

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FOOD

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Below is an excerpt on this subject, from a Bible Commentary, which excerpt is typical of most other commentaries. It embodies the traditional doctrine that most churches teach about the Commandments of God as being now set aside. . A typical commentary comment is, "*In the NT, however, such provisions for identifying 'clean' and 'unclean' animals were understood to have been set aside with the coming of Jesus (Mark 7:19; see also Acts 10:10-16)*". At least they are honest enough to say, "were understood" which shows they are not sure. If the argument was sure as is taught, it contains basic flaws, even if at first glance it appears to be reasonable, or even appears to be right.

FROM THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY.

"The precise meaning of these laws has been a source of debate since pre-Christian times. Perhaps the most popular modern explanation of the laws is that certain animals were prohibited for *hygienic reasons*. Commentators point out that pork may be a source of trichinosis and that the hare is a carrier of tularemia. However, several lines of evidence make this explanation improbable: (1) Jesus declared that all foods should be considered clean (Mark 7:14-23). This was reconfirmed in a heavenly vision granted to Peter (Acts 10:9-23) since the disciples seemed to have missed the point of Jesus' earlier declaration. It is difficult to believe that God was concerned about the health of His people in the Old Testament, but abandoned that concern in the New Testament. (2) Eating some of the "clean" animals may represent a greater danger to health than some of the "unclean" ones. (3) No hygienic reasons are given as motives for observing the law of the clean and the unclean. And the Old Testament does not state that the Israelites considered the unclean animals dangerous to their health.

A second popular interpretation of the prohibition of unclean animals for food is that they were used in *pagan cultic rites*. Evidence for this is that the unclean animals are said to be "detestable" (Deut. 14:3). The same Hebrew word is used elsewhere in Deuteronomy of idolatry and other pagan practices (7:25; 12:31). Also some unclean animals (e.g., pigs) were widely used in pagan rituals. However, this explanation clarifies so little of the data that it is not too useful. And one may adduce counter examples. For instance, the bull, a common symbol in the religions of the ancient Near East, was permitted as food for the Israelites.

A third explanation is that the clean and unclean animals were *symbolic* of good and evil in the human realm. This explanation became extremely subjective and even fanciful by earlier interpreters of the Old Testament. For instance, some held that chewing of the cud (14:6-8) represented the faithful believer who meditated on the Law. Others taught that the sheep (v. 4) was clean because it served as a reminder that the Lord is His people's Shepherd. This symbolic interpretation should be rejected since it is divorced from the controls of grammatical historical exegesis, and therefore is impossible to validate. However, a symbolic interpretation may be essentially correct if it is applied comprehensively under strict exegetical controls to all the ceremonially clean and unclean animals here".

To gain right understanding, we firstly must examine the two passages of Scripture given in the commentary passage.

THE FIRST BIBLE PASSAGE USED TO SUPPORT TRADITION.

Mark 7:14-23 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

15 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.

16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

In looking at this passage quoted, we should note that the commentaries have not gone back to the place where the context is established. Here this context is established earlier in the chapter where Jesus is

contrasting the “**commandments of men**” with the “**commandments of God**”. In general, churches do not seem to note the difference!

*Mark 7:7-9. “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines **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. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject **the commandment of God**, that ye may keep your own tradition”*

In no way does Jesus discount or eliminate the “commandments of God”. It is the “commandments of men” Jesus attacks. Jesus does not commend or sanction the eating of unclean foods, or of breaking the “commandments of God” in these passages. Jesus is insisting that it was the “commandments of God” that were being rejected and thus were being broken by these Judean leaders. They had substituted their interpretations for the “commandments of God”.

The “commandments of men” Jesus talks about are the “*washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do*”. What the Judean leaders were keeping, or trying to keep, were the “commandments of men”. For the commentaries to insist, or even to infer, that these two sets of commandments are the same is not only a lie, it is total error. The commentators need to be able to explain how “*the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do*” has anything to do with eating pork or unclean foods. Jesus nowhere mentions pork or unclean meat in these passages, and in no way links the two differing sets of commandments.

When Jesus gave His explanation, to His disciples, saying, “*Are ye so 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?*”, the context concerns only those things relating to the “commandments of men”. It is these things of man and man’s religion that “*goeth out into the draught, purging all meats*”. The fact that pork, for instance, likewise “goes out into the draught” does not mean it is no longer an unclean food, even if commentators say it is so. Not eating swine’s flesh is part of the “commandments of God”, and this is not mentioned in this passage as being part of the “commandments of men”.

THE SECOND BIBLE PASSAGE USED TO SUPPORT TRADITION.

*Acts 10:9-30 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 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: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate, 18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28 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**. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,*

Peter states simply what God had showed him in the vision, i.e. **“God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean”**. To say that God showed Peter anything different such as, “It is now acceptable to eat unclean meats”, is to call both Peter and the Word of God both liars.

The commentator says regarding the first passage in Mark chapter seven, *“This was reconfirmed in a heavenly vision granted to Peter (Acts 10:9-23) since the disciples seemed to have missed the point of Jesus’ earlier declaration”*. But did they really? Peter did not agree with the commentator that the symbols in his vision had anything to do with being able to eat unclean foods. The commentators refuse to believe what Peter says. This is because the commentators have to ignore the context, in order to support their traditional wrong doctrine. The context includes a connection about Peter being able to tell Cornelius what he should do.

Verse 5. *And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do*

This has nothing at all to do with eating or not eating pork, or any other animals God has declared to be unclean as food. When we read, *“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 “one of another nation” is *alophulos* which means “one of a kindred tribe”. In his explanation, Peter said something limiting the churches refuse to accept, *“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ”*. As the Judeans thought of the 10 tribes of House of Israel as being unclean like pigs and other unclean animals, then we can start to understand the vision. But, in no way has it anything to do with eating or not eating swine’s flesh. It is about the Word of God being sent to, and received by, the “gentilised” House of Israel.

As always, the symbols in a vision have to be interpreted! The commentators do not do this in this passage. Imagine how ridiculous it would be if all the symbols in Biblical visions were taken literally as the commentators have done here. Where we read in the vision of Peter saying, *‘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 is part of the vision; it is not part of the interpretation. Thus churches are not teaching what Peter says God showed him. It is not unusual to find such wrong teachings in commentaries and Bible footnotes.

And it is pointed out; the difference between clean and unclean animals predates Moses, since Noah knew the difference when he took the animals into the ark! The difference is eternal!

SOME RELATIVE NOTES FROM THE SAME COMMENTARY.

In Isaiah 66 we find this statement, which in context, is concerned with God’s people.

Isaiah 66:17 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.

Being consumed by God for eating swine’s flesh is a heavy statement! The abomination is *shequets* = “an unclean thing, an abomination”. Yes, it is heavy for Isaiah to say that God will consume eaters of pork, rodents and other things. But the same commentary (as quoted earlier in this paper) contradicts itself as it agrees that eating unclean animals as being unlawful, stands until Judgment Day, saying:

When God restores His people to Jerusalem (vv. 10-13) in the Millennium, they will rejoice and prosper, but on His and her enemies He will swoop down in judgment like a fire (cf. 2 Thes. 1:7-9) and a whirlwind to slay them. This judgment will be fair because of their abominations: worshiping in idolatrous gardens (cf. Isa. 1:29; 65:3) and eating ceremonially unclean animals such as pigs (cf. 65:4; 66:3; Lev. 11:7) and rats (cf. Lev. 11:29).

Where did they get the word “ceremonially”? It is from tradition. God’s commandment not to eat unclean food has nothing to do with any ceremony. It has nothing to do with food offered to idols either. The word “enemies” refers to those of God’s people who are eating pigs and mice, etc. Here this commentary is contradicting what they say in their quotation found in the first page of this paper. They confirm this concerning the verse below, which again is about eating swine’s flesh:

*Is 65:2-7 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, **which eat swine’s flesh**, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.*

The commentary says, as follows:

Isaiah 65:1-7. Constantly reaching out to Israel, God revealed Himself to those who did not even ask for that revelation. Only because of His grace did He do so, even calling out to them, Here am I. Yet they did not respond. He was always ready to help them (holding out His hands; Paul quotes vv. 1-2 in Rom. 10:20-21), but they continued to be stubborn, independent, and evil. They provoked God by (a) worshiping in pagan gardens (cf. Isa. 1:29; 66:17); (b) being involved in necromancy (supposedly consulting the dead, while sitting among the graves, 65:4; cf. 8:19); (c) disregarding His dietary laws (65:4b; cf. 66:3, 17; Lev. 11:7); and (d) being religiously arrogant till they became as repulsive and irritating to Him as smoke in a person's nose. Because of their sins, the LORD would judge them. The Assyrian threat (Isa. 1-37) and the Babylonian Exile (chaps. 38-66) were two of the ways the Lord disciplined His people. The consequences of sin had to be faced; God would pay them back in judgment for their idolatrous worship in high places (cf. 57:7).

Here the commentary again declares this reference to eating swine's flesh concerns God's people, thus showing inconsistency. Is there any wonder why church members are all so confused?

A THIRD BIBLE PASSAGE USED TO SUPPORT TRADITION.

Rom. 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. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

This is another passage that is used to promote the teaching that the eating of unclean foods was set aside by Jesus. Here again, tradition, which promotes that idea, has not considered the context. The context is established in the first verse of the chapter where the issue is about being a vegetarian or not.

Rom. 14:1 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

The context certainly is not about eating, or not eating, unclean meats. It is about being a vegetarian or not. So, as usual and according to good Greek word usage, "all" refers to the "all" of the context only, and thus does not include anything outside of the particular context. Likewise when we come down to the verse "All things indeed are pure" and "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost", there has been no change in the context within this chapter, and thus there is no application outside of the limited context.

A FOURTH BIBLE PASSAGE USED TO SUPPORT TRADITION.

1 Cor.8.8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

Again, to suggest that this means that God's people can now eat unclean foods once again means that no notice has been taken of the passage context, which is confined to eating foods offered to idols.

FINAL COMMENT.

No wonder church members are confused over this issue and every issue relating to "the Commandments of God", a phrase found often enough within the New Testament, even if churches ignore the phrase. Church trumpets, such as commentaries and teachers, are making uncertain sounds by contradicting themselves, in the way as was pointed out above! Commentaries say that on one hand Jesus has set aside the eating of unclean animals, and on the other hand that God's people will be judged for eating swine's flesh on judgement day, (if not before). What they have set aside are the "commandments of God".

The footnotes of the "Life Application Bible" actually say, "He did not downgrade the Law, but He paved the way for the change made clear in Acts 10, 7-22 when He removed the cultural restrictions regarding food". Amazing! Does this concept not in fact downgrade the Law of God? And where does 'culture' come into it? Do we not say our culture allows us to eat pig but not rat, so that is now our standard? On this basis we could say nothing of the "commandments of God" has any relevance in today's "culture". This is what we are seeing today in society and most churches, go along with this idea, even in the holier than thou, so-called "holy ghost works".

There may be some partial acknowledgement of the "commandments of God"-(Mal.2:9)- but God says, "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law". This partiality causes society to view the churches as they do. It is God that has brought this view of churches by society to pass. The blessing and the glory have departed from the churches. Again, why?

Rev. 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

And, as Jesus says,

John 14:21 *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and **the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.***

Jesus has not therefore changed the Father's word, or the Father's commandments. In making obedience a matter of the heart, Jesus did not over-ride the "commandments of God". He said,

Matthew 5:17-18 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 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.

But, commentaries and Bible footnotes, in general, gyrate in contradictory comments to try to establish the idea that heaven and earth has already passed away, thus giving the impression that the "Commandments of God" have been set aside. At least 90% of churches follow the conclusions of these commentators. Thus churchgoers have been taught to think that unclean foods are now clean.

*Ezekiel 22:26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, **neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean....***

*Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **GOD FORBID:***

*Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? **GOD FORBID:***

Paul did not agree with the commentators and neither should any of us.

Those who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, outside of any works of the Law, then come into a new relationship where the principle, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" applies.

Anybody for rat pie?