

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: November 5, 2017

Lesson Title: "Set Before"

Lesson Passage: Leviticus 1:3-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5

ABOUT THIS LESSON

If your class members were to be asked to name their favorite books of the Bible, they probably would not name Leviticus. They might wonder what the detailed descriptions of sacrifices and priestly rituals in Leviticus have to do with them. But a closer look at the text of Leviticus will reveal insights into the nature of God, and our relationship to Him. As we deal with the priestly instructions for presenting burnt and cereal offerings in this week's lesson passage, let's be on the lookout for "take away" spiritual truths.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Explain the purpose of offering sacrifices.
- (2) Explain the basic meaning of burnt offerings.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with this comment: As you think about this week's Lesson Passage (Lev. 1:3-9, 2:1-3), you might wonder, "What do these Old Testament rituals have to do with us?" Suggest that the best answer to the question is what Jesus had to say in Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them." Offer this explanation: Although the sacrificial system that emerged in ancient Israel was adapted to their understandings and their way of life, every aspect of it paralleled spiritual truths that Jesus would emphasize in his teaching ministry centuries later. As we examine the Old Testament Levitical regulations in this month's lessons, let's be on the lookout for truths with New Testament meanings.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Observe that our lesson passage consists of directions for preparing two kinds of sacrifices--burnt offerings of cattle (1:3-9) and cereal offerings (2:1-3). Suggest that, as we examine the instructions for these rituals, we should keep in mind four basic principles that are found in both Old Testament and New Testament teachings:* (1) SIN ALIENATES ONE FROM GOD. The "holiness" of God means that He stands over against all wickedness, evil and immorality. And people who are in covenant relationship with God are obligated to "be holy as He is holy" (Lev. 11:44). (2) SIN IS NOT TO BE TREATED CASUALLY. Sin is an offense against God. Even sin against one's neighbor is not to be taken lightly, because it is really "a breach of faith against the Lord" (Lev. 6:2). (3) THE OFFERING OF A SACRIFICE IS AN OUTWARD ACT, INTENDED TO RESTORE A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A WORSHIPER AND GOD. The Hebrew term for "sacrifice" or "offering" is *Qorban*, which comes from a verb meaning "to bring near." The motive that prompts the offering of a sacrifice brings

a person near to God. EXPLANATION: A sacrifice was a gift to God. If a relationship is strained, and the one who has done wrong offers a gift, the offended friend, by receiving the gift, signifies that he also receives the giver. A harmonious relationship is created between the giver and the receiver of a gift. (4) THE OUTWARD ACT OF SACRIFICE WAS MEANINGLESS IF IT WAS NOT ACCOMPANIED BY AN INWARD ATTITUDE OF FAITH, REPENTANCE AND A DESIRE FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD. *Read Psalm 51:17, where the psalmist stresses the fact that the offering is accepted by God only if it is the expression of genuine penitence and faith.*

2. *Read Lev. 1:3-4, then discuss the nature of the sacrificial animal:* (1) The sacrifice is referred to as a "whole offering" because the entire animal was burnt on the altar and none of it was eaten by anyone. (Only the skin went to the priest as his gratuity, 7:8). (2) Any sacrifice to God had to be costly to the worshiper. (Read 2 Samuel 24:24.) For this reason, [a] only a domesticated animal was to be presented as a burnt offering, since a wild animal did not cost anything; [b] the sacrificial animal must be a male, since males were far fewer than females in the typical flock; [c] to be an acceptable sacrifice, the animal must be "without blemish" (read Lev. 22:20-22). APPLICATION: Read verses 2 and 3 of the hymn, "Give of Your Best to the Master."

3. *Discuss the ritual sacrifice, as described in Lev. 1:4-9:* (1) The donor of the sacrificial animal was an active participant, not a passive observer. He laid his hand on the animal's head, indicating that it was his substitute, and that he was giving himself symbolically in the ritual (note "it will be accepted on his behalf," v. 4). (2) The worshiper prepared the animal for the sacrifice by killing it, skinning it, washing the dirty parts and cutting it up. (3) The priest's duty was to catch the blood and fling it against the sides of the altar as a means of presenting it to God (v. 5). Then he would kindle a fire and burn the sacrificial animal piece by piece on the top of the altar, beginning with the head and the suet (vv. 7-8). (4) While the priest was doing this, the worshiper washed the hind legs and the viscera of the animal to remove any unclean material (v. 9).

4. Comment on the presentation of the "cereal offering" (Lev. 2:1-3): (1) Like the burnt sacrifice, the cereal offering was a voluntary gift to God. Because it consisted of home-grown grain, the product of one's own labor, the cereal offering symbolized the dedication of man's work to God. (2) As with the burnt offering, the cereal offering was a joint undertaking. The worshiper made the preliminary preparations (v. 1), then a priest would burn a portion of it on the altar (v. 2). (3) The addition of frankincense distinguished the grain from ordinary food, because it created a "soothing odor," as the fat did in the case of animal sacrifices. (4) All the leftover grain was given to the priests (v. 3).

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

FOR DISCUSSION: In Levitical rites, worship was a team effort. The worshiper and the priest were both active participants. Similarly, worship today should be more than a passive audience witnessing a performance. Christian worship should be "a dialogue between the pulpit and the pew."

L. Coleman PO Box 2951, Weatherford TX 76086 <luciencoleman@gmail.com>