

Religious Myths vs. Bible Truths

We are all guilty of following them, like the blind following the blind and ending up in a ditch. But as we search the Word and hear by the Spirit, we uncover the real truths. It is then that we can distinguish truth from religious myth, as we do here.

The following religious myths are in no particular order of importance, but rather as His Spirit has brought them to mind, with the most current on top.

What about dietary laws?...haven't those "restrictions" ended?

No. We will look at the verses used to incorrectly justify their demise. But first the big picture. The dietary laws are found in **Leviticus 11**, (although even Noah was aware of their basics long before Moses wrote them down). All food was divided into two groups, "clean" & "unclean". They were given by the Creator out of His love for mankind, His creation. This is akin to a car manufacturer designating what type of fuel the vehicle was designed to run on to get the most life out of the engine. Both God and car-manufacturers were not mean to provide their guidelines. Neither were they laying out unnecessary rules to test our obedience. In giving the parameters they had our best interest at heart.

Some unclean foods may look appealing, but for some reason they are "unclean". Something is wrong with unclean food that makes it detrimental to those who eat them. Multiple modern scientific studies verify this as well. The details of what these foods are like & what they do to our bodies is too gruesome to mention here. Interestingly, it was noticed that Jews in large part escaped the famous bubonic plague. Why? They obeyed the dietary laws. Their immune systems were stronger. Many people who shift to abstaining from unclean foods typically notice increased energy, sharper mental clarity, and even healing from physical problems that have haunted them for a long time.

Unclean things include things like mice, bats, caterpillars, and more obvious things that we would be horrified to put into our mouths. Unclean foods also include more appealing things such as pork & shellfish. As a toddler we may be upset by a parent telling us to not put a certain thing into our mouths, but the parent has our best interest at heart. It is the same with us and God. We understand how much He loves us as we mature in our relationship with Him; just as a child appreciates the parent's love as the youngster matures. There are however several scriptures that are frequently misunderstood as justification for the eating of unclean things. Let's take a closer look at them, starting with Peter's vision in **Acts 10**.

In this vision God told Peter to eat unclean as well as clean food. At face value and taken out of context this would seem to indicate that God has changed His laws and it's now OK to eat anything. *But Peter himself knew this was NOT what the vision meant*, which is why he was trying to figure out what it really meant in **Acts 10:17,19**. For the full story read all of **Acts 10 & 11**, where it becomes clear that the purpose of the vision was to let Peter know that God is no respecter of *PEOPLE*, (not food). One confirmation to him was that he saw the vision 3-times, then 3-Gentiles (considered unclean to Peter), came to his door. Peter was to receive them. The vision prepared Peter for their visit. Wouldn't it be a ridiculous interpretation to think that God was telling Peter to eat the visitors?! In the same way it would be ridiculous to think the vision was telling Peter that unclean foods are acceptable to eat and should be. Those two thoughts are how the natural, carnal mind would see this vision. This is another example of how we must use the Spirit to understand the Word. Peter interpreted according the Spirit:

“34. Then Peter replied, ‘I see very clearly that God doesn’t show partiality. 35. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.’”

Acts 10: 34,35 New Living Translation

1Corinthians 8 is another passage used to incorrectly justify eating unclean food. The trouble with this premise is that the food being talked about is never mentioned as being “unclean meat”. The food discussed is meat for sure, but what kind of meat? This is meat that has been sacrificed to idols. Pagans sacrificed both clean & unclean meat. It goes without saying that the meat being discussed is “clean” meat that has been sacrificed to idols. How do we know this? Because the audience to whom this was addressed were all well aware of the cultural Jewish concept of eating just clean meat according to the Word. That was and is still not the issue. So what is it?

Sacrificing meat to idols is a foreign concept in most modern Christianity. To understand, let's see what was done then. When an animal was killed for food, the person doing the slaughtering dedicated the animal to his favorite god or gods. This is a distortion among pagans from the common Biblical concept of presenting an offering to God. Such Biblical offerings include sin offerings, guilt offerings, peace offerings, burnt offerings, trespass offerings, thank offerings, etc., most of which including the killing of an animal that was then eaten by the people and/or the Levitical Priests. Eating meat was often associated with worship to God. Today in similar fashion we acknowledge God's provision by giving thanks before eating.

Who the meat was sacrificed to was a legitimate concern to many. Some believers felt it would be acknowledging false gods to eat meat that had been dedicated to these idols by the butcher shop where they bought it. Others, fully realizing that idols are fake and not really gods at all, had no problem with it. The bottom line was, don't ask whether or not the meat was offered to an idol; just enjoy it and give thanks to God. However if your fellow believers felt it was wrong to eat it, then don't eat it in front of them. Let love rule by honoring others by respecting their views on such matters.

When we stick to the context of the topic in this chapter, there is nothing in this passage saying that people who eat unclean meat have more faith. And there is nothing here to say to eat unclean meat so as to please others. His Spirit may ask us, are we seeking to please man, God, or our bellies? And we keep in perspective that our true meat is to take in Jesus (Yeshua) as our spiritual nourishment, knowing that His meat is to do the Father's will.

But **Mark 7:19b** is the foundational verse used to justify eating unclean meat. Jesus (Yeshua), is here making a spiritual point about a wicked heart defiling a person. He makes the comparison that food passes through us and is not the source of defiling our souls. The emphasis is that matters of the heart are more important than matters of food. What one eats is an outward thing, while what one thinks & speaks reflects an inward condition. The inward condition is of far more value than the outward condition. At the end of this passage is a sentence in parentheses that steers the reader off from this point and into error; to believe that the point of this passage is that we can now eat any unclean food. Here is that passage:

(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean".)

Mark 7:19b NIV & other English translations.

But the problem with this is that it's not there in the oldest manuscripts. It was added by religious leaders much later in their steady effort to divorce their followers from Old Covenant truths and into church legalism...from following the Word to following church leaders along with their interpretations & rules. Or at best it was an insertion meant to be helpful, but reveals that the scribe was thinking in the natural mind like a child who hears instructions from a parent but twists it to suit what they want. The most famous example is when mom says to go ask your dad, and then the child tells the dad that mom said it's OK.

For a more in-depth study, an easy-to-read book is "Kosher" by Todd D. Bennett and also books by Kevin Trudeau or by Jordan Rubin.

In the big picture there are more questions on other aspects of comparing the Old Covenant with the New/Renewed Covenant and what applies today. We hope to examine those passages in future writings. But for now we'll move on with some other Religious Myths.

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