

LEVITICUS 12:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Ordinances concerning the purification of women after child-birth, Lev 12:1; after the birth of a son, who is to be circumcised the eighth day, Lev 12:2, Lev 12:3. The mother to be considered unclean for forty days, Lev 12:4. After the birth of a daughter, fourscore days, Lev 12:5. When the days of her purifying were ended, she was to bring a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering, Lev 12:6, Lev 12:7. If poor, and not able to bring a lamb, she was to bring either two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, Lev 12:8.

LEVITICUS 12:2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her monthly period she shall be unclean.

Verse 2

If a woman have conceived - In the extent mentioned here the ordinances of this chapter have little relation to us: and to inquire into their physical reasons, as far as they related to the Jews, could afford but little edification; and to make such a subject sufficiently plain would require such minute examination and circumstantial detail as could scarcely be proper for several readers. All that is necessary to be said the reader will find on Lev 12:4.

LEVITICUS 12:3 In the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

Verse 3

And in the eighth day - Before this time the child could scarcely be considered as having strength sufficient to bear the operation; after this time it was not necessary to delay it, as the child was not considered to be in covenant with God, and consequently not under the especial protection of the Divine providence and grace, till this rite had been performed. On circumcision see Clarke's note on Gen 17:10. Circumcision was to every man a constant, evident sign of the covenant into which he had entered with God, and of the moral obligations under which he was thereby laid. It was also a means of purity, and was especially necessary among a people naturally incontinent, and in a climate not peculiarly favorable to chastity. This is a light in which this subject should ever be viewed, and in which we see the reasonableness, propriety, expediency, and moral tendency of the ceremony.

LEVITICUS 12:4 She shall continue in the blood of purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any holy thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.

Verse 4

The blood of her purifying - A few words will make this subject sufficiently plain.

1. God designs that the human female should bring forth children.
2. That children should derive, under his providence, their being, all their solids and all their fluids, in a word, the whole mass of their bodies, from the substance of the mother.
3. For this purpose he has given to the body of the female an extra quantity of blood and nutritious juices.
4. Before pregnancy this superabundance is evacuated at periodical times.
5. In pregnancy, that which was formerly evacuated is retained for the formation and growth of the fetus, or the general strengthening of the system during the time of pregnancy.
6. After the birth of the child, for seven or fourteen days, more or less according to certain circumstances, that superabundance, no longer necessary for the growth of the child as before, continues to be evacuated: this was called the time of the female's purification among the Jews.
7. When the lacerated vessels are rejoined, this superfluity of blood is returned into the general circulation, and, by a wise law of the Creator, becomes principally useful to the breasts, and helps in the production of milk for the nourishment of the new-born infant.
8. And thus it continues till the weaning of the child, or renewed pregnancy takes place. Here is a series of mercies and wise providential regulations which cannot be known without being admired, and which should be known that the great Creator and Preserver may have that praise from his creatures which his wonderful working demands.

The term purifying here does not imply that there is any thing impure in the blood at this or the other times referred to above; on the contrary, the blood is pure, perfectly so, as to its quality, but is excessive in quantity for the reasons above assigned. The idle tales found in certain works relative to the infectious nature of this fluid, and of the female in such times are as impious as they are irrational and absurd.

LEVITICUS 12:5 But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her period; and she shall continue in the blood of purification sixty-six days.

LEVITICUS 12:6 "When the days of her purification are completed, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the door of the Tent of Meeting, a year old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering:

Verse 6

When the days of her purifying - It is not easy to account for the difference in the times of purification, after the birth of a male and female child. After the birth of a boy the mother was considered unclean for forty days; after the birth of a girl, four-score days. There is probably no physical reason for this difference, and it is difficult to assign a political one. Some of the ancient physicians assert that a woman is in the order of nature much longer in completely recovering after the birth of a female than after the birth of a male child. This assertion is not justified either by

observation or matter of fact. Others think that the difference in the time of purification after the birth of a male and female is intended to mark the inferiority of the female sex. This is a miserable reason, and pitifully supported.

She shall bring - a burnt-offering, and - a sin-offering - It is likely that all these ordinances were intended to show man's natural impurity and original defilement by sin, and the necessity of an atonement to cleanse the soul from unrighteousness.

LEVITICUS 12:7 and he shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the fountain of her blood. "This is the law for her who bears, whether a male or a female.

LEVITICUS 12:8 If she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons; the 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."

Verse 8

And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons - As the Virgin Mary brought only the latter, hence it is evident that she was not able, i. e., she was not rich enough to provide the former; for such a holy woman would not have brought the less offering had she been capable of bringing the greater. How astonishing is this! The only heir to the throne of David was not able to bring a lamb to offer in sacrifice to God! How abominable must sin be when it required him who was in the form of God thus to empty and to humble himself, yea, even to the death of the cross, in order to make an atonement for it, and to purify the soul from all defilement!

The priest shall make an atonement for her - Every act of man is sinful, but such as proceed from the influence of the grace and mercy of God. Her sorrow in conception, and her pain in bringing forth children, reminded the woman of her original offense; an offense which deserved death, an offense which she could not expiate, and for which a sacrifice must be offered: and in reference to better things the life of an animal must be offered as a ransom for her life. And being saved in childbed, though she deserved to die, she is required, as soon as the days of her separation were ended, to bring a sacrifice according to her ability to the priest, that he might offer it to God as an atonement for her. Thus, wherever God keeps up the remembrance of sin, he keeps up also the memorial of sacrifice, to show that the state of a sinner, howsoever deplorable, is not hopeless, for that he himself has found out a ransom. Every where, in the law and in the Gospel, in every ordinance and in every ceremony, we may see both the justice and the mercy of God. Hence, while we have the knowledge of our sin we have also the knowledge of our cure. Reader, whilst thou art confessing thy own misery do not forget the Lord's mercy; and remember, he saves to the uttermost all that come through Christ unto him.