

Leviticus Chapter 15

Purification for Male and Female Discharges



The chapter begins with the formula introduction that announced divine revelation. This time it was addressed to both Moses and Aaron. Other than that, the chapter has 5 sections.

[The picture is from the catacombs of Rome and depicts Jesus healing the woman with an issue of blood (<http://campus.belmont.edu/honors/CatPix/womanblood.jpg>).]

Leviticus 15:1-15 The Cleansing For Unnatural Male Emissions

These verses describe a long-term male discharge that is some kind of disease—like gonorrhea. Everything which he touched was to be considered unclean and washed or broken. Verse 11 is of special interest because it reveals the importance of washing hands to prevent the spread of disease. The verse reads:

Likewise, whomever the one with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.



When the man is healed, he must wait seven days, then bring two turtledoves or pigeons for a sin offering and a burnt offering to *make atonement on his behalf before the LORD* (15:13-15).

Leviticus 15:16-18 The Cleansing for Natural Male Seminal Emissions



A natural seminal emission was apparently not considered sinful. It required no sin offering. The man was to simply bathe and wash his clothing and remain unclean until evening. This was probably the case mentioned earlier (in chapter 11). When David did not show up for the evening meal at Saul's table, we read:

The king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall; then Jonathan rose up and Abner sat down by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul did not speak anything that day, for he thought, "It is an accident, he is not clean, surely he is not clean." (1 Samuel 20:25-26).

[The picture is from a Rembrandt of Saul (www.artbible.info/_art/large.115.html).]

Verse 18 discusses the case where *a man lies with a woman so that there is a seminal emission*. In that case, they were both to bathe and remain unclean until evening. This would clearly represent a man having sexual relations with his wife, since no sin is involved. But it also tells us that seminal emission without intercourse was not sinful and only required bathing, or it wouldn't be mentioned separately in verses 16 and 17.

Leviticus 15:19-24 The Cleansing for Natural Female Menstrual Emissions

This paragraph discusses the ceremonial uncleanness resulting from the natural flow of blood during a woman's monthly period. Though this was a regular discharge, she was to remain unclean seven

days in the same sense as a man who had an unnatural discharge. But no sacrifice for sin was required.

Sexual intercourse was forbidden during this time, and a man who lies with her and gets the discharge on himself was also to be unclean for seven days. [Again, to be unclean meant to not be involved in worship at the Tabernacle and to not participate in normal community activity.]

Leviticus 15:25-30 The Cleansing for Unnatural Female Emissions

This paragraph describes a female discharge caused by a disease or illness. As with the male unnatural emission, everything she touched was to be washed. When she was well, she had to wait seven days and present the same sin and burnt offerings as the man to *make atonement on her behalf before the LORD*—15:30). This was illustrated in all three Synoptic Gospels when Jesus healed the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48).

Leviticus 15:31-33 The Purpose for This Kind of Instruction

The purpose for this instruction was to:

- *keep the sons of Israel separated from their uncleanness*
- *so that they will not die in their uncleanness*
- *by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them (15:31)*

Although I have separated these three statements, it could be that the only point being made is the last one about not defiling God's Tabernacle. It cannot, however, be denied that physical cleansing to keep the people from disease and untimely death is part of these regulations.

THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

It is interesting to notice the difference between natural and unnatural emission. The natural emissions did not require a sacrifice, but they did require a washing. Apparently, God considered both to be unclean, but natural seminal and menstrual emissions did not offend His holiness enough to require an animal sacrifice. So there seems to be various degrees of offensiveness to God. Those which are the natural part of our bodily functions are not as offensive as disease or perversions of our bodily functions.

For example, when young people want to get married, make money, establish some sort of security base to operate from in this world, they have not sinned. It would be better if they remained single and celibate (Revelation 14:4), owned nothing but what they needed to survive (Luke 6:20-26), and serve God (John 4:34). That's what Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul did. What most of us do is less than ideal. And it involves things less than holy because it involves things which tie us to this earth. But when we introduce unnatural things (adultery, greed, cheating, lust, luxurious living – Romans 1:18ff), then it offends God on the level that it requires a blood sacrifice as a substitution to make atonement for us to God (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).