people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians.

I broke the bars of your yoke, and established you to walk with heads held high. There is a green hill far away, outside a city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.

So this next song, 437, a very simple one, by C. Francis Alexander. It is about Jesus of Nazareth, and the death that he died, and its deep and unique power, its unique effects for us.

It says, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in.

So we are going to sing this one. There is a green hill far away, outside a city wall, where our dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.

[27:49] He may not know, we cannot tell, what pains he had to bear, but we believe it was for us he hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven, he died to make us good, that we might go at last to heaven, saved by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in. Lord Jesus, dearly have you love, and we must love you too.

And trust in your redeeming blood, and learn to follow you. Now we're going to hear God's word, and have a look at this matter of Leviticus, and let's pray.

[29:36] Lord, it seems a very unlikely thing that by technology, and looking into an ancient book, that this would have any spiritual effect upon our lives.

And yet you say that those who meditate on the law of the Lord will be like trees planted by streams of water, and they will be fruitful and not wither.

And we pray that we might find that true for us today. So help speaker and hearers alike. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Well we've prayed, and we're going to come again in this series on Hebrews.

We've had a little break while we've listened to the wonderful ministry from John Woods. But now we're back in Hebrews. And my introduction is very simple.

I ask this question, why are we here? And I answer that the Bible says God has a purpose for our lives. There's something he wants us to do.

[30:47] And perhaps something that only we can do. He has a place for us. He has a blessing for us. And those things are true on the large scale and on the personal scale.

He has a purpose for us. He has a blessing, a place. He has a blessing for us. And he has a calling for us. That's you and me.

We're reminding ourselves of Hebrews. It's a letter of warnings. You remember that picture of people so near the edge of the cliff.

How stupid. Don't go so near the edge. And the letter to the Hebrews is full of those warnings to Christians not to go near the edge.

Not to go off the path. Not to go near sin and unbelief and apostasy. He says there's a very real danger. So there's warnings.

[31:54] And Hebrews also has some very, very attractive positives. As the writer will say, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Keep looking at him. And the letter will also say, you know, we have a great high priest, Jesus, the son of God. And as we try to keep to the path with all its dangers and trials and temptations, and us in a vulnerable state, he's there.

Let us approach him for grace and mercy to help us just when we need it. And the letter to the Hebrews is going to talk about this in terms of priests and priesthood and the old system of priests and the system of priests, which is prototyped in Melchizedek.

The priest who is in person, the gateway between heaven and earth. And the writer of the Hebrews is going to say that we can look back on that system of priests and we can say that Jesus is far, far better.

He's a complete upgrade on those priests. And he will say things like this. That Jesus is superior.

[33:31] He is better. Hebrews 8 verse 6. Hebrews 8 verse 6. The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is the mediator is superior to the old one.

And it is founded on better promises. Now that idea of being superior in this sense means that Jesus has not come to bring in a completely different system with no relation to the old.

It's like the old. It's of the same sort, but far, far better. So there's something the same and there's something which is a vast improvement.

And I'd like to try and develop the thought that the vision of that old system is the same vision as we have in the New Testament.

But that in the New Testament, it's fulfilled. The logical conclusion of it is reached. It's developed to its full capacity.

[34:41] That sort of thing. So this morning we're going to look back at that old system, the one that's going to be fulfilled in Christ.

And particularly to look at the book of Leviticus. So that's what we're going to do this morning, particularly focusing the book of Leviticus, because we're talking about Levitical priests and so on. And to just go back and see what it is that's being fulfilled. Now, John Woods, when I was having a chat to him about this series, he came up with a wonderful quote from Doctor Who.

Doctor Who, if you don't know, is a sort of children's science fiction programme that's been running for many, many years and in many ways is well loved.

The current Doctor Who is a woman, actually, so there's a break of the mould there. And in one of the programmes, apparently, she said in her capacity as Doctor Who, I believe in God, but not the angry God of the Old Testament or of Leviticus, but the God of the New Testament, who said, you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

[35:56] Well, surprise. You shall love your neighbour as yourself is a quote from Leviticus.

It's chapter 19, verse 18. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. A verse, incidentally, picked up by Jesus as epitomising a particular whole thread of what the Bible teaches.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. So we think, oh well, it's not so difficult after all. We're on home ground here. However, if you go and read the next verses, which says, keep my decrees.

Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. So we immediately feel uncomfortable with the book because, well, what are we to do with this?

I think I'm wearing a pullover made of wool and acrylic or something like that. It's a mixture. And so am I in breach of Leviticus?

[37:13] Well, I'm a New Testament Christian, not in that old covenant. But it does make you think, doesn't it? And there are other problem thoughts with Leviticus. Well, if you've ever tried to read the Bible from start to finish, you've probably got stuck on Leviticus.

It imposes burdens, you might say. It's full of laws to keep about clothing, about the food you can and can't eat, about dates and times and seasons.

And you might well ask, how does that fit for Christians? How does that fit in with the Christian life? And it has a system which we are quite unfamiliar with of unclean and clean and holy.

So there are gradations of this state of uncleanness. And there are a lot of things about that that are rather puzzling. I mean, one fairly obvious thing is that you're not allowed to eat unclean animals, pigs, for example.

So, say goodbye to the traditional English breakfast, I'm afraid, and bacon sandwiches. And you think, how do we cope with that? And that's in the Bible, is it?

[38:24] And in Leviticus and those books, there's a lot of ritual. There's rituals which Baptist people like us are not very into rituals.

And there's a lot of blood and stuff and rather gory animals being killed. And again, we think, how do I relate to that?

So what I'd like to do is try to help us a little bit make friends with Leviticus. And try to grasp something of the vision of the book, which is the same vision that God has for us.

Now, I'm going to own up. I'm copying this book by Mr. J. Sklar. He seems to be missing a vowel, but no, that's correct.

A very helpful book. I listened to a podcast by him, which is very helpful. So I'm just going to try and communicate something of that. And the way he will go is to say, put this book into the context of the five books of Moses.

[39:26] And let's go back to Genesis, the book of beginnings, the book where the human project is started in God's creation.

And then, of course, the fall into sin. And in that scheme, we have Adam and Eve. There they are in the garden.

And their task is to subdue an untamed world. You understand that the garden is not the whole of the world. It is a garden on a mountain.

And that's where the beautiful trees are. But there's an outside. And Adam and Eve's task is to tame that untamed world. And I'd like to make an equivalence between with the vision, the scheme of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, those other books of Moses, the books which encompass the old covenant, the Moses covenant.

And in that, we don't obviously have Adam and Eve, but we have Moses and the nation of Israel. And so I'm going to draw them a bit bigger, a land or a place.

[40:45] And in that place is the priesthood and all of that sort of thing. And they, too, have a mission to go out into the nations.

Of course, it's a little bit more subtle what the mission of Israel is to the nations. Sometimes it's a mission of conquest if people are opposed to them. And otherwise, it's a mission of vision, sorry, of witness that the nations should look and say, oh, I wish I could be like that nation.

I wish the community I belong to had the values that that community has. I wish we had the same God that they have. So that's the sort of territory I'd like to look at just now.

So let's go back to Genesis and look at the vision there. This is very simplified. I'm going to say three things. There's something about order. And in Genesis, it's order produced by separating a jumble of things.

I'll just say something about blessing, that God blesses in this scheme with gifts of good things. And I want to say something about calling, that there is a purpose and a role and a meaning for the people whom God has in mind in creation, first of all.

[42:07] So let's take those one by one, and then we'll just follow them through. So there's a little picture I've used before of six days. One, two, three, going down the first column.

Four, five, six, going down the second column. And let's pick up the thought of order. Valued order. This is one of the things that God values.

He values order. And when he makes the world, he produces order by separating. He actually separates and fills, but I'm just picking up on the separating part of it.

And the world begins. It says the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. So the Hebrew for that is tohu and bohu, tohu v'bohu, meaning formless and empty, chaotic and empty.

Just a little memorable phrase, isn't it? Formless and empty. And what God does is he separates the jumble to produce order.

[43:17] So in verse three, God said, let there be light. And there was light. And God saw the light was good. And he separated the light from the darkness. So in my top left hand drawing, there is light and darkness separated.

And then the next thing that he separates is the waters above and the waters beneath. God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it.

So that's another act of separation. And the third act of separation, so this is my bottom left hand picture. He separated dry land and sea.

Now he doesn't use the word separate. He uses the word gather. Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear. And it was so. God called the dry ground land and the gathered waters he called seas.

And God saw that it was good. So he values this order producing separation. And then after that, each separated space is filled. So space number four, the light and darkness is filled.

[44:35] And then the sea and the sky is filled. And then the land is filled, roughly speaking. So God values order. It's there in Genesis. That's the first thing. OK, second thing.

God gives blessings. I've put the word donated. This isn't a blessing that is earned, but a blessing that is given. And why do I say there is blessing?

Well, it's there in the text in Genesis chapter 1 verse 22. It says God blessed them. Now this is referring to the sea creatures and the birds.

But God blesses them. And he says, be fruitful and increase in numbers and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase on the earth.

So there is a blessing in terms of numbers and in terms of filling. In chapter 1 verse 28, there is a blessing for human beings.

[45:33] God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.

So there is a blessing here. Again, it's in terms of fruitfulness and in terms of increase in number. But God gives blessing.

And in chapter 2 verse 3, there is a blessing or a blessedness on that seventh day. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

So this is God's seventh day. So this is God's seventh day. There is no end stated to this seventh day. Our seventh day is a mimic or an imitation of this.

But this seventh day is the day which is filled with God's blessedness and his rejoicing, his own delight in who he is and what he has made.

[46:36] And that is the blessing of that seventh day. And it isn't just where blessing is, the word blessing is used.

There are blessings that God gives. So for example, in chapter 1 verse 29, he says, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it, they will be yours for food.

So the original vision, the original vision for being vegetarians. And all this food is given as a blessing.

And here is another blessing. The presence of God. It is in chapter 3 verse 8 where it says, In this garden he walked.

There is a particular word for this. He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. So here is another blessing that God blesses this place and these people with his own presence.

[47:39] If you go in the garden in the cool of the day, God will be there and you can walk with him. So that was the blessings in this original vision.

And the third thing I'm just going to pick up briefly is a purposeful calling. So there is a valued order. There is a donated blessing.

And there is a purposeful calling. In other words, that Adam and Eve are given a job to do. That they could say, this is good. I've been out to do what I've been meant to do.

I've come home. Or perhaps my work was in the home. But I've done what I was made for. And there is a satisfaction, a proper satisfaction, a proper human satisfaction in fulfilling this purposeful calling.

Now, in 1.28, which we've already read, the calling was to be fruitful in increase in number to fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.

[48:47] So there's a rule there. I hasten to say this is not exploitation. This is not abuse. This is a caring dominion to cultivate.

There is potential. And if effort is put in, you can cultivate it and develop that potential. So there's my word, develop. To take this earth with its possibilities, with the gold and the onyx and the trees and the rivers and the mountains, and make things out of them to develop.

So I'm going to put those blue arrows to show that the task of Adam and Eve wasn't just within the garden, but to expand the boundaries of the garden. We presume, in the end, to encompass the whole world, to turn the whole thing into a garden, shall we say.

So to develop. And to fill. So those arrows would come in again. To fill the world. And to do so.

Now the text doesn't say this in these words, does it? But surely this is the case. But to do so is good. It's what God says is good. It's what God wants. There's something about God's glory that is shown when these people are doing this stuff.

[50:08] That's God's purposeful calling to them. And there is a satisfaction in that. And if you want to add one other text, in chapter 2, verse 15, we're told that the man is there to tend and to guard or to keep the, let's say, the ground, the garden.

What's it? Chapter 2, verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. So I would say starting there but seeking to move outwards.

So, brief, very brief look. What was the original vision? There is an order which God values. He says it's good. There's a blessing that God gives out of his generosity.

There's a calling that gives meaning and purpose to the human project, to human beings. So there's Adam and Eve. What a wonderful drawing I've done there. And, but before we have to, we go on, we have to say this whole thing was spoiled.

By human rebellion. By Adam eating the fruit. Doing the one thing that God said he shouldn't do. You can eat all the fruit.

[51:25] You can go all the way around this garden. But the one thing you mustn't do, because I'm telling you not to do it, is to eat this fruit. And lo and behold, what does he do? He eats the fruit.

And he's enticed by the snake, the adversary, the evil one, who brings thereby into a place where there was order, disorder and dislocation.

We find this in our own internal makeup, don't we? That our mind experiences disorder, our emotions and affections experience disorder.

This is what sin does. And instead of blessing, there is cursing. There is a curse upon the operations of this world, making them gritty and uncomfortable and painful and sorrowful.

And of course, death is part of that. And the purpose that God gave gets spoiled or lost.

[52:33] And instead we have frustration and we have the feeling of emptiness. And all of these things that human sin has brought into a good world.

And we, to one extent or another, all carry the marks of this. Even as Christians, those marks haven't, although they're remedied at base, they're still, we still haven't escaped the consequences of those things.

So there we are. The beginning of the project in Genesis. And what I'd like to say now, this is my second thing to say, is that I'd like to make the case that the vision is picked up in Leviticus.

And then this vision is fulfilled in Christ. And that's where the writer to the Hebrews would pick this up. So let's go through those three things again and see how they are there in Leviticus.

Well, before I do that, let's deal with the sin thing. Because Leviticus and the whole Old Covenant has a very complex and comprehensive system to deal with sin and uncleanness.

[53:48] And it's a system of sacrifices. So it's human sin. So the animals that are sacrificed are, as far as I know, all linked with the human family.

They're domestic animals. Animals that belong to us. And so there's an ox or a bull. Animals are sacrificed.

And there is a complex system of priests to operate the sacrifices. And the priests are chosen by their lineage. They're a subset of a particular tribe.

So they do the necessary with these animals, slaughtering them, cutting them up, burning them, roasting them. All of that stuff. And as part of this system, as a very significant part of it, there is blood.

I'm sorry to be gory, but this is what it is. Blood of dead animals. This blood has a most remarkable cleansing effect on things that are unclean.

[54:56] Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Now there are other cleansing substances. I mean, water is one of them. But blood is the particularly most powerful cleansing substance.

And as another part of this system, there are calendar dates, repetitions day by day. Repetitions week by week.

Repetitions year by year. This whole system repeats and repeats and repeats and repeats in its efforts to remove sin.

And there's a little bit of a clue in the fact that it's repeated that it doesn't actually work. Because you still have to go back into it all over again. And the writers of the Hebrews will pick up on that in due course.

So, first of all, to say that there is a dealing with sin. And as we'll come to, so I might as well say it now.

[55:57] This dealing with sin is perfected in Jesus Christ. The perfect sacrifice, the perfect priest, the precious blood, the total cleansing that is in Christ.

Doesn't need to be repeated because he does it once and that's it. Problem solved. Job done. The finished work. Something to make us rejoice if we get a hold of that.

He's done it completely for us. So successfully. So, cleansing from sin. Now, let's come to those three things that we were thinking about.

Order. Now, Leviticus revisits order. And it revisits it in a rather exaggerated way. And it sets up a system which, as I put it here, dislikes things being mixed up together or jumbled up.

So you find this cropping up in various ways. So, spaces have order. So there's a priest and he's in a space. And that's within a space and that's within a space.

[57:10] So you get a differentiation. Space is not all jumbled up. There is the outside world. There is the camp where the people are.

Inside the camp there is the tabernacle or tent. And inside that there's the holy place and the most holy place. So there is a demarcation in terms of spaces and places.

So Leviticus is very strong on that. But there's a demarcation in terms of states. So in Leviticus 10.10, the priests are told to teach the people to distinguish between the holy and the common.

You can hear my pages turning because I'm just trying to find the place. Leviticus 10.10, you must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean.

And you must teach the Israelites all the decrees that the Lord has given them through Moses. So this distinguishing between states, there's a sort of order introduced there. And there's an order of people.

[58:20] And it's not a coincidence you get the order of spaces and states and people. So there are the nations on the outside. There's the people within the boundaries.

And then within the people are the priests. And perhaps you might say there is the high priest. So there is an order of people. So there is an order of people. And Leviticus is strong then on order.

And as we come into the New Testament, we find that there are some of these distinctions that have served their purpose. They were making a point. But as Peter learned when the sheep was lowered down with unclean animals in it for him to eat.

And the voice said, eat it. Because God has said it's clean. That distinction is taken away.

Jesus made all foods clean. And that links with the distinction between peoples. So no longer is there this huge barrier between the people of God and the foreign nations.

[59:31] That wall is broken down. That all may come in. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Come to the Father through Jesus the Son.

All may come in. He has opened the life gate that all may go in. So that distinction is broken down. But there are orders that are actually deeper than that.

A created order. And in Christ those are not, those distinctions, those pieces of order are not jumbled up again.

But the Gospel sends us back to inhabit that order. So there is an important order perhaps between parents and children. And the right respect that children owe their parents.

The right respect that children owe their parents. And the right love that parents should have for their children. So the Gospel sends us back to that.

[60:36] For example, husbands and wives. That is not jumbled up. But those relationships are celebrated. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Wives, submit to your husbands as the church does to Christ. So those relationships and those orders are reinforced. We are sent back to them to give them their full value.

Employer-employee relationships serve not just when people are looking at you in case you get into trouble. But as if you are serving Christ. And employers, treat your employees with the respect that I suppose you would if Jesus was working for you.

So order is part of the vision. And it's fulfilled in Christ. And as believers, as Christians we are sent back to honour that order and live in it.

The vision of Leviticus is fulfilled in Christ secondly. The reinstatement of God's blessing. Now Leviticus talks about blessing.

[61:51] And in the bit that Corin read, 26 verse 9. It says, I will look on you with favour and make you fruitful and increase your numbers and I will keep my covenant with you.

So here is a depiction of favour. I will favour you. I will make you fruitful. There is a depiction of a lush environment.

Verses 4 and 5. I will send you rain in its season. The ground will yield its crops. The trees of the field will yield their fruit. Your threshing will continue until the grape harvest.

And the grape harvest will continue until the planting. And you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. So a lush and secure environment is what Leviticus envisages.

And of course in Christ that's exactly what we're promised in the world to come. And the blessing of rest which we remarked upon in Genesis.

[62:57] Well it's there in Leviticus. Chapter 26 verse 2. Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. So there to echo in the Moses picture the rest which God himself blessed the seventh day.

Is eternal rest. And it's not just weekly Sabbaths. If you look at chapter 25 verses 2 and onwards. You get the land observing a Sabbath.

For six years sow your fields. For six years prune your vineyards and gather your crops. In the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest. A Sabbath to the Lord.

So that pattern of seven or six and one is worked out per day per seven days per seven years. And this idea of rest is embedded in the culture of Leviticus.

And this idea of God walking with his people is there in Leviticus. Chapter 26 verse 11. I will put my dwelling place among you.

[64:15] I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people. As God walked in the garden. So he walks with his people in the Leviticus scheme.

He walks with them. This is remarkable isn't it? That God lives with his people and walks with his people. He says I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people.

So that God says you're mine and that we can say of God you're mine. He is our God. We are his people. That's a wonderful vision isn't it? Of relationship with God. And I'm going to say that this relationship, this is all fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

It's not left behind. We are blessed with in heavenly places with every spiritual blessing in Christ. That when we come into the New Testament, we don't suddenly stop blessing, but God has blessing for his people.

[65:30] And if we're his people, we're under his blessing. We're under his favour. We can look forward to the heavenly rest.

We can have the privilege now of walking with God and he walking with us. So number two, a restatement of God's blessing.

That's the vision of Leviticus fulfilled in Christ. And thirdly, the reissue of God's calling. Now if we're in the Leviticus situation, these people have a purpose.

They're people with words spoken over them. Again, in Leviticus 26 verse 13. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians.

I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high. What a magnificent statement. What a precious statement to those people.

[66:29] They've been brought out of the slavery and captivity of Egypt. And the bars that held them have been broken. They're free. And they're able to walk not filled with shame or under the yoke of captivity, but with heads held high.

And if that was true of them, how much more true it is of the people of Jesus Christ. We're no longer slaves. The bars that held us have been broken.

We can walk with heads held high. We know the love of the Father, the forgiveness of sins, the removal of shame, and the speaking of blessing upon us and a calling given to us.

Now the, going back to Leviticus, the, there is a calling in regard to the nations. So I'll put those blue arrows in again.

It's referred to, perhaps you might say in passing in verse 8. Five of you will chase a hundred and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand and your enemies will fall by the sword.

[67:40] So always in the Old Testament there's a two-way relationship between Israel and the nations. If they're hard-hearted, then there is a, and they're antagonistic towards Israel, then they're conquered.

If they're open, then they're welcomed in. They receive witness. And, uh, this bit in Leviticus seems to imply that they're going out in conquest.

Of course, God's kingdom is still expanding, although not by killing people, but by winning them.

And there's a calling to the Leviticus congregation to reflect God's values in their lives so that the nations can see, and as I said earlier, that the nations would look and say, what a wonderful system of justice you have.

What a wonderful way of relating to one another you have. What wonderful answers to prayer you have. I wish we could be like you to reflect God's values in their lives.

And this is epitomized in this statement that often crops up. I am the Lord who brought you out of Egypt to be your God.

[69:00] Therefore be holy, because I am holy. And God's holiness is the things that distinguish him, that are his particular characteristics.

His love, his moral purity, his justice, his faithfulness, his mercy, his steadfastness, his dependability, his truthfulness, the way that he is always straight.

And these things intensify to the highest degree, make God's holiness burning holiness. I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God. Therefore you have these characteristics about you.

Faithfulness, honesty, steadfastness, dependability, purity, moral straightness. And in Christ this is fulfilled.

Christian people are made, and when they become Christians they become more human. You know that? When you become a Christian you don't become less human. You become more human.

[70:14] You become more in what God wants human beings to be. And we are to fulfil the calling to be human in the image of God.



he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever  
Amen Amen Well it's goodbye from me just now and I hope to see you soon but goodbye from me  
bye-bye