

CAN WE EAT EVERYTHING? WHY DID CHRIST EAT FISH?



INTRODUCTION: “Whether therefore ye **eat**, or **drink**, or **whatsoever ye do**, **do all to the glory of God.**”(1Corinthians 10:31)

It is the purpose of this lesson to deal with the food laws and related controversies from different parts of the Bible, especially the New Testament. **Truth is independent of human opinion.** You, however, as I do, holds a key for admission or rejection of the

truth.

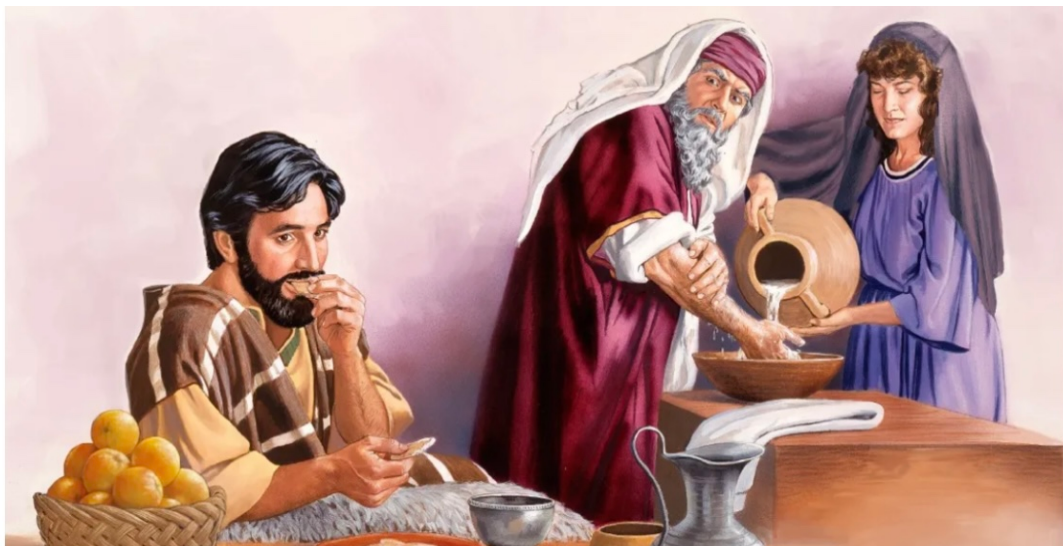
Concerning the writings of Paul and the Bible in general, Peter wrote: “As also in all his [Paul’s] **epistles**, speaking in them of these things; **in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction..**”(2Peter 3:16)

The Spirit of Truth warns further, “In order to sustain erroneous doctrines or unchristian practices, **some will seize upon passages of Scripture separated from the context, perhaps quoting half of a single verse as proving their point, when the remaining portion would show the meaning to be quite the opposite.** With the cunning of the serpent, they entrench themselves behind disconnected utterances construed **to suit their carnal desires.** Thus do many **willfully pervert the Word of God.** Others, who have an active imagination, seize upon the figures and symbols of Holy Writ, **interpret to suit their fancy,**

with little regard to the testimony of Scripture as its own interpreter, and then they present their vagaries as the teachings of the Bible.”(GC88 520.4)

With the guidance of heaven, Let's delve into it...

NOTHING FROM OUTSIDE DEFILES A PERSON....



“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, with unwashen, 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, they 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 unwashen hands? ”** (Mark 7:1-5)

Whenever the Jews came from the market place or encountered a gentile (whom they considered unclean), they had to wash their hands before touching anything including food, otherwise they would be defiled by eating that food. This of course was “**the tradition of the elders**” and not God. The Pharisees found fault with the disciples. And “many other things[traditions of men] there be, which they have received to hold.” Which were contradicting the law of God.

Upon rebuking them as hypocrites whose worship is in vain, **exalting their traditions above God's law**, Christ said **“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..”**(Mark 7:8)

Christ mentioned that not only did they break the first table of the Ten Commandments by not giving God due respect , but also the fifth commandment, **“But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift[devoted to God], by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free..”**(Mark 7:11) Thus Christ stood as the defender of God's commandments.

Corban simply meant that children were to give their property or money to God even if their parents were starving, thus they failed to honor them as God commanded.

Then He said, **“There is nothing from without a**

man, that entering into him can defile him[as their tradition taught]: but the things which come out of him[from the heart], **those are they that defile the man..**”(Mark 7:15)

He continued, “ Do ye not perceive, **that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him**[by simply eating it with unwashed hands as the the tradition taught]; **Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?**”(Mark 7:18-19)

The statement “**purging all meats**” doesn’t mean literally **making all foods clean** as the New Bible translations have tried to make it appear, but according to the context of the whole story, Christ taught **that food or meat can ’ t be defiled by simply touching it after coming from the market or meeting gentiles**. Thus as Christ brought this tradition of ceremonial cleansing to an end, he taught that **no meat can defile a person through**

those means, that all meats are cleansed and can't defile anyone. This is confirmed further by the Saviour himself....

“ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” (Matthew 15:18-20)

It is the evil deed, the evil word, the evil thought, the transgression of the law of God, **not the neglect of external, man-made ceremonies, that defiles a man.** Thus, this story is not about hygiene or the type of food one can have, but about the ceremonial cleansing, and that **“to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”**(see DA 397.4)

How many are still obeying the traditions of their church leaders more than the principles of God?

WHAT GOD CALLS CLEAN, DON'T CALL UNCLEAN...



Acts 10:1-8 introduces Cornelius, a gentile who believed in God. In a vision that he had, God instructed him to call for the apostle Peter and hear from him....

“Peter went up upon the housetop to pray

about the sixth hour: 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 four-footed 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)

This whole scene, you see, **took place in a vision only and it is , therefore, symbolic.** That the Lord’s instruction to Peter “**kill, and eat**” was not only deliberate but also **not literal**, for the Lord knew that the apostle would not agree to eat unclean meats. Surely Peter must have been so convinced of

his beliefs such that he couldn't even agree with the Lord. Are you rooted in your beliefs, brother, sister?

Again the meaning of a statement “**What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common**” is clearly revealed as we read further....

“Now **while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold** [showing that the Lord is now interpreting the vision, that it is related to Cornelius and his servants], **the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house,** and stood before the gate, And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. **While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit** [in trying to make him understand]said unto him, **Behold, three men seek thee.**” (Acts 10:17-19)

Thus, Peter went with them to see Cornelius....



“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, **Stand up; I myself also am a man.** And as he talked with him, he went in, and **found many that were come together.** 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.**”(Acts 10:25-28)

The Jews, you see, considered **the gentiles as unclean people.** But since through Christ’s death

“there is neither a Jew nor Greek....for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”(Gal 3:28), so the Gentiles are no longer common or unclean. Manifestly, then, In telling Peter to kill all kinds of animals, **the Lord taught that He had to mingle with both Jews and Gentiles in Christ, it has nothing to do with eating literal food. Do you look down on some people, brother, sister? It’s high time we became true Christians before it shall be too late. (See AA 135.3)**

EAT WHATSOEVER IS SET BEFORE YOU...

“If any of them **that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; **whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.**”**
(1Corinthians 10:27)

The idea that one can eat all things [both clean and unclean] is a mutilation of the word of God. To understand this scripture correctly, one should not attempt to remove it from its context.

The Apostle's argument here **begins in chapter 8**, and it is “ **..concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols..** ”(1 Cor 8:4)

Because some people believed that eating food sacrificed unto idols was wrong but others believed it not. So the Apostle was trying to explain that an **"idol" is nothing , and food sacrificed unto idols is nothing** , but that the gentiles should avoid performing such demonic sacrifices (1 Cor 10:19,20).

That whether food is sacrificed unto idols or not, “ **All things** [those sacrificed unto idols and those which are not]**are lawful**[permitted]for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. ”(1 Cor 10:23)

So in order to end the differences that were there over the issue of "food", the Apostle encouraged

people to " **Give none offence , neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:** ”
(1 Cor 10:32)

So he explained that, “ **Whatsoever [whether it is sacrificed unto idols or not]is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:** ”(1 Cor 10:25)

That is, do not question yourself whether the food has been sacrificed unto idols or not, for that's not important.

“ If any of them that believe not[Gentiles who perform those sacrifices]bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; **whatsoever [whether it is sacrificed unto idols or not]is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.** ”(1 Cor 10:27)

“But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it , and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other : for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? ”
(1 Cor 10:28-29)

That is, if someone tells you that the food has been offered unto idols, then don't eat it **“lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. ”**(1 Cor 8:9), and also that **“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother [who is weak - 1 Cor 8:7] to offend. ”**(1 Cor 8:13)

The Apostle, therefore, **wasn't talking about literally eating any kind of food anyhow , but about eating whatsoever is sacrificed unto idols or not, " all things are lawful"**, and I don't think the problem he was dealing with in this chapter exists

now...

In concluding his explanation, he said “**Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.** ”(1 Cor 10:31)

THE CEREMONIAL FOOD LAWS...

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, **Concerning the feasts of the LORD**, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts....**These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD...**”(Leviticus 23:1,2,37,38)

The burnt offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings and sabbaths, you see, **were all part of the ceremonial laws which were written by Moses “in a book”**(see Deut 31:24-26)

Since these were not to be permanent, Paul wrote concerning them...

“ Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances[written in the book] **that was against us**[see Deut 31:26], **which was contrary to us**, and took it out of the way, **nailing it to his cross**; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man **therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.**”(Colossians 2:14-17)

The “meat” and “drink” mentioned here are, evidently, those meat offerings and drink offerings

and had nothing to do with common food or drinks. The “**sabbath days**” or “**sabbaths**” together with “new moon” are ceremonial and were therefore nailed to the cross(Eph 2:15, Gal 4:10), unlike the seventh Day sabbath which will exist forever(Isaiah 66:22,23). Again the Health laws of Lev 11 and Deut 14 were not part of the ceremonial system.

LET EVERYONE BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND...

Remember that Paul said “...**an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.**” (1 Cor 8:4), with this knowledge a faithful Christian can eat anything whether it’s sacrificed unto idols or not. Some however who are weak[because they still hold to the idea that food sacrificed to idols isn’t good] questions everything (1 Cor 8:7,10).

Thus Paul said...

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations..”(Romans 14:1)

That is, do not try to look down on those may not be as strong as you in faith, whose Bible knowledge isn't enough, but be charitable and hospitable to all.

“ For one believeth that he may eat all things[since ceremonial food laws are no longer valid] :another, who is weak[not having enough understanding], eateth herbs[as his conscience tells him to obey the ceremonial food laws]. 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.[based on the light that he has].”(Rom 14:2,3)

This, you must understand, **had nothing to do with vegetarians and non vegetarians, neither is it talking about eating common food but ceremonial foods and drinks.** The issue was mainly between the gentiles who didn't keep the

ceremonial food laws and the Jews who still kept them in the Apostolic Church.

“ Who art thou that judgest another man ’ s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand..”(Romans 14:4)

That you should therefore judge or condemn no one.

“ One man esteemeth one day[pointing to the ceremonial feast days] above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”(Romans 14:5)

“In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. ‘Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.’ No one has a right

to merge his own individuality in that of another.
In all matters where principle is involved, ‘let
every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’
Romans 14:12, 5. I. “(DA 550.6)

Our duty, therefore, is to present the truth as it is in Jesus and allow everyone to be fully persuaded in their own mind. Other people’s business isn’t ours.

EVERY CREATURE OF GOD IS GOOD....

“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..”(1Timothy 4:1)

Paul said this because of the beliefs that had started existing even from his time. That by giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, many will depart from the faith in God and His Son.

“ Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared [blackened] with a hot iron.”
(1Timothy 4:2)

Then the Apostle explained the doctrines of devils...

“ 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.”(1Timothy 4:3)

It's imperative to understand that the word “meats” here points to food in general.

Notice the words "Commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received." These words plainly tell that **some, on their own responsibility, will command to abstain not from those meats which God has not sanctified but which He has created to be received with**

thanksgiving.

The first application of this scripture is with the Gnostic Christians who existed in the 1st century and have grown into a religion today. **They believed that there's the Most High God above the God of the Bible [Demiurge as they called him], and that the God of the Bible is not all powerful and all good. To them "Marriage and begetting children were wrong, because the condition of marriage was looked upon as an institution of the Demiurge."** And they also believed that most "meats" are evil and therefore shouldn't be eaten.

The second and perfect application is with Catholicism which forbid the priests and the nuns to marry [see also Daniel 11:37].

"Priests and popes have made laws forbidding people to marry, and secluding them in monasteries. These laws and restrictions were

devised by Satan to place men and women in unnatural positions. “(E.G.W BEcho August 28, 1899, par. 5)



Catholicism also commands to abstain from meats on Wednesday and Friday, and Lent days, which God has never commanded by His prophets.



“ For every creature[which God had permitted,

excluding unclean foods] 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..”(1Timothy 4:4-5)

The word “**every**” you see is used **in a restricted sense and not in a broad sense, only pointing to every clean food** [not all creatures in a broad sense] which God as given, just like the word “day” is sometimes used in a restricted sense as well as in a broad sense.(see Gen 1:5, John 11:9)

“**Every**[that is every clean]**moving thing** that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things..”(Genesis 9:3)

The statement “**every herb bearing seed ... and every tree...shall be meat for you.**”(Gen 1:29) did not mean that they were to literally eat every thing of that nature, **for some herbs are poisonous and therefore can't be eaten.** Thus the word “**every**” or “**all**” is used sometimes in a restricted sense,

pointing only to “every” suitable food. Jesus taught that the gospel must be preached to **“every creature”** to be saved,(Mark 16:15,16)surely he meant only human beings and not animals or trees included.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEATS...

“Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.”(Leviticus 11:3)

The Ox, sheep, goat, deer, antelope are permitted, pig, rabbit, lizard, rat, chameleon, camel, are unclean.

“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.”
(Leviticus 11:9)

The red or black kite, owl, raven, hawk, bat are

unclean.

“And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.”(Leviticus 11:41-42)

WHY DID CHRIST EAT FISH?



“And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any

meat? And **they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them..**”(Luke 24:41-43, see also John 6:1-15, 21:5-13)

An interesting point comes from reading the above scripture: **If Jesus is our example, and he was not a vegetarian, why does the Spirit of Prophecy counsels us to be vegetarians? Are we not rejecting Christ?**

Since this issue is quite sensitive, we need to be careful how we deal with it. The Spirit which guides into “**all truth**” is what we need now.

First of all we need to remember that...

1) God has permitted the eating of clean meats in the Bible..

2) We are not saved by either eating or not eating meats.

Next, we know that Jesus as our example(1 Peter 2:21), but let it be understood that to “follow his steps” **doesn’t necessarily mean that we need to do every single thing that he did while he walked among men.** The Redeemer was born “miraculously”, lived in “Nazareth”, got baptized at the “age” of 30, fasted for “forty days and forty nights”, had “twelve disciples”, was “crucified” and died for our sins. Does following Him mean that we need to do all these things? **God forbid.**

Now the Saviour, including his disciples, ate **all the lawful foods**[clean animals] given to the Jews by God and nothing was wrong with that.(Matthew 11:19). **Again the kinds of meats, especially fish, at that time were many times healthier than the ones we have now at the very end of time.**

Therefore, it is imperative to understand that **when circumstances change, God counsel also changes.** Let’s pursue this idea...

God gave to Adam **“every herb bearing seed”** but to animals He gave **“every green herb”** (Genesis 1:29,30) **After sin, he added “the herb of the field” to his diet.**(Genesis 3:18)

Later after the flood He added **“ every moving thing”**(Gen 9:3)

The reason for this was

“God gave our first parents the food He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden. The fruit of the trees in the garden, was the food man's wants required.

God gave man no permission to eat animal food until after the flood. Everything had been destroyed upon which man could subsist, and therefore the Lord in their necessity gave Noah permission to eat of the clean animals which he had taken with him into the ark. But animal food was not the most healthful article of food for

man.”(CD 373.1)

And “Only such animals could be used for food as were in good condition. No creature that was torn, that had died of itself or from which the blood had not been carefully drained, could be used as food.”(CD 374.4)

Moreover, fish, like today, was much healthier than land animals and birds. Thus Jesus and the Jews ate all the lawful foods, **“but from the beginning it was not so..”(Matthew 19:8, Gen 1:29)**

Remember, brother, sister, that the prophecy **“...the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner.”** (Isaiah 51:6) **is being fulfilled now** as we stand on the borders of the eternal world. **“It has a special application to those who are living in the last days.. “(RH December 1, 1896, par. 1, see also Country Living 17.4)**

Now in these last days, the increase in death rate is in proportion to the deterioration of the earth, thus the earth is in its worst condition at the end of time and so deaths, especially premature ones, are prevalent. Remember, too, that “ **the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.** ” (Romans 8:22) as a consequence of man’s disobedience.

Thus, while it’s true that the world in Christ’s day was not as bad as the world now, it’s also true that “**Flesh was never the best food**” even from the beginning, “ **but its use is now doubly objectionable, since disease in animals is so rapidly increasing. Animals are becoming more and more diseased,** and it will not be long until animal food will be discarded by many besides Seventh-day Adventists. **Foods that are healthful and life sustaining are to be prepared, so that men and women will not need to eat meat.**”(CD 384.2.3)

Thus, again and again we are brought face to face with the fact that when circumstances change, God's counsel also changes to meet the situation.

“...if ever meat eating were safe, it is not safe now.”(CD 384.4)

“Cancers, tumors, and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat eating.”(CD 383.4)

“In grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts are to be found all the food elements that we need. If we will come to the Lord in simplicity of mind, He will teach us how to prepare wholesome food free from the taint of flesh meat.”(CD 310.3)

“Again and again I have been shown that God is bringing His people back to His original design, that is, not to subsist upon the flesh of dead animals. He would have us teach people a better way...”(CD 82.1)



The student of the Bible must, therefore, deeply understand what it really means to follow Christ's example. He's the "**Truth**" (John 14:6) and as humble disciples, **our only duty is to follow His truth wherever it leads. "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light."**(CW 33.2)

There will be vegetarians and non vegetarians in heaven and in the earth made new, but those who refuse to obey the light disobey God and shall certainly fail to enter therein.

"In the judgment men will not be condemned

because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth.. “(PP 55.2)

We must always remember that , “ to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin..”(James 4:17)

May the Lord help His People.

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