

THE LAW OF CLEAN AND UNCLEAR MEATS

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If you read and study Lev 11 and Deut 14, you find a law which most people ignore today or don't believe. These chapters describe what creatures God has created fit for human consumption and what he has declared unfit.

Any child is taught by his parents not to put certain things in his mouth. If we know that what our physical parents taught us about eating is right so that we do not go around as adults putting any kind of worm or germ covered thing into our mouths, how much more should we obey our heavenly Father who also tells us for our own good what to eat and not to eat.

The very first test of man's obedience to God had to do with eating didn't it? God said to Adam and Eve, "You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because you will die." Whom did Adam and Eve believe - God or someone else? As the scripture says, "Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, etc." So they ate of that fruit and death passed on to all men from that day forward as a result.

The main foods eaten in this society which are declared abominable by God in Lev 11 and Deut 14 are pig, rabbit, and ocean creatures without fins and scales such as lobsters, oysters, crabs, clams, etc. Other societies commonly eat such things as mice, snakes, horses, dogs, etc. which are also abominable. While God did create these creatures, he did not intend that they be used for the purpose of food for human beings. However, so widespread is their use as food that in order to avoid them altogether, one needs to become a label reader as they are often added to clean foods. For example, clam juice is added to some spaghetti sauces.

Of course, the first question we all ask is, "Well, WHY NOT eat these things?" When the children of Israel were traveling through the wilderness, they did not have the technology to discover what we know today about many of these creatures. When God said they were unclean, he meant just that. The sea creatures that we find so tasty were created to be the garbage cleaners of the ocean floor, and any manner of waste and toxic substance that the ocean collects ends up as part of their flesh. Before men invented microscopes, God knew that swine's flesh contains a small parasitic worm called trichina that infests the muscles and produces a disease called trichinosis. Because we are what we eat, it is certain that many illnesses afflicting this nation today are the natural result of the commandments of God which we have broken in what we eat; and not only the law concerning clean and unclean meat, but also the law of moderation (Ec 10:17) and drunkenness (Pr 23:21) etc. People defile their bodies and ruin their health also from smoking and drugs. We as a nation need to REPENT of all these things and return to the right ways of God which would produce the good health that we all desire.

Many people think that Jesus Christ came to do away with the laws of the Old Testament. But he did not. He said in Mat 5:17-19 plainly, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law ...till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot nor one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law..." Many people who are willing to obey God are satisfied to know that God commanded the law of clean

and unclean meats for the good of our physical health, but some who are not willing to obey argue that since not everyone who eats these things gets cancer and we preserve meat better and cook it better than in Old Testament times, it does no damage to our health and therefore this law does not apply to us today. But the law does apply because God did not give it primarily for the purpose of our physical health. There is much deeper spiritual meaning in the law because 'the law is spiritual' which means that it will be kept 'in spirit' forever, long after physical meats and bellies have passed away.

Notice that God did not give the law for health purposes but for this reason: Lev 11:44 "For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy for I am holy" Sanctify means to set yourselves apart from these defiling things and be holy just as God himself is holy. When we obey this law of God in separating ourselves from meat which he defines as unclean, then God spiritually separates us from the 'unclean doctrines' of the world

As we saw with Adam and Eve, there is spiritual symbolism and significance in what we eat or don't eat. What we eat is what we 'live by'. Jesus said, "He who eats me shall live by me." Now Jesus was called the 'lamb' of God. A lamb is a clean beast. When we eat unclean meat we 'live by' unclean doctrines of the world. We are not sanctified or separate from the world, so we are not able to discern what is right and wrong from God's point of view.

A swine is an unclean beast and symbolic in 2Pe 2:22 of a Christian who, after being washed in the blood of Christ goes back and wallows in the uncleanness of the world. A swine is also symbolic in Pr 11:22 of a fair woman (type of church) without discretion (judgment, discernment)

Some use Rom 14 "For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak eateth herbs... I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." as proof that we may now eat unclean meats. They assume wrongly that "all things" means you can eat anything you want. Would that mean that you should eat anything polluted or poisonous or otherwise harmful? No, of course not! Therefore, the 'all things' must include an unspoken QUALIFIER which is 'all things that are approved by God as good and wholesome to eat'. In the context of this chapter it is referring to good wholesome meat (which God has defined as clean) as well as vegetables. The subject of the chapter is the difference between one who eats both meat and vegetables, and another who is spiritually weak eating only vegetables - restricting himself to a vegetarian diet for fear of eating what might have been offered as a sacrifice to an idol and so would be unclean. (compare 1 Co 8) The Roman Christians to whom the apostle Paul was writing lived in a pagan society that worshiped many gods and goddesses (Jupiter and Neptune, for example), as we note in the preaching to those in Athens. (Acts 17:23) When animals were slaughtered as sacrifices in idols' temples, they were then sold in the shambles or marketplaces or little restaurants (1 Co 10:25) The new convert from paganism, knowing that God regards certain meat as unclean, and also knowing that Jews would never go into an idol's temple, would think a lamb sacrificed to an idol was spiritually contaminated. But is Jupiter (for example) a real god? No! Can he affect the meat physically? No! Are you going into the temple to worship him? No! So it would not be a sin to eat it. (compare 1 Co 8:4) Therefore, in the context of all preceding verses in Rom. 14, in

the context of 1 Co 8 which is a parallel account it should not be assumed that Paul in Rom 14:14 is talking about meat which is unclean according to Lev 11, but rather clean meat which is esteemed unclean because it has been sacrificed to an idol.

Because so many people believe that Rom 14 does away with the law of clean and unclean meats, it is necessary to give a summary of scriptures on this subject. Notice that God has not changed His mind about this law throughout the rest of the Bible even though some scriptures, because they are not clear, could be misinterpreted to assume that He has. The first mention of clean and unclean meats is when Noah collected clean and unclean animals for the ark. This was long before it was written down in Lev 11 and Deut 14. Notice then that Isa 66:17 (written approximately 749 years after Lev 11), shows the continuity of God's will, that those who eat unclean things such as swine's flesh and mice shall be consumed. Eze 22:26 (written approximately 870 years after Lev 11), shows how the spiritual leaders who should be teaching God's laws put no difference between clean and unclean. We see then that from Noah's time up to Ezekiel's time, God's will is clear concerning clean and unclean meats. But now we find a scripture which is possible to be misinterpreted.

In Acts 10 we see unclean animals in vision which Peter was commanded to eat. Notice first that Peter said in verse 14, "Not so Lord for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean!" This statement shows that Peter knew that even in his day (approximately 41 AD, that to obey the law of Lev 11 was God's will. Peter was one of the closest disciples of Jesus. If Peter had never eaten anything unclean, certainly he never saw Jesus do so. Jesus is our example, that we are to walk in the same way he walked.

Now why did God command Peter to eat unclean meat - because he was doing away with that law? Does Acts 10 anywhere SAY this? No it does not. Could this chapter therefore just be an exception to the rule given for a special purpose? Yes it could. Indeed, there is another example in the Bible of a person being commanded by God to eat something unclean for a special purpose, a spiritual symbolism. Read this in Ezek 4:9-17. Ezekiel was commanded to eat bread made with dung. Ezekiel said the same thing Peter said; "Lord I have never eaten anything common or unclean!" Did he take this to mean that the Lord wanted people to make their bread this way from now on? No. He understood that it was for a special purpose. Acts 10:28 also shows that Peter KNEW WHY God gave him this vision, not to do away with the law of clean and unclean meats, but to teach him that unclean animals are symbolic of unconverted Gentiles just as it is written in Lev 20:24-26. God gave this vision to Peter because He was about to convert Gentiles for the first time and that once Gentiles are converted, they are no longer considered unclean. This chapter is not showing that we are now allowed to eat unclean meat, but rather that it is now possible for those Gentiles who were unclean to become clean through Jesus Christ. Peter knew that this was why God showed him the vision when he said in verse 28 "God hath showed me that I should not call ANY MAN common or unclean." It is possible for God to convert the heart of a Gentile, making him spiritually clean. However, since the physical attributes such as hoofs, fins and scales which defined animals as unclean have not changed, we should not ASSUME that we are now allowed to eat them. Because the Jews up to this time physically separated themselves from Gentiles, they needed to know that it is a spiritual

conversion, not a physical change in appearance, that makes a man clean through Jesus Christ. God does intend to change even the nature of animals - making them clean. (Isa 11:7)

Finally, notice in 2 Co 6:14-18, 7:1, (written approximately 57 AD) that the "unclean thing" is connected again with unconverted, unbelieving people (vs. 14, as well as with other things); and it is NOW God's will for us, just as it has always been, to separate ourselves and cleanse ourselves from all uncleanness of *flesh* and *spirit*.(7:1)