

ARE BABIES REALLY SO CUTE AND INNOCENT?

LEVITICUS 12:1-8

**EVERY PERSON BORN INTO THIS WORLD IS BY NATURE
SINFUL AND IN NEED OF THE SALVATION OFFERED BY GOD THROUGH JESUS.**

I. ALL HAVE SINNED (VS 1-5)

***Contrary To Popular Belief, There Is No One In This World Who Is Good Or Innocent.
We Are All Born Into This World As Enemies Of God.***

- A. BORN WITH SIN (1-2)
- B. SEALED WITH BLOOD (3)
- C. PURIFIED FROM BLOOD (4-5)

II. ALL NEED REDEMPTION (VS 6-7)

God Has Made A Way For Us To Be Right With Him Through His Son Jesus Christ.

- A. DEDICATED BY BLOOD (6)
- B. RESTORED BY BLOOD (7)

III. OFFERED TO ALL WHO WILL COME (VS 8)

Salvation Is A Gift Offered By God Freely To All Those Who Will Receive It.

- A. WHOEVER DESIRES (8a)
- B. MAY COME (8b)

IV. EPILOGUE

Are Babies Really So Cute and Innocent?

Leviticus 12:1-8

From this morning's text on, you'd better buckle up because the ride from here on out is going to be bumpy. One of the things I like about the Bible is that it doesn't shy away from any topic. There will be commands that are applicable from the Inner Sanctuary of the Tabernacle to the disposing of ashes outside the camp, from the dinner table to the bedroom. The one theme that comes through loud and clear throughout the book of Leviticus is that God is holy and where He is present, that place must be holy. If it is not, people can easily die.

Sometimes we think that what we do in private is our own personal business. We think that if no one is around to see our bad behavior, then it is o.k. However, just as dangerous as it was for the Hebrew to be unclean in the presence of God, it is equally dangerous for us since God actually lives in us. It doesn't matter if no one is around, God is and what we do in private is important.

Some of these commands will be hard for us to understand. In fact, I'm not sure the Hebrews understood the "why" of these commands. They simply knew that if they wanted to stay alive, they had to obey God. I will try to make sense of these strange passages. In some cases, although I will try to avoid it, I'm sure I may stretch the interpretation of a particular passage. I'm telling you up front, I'm not sure of the "whys" of these commands.

One of the things I think this morning's passage wants to teach us is that we all enter this world alienated from God. We are born physically alive but spiritually dead. It is a common sentiment to think babies are all cute and innocent. This is actually false theology. Those cute little babies are sinners and in need of redemption. Anyone who has had to raise children knows what I'm talking about.

The bad thing is that when children are extra precocious. Let me give you an example. I had a deacon whose 4-year-old son was far too intelligent to sit in the Sunday School program. He was a handful for the teacher. The deacon made the little boy sit with him through service. The kid started to misbehave in the middle of the service. His father was getting annoyed with his misbehavior and he was starting to get stares from nearby worshipers. Suddenly, the exasperated father picked up his son and started walking out. Looking back over his father's shoulder, the little guy interrupted my sermon by calling out to me, "Pastor! Please pray for me!"

Kids may look cute and innocent, but underneath it all, they are sinful little buggers, just like you and me.

Look, I know these passages seem strange to us. But they are part of God's Word. If we learn nothing else from our study through the book of Leviticus, we should remember that God is Holy, Powerful, and Dangerous. When He commands people to do something, it is exactly that, a command, and He expects us to obey. I will explain the theme of this morning's text as we go along. But for now, let me state the main idea as this. **EVERY PERSON BORN INTO THIS WORLD IS BY NATURE SINFUL AND IN NEED OF THE SALVATION OFFERED BY GOD THROUGH JESUS.**

I. ALL HAVE SINNED (VS 1-5)

Contrary To Popular Belief, There Is No One In This World Who Is Good Or Innocent. We Are All Born Into This World As Enemies Of God.

I know this sounds strange, but stick with me. When I take time to study through verses 1-5 and try and make sense out of these strange sounding commands, I think they point to the fact that all have sinned. I know all Christians believe this. But, **CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF,**

THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS WORLD WHO IS GOOD OR INNOCENT. WE ARE ALL BORN INTO THIS WORLD AS ENEMIES OF GOD.

A. BORN WITH SIN (1-2)

Let me now try and make my case. Verses 1-2 are a reminder of the fact that we are born into sin. When we first read this, it would be easy to jump to some conclusions. For example, some have said passages like this somehow point to the fact that sex is dirty. Others have said that women are second-class citizens because they are unclean during their menstrual cycles and not permitted to worship at the Tabernacle during this time. Further, anything they touch during this period of time or anyone or anything that touches them becomes unclean.

Let me address these first. First of all, when the married couple has sex, when the wife gets pregnant, and then gives birth, the couple is directly obeying the command of God. God gave the command to Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth. He repeated the command to Noah, Abraham, and the Hebrew nation. When married couples have sex and give birth, they are obeying God. So there is no particular sin to atone for here. The woman becoming ceremonially unclean has nothing to do with the sex act.

Secondly, although women are the ones here becoming unclean, in the next chapters we will see that men also become ceremonially unclean through blood or other bodily fluid discharges. Keep in mind, there will be all sorts of things that render people ceremonially unclean. Some will be a result of sin or carelessness. Some are just a result of being human, living in a fallen world. So this passage is not about the inferiority of women or about the act of sex being sinful.

So what is it about? First of all, blood is sacred in the Bible. Listen what God told Noah after the flood:

⁴But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 9:4-6 / NIV).

In worship ceremonies, the blood of animals is used to bring about the forgiveness of sin. Keep in mind this entire Hebrew system of worship by blood is bookended by two dramatic events. At the original Passover, the Hebrews put blood over the doorposts of their houses. God's Angel of Death passed over the Hebrew houses when he saw the blood. However, he killed the firstborn child in every Egyptian household because they were not covered by the blood. This system dramatically kicked off the Hebrew Tabernacle and later the Temple worship.

About 1500 years later, Jesus shed His blood on the cross at Calvary. And now when we apply that blood to our lives through faith, God passes over our sin as well.

So when people come in contact with blood outside the worship setting, they become ceremonially unclean until the evening.

Further, when a woman has her menstrual cycle, the blood is a sign of the unused eggs passing away. In some sense, that is a reminder of death. The same will apply to men when they ejaculate, even while having a wet dream. It is a reminder of potential life passing away. Again, there is nothing sinful here. It is a part of life.

I know that I don't give much thought of preparing to come to worship on Sunday morning except that my sermon is ready to go and that I've gotten a good night's sleep. However, think about midwives who delivered these babies and came into contact with all this blood, afterbirth, etc. They would be ceremonially unclean until evening. The Jewish Sabbath starts at Sundown Friday evening and ends at Sundown Saturday evening. If a baby were born Friday evening after sundown, the midwife would not be able to worship at the Tabernacle that week. So you wouldn't want the same midwife on call every Sabbath. They would have to have some sort of rotation.

Husbands and others who participated in delivering the baby would also be unclean until evening. Going to worship for the Hebrews took a lot of careful planning, reflection, honesty, humility, and repentance. It would be good for us to plan, reflect, and repent in humility and honesty before coming to church each week. Our worship would be much richer.

B. SEALED WITH BLOOD (3)

Since blood being spilled out reminds us of death, let's see how that relates to being sealed with blood in verse 3. On the 8th day of the baby boy's life, he was to be circumcised and at that time, traditionally named. If you remember your Gospel stories, John and Jesus were circumcised and named on the 8th day. When the foreskin of the baby's penis is cut away, there is a little bleeding. Again we have the shedding of blood. On this day, there is the recognition that the parents are presenting this baby back to God. The baby only belongs to the Jewish Covenant with God because of his parents' faith. This Covenant was for the Jews. It was a reminder that God delivered them from Egypt and that they were just as sinful as the Egyptians. It was only because God showed them grace and provided a way for them to escape the Angel of Death. Children are born into this world physically alive but spiritually dead. They need to be forgiven and saved by the blood of Jesus.

When we dedicate babies here at church, we are acknowledging that: 1. They are in need of God's forgiveness and salvation, 2. They stand in a special covenant relationship with God because of their parents, and 3. They will have to make a personal faith commitment to Jesus Christ when they grow up. So when we baptize someone or dedicate a baby, we are acknowledging that they, just like all of us have a natural bent towards sin, and they will rebel against God. So a proper theology of children must take into account two things: 1. God loves little children: They are a gift from Him, and 2. They are spiritually dead and need to be brought to life through repentance and conversion. To miss one of those points would severely handicap our parenting skills.

C. PURIFIED FROM BLOOD (4-5)

Verses 4-5 describe being purified from the blood contact. In these two verses, the timeframe for purification is laid out. The total days of purification the woman undergoes for the birth of a boy is 41 total days. For the birth of a girl, it is 80 days. There are all sorts of crazy theories out there to explain this. I don't know why that is. Let me just make an observation though. As I said before, when the baby boy was circumcised, there was a shedding of blood. This may all point forward to the blood Jesus would shed for our forgiveness of sin. After all, the Messiah would be born into this world as a baby Boy Who would be circumcised on the 8th day and shed His blood on the cross around 33-years-old. Did you catch that? After the baby's circumcision, the woman would remain unclean for another 33 days.

Perhaps the thought for double of the time for purification in the case of a baby girl would be because the acknowledgement that this little girl would grow up to give birth as well. Even though this is a patriarchal society, girls were not less valuable than boys in God's eyes.

To be sure, by the time Jesus comes on the scene, the worship had been perverted to the point women did become second-class citizens. In fact, in the Temple during Jesus' time, there was a place that women could approach no further. They called this the Court of the Women. But here in the wilderness, women brought their sacrifices to the Tabernacle and slaughtered their sacrifices and gave them to the priests, just like the men.

Let me just leave us with a couple of quotes that remind us that everyone is born into this world sinful and guilty. In pronouncing the curse on Adam and Eve, God says:

¹⁶ *... You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master."*

¹⁷ *And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to*

scratch a living from it. ¹⁸It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. ¹⁹All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return" (Genesis 3:16-19 / NLT).

When confronted with his sin, King David acknowledged:

⁵ for I was born a sinner — yes, from the moment my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5 / NLT).

The Apostle Paul sums up like this:

¹⁰As the Scriptures say, 'No one is good— not even one. ¹¹No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. ¹²All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one.'

²³ For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:10-12, 23 / NLT).

So to summarize this section, **CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS WORLD WHO IS GOOD OR INNOCENT. WE ARE ALL BORN INTO THIS WORLD AS ENEMIES OF GOD.**

II. ALL NEED REDEMPTION (VS 6-7)

God Has Made A Way For Us To Be Right With Him Through His Son Jesus Christ.

When you think about that for a moment, that really is a radical concept that flies in the face of what our culture believes. Biblical Christianity is counter-cultural. Verses 6-7 clearly state we are all in need of redemption. The love of God is expressed to us in this. **GOD HAS MADE A WAY FOR US TO BE RIGHT WITH HIM THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.** At this point in the text, the baby has been born and 41 days have passed in the case of a baby boy and 80 days in the case of a girl. The woman has stopped bleeding and she is pretty much back to normal health. She is now ready to complete the purification ceremony and be restored to a place where she can once again participate in formal worship.

A. DEDICATED BY BLOOD (6)

Verse 6 describes a dedication by blood ceremony. Now please follow this closely. It is part of my reasoning as to why there is no particular guilt incurred as a result of the woman sinning or doing something wrong. In most instances, the Sin Offering is offered up first and then the Burnt Offering after that. If you notice, here the order is reversed. The Burnt Offering is offered up first. If you remember, the Burnt Offering was a sign of total dedication on the part of the worshiper. The entire animal was completely burned up on the altar. The offering was to be a one-year-old lamb. What I think is going on here is this. The mother was dedicating herself and her child to God completely. There was a Jewish woman who desperately wanted to have a baby. She wept and pleaded with God. When she finally had the baby, let's listen to her response:

²⁴When the child was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. They brought along a three-year-old bull for the sacrifice and half a bushel of flour and some wine. ²⁵After sacrificing the bull, they took the child to Eli. ²⁶'Sir, do you remember me?' Hannah asked. "I am the woman who stood here several years ago praying to the LORD. ²⁷I asked the LORD to give me this child, and he has given me

my request. ²⁸Now I am giving him to the LORD, and he will belong to the LORD his whole life.' And they worshiped the LORD there" (I Samuel 1:24-28 / NLT).

Listen to this ceremony described in the life of Jesus:

²²Then it was time for the purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

²³The law of the Lord says, 'If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.' ²⁴So they offered a sacrifice according to what was required in the law of the Lord—'either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons'" (Luke 2:22-24 / NLT).

Both Hannah and Mary gave up their young sons to serve God with their entire lives. One other interesting comparison between Hannah and Mary is their prayer of thanksgiving to God. I would encourage you to look at their prayers and compare them. They understood they were truly giving up their wills and sons to God. I know many people like to bring their children to church because they think church will make them good kids. But if their children wanted to give it all up to be missionaries, they would be sorely disappointed.

When mothers went to the Tabernacle, or later the Temple they were dedicating themselves and their children to God. Are we that dedicated to God? Is doing His will that important to us? I know that personally, I'm trying to sharpen that attitude in my heart.

And now at this point, the Sin Offering is offered up. Remember, this particular offering had to do more with purification than the guilt and the need for restitution. This sin offering seems to be offered up as an acknowledgement that we are all born into sin and in need of forgiveness, restoration, and healing. It is an acknowledgement that there is no such thing as innocent babies, that sin pollutes us from the beginning, and the only way to be in a right relationship is to obey God's commands. God set up this elaborate sacrificial system for the Hebrews to follow. God is the One Who made the rules. If the people followed them they would be fine. And so faith to obey and do what they were commanded to do put them in a right relationship with God.

B. RESTORED BY BLOOD (7)

And verse 7 describes this situation as being restored by blood. The priest would take the blood and sprinkle it on the altar. The woman would be declared to be ritually clean again.

I think why true Christianity is such a hard sell is that we have to admit we are horrible, horrible people. Because we are so proud, we think we are better than others. It is hard for us to look deep into our souls and see them as God sees them. Unless we come to the point where we admit that without the blood of Jesus covering my sin, without His blood purifying me, healing me, and making me whole, I am totally and hopelessly lost. Unless we come to acknowledge how evil we are, then the understanding of God's miracle on the cross is lost. God made a way for us to be in a right relationship with Him. That way is for us to place our faith in the finished work of Christ. God applies Jesus' holiness to our lives and then commands us to live holy lives. It seems a lot more simple than the rituals and ceremonies God spelled out to the Hebrews. But it takes just as much dedication, planning, honesty, humility, and resolve for us to live holy lives as it did for the Hebrews. Here is the point. **GOD HAS MADE A WAY FOR US TO BE RIGHT WITH HIM THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.**

III. OFFERED TO ALL WHO WILL COME (VS 8)

***Salvation Is A Gift Offered By God Freely To All
Those Who Will Receive It.***

After giving birth, in order to be restored to ritual purity, the Hebrew women followed the procedures laid out here in this chapter. God offered cleansing, purity, wholeness, and acceptance to all who would follow His commands.

A. WHOEVER DESIRES (8a)

Verse 8 reminds us that Jesus offered salvation to all who will come. **SALVATION IS A GIFT OFFERED BY GOD FREELY TO ALL THOSE WHO WILL RECEIVE.** What if a couple was poor and couldn't afford a lamb? The first half of verse 8 makes it clear that being in a right relationship is offered by God to whoever desires it. But don't take this to mean anything goes. The acceptable sacrifice would be two doves or two pigeons. If you were to go back and read what offering Mary and Joseph brought, we can gain some insight into their financial status. They were poor. They were only able to bring a pair of birds. Another thing I want to point out one more time before we leave this passage is that women participated fully in worship. The woman is pictured here as offering up the sacrifice.

Jesus made it clear that salvation is for everyone who will believe. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, well or sick, male or female. It doesn't matter what race, culture, or background you come from. If you are willing to give your life to Jesus in faith and pursue a holy lifestyle, then Jesus is offering salvation to you.

B. MAY COME (8b)

But the catch is that in order to receive salvation we must come to Him as spelled out in the second half of verse 8. It wasn't up to the priest to go looking for the woman who just gave birth. The Hebrews knew the drill. Wholeness and purification was offered to every woman. It would be up to the individual woman to follow the rules of purification, gather up the sacrifices, take them to the Tabernacle, and offer up her sacrifices.

There is a defective brand of Christianity that believes we can say the magic words, "Jesus come into my heart," and everything is fine. We can do what we want and make up our own rules for living and still be saved. I'm here this morning once again to remind all of us that unless we are pursuing holy lives and living holy lives, there is no reason to believe that we are saved. Pursuing holiness is not just abstaining from certain forms of sinful behavior. Pursuing holiness is exactly what is intended in the word pursuing. It is actively looking for ways in which I can positively get better every day, all the way until that day God calls us home. It doesn't matter if we are 10 or 100-years-old. We are to be actively pursuing holiness. If any of us think we are good enough, then we are probably not Christians. So please remember what it means to be Christian. It means to receive Jesus' holiness that God gives to us and our response to that fact by living and pursuing holiness. **SALVATION IS A GIFT OFFERED BY GOD FREELY TO ALL THOSE WHO WILL RECEIVE IT.**

IV. EPILOGUE

God laid down the procedure His people had to follow in order to be in a right relationship with Him. My feeling is if the modern day Christian were asked to do this, we would find it too hard to follow the rules to be holy. We have convinced ourselves that we are good enough. But the cold hard fact is this. **EVERY PERSON BORN INTO THIS WORLD IS BY NATURE SINFUL AND IN NEED OF THE SALVATION OFFERED BY GOD THROUGH JESUS.** There is no other way and no other plan. Are we as interested in following Jesus as the description of this woman in the Gospels?

²⁵*And there was a woman in the crowd who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years.*

²⁶*She had suffered a great deal from many doctors through the years and had spent*

everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she was worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched the fringe of his robe. ²⁸For she thought to herself, 'If I can just touch his clothing, I will be healed.' ²⁹Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel that she had been healed!

³⁰Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?'

³¹His disciples said to him, 'All this crowd is pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?''

³²But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. ³³Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and told him what she had done. ³⁴And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. You have been healed'' (Mark 5:25-34 / NLT).

Are we that desperate to reach out and touch Jesus? Do we really want Him to make us holy so that we can pursue holiness? God has made a way for us to be right with Him and that way is through Jesus. If we have truly given our lives to Jesus in faith then we should have a burning desire to pursue holy living. If we don't have that, and if our lives are not being made more holy each day, then we probably need to go back and reassess if our faith commitments are perhaps false.