

Leviticus

Chapter 12

The Holy Family

04.09.2005

Imagine the conversation tomorrow...

“Wotdja do on the weekend?”

“I went to church!”

“Was it boring?”

“You’ll never guess what that bloke up the front spoke about!”

What follows could then be a bit ribald, a lot disparaging, or quite a good conversation. Which one...? That depends on you!

For as we heard in the Bible reading from Leviticus 12, there is an M rated chapter in the Bible. It contains Adult themes, and maybe also should carry a warning about male chauvinism.

For the Old Testament Israelite, God gave Moses laws to cover virtually every aspect of life. In Leviticus 11, he gave a very detailed diet for them. Now in Leviticus 12, he gives regulations about when a woman can resume full religious duties in the community again.

To our modern ears, it sounds appalling. The new mum is banished from religious participation for either 80 days if she has a baby girl, or for 40 days if she has a baby boy, except for the circumcision of the boy at 8 days old.

We are not given any reason, whether medical, theological or biological, for the time difference between a boy and a girl. However, there is no difference in the type of sacrifice to be offered by the mum. If she offered it, she would no longer be classed as “unclean”.

To our modern ear, “unclean” is the same as dirty, filthy, or yucky. However, in Leviticus, it was a classification God provided to prevent someone for a time from participating in corporate worship. Leviticus 12 tells when and how she could be restored to corporate worship.

Every aspect of life reflected their dependance upon God.

A few years ago, I went to a Greek wedding. Fortunately it was in Greek and English, and a booklet told us what was being said and done.

One thing really struck me from the wedding. It was their unashamed dependance on God throughout the service, and in their talking. The mother of the groom blessed me in God’s name as I arrived. The service constantly spoke about God, and how they were to trust him. And the prayers asked God to be involved in all aspects of their married life.

Leviticus 12 and the Greek wedding highlighted to me how little the average Aussie considers God in their daily life. Here is a private survey for you.

1. In the past week, did you give thanks to God before you ate three meals?
2. In the past week, did you pray to Jesus for anything?
3. In the past week, apart from today in church, did you read anything from the Bible?
4. In the past week, did you chat to anyone about God?
5. In the past week, did you consider doing anything good for someone else simply because you know that God wanted you to do it?

How did you go? 5 yeses out of 5? 3? 0?

Let me ask you how relevant is God in your life?

Over the past century, as the Christian sect called humanism has become more popular, it has progressively taken away from people the appreciation of God in every aspect of their lives. Humanism is a Christian sect, because it takes all the positive aspects of how Christianity treats people, and strips God away from it. It replaces God with an exalted humanity. This has been blended with a brand of science which has provided a framework for thinking about life that also allows people to think they can function without God.

Several generations have now grown without having God’s presence in their life, so when they read a passage like Leviticus 12, it only makes them angry.

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Yet humanism and the framework of science to support it, has not been just in the community. It is also very strong in the church, even in very faithful, loving churches.

Some Christians now function as weekday humanists and Sunday morning Christians. God is no longer relevant in the rest of their week. They may want him to be relevant, but they often either do not know how, or are scared of the consequences, or do not want him to be relevant in their lives.

Other Christians try to make God relevant by using the Christian formalities to keep the structure present, but it can often be an empty structure. By that I mean they may have certain rituals in their life, such as an oft-repeated prayer, or carrying a cross around their neck, or having a Christian superstition which they cannot remember why they do it, they simply do it.

Other Christians try too hard, and come across as the do-gooders or eccentrics who think that they are saving the world from absolute defeat, and so they simply have to keep going over the top in their display of religiosity etc.

But what was Leviticus 12 doing? It was applying the principle of holiness to a very specific situation in the lives of people. In Leviticus 15, it talks about what happens when fluid discharges from a male or female. (You will be pleased to know that we are avoiding that chapter in the sermons... well, I am pleased anyway!)

Having a baby includes that. But God gives a special case for it.

The new mums are not to be treated as if they have caught a disease, but instead there is time for recuperation and rest without shame, for all women knew what to expect. Just as the food laws became second nature to them, expressing their distinctiveness, so also the maternity and hygiene regulations of the holiness code would show their distinctiveness.

Jesus fulfilled this part of the Law as well. At 8 days he was presented for circumcision. The wise men had not yet come, for Joseph and Mary only offered the poor person's offering of the birds. Through his perfect obedience of the Law, by faith we are free from having to keep that law.

But that does not mean we should be free from allowing God to be active in every aspect of our lives.

Do not be over the top. Do not have empty rituals. Do not be humanists. Rather, ask God to help you grow the fruit of His Spirit in your life. To let you be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, gentle, faithful, good, and self controlled. and ask him to help you have a reason for the hope that you have, so you can answer anyone who asks you why you are different. And ask him to give you a heart like his, so you can care, give and listen. and ask him to give you wisdom, so you can speak appropriately, act wisely, and plan carefully. In other words, ask him to make you more like Jesus.

If we are like him then we will know God's presence and relevance in every aspect of life, and we will not be humanists, but Christians.