

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS CHAPTER 12

After the laws concerning clean and unclean food come the laws concerning clean and unclean persons; and the first is in this chapter concerning the ceremonial uncleanness of women in child-birth, **#Le 12:1-5**. And concerning their purification from that uncleanness, **#Le 12:6**.

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 5.

The law here pronounces women lying-in ceremonially unclean. The Jews say,

"The law extended even to an abortion, if the child was so formed as that the sex was distinguishable."

1. There was some time of strict separation immediately after the birth, which continued seven days for a son and fourteen for a daughter, **#Le 12:2,5**. During these days she was separated from her husband and friends, and those that necessarily attended her were ceremonially unclean, which was one reason why the males were not circumcised till the eighth day, because they participated in the mother's pollution during the days of her separation.
2. There was also a longer time appointed for their purifying; thirty-three days more (forty in all) if the birth were a male, and double that time if a female, **#Le 12:4-5**. During this time they were only separated from the sanctuary and forbidden to eat of the passover, or peace-offerings, or, if a priest's wife, to eat of any thing that was holy to the Lord. Why the time of both those was double for a female to what it was for a male I can assign no reason but the will of the Law-maker; in Christ Jesus no difference is made of male and female, **#Ga 3:28; Col 3:11**. But this ceremonial uncleanness which the law laid women in child-bed under was to signify the pollution of sin which we are all conceived and born in, **#Ps 51:5**. For, if the root be impure, so is the branch, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* If sin had not entered, nothing but purity and honour had attended all the productions of that great blessing, *Be fruitful and multiply*; but now that the nature of man is degenerated the propagation of that nature is laid under these marks of disgrace, because of the sin and corruption that are propagated with it, and in remembrance of the curse upon the woman that was first in the transgression. That *in sorrow* (to which it is here further added *in shame*) she should *bring forth children*. And the exclusion of the woman for so many days from the sanctuary, and all participation of the holy things, signified that our original corruption (that sinning sin which we brought into the world with us) would have excluded us for ever from the enjoyment of God and his favours if he had not graciously provided for our purifying.

Ver. 6. thru Ver. 8.

A woman that had lain in, when the time set for her return to the sanctuary had come, was not to attend there empty, but must bring her offerings, **#Le 12:6**.

1. A *burnt-offering*; a lamb if she was able, if poor, a pigeon. This she was to offer in thankfulness to God for his mercy to her, in bringing her safely through the pains of child-bearing and all the perils of child-bed, and in desire and hopes of God's further favour both to her and to the child. When a child is born there is joy and there is hope, and therefore it was proper to bring this offering, which was of a general nature; for what we rejoice in we must give thanks for, and what we are in hopes of we must pray for. But, besides this,

2. She must offer a *sin-offering*, which must be the same for poor and rich, a turtle-dove or a young pigeon; for, whatever difference there may be between rich and poor in the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of atonement is the same for both. This sin-offering was intended either,

(1.) To complete her purification from that ceremonial uncleanness which, though it was not in itself sinful, yet was typical of moral pollution; or,

(2.) To make atonement for that which was really sin, either an inordinate desire of the blessing of children or discontent or impatience under the pains of child-bearing. It is only by Christ, the great sin-offering, that the corruption of our nature is done away, and to that it is owing that we are not for ever excluded by it from the sanctuary, and from eating of the holy things. According to this law, we find that the mother of our blessed Lord, though he was not conceived in sin as others, yet *accomplished the days of purification*, and then presented her son to the Lord, being a first-born, and brought her own offering, *a pair of turtle-doves*, #Lu 2:22-24. So poor were Christ's parents that they were not able to bring a lamb for a burnt-offering; and so early was Christ *made under the law, to redeem those that were under it*. The morality of this law obliges those women that have received mercy from God in child-bearing with all thankfulness to own God's goodness to them, acknowledging themselves unworthy of it, and (which is the best purification of women that have been saved in child-bearing, #1Ti 2:15 to *continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety*; for this shall please the Lord better than the turtle-doves or the young pigeons.