LEVITICUS

Chapter 12

*Purification After Childbirth*

**The Lord said to Moses, 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. 3 On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. 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. 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. 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. 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. 8 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.’ ”**

**12:2** *unclean.* The uncleanness came from the bleeding (vv. 4–5, 7), not from the birth. It is not clear why the period of uncleanness after the birth of a baby boy (40 days) was half the period for a girl (80 days). (CSB)

After seven days, the new mother could resume normal family life. (TLSB)

**12:3** Cf Gn 17:10–14. (TLSB)

 *monthly period.* See 15:19–24. (CSB)

**12:3** See notes on Ge 17:10, 12. (CSB)

**12:4** *blood of her purifying*. She was not ritually unclean, but not yet ritually clean. Discharge during the first week or two after a birth was known as “the blood of purity. (TLSB)

**12:5** *unclean two weeks*. As throughout the Law, male and female are distinguished in God’s order. However, no explanation is given for the doubling of the purification time between male and female babies. The weeks may mark the boundaries for postnatal discharge as the Israelites typically experienced them. (TLSB)

**12:6** *burnt offering.* See note on 1:3. (CSB)

*burnt offering* … *sin offering*. These sacrifices purified the new mother from the impurity of her blood flow. Menstruation was not regarded as sinful, but the flow of blood made people ritually unclean (15:19–24). 9TLSB0

 *sin offering.* See notes on 4:3, 5. (CSB)

**12:7** *clean from the flow of her blood*. Through the ritual burning of the lamb on the altar, the woman was accepted by God and readmitted into the community. (TLSB)

**12:8** See 1:14–17 and note on 1:14; see also 5:7–10; 14:21–22; and especially Lk 2:24 (Mary’s offering for Jesus). (CSB)

 *cannot afford a lamb*. Lk 2:22–32 records the account of Mary’s sacrifice when Jesus was born. (TLSB)

 **Ch 12** Childbirth made a woman ceremonially unclean. These rules would exempt the new mother from the rigors of the Law and her typical role in family/community life. They also promised cleansing and restoration. In these ways, the Lord acts mercifully toward His daughters, even as He remembers us with kindness. • Merciful Father, we thank You for the rich blessings we find in Your Word. There we see how You placed Your Son under the Law, that we might have rest and peace. Amen. (TLSB)