



The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

18

Understanding Clean and Unclean Meats

Doctrinal Statement

Biblical dietary laws, including the prohibitions of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, are among the many health laws God gave to Israel. Jesus, the apostles, and the early New Testament church observed them too, and they remain in effect today. Scripture indicates that laws pertaining to “clean” and “unclean” animals were recognized and observed from earliest times.

Human beings delight in being contrarians. When we are told we can't do this or that—this and that is the first thing we seek too do.

God created us as free moral agents, which simply means we can by choice, decide for ourselves the direction of our lives, right or wrong, and God allows it, for now anyway. So it is no wonder we do those things that seem right in our own eyes, but which usually ends in sickness or death.

How many times have you tried to put a simple child toy together and failed, only to have the experience end in a search for the directions?

The Creator God is our maker. If any one should know how the human mind and body operates certainly He should know, since He designed and created it. He did not leave us in ignorance about our bodies and what each one of us need to do to maintain it. He left us an instruction book, *The Bible*, giving us the information we need to know to maintain, understand, and fuel this marvelous and intricate biological body we call the “human being.” However, human beings, having human nature, and being what they are did the natural thing, and threw away the directions, choosing rather to reinvent the wheel of good health for themselves. All of the problems in the world today can be traced back to man's refusal to look to God for direction.

The Psalmist writes, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalms 139:14).

Humanity on the whole, refuses to read or follow the directions of their maker. Consequently we see a

world constantly on the brink of one disaster or another, and yes, “*eating food that was not meant for human consumption*,” which brings upon us all forms of disease and sickness, and is just another of those human choices that brings more heart ache upon mankind.

For those who seek to follow Jesus Christ and express willing obedience, pleasing to Him and our Father, the understanding of clean and unclean meats is important. However, for those who seek only to please their lusting taste buds, eat up, and be merry, for tomorrow you shall die. This attitude is not recommended.

Following God's “clean and unclean” food laws may not be a matter of our salvation perhaps, but who wants to take the chance? Our obedience to them does demonstrate our faith and trust in His word. God looks upon our attitude in response to His laws. Anyone can give lip service, but not everyone will show his convictions in God's Word by physically doing what He says. As the Apostle James stated, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19-20).

God would not tell us to do something if it were not in our best interest.

The Clean and Unclean

Just what is meant by *clean and unclean*?

It was in the first five books of the Bible that God revealed to Moses the instructions God had for man regarding which kinds of animal flesh man should or should not eat. You will find an adequate list in (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).

These fundamental laws were revealed to man to show man what the digestive system of his body could properly assimilate.

There is no question that Noah was aware of the distinction between clean and unclean animals (Genesis 7:1-5). However, these laws were being violated by most of the world's population, therefore God re-established these laws with the nation He was founding, the nation of Israel (Leviticus 11:1-2).

Some will argue that these laws of clean and unclean were only for the Nation of Israel, but this does not change the make up of the food in question as to whether or not it is good for the health and well being of the human body, no matter what nation you are from.

This fundamental law is a part of God's law. And it is not a part of the sacrificial law system now embodied in Christ's sacrificial law system now embodied in Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1-10). The law of clean and unclean meats is for all humanity.

The animals whose flesh properly digests and nourishes the human body were so made in the original creation. There was never any change made in the structure of the human body at the time of the flood, or at the time of Jesus crucifixion or at any other time. It can't be found where God made some drastic change in the make-up of animal flesh, so that what once was unfit for food will now digest properly and supply the needs of the body. The unclean animals before the flood have remained unclean.

Notice, before the Flood, Noah took into the ark of the Clean animals to be eaten for food, by Sevens; but of the unclean, of which he was not to eat during the Flood, by Two's, only enough to preserve their lives (Genesis 7:2). The inference is inescapable that the additional clean animals were taken aboard to be eaten for food while Noah and his family were in the ark.

Prior to the flood vegetables were the main constituent of diet. After the flood God gave Noah not merely the green herb, (vegetables), as the major part of

diet, but of every type of living creature, clean animals, clean fish, clean fowl (Genesis 9:3 and Leviticus 11).

This verse does not say that every living, breathing creature is clean and fit to eat, but that "as the green herb have I given you all things." God did not give poisonous herbs as food. He gave man the healthful herbs of the earth.

Man at that time, even if he desired to, could not determine what flesh foods are harmful. That is why God had to determine for us in His word which meats are clean. Since the flood every moving clean, healthful nonpoisonous type of animal life is good for food, in the same manner as God gave the healthful nonpoisonous herbs. Therefore, the instruction we receive in chapter eleven of the book of Leviticus is not some ritualistic regulation for the Mosaic period only.

It should be understood by mankind in general that God is the creator of all, and the author of all law. He gave to mankind a dominion mandate. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:28). This involves the fundamental responsibility for research, development, education, and all other lawful activities of mankind for the purpose of improving the quality of his health, life, and environment.

This dominion mandate gives humans stewardship under the Creator to "Subdue the Earth." Certainly, if man has all this authority from God, by now, after nearly six thousand years he should know what food is good for consumption. Yet most individuals choose not to follow even the simple dietary food laws discovered by professional men of medicine and science. They simply insist on having their own way, eating whatever tastes good, in violation of God's food laws, and possibly shortening their life by committing suicide on the installment plan.

Review

1. Noah knew the distinction between clean and unclean meats.

2. Clean and unclean meats will be found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

3. These laws of clean and unclean meats were not just for Israel, but all mankind.

4. Animals that were unclean for human consumption are still unclean after Christ's crucifixion.

5. Noah took into the ark clean animals by seven's.

6. As the green herb have I given you all things.

7. God gave man healthful herbs to eat, and clean meats to match.

8. God gave man dominion over the earth.

9. Man is in a position of stewardship over earth under God.

Why the Hog

When God said, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Genesis 9:3), He did not mean that we should eat the flesh of unclean animals. Certainly we do understand, that God did not intend for us to eat poisonous toad stools, poison oak, or poison ivy. Since we are intelligent enough to know not to eat poisonous green herbs, we also should know it is unsafe to eat the unfit or "unclean" meats.

God states that the only flesh He permits us to eat comes from animals that *divide the hoof* and *chew the cud* (Leviticus 11:2-3). Animals such as the antelope, buffalo, cow, deer, gazelle, giraffe, ox, and sheep, are clean animals.

His instructions are easy to understand concerning clean and unclean meats. Notice the instruction concerning the hog (swine). "And the swine [pig], though he *divide the hoof...yet chews not the cud*, it is unclean to you" (Leviticus 11:7).

There is always purpose and order in everything God does or creates. Why then the "hog". The hog was created to be a scavenger. He was made to help clean the earth of refuse and filth. In order to survive on this diet God

equipped the hog with elimination tubes or glands just above the hoofs on each foreleg. Through these openings the hog eliminates a puss-like substance a fluid of waste and poison. This is what causes the hog to exude such a malodorous stench.

God created these animals to roam the land and forests, but man has penned them up and forced them to wallow in their own filth.

It is a well known fact today that animal fats are a big factor in producing cholesterol in the blood stream. Too much cholesterol in the blood causes atherosclerosis, a form of hardening of the arteries. It is caused by cholesterol, the fatty-like substance, collecting on the inner walls of the arteries. While it can correctly be said that heart disease is the *number one killer in America*, it is apparent also that atherosclerosis contributes in making heart disease the number one of all killers.

From the Monterey County daily newspaper, The Herald comes the following report. March 15, 2000. "Researchers in Virginia have created the world's first litter of cloned pigs, marking the fourth kind of mammal ever to be cloned and moving scientists one step closer to a controversial goal of growing pigs with gene-altered organs for transplantation into people. PPL's managing director in Scotland, said the feat would accelerate the company's efforts to develop genetically modified pigs with "humanized" organs that could be transplanted to people without risk of rejection."

What a modern day paradox! If you break God's law by eating Hog meat and clog up your arteries causing your heart to fail, don't worry, Modern medical science will give you a "*hog heart*" from a cloned pig that will only beat for you!

Review

1. The phrase, "*even as the green herb have I given you all things,*" does not mean we can eat unclean animals.

2. God did not give us poison ivy or poison oak to eat. Neither did He give us Swine to eat.

3. *Animals that are clean divide the hoof and chew the cud.*

4. *The hog divides the hoof, but does not chew the cud, and is therefore unclean.*

5. *The hog was created to be a scavenger.*

6. *The hog eliminates poisons and waste from glands on his forelegs.*

7. *By penning hogs up they are forced to wallow in their own waste.*

8. *Hogs were created to roam the land and forests to clean up the earth.*

Hog Abomination

Out of all the animals that God pronounced unfit for human consumption, the hog (swine) has been shown to be the most despicable and loathsome (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14). God pronounced it an abomination to eat its flesh (Isaiah 65:4). God speaks in no uncertain terms, He is coming in anger and fury, rebuking with flames those who defy His clear instructions and warnings. The world continues to disobey and through ignorance, which there is no excuse for, and wilful disobedience, suffers degeneration and physical depravity. "For by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, *eating swine's flesh*, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord (Isaiah 66:16-17).

Because of mankind's rush to be out from under God's holy and righteous law even some ministries approve the eating of swine's flesh and sanction ham suppers in their own churches. God was certainly correct when He said that we eat swine's flesh and the broth of abominable things are in our vessels.

Wherever we find swine mentioned in the Bible it depicts a low state, or the lowest state to which any person can fall. The prodigal son, after squandering all his wealth, ended up feeding husks to swine, and even eating of the husks himself. To eat the food the pigs had touched was to be degraded beyond

belief. He had truly sunk to the depths (Luke 15:15). We are strongly advised by Jesus not to cast pearls (God's truth) before swine (Matthew 7: 6). In the book of Proverbs God compares a woman who does not practice discretion, to the snout of a swine containing a jewel of gold (Proverbs 11:22).

The Apostle Peter in speaking about individuals who have learned about Christ and salvation, and have been greatly influenced by the truth, then turn and reject the truth and return to sin, as being like a dog or sow. "But it happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:22).

Because of what Jesus said in the book of Mark, many people believe that Jesus abrogated the distinction between clean and unclean, "making all meats clean."

In the New Testament, Jesus never said one word about all unclean meats being made clean. In Mark 7:1-13 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and called them hypocrites because they were more concerned about ceremonially "*washing their hands*" than they were about the important matters such as honoring parents (verses 10-12). They were more concerned about the small amount of "*dirt*" they might eat if they did not wash their hands. Notice again, there is not one mention of clean or unclean meats.

Jesus continues to scold them because they lay aside God's commandments and teach the commandments of men (verses 6-9).

Finally, in Verse 19 we see the verse people suppose gives them license to eat any kind of meat they want to. But notice the explanation Jesus gives His disciples. "Don't you perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him" (Mark 7:18). Why is this true? "Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?" (Mark 7:19). This does not say all meats are clean! Jesus is

speaking of a normal bodily function that expels all foods, and also the small amount of “dirt” you might get on your food if you eat with unwashed hands or pots and pans. Jesus went on to enumerate all the things that defile the man (Mark 7:20-23).

Dirt does not defile a man, it is the evil thoughts of the heart, when acted upon that defile the man.

The first three Gospels tell the story of Jesus casting unclean spirits (demons) out of a man. At their own request the demons are given permission to enter into the unclean flesh of a herd of swine. *The entire herd was destroyed* (Matthew 8; Mark 5; and Luke 8).

Because of advanced farm feeding methods and refrigeration, many believe the flesh of the hog to be safe for human consumption. However, a hog is still a swine. Nothing can change that.

Swine are scavengers and their flesh is susceptible to a greater number of diseases than any other domestic animal, with most of their ills transmissible to man. According to modern medical science, pork products are a contributing factor of cancer.

Some of the diseases passed from Swine to man are *trickinosis, tapeworm, swine erysipelas, swine influenza, roundworm, undulant fever, food poisoning, hog cholera, boils and a host of others.*

The animals pronounced unfit for human consumption by God can, under normal conditions become infected with the trickinosis parasite. Herbivorous domestic animals such as cattle, sheep and goats do not become infected with the parasite since they are not scavengers and do not eat meat.

God’s instruction to us in the Bible is not to eat the fat or the blood (Leviticus 3:17; 7: 23; Deuteronomy 12:16).

The fat and the blood contain the poisons and diseases of the flesh. The blood stream is the life of the body. It carries the nutrients to all parts of the body. The blood then returns the poisons, dead cells, and tissues and carries them to the various organs in the body for excretion. If an animal is

diseased or laden with poison and we eat the blood or fat, we then ingest a concentrated diet of disease and poison!

Our God is our Lawgiver, Creator, and Savior, and He is also our Master dietitian. His instructions to us in all things are given in love and concern for our well being.

In the book of Deuteronomy God enumerates the *blessings for obedience* and the *curses for disobedience* (Deuteronomy 28).

He has set before us the blessings and the cursings and told us to choose rightly. “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

By building godly character, by always choosing God’s way, and by overcoming every obstacle standing between God and ourselves, we can become the sons and daughters of God, being blessed with long life and good health!

Review

1. *It is an abomination to eat the flesh of the hog.*
2. *For by fire and by sword will the Lord plead with all men.*
3. *Those that eat swine’s flesh and the mouse shall be consumed.*
4. *To reject the truth after once accepting it is like a sow returning to it’s own wallow.*
5. *Unclean spirits cast out of a man by Jesus entered into a herd of swine and cast themselves over a cliff.*
6. *Feeding methods and refrigeration does not make the flesh of a hog clean.*
7. *Most ills of the hog are transmissible to man.*
8. *We are not to eat the fat or blood of animals.*
9. *Blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience will be found in Deuteronomy 28.*
10. *God has set before all people, life and death, blessing and cursing, urging us to “choose life.”*

11. *“Purging all meats” is another way of explaining the bodily function of elimination.*

12. *“Purging all meats” does not mean unclean meats are now made clean.*

13. *Jesus never said unclean meats are now made clean.*

MAMMALS

Characteristics: Bears young live (not eggs), suckle their young, breathe through lungs, hair on skin, constant body temperature, four-chambered heart.

Clean

The Bible says that animals are permitted for food which chew the cud and part the hoof. These animals are herbivores, have incisors in upper jaws, stomach with four compartments, hollow or solid horns.

Examples: Cow, sheep, goat, buffalo, deer, gazelle, antelope, ox, giraffe.

Unclean

1. Parts the hoof but does not chew the cud. Walks on hooves, possess canine and incisor teeth.

Examples: Pig, bear, hippo.

2. Chews the cud but does not part the hoof. Small hooves like nails, walks on cushion-like pads, tusk-like canines on both jaws and incisor teeth on upper jaws, stomach has only three compartments.

Examples: Camel, llama.

3. Solid-hoofed.

Herbivorous, single-stomach, incisor teeth on both upper and lower jaws.

Examples: Horse, donkey, mule, zebra.

4. Carnivores.

Six incisors and two sharp canine teeth on both jaws, four or five toes with claws on each foot and walk either on their toes or their paws.

Examples: Lion, leopard, dog, wolf, jackal, fox, hyena, bear.

5. Other mammals, neither chews cud nor parts hoof.

Examples: Ape, bat (even though found with birds in Leviticus 11:19), elephant, hare, mouse, rat, whale.

FISH AND FOWL

We must turn to the Bible for our definition of what fish and fowl are good food.

FISH

“Whatsoever hath *fins and scales* in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat” (Leviticus 11:39). It is clarified even more in Verse 10. “And all that have not fins and scales in the seas...they shall be an abomination unto you.”

An often asked question is, what fish have both fins and scales?

Two significant points are worth remembering. Many fish have very small insignificant scales or small patches of scales near the head and tail fin. In either case, such fish are clean and fit for food.

A number of commonly known unclean fish that are scaleless and not fit for food are, catfish, eels, paddlefish, sculpins, sticklebacks, sturgeons and swordfish. These fish do not have true scales.

Other forms of sea life unfit for human consumption are abalone, clams, crabs, lobsters, oysters, scallops, shrimp, whale. A complete list of clean fish would be too long to enumerate.

The following is a short list of the most important clean fish having both scales and fins. They are albacore, anchovy, barracuda, bass, black fish, bowfin, buffalo carp, characin, cod, croaker, darter, flounder, goby, grayling, haddock, halibut, herring, jack, mackerel, minnow, mooneye, mullet, needlefish, perch, pike, salmon, sardine, shad, silver side, smelt, snapper, sole, sucker, sunfish, surfscout, tarpons, trout, tuna, weakfish, whitefish. For further research try your public library.

FOWLS

We now come to the question of what *fowls* are fit for human consumption?

We will find our answer in Leviticus 11:13-19 and Deuteronomy 14:11-20.

These sections reveal specific varieties of birds *unfit* for human consumption.

Strange as it may seem, no clean birds are listed. Only about two dozen *unclean* birds are listed out of thousands found the world over.

These *unclean birds* illustrate the characteristics of all unclean birds. They fall into types each of which is unclean “*after its kind.*”

The important question now is, how do these unclean birds differ from those known to be clean or fit for human consumption?

Please note, that the characteristics of clean fowl are, of course, determined by the dove and the pigeon (Luke 2:24 and Leviticus 1:14-17) which were anciently used for sacrifice. The quail is clean since God provided it for food in (Numbers 11:31-32), and the sparrow is clean since it was sold for food and Christ recognized this use (Luke 12:6).

It is by comparing the differences between these clean birds and those listed as unclean, we can arrive at the following characteristics of clean birds.

Clean

1. They must not be birds of prey.
2. They catch food thrown to them in the air, but they bring to the ground and divide with their bills. (Unclean birds devour it in the air, or press it with one foot to the ground and tear it with their bills.)
3. They must have an elongated middle front toe and a hind toe.
4. They must spread their toes so that three front toes are on one side of a perch and the hind toe on the other side.
5. They must have craws or crops.
6. They must have a gizzard with a double lining which can easily be separated.

Examples: Duck, goose, hen, house sparrow, partridge, peacock, pheasant, pigeon, quail.

Unclean

1. Birds of prey.

a. Falcon-like birds are carnivores, have hooked beaks, sharp talons bent like hooks.

Examples: Eagle, kite, hawk, buzzard.

b. Vulture-like birds feed on carrion, bare neck (usually), thick bill which is solid, talons blunt and only slightly inclined.

Examples: Griffin vulture, black vulture, Egyptian vulture, bearded vulture.

2. Night birds of prey. Large head and eyes, four toes (two pointing forward and two backward).

Examples: Owl.

3. Water and marsh fowls. All unclean with exception of goose and duck.

4. Other birds.

Examples: Crow, swift, ostrich.

Some unclean birds such as the roadrunners, woodpeckers and the parrot family (which divide their toes so that two are on either side of a perch), aquatic and wading birds and gulls which have no crops or craws, no double lining of gizzards, and often no hind toe or elongated middle front toe, are not listed specifically in the Bible.

AMPHIBIANS

Characteristics: Amphibians are vertebrates born in water, living in water, on land, or both. During the (larva, tadpole) stage, they breathe with gills, and the adult stage either with lungs or gills. Their body temperatures will change according to the medium in which they live.

CLEAN

There are no clean amphibians.

UNCLEAN

Examples: Salamander, newt, toad, frog.

REPTILES

Characteristics: Creeping and crawling things which have short legs or none at all, so that they move close to the ground or drag along it, live mostly on dry land, have lungs, majority lay eggs with soft shell in which the white and the yolk are mixed, cold blooded

(temperature adjusts to the environment), skin covered with scales.

CLEAN

There are no clean reptiles.

UNCLEAN

Reptiles are included in the general prohibition. "And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination" (Leviticus 11:41-42). The crocodile would be included in this prohibition by "whatsoever has no fins or scales in the water" (Leviticus 11:12). All species of snake are prohibited.

Examples: Black snake, viper, cobra.

INVERTEBRATES

Characteristics: Largest number of species in the animal kingdom. They have no bony skeleton, their skin is either bare or covered with a shell. They reproduce by a simple division of the body, by laying eggs or bringing forth their offspring alive. The smallest creatures of this group are the protozoa whose existence was not known until the invention of the microscope.

CLEAN

Among the millions of species of insects there are only a few that are permitted for human consumption. "Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind" (Leviticus 11:21-22).

UNCLEAN

Most invertebrates are an abomination and prohibited. Those which live in the water are under the prohibition either of fish which lack fins and scales or of any living thing which is in the waters. "And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move

in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you" (Leviticus 11:10). Those which live on land are forbidden also. "Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination" (Leviticus 11:42).

Examples: Snail, oyster, squid, jellyfish, sponges, protozoa.

Review

1. *Fins and scales identify the edible clean fish.*

2. *The dove and pigeon are clean and were used in ancient sacrifices.*

3. *God provided quail for the Israelites, therefore it is clean meat.*

4. *Sparrows were sold for food during Jesus' time and are clean.*

5. *There are no clean reptiles.*

6. *The locust, beetle, and grasshopper, are clean insects.*

7. *The snail, oyster, squid, jellyfish, sponge, protozoa, are unclean invertebrates.*

8. *All amphibians are unclean.*

Peter's Vision

Many believe because of Peter's vision in Acts 10, of a container like an enormous sheet or sailcloth tied at the corners descending to him as it was let down to the earth filled with all kinds of quadrupeds, wild animals, reptiles of the earth, and birds of the air that God was telling Peter the dietary laws were abolished (Acts 10:11-12).

There came a voice to him saying, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat" (Acts 10:13).

Peter was with Jesus throughout His ministry. Certainly if Jesus had taught that the Old Testament dietary laws were abolished and that meats previously termed "unclean" were now cleansed it could hardly have gone unnoticed. This would have been a highly controversial (and highly significant) change. Peter could hardly have missed the significance of it.

Peter's reply to the Lord was, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:14).

Then the voice from heaven replied and told Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common (Acts 10:15).

These events occurred three times and the vessel was received up again into heaven (Acts 10:10-16).

Notice in Verse 17 that Peter doubted what this vision should mean. Whatever response we might have expected from Peter it seems unlikely that he would have "doubted in himself" what the vision might mean. Peter's initial doubt makes no sense if Jesus had plainly taught the cleansing of all meats.

The context of Acts 10 shows that Peter's vision had to do with *people, not meat*. "You know how it is unlawful for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

It is obvious, unclean meats were still unclean, but people who had been considered "unclean" were no longer to be considered unclean. God was showing Peter and the pious Jews of that day, who treated the gentiles (people of other nations) as unworthy of Godly acceptance, that, "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:34-35).

While Peter yet spoke these words an amazing event unfolded: "The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-45).

Among the Jews of the first century, uncircumcised Gentiles (people of other nations), were considered unclean, and it was considered unlawful according to the Jewish tradition, not the Law of Moses, for a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile and eat with him. But the intentions of Jesus Christ was to have all people regardless of nationality, in His

church that He was building, provided they would repent of their ways of sin and accept Him as their saviour. The purpose of the vision then was to make the intentions of Christ quite clear to Peter.

As time passed many gentiles accepted Christ as their saviour, and entered the church. They also embraced the sabbath, annual festivals and holy days, clean/unclean laws, along with the ten commandments.

Cornelius was a gentile, and he accepted all of God's laws. "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feareth God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:1,2). It is quite clear that Cornelius knew the God of the Hebrews, knew and kept God's Old Testament laws, and had a good reputation among the Jews.

Scholars will tell us that during the first century there were three classes of people. There were the pagans, both the idol worshipers and the irreligious. There were the proselytes of Judaism who submitted to the rite of circumcision and became Jews, and there were those who were known as "God fearers" who, though uncircumcised, worshipped the true God, believed the Scriptures, and even went to the synagogues on the Sabbath Day.

Cornelius was a "God fearer." He is described as "one that feared God" (Acts 10:2, 22).

Most of the converts to Christianity at this time were "God fearers." It is most unlikely these people would abandon any of God's laws which they had so devoutly embraced.

Peter's vision was not about Jesus Christ changing His Father's clean/unclean laws, but it was all about accepting all people into God's Church and not calling them common or unclean.

Review

1. Peter's vision in Acts 10 does not make unclean meat clean.

2. Jesus never taught that the O.T. Dietary laws were abolished.

3. Peter would have known if Jesus had changed the dietary laws.

4. Peter doubted what his vision could possibly mean.

5. If Jesus had taught Peter the laws of clean/unclean were done away with, Peter would never have doubted the meaning of the vision.

6. The context of Acts 10 shows the vision had to do with people not meats.

7. Peter was being shown not to call any man common or unclean.

8. People that the Jews of that day considered common and unclean, were not to be considered this way, by followers of Christ.

9. The purpose of the vision was to make Christ's intentions clear to Peter.

10. It is clear, Peter's vision had nothing to do with making unclean meats clean.

11. Cornelius was a "God fearer" and was described as one that "feared God".

12. It is most unlikely that the people known as "God fearers" would abandon God's laws.

Common or Unclean

There are two different words in the Greek which are many times carelessly translated "common" or "unclean."

Peter used both of these words when he said, "Not so Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is *common* (*koinos*) or *unclean* (*akathartos*)" (Acts 10:14).

Koinos, means polluted through external misuse. *Akathartos*, means unclean and impure by nature.

A hog (swine) is unclean (*akathartos*) by its very nature and not suitable for human consumption.

A cow is clean, suitable for human consumption, but can become common (*koinos*) by (1) improper killing or bleeding of the meat (strangulation), (2) disease, (3) or being offered to idols. Paul used the Greek word for "common" (*koinos*) throughout (Romans 14:14). He did not use the Greek word for "unclean" (*akathartos*).

Clearly then, Paul knew that no clean foods which God has sanctified are by nature polluted, but vegetarians who were weak in the faith, weak in understanding God's word, thought meats should not be eaten. To such a vegetarian, "to him," not to others, that meat seemed to be polluted. His conscience defiled the meat for him; he would become upset if he were to eat meat. But that does not make the meat polluted in fact or for everybody else.

Therefore, the context of Romans 14 is whether to be a meat eater or to be a vegetarian. Another reason for not eating meat is that some people thought it had been made common by becoming polluted or defiled, possibly because it had been offered to an idol. If you had recently repented of being an idol worshiper, it would bother your conscience to eat meat offered to an idol, because you think it is defiled. Those who believed this were to follow their conscience and not eat such meat because if you believe a thing to be sinful, you should not do it, even though it really is not sinful. "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

The only circumstance in which clean meats are ever common or polluted is when the clean animals have died of themselves or when the blood has not been properly drained. That is why the apostles and elders who gathered at Jerusalem forbade the use of meat from strangled animals and meat with the blood in it (Acts 15:20).

Such animal flesh was called "common" because it could be given to strangers or aliens in Old Testament times if those people wanted to eat it. They were the common or polluted people, of other nations, not the chosen and clean people, Israel (Deuteronomy 14:21).

In New Testament times, clean meat offered to idols was prohibited if it had been polluted by strangulation or if the blood were remaining in it. Otherwise the meat was permitted to be eaten if it did not offend anyone.

Paul devoted the entire 8th and 10th chapters of 1 Corinthians to instructions on not raising the question of meats offered to idols. "But if any man say unto you, 'This is offered in sacrifice unto idols,' eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake" (1 Corinthians 10:28). In other words, if clean meats offered to idols were not polluted, you could eat of them unless it offended someone. Under those circumstances the meat became common, not to you, but to the other person who raised the question about idols. Notice: "Conscience, I say not thine own, but of the other" (Verse 29).

That is why Paul said in Romans "But to him that esteemeth any thing to be common, to him it is common" (Romans 14:14).

Review

1. *Common (koinos), means polluted through external misuse.*

2. *Unclean (akathartos), means unclean and impure by nature.*

3. *A hog is unclean by its very nature, and not suitable for human consumption.*

4. *A cow is clean suitable for human consumption, but can become common (koinos), by improper bleeding, strangulation, disease, or being offered to an idol.*

5. *No clean foods God has sanctified are by nature unclean.*

6. *If you believe a thing to be sinful you must not partake of it.*

7. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.*

8. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

Being Holy

Is it really important for a follower of Christ to keep the clean/unclean laws found in the Old Testament?

In Leviticus 1:1 God spoke to Moses out of the Tabernacle and instructed him to teach the children of Israel the law of the offerings as found in (Leviticus chapters 1-7).

Note also that all these sacrifices were to be burnt. None of it was to be eaten

by man, it was a sweet smelling savor unto the Lord.

Only clean animals were acceptable to God, such as the bullock, sheep or goat, turtledove, and oxen. No unclean animals were ever offered to God by His priesthood.

In Leviticus the eleventh chapter God gives instructions as to what is clean and unclean. He goes on to say "For I am the Lord your God that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be *holy*, for I am *Holy* (Leviticus 11:45).

God expected the Israelites to eat as He did the clean animals, and not eat unclean animals. Not to obey Him would make you *unholy!*

In 70 A. D. God's temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the worship of God in that temple ceased.

We might ask the question, where is God's temple today?

"What know you not that your body is the *temple of the Holy Spirit* which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19).

For those who have accepted Christ Jesus as saviour, are duty bound not to follow the dictates of their fleshly desires, which leads to the detriment of their bodies. For they are like slaves, bought at a slave auction with the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Paul also warned the Corinthians not to defile the temple of God. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are (1 Corinthians 3:16).

It is easy for some to dismiss the Old Testament as being without relevancy in their lives now that they are Christians. Paul did not think so. He reminded the early church that just as Israel was baptized unto Moses, they, and we Christians today, are united in Christ by baptism (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

Paul went on to say that those things that happened to the Israelites were to be examples for us today (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Again, Paul in speaking to the Romans, admonished them to lay aside their own daily desires and follow Christ, offering themselves as living sacrifices. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, "*Holy*" acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1). Dare we pollute our bodies with unclean meat since they are a living sacrifice to God?

If we defile our physical bodies which are, and make up the temple of God, by eating unclean meat, we have sinned. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4).

By having a "so what" attitude about clean and unclean meats, and by not being careful of what we eat, we allow sin to come into the innermost part of our mind (the *Holy of Holies*"), thereby defiling that most holy place. If this is not realized and repented of, God cannot continue to dwell there.

If we neglect to eat clean physical meats, eventually we will become lax, and neglect to eat the proper spiritual meats.

"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils" (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Real Christians, followers of Christ Jesus, only place on their tables the food God Himself permitted on His altar or table, the clean animals listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

When viewed in the light of all the Scriptures, clean and unclean meats become very important.

Review

1. *Only clean animals were acceptable to God for sacrifice to Him.*

2. *God gave the clean/unclean meat laws to Israel and said, "You shall therefore be Holy, for I am Holy.*

3. *Not to obey God in all things would make us unholy!*

4. *Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.*

18

Understanding Clean and Unclean Meats

Test Yourself

Write your answers
on a separate piece
of paper.

Check your answers
with the answers
found at the end of
the test.

The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

True or False Questions

1. Noah did not understand the distinction between clean and unclean meats.
2. Clean and unclean meats will be found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
3. These laws of clean and unclean meats could not be for all mankind.
4. Animals not fit for human consumption were still unclean after the crucifixion of Jesus.
5. Noah took into the Ark unclean animals by seven's.
6. God gave man healthful herbs to eat and clean meats to match.
7. Man is in a position of Stewardship over earth under God.
8. Even as the green herb have I given you all things, means you can eat all meats.
9. Animals that are clean divide the hoof and chew the cud.
10. The hog divides the hoof, so he is clean meat.
11. The hog was created only to eat corn and wheat.
12. The hog eliminates poisonous waste from his forelegs.
13. Hogs were created to roam freely the land and forests scavenging for its food.
14. It is abominable not to eat swine flesh.
15. There will be those God will consume because they eat swine flesh and the mouse.
16. To accept then reject the Godly life is to be like a sow returning to wallow in its own waste.
17. The hog is by nature a clean animal to eat.
18. It's alright to eat pork chops as long as you fry them well.
19. Most ills of the hog are transmissible to man.
20. It's alright to eat the blood or fat of a clean animal.
21. Blessings for obedience will be found in Deuteronomy 28.
22. Cursings for disobedience will be found in Deuteronomy 28.
23. God wants all mankind to choose life and live.
24. Purging all meats does not mean unclean meats are now clean.
25. Jesus never said unclean meats are now made clean.

18

Test Yourself

(Continued)

26. Fins and scales do not identify the clean fish.
27. The dove might not be a clean bird.
28. The sparrow is a clean bird.
29. All reptiles are good to eat.
30. Oh no. The Locust, Beetle, and Grasshopper are clean insects? Yuck!
31. It is ok to eat snails if they are large.
32. Peter's vision in Acts 10 makes it alright to eat anything, right?
33. Jesus never taught that the O. T. dietary laws were abolished.
34. The context of Acts 10 has to do with people not meats.
35. Whatever is not of faith is sin.
36. No clean foods God has sanctified are by nature unclean.
37. Our bodies are not the temple of the Holy Spirit.
38. The things the Israelites experienced are not relevant to us today.
39. Our bodies can't be living sacrifices to God.
40. Not to obey God's clean and unclean dietary laws will make us unholy.
41. The food laws are done away due to Christ's sacrifice.
42. Matthew 5 teaches us God's law is still valid today.
43. Isaiah 66 confirms God will take issue with those eating swine's flesh in the future.
44. God's law of "clean and unclean" will be taught during His future kingdom reign.

For information on the Church of God International congregation nearest you, write to The Church of God International, 3900 Timms St., Tyler, TX 75701, call the home office at (903) 939-2929, or visit www.cgi.org.

Answers to True or False Questions: Score Yourself: Miss 0-3 = Excellent; Miss 4-6 = Good; Miss 7-9 = Fair

Answers: 1. False 2. False 3. False 4. True 5. False 6. True 7. True 8. False 9. True 10. False 11. False 12. True 13. True 14. False 15. True 16. True 17. False 18. False 19. True 20. False 21. True 22. True 23. True 24. True 25. True 26. False 27. False 28. True 29. False 30. True 31. False 32. False 33. True 34. True 35. True 36. True 37. False 38. False 39. False 40. True 41. False 42. True 43. True 44. True



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