

SHOULD CHRISTIANS KEEP THE O.T. FOOD LAWS?

By Denver Cheddie

There are many well meaning sincere believers who still observe the food laws of the Old Testament. Certainly they are not in sin and there may be real health benefits to such a practice. But are believers **required** to do likewise and are those food laws still expressions of holiness before God?

Lev. 11 and Deut. 14 give lists of those foods that God called unclean. Interestingly in the Garden of Eden, man was never commanded to eat animals. Man was originally created to be vegetarian. After the fall, God made a covenant with Noah. In Gen 9:2-5, He gave him permission to eat ANYTHING that did not have its life blood in it. This included ALL land animals, birds and fishes. No exception was given. During the time of Moses, God introduced a number of restrictions. Why did God seemingly change his mind in Moses' day?

Lev. 11:44, 45 cite God's holiness as a reason for Israel having to abstain from unclean foods. Deut. 14 is a little more revealing, especially verses 1, 2, 21. These verses stress the fact that Israel were God's people. It was OK for foreigners to eat unclean foods, but not Israel. It must be noted that God never intended bad for the foreigners because Israel were once strangers in Egypt (Ex. 22:21; 23:9). So why then was it OK for them but not for Israel? Because Israel were God's people. They were to be different. It had to be clear to anyone by observing His people that their God was holy. The reason for this apparent change of God's mind was to make a distinction between Israel and the other nations. I may have done differently if I were God, but fortunately for the reader, I am not. God just decided, "I want you to be different, and this is how."

In the New Testament we see a relaxing of those food laws. In Acts 10:14, 15 Peter's old way of thinking had to be changed as the transition from Law to Gospel moved into high gear. 1 Tim. 4:1-5 is the final word on the subject. Everything God made is clean and may be eaten. Period. Teaching otherwise is preaching doctrines of devils.

1 Tim. 4 (NKJV)

1) Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirit and doctrines of demons, 2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3) forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4) For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5) for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

This scripture clearly teaches that everything that God created is now sanctified by the word of God and prayer. For us, believers, there is no such thing as unclean foods. Commanding others to abstain from such foods is an example of a doctrine of demons. It's so clear, you have to be blind to miss it.

We may choose to observe the food laws for health reasons but we are not required to. In my judgment, the command against eating blood still applies since it predates the Law and the reasons for it have never been undone. Apart from this there is no restriction. We may eat anything that we find palatable.

(c) 2001 Denver Cheddie

All Rights Reserved