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Frank W. Nelte

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEATS

With the introduction of the 'new covenant theology' the Worldwide Church of God has stated that we are no longer required to obey all of the Old Testament laws. Included in that is the claim that the dietary laws of the Old Testament are no longer binding on us today.

That claim is false!

In this ARTICLE we'll examine this question of clean and unclean meats.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

When God created Adam and Eve as physical beings, dependent on food and drink for survival, God created a whole environment for them. The physical creation, of which we human beings are a part, is so complex and so interdependent, that it is beyond our collective abilities to fathom out. As God tells us:

For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
(Isaiah 55:8)

Everything God created for man's environment was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Yet God created the potential within this creation to deal with every possible course of action that human beings would follow. Built into God's system of creation were spontaneous blessings for obedience and automatic curses and penalties for transgressions. In today's language we would say that God created "AN INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT", one that responds to every action of mankind.

Even before the creation of man, Satan and the demons had already sinned. They had rejected God's ways. God planned for Satan to continue to be on this Earth with the ability to influence human beings until Jesus Christ Himself would establish a government. God planned it so that human beings would have to actively resist this influence from Satan. In the process we would develop godly character, something Satan himself had never developed.

It was God's desire that people would reject Satan's temptations. Such rejection should eventually be motivated by an understanding that the spontaneous consequences of Satan's ways are ALWAYS bad. Satan's temptations always appeal to selfishness, to put self ahead of others. Selfishness is the very antithesis of God's nature.

So right from the start, from the re-creation week in Genesis chapter 1, God built into this incredibly intricate interactive environment for human existence features that would enable God to test whether mankind would actively resist Satan's self-centred ways of living.

When Satan had sinned, he had defiled himself. He had become "impure" and "unclean" before God. Demons are frequently referred to as "unclean" spirits. The Greek word for this in the New Testament is "akathartos" and it means "not purified".

This is important to understand!

Even before the re-creation in Genesis chapter 1 there were already in existence "UNCLEAN" spirit beings. The way these demons "walked" (i.e. lived) was not right before God. How the minds of these demons worked, HOW they processed their thoughts, was not right before God. Keep these points in mind for later, when we look at "the features" of clean and unclean animals.

Thus, when God created a physical environment for mankind, God designed it so that this physical environment would reflect the invisible spiritual reality! Demons may be invisible to man, but they are real. There is a Satan. And because there are "clean", as well as "unclean" spirit beings, THEREFORE God already in Genesis chapter 1 created "clean" physical animals and "unclean" physical animals.

Can we understand this? EVEN IF human beings never ate meat (because of choice or command?), there were STILL going to be two broad categories of animals in God's physical creation: those that were "clean" and those that were "unclean", because those two categories would REFLECT THE SPIRITUAL REALITY that already existed at that point in time; i.e. the "clean" and the "unclean" spirit beings.

The Apostle Paul explained:

For THE INVISIBLE THINGS of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, BEING UNDERSTOOD by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Romans 1:20)

Can we understand WHY God created some animals to be "clean" and others to be "unclean"? It is TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THINGS THAT ARE INVISIBLE TO US.

Realize that for EVERYTHING that God has done, there is a purpose. Absolutely nothing was done by God without forethought and meaning. There is a reason for EVERYTHING. Nothing was done arbitrarily or "on impulse" by God. God is God! And there are reasons for what God created, for the features God built into the creation, for the laws God gave, and for the penalties that are the direct consequences of transgression. For everything there is a purpose.

God is so incredibly supremely aware of absolutely everything in His creation, that it is way beyond our comprehension. Think about Jesus Christ's statement in Matthew 10:30:

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

SACRIFICIAL AND CEREMONIAL LAWS

It was not God's original intention to give Israel a sacrificial "system". This is explained by the prophet Jeremiah.

For I SPAKE NOT unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, CONCERNING BURNT OFFERINGS OR SACRIFICES: But this thing commanded I them, saying, OBEY MY VOICE, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and WALK YE IN ALL THE WAYS that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. (Jeremiah 7:22-23)

While a sacrificial "system" was not God's original intention, nevertheless God had ALREADY built all the ingredients for such a system into His creation from the time of Adam. It should be clear that animals which represented the category of "unclean" spirit beings have NEVER at any time been acceptable

sacrifices to God!

Rather, the "clean" animals that were going to be acceptable as sacrificial animals to God were going to represent a holy, righteous Spirit Being ... Jesus Christ, the Son of God! And of all the sacrificial animals as a group, the one "clean" animal that represents Jesus Christ more than any other is "A LAMB" (John 1:29, 36; etc.). Consider the following statement:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. (Revelation 13:8)

This refers to "the foundation of human society". But think about this for a moment: the fact that Jesus Christ is "THE LAMB" that has been slain since the time when Adam and Eve sinned, means that at the time of Adam lambs were already set apart as "clean" animals. This is further substantiated by the fact that Abel brought "the firstlings of his flock" as sacrifices to God (see Genesis 4:2-4). Abel knew exactly which animals God had pronounced as "clean".

Understand that from the time when Adam and Eve sinned, God made "provision" for sacrifices to be brought. Such sacrifices pointed to the need for a Saviour. That's why Abel sacrificed the firstlings of his flock. But such sacrifices were apparently of a voluntary nature, not within the framework of a detailed sacrificial "system". Such a "system" of sacrifices God gave to Israel later, in the second year after the exodus from Egypt. That whole sacrificial "system" represented a set of laws that was ... "added because of (repeated) transgressions" of God's spiritual laws (Galatians 3:19).

However, THE CONCEPT of bringing "clean" animals to God as sacrifices existed from the time of righteous Abel onwards.

IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

God's instructions to Noah make clear that Noah understood the difference between "clean" and "unclean" animals. God instructed Noah to take seven pairs of "clean" animals into the ark.

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. (Genesis 7:2)

Here we see a clear distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals almost 1000 years before the exodus. This distinction referred to animals BEFORE the flood. This classification into "clean" and "unclean" animals did not just come into being at the time of Moses. It has existed SINCE THE CREATION OF MANKIND.

THE FEATURES OF CLEAN ANIMALS

The classification "clean" applies to animal-life in three areas: four-footed animals, fowls and fish. Let's focus on the four-footed animals for the moment. The detailed descriptions for these classifications of animals are found in Leviticus chapter 11 and in Deuteronomy chapter 14. Notice Leviticus chapter 11:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These [are] the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that [are] on the earth. (Leviticus 11:2)

This is not the creation of new categories for classifying animals; this is merely an elaboration of the

classifications that were already extant when Noah had taken the animals into the ark almost 1000 years earlier.

Notice the TWO characteristics that all "clean" animals must have:

Whatsoever PARTETH THE HOOF, AND is clovenfooted, [and] CHEWETH THE CUD, among the beasts, that shall ye eat. (Leviticus 11:3)

There are animals that meet ONE of these conditions, but that is still not acceptable. In order to be "clean" they must meet BOTH of these conditions.

Now let's ask ourselves: what do these two conditions achieve?

The answer is: THEY SET THESE ANIMALS APART FROM ALL OTHERS!

These two attributes set the "clean" animals apart from all other animals. And these attributes had set them apart from the very time they were created! They were already "set apart" by these features in Genesis chapter 1. Here in Leviticus 11 we are told that God classifies all land animals into two broad groups: on the one hand those that have a cloven hoof AND chew the cud; and on the other hand ALL OTHER ANIMALS.

Now on the animal level: it is not a matter that these animals are "better" than others; they are simply "different", that's all. The two features, which God planned in advance of creating them as requirements for the "clean" status have to do with WALKING and with EATING.

"Walking" is frequently used in the Bible to symbolize "HOW WE LIVE". When we are told that certain men "walked with God", it refers to how they lived in harmony with the laws of God.

"Eating" has to do with THE THINGS WE TAKE IN, and which our bodies utilize in order to grow. Most animals never again occupy themselves with the things they have already swallowed. Those animals that chew the cud, by contrast, never totally absorb something the first time round. Before they fully process the food they have eaten, they THOROUGHLY and very methodically chew it over again. Only then are the things they have already eaten fully absorbed.

The lessons should be easy to see:

- 1) The "clean" animals have different feet for walking, and they leave a different track.
- 2) "Unclean" animals largely just swallow their food without any chewing. But the "clean" animals don't do that. They bring everything they have already swallowed back up and then chew it over very carefully. Every little bit is thoroughly ground down by this chewing.

Likewise, we should examine how we walk before God. And we should not just "swallow" everything that comes our way. Rather, we need to "prove" everything, and then hold fast to those things that are good. There are clear parallels here for us.

WHEN GOD CREATED THE CLEAN ANIMALS

Let's go back to the re-creation week in Genesis chapter 1. God created some animals as "clean" because there are "clean" invisible spirit beings; and He created the rest of the animals as "unclean"

because there are "unclean" spirit beings. God chose to give all of the "clean" animals the two distinctive features we have already looked at. But that is not the main point God wants us to learn.

The main point is really that we should not "take in" the thoughts and ideas of demons. As the Apostle Paul explained in the context of meat sacrificed to idols:

But I [say], that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I WOULD NOT THAT YE SHOULD HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH DEVILS. (1 Corinthians 10:20)

We are to resist the temptations that demons present to us. If we do accept the ideas of demons, we will suffer in some way. There is always a penalty for accepting Satan's ways. That is what God wants us to come to see.

When we understand this, THEN we should also understand how God designed unclean animals. God designed them in such a way that they will NEVER be fit for human consumption. They typify "unclean" spirits, whose influence we should always reject.

Yes, people can eat unclean animals and seemingly get away without any adverse affects, in the same way as we can think the thoughts Satan presents to us and seemingly not be affected by them. But, whether we realize it or not, we really ARE affected when we allow ourselves to think as Satan wants us to think, and we really ARE affected when we eat unclean animals.

It simply has to be this way for God to be consistent.

GOD'S PURPOSE MADE PLAIN

The whole of Leviticus chapter 11 is devoted to what we may eat and what is "unclean".

As far as food is concerned, the terms "clean" and "unclean" only apply to animal life. There are many poisonous plants, but there are no "unclean" plants. The reason for this should be plain: the term "unclean" applies to animal foods because the word points back to "unclean SPIRITS". Plant foods don't typify "evil spirits"; therefore God did not designate any plants as "unclean".

Keep in mind that when God created "unclean" animals in Genesis chapter 1, there already were in existence a group of beings who were "unclean" in God's sight.

Now notice how God concluded the instructions in Leviticus chpt. 11. This is in verse 44.

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. (Leviticus 11:44)

The two words to notice in this verse are "sanctify" and "holy". The Hebrew word for "sanctify" is "kadash". Here it is used with the hithpael stem. In Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon the definitions given with the hithpael stem are:

- 1) to purify, to make oneself clean,
- 2) to show oneself holy,

3) to be celebrated as a feast.

In its simplest terms the word refers to: being set apart for a holy use.

The word twice translated as "holy" in this verse is the adjective "kadowsh", which is formed from the above verb "kadash". Gesenius defines this adjective as: "pure, clean, free from defilement". In the next verse, Leviticus 11:45, this statement about being holy is repeated.

So WHY did God spell out to Israel all these laws about "unclean" meats? God wanted Israel to be set apart for a holy use. Avoiding eating any "unclean" meats pictured avoiding the influence of "unclean" spirits.

So notice: the people of Israel were to be "sanctified" by abstaining from all "unclean" meats. In the New Testament we are also told that true Christians are "sanctified". For example:

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but YE ARE SANCTIFIED, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

Wherefore Jesus also, THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY THE PEOPLE WITH HIS OWN BLOOD, suffered without the gate. (Hebrews 13:12)

Here the Greek verb translated "sanctify" is "hagiazo". Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon mentions that in biblical usage it is very frequently equivalent to the Hebrew verb "kadash".

So God wanted Israel to be set apart for a holy use (i.e. "sanctified") and God also sets us in His Church apart for a holy use. Now it is access to forgiveness of our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (i.e. through His blood) that sets us apart. We are "set apart" on a far higher level than ancient Israel ever were set apart. But that does not mean that God now wants us to trample all over the instructions HE had given Israel to set them apart in a physical way. Eating the meat of unclean animals TODAY still pictures receiving nourishment from "unclean" spirits, just as much as it did in Old Testament times. And that is something we are to avoid!

Remember also that God had ALREADY created animals as "clean" and as "unclean" even before He created Adam. Even if Adam had NOT committed that first sin (first on the human level), there STILL would have been "clean" and "unclean" animals. Their classification points back to the sins of Satan and the demons. It had nothing to do with the sins of human beings.

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

I have not covered any of the Scriptures in the New Testament that people will turn to in order to justify eating "unclean" meats. They have been quite thoroughly explained in the past, and I don't think there is a need for me to here go over those verses again. Most of us would realize that people twist the verses concerned, and read things into them that are not stated or that are not even being discussed. My purpose in this article is not to convince those people in the world who really want to excuse their eating of "unclean" meats; they don't want to be convicted of their wrong ways.

But you who are a member of God's Church, you who have already lived by these dietary laws for many years, you who are perhaps being enticed by clever arguments, you are the one I would like to make this clear to. I know that YOU can understand what I am explaining.

If you can understand the things I have discussed in this article; if you can understand God's purpose in

creating some animals as "clean" and others as "unclean"; if you can grasp that God has planned an incredibly interdependent environment for mankind, where EVERYTHING fulfills some purpose, and where every action results in a reaction; if you can understand that God uses abstaining from "unclean" meats to picture avoiding taking in the influence of demons, then it is UTTERLY ABSURD to propose that the dietary laws God gave to His people Israel are somehow "done away".

It is also revealing to notice that one of the doctrines of demons is to abstain from "CLEAN" MEATS! This is what Paul explained to Timothy:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and DOCTRINES OF DEVILS; 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. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

Paul is speaking to and about people who "KNOW" the truth of God. They "know" exactly which foods God has created for us to give Him thanks for. They are listed and categorized in Leviticus 11 and in Deuteronomy 14. Those who know the truth, know this very well. They know that God never at any time wanted people to thank Him for "pork chops" or for "lobsters", etc.. They know that God forbids the eating of these "unclean" things.

So don't ever fall for clever arguments, that some parts of God's laws are supposedly done away. Remember that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday (i.e. Old Testament times), and today (i.e. New Testament times) and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Frank W. Nelte