

Nevertheless, of Those That Chew the Cud or Have Cloven Hooves, You Shall Not Eat

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There Is Nothing Unclean of Itself (Rom. 14:14).

Nevertheless, of Those That Chew the Cud or Have Cloven Hooves, You Shall Not Eat... (Dt. 14:7-8).

As with many apparent contradictions in scripture, some people choose to ignore the context in order to support their antinomian position. This tactic will be exposed while proving that no contradiction exists between these scriptures.

Those who wish to prove that God's law, regarding clean and unclean animals, is no longer applicable, fail to understand the spiritual lessons that God is teaching mankind. Throughout both the First Covenant and Second Covenant writings, Gentiles were often referred to as "unclean" and this had nothing to do with anything physical. God applied the term "unclean" because the spiritual condition of the majority of Gentile nations was steeped in pagan worship systems. This is what made them "unclean." However, in the case of animals, their spiritual condition is not what makes them "unclean." Instead, as God created both the human body as well as the body of animals, He and He alone knows what is best when it comes to the type of meat that people should consume. As God did not change the physical structure of animals after Christ's death and resurrection, animals that God deemed as unclean in the First Covenant are still unclean and not suitable for human consumption today. The majority of mankind ignores God's command in this matter, and reaps various consequences. God did not issue His commands to harm anyone. The reverse is the case, but like immature children who resist the instructions of their parents, mankind refuses to trust and obey what their heavenly Father commands for their benefit.

With this brief introduction, the context of Paul's comments on "unclean" will be examined. As recorded in the book of Romans, and 1Corinthians, Paul worked diligently to diffuse tensions and arguments between brethren over issues that had the potential to cause division in God's church. One of these disputes was over the consumption of "clean" meat that may have been offered previously in pagan sacrificial ceremonies and then sold in the marketplace or served during a family meal that followed,

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions (i.e. was this meat offered in an idolatrous ceremony) for conscience' sake (1Cor. 10:25; Ed. note in parenthesis; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience' sake (1Cor. 10:27).

Paul was not addressing whether the meat was beef or pork because the person purchasing it would know by its physical appearance. Therefore, “asking no questions” would have nothing to do with whether the meat was clean or unclean according to God’s law (cf. Dt. 14:7-8). Instead, it would have everything to do with someone’s conscience if they knew the meat had been part of a pagan worship ceremony,

But if anyone says to you, ‘This was offered to idols,’ do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience’ sake ... (1Cor. 10:28a).

Paul went on to say that refusing the meat offered in idolatrous ceremonies was for the sole benefit of those who were either weaker in the faith or did not understand God’s truth yet,

Conscience, I (Paul) say, not your own (one of God’s servants), but that of the other (someone outside of God’s church). For why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience (1Cor. 10:29; Ed. notes in parentheses).

If Paul was speaking about eating unclean meat as defined by God’s law, he most definitely would have given offense to any Jew of his day. However, Paul specifically pointed out he was not talking about eating unclean meat when he mentioned the following,

Give no offense, either **to the Jews** or to the Greeks or to the church of God (1Cor. 10:32; emphasis added).

Today, offering animals in pagan sacrificial ceremonies is not commonplace. However, during the first century CE, it was still an integral part of many cultures. This is why Paul had to address the issue a number of times,

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we (in God’s church) know that an idol is nothing in the world (cf. Jer. 10:2-9), and there is no other God but one (Almighty God).⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords - i.e. fallen host).⁶ yet for us there is only one God, the Father (who is to be worshiped), of whom are all things, and we for Him; and (as a separate spirit-being) one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things (by delegation from Almighty God), and through whom we live (because of Christ’s sacrifice).⁷ However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some (from a pagan background), with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.⁸ But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat (meat that was part of a pagan ceremony) are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty (in the knowledge that meat offered in idolatrous ceremonies means nothing to God) of yours become a stumbling block (cause of offense) to those who are weak (in the faith).¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have (this) knowledge eating in an idol’s temple (area), will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols (believing this is the manner in which to worship Almighty God)?¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their conscience, you sin against Christ.¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble (1Cor. 8:4-13; Ed. notes in parentheses).

With this background, it is now possible to examine the apparent contradiction in the book of Romans,

I (Paul) know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean (Gr. Koinos – common; cf. Ac. 2:44; 4:32) of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean (common), to him (because of his pagan background) 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; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak (Rom. 14:21).

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats (foods or drinks offered in pagan ceremonies), because he does not eat from faith (convinced there is no connection between worshiping Almighty God and eating foods or drinks that are also part of pagan worship systems); for whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

In none of these examples was Paul advocating that church members eat meat that is unclean according to Deuteronomy 14:7-8. Instead, he was addressing an issue that was pertinent during the first century CE when many people were being called out of pagan worship systems which offered animal sacrifices to their gods. To make this abundantly clear, Paul mentioned that God's people comprised the temple of God and as such were to be careful what they put into it, both physically and spiritually,

Do you not know that you (God's servants) are (comprise) the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For **the temple of God is holy, which temple you are** (1Cor. 3:16-17; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The question for professing Christians is, "would anyone bring unclean meat into God's temple during the First Covenant period?" If the answer is "no," then why would Christians put meat, that God defines as unclean in Deuteronomy 14:7-8, into their bodies, thereby defiling the temple in which God's Holy Spirit dwells?

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have from God, and (therefore) you are not your own (to do as you please without any consideration for God's law and commandments)? ²⁰For you were bought at a price (Christ's death); therefore glorify God in (what you do with) your body ... (1Cor. 6:19-20a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

By abstaining from the consumption of unclean animals, God is teaching His people to discern what they are allowing into their bodies every day. Why? So they come to understand the spiritual lesson, which is to carefully discern what they allow into their minds on a daily basis (cf. 1Cor. 6:9-11). It is no coincidence that so many people are comfortable eating unclean meat because it reflects the fact they do not discern what goes into their mind, in relation to what God considers unclean.

In conclusion, the scriptures in the heading of this study do not contradict one another. Instead, they are dealing with two different subjects. Deuteronomy 14:7-8 is God's law regarding animals that are not to be eaten, and this has not changed. On the other hand, Paul's writings in the book of Romans and 1Corinthians deal with new converts who were coming into God's church from pagan worship systems which had various meat and drink offerings to their gods.

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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