

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: November 26, 2017

Lesson Title: "Set Futures"

Lesson Passage: Leviticus 26:3-16,40-45

ABOUT THIS LESSON

The lesson passage is a collection of blessings on those who keep God's law and curses on those who do not. The blessings portray an idyllic life with abundant rain and good harvests and safety from attack by human and animal enemies. But rejection of God's rules, by failure to keep the covenant, will bring on illness, famine, and defeat by enemies. However, these judgments will not mean that God has rejected His people. In fact, he punishes them precisely because they are his own. If they confess their sins and humble their hearts, God will remember his covenant with their forefathers.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the benefits of obedience to God's will that were promised to Israel. (2) Summarize the penalties for disobedience.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

To introduce the lesson, display this saying: "YOU ARE FREE TO CHOOSE, BUT YOU ARE NOT FREE FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR CHOICE." Then comment: While this saying didn't come from the Bible, it does state a biblical truth that is made very evident in this week's lesson. In our Focal Passage, the people of Israel are promised that obedience to God's commandments will bring blessing to their land; but they are warned that disobedience will result in disasters.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Observe that, in contemporary Christianity, we tend to think of sin and righteousness in terms of individual conduct. (For example, read 1 John 1:9.) Then, note that in Leviticus the writer's treatment of the blessings of obedience to the laws of God and the curses of disobedience was focused on the nation as a whole, not individuals. Also, point out that, in Leviticus, the consequences of both obeying and disobeying the will of God were experienced in this lifetime, not in a life to come.*

2. *Call attention to Leviticus 26:3-13 and note that these verses list five promises of divine favor if the Israelites walk in God's statutes and observe His commandments: (1) The first promise is that rain will come at the right season, and, as a result, good harvests (vv. 4-5) (In a dry country like Palestine, regular rain was essential for successful agriculture.) The abundant harvests will mean that there will be no worry about food supplies. ("You will eat your food in plenty and dwell in your land securely," v. 5.) (2) The second promise is the*

assurance of peace in the land and security (v. 6). Food without security would be of limited value. If enemies invaded, they could deprive the country of much of its produce, as was the case in Gideon's day (refer to *Judges 6:4*). Even the wild animals, such as lions and bears, will not harm them. NOTE: The word "peace" in v. 6 is the Hebrew term "Shalom," which denoted personal well-being, good health and safety and security of both people and animals. (3) The third blessing is victory in war (vv. 7-8). If their enemies do attack, they will easily be defeated. (4) The fourth promise is a high birthrate (v. 9), an important blessing for a rudimentary society where under-population was a real problem ("establish my covenant with you" refers to God's covenant with Abraham, the promise of numerous descendants, Gen. 17:1-6). (5) The fifth promise is the gift of God's presence (vv. 11-13). [a] "I shall make my dwelling among you" (v. 11) is, literally, "I shall give my tabernacle among you." The tabernacle was established to be the place where God would dwell among his people (Exodus 25:8); but Israel's sins could make it an empty shrine. [b] If they are faithful to their Lord, He will "walk among his people" (v. 12) as He has done before (Deut. 23:14).

3. After listing the blessings that will come as a consequence of obedience, the writer then lists the curses that will be brought on by ignoring or disobeying God's commandments. Our lesson passage omits most of this list in vv. 17-39, but it is introduced by a general warning in Lev. 26:14-16, which warns that disobedience will result in God's withdrawal of the blessings already named; thus, Israel will fail in every aspect of her life. Physical and mental disease will be accompanied by defeat in battle.

4. But the lesson passage ends on a more positive note, the promise of hope for the future (Lev. 26:40-45): Since God is a God of justice, the Israelites' repeated iniquity, treachery and defiance must be punished; but the aim of the punishment is remedial, to bring Israel to repentance and amendment. (v. 42) If the Israelites "accept their punishment in full" God will "remember his covenant with the patriarchs. ("Remember" in the Old Testament means not only to recollect, but also to take action on the basis of what is recalled.) The covenant with the patriarchs included the divine promise to give them the land of Canaan (Gen. 17:7-8; 26:3; 35:12).

CLOSING THE LESSON

Observe that these studies in Leviticus might have made us wonder, at times, "What have the detailed descriptions of Old Testament temple worship to do with the gospel?" Suggest that the Levitical writer's emphasis on the sanctity of the Temple as God's dwelling place helps us appreciate the full meaning of New Testament passages like Paul's reference to Lev. 26:12 in 2 Cor. 6:16, "**For we (the church) are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will live in them and move among them, And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**"

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