



[Mark 7:14-23](#)

(14) When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: (15) There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. (16) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" (17) When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. (18) So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, (19) because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?" (20) And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. (21) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. (23) All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

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[Mark 7:14-23](#) (and its parallel account in [Matthew 15:1-20](#)) is another set of scriptures that some believe state that nothing entering into a man can defile him, therefore eating whatever one wishes is perfectly all right. Can this be correct?

Those who believe this fail to understand the subject of the chapter, which is [Jesus'](#) denunciation of the Pharisees for their rejection of God's commandments in favor of their own traditions (verse 8). Verse 2 introduces the context: "Now when [the Pharisees] saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault." The dispute was over ceremonial cleanliness - eating without first washing one's hands - which is not even an Old Testament law but a "tradition of the elders" (verse 5), which the Pharisees had themselves proclaimed authoritative.

In addition, beyond this fact, note that the kind of food the apostles were eating is "bread," not meat. Jesus' later comments speak generally of "foods" and "whatever enters the mouth," not specifically meat. Mark 7 is not about [clean and unclean meats](#) at

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all!

Verse 19 contains the phrase "thus purifying all foods," and many have jumped to the conclusion that Jesus declared all foods clean (as many marginal references state). The context, again - the very sentence in which it appears - proves this false: "Do you [disciples] not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, thus purifying all foods?"

First, "thus" is not in the Greek text but has been supplied by the translators. Without it, the sentence plainly states that the stomach "purifies" any kind of food put in it, not that Jesus had somehow declared all foods to be purified. Second, *purified* is the Greek word *katharízoon*, which means "to cleanse," "to purify," "to free from filth." In relation to the stomach's or the digestive tract's ability to "purify" food, the sense of *katharízoon* in this verse is "to purge of waste." This is brought out clearly in the parallel statement in [Matthew 15:17](#): "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?"

Do these scriptures do away with the law concerning clean and unclean meats? Not at all!

— John O. Reid

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