

Should *UNCLEAN MEATS* Be Eaten Today?

Are the Biblical dietary laws still in force, today? Should human beings eat pork, shrimp, crab, lobster, or any other "unclean" meats described in the Bible? Why did Almighty God forbid certain meats to be avoided? Did Jesus make "all" meats "clean"? What about Peter's vision of all the unclean animals and being told to "slay and eat"? What does God think about "pork eaters"? It's high time we examine these questions honestly, with an open, unprejudiced mind!

William F. Dankenbring

Joseph Tkach, Jr., and now all the Worldwide Church of God, seems to relish and wallow in their newfound "freedom" to eat whatever they please, including pork, shrimp, bacon, ham, and the whole litany of "unclean meats" which the Church has condemned as unfit for human consumption from its very inception, in 1934, till January 1995 -- for over sixty years!

Now that the Church has claimed that all the "Old Testament" laws are done away, and abolished, it seems there is a mad "rush" to imbibe the previously "forbidden," like children fighting over a forbidden "toy." When "make up" was taken off the proscribed list years ago, it seemed the Church women could not wait until the Sabbath was over to rush out to Macy's, Broadway, Penny's, or Bullock's, to see and experience the latest in "cosmetics," and especially lipsticks.

When the Sabbath was no long obligatory for observation, Church men and women suddenly got new jobs, or found themselves freely working on the Sabbath at their places of employment, with nary a self-condemning thought or backwards glance of guilt! And when the laws were 'loosened' about eating unclean meats, members lined up at restaurants to sample the once "taboo" -- bacon and eggs, pork sausage, ham and eggs, shrimp salad, and every dish imaginable -- once again claiming, "It's all right." "We're now under the NEW covenant," and "Jesus made the unclean clean."

But you know -- why all the rush? Is God really so fickle and changeable? Would God Almighty institute a "LAW" and then suddenly CHANGE it? God says, "For I am the LORD: "I change NOT" (Mal.3:6). Also, we read, "Jesus Christ, the SAME, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb.13:8). Would God give a Law -- and then change it? Is He like the absent-minded professor? Of course not!

Did God change His mind about "unclean meats"? Why did He forbid their consumption in the first place? What does medical science have to say about the subject? What does the New

Testament say about this very important subject?

And old saying goes, "You are what you eat." Doctors know that basically this is a very true, and profound, statement of fact. Another way of putting it is, "Garbage in, garbage out." When people put garbage into their bodies, they themselves become "so much garbage." What you eat can and does affect your physical health -- as well has a subtle and powerful effect on your spiritual health!

First Mention of "Unclean" Animals

Most people assume that God's dietary laws concerning clean and unclean animal flesh began with Moses (Lev.11; Deut.14). This, however, is most certainly not the case! The distinction between clean and unclean animals goes all the way back to the time of NOAH, at the very least!

We read in the book of Genesis, concerning the animals which Noah was commanded to put inside the Ark, that God told Noah:

"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 . . . And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of *clean beasts*, and of *beasts that are not clean*, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 7:2-9).

After the Flood waters receded, and Noah and the animals left the ark, to renew their lives upon the face of the earth, Noah built an altar to the LORD to give thanks and to bless His name, and to worship the One who had protected them and spared their lives.

"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" (Gen.8:20-21).

In ancient times, the flesh of burnt offerings was eaten by the priests and their families. Animals that were sacrificed on the altar were generally shared by the officiating priests, and the families that brought the sacrifices. The flesh was eaten as a thing of delicacy and enjoyment. *Unclean animals were forbidden to be offered or sacrificed.* The flesh of unclean beasts was considered an "abomination" to the LORD. Anyone who would offer "unclean" animals on the altar was guilty of sacrilege and desecration of God's Temple! Such sins were punishable by DEATH!

Yet the Word of God tells us, in the New Testament, that today OUR BODIES ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD! The apostle Paul writes, "What? Know ye not that YOUR BODY *is the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit which is in you*, which you have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are BOUGHT with a price: therefore *glorify God in your body, and in your spirit*, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

Does it "glorify God" to put "unclean" things inside His Temple? Does it glorify Him if

you eat "unclean" animal flesh, consume it, and devour it? Or does that not make YOU spiritually "defiled," and "UNCLEAN" and IMPURE in God's eyes? Think about it!

God's Food Laws Revealed

After the great Deluge of Noah's time, in the middle of the third millennium before Christ, God commanded Noah and his family to repopulate the earth. And He told them, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat [food] for you; *EVEN AS THE GREEN HERB have I given you all things*" (Gen.9:3).

Many have misconstrued the meaning of this verse of Scripture. They claim it means that God gave ALL flesh of EVERY animal for men to eat -- whether it is the flesh of beetles, spiders, ants, caterpillars, worms, jellyfish, as well as pork, shrimp, oysters, and every animal that exists on earth. Is that what this verse really says?

Take a *good* look at exactly what God says -- and does NOT say. First of all, notice carefully -- God put a very distinct "proviso" or "qualification" on this permission. He said He gave man permission to eat ALL animal flesh AS man was permitted to eat the "green herbs." Now let us stop and think for a minute. Does man today "eat" of EVERY GREEN HERB -- that is, EVERY PLANT -- on the face of the earth? Not at all!

Poison ivy is a "green" herb, or plant -- but it is not edible. Poison sumac, also, and poison oak, are deadly. Hemlock is a tree that grows in the earth; but its leaves are deadly poisonous!

The lesson is that some green plants are poisonous and deadly and were never intended for mankind to consume as food! Even so, on the same basis, there are some animals which -- like some green plants -- are poisonous, deadly, and unfit for human consumption. Some are clearly so, from observation and study. Others, the "poison" is more subtle and difficult to detect, and requires much more information and study to "prove" that they are unfit to eat, or "deadly." It is the latter classification that God prohibits in His Word, telling us that such flesh is unfit to eat, that it contaminates and pollutes and corrupts the human body, over a period of time and accumulated influence, poisons, and subtle effects.

There is a bush which grows profusely in Southern California called "pyrocantha," which produces bunches of small red berries. But if you, or your children, were to attempt to "eat" of those berries, they could and very likely would, kill you -- or at the very least make you terribly sick! They are DEADLY! Also, a popular bush for decoration in front of homes and along the freeways is the "oleander" bush. But again, the oleander berries are extremely toxic and poisonous if you eat them.

The law that God gave Noah, then, was permission to eat of animal flesh on a widespread basis, but limited to those kinds of animals which God himself showed were suitable for human consumption. In other words, God had revealed by Noah's time which animals were "clean" and edible, and those which were to be considered "unclean" and therefore unfit for human

consumption!

The Laws Given to Moses

The first listing or classification of which animals are fit to eat and which must be avoided is given in Leviticus, chapter 11. God says, "These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth" (Lev.11:2). God goes on to show that clean animals must part the hoof and chew the cud -- such as cattle, goats, sheep, deer, bison, elk, moose, etc. However, He says, animals which only do one or the other, are unclean -- not fit for food. These would include the camel, the rabbit, the pig or swine, the horse, dogs, cats, snakes, etc. Notice what God says:

"Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat. Nevertheless these shall ye NOT eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is UNCLEAN unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is UNCLEAN unto you. AND THE SWINE, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is UNCLEAN to you. Of their flesh shall ye NOT EAT, and their carcass shall ye not touch; they are UNCLEAN to you" (Lev.11:4-8).

What is the major difference between the "clean" and "unclean" animals? Why are some considered all right to eat, and others unfit for human consumption? Some say there is no difference; that it is mere "ritual." However, there is no "ritualism" discussed in this chapter at all -- just a plain and straightforward statement of DIVINE LAWS.

Let's analyze this matter. Gordon S.Tessler, Ph.D., in his book *Clean and Unclean Foods*, points out that all the edible animals listed above are complete herbivores. None of them eats meat, flesh, or bugs. They eat grass, vegetation, fruits, and grains. Also, they have two or three stomachs or secondary cud receptacles and a digestive tract that is 6 to 12 times the length of their bodies.

Such animals avoid the multiple diseases as well as the worms and other parasites carried by other animals. Their long alimentary canal assures them of a much more complete digestion and detoxification of the food they eat.

What about the unclean animals which God forbids us to eat? These animals are called "omnivores," and will eat just about anything. Their alimentary canal is much shorter, and as a result of their eating habits, they are much more prone to be disease-carriers. The popular "pig," for example, can carry up to 200 different diseases, and 18 different worms and other parasites! Pigs carry large round worms, which can be 18 inches long, the gullet worm, three kinds of stomach worms, a tiny hair worm, a hookworm, and the thorn-headed worm, all in the small intestine. Several species of nodular worms, and one species of the whip worm, and the kidney worm, exist in the large intestine.

One worm parasite that infects many pigs is *trichinella spiralis*, which causes a disease known as trichinosis -- for which even today *there is no known cure*. The trichinae worms are so

small that only a highly trained inspector using a powerful microscope can detect their presence.

Writes Elmer A. Josephson in *God's Key to Health and Happiness*,

"Senator Thomas C. Desmond, who served as chairman of the New York Trichinosis Commission stated, 'Physicians have confused trichinosis with some *fifty ailments*, ranging from typhoid fever to acute alcoholism'

"It has been reported from a lab of one of our northern universities that trichinae-laden swine flesh was heated to an unbelievably high temperature and then put under a microscope. To the amazement of the technicians some worms were still alive and moving about. The supposition that all of these worms can be killed in cooking is not to be relied upon" (p.59).

Pigs simply were not created to be eaten by mankind. Many poisons, in life, may seem to "taste" good -- but that doesn't make them safe! Consider arsenic, which is alleged to taste like almonds. A special report on trichinosis was presented at a Conference on Communicable Diseases by Dr. Manley, an expert on animal diseases. According to Dr. Manley, that report revealed that autopsies showed that *one out of three people are infected with trichinosis!* (*ibid.*) Thus trichinosis would appear to be a much more serious and widespread problem that most people begin to believe. Has this shocking statistic been covered up by a medical profession in league with the major pork producing corporations and meat packing industry of America?

The hog has an omnivorous appetite and a poorly built stomach. Within three hours of its eating putrid carrion, swill from the trough, or the feces of other animals, it may be butchered and served on a dining table as a "pork roast" or "pork chops." But is the flesh "clean"? Who can make "clean" that which God declares is "unclean"? The truth is, hogs have running sores in their front hooves from which oozes a greenish substance which is an avenue of elimination for the toxic poisons the hog has ingested. If these outlets are stopped up, greenish sores appear on the hog's body. The hog is nothing but Nature's walking, rooting, grunting vacuum cleaner, which ingests all the filth, squalor, swill, and garbage in its path. Those who eat of its flesh are eating second-hand "garbage" -- and it could cost them their health, and even their life!

What about sea life and fish? Concerning life that dwells in the waters of the earth, God declares that only aquatic life which has both fins and scales -- that is, true fish -- is fit for food or is "clean." His Word declares:

"These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat, and all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, **THEY SHALL BE AN ABOMINATION unto you: They shall be even an ABOMINATION unto you;** ye shall NOT eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in **ABOMINATION**. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an **ABOMINATION** unto you" (Lev. 11:9-12)

Therefore, all creatures which don't have both fins and scales -- that is, those creatures which are not true fish -- must be avoided. Notice! **FOUR TIMES** God calls those creatures which don't have fins and scales "**AN ABOMINATION**"! Is that plain

language, or isn't it? Such creatures would be crustaceans, shrimp, catfish (no scales), shark (no scales), whales (no scales), octopus, squid, mussels, clams, oysters, eels, crabs, lobsters, crayfish, and so forth. These don't have fins and scales and must be avoided as "unclean." They are to be considered an utter "abomination" -- detestable and vile filth!

Why does God say four different times that these particular creatures are "an *abomination*"? This is a powerful warning to us to TAKE HEED! Nowhere else in the Bible does God repeat four consecutive times such a clear and palpable red-flag warning!

Yet, today, in southern California, I am amazed at the increase in advertising of shrimp, and shellfish, lobsters, crab, and similar denizens of the deep, as well as the upsurge in advertising of catfish, and shark -- all of which God condemns in His Word! These scavenger fish and sea creatures are multipliers of filth and contamination. They contain high levels of cholesterol, mercury, disease, worms, parasites, and sometimes pesticides and other residue from man-made pollutants which they absorb from the waters where they dwell.

Why does God call these animals "unclean"? Nature itself speaks volumes on this subject. A little careful observation reveals that the pig, for example, is an omnivorous eater -- it eats virtually anything and everything. It is a walking, wallowing "garbage can" on legs. It's flesh is very unclean. Also, unlike the cow which has two stomachs, to digest food, the pig has only one stomach, to digest all the filth which it consumes so avidly.

Catfish, and other bottom-dwelling sea life, like the pig on land, are the scavengers of the "deep." They are the "vacuum-cleaners" at the bottom of the sea, eating all the filth which filters down to the sea bottom. As "filters of filth," they become "filth." They are not to be eaten or consumed at all.

However, there may be many more reasons why God has listed these creatures as "unclean" and unfit for human consumption. He has not given us every reason, or even one reason, in His Word. His Command should be enough warning to us. Let him that hears, fear to disobey! God doesn't have to tell us *why*. He is only obligated, as our Creator, to tell us *what*. He may leave out the *why* and challenge us to prove the reasons why to ourselves by observation and careful study over time. Someday, He may even reveal reasons we could never discover in a million years -- but that is up to Him. In the meantime, "a word to the wise" should be sufficient!

What about the birds? God's Word says:

And these are they which ye shall have IN ABOMINATION among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an ABOMINATION: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray, and the vulture, and the kite after his kind; every raven after his kind; and the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind, and the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl, and the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat. All fowls that creep, going on all four, shall be an ABOMINATION UNTO YOU" (Lev. 11:13-20).

Other unclean animals which may not be eaten include such things as bears, lions, tigers,

leopards, mountain lions (none of them divide the hoof or chew the cud). Other forbidden creatures are such things as weasels, the mouse, the lizard, the snail, the mole, prairie dogs, gophers, the ferret, the chameleon (vs.27-30). "And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten" (v.41). This includes multiple-footed creatures such as caterpillars (v.42). God thunders, "Ye shall not make your selves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves UNCLEAN with them, that ye should be DEFILED THEREBY" (v.43). He adds, "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore SANCTIFY yourselves, and ye shall be HOLY: for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (v.44-45).

God says:

"This is THE LAW of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living thing that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNCLEAN AND THE CLEAN, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten" (Lev.11:46-47).

That's "the Law." Is God's Word sufficient for us? Does God make these laws just to hear Himself talk? Does it not make any difference to Him what we do with these laws of His, whether we obey them or not? Some seem to have convinced themselves it simply doesn't matter! One wonders: Have they no fear of God? Have they paid any attention to what they have read in the Scriptures?

Notice! There is not ONE WORD in this entire chapter about this being a mere "ceremonial" or "ritualistic" law. That is utter nonsense! This is simply GOD'S LAW -- *THE LAW OF GOD*. It is up to us, then, to accept it, or reject it. Period. Pure and simple. Accept it, and LIVE -- reject it, and *die a million deaths, sooner or later -- PERISH FOREVER!!!*

This crucial law of God, concerning human DIETARY needs, is repeated and elaborated upon in Deuteronomy chapter 14. This is so important to God that He spends two whole chapters in His Word dealing with the subject! Do we get the point? Is what is obviously important to God also important to *us*? Or does our heart condemn us when we read the Word of God?

Notice! God said to ancient Israel, "For thou art a HOLY PEOPLE unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut.14:2) This is almost identical to what God says to His people, the Church, which is "spiritual Israel," or "the Israel of God" (Gal.6:16). The apostle Peter wrote of the church of God: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an HOLY NATION, a *peculiar people . . .*" (I Pet.2:9). What set ancient Israel apart from the Gentile world? What sets the church apart from the world around us? What, in other words, makes us both *different*?

Answer: *The LAWS of God!*

Our behavior, our obedience to the Laws of God, is what separates us from the children of this world! Some of those vital LAWS which mark our behavior and set us apart as different, "peculiar," and which make us HOLY in the eyes of God, are His DIETARY LAWS!

God goes on to spell it out, in Deuteronomy 11:

"Thou shalt not eat *any abominable thing*. These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat, the hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the bison, and the wild ox, and the chamois. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat" (Deut.11:3-6).

How important is this to God? This law, He says in context, is a gift from Him to set us apart from the Gentile nations which know not God; it makes us a holy, separated, chosen people; it places us "above ALL the nations that are upon the earth" (v.2).

If we disobey it, then we LOSE our unique, special status in the eyes of God! If we disobey, we become "unclean," impure, unchosen, just one of the milling masses of the unwashed multitudes, just another piece of driftwood on the sea of life, just another piece of flotsam and jetsam bobbing up and down, going nowhere, accomplishing nothing, achieving nothing.

The Prophet Isaiah's Words

The laws of God are very special, and separate us from the multitudes of the unwashed, unforgiven, unregenerated millions of men and women who don't know the Living God. They identify us as God's people. Disobedience identifies us with death, sin, and rebellion.

Isaiah the prophet wrote of the attitudes and actions of those men who forsake the laws of God, and turn their backs on His commandments -- including in particular His dietary laws! Notice God's flaming words of condemnation and warning rebuke!

"I have spread out my hands all the day unto a REBELLIOUS people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face . . . *WHICH EAT SWINE'S FLESH, and broth of abominable things [clam chowder!] is in their vessels*" (Isa.65:3-4).

"He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, *AS IF HE OFFERED SWINE'S BLOOD* ... Yea, they have *chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their ABOMINATIONS. I also will choose their DELUSIONS*" (Isa.66:3-4).

"They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree [the Christmas tree?!!] in the midst, *EATING SWINE'S FLESH, AND THE ABOMINATION, and the mouse, shall be CONSUMED together, saith the LORD*" (Isa.66:17).

Notice! This is a prophecy for the end time -- the LAST DAYS! These chapters are talking about the "Day of the Lord" when God will intervene in human affairs, at the END of this modern age (Isa.63:1-6; 64:1-3; 65:17; 66:5-11, 15-16). At this time, during the END time, God sees many of HIS people returning to the ways of the Gentiles, consuming unfit animal flesh, even PORK, and broth of abominable things such as clam chowder, a "favorite" in restaurants

today, and similar abominations. At Christmas time, many families bake their cherished "Christmas ham," and their "Easter ham" on Easter. These practices are an offense -- an abomination -- in the sight of God!

Does it make any difference to God what we eat? The prophet Hosea wrote:

"My people are DESTROYED for lack of knowledge: because thou hast REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: *seeing thou hast FORGOTTEN THE LAW* of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame" (Hos. 4:6-7).

If we reject the truth of God, He says He will reject us! A very simple quid pro quo. God says, "You do this, and I'll do that." "You ignore my Law, and I'll ignore your children, and refuse to bless them." "You turn your back on Me, and I'll turn my back on YOU."

New Testament Teaching

But what did Jesus Christ say about this subject? Did He come to do away with His Father's law? Did He abolish the law of clean and unclean meats, so Christians (so-called) can have their Easter hams, and Christmas hams, and pork sausage, or pork bacon, together with all the shrimp they want on their salads, in their cocktails, or oysters for their "appetizers"? Did He come to abolish all God's food laws, making all things "clean" -- including ants, cockroaches, caterpillars, beetles, spiders, snakes, worms, and the like? Anybody who believes this, why not cook them up a batch of "spider stew" or "french-fried cockroaches" or "bettle and caterpillar goulash"? Let's get serious about this question. Notice!

What was Jesus Christ's attitude toward the laws of God? Jesus Himself declared:

"Think not that I am come to DESTROY the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to FULFILL. For verily I say unto you, *TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE SHALL IN NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW, TILL ALL BE FULFILLED*" (Matt.5:17-18).

How many times have I quoted that Scripture, and turned to it, to solve a question about God's Law, and whether it is still in force, or not! How plain it is! But will we just BELIEVE IT FOR WHAT IT SAYS?

Not once during His entire ministry did Jesus Christ even hint, let alone state, that unclean animal flesh is now all right to consume at the dinner table. He upheld His Father's laws in their entirety. In fact, He said He came to FULFILL THEM -- that is, to fill them up to the full, to the brim, and overflowing! He came to MAGNIFY THEM, and to EXALT the law, not to abolish it or its requirements!

"Making All Meats Clean"?

Some, however, insist that Christ did away with the so-called ceremonial "laws" of Leviticus regarding clean and unclean animal flesh. They will point to a comment He made in Mark 7:19. Let's notice this Scripture in context.

"Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, *unwashed hands*, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, *except they wash their hands*, eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the *washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables*. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" (Mark 7:1-5).

Notice! This is a dispute over "tradition" -- not over the laws of God as they are revealed in Leviticus, or the Torah portion of the Bible. This is an argument over the "traditions of the elders," handed down by the Jews from generation to generation! Even today, "observant Jews" or "orthodox Jews" will not eat dairy products out of the same utensils as animal flesh based on a misinterpretation of Exodus 23:19 -- "You shall not cook a kid in its mother's milk" (see also Exo.34:26; Deut.14:21). According to the tenets of Judaism, this means "not only a kid, but the meat and milk of all domestic animals." Says the book *Kashrut*, by Rabbi Yacov Lipschutz:

"The Talmud further states that since this passage is repeated three times, each passage indicates a distinct prohibition. Therefore, it is derived that (a) it is forbidden to cook a mixture of meat and milk of domestic animals; and if cooked (b) it may not be eaten; and (c) no benefit whatsoever may be derived from it. Since all use is restricted, it is forbidden to sell the cooked mixture, to give it as a gift, or to use it as animal feed. Therefore one must exercise caution in the use of pet foods and feeds produced from beef, veal or mutton, containing milk and processed by cooking" (p.40-41).

What did Jesus Christ think of these laws concerning washing pots and pans diligently, having separate pots and pans and dishes and utensils for meat and dairy products, and the emphasis on "washing"? This was a "tradition of the elders," a custom handed down from many generations, which apparently had developed since the time of Ezra. It was not a custom followed by Abraham, the patriarch and ancestor of all Israel, for we find in Genesis 18 that when three angels visited him at Mamre, one of them being the LORD,

"Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man, and he hastened to dress it. *And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the fig tree, and THEY DID EAT*" (Genesis 18:1-8).

According to Jewish tradition -- the "tradition of the elders" -- Abraham must have grievously sinned, because to serve meat and milk and dairy products at the same meal is forbidden! Writes Rabbi Lipschutz:

"The prohibition of cooking milk and meat has far reaching effects, and such mixtures may not be cooked together even when the foods are not to be eaten by non-Jews. This prohibits a Jewish worker in a non-kosher facility from cooking meats of kosher domestic animals with dairy products. When the foods themselves are not mixed, but the utensils are, it is forbidden to cook milk for non-kosher use in meat utensils that have been used to heat meat in the immediately preceding twenty-four-hour period, and vice-versa."

This rabbinical authority continues:

"As an extension of the prohibition against eating cooked milk-meat mixtures, even unmixed and uncooked milk and meat may not be eaten together. *Furthermore, a time period must elapse before one may eat dairy foods after having eaten meat. The nearly UNIVERSAL TRADITION for the duration of that time period is SIX HOURS. . . . At no time may meat and milk be eaten during the same meal, even though there may have been a sufficient time between meat and dairy*" (p.42).

As we saw in the book of Genesis, obviously Abraham was unaware of this "rule." He did not live by it, or practice it! He served meat, butter, and milk to his guests *at the same meal!* He did not have them wait till six hours later before serving one or the other!

But Jewish "tradition," once begun, dies hard. What was the attitude of Jesus Christ to these punctilious "do's and don'ts among the Jewish people, particularly concerning foods and washings? Notice His own response to the inquisitive Pharisees:

"Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you HYPOCRITES, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit IN VAIN do they worship me, *teaching for doctrine the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. For laying aside the commandment of God, YE HOLD THE TRADITION OF MEN, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. . . Full well ye reject the commandment of God, THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR OWN TRADITION*" (Mark 7:6-9).

Jesus Christ did not accept "tradition" or "custom" when it conflicted with Torah, or the plain and clear teachings of the Law itself. He did not accept *additional rules and requirements* imposed on the people by the rabbis and religious leaders. He stood up against them!

Then, in this setting and context, Jesus called the people to them to explain while these additional rules and regulations were not necessary to be obeyed. He declared:

"There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (v.15).

His disciples still did not get His point, so He told them later, after then entered a house away from the people:

"Are ye without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him: Because it entereth not into *his heart*, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, *purging all meats?* . . . That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:18-23).

This explanation seems clear enough. A little "dirt" on the hands, while eating, is not the problem -- but the "dirt" that people think up in their hearts and minds, and then perpetrate in their lives, that is what really makes men spiritually "unclean"!

The subject under discussion here has nothing whatsoever to do with God's Laws relating to clean and unclean animal flesh, as given in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14! Not at all!

Jesus was not arguing with the Pharisees over eating pork, or shrimp, or crab cakes, or eels. The subject under discussion was the Jewish "traditions" of eating with "unwashed hands," unwashed cups and saucers, pots and pans, and similar traditions!

Some, however, take verse 19 out of context, and claim Jesus was stating a new truth, changing God's health and cleanliness laws, and "purging all meats." The *Amplified Bible* totally misses the point, and states dogmatically, "Thus He was making and declaring all foods (ceremonially) clean [that is, abolishing the ceremonial distinctions of the Levitical Law]." That is a flagrant mistranslation and nothing more than an editorial opinion of the "translators." The Greek in this verse simply states that when a man eats food, it goes into his belly, "*and into the draught goes out, purifying all the food.*"

The subject under discussion is FOOD eaten with unwashed hands -- not the eating of pork, shellfish, or other abominations! Those things were never considered as "food" by the Jews, by Christ, or the disciples. The word translated "meats" in this verse, in the King James Version, is the Greek word *broma*, #1033 in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, and means "food." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* defines the word as meaning "that which is eaten, food." Food, of course, includes meat from animals, dairy products, vegetables, grains, and so forth. The flesh of unclean animals proscribed in Leviticus was not even considered as "food" to the Jews -- it was considered "unclean" and "contaminated" by its very nature.

"Eat All Things"?

However, in the book of Romans is another scripture which many have twisted, or misunderstood, as the case may be, which may on the surface seem to imply that as Christians we may eat "all things." Notice this passage:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth 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" (Rom.14:1-3).

What is really under discussion in this passage? Is this a controversy between a man who eats pork, shrimp, and all manner of beasts, and a person who only eats "herbs" -- that is, a vegetarian? Not at all. The argument these people are having is over the matter of whether it is all right to eat ANIMAL FLESH VERSUS VEGETARIANISM! What kind of animal flesh is not the subject here -- only the matter of eating animal flesh versus strict vegetarianism!

Notice! One person "eateth herbs" and does not eat "all" things -- that is, both herbs and animal flesh. This is the whole substance of this discussion. Paul goes on to explain in verse 6, latter part, "He that eateth [flesh], eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. . . . But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (verses 6-10).

Paul goes on, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more [as to whether we are vegetarians or meat eaters, i.e., those who eat clean meats -- both are acceptable with God]: but

judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (v.13). Now, with this context understood, let's notice the next two verses:

"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. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat [eating flesh], now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for who Christ died" (Rom.14:14-15).

Again, the context, as we have seen, is vegetarianism versus eating animal flesh. The issue is not eating clean animal flesh versus unclean animal flesh. The problem here was not that some were eating pork, ham, and clams, versus others who only ate clean meats! The underlying issue was simply whether one should eat any meat at all, versus pure vegetarianism. Paul said that if a person considered in his own mind and conscience that eating meat would be wrong, then he should do it. To such a person, it would have defiled their conscience. However, he said, it was not "unclean" of itself to eat animal flesh (of permitted animals).

Isn't this clear?

"Sanctified by the Word of God"

Another misunderstood Scripture is found in Paul's first letter to Timothy. Here Paul warns Timothy that in the "latter times" some would depart from the faith -- the truth of God -- giving heed to "seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (I Tim.4:1). These, he said, would be

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

FOR IT IS

SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD OF GOD and prayer" (I Tim.4:2-5).

Again, we must be very careful to understand the subject Paul is addressing here, and not take this passage out of context, to read our own meaning or desire into it, as some have done. Notice that Paul was defending the truth of God against various heretics and heresies which were cropping up, inspired by "doctrines of demons." Among these heresies was the teaching that men should "abstain from meats" -- that is, we must all avoid all meat products and be VEGETARIANS! There were certain gnostics and heretics in Paul's day, as is true also today, who were teaching that you had to be a vegetarian, that eating any animal flesh was "sin."

Notice! These false prophets and teachers were forbidding marriage also. They were what were called "ascetics," those who denied the flesh totally, who wanted to be "more holy than God." They taught celibacy was God's way, and marriage was "sinful." Their teachings were the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church!

However, Paul explained that these perverters of the truth were commanding that men "abstain from meats, *which God hath CREATED TO BE RECEIVED with thanksgiving.*" In other words, they were forbidding people to eat that which GOD CREATED TO BE EATEN, "with thanksgiving" and gratitude, by "them which believe and KNOW the TRUTH" (v.3).

Those who know the truth -- and Jesus Christ said, "Thy Word is TRUTH" (John 17:17) -- will believe and eat these meat products, Paul said. In other words, the "truth" -- the Word of God -- tells us what to eat and what not to eat. We don't need to listen to vegetarian preachers, and those who come along preaching a "gospel of vitamins," or "gospel of herbs," or "gospel of vegetarianism" -- but we should avoid them, and not even listen to them. The WORD OF GOD is to be our GUIDE when it comes to matters of what foods we should eat or not eat! And God's Word tells us precisely what foods are clean and unclean in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14!

Now let's notice again verses 4-5:

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For *IT IS SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD OF GOD* and prayer."

What does this mean? One might think that this says every animal is all right to eat, so long as we give God thanks when we partake of its flesh. But is this true? Stop and consider for a moment? Are "all" creatures meant to be eaten? Some animals, insects, creepy-crawly things, sea snakes, etc., are EXTREMELY POISONOUS and HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH! There are some creatures which Nature itself teaches us we must not eat! Therefore, we must guard against taking this verse at "face value," out of context, and reading into it what Paul did not mean to imply.

The key to understanding this verse is in the latter part: "It is *sanctified [that is, SET APART] by the WORD OF GOD* and prayer." In other words, the creatures of God that are fit for food are those which are set apart by God's Word -- revealed in God's Word -- as that which is fit for human consumption. So again, this Scripture merely directs us back to God's original instructions about food and clean and unclean meats, found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14!

Isn't the truth plain? God's Word does not conflict with itself. The Scripture does not "contradict" itself. It is wholly consistent, and uniform, and completely united in teaching. "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Peter's Amazing Vision

Some, however, really love their shrimp cocktails and oysters on the half-shell. They will not give them up, without serious prying open their minds, any more than an oyster will give up its "pearl" without prying open its shell. They often will quote Peter's vision in the book of Acts. Notice this incredible vision, and its true meaning!

"Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour [high noon]: and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Acts 10:9-16).

We read that "Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had should mean" (Acts 10:17). While he was still pondering it, men arrived at the house who had been sent by Cornelius, a Roman centurion (v.1-2). Cornelius had also just had a vision from God, telling him to send men to city named Joppa, on the coast, to find a man named Peter, who would then tell him what he needed to do to be right with God (verses 3-6). Peter was still meditating on the meaning of the vision, when God's Spirit spoke to him, informing him three men were seeking him, and told him to go down, and go with them, without doubting, for God had sent them (vs.17-23).

Peter went with them the next day back to Caesaria, and when they arrived, many people were come together to hear him. Cornelius told him how he had been praying and fasting, and how an angel in a vision told him to send men to Peter, who would instruct them. "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (v.33).

Peter replied, "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (v.34-35). Peter then proceeded to tell them about Christ, the anointed Messiah sent by God, and as he spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and "all them which heard the word" (v.44). Those who came with Peter were all astonished, "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v.45). At that point, they were all baptized (v.46-48).

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, some of the brethren who were of the Pharisees contended with him, because he had gone to visit uncircumcized Gentiles. Peter then rehearsed the whole matter to them, from the beginning, expounding the whole story in order (Acts 11:2-4), beginning with the vision of the sheet from heaven with all the wild beasts and creeping things, and the command to "slay and eat" (v.7). He recounted how a voice told him, "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common" (v.9), and how immediately the men arrived from Cornelius, a Gentile, seeking an audience with him, and how God's Spirit bade him to go with them. He then recounted how Cornelius had a vision causing him to send the men to fetch Peter, and how when he told them the gospel message, the Holy Spirit came upon every one of them, as it had upon the Jewish brethren previously.

What was the whole lesson in all this story? God was opening the door for the truth of the gospel message to go to the Gentiles -- whom the Jewish people considered "unclean." They had nothing to do with Gentiles, but remained separated, apart, lest they would be contaminated or "defiled" spiritually. But God used the vision of the heavenly sheet with all the unclean animals to show Peter that *any human being whom God has cleansed, and forgiven, must not be considered "unclean" spiritually, but fully accepted as a brother in Christ!*

This vision, therefore, had absolutely nothing whatever to do with all flesh of unclean animals being "changed" mysteriously so that all of a sudden, now, it can be consumed by Christians everywhere! Absolutely not! This was merely a *vision* -- not a reality. And it was a symbol of *Gentiles being cleansed and accepted into the Church* -- not of any changes in the nature of wild beasts, vermin, creeping crawlies, or unclean animal flesh. What was unclean in the days of Moses and Noah and Christ is still unclean, today. Make no mistake. It is no more

right to eat hog flesh, swine's blood, or mouse feet, or pickled cats, or boiled dogs, or pickled pig's feet or crab or shrimp or lobster or any other unclean animal, today, than it was two thousand or three thousand years ago!

"I CHANGE NOT!" God Says

God says, "For I am the LORD: *I change not*: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal.3:6). God doesn't give a law one day, and turn around and change His mind a few days later. (Remember, a "thousand years" is as one day in God's sight -- II Pet.3:8-9). When God establishes a Law, it remains in force FOR EVER!

God's law is eternal, in the heavens, unchanging, still vibrant and in force, just as much as the law of gravity. It is just as binding and forceful today as it was two or three thousand years ago! "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; *ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS ARE SURE. They stand fast FOR EVER AND EVER*, and are done in TRUTH and UPRIGHTNESS" (Psalm 111:7-8).

David, a man after God's own heart, wrote: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover *by them is your servant WARNED: and in keeping of them there is GREAT REWARD*" (Psalm 19:7-11).

By obeying the laws of God concerning food, we come under His protection. He intends to spare His people the sickness, disease, and afflictions, that come upon those people who defy His laws and commandments. Keeping God's health laws protects our health, one of the most vital and valuable gifts God has given to us! Those who ignore God's "warning message" concerning diet, however, will bring upon themselves afflictions, sores, infections, cancerous tumors, a host of debilitating diseases, suffering, and eventually death!

The Eternal, Unchanging Laws of God

Consider for a moment. The great God who invented the human body knows how it works best. He knows what kind of "fuel" it needs to operate at chief efficiency. He knows all about it, because He designed it.

The Creator also knows what sort of things would tend to destroy -- even over time -- the delicate, fine balance of the human mechanism. He knows what sort of ingredients would "clog" its filters, bog down its immune system, or weaken and devitalize its long range effectiveness. ***God knows these things!***

Who, then, are we to turn up our noses at God, and His Laws, and thumb our noses at God? Who are we to say, "We disagree with you and your food laws." "They don't make any sense to us." "We're going to eat whatever we please!"

Isn't that a little like the foolish baby who puts all sorts of dirt and filthy things into her mouth, "experimenting"? Aren't most grown men and women just little children, a few years later, having grown up physically, but still "doing their own thing" and ignoring the laws of God, spiritually?

God Almighty says:

"If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I WILL PUT NONE OF THESE DISEASES UPON THEE, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: *for I AM THE LORD [YAHVEH-ROPHEKAH] THAT HEALETH THEE*" (Exo.15:26).

Notice! God's healing promises are *conditional*. He does not promise to "heal" us if we break His laws, transgress His covenant, ignore His statutes, and turn our ears away from His commandments. He only promises to keep us free from the "diseases of Egypt" if we OBEY Him and keep His laws -- including, most certainly, His divinely ordained FOOD LAWS!

Thus, whether or not we observe God's laws concerning clean and unclean meats may not mean much to some men, who have forsaken the truth of God, and plunged back madly into this evil world and pagan system, but it matters to the Living, Eternal, True GOD!

He says He is the LORD God who HEALS us, when we become sick or ill, or afflicted with some disease or disturbance in our bodily system. Do we believe that? His promises to heal are *conditional* upon our OBEDIENCE TO HIS LAWS! What could be clearer than that?

Do you think for one moment that God will "heal" someone who FLOUTS His laws, and FLAUNTS their disobedience for all too see? Can we expect God to HEAL us of our diseases if we CONTINUE TO *HABITUALLY VIOLATE HIS DIETARY LAWS*?

God warns in Deuteronomy 28, if we break His divine laws and transgress His commandments, and forsake His covenant, that we will pay a terrible price:

"And the LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods [tumors, cancer], and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. The LORD will smite thee with madness, and with blindness, and astonishment of heart [cardiovascular diseases] . . ." (Deut.28:27-28).

May God help us all to wake up, and to love and appreciate His divine health laws, and our loving Father who gave them to us, for our benefit! May He also wake us up to the need to OBEY Him, carefully, in every aspect of our lives, so that as the apostle John wrote, we may "prosper, and *be in health*" (III John 2).

Jesus Christ declared, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it MORE ABUNDANTLY" (John 10:10). Obedience to God's Laws = *Life and health and well-being!* Disobedience to the Laws of God = sickness, disease, suffering, afflictions, pain, anguish, sorrow, and DEATH!

Disobedience to any of the laws of God = SIN. And what is sin? Well, as the apostle John so clearly defined it, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for *sin IS the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4). And where does "sin" lead? As the apostle Paul wrote, "The wages of SIN is *DEATH*" (Romans 6:23).

God's eternal health and dietary laws were ordained for our GOOD! To break them is sin and leads to suffering and death! So God says:

"Keep therefore and do them: for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you today?"

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, LEST THOU FORGET the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they DEPART FROM THY HEART all the days of thy life: but TEACH THEM thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deuteronomy 4:6-9).

Once we really learn this lesson, we will be truly blessed!