

A Persuasive Commentary on the Dietary Laws of Leviticus 11: Choosing God's Best

The dietary ordinances of Leviticus 11, often dismissed as outdated or unnecessary under the New Covenant, hold profound wisdom for anyone seeking to honor their body and maintain optimal health. These commands, far from being arbitrary restrictions, reflect God's intimate care for His people, as He distinguishes between what is clean and unclean for consumption. By observing these dietary principles, one can embrace a lifestyle that aligns with God's original design, promoting both physical and spiritual well-being.

The Wisdom of God's Clean vs. Unclean Designations

In Leviticus 11, God declares certain animals unclean for His people. Notably, swine (pigs) are prohibited: "And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you" (Leviticus 11:7). While modern culture readily embraces pork in all its forms, it is worth noting that swine are notorious for their unhygienic habits. They wallow in their own filth, eat feces, and serve as hosts to harmful parasites such as trichinella. Even with modern cooking practices, these parasites can pose significant health risks. Is this truly the "best" nourishment for a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?

Similarly, shellfish, such as shrimp, crab, and lobster, are labeled unclean: "Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you" (Leviticus 11:12). These creatures are bottom-feeders, scavengers that consume decaying matter, including dead fish and toxic waste. Their diet inherently makes them high in toxins, which can harm human health. Studies link the consumption of shellfish to higher risks of foodborne illnesses and contamination by heavy metals. Again, the question arises: Why settle for "second best" when God desires to give us His finest?

Even certain birds are unclean: "And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls... the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey" (Leviticus 11:13). These birds of prey feed on carrion—rotting, dead animals—making them a poor choice for a healthy diet. In contrast, clean animals, such as cattle, sheep, and fish with fins and scales, consume live vegetation or pure food sources. This distinction underscores God's provision for His people: He has given us animals that naturally avoid contamination to sustain and nourish us.

Avoiding the Diseases of Egypt

God's dietary laws are not merely restrictive but protective. In Exodus 15:26, He promises: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Ancient Egyptian

mummies reveal evidence of heart disease, arthritis, and parasitic infections, much of which could be linked to their diet, which included pork and other unclean foods.

By following God's dietary instructions, the Israelites avoided these health issues. Modern science supports this: diets that exclude pork and shellfish tend to result in lower rates of cardiovascular disease, digestive issues, and chronic inflammation. These benefits are not coincidences but reflections of God's wisdom.

Freedom to Choose: The Best vs. the Permissible

Under the New Covenant, Christians are indeed free to eat any food. Jesus declared, "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark 7:15). Peter's vision in Acts 10 further confirmed that the gospel was for all nations, symbolized by the clean and unclean animals being declared acceptable.

However, freedom does not mean all choices are equally beneficial. Paul reminds us, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). While eating pork or shellfish is no longer a sin, it is, at best, "second best." Would you freely feast on pig intestines or embrace the idea of consuming bottom-feeders that thrive on waste? You are free, of course, to dine on these foods, but why settle for less when God has already shown us what is best for our bodies?

Conclusion: Choosing God's Best

The dietary laws of Leviticus 11 are not relics of an archaic past but testimonies of God's care for His creation. While we are free to eat all foods, God's distinctions between clean and unclean are still relevant for those who desire to live in harmony with His design. By choosing clean foods, we honor our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and avoid unnecessary health risks associated with unclean animals.

Let us not use our freedom to settle for mediocrity in our diet. Instead, let us strive for God's best, trusting that His instructions are given not to restrict us but to bless us abundantly. The choice is ours: Will we embrace the wisdom of Leviticus 11 and choose the best, or will we merely settle for the permissible? As for me, I will follow the wisdom of the Lord, for His ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9), and His design is always good.

Leviticus 11: Beasts That May Not Be Eaten



Camel⁴



Coney/Hare⁵⁻⁶



Swine/Pig⁷



All that have not fins and scales in the seas and rivers¹⁰⁻¹²



Ferret, Lizard, Tortoise²⁹⁻³⁰



Bat & Mouse^{19,29}



Whatever hath more feet among all creeping things⁴²



Vulture, Eagle, Kite, Hawk, Raven¹⁴⁻¹⁶



Pelican, Swan, Stork¹⁸⁻¹⁹



Whatever goeth about upon his paws²⁷



Owl & Snail^{16,30}

Leviticus 11: Beasts That May Be Eaten



Chew the Cud + Divided Hoof³



Fish with
Fins & Scales⁹



Grasshopper²²



Locust²²



Cricket (KJV Beetle)²²