

Leviticus 12

Hope in Jesus for Purification

Friday, October 13, 2023 • Read Leviticus 12:1–8

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom does YHWH speak in v1? To whom is Moses to speak (v2)? What situation is this addressing for a woman? What is her condition? For how long? What happens on the eighth day (v3)? How many days does she continue unclean? How long is her uncleanness if the child is a female (v5)? What couldn't be done on the 8th day if the child is female? How long after that would she continue unclean? For which sex of child does v6 apply? What is she to bring to whom for an ascension ("burnt offering")? And what for a sin offering? Before Whom does the priest offer it (v7)? What does he make for her? What does this do for her? What may she substitute for the ascension if she can't bring a lamb (v8)? What will the priest do for her? What will this do for her?

Why did a woman who gave birth need atonement? Leviticus 12:1–8 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **while specific sins need to be forgiven, sinfulness itself also needs to be cleansed.**

Sin is dirtier than death. The uncleanness of touching the carcass of an unclean animal could be cleansed by washings (v25, 28, 32, 36, 40). But now a woman who gives birth is unclean with an uncleanness that requires atonement to cleanse. This is because animals, though disordered by the fallenness of the creation, are not sinners. The corruption and decay of the created order is not as filthy as the corruption of the sinful heart.

Though these regulations have passed, let fathers have compassion upon their wife, whom they have brought into the condition of bearing sinful children—the true sorrow of conception and pain of bringing forth from Gen 3:16b–c. The Lord now gives His people a requirement for cleansing at birth that reminds us that we are sinners, and our children are sinners—children of Adam in a world under curse. We must bring the atonement of Christ, and apply the truth of the gospel in all of our family interactions. How grievous for children of parents (and for parents themselves!) who are outside of Christ. Neither are they clean/holy, covenantally, before God (cf. 1Cor 7:14); nor, are they able to apply the gospel to their parenting and family interactions.

Cleansing by signs that point to Christ. It would be a mistake to see the difference in durations of uncleanness, from v2–4 to v5, as an indicator that female babies are more polluted by sin than males. Rather, it is circumcision that "cuts" (pun intended) the time of uncleanness in half. It was a bloody ritual that looked forward to the shed blood of Christ. It was a sign of what the Lord does when He gives a new heart (cf. Deut 10:16, 30:6; Rom 2:28–29; cp. baptism in Eze 36:25–26; Mt 3:8–11; Col 2:11–13). So the Lord honors the sacrament that signified regeneration by its halving the duration of uncleanness for bearing children that need it.

Sinfulness itself, not just sins, needs atonement. In chs4–5, the priest would make atonement for the worshiper, and his sins would be forgiven him. When considering it, we noted that the priest does not do the forgiving; God alone forgives. So the return of that language teaches us something about cleansing and something about sin. About cleansing, it teaches us that only God can cleanse; the priest administers the sacrifice that makes atonement, but God cleanses.

And the fact that the atonement is needed for the cleansing teaches us something about sin. It teaches us that not only do particular sins need forgiveness as in chs4–5, but that sinfulness itself needs cleansing. We learn here with the purification ritual (an ascension and a sin offering), sinfulness itself pollutes. The sinfulness of the child both pollutes the mother and brings to mind her own sinfulness. But God has provided the ritual to take away the pollution of sinfulness.

For the Christian, we know that Christ's offering of Himself, once for all, is both ascension and sin offering. We receive complete forgiveness in the moment that we are united to Christ, but we keep coming back whenever our consciences are guilty, receiving the clearing of our conscience as with the sin offering. So also, whenever we remember our sinfulness and feel or see our ongoing need of sanctification, we must plead the once-offering of Christ for our purification. And let us, whenever we remember our children's sinfulness, plead Christ for them—looking forward to the day when they will plead Him for themselves.

New covenant children (and parents) have advantages! The girls, not just the boys, receive the sacrament that signifies regeneration. No one has to wait until the 8th day to receive it. Their parents can be laying hold of the sacrifice of Christ for them even before they are born. Neither baby nor mother are made unclean and kept from the holy assembly. There are those who would turn this all on its head and view them as covenantally/ecclesiastically unholy until the Lord has done the regenerating work in the heart, but this turns the progression of the covenant of grace upon its head and creates the problem of judging the secret work in the heart. No, Christian parents and their children do have genuine advantages. So, let them apply Leviticus 12 by looking to Him Who, once for all, has purified us from our sin. And as we continue to have those moments when we realize and feel our need to be cleansed, let us keep looking to Him for that.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1Jn 1:6–9.

What challenges must all Christian parents and children overcome? When are you most aware of that? Who is the Priest Who has made atonement for you? How are you looking to Him to purify you?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You that You have promised to be God to us and to our children. For, our sin has not only polluted ourselves, but has resulted in our children's sinfulness. Apart from Christ we would be unclean. So, we thank You for the clean status that comes by being part of His church. And we thank You for the cleansing of our consciences that comes from laying hold of His sacrifice. And we thank You for the sacrament that You have given us to direct our hearts and minds always to Him as the One through whom we are in covenant with God. Grant that by His Spirit's almighty work, we would continue to be cleansed from all actual sinning in our hearts and lives, we ask in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP51B "From My Sins, O Hide Your Face" or TPH274 "Jesus, My Great High Priest"

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Leviticus chapter 12. These are God's words. Then you always spoke to Moses saying, speak to the children of Israel saying, with a woman has conceived and born a male child. Then she shall be unclean seven days as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean and on the eighth day, the flesh of his fourskin shall be circumcised.

She shall then continue in the blood of her purification 33 days. She still not touch any hollowed thing or come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification or fulfilled. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean to weeks as in her customary impurity and she shall continue in the blood of her purifications 66 days.

When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest to land for the first year of the first year as a burnt offering

and a young pigeon, or turtle dove as a sin offering to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Then he saw offer it before y'all and make a tournament for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has born a male or a female. And if she has not able to bring a lamb then she may bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering.

So the priests shall make atonement for her and she will be clean. And then no sends us reading of God's word. It's interesting that the uncleanness that is brought on by the carcass of an unclean, animal only requires the washing of clothes whereas the uncleanness that is described in chapter 12 of bearing a child giving birth and it requires a sacrifice of a toadament atonement to both by the ascension offering and the sin offering and the uncleanness of the unclean animals.

Dead carcasses is just one day whereas youngness. Of bearing as either four to your 80, depending upon whether it's a male child or a female child. There's something here in the relative uncleanness of a animal that is dead. Perhaps, even associated with death. It's one of the explanations for which animals are unclean, not just scavengers, but, and the interpreters get very creative trying to make everything fit, rabbits live in burrows.

That are like, graves and pigs are lords of the underworld and other contemporary religion. But you don't have to go that far, just the fact of a carcass in the decay that sets in immediately with the carcass of the unclean animal. But death is dirty it's defiling it makes unclean.

That's true. But here by the comparison of what is required to do in each case and how long the uncleanness continues in each case, we see that a sinful human being is more defiled than the carcass of an animal because sin is dirtier than death. Sin is dirtier than dirt.

And perhaps as we see the ark tolering and he knows how many of these creeping creatures. There are in every mound of dirt that there is, as many of you have discovered by turning over a rock at being amazed at the great colony or city of uncleanness that can be in in the dirt.

Perhaps as we all thought that saw that he thought oh no I must stabilize the ark. Let's get to filed by all those unclean things in this soil and yet also was a sinner which is far more defiling than dirt or other creatures and then he reached out and tried to stabilize the ark with his hand.

God struck him dead. Well, Leviticus 12, takes us back to the fall and the pain and the sorrow in which a woman would conceive and get birth and is not just pain and sorrow because it is physically uncomfortable for approximately nine months time. And then physically excruciating for and however many hours, labor continues and the giving of birth and all those things.

Another great pain sorrow is being a sinner who conceived sinners And so we who are sinners, the father who follows the center of the mother, who can receives a sinner. We know that because of our own sinfulness the child that we have conceived will be a sinner and will have that defiling of sin.

And this is something that all parents should take very seriously. It's one of the one of the excellencies of that little book by royal on duties of parents reminding us that our children's dreadful condition, not just the sinfulness that is in themselves. But the guilt therefore that is before God their need of redemption that it is all due to their being our child.

And so that's communicated here by that which is required for the mother as she bears. The child sin is dirtier than death. Another thing that's communicated here is the cleansing that is in Christ to which the signs that God has given points. And we have obviously the the sign of the sacrifice the ascension offering in the sin offering.

That that is made. But there's also the sign of circumcision, which is a bloody sign, looking forward to the shedding of Christ's blood once for all, which is why circumcision does not have any spiritual value with Christ having come Because his shed blood obsoletes all other shedding of blood as a sign of God's grace and salvation in the Lord.

Jesus. And not just the shedding of blood, but the cutting away that we need for God's to cut away, to kill to eliminate the old nature in Deuteronomy. The Lord teaches us that circumcision is circumcision of the heart. First, commanding us to circumcise, our hearts chapter 10, verse 16, and then promising that he who will circumcise our hearts chapter 30 and verse 6.

And if, if you remember back to chapter 2 and we were in Romans in chapter 2, verse 28 and 29, he makes the point that the main point of circumcision was always the heart. The need of a new heart. And so when a father circumcises his son, he he sees in their flesh, I needed a new heart and my son needs a new heart.

And God who gave the sign is the giver of new hearts. He is the God of Ezekiel 36 who puts a new heart in us, puts a new spirit in us, by porting out his spirit, who would come to be, who had come to be signed and sealed unto us, not by the cutting away of the foreskin of the male.

But by the sprinkling of water. Pointing to the pouring of the spirit. And so there is not here in Leviticus 12. Some indication that girls are more defiling than boys because it takes the mom 80 days to recover from the impurity of the girl and just 40 from the boys.

No, it's an indication of the greatness of him whom circumcision signifies. And since circumcision was only for males, that's why only males got the benefit of the cutting in half of the time that was required for the purification saying that. The one to whom circumcision points is going to do away, not just with all of our guilt.

But with our uncleanness, it was that which belongs to our original nature. And so there was a, there is a ceremonial sacramental cleansing by virtue of the sign that points to Christ just as the baptized believer is set apart unto God as holy set apart and to God. As part of his church you remember the the child even of just a believing mother without a believing father.

In first Corinthians 7 is baptized and a saint and called. Holy every bit as much as if he had had two believing parents. Just for the sake of the one believing mother, but the sign consecrates unto the Lord, even though the sign of course, does not of itself produce the new art yet, he who produces the new art does employ, the Line.

Just as he employs his work in those to him, he is giving faith and so it points cleansing by signs that point to Christ. This is what cuts the time in half and so we too ought to make use of our baptisms to remember the great privilege that we have a bearing, the covenant sign with real earthly benefits.

Now we don't have in the ecclesiology of the new covenant, some sort of cutting in half of some penalty by virtue of having been baptized, they're cutting in half of a penalty for our mother, by virtue of our being baptized. But it does remind us that there are real benefits in this life in the interaction that we have with God.

And the that there is this covenantal, sacramental cleansing, that speaks to us and seals to and seals to us what God does in the heart by faith. And then notice that it is not just sins that need to be forgiven. But sinfulness that needs to be removed, that atonement does both of these things, there's language that is borrowed or brought from chapter 4 and 5 into chapter 12.

You remember back in chapter 4 and 5 and the offering that the priest shall make a tonement for him or for her, it's just for him and chapter 4 and 5. You remember

in chapter five, the priests will make atonement for him and he shall be forgiven. That there is this sacramental atonement in the offering of the sacrifice, but the priest can't forgive the priest has been assigned the administration of the sacrifice, but God forgives and so God gives the priest and God gives the sacrifice, and God gives that specific administration of that, sacrifice by that priest, a signified by the fact that, that priest is the one who gets to eat of this in offering.

God gives all those things but it is God, alone who forgives sin He shall make atonement for him and it shall be forgiven him. What we have something similar here and chapter 12. So, the priests shall make a tonement for her, and she will be clean and you see the combination of those two things.

Again, the priest cannot cleanse her. The priests makes administers the sacrifice that God has appointed. But God is the one who cleanses and so we see that sin needs both to be forgiven and cleansed and Jesus is sacrifice, does this for us, which is a great help in the Christian life because often we struggle with a sin, like we heard about when we're in this, in offering, there's something, we didn't realize was sinful at the time or or we're we're even not sure about whether it was sinful.

Now and our consciences are afflicted before God, and God gives us not. Now the thin offering of that has to be repeated but Christ's once for all offering and we come back to God every time we have that, that strike, that pang, that pain of a guilty conscience and we lay hold again of Jesus Christ, our ones for all sacrifice and our consciences are freed or cleansed again from That particular sin, the guilt of it.

We know it's forgiveness and we have we have settled our account with God as it were. Well it's not just specific sins that afflict us in the Christian life. It's the our ongoing sinfulness our tendency to send the the knowledge that the sense that in me, there is all of this temptation.

There is all of this desire from my former nature. The? That afflicts me before. God, I know myself to be a sinner. Who needs to be cleansed just like Excuse me.

Just like we read in first John, where if we can confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and To cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And so when we're struggling with the fact that we're still sinners before God, what a blessing to be able to come and now we don't have, you know, Descendants of Aaron offering, you know, depending on how wealthy you are two birds or maybe a goat and a bird.

We we have Jesus who sitting on the throne and offered himself once we're all and we lay hold of him and remember the cross. And we know That he is going to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And so we feel the greatness of the life of Christ in us and the sacrifice of Christ for us that benefit that comes from his body and his blood.

We know the greatness of that over against the greatness of our former nature, the sinfulness of which we still feel and by which sometimes we are defiled and done clean before God and we can come to him immediately. And be cleansed. And so that's the last point here is that there are so many advantages in the new covenant, one of them is you don't need to have the animals and find a priest or come to the priest and all the things you can immediately.

And the moment that you feel the uncleanness, perhaps it's even in interaction with your children and you're dealing with their sinful nature and you realize your own sinful nature and that dealing. But in the moment you can always lay hold of Christ, who is our purification. There's not seven days and 33 or 14 days and and 66.

That's right now. He's been offered once for all when we can have that cleansing another advantage. You don't have to wait till the eighth day to apply the sign. I I thoroughly enjoy whenever I get to do a baptism on a child who is less than eight days old, which I think is been done in my entire ministry to two bakings and one Vanessa delft.

But it's such a wonderful display of the advantages of having Christ as our covenant, mediator and being in the new covenant that the child can receive the sign before it eight days and that and that all of the, the female children, all of the daughters, receive the sign. Now, they're not just participants in the sign by virtue of having been fathered by someone who had the sign, But the daughters themselves all received the sign and then of course, the sign speaks to us a better thing because we don't look forward with a great amount of ignorance to the Savior who us to come not knowing how he would say us.

But we know precisely what the Lord Jesus has done that he entered the womb that he was circumcised, that the two turtled doves were offered in on account of him, for his mother's purification, that he has fulfilled, all righteousness and now our faith joins us to him. And as once for all sacrifice and the life of his resurrection which is ministered to us by his spirit, How much better?

Is our sign. And so we have all of these wonderful advantages. We read Leviticus 12 and we see the mercy of God giving his people. These word pictures about our children's sinfulness and our own sinfulness from from when set came and God's provision purification at all those things. And we say behold how merciful God was to his people.

But if we're saying that about his people and Leviticus chapter 12, How much more should we say it about ourselves behold on merciful God has been to us, has people through Jesus Christ, our Lord and to our children. Sophia. In mindless prayer. How we thank you. Oh God that you have given Christ to be another Adam.

That there is a human nature that we get from him that we cannot pass on to our children. But you have given us signs for us and signs for our children. And so we pray. Oh Lord, that you would Grant your spirits ministry. To bring home to us by faith, what Christ has done and that through that faith, We would have him and know him and not just his forgiveness, but his purification to be ours.

Keep doing the work. We pray of sanctifying us and cleansing us until you have fulfilled. Your perfectly true word, that you are faithful. And just not only to forgive us our sins, but to cleanse us from all righteousness. Oh Lord, there's so much left to glance. But we trust and need to do it.

Please do it. We ask in Jesus name, amen.