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FOOD FOR MAN



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FOOD FOR MAN

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Out of love and concern for His creation, God has given laws for mankind's protection. This is one of the more misunderstood points of God's relationship with man. Most people think God only demands obedience as some kind of moral test of man's devotion to Him. While this may be partly true, it is not all of the truth concerning submission to greater wisdom. God, who made man, knows what is best for him and has provided His law for the good of man, even though He may allow us to ignore it for the present. Consider the statement made by Moses, the man God used to write much of His law,

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive..." (Deuteronomy 6:24).

If people would just believe that and look for the reasons to keep His law instead of all the

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excuses they can find to justify breaking it, they would be much healthier and happier. Pride and self will cause man to view God's commands as harsh unreasonable demands of an illogical and inconsistent God. Therefore, men go forward in ignorance like the child who insists on playing in the busy street, totally unaware of the danger.

Much has already been written about the dangers to health from eating pork, shellfish, fats, etc., so we will refrain from the temptation of listing the known harmful effects again in this writing. We will only point out that new discoveries are being made periodically about the importance of man's diet in relation to his health. Many dangers, not discovered until this century, have been avoided by those who obeyed the Bible. Hence, we choose to approach this subject from the aspect of obedience to God and take for granted that we will benefit both physically as well as spiritually since His commands are "for our good always."

WHEN DIETARY LAWS WERE GIVEN

The Bible says very little about the meat in man's diet previous to the flood of Noah's day, about 1,656 years after creation, according to the Genesis account. However, we can be sure of one thing; God had by that time at least made a distinction between the clean and unclean animals. Nearly 900 years before Moses codified the laws for the nation of Israel, God instructed Noah to take both the clean and unclean animals into the ark.

"Of every *clean* beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are *not clean* by two, the male and his female"
(Genesis 7:2).

The history of the antediluvian world is not detailed enough to be positive of just when this distinction was known to man, but it is just as rational to believe that Adam knew some animals were unclean from the very beginning as to believe God made it known in some later generation. This seems especially true when we consider the reason for God's laws are always for man's good.

The fact that God had given man an established set of laws prior to the time of Moses is again made positive when the Bible speaks of Abraham, who lived about 400 years before Moses. We may not be able to prove to ourselves what all was in those laws, but we can know for sure they existed.

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

Since God has said, "For I am the Lord, I *change not...*" (Malachi 3:6), it is reasonable to assume these laws and commandments were much the same as those given through Moses at the later time, though it cannot be proven beyond all doubt.

THE CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FOODS

Everyone who believes the Bible to be the inspired Word of God can be certain of which flesh foods God instructed Moses to select for man's diet.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all

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the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat" (Leviticus 11:2-3).

Likewise, He was specific about what not to eat and listed them in Leviticus 11:4-8, including the camel, coney, hare, and swine.

Further, God limits fish foods to those which have fins and scales, thus eliminating from man's diet many water creatures such as catfish, octopus, shellfish, etc.

"Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you" (Leviticus 11:12).

Then He lists the birds and insects which we are to avoid eating in verses 13-23, while naming those which are clean and edible. Leviticus chapter 11 should be read carefully by all who want to walk totally in the ways of God.

BLOOD AND FAT FORBIDDEN

Among some ethnic groups, it is popular to

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eat not only the animals which the Bible forbids, but also blood of animals. Indeed, blood sausage is considered a delicacy in some cultures. The pagan custom of drinking blood from freshly killed, and sometimes still living, cattle is still practiced in parts of the world. The Bible strictly forbids this practice.

“And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people” (Leviticus 17:10).

Such activities are listed along with idolatry and fornication in Luke's history.

“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and *from blood*, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:29).

Research has shown that the blood of animals can carry diseases to the eater thereof.

In just the past few years, man is beginning to learn the detrimental consequences of eating too much fat in his diet. According to some nutritionists, we should limit our intake of fat

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calories to about 15% of our total caloric diet. The wisdom of our God shows in His inspired words of about 3,500 years ago,

“It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither *fat nor blood*” (Leviticus 3:17).

Also read Leviticus 7:23 and 26. Evidently, God is saying that we get enough fats from those vegetables which contain them and whatever is in the lean part of our meat. After all these years, some men are just beginning to recognize the benefit of this law from their Creator.

CHRIST DID NOT CHANGE THESE LAWS

Later, we will address some of the New Testament texts which have been used to support the erroneous idea that God's laws regarding foods have been changed. But, first we want to be sure that what we eat today could be an abomination to God. To prove this point, we ask that you look up Isaiah chapter 66 in your own Bible to be sure we are not taking His words out of context. In fact, it is very important that we put

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these prophetic events in historical context.

Beginning in verse 14, Isaiah is prophesying about the second coming of Christ. He proceeds to tell how God will judge *all flesh*. This has never occurred in history of man since the flood, therefore, it must be yet in the future. Next, Isaiah tells some specific things being done by men that God calls an abomination and condemns the ones who practice such.

We will quote from the King James Version using emphasis to bring out clearly our point.

"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. For I know *their works and their thoughts*: it shall come, that I will *gather all nations and tongues*; and they shall come, and see my glory" (Isaiah 66:17,18).

Never before has God gathered all the nations to see His glory. This occurs when Christ returns to the earth to judge the nations. This proves that God still, in our day, condemns the use of swine's flesh and the mouse for eating purposes.

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CONTROVERSIAL TEXTS

If these things be true, and they certainly are, how do we explain certain New Testament verses that seem to contradict these clear statements? Two ways. First, we want to be sure of exactly what each verse is saying, and what it is not saying. Second, we want to be sure to read the *full context* of the verses in question.

I TIMOTHY 4:4

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

This verse is often cited to prove that all creatures are good for food.

Taken all alone, this verse seems to say every creature is good for food, but what happens if we back up a couple of verses and get the fuller context of Paul's writing?

"Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 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*" (I Timothy 4:2,3).

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distortion of scripture to say otherwise.

The parallel account of this event in Mark's gospel, as translated by some theologians, has added a conclusion not consistent with the Greek manuscripts. These words are a private interpretation (misinterpretation) and read as follows in the Good News Bible, "In saying this, Jesus declared that all foods are fit to be eaten" (Mark 7:19). Thus, the ill-informed reader is misled into believing the disciple, Mark, wrote this conclusion. Watch carefully what you read in some of the more modern translations. The added portions are usually in brackets or parenthesis.

The King James Version makes the meaning more clear by keep its translation in context with the whole story, which is referring to the bodily eliminations. Alfred Marshall's *Greek English Interlinear New Testament* agrees with this translation.

ROMANS 14:14

"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

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Does this verse give man the right to override God's law and make his own decisions of what is right and wrong conduct? May he eat anything he likes, as long as he is so persuaded? Certainly not! At least, not with God's approval.

Beginning with the first part of this chapter, we see Paul is dealing with those weak in the faith,

"Him that is *weak in the faith* receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is *weak, eateth herbs*. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him" (Romans 14:1-3).

Thus far, Paul is dealing with vegetarianism. Paul's warning is not to be judging others because they are eating only herbs.

But why would Christians refuse to eat meat since the Bible nowhere forbids it? It is necessary to realize the historical conditions under which these first century believers lived. The local meat market often sold meat from animals which had been sacrificed to pagan idols. The real question was whether or not to risk eating

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such meat. Paul's conclusion over this problem was not to question about the meat's origin. Hence, his advice to those in Corinth,

"Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience' sake" (I Corinthians 10:25 NASB).

Paul knew that those who were spiritually mature understood that the pagan ceremony of offering meat to an idol did not defile the meat. It was the act of false worship that would defile the believer, not the meat from such a source. However, even though he knew this, Paul would not insist upon his valid right to eat such questionable meat before weaker brothers. Paul said, in effect, we are not to insist on our legitimate rights if it would stumble a weaker brother by violation of his conscience.

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Romans 14:21).

Therefore, Paul is saying in Romans 14:13-14 that each person is to be guided by his own conscience when it comes to eating such meats,

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rather than to cause strife and stumbling by judging one another. One man might choose to be a vegetarian because of "idol offered meat from the market", the other would choose to eat it, knowing the meat itself was not defiled. Neither position is to be viewed as a sin.

PETER'S VISION

Finally, in Acts 10, Luke narrates a vision given to Peter wherein a sheet comes down from heaven containing unclean creatures. He hears a voice,

"Rise, Peter; kill, and eat" (Acts 10:13).

Peter refuses,

"Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:14).

This event occurred several years after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Peter had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus promised that His disciples would be guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). How is it that Peter did not know that God approved of his eating unclean animals?

Peter was perplexed. He knew God's laws

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were to be obeyed, and yet this command to eat being given in the vision disturbs Peter.

"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean..." (Acts 10:17).

Peter knew the vision was not given to change God's laws of obedience, for His Word says, "I change not." While Peter pondered this seeming contradiction, he was told to go with three men who were seeking him, "doubting nothing."

Immediately following this is the story of the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius. To understand the gem of truth from this experience, read the whole account from Acts 10:9-34. Especially notice Peter's appraisal of the meaning of the vision as he gave it in the 28th verse,

"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."

The meaning of the vision had been made clear to Peter. God was not changing His laws

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concerning clean and unclean foods. God was not beginning to call Gentiles; Peter should no longer let the custom of the Jews prevent him from preaching salvation to the Gentiles.

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

Peter was made to understand the vision. The unclean animals were a symbol God had used to teach Peter that He had created all men and Peter was no longer to assume that His love extended only to the Jews. In no way does this vision teach God had changed His dietary laws for man.

CEREMONIAL LAWS

Some teachers have assumed and taught the error that the food laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are a part of the ceremonial laws given to Moses. This is simply not true. As we have already seen, the distinction between the clean and unclean was revealed to man before the Noachian flood.

It is true that only clean animals were to be

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used in any sacrifices to God. For example, when Noah left the ark he chose only from among the clean animals to make sacrifices.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Genesis 8:20).

Likewise, when the tabernacle was later built, and finally the temple, only clean animals were offered.

There is a lesson to be learned from this if we care to apply it. Only clean animals could be used in God's temple as He commanded. What is God's temple today? We are! The members of His church, both individually and collectively.

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17).

The point is obvious. If we recognize the spiritual and physical harm caused by disobeying God, satisfying our own lust, and insisting upon eating what God calls unclean for food, we will surely pay the price of ill health spiritually and physically in due time.

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CONCLUSION

Mankind today wants to ignore God as lawmaker. Even many of those who claim Him as their Savior disclaim Him as their Lord by their disobedience. Jesus said,

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

As believers, we are not free to pick and choose from His Word what we live by. If we have accepted Him as our Lord, let us live as He instructs us—by every word.

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UNCLEAN FLESH FOODS

(As listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14)

Animals that do not have a parted hoof
and/or do not chew the cud:

Swine of all kind:
Boar, Peccary, and Pig

Canine of all kind:
Coyote, Dog, Fox, Hyena, Jackal, and Wolf

Feline of all kind:
Cat, Cheetah, Leopard, Lion, Panther, and Tiger

Equine of all kind:
Donkey, Horse, Mule, Onager, Quagga, Zebra

Miscine of all kind:
Badger, Coney, Hare, Monkey, Opossum, Porcupine, Raccoon, Skunk, Squirrel, Bear, Camel, Elephant, Gorilla, Hippopotamus, Kangaroo, Llama, Rhino, Walaby

Fish and water creatures without fins and scales:

Catfish

Sturgeon

Crayfish

Oyster

Jellyfish

Dolphin

Whale

Eel

Abalone

Lobster

Scallop

Limpet

Otter

Martin

Clam

Mussel

Shrimp

Octopus

Seal

Shark

Crab

Prawn

Cuttlefish

Squid

Walrus

Birds with unclean characteristics:

Albatross	Hawk	Swallow
Condor	Loon	Water Hen
Cuckoo	Pelican	Buzzard
Gull	Stork	Crow
Lapwing	Vulture	Grossbeak
Owl	Bittern	Kite
Raven	Crane	Ostrich
Swift	Flamingo	Plover
Bat	Heron	Swan
Cormorant	Osprey	Woodpecker
Eagle	Penguin	

All Reptiles, Amphibians,
Rodents, and Insects
(except the Locust family) are unclean.

CLEAN FLESH FOOD

(As listed in *Leviticus 11* and *Deuteronomy 14*)

Animals that have a parted hoof and chew the cud:

Cattle	Gazelle
Deer	Moose
Hart	Buffalo
Sheep	Giraffe
Elk	Reindeer
Ibex	Caribou
Antelope	Goat

Fish that have fins and scales:

Anchovy	Herring
Crappie	Pike
Halibut	Snapper
Perch	Tuna
Shad	Carp
Tarpon	Gruel
Bass	Mackerel
Flounder	Rockfish
Hardhead	Sole
Pickrel	Cod
Smelt	Haddock
Trout	Morrow
Bluefish	Salmon
Grouper	Sunfish

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Birds that have clean fowl characteristics:

Chicken	Peacock
Guinea	Quail
Songbirds	Goose
Dove	Pheasant
Partridge	Turkey
Sparrow	Grouse
Duck	Pigeon

Clean creeping things that have feet to leap:

*Locusts of various kinds; such as,
Crickets and Grasshoppers*

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