

Leviticus 11:1-38 - Thursday, October 22nd, 2009

- If you are one who has read ahead to stay ahead, you may be scratching your head after reading this eleventh chapter of Leviticus.
- This is certainly understandable given the detailed instruction that is written here regarding this list of clean and unclean animals.
- However, we shouldn't write this chapter off as being irrelevant with no application to us today. Consider the following commentary:

"In the eleventh chapter of Leviticus God has given us a picture of the believer's walk in a world of sin: and of the spiritual food provided for him in the Word of God, that he may maintain that walk with the Lord 'in righteousness and true holiness.' The chapter has to do with the clean and the unclean animals, fishes, birds, and creeping things, as set forth for Israel by Moses in the ceremonial law. Only those animals which had the cloven hoof and chewed the cud were pronounced clean by Jehovah. Only those fishes which had fins and scales were clean. Certain fowls and the creeping things were 'an abomination' unto the Lord. The cloven hoof represents a walk of separation from sin in a godless world. The chewing of the cud speaks to us of meditation upon the living Word of God, which alone can enable the Christian to walk with the Lord. The fins suggest power to rise above the degrading things that tend to drag us down in defeat. And the scales remind us of the Christian's 'whole armor of God,' given to enable him to resist the devil 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.' Certain birds and the creeping things of the earth speak of the depravity and deceitfulness of sin, over which the child of God can and should live victoriously by His grace through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sacred Scriptures. In other words, the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, in keeping with the message of the entire book, shows us how a redeemed people may live in the midst of a godless world, yet have fellowship with a holy God – only by a separated walk that leads to growth in grace, with consequent power and progress in victorious battle against Satan and sin. All this is the portion of the redeemed people of God, as they find their spiritual strength in the heaven-sent food, which is His unfailing, soul-satisfying Word." Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," pp. 3-4

- One commentator said; "chapters 1-10 dealt with the worshipping of the Lord, and here in chapters 11-17 it's walking with the Lord."

11:1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth: 3 Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud -- that you may eat. 4 Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; 5 the rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; 6 the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; 7 and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. 8 Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you.

- Animals that had a divided hoof and that chewed their cud were considered clean, or kosher, and could be eaten by the Israelites.
- Animals that did not have a cloven or divided hoof were deemed unclean even if they chewed the cud, and we even have some listed.
- This eating of that which was clean had a practical purpose for their life physically, and it also had an application to their life spiritually.

- First, the practical purpose physically was that by the Israelites eating certain foods that were clean would protect them from diseases.
- The other cultures surrounding the Israelites would eat these unclean animals, and as a result would become very ill and even die.
- In other words, this was God's way of protecting his children by prohibiting certain dietary practices. He's wants them healthy and holy.

One commentator said; "It is now known that the pig is the intermediate host for several parasitic organisms, some of which can result in tapeworm infestation. One of these worms, the *Taenia solium*, grows to about 2.5 m in length, and is found in poorly cooked pork."

- Be that as it may, by heeding God's Word as it related to these dietary practices, the Israelites were kept safe from these diseases.
- Secondly, in concert with the practical purpose physically, there was a life application spiritually because this would make them distinct.

"God wanted Israel to be separated from the idolatrous practices of the nations surrounding them. The Arabs even today eat the camel. The Canaanites ate swine. The Mohammedan still sets up a barrier against the followers of all other religions by the food he eats. The devout Jew would not think of touching or tasting anything 'common or unclean,' even as Peter said to the risen Lord when he was upon the housetop of Simon the tanner. God's laws concerning Israel's food helped materially to keep the obedient Israelite from the evils of the heathen nations, in the midst of whom they dwelt." Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 10

"The animals, in which these two characteristics met, were reckoned clean, and therefore fit for food. It is certain that the minute particularity of these words has some further reference than to the diet of Israel, important though that was, or to accentuate with every meal the necessity of their being a separate people. We, at least, may gather this lesson, that in our daily experience we must combine meditation [chewing the cud] and separation, [separated hoof]. [With] meditation, the cattle do not simply browse on the pastures, but they lie down to chew the cud. It is not enough to peruse our allotted Scripture portion; we must ruminate upon it, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and scripture with scripture. The Holy Ghost will take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and He will bring all things to our remembrance. [With] separation; ... 'the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' We have not meditated to good purpose unless we have felt its keen edge. Detachment from the world must follow on true attachment to Christ. ... The two must be combined. — The swine divideth the hoof, but cheweth not the cud, and was therefore unclean. A man may profess to love his Bible, but the supreme test is his daily separation from evil. On the other hand, our daily life ought to emanate, not from without, which is Pharisaism, but from within, where we chew the cud of holy meditation.

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

Again, Louis Talbot echoed the same thing when he writes; "...the cloven hoof is a picture of a separated walk; the chewing of the cud, of meditation upon the Word of God. The two are inseparable; therefore, we would consider them together."

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 11

9'These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers -- that you may eat.10 But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales, all that move in the water or any living thing which is in the water, they are an abomination to you.11 They shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat their flesh, but you shall regard their carcasses as an abomination.12 Whatever in the water does not have fins or scales -- that shall be an abomination to you.

- We round a corner and go from how animals walk and eat, to how fish swim and eat. Again, we have physical and spiritual application.
- If a fish had scales and fins, it was kosher and could be eaten, however, if it didn't, it wasn't kosher. This would include shellfish.

"This description of the unclean fishes undoubtedly refers to the scavengers of the sea, which have neither fins nor scales. Lacking fins, they have no power to lift themselves above the slime at the bottom of the sea. Lacking fins, they can make no progress in moving about. And lacking scales, they cannot withstand the impurities of the environment in which they live. For example, the eel and the oyster have neither fins nor scales. They live in the slime at the bottom of the water; and they take into their systems the impurities found there. Now the clean fish had both fins and scales: fins, with which to make progress against the current of the stream; and scales, with which to resist the elements in which they lived. Unlike the oyster, which attached itself to a rock at the bottom of the sea, there to remain; the fishes with fins and scales could make progress, because of their power to rise above their environment."

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 11

13'And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard,14 the kite, and the falcon after its kind;15 every raven after its kind,16 the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind;17 the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl;18 the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture;19 the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.

- We now go from animals and fish to birds. It's interesting that there are no specifics given to distinguish between clean and unclean.
- Though it does seem that there is a common denominator of sorts in that all of the 20 unclean birds are either predators or scavengers.

"Some Christians are like the scavenger birds, the vulture and the raven; they appear to rejoice in the failure of others, bearing tales, repeating gossip, injuring other Christians, and driving the unsaved away from Christ and the church. I know a man who was a drunkard for years:" then he was saved by faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. He gave a glorious testimony for the Lord, until one day he fell into the old habit of drink. With what results? Those vultures came like cloud to break the news to me, that man's pastor, and to everyone who knew him. Instead of praying for the member of the body of Christ who needed to confess his sin and get back into fellowship with God, they drove him from them; in misery and sorrow he shunned their very presence. ...May God give us 'milk of human-kindness,' that we may not be like the vulture and the raven!"

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 11

20'All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you.21 Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on all fours: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth.22 These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind.23 But all other flying insects which have four feet shall be an abomination to you.

- Now from animals, fish, and birds we go to insects where we learn that certain kinds of beetles, locusts and grasshoppers were kosher.
- Perhaps this would explain the dietary practices of one John the Baptist who we know ate these kinds of kosher insects. "No thanks!"
- The thought is that clean and unclean insects are in keeping with the theme of God's direction and protection for the children of Israel.

24 'By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening; 25 whoever carries part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: 26 The carcass of any animal which divides the foot, but is not cloven-hoofed or does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches it shall be unclean.27 And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on all fours, those are unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass shall be unclean until evening. 28 Whoever carries any such carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. It is unclean to you.

- Here we have these detailed instructions for the Israelites to dispose of dead animals so as to not become unclean and thus diseased.

- History tells us that if a dead rat was found in Israel it was to be disposed of. Everyone and everything was to be completely cleaned.
- When the bubonic plague killed one fourth of Europe's population by the year 1350, the Israelites were, for the most part, untouched.
- The reason they stayed healthy is because they observed these commands. Actually they were even blamed for causing the plague.

Jewish History Sourcebook: The Black Death and the Jews 1348-1349 CE "In 1348 there appeared in Europe a devastating plague which is reported to have killed off ultimately twenty-five million people. By the fall of that year the rumor was current that these deaths were due to an international conspiracy of Jewry to poison Christendom. It was reported that the leaders in the Jewish metropolis of Toledo had initiated the plot and that one of the chief conspirators was a Rabbi Peyret who had his headquarters in Chambéry, Savoy, whence he dispatched his poisoners to France, Switzerland, and Italy." <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.html>

According to another source; "when a dead rat was found by a Jew it was to be disposed of, and everyone and everything was to be cleaned up. The Jews were persecuted for poisoning these wells with the rats that were disposed of and thus caused the Bubonic Plague also known as Black Death. In Basel, Switzerland, the city's Jews were rounded up, locked in a wooden structure and burned alive."

29'These also shall be unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: the mole, the mouse, and the large lizard after its kind;30 the gecko, the monitor lizard, the sand reptile, the sand lizard, and the chameleon.31 These are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening.32 Anything on which any of them falls, when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack, whatever item it is, in which any work is done, it must be put in water. And it shall be unclean until evening; then it shall be clean.33 Any earthen vessel into which any of them falls you shall break; and whatever is in it shall be unclean:34 in such a vessel, any edible food upon which water falls becomes unclean, and any drink that may be drunk from it becomes unclean.35 And everything on which a part of any such carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it is an oven or cooking stove, it shall be broken down; for they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you.36 Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, in which there is plenty of water, shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean.37 And if a part of any such carcass falls on any planting seed which is to be sown, it remains clean.38 But if water is put on the seed, and if a part of any such carcass falls on it, it becomes unclean to you.

- This is interesting because such drastic measures had to be taken in order to protect them from any disease spreading in their homes.
- Notice that if a one of these reptiles was to crawl or fall into one of these vessels, it was to be put in water, and or it was to be broken.
- This is true in our lives as well, if we are put in the Word (water) of the Lord, it cleanses us from the inside out, by breaking us (clay pot).