

Christ's Sacrifice and Unclean Meats

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There is an expression, “you are what you eat”, used to describe someone’s overall health based on the type of foods that are consumed. Therefore, if an individual has a diet high in saturated and/or trans fatty acids, they are more likely to gain weight and experience health problems. This principle can be applied spiritually to the majority of Christians today who think it is acceptable to ignore the food laws of Almighty God, and somehow maintain a healthy relationship with Jesus Christ.

During the First Covenant system only meats deemed “clean” could be used as offerings. This truth was understood before the time of Moses, and therefore preceded God’s law and commandments given at Mt. Sinai,

You (Noah) 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 (Gen. 7:2; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Noah understood that certain animals were unacceptable as offerings to Almighty God,

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar (Gen. 8:20).

As Almighty God created all lifeforms, only He can decide which animals are acceptable as sacrifices, and therefore regarded as “clean”. The priesthood that administered the animal sacrifices could eat portions from these “clean” animals after they were offered,

He among the sons of Aaron, who offers the blood of the peace offering, and the fat, shall have the right thigh for his part. ³⁴For the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering I (the Lord) have taken from the children of Israel, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons from the children of Israel by a statute forever (Lev. 7:33-34; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The clean animals offered as sacrifices pre-figured the acceptable sacrifice that would come and fulfill what the animal sacrificial system could not,

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹²Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12).

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins (Heb. 10:4).

Figuratively speaking, those who repent of sin, are baptized, and begin living a new life of obedience to God’s law and commandments (Rom. 6:4), partake of the acceptable sacrifice of Jesus Christ who is regarded as “clean” because he did not commit sin. This is done once a year during the New Testament Passover service, which occurs at the

end of the 14th day of the 1st month of the year,

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, **yet without sin** (Heb. 4:15; emphasis added).

...For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸Therefore **let us keep the feast** (Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1Cor. 5:7b-8).

And he (Christ) took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me'. ²⁰Likewise he also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you' (Lk. 22:19-20; cf. 1Cor. 11:24-25).

Only clean animals were sacrificed during the Old Testament period because they were a type of the ultimate sacrifice to come, Jesus Christ. As mentioned previously, Christ was without sin and therefore "clean" as far as the spiritual context of God's law, regarding acceptable sacrifices, is concerned. Consequently, it is incongruous that anyone regarding themselves as "Christian" would eat meats that are unclean and believe it is somehow acceptable to God. Christ is figuratively the sacrifice on the altar from which everyone receives forgiveness of sin. Therefore, when anyone eats unclean meat, it is no different than approaching God's altar with an unclean animal and expect it to be accepted,

...Are those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar (1Cor. 10:18b)?

Every repentant servant of God is regarded as part of God's new spiritual temple. Therefore, consuming unclean meat is the same as bringing unclean meat into God's temple. It wasn't acceptable during the First Covenant period and, as God does not change, it is not acceptable today (Mal. 3:6),

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have (received) from God (following repentance and baptism), and you are not your own (to do as you please)? ²⁰For **you were bought at a price** (Christ's sacrifice); **therefore glorify God in your body** (1Cor. 6:19-20; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Putting unclean meat into one's body does not glorify Almighty God, or represent Christ's sacrifice. Instead, it is an insult to what Christ did on behalf of every repentant sinner. In essence, it puts no difference between the clean offering of Jesus Christ and everything that God considers unclean. Religious leaders who teach that God has changed His law regarding eating unclean meats are lying to their followers and will have to give account in the second resurrection if they do not repent of this falsehood,

Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, **nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean...** (Eze. 22:26a; emphasis added).

You shall therefore distinguish between clean beasts and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean (Lev. 20:25; cf. Lev. 11:2-30; Dt. 14:3-21).

Many of these same religious leaders misquote what Christ said when he dealt with the Pharisees regarding what goes into one's stomach. They also misrepresent the purpose of Peter's vision in Acts 10:1-48, which will be discussed shortly,

Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? (Mt. 15:17).

In the scripture above, Christ was responding to the Pharisees who were finding fault with his disciples because some were not washing their hands according to the traditions of men (Mt. 15:6),

Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread (Mt. 15:2).

Therefore, Matthew 15:17 had nothing to do with eating unclean meat, nor was it a license to disobey God's clear instructions regarding unclean meats (Lev. 11:2-30; Dt. 14:3-21). Instead, Christ simply pointed out that impurities ingested during a meal are usually dealt with as they pass through the digestive system and eliminated from the body.

Next, in Peter's vision of the unclean animals and creeping things, God stressed the importance of accepting Gentiles into fellowship because up to this point Jews would avoid them as they were considered unclean (Ac. 10:1-48). In fact, Gentiles were even compared to unclean animals like dogs. Christ used this example when dealing with a Gentile woman from Canaan,

And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.'²³ But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and urged him saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.'²⁴ But he answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'²⁵ Then she came and *worshiped* him (SGD 4352; bowed down as a sign of respect), saying, 'Lord, help me!'²⁶ But he answered and said, 'It is not good to take *the children's bread* (referring to God's word intended for the twelve tribes of Israel; cf. Jn. 1:11; Ac. 10:36) and throw it to the little dogs' (Gentiles).²⁷ And she said, **True, Lord** (she understood Gentile nations were not yet considered part of spiritual Israel), yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.'²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Mt. 15:22-28; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

This scenario was prophetic confirming that it was just a matter of time before the Gentile nations could be part of God's kingdom following Christ's death and resurrection,

But the Lord said to him (Ananias), 'Go, for **he (Paul) is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles**, kings, and the children of Israel' (Ac. 9:15; cf. 10:45; 11:1; emphasis added).

Had Christ intended his disciples to eat unclean meat, he would have told them prior to his death. Clearly, this did not occur as Peter stated he had eaten nothing unclean before meeting Christ, during Christ's ministry, or following his death and resurrection,

The he (Peter) became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³And a voice spoke to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, **'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean'** (Ac. 10:10-14; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Peter was a devout Jew, and it would not be easy for him to accept that Gentiles could now be part of spiritual Israel. God used this vision to stress that they were no longer considered "unclean." Therefore, the vision of unclean animals was used as a metaphor picturing how the Gentiles used to be regarded,

And a voice spoke to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed (declared clean; i.e. the Gentiles) you must not call common' (Ac. 10:15; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Peter finally made the connection and understood that God used this vision to teach a vital lesson regarding the Gentile nations,

Then he (Peter) said to them (Gentiles, including Cornelius), 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But **God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean** (Ac. 10:28; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

This was the sole purpose of the vision that Peter was given. It had nothing to do with declaring that unclean meats are now considered clean. If it did, Peter would have stated the following, "God has shown me that I should not call any meat common or unclean." However, that is not what Peter said because he knew better. Unfortunately, many "Christians" twist this section of scripture to suit their own desire to consume pork, bacon, ham, clams, mussels, oysters, prawns, crabs, lobsters, catfish, sharks, squid, catfish, etc. They fail to realize that Christ's sacrifice was foreshadowed by the clean meats offered in the temple. Therefore, *eating unclean meats is a denial of Christ's sacrifice* because Almighty God regarded His son as a "clean" sacrifice (i.e. sinless), which all "Christians" are to partake of symbolically each Passover when they eat unleavened bread, picturing Christ's broken body, and drink wine representing his shed blood. How can someone partake of these symbols, representing Christ who was sacrificed for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29), and then consume unclean meats which picture the exact opposite?

But whoever denies me (Christ) before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven (Mt. 10:33; cf. 7:21-23; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Some of the Apostle Paul's statements are also misquoted in order to excuse the consumption of unclean meats. In a dispute over eating "clean meats" offered as part of a pagan worship service, Paul stated that the meat itself was still suitable for consumption. However, if eating this "clean meat" might cause an offense to someone in God's church, it should be avoided out of love and concern for one's spiritual brother,

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one (1Cor. 8:4).

However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol (perhaps because they came from a pagan background), until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled (1Cor. 8:7; Ed. note in parenthesis).

But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat (meat that was previously part of a pagan worship service) are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. ⁹But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block (cause of offense) to those who are weak. ¹⁰For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple (complex area where this "clean" meat could be sold to the public), will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? ¹¹And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for who Christ died? ¹²But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble (1Cor. 8:8-13; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In the same context as 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Paul summarized that meat offered to idols is not something that has to be avoided unless it causes offense to a brother who, in many cases, has come from a pagan background,

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:14-15).

It cannot be stressed enough that the early church had to deal with Gentile converts who had previously been immersed in pagan worship systems. Therefore, these issues had to be addressed. In fact, the church conference recorded in the 15th chapter of Acts confirms this,

Therefore I judge that we (the entire Church of God) should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols (avoid anything associated with pagan sacrifices), from sexual immorality (fornication), from things strangled, and from blood. ²¹For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath (Ac. 15:19-21; cf. 2Chr. 23:18; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In conclusion, consuming meats that God has declared "unclean" is a transgression of God's law. Even the patriarchs, who lived prior to Moses knew this truth. Therefore, it is not an aspect of God's law and commandments that has changed in any way. Consuming unclean meats is an insult to the "clean" sacrifice of Jesus Christ and cannot be supported by scripture.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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