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Leviticus 12

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Leviticus 12.

FOCUS: LAWS FOR WOMAN CONCEIVING A MALE AND FEMALE CHILD

Topics.

- If a woman bears a male child, she shall be unclean seven days.
- On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.
- She shall continue thirty-three days and not come into the sanctuary.
- She shall be unclean two weeks and continue purifying sixty-six days.
- When her purifying is completed, the priest will make atonement.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Leviticus is about ceremonial rules and civil laws that God gave to Moses after He had given him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

- These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Lev. 26:46).

Either on Mount Sinai or when he met with him in the Tabernacle (also called the tent of meeting) when they were in the wilderness near the Mountain. Moses was to give these ceremonial laws to the Levitical priesthood, they embrace rules concerning sacrifices, offerings and worship; the ordination of Aaron and his sons and their ceremonial cleanness; the Day of Atonement; feasts and holy days and the Year of Jubilee. The civil and social laws and laws of justice he was to give to the government of Israel to implement within their society. The ceremonial and civil laws were not given to the secular world but are laws God gave to the nation of Israel. The central message is that God is holy and requires His people to be holy. The book also shows that God graciously provides atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the giving of the Law (about 1445 B.C.).

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NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: covered animals, creatures in the sea and rivers that the law declared clean that the people of Israel could eat, and birds, swarming creatures that creep on the ground, creatures that go on their belly, or on all fours or has many feet, swarming things that swarm and creep on the ground, that the law declared unclean that the people of Israel could not eat. The chapter ends with various other laws of the LORD focused on making a distinction between the clean and the unclean.

THE BIRTH OF A MALE CHILD

LEVITICUS 12:1-2

If a Woman Bears a Male Child, shall Be Unclean Seven Days.

- **Leviticus 12:1-2:** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean (according to the days of the separation for her infirmity in KJV).

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel," this embraces all the people of Israel, the priests, Levites, Israelites, proselytes, and servants and all families. Since Moses could not speak to the entire nation at the same time, he most likely spoke to the priests and elders who then spoke to the heads of their tribes who then spoke to the heads of the families and in this manner the laws of the LORD would have been spread throughout the nation. Some feel that verse two contradicts the laws concerning a woman's menstrual cycle spoken of in Leviticus chapter fifteen, because chapter fifteen says that a woman in her menstrual cycle, shall be unclean for only seven days, (Lev 15:19), yet here in chapter twelve it states, when a woman has a child she shall be unclean for two weeks (i.e., 14 days) as at the time of her menstruation (Lev. 12:2). This is easily harmonized when we jump to (Lev. 15:28) and read, "if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days," which means that the total time of her uncleanness is counted as fourteen days (two weeks), both in this chapter and in chapter fifteen.

Her infirmity: (v2) refers to the blood flow of a woman's monthly cycle.

Unclean: (v5) comes from the Hebrew word (*tame'*) and means to be foul in a religious, ceremonial or moral sense. It carries the idea of being defiled, contaminated and polluted. Those who were counted as being ceremonially unclean, could not go into the sanctuary or partake in any sacred duty or religious matter until they were declared clean. After the laws concerning clean and unclean food, come the laws concerning clean and unclean persons. Laws concerning a woman and her menstrual cycle are recorded in chapter fifteen, there we are told when a woman has a discharge, of blood, and is in her menstrual cycle:

- She was to be in her impurity for seven days. (Lev.15:19).
- Whoever touched her would be unclean until the evening. (Lev.15:19).
- Everything on which she sat or lied upon would be unclean and whoever touched her or her bed or anything she sat on would be unclean. (Lev.15:20).
- Whoever became unclean by her or by anything she touched was to wash their clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until the evening. (Lev.15:21-23).
- If any man lay with her and her menstrual impurity came upon him, he was unclean for seven days, and every bed on which he lies was unclean. (Lev.15:24).
- When she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. (Lev. 15:28)
- On the eighth day she was to take two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering and he would make atonement for her unclean discharge. (Lev. 15:29-30).
- The people of Israel were to be kept separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling the LORDs tabernacle that is in their midst. (Leviticus 15:31).

These are the laws for a woman who is unwell with her menstrual discharge and for those who have a bodily discharge of blood (male or female) or a man who has an emission of semen and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean. (Lev. 15:32-33).

Speak to the people of Israel: (v2) shows that this law only concerned the people of Israel and no other nation.

If a woman has conceived and bears a male child: (v2) the laws concerning impurity naturally begin with the beginning of life, firstly, the animals (in the previous chapter) and secondly, the birth of a child, which generally brings great joy not only to the mother, but also to the whole family.

- When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. (John 16:21).

She shall be unclean seven days: (v2) because of the issue of blood which succeeds child-birth and generally only lasts three or four days, yet the period of uncleanness is extended to seven days, perhaps to include exceptional cases. This was not for any filthiness in the conception, or in the bringing forth of the child into the world, but to signify the universal and deep pollution of man's nature, even from the birth, and from the conception for the sin nature is imparted to the new born child. This does not mean babies are born evil as some teach, but that they have the potential within them to be good or bad and that no one born of a woman can attain to the perfection of the law and God's Holiness. If we could Christ died for no reason. It is for this reason that we are saved by grace and not by self-effort and works of the law.

As at the time of her menstruation: (v2) as in the days of the uncleanness of her monthly cycle (called here an infirmity or sickness), meaning, the time of her uncleanness after childbirth was to be the same duration of time, and that she was to observe the same rules, and be subjected to the same restraints as she was during the period of her menstruation.

- When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. (Lev. 15:19).

The fact that reference is made here to the regulations about the periodical impurity of women which have not as yet been laid down shows that, like other laws, this law was already known and generally practised by the Jews before it was finally fixed into the Levitical law.

She shall be unclean seven days: means that she was to separate herself from all company, except those who were needed to take care of her in her circumstances and since these became ceremonially unclean, her husband was not permitted to sit near her, or eat and drink with her.

LEVITICUS 12:3

On the Eighth Day the Flesh of His Foreskin Shall Be Circumcised.

- **Leviticus 12:3:** And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

On the eighth day: (v3) at the end of the seven days the first period of the mothers' extreme state of impurity ceased, and no longer was anyone who touched her defiled, so on the eighth day the boy was circumcised according to the law.

- He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. (Gen. 17:12).
- Both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised, so shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. (Genesis 17:13).

The Jews held fast to this law in such high esteem that they even circumcised a boy on a Sabbath Day if it happened to be the eighth day as the following words of Jesus show.

- Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. (John 7:22).
- If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? (John 7:23).

The child is circumcised on the eighth day partly because the first week of the woman's uncleanness ended, though this was certainly not the only reason why the child's circumcision was held off until the eighth day.

She shall Continue Thirty-Three Days and Not enter the Sanctuary.

- **Leviticus 12:4:** Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.

Though the discharge of blood generally ceases after two to three weeks of the birth it can continue for up to six weeks. The length of time in this case, as in the case of her menstrual cycle, is nearly doubled, (perhaps to include exceptional cases). The heavy flow of blood and mucus that starts after delivery (vaginal postpartum bleeding, or lochia) generally continues for up to 10 days. Light bleeding and spotting after pregnancy can continue for up to four to six weeks after delivery, however, this varies from person to person and pregnancy to pregnancy. Even though the woman in some respects was free from her uncleanness at the end of seven days, she was not fully free, but remained in her purifying, which was fully completed at the end of the forty days. During the thirty-three days, which formed the second stage of her purifying, the mother was not to:

- Go into the tabernacle and its outer the court or enter through the court gate.
- Eat any part of the peace offerings which she or her husband offered, which otherwise she might have done; and, if she be a priest's wife, she shall not eat any of the tithes or first-fruits, or part of the hallowed meats, which at other times she, together with her husband, might eat.

The blood of her purifying: (v4) it is called the blood of her purifying, because by the discharge of that blood, which is done by degrees, she is purified.

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Until the days of her purifying are completed: (v4) until the setting of the sun on the fortieth day after which she was to bring the atonement of her purification.

- When the days of her (a woman who has born a child) purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. (Lev. 12:6).

BIRTH OF A FEMALE CHILD

LEVITICUS 12:5

She shall be Unclean Two Weeks and Her Purifying Sixty-Six Days.

- **Leviticus 12:5:** But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.

If the child was a girl, the mother was to remain unclean (in her infirmity in KJV) for two weeks double that of the birth of a boy, Some suggest this is because of her sin in the Garden of Eden, but should this be the case the birth of the boy should carry the greater time period since he was not deceived, whereas the woman was, which means he consciously and knowingly disobeyed God's command.

- The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen. 2:16-17).

- Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Tim. 2:14-15).

Everyone who touched her or anything she touched during the time of her uncleanness also became unclean. After the thirty-three days, visitors could approach her, but she was still excluded from entering the tabernacle and public sacred ordinances of religion.

She shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days: (v5) which being added to the fourteen days make eighty days, double the amount of days for a male child. The extreme separation for the woman finished within two weeks, but the purification continued another sixty-six days.

Days of a woman's uncleanness for a male child: the mother was firstly, unclean for seven days (v2), then on the eighth day the child was circumcised. (v3). After this, the mother continued for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. (v4), so the total days of the mothers' uncleanness for a male child was forty days.

Days of a woman's uncleanness for a female child: the mother was firstly, unclean two weeks (fourteen days) (v5) and continued in the blood of her purifying for another sixty-six days. (v5), so the total days of her uncleanness for a female child was eighty days. Some have thought that this doubling of time for the woman was because it was the woman who first fell into temptation.

- Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Tim. 2:13-15).

Others feel that a more likely reason may be, that a male child was circumcised on the eighth day, and the flow of his own blood and the ceremony formed part of the purification process.

LEVITICUS 12:6-8

When Her Purifying is Completed, the Priest will Make Atonement.

- **Leviticus 12:6-8:** "And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, ⁷and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. ⁸And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

She was to take a sin offering to the priest and he would make atonement for her. This sin offering was not for any sin involved in giving birth to a child, but embraces the following three ideas:

1. An acknowledgment that the mother understood that the nature of sin had passed through her to her new born child.
2. A dedication of herself to the LORD.
3. An offering that would impress upon the mind of the parents the origin of sin, and that the child inherited a fallen and sinful nature.

At the end of these days, the woman was cleansed in a ceremonial sense from the issue of her blood and according to the law counted as being pure and clean from the flow of her blood. This was the law for a woman that gave birth to a male or a female child to be observed by her. Today, as with the rest of the ceremonial laws, these laws are abolished.

The lesson we can learn from these laws: is it that though holding a new born baby in the arms is one of the most wonderful experiences a woman can have, it should always be remembered that no child is born perfect but inherit the nature of humanity which has sin dwelling (perhaps better lurking) in it. This does not mean babies are born evil as some teach, but that they have the potential within them to be good or bad. To teach his son this truth, a wise Indian father told his young son that within all of us is a white wolf and a black wolf, continually fighting against each other. The young son asked his father, "Which one wins?" To which the father wisely replied, "The one that is fed the most."

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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