

CLEAN AND UNCLEAR MEATS

Topic: Clean and Unclean Meats – key Scriptures

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CLEAN AND UNCLEAR MEATS:

- Our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made! (**Psalm 119:14**).
- The God who designed, created, and made our body has revealed some essential basic knowledge about which meats can be eaten to keep our bodies functioning in tip-top shape; and which ones he never intended us to eat – as these will bring on sickness, disease, aches, pains and a dulled mind.
- Just as every plant that God caused to grow out of the ground was not designed for food, so it is with animal flesh. Everything was created with a purpose, but not everything for the purpose of eating.
- Jesus who came to set us an example did eat meat (**Genesis 18:7-8; Luke 24:42-43**).
- When the first written revelation of God came to man through Moses, God instructed man as to which kinds of animal flesh man ought or ought not to eat. You will find these listed in – **Leviticus 11 & Deuteronomy 14**.
- There are physical laws that God put in motion, working in our bodies, regulating our health. This meat question has to do with these laws.
- The animals whose flesh properly digests and nourishes the human body were made that way in the original creation. No change was ever made in the structure of men's bodies at the time of the flood, or at the time of Jesus; death, or any other time. Neither did God make some sudden change in the structure of animal flesh, so that what once was unfit for food will now digest properly and supply the body's needs.
- The unclean animals were unclean before the Flood in Noah's day. 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, by two's (**Genesis 7:1-3**). The inference is inescapable that the additional clean animals were taken aboard to be eaten for food while Noah and his family were on the ark.

Question: Which ANIMALS are clean and fit for human consumption? Which are not?
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Answer: Deuteronomy 14:6 "And you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split in two parts, *and that* chews the cud, among the animals." (**Also see Leviticus 11:3**.)

See – Deuteronomy 14:4-8 & Leviticus 11:2-8 – clean and unclean animals.

Note: Cud is a portion of food that returns from a ruminant's stomach to be chewed a second time. Animals that chew the cud – are also called ruminating animals.

Question: Which WATER CREATURES are clean and fit for human consumption? Which are not?
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Answer: Leviticus 11:9 “These you may eat of all that *are* in the water; whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers – that you may eat.” (**Also see Deuteronomy 14:9**).

See – Leviticus 11:9-12 & Deuteronomy 14:9-10 – clean and unclean water creatures.

- Some have thought certain of clean fish were without scales, but this is not true. One point to remember is that many fish have very small or minute scales near the head and the tail fin. In either case, such fish are clean and fit for food.

Question: Which varieties of BIRDS (or fowl) are clean and fit for human consumption? Which are not?

Answer: Leviticus 11:13-19 & Deuteronomy 14:11-20

- Each of these sections lists specific varieties of birds unfit for human consumption. No clean birds are listed.
- Only about two dozen unclean birds are listed out of thousands. These unclean birds illustrate the characteristics of all unclean birds. They fall into types each of which is unclean “after its kind.”

How do these unclean birds differ from those known to be clean or fit for human consumption?

- The characteristics of clean fowl are, determined by the dove and the pigeon (**Luke 2:24; Leviticus 1:14-17**) which were anciently used for sacrifice.
- By comparing the differences between these clean birds and those listed as unclean – we can arrive at the following characteristics of clean birds:

SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF CLEAN BIRDS

- (1) They must not be birds of prey.
 - (2) They catch food thrown to them in the air; but they bring it to the ground, where they divide it with their bills, if possible, before eating it; whereas 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.
- Clean birds have all these characteristics; unclean birds lack one or more of these characteristics. If a bird lacks any one of these characteristics, it is unclean.
 - Besides the pigeon and dove, the following birds are clean: chicken, pheasant, quail, partridge, grouse, turkey, all song birds, ducks and geese.
 - Unclean birds not listed specifically in the Bible are 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 no elongated middle front toe.

(Consult articles in Jewish Encyclopaedia under “Poultry: and “Clean and Unclean Animals.”)

THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES ARE USED BY SOME TRY TO USE TO PROVE THAT THE LAWS OF CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEAT ARE NO LONGER IN FORCE:

Note: Of course the laws of clean and unclean meat are valid for all humans of all time – but let's dispute these false arguments.

Argument #1 – Genesis 9:3 “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.”

- This verse does not say that every living, breathing creature is clean and fit to eat – but “even as the green herbs.” God did not give poisonous herbs as food – and therefore all green herbs are not fit for food either.
- Man can determine which herbs are healthful, but man cannot by himself determine which flesh foods are harmful. That is why our Creator had to determine for us which meats are clean.

Argument #2 – Mark 7:14-23.

- *Here Jesus was speaking of spiritual defilement, not physical health.*
- Not that which enters into a man's mouth, but the evil that comes out of his heart, defiles the man spiritually.
- What comes out of a man that defiles him? Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness...etc. (**verses 21-23**). These things have nothing to do with the physical laws of health. Christ was making a point concerning spiritual defilement not physical health.
- Specifically, on the physical level, He was referring to a possible particle of dirt which might get on the food from dirty and unwashed hands – He was not speaking of clean or unclean meats at all.

Mark 7 and Unclean Meats

The context is really the heart of the matter of what Jesus actually means by “purifying all foods” in – **verse 19**. After food has passed through the digestive tract, it has been purified – but how? The whole context of **Mark 7** shows that it is a question of ceremonial cleanliness – not any law in the Old Testament, but instead the ritual purity which certain Palestinian sects had proclaimed on their authority.

The Greek word *broma* (If not taken to mean “filth” as some authorities suggest) means simply “that which is eaten” or “food,” and includes all kinds of food. To limit the words “purifying all foods” to flesh foods is unjustified by the straightforward reading of the Greek.

The context (**verses 1-4, 20-23**) deals, not with biological uncleanness, but with uncleanness supposedly incurred from the omission of ritual washing (**verse 15**). The kind of food the disciples ate (**verses 2, 5**), is not referred to, but only *the manner* in which they ate (**verses 2, 5, 15**). The context throughout shows Christ dealing with the problem of the “commandment of God” verses the “tradition of men.”

Another point: there is no commandment in the Old Testament that forbids eating food with dirty hands. The Pharisaical tradition is in question here, not any of God's Word.

Argument #3 – Acts 10 – Peter’s vision

- But what about the sheet containing unclean animals which was shown to the Apostle Peter in a vision – **Acts 10**? Did this vision change the entire composition of all unclean animals, or the human apparatus, so that these unfit things suddenly became nourishing food? NOT AT ALL!
- The purpose of this vision was NOT to change God’s food and health laws which have been in motion from the beginning, but to show Peter “that I should not call any *man* common or unclean.” Why? Because the Jewish people had been taught to regard Gentiles like unclean animals – to have nothing to do with them.
- Notice that Cornelius was an Italian soldier – an uncircumcised Italian – a Gentile by race. To the strict Jews, he was to be regarded as an unclean man.
- But God looks on the heart. Cornelius was “A devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms [*charitable gifts*] generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (**Acts 10:2**). God remembered his prayers and his alms and revealed in a vision that he should send some of his servants to Joppa to contact Peter (**verses 4-5**).
- In **verse 9** – we find Peter was a man of prayer. While praying on a housetop, Peter became very hungry. Just before noon Peter fell into a trance (**verses 9-10**). In vision he saw heaven opened and a sheet was let down to the earth. This sheet contained “all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air” (**verse 12**).
- Notice this carefully. This sheet contained every type of animal imaginable, including wild animals – lions, tigers, hyenas, monkeys, etc. And also, creeping things – snakes and lizards, vermin and spiders. And fowl like vultures and crows and eagles. Peter was shocked by the sight of all these creatures. Then God commanded Peter to “kill and eat” of these creatures (**verse 13**)! What did Peter say? **Verse 14** – “...not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”
- Peter had lived day and night with Jesus for over three years. He certainly understood from Jesus’ teaching that there were some creatures which are simply not fit for human food. That is why when this vision came *ten years* after the rituals and ceremonies were abolished at the cross, Peter refused to eat. He knew that God’s law of clean and unclean meats was still in full force and effect!
- Now notice what the voice from heaven told Peter when he refused to eat: “What God has cleansed you must not all common” (**verse 15**). It does not say that what God cleansed were these unclean reptiles, fowl and wild animals. So, what did God cleanse?
- In this vision which Peter saw, the voice from heaven spoke three times. What did Peter do? “...Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he has seen meant...” (**verse 17**). He did not immediately assume like so many people that God suddenly changed His laws ten years after the crucifixion!
- What happened next – “...behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether

Simeon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there” (**verse 17-18**). “While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them” (**verses 19-20**).

- Peter went with them to see Cornelius. This is when Peter understood the vision! He confessed in **verse 28** – “Then he said to them, ‘You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.’”
- What God cleansed were not those unclean animals, but those Gentile men, formerly regarded as unclean by the Jewish people.
- Those unclean animals in Peter’s vision were used to symbolize the Gentile races of *men*. The Jewish people had been forbidden to associate with them because of their abominable practices. But now this wall of separation had been broken down and salvation was extended to the Gentiles. Peter finally realized that this was the meaning of the vision (**verses 34-35**).

Argument #4 – I Timothy 4:1-5 – V1 “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

V2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

V3 Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

V4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;

V5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

- Christ said, “Your word is truth” (**John 17:17**). Then the Bible reveals the truth concerning which meats are good for food. We should not refuse to eat any food which, according to truth, God created to be eaten with thanksgiving. But this does not mean that all meats are healthful and fit for the human body.
- Notice the false doctrine is “commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”
- **Verses 4-5** – “What does it mean to be “sanctified by the word of God and prayer”? *Sanctify* is a word meaning to make holy, or set apart for a right use or purpose. Now which meats has God set apart as fit for human food? The answer is found in **Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14**.

Argument #5 – Romans 14

Romans 14:1-2: V1 “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

V2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables.”

- Paul’s letter to the saints at Rome is often quoted as supposed proof that any kind of flesh food is good to eat. But is this what Paul taught? ABSOLUTELY NOT.

- Paul was confronted with the same problem we encounter today in carrying the Gospel to the world. You may be surprised at the number of people who do not eat meat or even any animal product. Others have meatless days or days on which they eat fish only. These are all people who, because they are weak in the faith, abstain from those clean meats which God originally sanctified or set apart for man's physical nourishment.
- The question confronting Paul was not that Christians at Rome contended that all unclean animals had now been cleansed by God – the common false assumption of today – but the real issue, according to **verse 2** – was over the vegetarian belief held by some that no meats whatsoever should be eaten.
- Paul was straightening out the brethren on this matter, telling them that none of those meats which had been created by God to be received with thanksgiving should be refused. He pointed out to them, however, that it would be wrong for the vegetarian to eat meat if he had doubts about it, thereby defiling his weak conscience (**Romans 14:22-23**). God thinks more highly of a vegetarian who might sincerely and conscientiously deny himself the clean meats, because he does not know the full truth, than He does a person who would do the right thing according to the letter, but who really believes in his heart that he is doing wrong.

Romans 14:14 “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean [common] of itself; but to him [the vegetarian] who considers anything to be unclean [common], to him *it is* unclean [common].”

- In the Greek there are two different words used which are often carelessly translated “unclean” or “common.” In **Acts 10:14** – both words are used. These two words mean entirely different things. The Greek word for “unclean” is *akarthatos* – meaning “unclean and impure by nature.” The Greek word for “common” is *koinos* – which means “polluted through external misuse.” Paul used the word for “common” throughout – **Romans 14:14**. He did not use the Greek word for “unclean.”
- 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 him” [the vegetarian] is 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.
- Notice Paul's conclusion: “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor *do anything* by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (**verses 20-21**).
- Paul is not recommending eating unclean meats! Quite the opposite. He is recommending not eating any meat at all in the presence of a vegetarian brother if he is offended.

When is clean meat common?

- The only circumstance in which clean meats are ever common or polluted is when they 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 with the blood in it (**Acts 15:20**). This is New Testament teaching for today.

- 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* and polluted people – the Gentiles – 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.