

Clean Unclean Food

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Fact or Fiction? Are Christians today to not eat certain meats because they are forbidden in God's Law?

Fiction There are those today that are teaching the body of Christ that it is wrong to eat certain meats or foods because they are forbidden in God's law. Some even go so far to say that people in the body of Christ have physical illnesses because they have violated God's commands by eating certain foods that are listed in *Leviticus 11* (which are commonly referred to as the Levitical food laws). Is it a sin to eat these meats? Are these laws for us to keep forever? Why did God command the Israelites not to eat specific animals? Is eating these animals bad for our health as some nutrition experts' claim? Let's study the word of God to find the answers to these questions and more.

First we must understand to whom these laws were given and why. These laws were given to the nation of Israel under the Old Testament Law of Moses. The law was a temporary system imposed only on the nation of Israel until Christ, the Messiah would come. (*Galatians 3: 19-25*) Now that Jesus Christ has come, we are not under law but grace. Jews that come to Christ have been set free from the law and no longer must adhere to its rules and regulations. (*Romans 7:1-6, Galatians 2:11-21, 3:23-24, 4:1-7*) God never gave the Gentiles the law to keep. The Law could not save us or help us obtain righteousness, it only defined what sin is. Jesus said the law could be summed up in two commands, "Love God with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself."

There is a difference in the spiritual and physical in God's Kingdom with the greater emphasis being on the spiritual. (*Romans 14:17*) Under the Law of Moses, food and drink most often pertained to the ceremonial law. What was the ceremonial law? It had to do with the fleshly ordinances that were used in the service of the tabernacle, such as gifts, sacrifices, meats, drinks, washings, and other carnal ordinances under the Old Testament Law. (*Hebrews 9:1-11*) These were imposed on the nation of Israel until Christ could come with a more perfect spiritual tabernacle. In the book of Hebrews it defines the Old Testament Tabernacle as a worldly sanctuary and the ceremonies as fleshly ordinances. This was clearly a temporary system put in place until the greater one could come along. This ceremonialism included not only the eating and sacrificing of certain animals, but the abstaining from others as was instructed in *Leviticus 11*. God pronounced these animals unclean for His people and they were commanded not to eat or use them for sacrifices. These animals were ceremonially unclean. They were not unhealthy to eat as some claim. How do we know this? The answers are found in the New Testament.

Those who teach such fallacies obviously do not understand yet that there is a higher law in effect than the Law of Moses. Believers in Christ are not under the Law of Moses but under the Law of Christ. (*1 Corinthians 9:21, Hebrews 3:1-6*) This being the case, we must receive the truth from our Lord and Master about such matters. The New Testament supercedes the Old Testament. (*Hebrews 7:18-19, 8:6-10*) What did Jesus teach us about such foods? What did the Apostles teach? The answers are clearly written in the word of God.

Before we go to the scriptures in the New Testament, it is interesting to note that in the book of *Genesis* (before the Law of Moses was given) that God told Noah and his sons what was given to them to eat. "Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." (*Genesis 9:3*) It is interesting to note that God said it was perfectly fine for the righteous to eat

“everything that moves”, but later tells Israel that it is unclean. This is proof that meat was not unclean in a way that was unhealthy for the human body, but under the Law of Moses it was deemed by God to be spiritually unclean, or not acceptable to Him as ceremonial sacrifices. Would God give Noah and his family instructions to eat something that would harm their health? Since God is good we must conclude that the answer is a resounding no!

Later in the New Testament gospels, Jesus teaches that it is not what goes in a man that defiles him but the sin that comes out of a man’s heart and mouth. (*Matthew 15:10-11, Mark 7:14-23*) God knows what is harmful to His people. The Apostles understood the will of God concerning what is clean and unclean to God. God gave Peter a vision revealing His divine act of cleansing the Gentiles, proclaiming those Gentiles that would come unto Him as holy and acceptable before Him. If God can make people clean that were previously unclean, then it is but a very small thing for God to deem animals clean. In this vision that God gave to Peter, He was clearly revealing His decision to cleanse not only those animals that had previously been unclean, but also the Gentiles who had also been unclean to God. In the New Testament, both of these were declared clean by the Almighty.

Paul understood God’s truths in these matters and taught the Church that great emphasis should not be placed on food and drink, but instead on spiritual matters. He also taught the Church that there is nothing unclean of itself (pertaining to food and drink). Paul made it clear in *1 Timothy 4:1-6* that it was false teaching to command people to abstain from certain meats and that all creatures were now good to eat because they were sanctified by God through the word and prayer. Why is it that those who teach the Church that it is wrong to eat the “unclean” meats of *Leviticus 11* neglect the word of the Lord? The apostles of the New Testament understood the cleansing of all meats because Jesus Himself taught it to them. (*Matthew 15:10-19, Romans 14:14*) Non-kosher food does not defile us spiritually or physically. All creatures may now be received with thanksgiving. We are not to call anything that God has declared clean, unclean. (*Acts 10:15*)