

INTRO: Last Wednesday evening we discussed an Old Testament annual religious festival called Yom Kippur, when the high priest ritually laid the sins of the people on the head of a scapegoat and sent it off into the wilderness. This week we will study an Old Testament law concerning the birth of a baby boy or girl, or even the birth of a domesticated animal.

I. TWO LAWS APPLIED TO BIRTHS

A. The 'firstborn' principle

1. Ex.13:12 "you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb"
2. this applied to humans and animals alike
3. setting was Exodus when Angel of Death killed all firstborn w/o lamb's blood on doorpost and lintel
4. curious exception e.g., if you wanted to keep animal (e.g. donkey) for yourself, you could 'redeem' it with the sacrifice of a blemish-free lamb
5. 'redeem' implies payment, ergo first fruits belong to God
6. so, Ex.13:13 continues... "and all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem"

B. Purification ritual for baby boys or girls

1. baby boy, mother 'unclean' 7 days; circumcision 8th day
2. continue another 33 days ritually unclean (7 + 33 = 40)
3. double '40' for baby girl; no circumcision
4. either sex, after 40/80 days, bring lamb as burnt offering and dove as sin offering
5. whoa! Why a sin offering for an innocent newborn baby?
6. can it be that humans are born sinful and animals are not?
7. David: Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Psalm 51:5)
8. John 3:6 ... that which is born of flesh is flesh (Jesus to Nicodemus)

II. WHERE IS JESUS IN THESE OLD TESTAMENT RITUALS?

A. Jesus fulfilled these requirements...

1. Luke 2:22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to

the Lord (23) *[as it is written in the law of the Lord, "every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"]*, (24) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, *"A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."*

2. Jesus was raised in a normal Jewish home by godly parents
3. though He was rich, He became poor (2 doves, no lamb)
4. but then, He Himself is the Lamb (of God; a very expensive lamb)
5. the only begotten Son of God
6. as holy angels attested: To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ, the Lord (Luke 2:11)

B. (Jesus fulfilled these requirements...) for us

1. we are God's 'Israel' born sinful and enslaved to sin
2. we need 'redeeming' from our damnable sins, besides our original sinfulness
3. But wait! Jesus didn't **need** a sin offering, He was **sinless**, conceived holy
4. answer is same as Jesus' baptism; John protested, Jesus replied "permit it to be so now, for thus it is necessary to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt.3:15)
5. His entire holy obedient life was an offering to God as our Substitute: credit His offering into the column of our debts
6. only Jesus' substitution of Himself for us fulfills **our** righteousness

III. SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

A. How amazing is this Bible

1. it is humbling to see Joseph and Mary parenting far above my shortcomings
2. and which of us has been the perfect, obedient child
3. how many of the Bible's details have eluded us
4. anybody share my guilt for not studying it more?

B. How profound are all the layers of the Bible

1. God owns our firstborn and our firstfruits
2. principle: all we 'own' belongs to God; we're mere stewards
3. BTW, we don't **own** our children (**my** son/daughter) nor does the government, by any stretch
4. also, how many examples of substitution/redeeming are there in the Bible

C. How reassuring is this message from the Bible

1. God's Holy Spirit has called us by this gospel message
2. our Good Shepherd is also our sin-offering Lamb (ruminant on that)
3. each of us is God's redeemed, reborn child

CONCLUSION: Thanks be to God that in Christ Jesus, every detail of our soul's salvation is fulfilled for all eternity. Amen.