

“Not that which goeth into the mouth defiled a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, defileth a man”. (*Mt. 15:11*) The dietary laws are and always have been primarily used as lessons in personal holiness, rather than lessons in personal health, from the clear teaching of Scripture. Like so many other things, even this professing Christian culture has made clean and unclean plants, animals, birds, and fish all about physical health at the expense of spiritual health. Professing Christians are so much more consumed with their time and resources, in pursuing a restrictive diet and regimented physical exercise, at the expense of their spiritual health in pursuing holiness. They are more concerned about what they physical eat than what they spiritually eat. More emphasis is placed on their dietary disciplines with each meal, than their spiritual meal in the word, each day. Emphasis is placed on eating certain foods four and five times throughout each day, but would never entertain the thought of spending time in the word numerous times throughout the day. “They just don’t have enough time to do that with the Word of God”. They spend more time doing their physical workouts than they do on their spiritual workouts with their involvement in ministry in a local church. God so aptly spelled out what comes first in the New Testament when He said: “Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (*1 Tim. 4:7b-8*) A professing Christian must ask himself: Am I more concerned about what goes in and out of my life spiritually or what goes in and out of my life physically? (*Mt. 15:11*) As a professing believer am I more interested in looking right (physique) on the outside, or being right (heart) on the inside? Am I more focused on what is going into my mouth physically or what is coming out of my mouth spiritually? Taking care of your “physical tent” (diet and exercise) has merit, but doesn’t begin to compare with your quest for personal holiness. The Christian’s up-side-down dietary laws needs to be Biblically refocused and prioritized on our spiritual health at the expense of our physical health, with each and every meal.

B. The dietary instructions spelled out in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: (*less severe – no death penalties; but restrictions more defined in order to illustrate more comprehensively, holiness*) (*Lev. 11; Deut. 14*) The dietary (purity or holiness) laws follow in order the sacrificial laws since sacrificial laws remind you of the way to God, while the dietary (purity) laws remind the reader of the walk with God (holiness).

1. Clean and unclean choices defined:

a. Clean and unclean animals: (*Lev. 11:1-8; Deut. 14:3-8*)

(1) Clean – must chew the cud and have a divided hoof (antelope, beef, buffalo, deer, elk, goat, moose, sheep, reindeer, caribou)

(2) Unclean – anything else

b. Clean and unclean fish: (*Lev. 11:9-12; Deut. 14:9-10*)

(1) Clean - must have both fins and scales (albacore, herring, anchovy, barracuda, bass, blackfish, bluebill, bluefish, bonitos, bowfin, carp, chub, cod, crappie, darter, flounder, smelt, grayling, tuna, whitefish, sucker, sardine, perch, walleye)

(2) Unclean – (abalone, catfish, clam, crab, eel, krill, lobster, mussel, oyster, scallop, shark, shrimp, squid, sturgeon, swordfish, whale)

c. Clean and unclean birds: (*Lev. 11; Deut. 14:11-18*)

(1) Clean - cannot be a raptor or scavenger: (chicken, dove, duck, goose, grouse, pheasant, quail, turkey)

(2) Unclean - anything else (*Lev. 11:13-19; Deut. 14:11-18, 20*)

*Footnote – locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers considered “clean” and all “winged insects moving about on all four, “unclean”. (*Lev. 11:20-23; Deut. 14:19*)

2. **Necessary preparations:** Many of those who attempt to observe the dietary restrictions of the Law of Moses, are lawbreakers in application. (Lev. 11:32-35) No one claiming to keep these dietary restrictions, could eat at a restaurant or even buy used appliances. You would have to limit yourself to a strict Jewish (kosher) or vegetarian establishment, that did not use vegetable oil, to cook vegetables, or utensils and dishes that had previously touched any "unclean" meat. Almost every restaurant in the United States that caters to a kosher diet, uses ovens, refrigerators, eating utensils, plates and bowls that housed or touched pork or other unclean game. Utensils, storage facilities, and cooking centers were to be destroyed if any item even touched a "piece of bacon". It meant that used refrigerators, ovens, and other used utensils could never be purchased by frugal buyers on the basis of what they may have touched or housed, prior to your purchase. Notice the importance of separation in light of the central theme of holiness. Even the dietary laws of food preparation were given to promote the idea of being set apart (sanctified) so that holiness was communicated at the expense of embracing the surrounding culture. The idea is expanded in II Corinthians 6:17 where we read: "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Even with laws governing food preparation clearly stated, there is once again, no proof that they were given with human health in mind. Utensils and appliances properly washed, had no harmful affect on the human body, focusing food preparation on spiritual health, not physical health.

3. **Insights into creatures and preparations of creatures for food:**

- a. **Moral discipline was the primary reason for the dietary laws.** It reminded them that they came out of slavery (*Deut. 23:4*) and not to be in bondage to sin, but embrace a freeing life of holy living as their first priority. Sacrificial laws reminded them of the cost of coming to God, while the dietary laws that followed, reminded them of their walk of holiness with God. Their holiness would generate their happiness.
- b. **Divine authority is another reason for the dietary laws.** It reminded them who was in charge, God or themselves. If we are to be like Christ, we must walk in His steps, under His divine influence.
- c. **Obedience is one of the reasons for dietary laws.** It exposed their resolve to obey, even when didn't understand why.
- d. **Spiritual symbolism was another reason for the dietary laws.** AS we have already seen, the best way to teach is to use visible symbols. IN the New Testament Christ used symbols to teach people about Himself. He was living water, the door, the good shepherd, the bread of life, etc. Visual symbolism is helpful in teaching an illiterate audience and a young audience.
- e. **Pagan worship was also exposed by exposing the things not to worship.** The sinful nations around them worshipped creatures that were labeled "unclean". The eagle was worshipped in Egypt as a god, and snakes, hawks, hogs, and horses were sacred items worshipped by neighboring countries. The animals and plants that were not sacred to the nations for the most part, were "clean" plant and animal reminders to remind them not to worship false gods.
- f. **Obedience always brings blessing.** It is not surprising to note that "clean" animals are less likely to transmit animal diseases to mankind (zoonoses). "Unclean" animals could also transmit worms, bacteria, and other pathogens to humanity. But even cattle can pass diseases on the human race. All "unclean" animals were originally "clean". Any health benefits from the dietary laws seem to be the added blessings of obedience to an unaware audience. No health reasons were ever given for the "clean" and "unclean" distinction in Scripture, and so one must be very careful in teaching them on the basis of health concerns, if there is no Biblical precedent.