

Leviticus 12

Purification After Childbirth

Lev 12:1 The LORD said to Moses,

Lev 12:2 "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period.'

Lev 12:3 On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised.

Lev 12:4 Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.

Lev 12:5 If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

Lev 12:6 "'When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering.

Lev 12:7 He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. "'These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl.

Lev 12:8 But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'"

Leviticus 12 outlines ancient Israelite laws regarding ritual purification after childbirth. It states that a mother is ceremonially "unclean" due to blood and bodily fluids for 40 days after giving birth to a boy, and 80 days after a girl, after which she presents an animal offering to the priest at the sanctuary.

Core Concepts

- **Ceremonial Uncleaness:** being "unclean" in this context does not mean sin, moral shame, or personal guilt. Instead, it describes a temporary ritual separation related to life, blood, and physical recovery.
- **Time Differences:** The purification period lasts twice as long for a female infant (80 total days) compared to a male infant (40 total days). Scholars and traditions offer various views for this, from health and postpartum recovery pacing to symbolic symmetry.

- **Circumcision:** For a boy, circumcision takes place on the eighth day, connecting the family back to the Abrahamic covenant.

New Testament Connection

- This chapter directly relates to the birth of Jesus. In [Luke 2:22-24](#), Mary and Joseph travel to the Temple in Jerusalem to complete these exact purification rites and present Jesus.

• **Jesus Presented at the Temple**

- **Luk 2:22** 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
- **Luk 2:23** (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),
- **Luk 2:24** 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."
- **Luk 2:25** Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.
- **Luk 2:26** It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.
- **Luk 2:27** Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,
- **Luk 2:28** Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:
- **Luk 2:29** "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
- **Luk 2:30** For my eyes have seen your salvation,
- **Luk 2:31** which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
- **Luk 2:32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."
- **Luk 2:33** The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.
- **Luk 2:34** Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,
- **Luk 2:35** so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

- **Luk 2:36** There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,
- **Luk 2:37** and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.
- **Luk 2:38** Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.
- **An Offering of Poverty:** The text allows a family who cannot afford a lamb to bring two turtledoves or two pigeons instead. Mary and Joseph used this lesser option, showing their humble economic status.
- **The Fulfillment in Luke 2**
- **Fulfilling the Law:** Mary and Joseph strictly obeyed the Mosaic law. They waited for the completion of the 40 days required after the birth of a male child (Leviticus 12:1-4) before going to the temple.
- **Lev 12:1** The LORD said to Moses,
- **Lev 12:2** "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period.'
- **Lev 12:3** On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised.
- **Lev 12:4** Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.
- **The Offering of the Poor:** Leviticus 12:8 states that if a woman cannot afford a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering, she may bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons instead. Mary and Joseph used this lesser option, showing their humble economic status.
- **A Sign of Humility:** Luke notes that Mary and Joseph offered "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons". This detail proves that Jesus grew up in a humble, low-income household, choosing an identification with the poor from the very beginning of his life.

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- **Theological Connections**
- **Shadow and Substance:** The purification and sin offerings in Leviticus 12 highlight human frailty and the reality of uncleanness tied to fallen human life. The New Testament presents Jesus as the ultimate, final cleanser who replaces temporary ritual cleansings with spiritual perfection.
- **Transition from Old to New:** Jesus was born "under the law" so that he could fulfill it. His presentation at the temple under Leviticus 12 marks the intersection where the old covenant rituals gracefully transition into the arrival of the New Covenant Redeemer.

Mat 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Mat 5:18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Mat 5:19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus not only fulfilled the law, He took it to a higher level

Mat 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

Mat 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Mat 5:23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

Mat 5:24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Mat 5:25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

Mat 5:26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Lust

Mat 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

Mat 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Mat 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Mat 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

Mat 5:31 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'

Mat 5:32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

Mat 5:33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.'

Mat 5:34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;

Mat 5:35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

Mat 5:36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

Mat 5:37 All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Retaliation

Mat 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'

Mat 5:39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

Mat 5:40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

Mat 5:41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Mat 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love Your Enemies

Mat 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

Mat 5:44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Mat 5:45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Mat 5:46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

Mat 5:47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Mat 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.