

Leviticus 11

Gill's introduction:

This chapter treats of creatures clean and unclean, as fit or not fit to be eaten; and first of beasts, whose signs are given, #Le 11:1-8 then of fishes, which are likewise described, #Le 11:9-12 after that of fowls, and those that are not to be eaten are particularly named, #Le 11:13-19 next of creeping things, which are distinguished into two sorts, as flying creeping things, of which those that are unclean, their carcasses are not even to be touched, as neither the carcasses of unclean beasts, #Le 11:20-28 and creeping things on the earth, which defile by touching, as well as eating, and make every thing unclean, upon which, being dead, they fall, #Le 11:29-43 and these laws are enforced from the holiness and goodness of God, #Le 11:44,45 and the chapter is concluded with a recapitulation of them, #Le 11:46,47.

The Lord now deals with man's diet. One reason He Lord placed good tasting, yet unclean, animals within our reach is to see if we will obey Him over our own desires of the flesh. See 20:25, 26.

Moreover, we hear many spiritual applications of this passage, but I am inclined to think that Lord meant what He said here, how He said it: simply put, here is My diet for your good health.

V. 1, *the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron...* The Lord speaks to both, evidently, while they were both in the tabernacle. Gill points out that the one, Moses, was the chief magistrate, and the other, Aaron, the high priest.

If this is the reason Moses was included, because he is the chief magistrate, that means that these dietary laws should also be reflected in man's civil laws. Before we jump to conclusions, we should remember that America's requirement that animals be bled is purely Biblical. Actually, all our meat is "Kosher," for it is slaughtered in a Biblical manner.

Though I cannot agree totally with Gill, I will quote him on v. 2:

**Ver. 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, &c.]** For to them only belong the following laws, and not unto the Gentiles, as Jarchi rightly observes; these were parts of the ceremonial law, which was peculiarly given to them, and lay, among other things, in meats and drinks, and now abolished; for it is not what goes into a man that defiles him; nor is any thing common or unclean of itself, but every creature of God is good if received with thanksgiving. The sons of Noah had free liberty, without any restraint or limitation, of using for food any living creature that moved upon the face of the earth; in the choice of which they were left to exercise their reason and judgment, and is the case with us now; but as men have not so nice a smell as some animals have, and cannot distinguish by their senses so well as they what food is most wholesome, which makes the exercise of their reason and judgment necessary, and the people of the Jews being a special people, and for whom the Lord had a peculiar regard; for the sake of their health, and to preserve them from diseases they were subject to, such as the leprosy and others, and to direct them to what was most salubrious and

healthful, gave them the following laws; and which, though they are not obligatory upon us, yet may be a direction to us, in the use of what may be most suitable and proper food for us, the difference of climates, and of the constitutions of men's bodies, being considered: not that we are to suppose, that the case of health was the only reason of delivering out these laws to the children of Israel, for other ends, besides that, may be thought to be had in view as to assert his sovereign right to the creatures, and his disposal of them to them according to his will and pleasure; to lay a restraint on their appetites, to prevent luxury, and to teach them self denial, and compliance with his will; as also to keep them the more from the company and conversation of the Gentiles, by whom they otherwise might be led into idolatry; and to give them an aversion to their idols, to whom the creatures forbidden them to eat, many of them were either now or would be sacred to them; and chiefly to excite to a care for purity, both inward and outward, and create in the man abhorrence of those vices which may be signified by the ill qualities of several of the creatures; and to instruct them in the difference between holy and unholy persons, with whom they should or should not have communion; see #Ac 10:11-15,28

Observe:

**First**, "every creature of God is good if received with thanksgiving..." That is, as it is sanctified by God's Word, 1 Tim 4:5.

**Sanctified**, set apart, or, as Gill points out, made holy. Though not advocating eating "unclean" food, Gill does say, however, "that by virtue of this word of God, every creature may be made use of, that is fit for food..." He is referring back to Peter's vision, mentioned above.

**and prayer...** But the word of God and prayer does not change the nature of the food listed in Lev 11. Gill, and others, seem to what to have it both ways: He claims that Lev 11 represents a healthy diet for God's people, the Jews, yet he wants to exempt God's people of our day from that healthy diet.

So many people flee to Acts 10 to justify any diet they desire, but that passage has nothing to do with one's diet: Peter clearly told the church at Jerusalem the reason for the vision--that God was making the Gentiles fellow-heirs to the promise blessings given to Abraham. The following is found in the vegetarianism mailing:

V. 5, *For it is sanctified*, or set apart by God's Word for man's use. (See Gen 9:4) The meats *sanctified* are listed in Leviticus chapter 11. It would be redundant to go over the list found in Leviticus 11, so this writer urges the reader to check *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, vol I, pp 297. [©1973, The Craig Press, R.J. Rushdoony.]...

We will address a few points used to justify an extreme opposite of vegetarianism: eating *every creature*, e.g. swine, &c. **First**, Acts 10 clearly illustrated taking the gospel to the unclean beasts of the field, the Gentiles, Acts 11. **Second**, 1 Cor 10 refers to Scripturally clean meats that had been offered to idols **Third**, Acts 15:29; 21:25, &c. Concerning Col. 2:16, 17, Rushdoony says:

"The significance of this has been noted with respect to the sabbath law. The sabbath law is no longer law for us, in that it no longer is a civil and religious offense to fail in one's observance, but it is a principle of life and a moral rule. Similarly, the dietary laws are not legally binding on us, but they do provide us with a principle of operation. The apostles, as they moved into a Gentile world, did not allow diet to be a barrier between them and the Gentiles. If they were served pork or shrimp, they ate it. On their own, they maintained the kosher rules as God's rules of health and life. St. Paul rebuked St. Peter to his face when he withdrew from the Gentiles, with whom he had been eating, because of fear of criticism on the part of some Judaizers (Gal. 2:9-15). With reference to our salvation, the laws of diet have no significance, although Phariseeism gave it such a significance (Gal. 2:16). With reference to our health, the rules of diet are still valid rules... Both [Sabbath & dietary laws, ed] remain, not as laws but as principles for the health of man, the sabbath for man's spirit, and the rules of diet for man's body. Our observance of these dietary rules should never be to place a barrier between ourselves and other men but for our health and prosperity in Christ." [Ibid, pp 301, 302.]

**Second,** "The sons of Noah had free liberty, without any restraint or limitation, of using for food any living creature that moved upon the face of the earth; in the choice of which they were left to exercise their reason and judgment..." But as far back as Abel, man knew the difference between clean and unclean beasts: Abel knew what to sacrifice, and Noah took extra of clean beasts into the ark. I am convinced, though unable to support from Scripture, that the Lord told Adam what was clean and unclean to be passed down from generation to generation, Gen 8:20. Of course, meat was not used before the flood.

Gen 9:3 *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you...* Can this be taken literally, or did God exclude cannibalism? Of course, the context of v. 2 shows the reference is to *every beast of the earth*. Personally, I believe that Noah understood the command within the context of clean and unclean beasts of 8:20. But I cannot be dogmatic.

**Third,** "Jews being a special people, and for whom the Lord had a peculiar regard; for the sake of their health, and to preserve them from diseases..." And the Lord does not regard the health of the modern *Israel of God*, the church? Did He not die for the *Israel of God*, when He did not for the Old Testament Israel?

**Fourth,** Gill rightly says the laws were given for the health of his people, but can we suppose that God's general laws of health have changed? Diet will not, obviously, send one to hell, but proper diet will give one an extended life in service to the Lord. As medical science "finds" the proper diet for good health, it lines up with this chapter. We, however, exclude the modern move into vegetarianism.

All the above to say this: I believe we dismiss far too lightly what is contained herein.

Note that if even touching these unclean make a person unclean, how much more eating them. **Ch. 19:6**, meat only good two days without refrigeration.

Online Bible has this chapter divided thusly:

**Vv. 1-8**, of clean and unclean land beasts.

**Vv. 9-19**, of clean and unclean fish and fowls.

**Vv. 20-42**, is kind of a long section: It covers clean and unclean bugs that go upon the ground, vv. 20-23; it covers the touching of the carcass of dead animals, vv. 24-28; it covers additional unclean things and their carcasses, *things that creep upon the earth*, vv. 29-31; it covers how to deal with a situation where a carcass contacts or falls into vessels used for food, vv. 32-38; it covers the proper handling of the carcasses of clean animals, 39-40, and it covers again actions in regard to *creeping things*, vv. 41, 42.

The above regulations of this passage seem quite strict, but they will result in good health. We should not forget that several million people were living in very close quarters, and as these health laws were followed, disease was kept to a minimum. It would not hurt to follow these health laws today for sanitation purposes. Of course, we do not use the stone and earthen vessels, and our vessels can, and should, be washed according to the instructions given in the above section.

**Vv. 43-47**, God's reason for these laws is given: holiness, purity, cleanliness, separation from heathens. God's authority to give such laws is given: to glorify Him as God is to recognize His authority and abide by what He says.

Certainly, one's eternal life does not depend upon following the laws given in this chapter. But the Lord clearly states that one's good health and testimony before the pagans depend upon the above laws.

See Lev 20, and diet file for further development.