
The Bible

-and-

Man's Food

A Study of the
Clean and Unclean Meats

THE BIBLE AND MAN'S FOOD

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"God is love!" This is one of the most profound truths in the Bible. The Creator, the Father of all mankind, so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation. God desires that we be joyful and He has given us of His abundance of material things. "...*The living God, who giveth us riches all things to enjoy*" (1 Timothy 6:17). One of the basic needs of man is food and God has provided a plentiful supply of good things for all. And He has said,

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour . . . (Ecclesiastes 2:24).

God made the world that man should live in it and enjoy it. He made plants and animals which man could use for food. But He did not make *all* plants and animals for food. This is obvious to everyone for there is no food for man in an elm tree, or in a thistle, or a rose. Most people in the world do not eat cats, lizards, pelicans or crows. But many people do not realize that in the Bible God has specified certain animals as being approved for food and others which are not only disapproved, but are forbidden to be used as food by the people of God.

The Importance of Food

We all know that food is essential to the life of all people and thus it is very important.

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But does it make any difference to God as to just what things we eat? Yes, we find that not only does God want us to be in health, but He has used such a simple thing as food as a test of man's loyalty and obedience.

Consider the scene of the Garden of Eden at the very beginning of the world. God placed the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve, in the garden and He told them that they could use for food the fruit of all the trees in the garden except one. Nothing was said about the fruit of this forbidden tree not being good to eat. It was simply not given to man for food. To eat it would be to disobey God, the Creator. And disobedience to God is sin and "the wages of sin is death." Thus we see in the very beginning that God used food as a great test of obedience. How sad that man failed as we find Adam and Eve eating that which had been forbidden. The result of this disobedience was the fall of man and his banishment from the Garden of Eden. A great curse came upon the earth and mankind. Only the death of the Son of God could atone for Adam's sin and bring release from the curse. How terrible were the results of the very simple act of eating a fruit because that fruit had not been given to man for food. What will it mean to us if we also eat things which God has not given for our food?

God's Classification of Animals

God did not give man permission to use animals for food before the flood. But as the animals went into the ark they were designated as clean and unclean. Only one pair of the

unclean entered while seven of the clean were preserved. After the flood Noah sacrificed one of each of the clean. The others were left to multiply and thus there were many more of the clean than of the unclean. Since nothing is said in Genesis as to *which* animals were clean or unclean or just what the purpose of the designation was, we must get this information in other books of the Bible. Were it not for the later explanation we might make the error of thinking the designations were only to tell which animals were suitable for sacrifice. But our rule of Bible interpretation must always be to allow the Bible to interpret itself, verses in one part being explained by similar references in other parts of the sacred Book.

"Even As the Green Herb"

In giving man permission to use animals for food, the Lord 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).

At first reading this may appear to actually include all kinds of animal life, clean and unclean. But let us notice that the animals were given "even as the green herb."

In Genesis 1:30 it is stated that God had given to the animals "every green herb for meat..." There are no qualifying or limiting phrases. EVERY GREEN HERB was given to animals for food.

In Genesis 1:29 it is stated that God had given to man for food: "...every herb bearing seed, and every tree, in the which is the

fruit of a tree yielding seed . . .”

In the beginning ALL green herbs were given to *animals*. But there is a distinct limitation on the herbs given to *man*. This allows for a limitation in the meaning of Genesis 9:3. "Every moving thing"—but limited—"even as the green herb."

The Laws of God Before Sinai

In the Bible record we do not find any formal codes of law stated until Israel had left Egypt and God had given the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses at Mt. Sinai. This was about 2,500 years after creation. Does this mean that God did not give mankind any laws during all these centuries? No, it does not mean there were no laws for one of the patriarchs who lived during this time was Abraham and of him we read:

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws (Genesis 26:5).

No laws are here recorded, yet Abraham kept the laws of God. Therefore God had given laws and it is reasonable to believe that these included the knowledge of the clean and unclean animals. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob kept flocks and herds but all the animals mentioned being kept for food were cattle, sheep and goats, all later classed as clean. God's people knew which animals were clean and unclean before the Law of Moses was given.

Two Great Codes of Law

When God led His people out of Egypt

He gave them His laws in written form. The first law He gave was the Ten Commandments. At Mt. Sinai, God spoke these commands with a great voice which all the people heard and understood. Then God wrote these commandments on two slabs or tables of stone. This was the great constitutional law containing the basic principles of righteousness and the basic definition of sin. The first four commandments teach that we should love God and make Him first in our lives. As a part of this we are to keep holy the sacred seventh day as a memorial of God's great work of creation. The last six commandments tell us our duty to our fellow man—that which we should and should not do as people of God. Upon this great constitution all the laws, ordinances and statutes of God are based.

After giving the Ten Commandments, God gave a large number of statutes and ordinances—detailed instructions and regulations. God told these to Moses and Moses wrote them upon a great scroll of parchment, made up into a roll which was called a book. This was the book of the Law of Moses—laws of God given through Moses. In this code of law God gave the details of the sacrificial system with the work of the priests and the use of the tabernacle. It is evident that all the regulations which involved animal sacrifices were foreshadows of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and all came to an end at that time. This is plainly taught in the ninth chapter of the book of Hebrews. This Law of Moses also contains the details of the law of clean and unclean animals in the mat-

ter of food. We have noted that long before this Noah evidently had been told which animals were clean and which were unclean. But in the Law of Moses, a *written* record was made and from it we know which were the clean creatures that Noah sacrificed after the flood. The record in the Law of Moses is thus the *source of information* as to the clean and unclean animals for food.

The End of the Law of Moses

The many detailed ordinances and statutes of the Law of Moses with the temple system and the animal sacrifices came to an end when Christ died on the cross. Most were types and shadows of the work of Christ for our salvation. We find this taught in the following Bible verses:

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Ephesians 2:15).

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Colossians 2:14).

Most of the Law of Moses is made up of the laws relating to sacrifices which foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ. There were many different kinds of offerings including such foods as corn, cakes, meal, lambs and cattle. There were meat offerings and drink offerings. (See Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13, 18 and Numbers 28:14.) The Law of Moses

also included many special holy days and sabbaths all of which were celebrated with animal sacrifices. Many of these are described in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus. Speaking of these things which foreshadowed the work and sacrifice of Christ, we read in Hebrews 10:1:

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

In other words there was no salvation in those forms and ceremonies except as they pointed forward to the salvation which Christ would bring. Therefore they were blotted out when Christ died on the cross. Of these things we also read:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come... (Colossians 2:16, 17).

In these verses we have grouped together the mention of some of the "shadows" in the Law of Moses, including meat (offerings) and drink (offerings), new moons, and special feast days and the special and annual sabbaths. All of these were connected with sacrifices and therefore were shadows. But the Ten Commandments, the seventh-day weekly Sabbath, and the distinction between clean and unclean meats had nothing to do with sacrifices and are in no way "shadows" and

therefore did *not* come to an end at the cross.

A Special Sign of God's People

God's people have always been set apart from the world by obedience to His commandments and laws. And like the Sabbath, the law of clean and unclean meats has been, and is, a special sign. This is shown in Leviticus 20 where we read, beginning with verse 23:

And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine (Leviticus 20:23-26).

It is important to note that what was said to Israel at the time of the Exodus was *not* said to them as *one part* of God's people, but to them as *the* people of God on earth. They were to be separate and different from the

heathen people around them. These heathen people committed many terrible sins, some of which are described in the first 21 verses of the 20th chapter of Leviticus. Because these people did such sins we note that God said, "*therefore I abhorred them.*" Those people were defiled by their sins and actually it was their sins which God abhorred and not the Gentile sinners. This is shown by a mention of the Gentiles in the previous chapter, where we read:

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself... (Leviticus 19:33, 34).

Thus it is seen that God never rejected the Gentiles as a people, and they could become Israelites by joining with Israel and would then be under the same laws of God.* (See Leviticus 24:22.) But nothing is ever said in any part of the Bible to indicate that meats which God once designated as *unclean*, could ever become *clean* or be used as food. Again in Leviticus 20, note verse 25:

Ye shall therefore put a difference between clean beasts and unclean... any manner of living thing... which I have separated from you as unclean.

Why were they to make the difference? Because God had separated them from *all* the sins of the heathen, *including* the eating

*For a study of this, send for the tract "God's Treatment of Jews and Gentiles."

of unclean meats. If the Gentiles joined with Israel, the same thing applied to them—they also became a part of the separate people, the people of God. The same thing applies to true Christians today as we find brought out in 2 Corinthians 6:17:

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Compare this passage carefully with Leviticus 20:25, 26 and note the striking similarity. The Sabbath and the distinction of clean and unclean meats are among the special marks of God's people *now*, even as they were in the days of Israel, God's people of old.

Jesus and the Unclean Meats

God's laws for Christians were taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the apostles. When a young man asked Christ what he should do to have eternal life, Jesus answered:

...If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17).

And when the young man wanted to know which commandments Jesus meant, He quoted a part of the Ten Commandments. We find there are also other laws for Christians, for Jesus taught baptism and the observance of the Lord's Supper and feet washing. And indirectly He also taught the observance of the law of clean and unclean meats. This was not a problem at that time for the Jews ob-

served this law very strictly. But one day Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gergesenes. These people were of non-Jewish Persea. There He found a man possessed with devils, and He also found some men keeping a large herd of swine or hogs. Wherever He went, Jesus helped the people by healing the sick and generally doing good. He had pity on the demented man and was about to cast the devils out of him when the demons begged to be allowed to enter into the herd of swine. Jesus, with His divine power, surely knew what would happen if the devils entered into the swine. No doubt these swine were valuable to these people as food. Jesus never took away anything good from anyone. But here were hogs being kept for a wrong purpose. Since Jesus knew what would happen, it is proper to say that He deliberately destroyed those pigs, for as He permitted the devils to enter them, the whole herd dashed down the hill into the sea and were drowned. By this action Jesus taught a great lesson of truth showing that unclean animals should *not* be used for food by anyone. This record is found in Matthew 8:28-34.

Good Meats To Be Received

The apostle Paul did not write very much about the matter of clean and unclean meats probably because this was not a problem at that time. But he showed very clearly that there are some meats to be used and some not for our use. We find this reference in First Timothy 4:3-6. He says that in the last

days some people would depart from the faith and would speak lies,

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth (1 Timothy 4:3).

Notice that he here refers to certain meats—those which God created to be received with thanksgiving. Evidently there are other meats not so created. And there are some who believe and know the truth about this, that is, the truth concerning what meats are created for food. Now we notice the next two verses:

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

We must read this very carefully to get the true teaching. At first glance this seems to teach that man can eat anything—rats, mice, snakes, lizards, worms, flies—every creature! But a little closer observation of the text will show that this is *not* the teaching. Please notice the word "is" which is printed in italics to show that it is a supplied word. This word was put in by the translators. And so it is correct to leave it out and what we do the verse says:

For every creature of God good and nothing to be refused. . . .

In other words, every creature of God which is good is not to be refused.

The great Bible commentator, Dr. Adam

Clarke, has this comment on the verse: "Verse 4. For every creature of God is good, That is, every creature which God has made for man's nourishment, is good for that purpose, and to be thankfully received." This comment goes along with the next verse (1 Timothy 4:5) which shows that *only* the foods which God has set apart for our use are to be received. The verse reads:

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

To sanctify is to set apart or make holy. The Word of God sanctifies some meats as holy for the holy people of God. Other meats are not only not sanctified, but are specifically forbidden.

Unclean Things Not to Be Used

In this study we have already pointed out the comparison between Leviticus 20 and 2 Corinthians 6:17, but here we wish again to point out that the apostle Paul in his instructions to the Christians at Corinth called upon them to be a separate people and to avoid all unclean things. The apostle quotes from the Old Testament, from Isaiah 52:11, and shows that this applies as a part of the Christian teachings. In the quotation to the Corinthians we read:

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

This is apparently a quotation of Isaiah 52:11 which reads:

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

Yes, Christians are to be separate from the world and are not to take part in or use any of the contaminated or improper or unclean things, and this surely includes the forbidden meats.

How Are We to Know Which Meats Are Unclean?

We have found that animals were classed as clean and unclean in the time of Noah, and in the Law of Moses. We have also found that Christ allowed the destruction of a herd of swine. And we have found that the apostle Paul declares that there are meats created to be received with thanksgiving and that these are set apart by the Word of God. We now have the question, *where* are they set apart and *how* can we *know* all the foods which are good and those called unclean? The answer is that the complete classification and identification of the clean and unclean is found in the 11th chapter of Leviticus and in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy. Here is the record for us to read and understand. Here is where we learn what the apostle Paul meant when he said: Christians are not to touch the unclean. The law of Moses as a whole is no longer in effect. We are not called upon to observe the distinction between the clean and unclean *because it is in the Law of Moses.* We have found the word "unclean" men-

tioned in many other places in the Bible. But we find the *identification* here in the Law of Moses. Thus in using this identification, we are *not keeping* the Law of Moses. God has preserved this part of the Bible for us in order that we might know the foods which He created for us to use as food and what animals He has said are unclean and not for our use.

The Classification of Meats

Let us read from Leviticus 11, verses 1-3:

And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that ye shall eat.

Note that this is a general classification applying to a number of different animals. Those which chew the cud and have a divided hoof include the cows, sheep, deer, goats, moose, elk, antelope, buffalo, South American llama, and all such animals. The unclean animals are listed in verses following in Leviticus 11. They include the camel, coney, hare, and swine, and of course all members of the cat family and all of the dog type and bears and the huge animals of Africa including the elephant. None of these chew the cud and have the divided hoof. The mention of the coney, or ground squirrel, and of the hare or rabbit is of special interest because it shows

clearly that the term "unclean" does not mean dirty, for these are among those that keep themselves the cleanest, and have the cleanest habits. All rabbits and squirrels are very clean in their habits, but they are classed right along with the filthy hog as being unclean. Evidently the word means *improper* or *not acceptable*.

After classifying animals, the record next takes up fish and all water creatures. Of these we read:

These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. 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 11:9, 10).

From this we learn that catfish, eels, crabs, lobsters, shrimp, oysters, clams, and all such are not to be eaten by the people of God. Most of these are of the scavenger type which may be the clue as to the reason they are not for man's food. But regardless of what we think of these as being clean or not in the usual sense of the word, they are classed by the Creator as *unclean*, or not created for food for man.

The classification record then takes up the birds and fowls. Here we do not find any general classification but rather a listing of birds and, in many cases, a classification by groups of a type—"after their kind." First

listed as unclean are birds of prey—the eagle, vulture, etc., after their kind. The stork and heron are also mentioned and all after their kind which includes the long-legged wading birds. The owl, pelican, and swan are also mentioned as unclean. But it does *not* include the phrase "after his kind" with the swan. Sometimes there is a question as to whether ducks and geese are classed as clean. Some have thought that all birds with a long neck and web feet are unclean. But this is not in the Bible. The stately, decorative swan is unclean for food, but the ducks and geese are regarded as proper for food and are so considered by the Jews.

It is of special interest to note that among the creatures described as proper for food are locusts, grasshoppers and beetles. All other insects are classed as unclean. We probably do not wish to eat any insects but the three could be eaten if desired.

The chapter closes with words which show that this is a special law of God, the Creator of all things. We read:

For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy: for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast

that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten (Leviticus 11:44, 46, 47).

Notice that the verses just quoted connect holiness with the refraining from the use of the unclean meats. Of course this is not the only thing which can make one holy, but it definitely is one thing. These verses may have been in the mind of the apostle Paul when he said:

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Thus we see that God, the Creator, the Heavenly Father, the One Who gave His Son for our salvation, has said that a part of being holy is to abstain from eating things which He has declared unfit, or not created for food, and which are expressly forbidden for such use. There are no types or shadows of any kind in this matter. It is also not a matter of "works of the law," for there is no act to be done, no ceremony to carry out. It is simply to obey God and use for food the abundant good things which He has given to us, and leave off using anything which He has said we should not use. It is a simple test of obedience to the great God Who has also said:

For I am the Lord, I change not . . . (Malachi 3:6).

In Effect at the Time of the Second Advent of Christ

The second advent of Christ is an event to which all Christians should be looking for-

ward. That great event will mark the end of this age and the ushering in of the Kingdom of Christ. This will be the time of the resurrection to immortality and of salvation for all the true people of God. But it will also be a time of destruction and punishment. Notice this description of the second advent:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8).

Now let us compare this with Isaiah 66: 15-17, and note the similarity:

For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 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.

Yes, this also describes the second advent of Christ and the destruction of the wicked which will come at that time. And we notice that one of the things for which the lost will be condemned will be for the eating of swine's flesh, which is the meat of the hog, commonly called pork. *This is the Word of*

God. It is not a part of the Law of Moses, but is a prophecy of events at the second advent of Christ. Surely no one who wants to be ready to meet Jesus when He comes again will, after studying this verse, want to be found using for food the flesh of the hog, or any other of the meats God has said are unclean.

The Unclean Called Abominable

The word "abomination" is one of the strongest words of denunciation found in the Bible. That which is abominable is something God hates for it is utterly abhorrent and obnoxious. In Leviticus 11:43 we read:

Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them. . . .

Deuteronomy 14 begins the description of the clean and unclean animals by saying:

Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

We find the same thought in the strong denunciation of sinners in Isaiah 65:3, 4 which says:

A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face . . . which eat swine's flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels. . . .

And now we turn to Revelation 21 and we read the description of the lost:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whorc-

mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

Many things of sin are abominable in the sight of God but we have noted that this term is used by the Lord also in connection with unclean meats. To deliberately take for our own use that which God has forbidden us to use, makes us abominable before God. Compare the foregoing verse (Rev. 21:8) with Isaiah 66:16, 17. To escape this terrible fate we must not do anything which God calls abominable or an abomination.

In the 18th chapter of Revelation we find a description of the downfall of the corrupt and wicked systems of this world which are here called Babylon. In declaring the fall of that wicked system the angel declares:

. . . Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Revelation 18:2).

John the Revelator, writing almost a hundred years after the birth of Christ, here refers to some birds as *unclean*. This shows that Christians continued to make these distinctions. Some birds are *clean* and others are *unclean*.

Summary

We now conclude the study of the direct teachings of the Bible on the subject of clean

and unclean meats. We have shown that the designation of clean and unclean was made before the flood. After the flood man was permitted to eat animals for food. But a comparison of the texts shows that God created some things fit for man's food and other things which were not for food. Christians are to refrain from touching (that is, using) any unclean thing. At the time of the second coming of Christ those who justify the use of the unclean by trying to hide behind anything will be consumed with the wicked. The designation of clean and unclean meats is in no sense a type or shadow and did not begin at Sinai or end at the cross. The record in the Law of Moses gives us the needed information so that we know which creatures are approved for food for us. Thus we may eat food, "sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

**AN EXPLANATION OF BIBLE
PASSAGES OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD**

There are several Bible passages which are often misunderstood in connection with the study of the clean and unclean meats. It is often taught that these passages show that the unclean meats have been cleansed and that Christians are now permitted to eat anything they may wish. Let us study to see what these passages actually teach.

Matthew 15:10-20 and Mark 7:14-23

The fifteenth chapter of Matthew and the seventh chapter of Mark describe the same

experience. This begins with the Pharisees finding fault with the disciples of Jesus because they transgressed the tradition of the elders by eating with unwashed hands. This was not a matter of cleanliness but of going through the ceremonial washing prescribed by the Jewish rabbis. Jesus reproved them for holding to the traditions while at the same time making void a commandment of God by not honoring their parents. Then He proceeded to show that eating with unwashed hands would not defile a person. In fact He said:

There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him. . . . Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him: Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? (Mark 7:15, 18, 19).

At first reading it might appear that these verses teach that one cannot sin by eating anything, including unclean meats. But let us study the context to see what Jesus was really teaching. The question being discussed was whether or not it was permissible to eat with unwashed hands. Jesus showed that even if the hands were not clean, the contamination one might receive into his body would not defile him. The body would take care of it. The real defilement comes not from what goes into the mouth, but from what comes out. Jesus listed a number of evil things which could come out in the words or life of a person. These include evil thoughts, thefts, covetous-

ness, wickedness, etc. In other words it is *sin* which defiles a person. Thus it is not the meats which God has classed as unclean, which defile the person, but the *sin of disobedience*. One who eats the unclean is coveting that which he should not have, and is taking it for his wrong use and in doing such he is committing *wickedness*. Many of the unclean meats have been proven to be unhealthful and as such they do definite harm to the body. This is bad in itself but the sin of disobedience is rebellion against God and can result only in destruction.

Acts 10 Peter's Vision

There was a certain officer of the Roman army, a centurion who was a believer in the true God. As he was praying he saw a vision in which he was told to send to Joppa for a man named Peter who would come and tell him what he should do. As the men sent by Cornelius came near Joppa, Peter was on the enclosed housetop of the home where he was staying. He saw a vision of a great sheet let down from heaven upon which were all kinds of animals. A voice from heaven said, "*Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.*" Peter answered,

... *Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven (Acts 10:14-16).*

First let us notice that there were ALL

KINDS of animals on the sheet, both *clean* and *unclean*. Peter could have killed one of the *clean* animals and prepared it and eaten it without disobeying any law of God. But we notice that he put the animals into two classes—*unclean* and *common*. Evidently he considered the clean animals as being contaminated by contact with the unclean. There was no such teaching in the Law of Moses but it was a ceremonial provision of the rabbis. Peter held to this thought and called the clean animals *common* or defiled. He declared that he had not eaten any animals either of the unclean or of the common.

Second let us notice what was said by the voice from heaven for it was very explicit and important. It did NOT say that what God has cleansed, call thou not *unclean*. But it said:

... *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou COMMON (Acts 10:15, capitals added).*

The *unclean* animals are not even mentioned. God did not say He had cleansed them. But He did say that the contamination of the *common*, that is, of the clean animals which had been in contact with the unclean, had been cleansed. After the vision, the men from Cornelius arrived and the Lord told Peter to go with them. Arriving at Caesarea he found a company of Gentiles gathered to hear him. We read:

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come

unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean (Acts 10: 28).

Notice the wonderful lesson which God taught by this experience. God has made all mankind but some wandered away from Him and became strangers or Gentiles. They came into contact with idolatry, immorality, evil practices, and sin of all kinds. These are things which defile or contaminate people. By such sin people are made unclean in the sight of God. The unclean *sins* cannot themselves ever be cleansed. For instance, idolatry can never be made acceptable in the sight of God. It is *unclean* and will always *remain so*. Even so, *unclean animals* can never be made acceptable for food for man because God never made them for that purpose. But the acceptable animals which had been contaminated by coming into contact with the unclean, could be cleansed. This means that Gentiles who have been made unclean by sin, can be cleansed, for we read:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Praise God, anyone of any nation who accepts the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, is cleansed by faith in the shed blood of Christ. And when Peter came to the group of Gentiles, he told what the vision meant to him. It was really not about *animals* at all but about *people*. And it is very wrong to try to change

the meaning to make it apply to the doctrine of clean and unclean meats.

1 Corinthians 8 and 10 Meats Offered to Idols

The instruction which Paul gave to the Corinthian church regarding a special problem they had in regard to foods, is often misunderstood and misinterpreted to appear as though he taught that unclean meats are acceptable food for Christians. A careful study will show that there is no such teaching in these chapters. The problem is introduced in the first verse:

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we have all knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth (1 Corinthians 8:1).

It was evidently a common practice at Corinth for storekeepers to place articles of food before images of Greek gods before offering the food for sale. By this action the Greeks believed the food to be "blessed." Those who were converted to Christ knew that the idols were nothing and that the food, either vegetable or animal, was not better or worse for having been before the idols. Now the problem was that if the unconverted people saw a Christian buy this food, they would conclude that the Christian also regarded the idol and its "blessing." No matter what the Christian might say, if he bought the meat which had been before the idol, he would be judged as believing that the idol was a god.

Paul explains in detail that the idol is

They were not to ask about this and if nothing was said, they could eat any acceptable food. On the other hand concerning the same meats, Paul says:

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, capitals added).

Thus we can see that it is very wrong to try to make these verses teach that it is all right for Christians to buy unclean meats sold in stores or to eat unclean meats if set before them on anyone's table. We no longer have that problem with idols. But we do have the problem of a wicked world selling the unclean meats and we should make every effort to make sure we are not buying or eating it. In the same chapter Paul also says:

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

It is impossible to eat, to God's glory, meats which He has plainly said are not given to us for food.

Nothing is said in these chapters about asking whether or not meat was clean. There was no need for this to be mentioned for it was not a problem. The Christians knew they were not to eat flesh of animals God had called unclean. And there is no hint in either of these chapters (1 Cor. 8 and 10) that unclean meats were to be considered proper for Christians to eat.

nothing and that good food is not made better or worse by being before it. But if there were any danger of others getting the wrong impression, then the Christians were not to buy or eat the meats or other foods which they knew had been before an idol. Notice especially the teaching of the following verse:

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse (1 Corinthians 8:8).

What he is saying is that no one is made better by eating any idol-blessed food and no one suffers any loss by not eating it. But there is nothing in these words to imply that a person may not be made worse, or not become a sinner by eating meats which God in the Bible has classed as unclean. Likewise, refraining from eating the unclean meats is not something for which God will commend us any more than He commends us for not killing or stealing. We are never to be praised for simply living up to our obligations.

In connection with this same problem of meats and idols, Paul says:

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake . . . whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake (1 Corinthians 10:25, 27).

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Romans 14 Nothing Unclean of Itself

For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him (Romans 14: 2, 3).

These verses are sometimes wrongly interpreted to mean that no one should find fault with others because of what they eat, regardless of what it may be. But we notice that the question is whether one might eat only herbs, that is, be a vegetarian. Paul says we should not find fault with the vegetarians and they should not find fault with those who eat meat, for in each case "God has received him." Would God receive, or accept, anyone who eats those things which He did not create to be received as food? Does God accept those who disobey any of His commandments?

These verses simply show that man has a free choice to eat only vegetables or also to eat those meats which God has given for food.

Let us now read verse 14 of this 14th chapter of Romans:

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.

The key words to the understanding of this verse is the phrase "of itself." Nothing is

by its own nature to be regarded as unclean. God made everything good for its purpose. Everything is proper and acceptable in its place. But some things God has designated as being improper for human food. They are not unclean of themselves but God has declared some unclean for human food.

There is an even better explanation of this verse which you may note if your Bible gives a marginal reference for the word "unclean." This word is used three times in the verse and for each the margin gives the word "common." This is the same word which is found in Acts 10:15 in which God said that what He had cleansed was not to be called common. This agrees with the thought that nothing which is good and acceptable may of itself become unacceptable. But good foods may be so regarded by some people. Peter regarded the clean animals on the sheet as being unfit for food and he called them common. The Greek word from which this is translated is given in Strong's Concordance Greek Dictionary as No. 2839 or 2840. The meaning is "defiled" or "polluted." Peter considered the clean animals to be defiled or polluted by being on the same sheet with the unclean. And so people may regard foods which are good, to be unacceptable. Paul is teaching that we should be careful not to give offense by what we eat.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17).

Salvation cannot be attained by eating and drinking certain things. But the first important thing is RIGHTEOUSNESS. One cannot be righteous if he disobeys God in anything, including the eating of those things not created for man's food. But if we are truly righteous, we will have peace and joy and the Spirit of God.

Summary and Conclusion

In the first part of this Bible study we showed the positive teaching of the Bible regarding flesh foods. From the time of the flood animals were classed as *clean* and *unclean* by the Creator. In the Law of Moses God gives the names and descriptions of these animals with their classifications which show us which are the clean and unclean. Christ did not say anything to change the teaching of God about this, and His action in permitting the destruction of the herd of swine shows that they were not to be considered good or to be kept for food. The apostle Paul declares that there are meats created to be used for food and that these are sanctified, or set apart, by the Word of God. He also says we who are Christians are not to touch the "unclean thing." Among those who will be condemned at the second advent of Christ will be those who justify themselves in eating swine's flesh as is shown by Isaiah 66:17. Unclean meats are called "abominable" and their use is disobedience to God. Those who enter the Holy City will be obedient to all the commandments of God (Revelation 22:14).

Several passages in the New Testament which are often thought to show that the unclean meats are cleansed, are found to be not even on the subject of clean and unclean meats. There is abundant good food and man is most healthy and happy when he is obedient to God in this as well as in all other teachings of the Bible. No one will be *saved* or made a better Christian by eating any certain foods, but many will be *lost* by disobeying God in eating things *not given* for human food. Truly the kingdom of God is in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Righteousness means obedience to God. Let us obey and find that peace and joy, now and evermore. Amen.

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