

The Power of Life
Leviticus 15
Leviticus series #11
August 21, 2022

Pre-Sermon Comments

- Families with younger kids be forewarned, discussion of reproduction
- Middle schoolers, or people with the maturity of middle school, get your giggles out now

Introduction

Matthew Thiessen Most if not all ancient Mediterranean cultures held to similar purity codes related to sex, menstruation, and childbirth. In other words, as foreign as such codes may seem to many modern readers, such restrictions were nearly ubiquitous in the ancient world.

Three Questions Today

1. What did this chapter mean to them?
2. How does this chapter point us to Jesus?
3. How do we live out these regulations today?

I. WHAT DID THIS MEAN TO THEM?

Ritual Impurity

Numbers 5 ¹The Lord instructed Moses, ²“Command the Israelites to send away anyone from the camp who is afflicted with a skin disease, anyone who has a discharge, or anyone who is defiled because of a corpse. ³Send away both male or female; send them outside the camp, so that they will not defile their camps where I dwell among them.”

- Three main sources: corpse, skin disease, discharges
- It is not sinful to be ritually impure

Matthew Thiessen The majority of Israelites would have at one time or another experienced such ritual impurities. Priestly legislation does not prohibit Israelites from contracting such impurities, nor does it punish them for doing so. Priestly law assumes that people will endure such impurities and provides them with the ritual means to remove those impurities. Only in the event that people do not properly dispose of their impurities does the issue become one of wrongdoing.

- Last week: did Jesus sin by touching the leper? No, not sinful to become ritually impure.
- Corpse is literally death, skin disease makes you look like a corpse, but why discharges?

B. The Shape of Leviticus 15

Introduction | 15:1-2a

¹The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: ²“Speak to the Israelites and tell them:

Abnormal male discharges | 15:2b-15

²...When any man has a discharge from his member, he is unclean...⁴ All the days that his member secretes or retains anything because of his discharge, he is unclean.

- Something ongoing, not just the one-time discharge of sexual activity
 - Also, it doesn't use the word "seed" here, but it does in a minute
- Furniture, clothing, etc. must be washed
- When it stops, the man is to go to the priest for a cleansing ceremony

Normal male discharges | 15:16-17

¹⁶ If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening.

- Possibly nocturnal emission (like Deut. 23), some see a reference to masturbation
- Either way, this is not about a disease or something, it's just normal function of the body

Sexual intercourse | 15:18

If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening.

- Sad history of interpretation | It is not sinful to be unclean
- Note: the bible is very pro-sex, but in the proper context. More in 3 weeks

Normal female discharges | 15:19-24

¹⁹ "When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening."²⁰ And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean.

- Not a sin for a woman to have her monthly period

Abnormal female discharges | 15:25-30

²⁵ "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness.

Summary | 15:31-33

Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.

- It's not a sin to have a cold, but you wouldn't go into an operating room
- It's not a sin to be ritually impure, but you don't go into the holy space | Compassion!

Mark Scarlata Human genitalia are associated with the production of life and an unnatural loss of blood or semen may have been associated with death and uncleanness. In the case of sexual union, the passing of semen to the female may symbolically represent loss of life for the male. The female may also be more in danger of death as the life of the child grows within her. Sexual activity,

reproduction, and new life were all endowed with God's mysterious power working through the human body...[I]t is clear that Leviticus treats conception as a sacred event that should be held with the greatest respect in relation to holiness and wholeness.

John Goldingay In Western Christian culture, the key question about sex may seem the moral one about whether you are having sex with the right person, and menstruation is just something a woman has to manage. Actually sex and menstruation deserve some awe on the part of both men and women. For some women, their monthly period is a reminder that once again they have failed to conceive. They are very aware of the link between menstruation and procreation and their menstruation is a sign of life and a sign of death; it is life wasted. So is their husbands' emission of semen.

(big idea) Because death is always at the door, life is to be honored as sacred

II. HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO JESUS?

- Jesus said that he fulfills all Torah, everything Moses wrote was about him. HOW?

Abnormal Bleeding

Luke 8 ⁴⁰When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹Just then, a man named Jairus came. He was a leader of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with him to come to his house, ⁴²because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying. While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him. ⁴³A woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all she had on doctors and yet could not be healed by any,

- Side note #1: more could be said about Jesus touching a dead body/corpse
- Side note #2: 12 year old only daughter (joy!), vs. 12 year bleeding disorder (**abnormal**)
 - Living in a state of impurity, so distanced from the temple
 - Figuratively **and** literally (?) dying for 12 years
- But, no resignation, she's a fighter! Spent everything on doctors, now Jesus

⁴⁴approached from behind and touched the end of his robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵"Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you." ⁴⁶"Someone did touch me," said Jesus. "I know that power has gone out from me."

- Uncommon discharge from Jesus' body? So much happening in this story...

⁴⁷When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched him and how she was instantly healed. ⁴⁸"Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Matthew Thiessen This depiction of Jesus portrays something unexpected. Whoever Jesus is, even contact with his garment can provoke an unconscious flow of healing power from his body. Such power emanating or leaking out of Jesus's body through mere contact with his clothing (with, of course, the woman's trust) demonstrates that Jesus's body contains some sort of contagious

holiness. Jesus is the holy one of God (Mark 1:24)—he is a force of holiness that opposes the forces of impurity...[A] new and previously unheard of source of powerful holiness has entered into a world mapped by the categories of purity and impurity, holiness and profaneness. Jesus, the holy one of God, represents such an overwhelming force of holiness that those who suffer even the most enduring forms of ritual impurities find themselves dried up, healed, and purified.

Jesus, Full of Life

- Jesus is the God of life | John 5:26
 - For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted to the Son to have life in himself.
 - God created all things, he animates all things, Jesus claims to have that same power
- Jesus is the God of abundant life | John 10:10
 - I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.
 - Overflowing, overwhelming life
- Jesus is the God of eternal life | John 6:40
 - ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
 - Jesus died on the cross, taking on the forces of death
 - Jesus rose on the 3rd day, conquering over the forces of death

III. HOW DO WE LIVE THIS OUT?

Live as People of Life

*This is not simply about voting or politicians. That’s what the modern American political machine wants you to believe. In fact, it might be more about your own work with your own money/hands.

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| 1. Abortion 4k CPC’s, vol. & \$\$ | 5. Euthenasia Lord numbers our days |
| 2. Adoption 2x the national avg | 6. Immigration \$60k in one month |
| 3. Disability Image bearers | 7. Warfare Swords into plowshares |
| 4. Elderly Value not in output | 8. Environment Flourishing care |

**all of this is complicated, no one-size-fits all approach. All of us united toward flourishing life.

***Now even with our best work, death will still last until Christ’s return, so...

Die as People of Life

Psalm 116 ¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Philippians 1 ²¹ To live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Rise as People of Life

Scott Sauls According to Scripture, when we die, we will not be buried in the dirt forever but will only be planted there for a time. Our mortal bodies, now tarnished by weariness, will be like fertile seeds in waiting. Once resurrected, our bodies will assume all the features of immortality, full redemption, unending momentum, untarnished flourishing, and imperishable bliss. We are now and forevermore united with Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. Because Jesus lives and will never die again, the same must be true of us.