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Appendix 6: The Forbidden Meats for Christians

NOT ALL LIVING THINGS WERE CREATED TO BE FOOD

This truth becomes evident when we examine the beginning of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Adam, the first man, was given the task of tending a garden. What type of garden? The original Hebrew text does not specify, but there is compelling evidence that it was a fruit garden:
"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden... And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Genesis 2:8-9).

We also read about Adam's role in naming and caring for the animals, but nowhere does Scripture suggest that they were also "good for food," like the trees.

This is not to say that eating meat is forbidden by God—had it been, there would be explicit instruction to that effect in the entire Scripture. However, it does tell us that the consumption of animal flesh was not part of humanity's diet from the beginning.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS

INTRODUCED IN NOAH'S TIME

While God eventually permitted humans to kill and eat animals, clear distinctions were established between animals that were suitable for consumption and those that were

not.

This distinction is first implied in the instructions given to Noah before the flood: *"Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate"* (Genesis 7:2).

IMPLICIT KNOWLEDGE OF CLEAN ANIMALS

The fact that God did not explain to Noah how to distinguish between clean and unclean animals suggests that such knowledge was already ingrained in humanity, possibly from the very inception of creation.

This recognition of clean and unclean animals reflects a broader divine order and purpose, where certain creatures were set apart for specific roles or purposes within the natural and spiritual framework.

THE EARLY MEANING OF CLEAN ANIMALS

ASSOCIATED WITH SACRIFICE

Based on what has transpired so far in the Genesis narrative, we can safely assume that up to the flood, the distinction between clean and unclean animals was only related to their acceptability as sacrifices.

Abel's offering of the firstborn of his flock highlights this principle. In the Hebrew text, the phrase *"firstborn of his flock"* (מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ) uses the word "flock" (*tzon*, צֹאן), which typically refers to small domesticated animals such as sheep and goats. Thus, it is most likely that Abel offered a lamb or a young goat from his flock (Genesis 4:3-5).

NOAH’S SACRIFICES OF CLEAN ANIMALS

Similarly, when Noah exited the ark, he built an altar and sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord using clean animals, which were specifically mentioned in God’s instructions before the flood (Genesis 8:20; 7:2).

This early emphasis on clean animals for sacrifice sets the foundation for understanding their unique role in worship and covenantal purity.

The Hebrew words used to describe these categories—**tahor** (טָהוֹר) and **tamei** (טָמֵא)—are not arbitrary. They are deeply connected to concepts of holiness and separation for the Lord:

- **טָמֵא (Tamei) Meaning**: Unclean, impure. **Usage**: Refers to ritual, moral, or physical impurity. Often associated with animals, objects, or actions prohibited for consumption or worship. **Example**: *"Nevertheless, these you shall not eat... they are unclean (tamei) to you" (Leviticus 11:4).*
- **טָהוֹר (Tahor) Meaning**: Clean, pure. **Usage**: Refers to animals, objects, or people suitable for consumption, worship, or ritual activities. **Example**: *"You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Leviticus 10:10).*

These terms form the foundation of God's dietary laws, which are later detailed in **Leviticus 11** and **Deuteronomy 14**. These chapters explicitly list animals deemed clean (permissible for food) and unclean (forbidden to eat), ensuring that God's people remain distinct and holy.

GOD'S ADMONITIONS AGAINST EATING UNCLEAN MEATS

Throughout the Tanach (Old Testament), God repeatedly admonished His people for violating His dietary laws. Several passages specifically condemn the consumption of unclean animals, emphasizing that this practice was seen as a rebellion against God's commandments:

"A people who provoke Me continually to My face... who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat" (Isaiah 65:3-4).

"Those who consecrate and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one who is among those who eat the flesh of pigs, rats and other unclean things—they will meet their end together with the one they follow," declares the Lord (Isaiah 66:17).

These rebukes highlight that eating unclean meat was not merely a dietary issue but a moral and spiritual failure. The act of consuming such food was linked to defiance against God's instructions. By indulging in practices explicitly forbidden, the people demonstrated a disregard for holiness and obedience.

JESUS AND UNCLEAN MEAT

With the coming of Jesus, the rise of Christianity, and the writings of the New Testament, many have begun to question whether God no longer cares about obedience to His laws, including His rules on unclean foods. In reality, practically the entire Christian world will eat anything they want.

The fact, however, is that there is no prophecy in the Old Testament that says that the Messiah would cancel the law of unclean meat, or any other law of His Father (as some argue). Jesus clearly obeyed the Father's ordinances in everything, including on this point. **If Jesus had eaten pork**, just as we know he ate fish (Luke 24:41-43) and lamb (Matthew 26:17-30), then we would have a clear teaching by example, but we know that this was not the case. We have no indication that Jesus and his disciples disobeyed these instructions given by God through the prophets.

ARGUMENTS REFUTED

FALSE ARGUMENT: *"Jesus declared all food clean"*

THE TRUTH:

Mark 7:1-23 is often quoted as evidence that Jesus abolished the dietary laws concerning unclean meat. However, a careful examination of the text reveals that this interpretation is unfounded. The commonly misquoted verse says:
"'Because the food doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and is expelled as waste.' (By this he declared all foods clean)" (Mark 7:19).

THE CONTEXT: IT'S NOT ABOUT CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEAT

First and foremost, the context of this passage has nothing to do with clean or unclean meat as outlined in Leviticus 11. Instead, it focuses on a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees about a Jewish tradition unrelated to the dietary laws. The Pharisees and scribes noticed that Jesus' disciples did not perform the ceremonial handwashing before eating, known in Hebrew as *netilat yadayim* (נטילת ידיים). This ritual involves washing the hands with a blessing and is a traditional practice observed by the Jewish community to this day, particularly within orthodox circles.

The Pharisees' concern was not about God's dietary laws but about adherence to this man-made tradition. They viewed the disciples' failure to perform the ritual as a violation of their customs, equating it with impurity.

JESUS' RESPONSE: THE HEART MATTERS MORE

Jesus spends much of Mark 7 teaching that what truly defiles a person is not external practices or traditions but the condition of the heart. He emphasizes that spiritual impurity comes from within, from sinful thoughts and actions, rather than from failing to observe ceremonial rituals.

When Jesus explains that food does not defile a person because it goes into the digestive system and not the heart, He is not addressing the dietary laws but rather the ceremonial handwashing tradition. His focus is on internal purity rather than outward rituals.

A CLOSER LOOK AT MARK 7:19

Mark 7:19 is often misunderstood due to a non-existent parenthetical note that Bible publishers inserted in the text, stating, "By this, he declared all foods clean." In the Greek text, the sentence only says: "οτι ουκ εισπορευεται αυτου εις την καρδιαν αλλ εις την κοιλιαν και εις τον αφεδρωνα εκπορευεται **καθαριζον παντα τα βρωματα**," which translates literally as: "Because it enters not of him into the heart, but into the belly, and into the latrine goes out, cleansing all the foods."

Reading: " into the latrine goes out, cleansing all the foods" and translating as: "With this, he declared all foods clean" is a blatant attempt to manipulate the text to fit a common bias against God's Law in seminaries and among Bible publishers.

What makes more sense is that the whole sentence is Jesus describing in the everyday parlance of the time the process of eating. The digestive system takes in food, extracts nutrients and beneficial components that the body needs (the clean part), and then expels the rest as waste. The phrase "cleansing or purifying all foods" probably refers to this natural process of separating useful nutrients from what will be discarded.

CONCLUSION ON THIS FALSE ARGUMENT

Mark 7:1-23 is not about abolishing God's dietary laws but about rejecting human traditions that elevate external rituals over matters of the heart. Jesus taught that true defilement comes from within, not from failing to observe ceremonial handwashing. The claim that "Jesus declared all food clean" is a misinterpretation of the text, rooted in biases against God's eternal laws. By carefully reading the context and original language, it becomes clear that Jesus upheld the Torah's teachings and did not dismiss the dietary laws given by God.

FALSE ARGUMENT: *"In a vision, God told the apostle Peter that we can now eat the flesh of any animal"*

THE TRUTH:

Many people cite Peter's vision in Acts 10 as evidence that God abolished the dietary laws concerning unclean animals. However, a closer examination of the context and purpose of the vision reveals that it had nothing to do with overturning the laws about clean and unclean meat. Instead, the vision was meant to teach Peter to accept Gentiles into God's people, not to alter the dietary instructions given by God.

PETER'S VISION AND ITS PURPOSE

In Acts 10, Peter has a vision of a sheet descending from heaven, containing all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean, accompanied by a command to "kill and eat." Peter's immediate response is clear:
"Surely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean" (Acts 10:14).

This reaction is significant for several reasons:

1. **Peter's Obedience to the Dietary Laws** This vision occurs after Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. If Jesus had abolished the dietary laws during His ministry, Peter—a close disciple of Jesus—would have been aware of it and would not have objected so strongly. The fact that Peter refused to eat unclean animals demonstrates that he still observed the dietary laws and had no understanding that they had been abolished.
2. **The Vision's Real Message** The vision is repeated three times, emphasizing its importance, but its true meaning is clarified just a few verses later when Peter visits the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter himself explains the vision's meaning: *"God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean"* (Acts 10:28).

The vision was not about food at all but was a symbolic message. God used the imagery of clean and unclean animals to teach Peter that the barriers between Jews and Gentiles were being removed and that Gentiles could now be accepted into God's covenant community.

LOGICAL INCONSISTENCIES WITH THE "FOOD LAW ABOLISHED" ARGUMENT

Claiming that Peter's vision abolished the dietary laws ignores several critical points:

1. **Peter's Initial Resistance** If the dietary laws had already been abolished, Peter's objection would make no sense. His words reflect his continued adherence to these laws, even after years of following Jesus.
2. **No Scriptural Evidence of Abolishment** Nowhere in Acts 10 does the text explicitly state that the dietary laws were abolished. The focus is entirely on the inclusion of Gentiles, not a redefinition of clean and unclean food.

3. **The Vision's Symbolism** The vision's purpose becomes evident in its application. When Peter realizes that God does not show favoritism but accepts people from every nation who fear Him and do what is right (Acts 10:34-35), it is clear that the vision was about breaking down prejudices, not dietary regulations.
4. **Contradictions in Interpretation** If the vision were about abolishing dietary laws, it would contradict the broader context of Acts, where Jewish believers, including Peter, continued to observe the Torah's instructions. Furthermore, the vision would lose its symbolic power if it were interpreted literally, as it would then only address dietary practices and not the more significant issue of Gentile inclusion.

CONCLUSION ON THIS FALSE ARGUMENT

Peter's vision in Acts 10 was not about food but about people. God used the imagery of clean and unclean animals to convey a deeper spiritual truth: that the gospel was for all nations and that Gentiles were no longer to be considered impure or excluded from God's people. To interpret this vision as a revocation of the dietary laws is to misunderstand both the context and the purpose of the passage.

The dietary instructions given by God in Leviticus 11 remain unchanged and were never the focus of this vision. Peter's own actions and explanations confirm this. The real message of the vision is about breaking down barriers between people, not altering God's eternal laws.



An old painting of butchers preparing meat according to the rules of the Bible for draining the blood of all clean animals, birds, and land animals as described in Leviticus 11.

FALSE ARGUMENT: *"The Jerusalem council decided that Gentiles could eat anything as long as it's not strangled and with blood"*

THE TRUTH:

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is often misinterpreted to suggest that Gentiles were given permission to disregard most of God's commandments and only follow four basic requirements. However, a closer examination reveals that this council was not about abolishing God's laws for Gentiles but about easing their initial participation in Messianic Jewish communities.

WHAT WAS THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL ABOUT?

The primary question addressed at the council was whether Gentiles needed to fully commit to the entire Torah—including circumcision—before being allowed to hear the gospel and participate in the meetings of the first Messianic congregations.

For centuries, Jewish tradition held that Gentiles must become fully observant of the Torah, including adopting practices like circumcision, observing the Sabbath, dietary laws, and other commandments, before a Jew could freely interact with them (See Matthew 10:5-6; John 4:9; Acts 10:28). The council's decision marked a shift, recognizing that Gentiles could begin their journey of faith without immediately following all these laws.

FOUR INITIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR HARMONY

The council concluded that Gentiles could attend the congregational meetings as they were, provided they abstained from the following practices (Acts 15:20):

1. **Food Polluted by Idols:** Abstain from consuming food sacrificed to idols, as idolatry was deeply offensive to Jewish believers.
2. **Sexual Immorality:** Abstain from sexual sins, which were common in pagan practices.
3. **Meat of Strangled Animals:** Abstain from eating animals that were killed improperly, as this retained blood, forbidden by God's dietary laws.
4. **Blood:** Abstain from consuming blood, a practice prohibited in the Torah (Leviticus 17:10-12).

These requirements were not a summary of all the laws Gentiles needed to follow. Instead, they served as a starting point to ensure peace and unity between Jewish and Gentile believers in mixed congregations.

WHAT THIS DECISION DID NOT MEAN

It is absurd to claim that these four requirements were the only laws Gentiles needed to obey to please God and receive salvation.

- **Were Gentiles free to violate the Ten Commandments?**
    - Could they worship other gods, use God's name in vain, steal, or murder? Of course not. Such a conclusion would contradict everything the Scriptures teach about God's expectations for righteousness.

- **A Starting Point, Not an Endpoint:**
    - The council addressed the immediate need to allow Gentiles to participate in Messianic Jewish gatherings. It was assumed they would grow in knowledge and obedience over time.

ACTS 15:21 PROVIDES CLARITY

The council's decision is clarified in Acts 15:21:
"For the law of Moses [the Torah] has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

This verse demonstrates that the Gentiles would continue learning God's laws as they attended the synagogue and heard the Torah. The council did not abolish God's commandments but established a practical approach for Gentiles to begin their faith journey without overwhelming them.

CONTEXT FROM JESUS' TEACHINGS

Jesus Himself emphasized the importance of God's commandments. For instance, in Matthew 19:17 and Luke 11:28, and in the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus affirmed the necessity of following God's laws, such as not committing murder, adultery, loving our neighbors, and many others. These principles were foundational and would not have been dismissed by the apostles.

CONCLUSION ON THIS FALSE ARGUMENT

The Jerusalem Council did not declare that Gentiles could eat anything or ignore God's commandments. It addressed a specific issue: how Gentiles could start participating in Messianic congregations without immediately adopting every aspect of the Torah. The four requirements were practical measures to promote harmony in mixed Jewish-Gentile communities.

The expectation was clear: Gentiles would grow in their understanding of God's laws over time through the teaching of the Torah, which was read in the synagogues every Sabbath. To suggest otherwise misrepresents the council's purpose and ignores the broader teachings of Scripture.

FALSE ARGUMENT: *"The apostle Paul taught that Christ cancelled the need to obey God's laws for salvation"*

THE TRUTH:

Many Christian leaders, if not most, incorrectly teach that the apostle Paul opposed God's Law and instructed Gentile converts to disregard His commandments. Some even suggest that obeying God's laws could endanger salvation. This interpretation has led to significant theological confusion.

Scholars who disagree with this perspective have painstakingly worked to address the controversies surrounding Paul's writings, attempting to demonstrate that his teachings have been misunderstood or taken out of context regarding the Law and salvation. However, our ministry holds a different position.

WHY EXPLAINING PAUL IS THE WRONG APPROACH

We believe it is unnecessary—and even offensive to the Lord—to go to great lengths to explain Paul's stance on the Law. Doing so elevates Paul, a human being, to a status equal to or greater than the prophets of God, and even Jesus Himself.

Instead, the proper theological approach is to examine whether the Scriptures prior to Paul predicted or endorsed the idea that someone would come after Jesus to teach a message nullifying God's laws. If such an important prophecy existed, we would have reason to accept Paul's teachings on this matter as divinely sanctioned, and it would make sense to do our utmost to understand and live by it.

THE ABSENCE OF PROPHECIES ABOUT PAUL

The reality is that the Scriptures contain no prophecies about Paul—or any other figure—bringing a message that cancels God's laws. The only individuals explicitly prophesied in the Old Testament who appear in the New Testament are:

1. **John the Baptist:** His role as the forerunner of the Messiah was foretold and confirmed by Jesus (e.g., Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 11:14).
2. **Judas Iscariot:** Indirect references are found in passages like Psalms 41:9 and Psalms 69:25.
3. **Joseph of Arimathea:** Isaiah 53:9 indirectly alludes to him as the one who provided Jesus' burial.

Beyond these individuals, no prophecies exist about anyone—least of all someone from Tarsus—being sent to nullify God's commandments or teach that Gentiles could be saved without obedience to His eternal laws.

WHAT JESUS PROPHESIED TO COME AFTER HIS ASCENSION

Jesus made numerous prophecies about what would happen after His earthly ministry, including:

- **The destruction of the Temple** (Matthew 24:2).
- **The persecution of His disciples** (John 15:20, Matthew 10:22).
- **The spread of the Kingdom message to all nations** (Matthew 24:14).

Yet, there is no mention of anyone from Tarsus—let alone Paul—being given authority to teach a new or contrary doctrine regarding salvation and obedience.

THE TRUE TEST OF PAUL'S WRITINGS

This does not mean we should dismiss Paul's writings or those of Peter, John, or James. Instead, we must approach their writings with caution, ensuring that any interpretation aligns with the foundational Scriptures: the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels.

The problem lies not in the writings themselves, but in the interpretations that theologians and church leaders have imposed on them. Any interpretation of Paul's teachings must be supported by:

1. **The Old Testament:** God's Law as revealed through His prophets.
2. **The Four Gospels:** The words and actions of Jesus, who upheld the Law.

If an interpretation does not meet these criteria, it should not be accepted as truth.

CONCLUSION ON THIS FALSE ARGUMENT

The argument that Paul taught the cancellation of God's laws, including dietary instructions, is not supported by Scripture. No prophecy foretells such a message, and Jesus Himself upheld the Law. Therefore, any teaching that claims otherwise must be scrutinized against the unchanging Word of God.

As followers of the Messiah, we are called to seek alignment with what has already been written and revealed by God, not to rely on interpretations that contradict His eternal commandments.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS, THROUGH WORDS AND EXAMPLE

The true disciple of Christ models their entire life after Him. He made it clear that if we love Him, we will be obedient to the Father and the Son. This is not a requirement for the faint-hearted but for those whose eyes are fixed on the Kingdom of God and who are ready to do whatever it takes to obtain eternal life—even if it brings opposition from friends, the church, and family. The commandments concerning hair and beard, tzitzit, circumcision, the Sabbath, and forbidden meats are ignored by almost all of Christianity,

and those who refuse to follow the crowd **will certainly face persecution**, just as Jesus told us (Matthew 5:10). Obedience to God requires courage, but the reward is eternity.

THE FORBIDDEN MEATS ACCORDING TO GOD'S LAW



Four hooves of different animals, some split and some solid, illustrate the Bible law about clean and unclean animals according to Leviticus 11.

God's dietary laws, outlined in the Torah, specifically define the animals that His people are permitted to eat and those they must not eat. These instructions emphasize holiness, obedience, and separation from practices that defile. Below is a detailed and descriptive list of the forbidden meats, with scriptural references.

1. **LAND ANIMALS THAT DO NOT CHEW THE CUD OR HAVE SPLIT HOOVES**

- Animals are considered unclean if they lack one or both of these characteristics.
- **Examples of Forbidden Animals:**
  - Camel (*gamal*, גָּמָל) – Chews the cud but does not have split hooves (Leviticus 11:4).
  - Horse (*sus*, סוּס) – Does not chew the cud and does not have split hooves.
  - Pig (*chazir*, חֲזִיר) – Has split hooves but does not chew the cud (Leviticus 11:7).

2. AQUATIC CREATURES WITHOUT FINS AND SCALES

- Only fish with both fins and scales are permissible. Creatures that lack either are unclean.
- **Examples of Forbidden Creatures:**
  - Catfish – Lacks scales.
  - Shellfish – Includes shrimp, crab, lobster, and clams.
  - Eels – Lacks fins and scales.
  - Squid and Octopus – Neither have fins nor scales (Leviticus 11:9-12).

3. BIRDS OF PREY, SCAVENGERS, AND OTHER FORBIDDEN BIRDS

- The law specifies certain birds that must not be eaten, typically those associated with predatory or scavenging behaviors.
- **Examples of Forbidden Birds:**
  - Eagle (*nesher*, נֶשֶׁר) (Leviticus 11:13).
  - Vulture (*da'ah*, דַּאָה) (Leviticus 11:14).
  - Raven (*orev*, עֹרֵב) (Leviticus 11:15).

    - Owl, Hawk, Cormorant, and others (Leviticus 11:16-19).

4. **FLYING INSECTS THAT WALK ON ALL FOURS**

- Flying insects are generally unclean unless they have jointed legs for hopping.
- **Examples of Forbidden Insects:**
    - Flies, mosquitoes, and beetles.
    - Grasshoppers and locusts, however, are exceptions and permitted (Leviticus 11:20-23).

5. **ANIMALS THAT CRAWL ON THE GROUND**

- Any creature that moves along its belly or has multiple legs and crawls on the ground is unclean.
- **Examples of Forbidden Creatures:**
    - Snakes.
    - Lizards.
    - Mice and moles (Leviticus 11:29-30, 11:41-42).

6. **DEAD OR DECAYING ANIMALS**

- Even from clean animals, any carcass that has died on its own or was torn by predators is forbidden to eat.

- **Reference:** Leviticus 11:39-40, Exodus 22:31.

7. **CROSS-SPECIES BREEDING**

- While not directly dietary, crossbreeding of species is forbidden, implying care in food production practices.
- **Reference:** Leviticus 19:19.

These instructions demonstrate God's desire for His people to be distinct, honoring Him even in their dietary choices. By adhering to these laws, His followers show obedience and respect for the sanctity of His commands.