

Help us celebrate Dale's baptism! 🎉

"I have submitted to him and his will, making a covenant with him to lead a life of a Christian and a new man and husband." **Leviticus 11 and Acts 10**

Forbidden Foods - Clean and Unclean Foods Explained

Feb 28, 2021

## Pre-Message

Photos for Easter publicity... text that photo to us at (402) 413-5638 **Need Background Music**

## Introduction...

The book of Leviticus... we know you have been avoiding it because it is weird... so let's fix that. But every week is weird... (weird things in this world?)

## Overview – Holiness of God

- Big problem of Leviticus – **How can ordinary people approach a Holy God?**
- God has taken up residence in their backyard. There is this tent in the middle, called the Tabernacle. This is where the priests do their work, sacrifices are made and God's presence is in its fullness.
- But God's holiness is not just pure and powerful, it is dangerous
- Holiness is Good – but it is also dangerous. Holiness is like the sun – super powerful, but approach it and you could be burned up
- Priests who go inappropriately will die – Aaron's sons in 8-10, ordination/consecration. Only certain people are called... and they must live a higher standard.
- But for 'everyone', When you are in a "Pure" status, you can be near God's presence – when you are impure, you can't

**Overview of Leviticus – see diagram.** 10 (Add Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Blood and on p. Note the Chiasm structure – Ritual, Priest, Purity, Day of Atonement, Purity, Priest, Ritual...

- Remember, God is knocking the Egypt out of them. I am YHWH who brought you OUT of Egypt. You have a new God, you are not slaves... lean into it (Message for us today.)
- In the ancient world, sacrifices were normal, rules were normal – but the other Gods were arbitrary and capricious. You don't know how they will respond to you.
- Leviticus is a dramatic gift because it is clarity... "This is clean, this is unclean". And if you are unclean "This is how you get back to clean." you KNOW how God will respond. You KNOW expectations. You KNOW this is a holy God who is also approachable if...x, y, z... This is revolutionary in contrast to the other Canaanite, Hittite, and Egyptians all around them.

Clean and Unclean are not moral categories, they are ritual categories. They define what can and cannot be in God's presence. Another way to say it: Pure and Impure. Unclean in the text – why certain animals are pure and impure. What is clear is that what you eat sets you apart from the other nations...

God's holiness affects everything... including what you eat! Turn to p. 22 in your guide.

### Food Laws – a picture of “Clean”

Jewish people were to only eat certain foods and avoid certain foods. Here is a list:

11 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 2 “Say to the Israelites: ‘Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: 3 You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud.

4 “‘There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. 5 The hyrax, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. 6 The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. 7 And the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. 8 You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

No camel, hyrax, bunny or PIG! What? No pork chops, no bacon, no ham for Christmas day... Seriously, no bacon? I can't believe it! [Land Diagram](#) from p. 23

9 “‘Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams you may eat any that have fins and scales. 10 But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to regard as unclean. 11 And since you are to regard them as unclean, you must not eat their meat; you must regard their carcasses as unclean. 12 Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be regarded as unclean by you.

No Lobster, squid, ocotpus, shrimp, crab or catfish. Notice, these are bottom feeders. They actually recycle all the stuff that floats to the bottom – the sanitation engineers and sewer workers of the deep. [Water Diagram](#)

13 “‘These are the birds you are to regard as unclean and not eat because they are unclean: the eagle,[a] the vulture, the black vulture, 14 the red kite, any kind of black kite, 15 any kind of raven, 16 the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, 17 the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, 18 the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, 19 the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

OK, so at this point, I want to issue a challenge to our worship team. We have plenty of worship songs from the gospels... from Revelation, from the psalms... but almost nothing from Leviticus 11. Can I challenge you? Leviticus 11 worship song for next week... using words from this chapter. Ha! OK... Birds of Prey and Scavengers are out. BAT! Who would ever eat a bat? If only the people of Wuhan were following Leviticus. [Air Diagram](#)

20 “‘All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be regarded as unclean by you. 21 There are, however, some flying insects that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. 22 Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. 23 But all other flying insects that have four legs you are to regard as unclean.

Lots of nasty stuff you would never eat anyway...

Look in your guide p. 23 and you can see the key questions to ask in each category as to whether something is clean or not. **Bug Diagram** good news! You can still eat grasshoppers... some of you are John the Baptist fans... this is good news to you.

The rest of the text adds dead carcasses, lizards and geckos... But the key question is Why? Why all of these food laws? It all gets answered in verses 44-45...

### **Key Verses from Leviticus: 11:44-45**

44 I am YHWH your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. 45 I am YHWH, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

OK, this verse give you the reason for Leviticus.

- I am YHWH your God. I am new. Not like Pharaoh or Isis or Osiris. Call me “I am”... because “I am Holy”. I am the one who pulled you out of slavery, parted the Red Sea, drowned Pharaohs army and showed up on Mt. Sinai! I have a new set of rules... live by them.
- You need to be holy because I am holy. What does “HOLY” mean? Not perfect and pure... it means “set apart” it means different. Get used to different because YHWH and his kids are coming over. So all of these things in Leviticus are designed to show that God’s people are just different... You know, the idea of having no tattoos for instance or long beards or curly hair on the sides... all indicators that these people are different. Even to this day, if you run into someone in an airport or New York or Israel who looks like THIS **Orthodox Jews**, instantly you can identify them. God wanted this to happen by looks and by food. Those dudes who refused bacon... must be Jews. All of this is designed to create an identity.
- Some people have pointed out that animals who were not eaten were largely bottom feeders and scavengers – that this is meant to protect their health. And maybe it did. Maybe their health was better because of these food regulations. But don’t miss the big important piece of this all. It is about being holy and different and not ashamed.
- God is creating a massive differentiator between the people and the nations... NATIONS. I want you different than the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, Amorites, Edomites and Philistines. He wanted his people distinct... different... unique. His idea was that they would be a light in the darkness... a witness to the world... a blessing to all nations. Different in their identity, clothing, morals, and eating habits.

### **Interesting sidelight:**

I read an article by a skeptic or critic of Christianity this week. And it asked the question “Why is it that some laws in Leviticus are continued, while others are ignored? Why do Christians cherry pick the ones they like? How come some are in play today... while others are out. For example, we do apply the laws related to lying, stealing, caring for the poor. But we don’t still do things like the commanded offerings.

And it really reflects the idea that the Bible is a static list of rules. Do’s and don’ts. And you should DO every command there. But it is so much more... it is story, history, context, drama, poetry and prophecy. But that leaves us with the same question. How do we know what Levitical laws are kept in the new testament and should be practiced by us today.

I have always answered this question a certain way in the past, but God gave me a new paradigm this week. We are testing it on you... the first to hear. And it gives three simple tests for whether New Testament Christians should obey Old Testament Laws.

- **Repeated** – Is it Repeated? In Leviticus 19, it says “You should not take revenge...” and in the Romans 12, it says “You should not take revenge...” Clearly, this rule is in play for Christians today. Lev. 19 = Be generous with the poor. Luke 11 – “*But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you*” Do not take advantage of the poor. Keep doing that. So if it is repeated, keep doing it!
- **Repealed** – Is it repealed? Some things were simply reversed by Jesus or the Holy Spirit. This is the case with food laws and I will do an extended play on that in just a minute. But if it is repealed, you no longer need to keep doing it.
- **Realized (Fulfilled)** – Is it Realized? Fulfilled is probably a better word here, but I am a preacher and I like alliteration – So is it REALIZED? Was it a shadow of something bigger to come – usually Jesus... and now that Jesus has come, the old law is no longer necessary. If it is realized, then there is no reason to keep doing the shadow when the reality is here! The sacrifices we talked about last week are a perfect example of rituals that were fulfilled ... er... realized... in JESUS. Also, all of the priestly or tabernacle commands were fulfilled in Jesus our great High Priest... so those no longer need to be applied.

In this skeptic's article, there were 76 things that were banned in Leviticus. Joshua and I took a pen and paper and applied these three questions to the 76 items and it worked with about 72 of them. The others are just admittedly weird and should be dealt with case by case. Most of them could have a fourth test. “Were they only there to create a distinct culture from the Canaanites?” If so, their usefulness is no more. Suffice it to say, an average person can apply 90% of the Levitical rules with these three questions – but will still have a few headscratchers when you are done.

We have added a document of these 72 on my FB page and our YouTube page for those who are eager to double check our work.

### **Food Laws are REPEALED**

And Jesus gets direct credit on this one. Here is what he said:

Mark 7:18-19 <sup>18</sup> “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

So, Mark does not even leave this up to us to interpret... he lets everyone know that Jesus has declared all foods clean. Then again in Matthew, Jesus reiterates...

Matthew 15:10 “Listen and understand. What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

Jesus brilliantly uses the mouth as his illustration. It is not what you put IN that makes you unclean, but what comes out. Those other things may have been unclean because of where they came FROM, but they are not making you unclean. When you speak in a way that is demeaning, harsh, lying boastful... it

demonstrates that there was something unclean in your soul. Jesus cares far more about your soul than your eating habits.

But there is something bigger going on here. And it is best illustrated in a story about Peter.

**Joppa Slide** – Peter is hanging out in Jewish city called Joppa. Jesus has taken Peter to at least five different Gentile locations to show him that the gospel is for everyone, but Peter is still focused on only reaching the Jews... and he will have some big influence on this later. So God meets him in this weird food dream.

Acts 10:9-16 9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven

So, Jesus has declared all foods clean. And Peter is now getting a visual aide in the form of a dream. Three times in a row just for emphasis. None of this food is impure anymore. Don't call it that because everything is different now.

But it wasn't the only point God was making with peter. Because Just up the lake was a God-Fearing Roman Centurian named Cornelius. And God wanted Peter to reach him. So God gave Cornelius a dream to send for Peter. And just at the moment that the dream was ending, "Knock Knock" the guards say he is being summoned to a Gentile's house. So Peter went with them up the coast to Casarea Martima.

Now, remember the food laws were there to make distinction between Israel and all other nations. To make the people distinct from other NATIONS. And now God is calling Peter to a member of another NATION right after a dream about bacon and shrimp.

**Map: Joppa to Caesarea Maritima**

There he found this ready made audience who wanted to hear the gospel. And not only did they receive the message... not only did they receive Jesus... but they burst out speaking in tongues. Peter was reeling. HE started speaking in tongues right after the Holy Spirit fell on him on Pentecost day... now these people are speaking in tongues! They must have received the Holy Spirit. Then Peter drops this profundity... don't miss it.

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

You see, Peter's dream had two aspects. Food laws don't apply – why? Because God is going to inhabit people of ALL NATIONS... not just the people of Israel. He is breaking down walls... the food communication is amazing.

And Cornelis then served him some shrimp cocktail and Best pork chop and bacon sandwich he ever had! I had “NO IDEA” what I was missing!

Now this moment was catalytic for world history and relevant to you and me. Let me just do a pop quiz. How many people here have absolutely no Jewishness in your DNA... no Jewish heritage... raise your hand! For you and you and you... the elimination of the FOOD LAWS means you can be included. It means you are welcome. It means that Sweedes and Swazilanders and aussies and Peruvians and even Romans can be included in the family of God. It means the gospel is going worldwide.

And what makes us different from the rest of humanity is not that we never have carnitas at Chipotle. What makes us different is that the Holy Spirit lives inside us. HE makes us unique. He makes us compassionate and righteous and loving and good by the power of the Spirit living in us. It is not what goes INTO our mouths, it is what comes OUT of our mouths.

It also means that there is no room for racism. God was knocking the Jewish superiority syndrome out of Peter. And he wants us to join in a celebration of the beauty that God has made in every person.

**Conclusion: Begin Musical Underlay**

Application number one – Go home and eat a bacon cheeseburger with a clean conscience.

Application number two - Clean happens through Jesus blood. Not ritual. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

One huge misconception One: God’s favor can be earned by following rules. The more moral I am, the more likely I am acceptable. Not by Jesus. He made us clean by his death. He makes us clean by his death. He will make us clean by his death. His blood covers sin past, present and future. You are not good enough – the question is what covers your bad?

Religion does not get you to God. It does not. No amount of food laws, bowing, donating money, attending functions, caring for the poor, or being nicer can get you to God. Christianity is actually the anti-religion. It is not about your attempt to get to God... it is about God’s attempt to get to you. You are his prize and he just holds out his hand and asks you to trust him fully. He does not say follow laws, he says “Follow my Son”

Where nations used to be divided by food eating, today, the biggest worldwide unifier is the communion meal – the body and blood of Jesus.

It is being practiced this day by Malaysians, Malians and Minnesotians. It is being taken in India and Indiana. It is received in Paraguay, Portugal, Poland and Pakistan. It is the meal for all people that unifies us.

Now today, you may be asking the question... can I get in on this? What do I need to DO to be a part of the family cleaned by Jesus? Answer... trust him. , and Not just for one people group, but all people. Jesus cleanliness makes us clean. We are what we eat... communion is the new ‘clean’ food. Today, you can even take communion for the first time as a symbol of trusting Jesus.

You should have your communion ready at home or have received it at the door. It is the food – bread and wine. That unites us. It also harkens back to Leviticus 1-7. Four sacrifices that required blood and

one that required bread. And Jesus says do this as a remembrance of me and my forgiveness offered to you.

So reflect now for a minute... on Jesus sacrifice. On the ways he fulfills the sacrifices of Leviticus. On the way THIS food of communion means you are IN, not you are OUT!

**Reflection Song: Nothing but the Blood of Jesus** - 60 seconds of instrumental followed by 60 seconds of corporate singing. Music continues til the ending.

Now lets take and eat together. Lets drink together.

Stand for closing prayer