

## Question and Answer

**Question:** Mr. Armstrong stated on several occasions that he would, at times in the early history of the Work, eat pork when visiting the homes of prospective members. In view of these statements, should we today eat pork under these circumstances?

**Answer:** No, we should not. Mr. Armstrong privately qualified his statements about eating pork by saying this was something, in retrospect, he should not have done. The incidents which Mr. Armstrong was relating took place in the early days of the Work. He incorrectly believed at that time that it was better to eat whatever was set before him rather than offend his host. This was based upon his understanding that eating unclean meat, unless lust is involved, is a physical matter. He did not want this physical matter to possibly interfere with the spiritual progress of someone just beginning to learn the truth.

But the biblical teaching not to eat unclean meat is a command of God. Therefore, to knowingly eat unclean meat is a violation of this command that ought not be done for whatever reason. We must also remember that we are lights to those around us by our proper conduct and obedience to God.

Mr. Armstrong came to see the error of this reasoning and on his later international trips, he was careful not to eat unclean meat. In fact, the menus at banquets were often arranged with the input of one of his aides to make sure the food was clean.

While Mr. Armstrong may have eaten unclean meat early in his ministry, he did not do so later, and we should not do so today. Often, the possibility of offense can be completely avoided by notifying the host ahead of time. However, there may be some occasions when we will have unclean meat served to us. When the unclean meat served is only a small portion of the entire meal, we can sometimes avoid it without even saying anything. At other times, we would have to politely decline. Some people assume a food is declined for medical reasons and never question it further. Except for rare occasions, we need not explain the laws of clean and unclean meats. Taking the occasion to preach on the subject might cause undue offense.

*Question: I have heard that the Jews have retained the knowledge of the seven year cycle. If so, shouldn't the Church adopt this cycle to obey God's command concerning the land Sabbath?*

**Answer:** It is true that the Jews have retained the knowledge of a seven-year cycle, although they have never applied it beyond the land of Israel and certain other areas of the Middle East. This is not, however, the biblical cycle because the jubilees are omitted. The ancient practice of having cycles of 50 years ended with the last of the prophets of the Old Testament, because in the late Persian period and succeeding centuries the Jews had no power to control fully the jubilee land titles.

The Jews keep the sabbatical years in the sequence 1979-1980, 1986-1987, 1993-1994 and so on. We are presently in the first year of a new cycle. But this does not mean that we should now all keep the land Sabbath at the same time!

The instructions concerning the land Sabbath do not have the same force as, for example, God's tithing command. When one does not pay his tithes, he is guilty of breaking the commandment against stealing. No such commandment is broken when we do not all keep the land Sabbath *at the same time*. Herbert W. Armstrong long ago recognized that this question for the Church of God *is an administrative decision just as it is for Jews since abandoning the jubilee*. It is the responsibility of each individual to put the general instruction concerning the land Sabbath into practice according to his circumstances.

The idea that blessings will come now only if all observe the same year as the Jews overlooks the fact that the sabbatical years recognized by the Jews are out of sequence with the original jubilee.