

Clean And Unclean Meats

Continuously Clean

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Understanding God's Word sometimes requires:

1. Carefully examining the context in which something difficult is said.
2. Knowing something about the times the events in question took place.
3. Seeing the overall picture of God's purpose.
4. A bit of godly wisdom as well.

One time Herbert Armstrong was asked if he believed every word in the Bible is true. He answered that he believed that every understanding God intends is true, but not every word as it is translated into English from Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. The last response applies to this sermon. But today we are going to take a different look (a different perspective) at the question of whether all animal flesh is good for food. One reason I am doing this is because of a statement that I made in the three commentaries I gave concerning food ["Our Genetically Modified Foods"]. I said: "In no place in the New Testament are unclean animals involved in any issue discussed."

Now there is a reason why this issue even arises that is fundamentally important as to why mankind is estranged from God. The reason is important because it affects everything in one's relation to God. I have been stressing this reason often in this series regarding God's sovereignty. Paul reports in Hebrews 3, and in Romans 11 he confirms, that Israel failed because they did not believe God, and thus they did not obey Him either.

There is an aura of mystery regarding clean and unclean meats and this is partly because God never explains why certain things are unclean. He just says: do not eat them. But man, by nature, wants to know specifically why. He wants answers before he accepts. But, brethren, that is not living by faith.

Now this subject is not rocket science; it is not complex. Understand this fact within the overall picture. Adam and Eve, like Israel, sinned because they did not believe God and thus they got life on earth started off on the wrong path, and life has continued on this

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path to this very day. The fundamental issues of life revolve around this simple disbelieving reality to this very day.

Now the Adam and Eve story adds a second factor—mankind's disbelief is instigated and intensified by a demon spirit of great persuasion who labors to trick mankind into following his way of thinking rather than following God's instruction. These two factors set the stage for mankind's perspective of the Creator and therefore one's personal relation with him.

Romans 8:7 succinctly captures that perception. God is the enemy, and anything God says is perceived with some level of guarded distrust and suspicion by the carnal mind. It is as though God is trying to entrap man—to get something from him—rather than the reality that God wants to give man every good thing in life. However, when God reveals himself to man in his calling that perception should, indeed it must, change or God's intended creation of us will be nullified. Now turn with me to Jeremiah 29 and verses 11 through 13. Listen to this.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, [this is God speaking] says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me, and go and pray to me, and I will listen unto you. And ye shall seek me and you will find me, when you search for me with all your heart.

Now if we do not approach God in the right perspective or with the right perspective, why would His purpose be nullified? Well, again, the reason is very simple. His purpose requires our cooperation through making right choices, using God's instruction contained within His word. Mankind does not perceive God this way, and that is why there are issues even regarding food.

The overall effect of this attitude towards God to the unconverted mind regarding food is that man judges what he chooses to eat primarily by its taste, regardless of what God says.

Now let us look at this very important fact regarding God's character and therefore His purposes. We are going to go to Malachi and in chapter 3 and verses 6 and 7. This is one of those memory scriptures, but it is important towards our attitude towards God.

Malachi 3:6-7 For I am the Lord, I do not change, therefore you are not consumed oh sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have

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gone away from mine ordinances, [think of clean and unclean here] and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you said, in what way shall we return?

That is the way the relationship between God and man has always been. Man, unconverted man, simply does not believe Him, does not trust Him, and therefore will not submit to Him. It is that simple. Without that cooperation man cannot do the right thing even on subjects as simple as clean and unclean.

Now let us see what we can pick up here from Malachi in verse 7 that God never changes. God knows the end from the beginning, and he keeps heading toward those goals. Those goals that he has in the future are very definite, and they are expressed in His instruction given to mankind, and all of those goals are good for mankind. In our relationship with Him, it is good to keep in mind what Ecclesiastes teaches without saying it directly—that everything in life matters. Clean and unclean matters.

Now we must be thoughtful about our relationship with him. Picking up on the end of Richard's sermon ["Adolescent Geriatrics"] it does mankind no good whatever to have a Creator who cannot be trusted because He is making changes that leave one unsure. It says of Jesus Christ, that like the Father, He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Now James 1 and verse 17 reminds us that:

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation nor shadow of turning. [I am God, I change not.]

And the food that God created and sanctified for man is a perfectly good gift designed with nourishment to strengthen and energize our bodies which He also created. The food and our bodies complement each other and is the reality of life. And this is the foundation, as we begin this sermon, thus showing us that in regard to clean and unclean...catch this: nothing has ever changed from the beginning. Yes, further explained and clarified. But what was clean or unclean at the beginning remains clean and unclean to this very day. The animals have not changed; neither have men's bodies; and neither have Gods spiritual principals.

Now I am going to approach this subject in a time-oriented way; and so we are going to back to the beginning of the book to Genesis chapter 4. Genesis 4 and verse 3 and 5 where it says:

Genesis 4:3-5 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. And Abel, also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of the fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering: But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Well, believe it or not, clean and unclean is not mentioned, here, but sacrificing to God is; and, therefore, the subject of clean and unclean Biblically is actually introduced here, without it being directly stated. Now this context that we had just read will perfectly coordinate with the detailed instructions regarding sacrifices given in Leviticus, chapter 1 through 7.

It is very, very helpful to note that the subject of clean and unclean regarding food (please pick this up) is not introduced within instruction regarding Israel or the Old Covenant but rather right at the beginning of the book in a universal foundational setting, a setting that applies to all of mankind right from the very beginning of God's purpose. There is no Israel. There is no Old Covenant. This was introduced from the very beginning.

Genesis 7:1-3 Then the Lord said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth.

We have advanced 1500, maybe 1600 years from the time of Cain and Abel to the time of the flood; and mankind through Noah clearly understood that some animals were clean and others unclean. Now God did not specifically name which were clean and unclean. Why? Because Noah already knew! He knew what was clean; he knew what was unclean. Again, no Israel, no Old Covenant. The setting is still universal and already mankind knows about clean and unclean.

In Genesis the 9th chapter and verses 3 and 4, the flood is over and God instructs Noah.

Genesis 9:3-4 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Now this might cause a little bit of questioning or consternation, but there is no change indicated here from what preceded it. God is consistent. The key is the phrase "even as the green herb." The universal teaching available for all mankind is that every green thing that grows from the ground is *not* intended by God for food. Like poison ivy. When we moved to California people quickly warned us Oleander bushes are poison. I mean they are deadly; do not eat anything from the Oleander bush. They are all over the place in southern California.

This is easy to understand because mankind can quickly discover what green things are not intended for food because his body quickly reacts, sometimes violently, to those things that God never intended as food for man. So, even as the green herb... So no change in chapter 9. The differences in regard to flesh foods is that the reaction may not be quick and thus their uncleanness is not easily physically discerned; and that is why eventually God named them all.

Now, the mention of "physical" brings another thought to mind. Those familiar with the Worldwide Church of God teaching should recall the term physical sin. That term never appears in the Bible. Now it was something that was taught, though. Eating things God designed as unclean is simply sin. It does not call it physical sin. It is simply sin. I think you can understand why when you understand that the term translated "sin" simply means, "to miss the mark, to fall short, to go off the path." When we eat something that He designated that we should not, we fall short of the ideal. It is that simple.

In Genesis 9, it is clarified that the slain animal's blood is clearly denied to man as a food. The animal is fine, but the blood goes out on the ground. This is out of respect for the animal that gave its life.

Now it is clearly established to all of Israel... We are going to jump all way to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, at least in thought right now. It is clearly established to all Israel and to all who read the Bible in Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11 that the clean animals could be eaten. The unclean are not to be eaten. And everything regarding food created for mankind both before Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 and after these two chapter is in perfect agreement with Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Nothing changes.

And again at this time the instruction regarding clean and unclean is made part of the Old Covenant. Now what I asked you to especially to latch on to earlier, comes to a head here because at the time of the writings of Moses in Leviticus 11 and 14, the

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instruction regarding clean and unclean is made part of the Old Covenant that God made with Israel, but the application of those laws, just like the 10 Commandments, supersede the Old Covenant and are universal in application. In other words, just because they were part of the Old Covenant doesn't suddenly clean those things up for the rest of mankind. They are still unclean.

So just assuredly as the 10 Commandments existed prior to the Old Covenant and obedience to them was required before the Old Covenant the same principal applies to the food laws. These food laws applied to everybody from the beginning. The Old Covenant did not bring them in and the passing of the Old Covenant does not take them away. They are not ceremonial but fundamental to living a good life, even as the 10 Commandments are.

Now it is clearly shown in Leviticus in chapters 1 through 7 that every sacrifice had to be that of a clean animal or bird. An additional truth is that some of the sacrifices were to be eaten either by the offerer, the priest, or symbolically by God as the sacrifice was consumed by the fires on the altar. In other words, there is symbolic indication here that God Himself only eats things that are clean. If that is good enough for God, then it is right for us.

So this is a major clue as to why clean animals only were offered. In addition, the flesh offering symbolically represented Jesus Christ in some aspect of His work in mankind's behalf, and Jesus Christ life was perfectly free from the defilement of any sin whatsoever. Therefore since those sacrifices represented Jesus Christ, they had to be clean. That is the only thing we eat, and spiritually we eat Christ. All these things are linked.

Let us go to Isaiah in chapter 65 verses 2 through 5. What you need to pay attention to here, is the time element. I told you I was going to go time-wise through the book, and in chapter 65 we are dealing with something that you will see very quickly.

Isaiah 65:2-5 I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; a people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; who sacrifice in gardens and burn incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves and spend the night in the tombs; who eat swine's flesh and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

Interesting, all those sins categorized together, and it almost looks like to me that God is

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equating swine's flesh with idolatry. Isaiah was written roughly 750 BBC so here we are moving toward the time of Christ and the eating of swine's flesh is still bad business to God. This one is very interesting, very interesting.

Isaiah 66:15-17 For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind [you can see the time element here—the return of Christ at least] To render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many. Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse.

At the return of Jesus Christ, and on into the Millennium that which is unclean is still unclean and detestable before God as something that ought not to be eaten. We are way past the return of Jesus Christ here. I am only going to read a tiny portion of this in Ezekiel 43.

Ezekiel 43:18-19 And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord God: 'These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it. You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,'" says the Lord God.

Jump to chapter 44 and verse 10 where it says.

Ezekiel 44:10-11 And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them.

Ezekiel 44:15-16 "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood," says the Lord God. They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.

Why did I go into this? Because beginning in Ezekiel 40, all the way through the end of the book, is at the very least millennial in application; and it may even be after the second resurrection—in the 100 year period when all those come up out of the earth, who are resurrected and who never had an opportunity before. I want you to see that here in this time element this same thing that existed in Leviticus 1 through 7 and also Leviticus 11 and 15 remain exactly the same. Clean is clean, unclean is unclean. The same kind of sacrifices, the very descendants of the same people who did the sacrificing under the Old Covenant are doing the same work. “I am God, I change not.”

Now let us go to Mark the 7th chapter. We are back to the time of Jesus’s ministry. This is to me one of the most egregious misinterpretations in the entire Bible that I see regarding this subject. And if we do not get anything else done on this subject, I hope we get this one nailed down, so that you can see how far off man is in his assessment of things. Jesus is speaking, and He is speaking to His disciples.

Mark 7:18-19 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, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?

Now let us add to this Mark 7 verses 1 to 4 as we set the stage.

Mark 7:1-4 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

Now this episode reveals the carnal minds foul attitude towards God, I think, perhaps better than any other section of scripture because they say in verse 19 and Jesus does say this, “Thus purifying all foods.” Now it is the way that the carnal mind interprets what Jesus said which is so bad. There are two problems in this episode. One is spiritual, one is physical, but the physical one overlaps into the spiritual one in terms of understanding what the teaching is here.

Now notice, it specifies who the certain Jews were that Jesus directs His corrections to. They were Pharisees. And the Bible says in Acts 26:5 that the Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews. They were very severe upon themselves making sure they did things correctly according to their tradition. Now the point here in Mark is that they had a teaching involving personal defilement through eating something that rendered *them* unclean. Not that what they were eating was unclean, but it rendered *them* unclean. So it is not that they were eating things created unclean by God. Now the reason that they were so careful is because their teaching dictated that God is so pure in His Holiness that this defilement that they saw rendered them unable to fellowship with God. Now can you imagine these very strict people eating something unclean like a cockroach or a squishy caterpillar? Never!

Verse 2 and 3 comes to our rescue by specifying that their fear of defilement was the issue—the defilement did not involve unclean meats at all, but simply common ordinary *dirt* that got on what they ate from their hands or the utensils that the meat was held in). Now in verse 13, Jesus corrects them by saying that their traditions, their teaching, was making the Word of God of no effect through their traditions which were handed down.

Mark 7:19 ...because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods.

I want you to first look, just carry this thought—Jesus is saying that physical dirt (for that was what was going into them, not unclean meat) does not defile the spiritual heart of a man. I want you to notice the word “foods” in verse 19, the last word. It is translated in the King James Version as “meats.” Now there is a reason for that. In 1611 when the King James Version was published, meats was the common term for all food generally, but those translators were still wrong in what they did because when Mark or Peter wrote this, he used the word *broma*. That should have been clear as anything to those who understood Greek. *Broma* means food. *Broma* does not mean meat. The Greek language had a separate word for meat, and it is used often throughout the New Testament, but for some reason they translated it here as “meats.” No, the word in Greek that means meat is *sarx*, and that is all it means, except symbolically it means flesh. In terms as a contrast to spirit.

So the whole subject here was not flesh created unclean by God, but simply food; and if you want to know sure, absolutely, totally in verse 2 it calls this food *bread* and it really is the Greek word for bread. And do you know what the world says about it? They say because of Jesus’s statement, He made all flesh meat clean. It says nothing of the kind,

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but as I explained when I began this sermon, that is the way the carnal mind approaches God—suspicious that there is something wrong and therefore God is withholding something and denying us something that we love to eat. You see, Jesus cleaned it all up. No, He did not—not at all. The subject was not flesh at all, created unclean by God, but foods, most specifically bread that became defiled externally by dirt from ones hand, clothing, or utensils. So Jesus simply says to these people, that man's digestive and elimination organs can handle and eliminate all dirt that we might get into our bodies by touching something that is dirty.