

LEVITICUS 12:1- 8

SCRIPTURE

12:1-5 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a woman has conceived, and borne 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 foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days.*

- Many people read this and think it is unfair that a mother is considered “unclean” and must be “put away” for simply giving birth, but it appears that there are practical reasons, and insights we are not considering.
 1. Mothers and babies need time away to themselves to bond and heal (sometimes protected them from the father).
 2. Babies are especially susceptible to disease when they are first born and should be quarantined away from other people until at least a month or two has gone by, (with the exception of the male babies who have an interrupted quarantine because they HAVE to be circumcised on the 8th day, but then go back into quarantine with mom for at least a month).
 3. The usage of the word unclean here does not just denote the fact that she has been exposed to bodily fluids, but possibly has a more spiritual meaning.
- Benson states that women were considered unclean “Not for any filthiness which was either in the conception, or in bringing forth, but to signify the universal and deep pollution of man’s nature, even from the birth, and from the conception.” (BibleHub)
 - The baby is born with a sin nature and the mother must make the first sin offering on behalf of the child, which she does when her time of being set apart is up.
 - (Barnes disagrees and places the defilement completely on the mother.)
- Why twice as long for girl babies? Some commentators say it is because the act of circumcision shortens the time period for a boy. Some say it is because the woman sinned first.
- Wiersbe states that the mother is ceremonially unclean, not morally unclean. The theme of this chapter is not personal holiness, but ritual purification for sanitary reasons, to protect mother and baby.

Eighth Day

1. Pain and Trauma Factor:

- Pain is almost negligible compared to what it would be later. Also doesn’t remember the experience.
- 3 months = at least three days of pain
- Older child > adulthood = at least a week if not more of pain and potential trauma from the experience.
- Doctors agree that unless a medical issue arises later, no boy should be circumcised after infancy.

2. Science

- The body needs **vitamin K** to make clotting proteins.
- Newborn babies don't make vitamin K until they are at least 5 days old.
- "The greatest risk of bleeding occurs between the 2-7 days of life... and any bleeding at this time may cause serious damage to internal organs, esp. the brain, and may cause death from shock." (*None of These Diseases*, p. 83)
- On Day 8, **prothrombin** (a clotting protein) jumps up to 110% of adult levels. This is why it is the safest day.
- God told Abraham this in Genesis 17:12.
- Nowadays, we give babies vitamin K shots so this is no longer a concern.

Why circumcision at all?

- The American Academy of Pediatric Medicine recognized in 1989 that:
 - "Uncircumcised boys are ten times more likely to suffer from urinary tract infections." (*None of These Diseases*, p. 73)
 - "Uncircumcised men are up to 8x more likely to become infected with AIDS," even if it is only heterosexual contact. (*None of These Diseases*, p. 75)
 - The foreskin also makes men much more susceptible to other STD's.
 - Circumcision also protects against certain kinds of cancers.
- It was only because it is a law originating in a religion that people started fighting against it, yet medically and scientifically, the harmful effects are negligible compared to the benefits.

12:6-8 *'When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [The priest] shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female. 'And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering . So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'* "

- After the quarantine is up, the mother offers a sin offering for her child.
- If they could afford it, the mother needed to bring a lamb and a bird for the burnt and sin offering, or one bird for each if they were poor.
- As mentioned in a previous study, this is how we knew that Jesus's parents were not well off, as they offered two turtledoves after he was born.

Christmas Connection – Luke 2:21-24

"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived. When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph

and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

TAKEAWAY

- **Unclean**: Hebrew *tāmē'* (taw-may)
 - Verb – to be polluted or contaminated ceremonially, physically, and/or morally.
 - It being a verb indicates it is a temporary state and can be changed. It does not define the person.
- **Clean**: Hebrew *tāhēr* (taw-hairre)
 - Verb: to be clean ceremonially, physically, and/or morally.
 - It being a verb indicates it is a temporary state and can be changed.
- Being a human is bittersweet. Bitter because our own blood makes us unclean, but also sweet because Jesus' blood can make us permanently clean.

DISCUSSION

1. How should modern-day Christians relate to or apply the cleanliness laws in chapter 12 in our lives or society today?
2. Consider Romans 2:25-29 – “Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.” Explain what Paul is saying here in light of what you learned in Leviticus chapter 12.