

Fundamentals of Belief #14A: Clean and Unclean Foods in the Old Testament

Edited Sermon Transcript
Jon W. Brisby; 6-16-2001

We are going to continue with the very long series I have been covering on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. We have completed one-half of the twenty-six fundamentals. We have gone through fundamental number thirteen, and we are now ready to begin fundamental fourteen concerning clean and unclean foods.

Let me read you this fundamental verbatim, just as Mr. Armstrong originally wrote it decades ago. It reads:

We believe that certain foods called "unclean" are not to be eaten under any circumstances as they are harmful to body and health and also violate our bodies which are called the temple of the Holy Spirit of God.

You will notice, perhaps as I did, that Mr. Armstrong didn't specifically center this fundamental around the word "meat." Maybe that was for a specific reason, maybe it wasn't. Because he used the phrase, "certain foods called unclean are not to be eaten under any circumstances," I am going to take the opportunity to actually cover not only the Biblical principles of clean and unclean meats, but also diet in general.

It has been about three years since I gave a sermon on diet at the Feast of Tabernacles, so we are not going to get into that in this particular sermon. I can tell you that before we finish this particular topic, we are going to talk a lot about what it means to take care of these bodies which are called the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, and also, what it means to violate them by the choices we make in what we put in them. I hope it is something that will give us, pardon the pun, some food for thought.

Let's begin by looking at 1 Corinthians 3:16. In the fundamental we just read, this is what Mr. Armstrong referred to about our bodies being the temple of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16–17:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

So, obviously, God has created these physical bodies that He has given to each one of us as a repository for His Holy Spirit. That is their purpose. They weren't given for us to fulfill the whims of the flesh, although that is what all human beings do with them according to the dictates of the minds that reject all of God's holy laws. They were created for us to use as a vehicle in order to fulfill God's will as a repository for His Holy Spirit, to do His bidding, to obey His laws and to live according to those principles that we were all taught. How important is it that we take care of those physical bodies? If our physical bodies are the repositories of the Holy Spirit, if they are the temples of God, then how important does God consider it that we treat those human bodies with respect and obey all of the laws that He has set down for keeping them in good health?

Illness is a result of broken laws. The diseases and problems that we experience in the flesh are a result of breaking immutable laws that God set down which govern. Some of those are easier to understand and pinpoint when we experience difficulties; some are not so easy. Fundamentally, we know that Jesus Christ was perfect, both spiritually and physically, and that when He walked in the flesh, He not only possessed a perfect mind and heart led by the fullness of God's Holy Spirit, but He also was perfect physically. He obeyed every health law that was required of Him. Had He been perfect mentally in His orientation to the Truth, but yet, violated a health law, He would have failed to fulfill His responsibility as our Savior. The fact that He was perfect and was able to give Himself totally for us as a sacrifice means that He obeyed all of God's laws, physical and spiritual. He treated His body truly as the temple of the Holy Spirit, exactly as the example of that which we should do.

Matthew 4:4. This is the setting, of course, for the three temptations of Christ by Satan the Devil. After He had fasted forty days and forty nights, Jesus Christ was tempted, and Satan offered Him an opportunity to turn stones into bread to prove that He truly was the Son of God. In verse 4, Christ gives His reply.

Matthew 4:4:

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

It is not just that we fulfill the dictates of the flesh when the flesh is hungry; we eat, and we eat whatever we want to, to fill that hunger. More importantly, the overriding principle is that we obey the laws of God. In this particular case, Christ would have utterly failed if He had been willing to use the power that was within His hands in order to turn those stones into bread and eat. It is not that the bread would have been a violation at all, but the principle behind it certainly would have invalidated His very opportunity to become our Savior.

Jesus Christ understood the overriding principles. He did not give in to the temptation, in spite of His voracious hunger after fasting for forty days and forty nights. He was able to keep Himself in check and make the right decisions. He did not give in to the pull of the stomach or the other senses of the physical body in order to fulfill the whim of the flesh. He was able to pass that great temptation and say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." What are the words that have proceeded out of the mouth of God concerning our responsibilities to take care of these physical bodies? What are those rules, those laws that govern us, which make the difference between health and illness? We are going to begin the topic today by looking at those scriptures in the Old Testament that give the health laws concerning clean and unclean meats.

So, we are talking about the laws concerning animal meats—those that God created for human consumption and those that He created to be avoided absolutely. Let's first note this fact. The laws concerning clean and unclean meats did not originate with ancient Israel. They were not given for the very first time in Leviticus 11 and in Deuteronomy 14, although we are going to spend a lot of time reading those. Those health laws concerning clean and unclean beasts preceded Israel by hundreds of years.

Genesis 7:1–2:

And the [Eternal] said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens . . .

Here, at the very time of Noah, hundreds of years before Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Israelites, is this specific reference to a distinction in animals between clean and unclean.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

At the very time of the flood, as God was instructing Noah, He made a very marked distinction between clean and unclean beasts. For their consumption, He had Noah specifically take upon the ark, not just one pair of the clean beasts, but seven. You don't see that indicated very often when you read the children's books about Noah's ark. You see the pictures of the big ark and the animals lined up two by two. You only see one pair of each thing. I wonder why they don't show the seven pairs of clean animals that were taken onto the ark. If they wanted to portray it correctly, that is what they would show.

God did make a distinction between clean and unclean beasts. It was made from the very beginning because it had to do with laws that govern the health of these physical bodies from the very creation of Adam. Those laws were in force, and obviously we can be assured that God taught Adam what was clean and what was unclean for him to eat.

Genesis 9:3. This is one of the scriptures that is often quoted by those who want to justify eating anything and everything, and say that God approved.

"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you . . ." So, God just approved now, *carte blanche*, for us to eat swine, rattlesnake and mongoose; everything we want to put into our mouths is good meat. Is that true? What people fail to see is the condition that directly follows this statement.

"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." The question is, what does that phrase, "even as the green herb," mean? It is a specific condition. The approved meats that God made for man are conditional; they require some guidelines. Everything is good for meat, even as the green herb. What kind of guidelines did God give for eating the green herbs of the earth? Are we free to eat any and everything that grows? Is every plant that grows on the face of this earth good for us to eat as food? If so, then you could make an argument that we are approved to eat any kind of animal. However, because clean meat is related directly to the conditions set upon plants, we need to understand what those conditions are.

The plants were limited to those that were good and those that were harmful for human beings. We know automatically, do we not, that there are certain plants that are poisonous? You wouldn't just eat anything that you find in the woods. Human beings know and have learned by hard experience that there are certain plants that will make you sick and many others that absolutely will kill you. They are poisonous to the human body. There are entire sciences that have cataloged those very traits of green plants.

Genesis 1:29:

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

What is the distinction that God placed upon plant life to determine for mankind what is good and what is not good for food? It is the herb bearing seed. They have to bear seeds. That is the distinction that will keep us from eating poisonous plants.

What is this word "herb?" It the same one from Genesis 9:3, ". . . even as the green herb have I given you all things." It is the Hebrew word *esab*, which simply means "grass or any tender shoot." So, we are not talking about anything exotic. It is strictly a term that applies to green plant life upon the earth; and therefore, the distinction that God made so that we can know if it is good to eat is that it has to have seeds.

Now, if we recognize that plants are limited for human consumption according to those that are good and those that are poisonous, then the same absolutely must be true for meat. Because again, back to Genesis 9:3, the condition for meat is even as the green herb. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb . . ." So, if there are conditions upon the herbs, then that means there are associated conditions upon the meat. We have already seen that God did make a difference between clean and unclean meats.

Let's begin now to look at Leviticus 11, and we will see the very specific laws concerning clean and unclean meats that God enumerated for the Israelites. They absolutely were consistent with those laws that were established from the very beginning.

First, in Leviticus 11, beginning in verse 1, we are going to find the rules concerning land animals. After land animals, we will see the separate laws concerning sea creatures and fish, then fowl, insects, and other animals. Basically, we have the divisions throughout the chapter. We are also going to look at the parallel accounts in Deuteronomy 14, so I will be flipping between the two books.

Leviticus 11:1–7:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

Much to the chagrin of the vegetarians who want to say that human bodies were never intended to consume meat, the Maker of these human bodies said otherwise. He is the One who designed our bodies, brought them into being, and placed us here on this earth. He created these bodies to eat meat. That is just a fact. "These are the beasts which ye shall eat . . ." It doesn't say, "which you shall avoid, thinking that you are being more healthy than others." There is a list of clean animals—meat, including red meat—which is good by God's design for the human body.

Now here we find a very nice, concise rule that God provided to make it very easy for us to determine the difference between land animals that are clean and those that are not. This is the easiest rule we are going to see because the following rules on sea creatures and fowl get increasingly more difficult. This is the easy one.

Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

So, basically, there are two criteria for a land animal to be clean for human consumption. It must have a parted hoof, and it must chew the cud. That is pretty simple.

"Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof . . ." In case there is any confusion or misunderstanding, God gives specific examples here, so that we know exactly how to apply this rule.

Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

So, there are certain animals that chew the cud that are still not clean; and there are certain animals that have a parted hoof, and yet they are not clean either. They simultaneously have to have both. I know you have seen pictures of a camel or maybe one up close in the zoo. They are continually chewing, chewing and chewing. However, a camel has a completely uniform hoof which is not parted or divided into two separate parts whatsoever.

And the coney [a kind of rabbit], because he cheweth the cud [You have seen pictures of rabbits or had them, and you know that they also chew the cud.], but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

Pigs are unclean; they are not fit for human consumption, but how many tons of swine meat is consumed in this country and in countries around the world? Eating swine flesh is probably one of the single, greatest contributors to ill health.

That, I can tell you, brethren, is one of the greatest benefits of having been called into the Church of the last days. Among everything else, we learned God's health laws and how to avoid those things that God made as poison to our human bodies. There are so many out there—the majority of the people in this world—who ignorantly eat everything that they think is good according to their own devices. They do not realize that they are slowly killing themselves and bringing every evil upon themselves.

For those of us—and I count myself among the greatest blessed—who were raised in the Church from our very births and did not eat any of these things, how much greater of an opportunity do we have? How much greater are we blessed because of having avoided so many of those things? I try not to take that for granted at all, and I pray that I may continue to do a better job of living up to God's health laws. We should all want an increased chance of having the true fullness of health for as many years as God will give to us.

Let's notice Deuteronomy 14:4 to see the parallel account, which adds a little bit of additional detail.

Deuteronomy 14:4–8:

These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox [which includes the bull, cow, heifer and calf], the sheep [including the ram, ewe and lamb], and the goat, The hart [referring to a deer], and the roebuck [an antelope], and the fallow deer [which is thought by many of the commentators to be the buffalo] . . .

I have captured a lot of the interpretation of some of the commentators. I have used *Adam Clarke's Commentary* concerning Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 to itemize what the "experts" believe many of these beasts really are. As we are going to see when we get to the sea creatures, and especially the birds, it becomes increasingly more difficult to identify specifically what these creatures are today from the time of the writing of the Old Testament. Basically, there is a whole lot of guessing going on. Everyone has their own opinions; but obviously, there is still enough for us to know what we need to in order to avoid unclean food. However, I will refer to what I call "the guesses" of a few commentators in order to fill in the blanks on some of these creatures.

. . . and the wild goat [The commentators don't agree on this one; they think it is perhaps what they call a rock goat, which is a type of mountain goat.], and the pygarg [This is absolutely unclear—the commentators don't even fathom a guess at what this creature might be.], and the wild ox [probably another animal of the deer species, but it is also unclear], and the chamois [also probably a goat or deer, but questionable]. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat. Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you. And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase.

There is no way, brethren, that we should have any confusion whatsoever concerning land animals. The rule is very, very easy to apply. It must chew the cud, and it must also have a parted hoof. It is a distinction that God has built into the animal system to distinguish between those that are good for food and those that are not. It has everything to do with the digestive system of the animal. One, the animal must eat food that is not poisonous or harmful for man, and second, it must process it through a digestive system that cleans all of the impurities out of it so that the meat is clean and absolutely acceptable for human consumption.

Now, there are all kinds of ways for that to be perverted. You cannot be assured that if you go into the store and buy beef, you are getting good meat at all. I fully suspect that many of the problems and stigmas associated with red meat come not because red meat in and of itself is wrong; but because of the way man has perverted it, it has become poisonous to our bodies. When cattle are grown in feedlots, filled full of steroids to make them grow faster and larger, and fed with all sorts of things that God did not intend, then you find that the quality of meat is not what God intended it to be at all. The meat is defective. God made them to be fed on the plains with grass and grain. Since we have corrupted the very processes that God put into place for caring for those domesticated animals, they are no longer good for food in many cases. We have to really go out of our way in order to find good food.

My family has been able to find sources of good, quality meat with the help of others within the Church who have done a lot of work to find those resources; but you really have to work at it. If you are just going to go down to your corner grocery store and buy the most convenient thing, you are probably not getting a quality product at all. In fact, you are probably getting something that is very carcinogenic to your system. That is likely the reason that red meat has gotten a bad name. If we go the extra mile, we will probably have to pay more for it, but how much is our health worth, brethren? How much is it worth to us in order to find the resources of the very best that we can get to feed these human bodies—the temples of God? I don't think there is anything worth more than to put in a little extra time concerning the food that we select. As we get further along in this topic, we are going to talk a lot more beyond meat, concerning other things that we eat and buy in the store.

Let's continue on now and see the laws concerning sea creatures and fish. These also have very clear rules and a simple formula, just like land animals, but sometimes it is a little harder to apply in figuring out the fish, than it is the land animals.

Leviticus 11:9–11:

"These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters . . ." So, obviously, this tells us that God created certain water and sea creatures that are intended to be food.

These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.

There are two criteria. For a fish to be clean, it must have both fins and scales. This also says, "in the waters, seas and rivers," so God made water creatures that are good to eat from both fresh and salt water.

And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you: They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination.

That rules out for us—if we want to obey God's health laws—the greatest delicacies that human beings love to eat. It rules out all of the best seafood in the seafood restaurants, stores and shops on the coasts of this country and those around the world. You have to give up your lobster, clams, oysters, scallops and all of these creatures that live in the ocean, because they do not meet the criteria that God gave. They do not have fins and scales. The majority of those things that human beings consider delicacies are the bottom feeders. Their very purpose is to dredge along the bottoms of the oceans, bays, and around the coastlines and eat up all of the poisons and garbage. They are a part of that which God designed in order to keep our environment clean.

I remember a few years ago when I was in the Baltimore, Maryland area visiting our congregation there, I took a trip out on a private boat on Chesapeake Bay. All of the mussels that were supposed to fill that bay had been harvested so much for eating that it depleted much of that environment's ability to restore itself from any kind of problems and difficulties. At the time, they were having problems handling the pollution that was in the water. If man just obeyed the health laws as God gave them, we would be leaving all of those mussels, scavengers and bottom feeders alone in the bays and oceans, and we wouldn't have nearly as many problems as we do in keeping our water clean. One problem compounds the other. Not only do we abuse the natural resources that God gave us, but also we insist on eating the very creatures that are intended to be there in mass numbers in order to keep the water clean.

Deuteronomy 14:9–10:

These ye shall eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat: And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it is unclean unto you.

This is a very simple rule, but I know there are a lot of questions about which fish are clean and which fish are not. If we go to a restaurant and order fish, we do not often see what we are going to eat. You don't often have an opportunity to see it beforehand to investigate it for fins and scales. I don't like to take any chances with it, so I usually stick to the ones that I am absolutely certain about. What you find is that even by region

of the country or in other countries of the world, the same term for a fish might be different. What we might call a tuna here, might be the term used for an unclean fish somewhere else. That is one of the challenges we have.

I want to refer to a piece that was published by the Radio Church of God in *The Plain Truth*, June 1958, entitled, "What Fish and Fowl Are Good for Food" and read through the list of unclean and clean fish. I tried to look up a number of these to certify them; two or three of them we weren't able to find. However, we have reasonable confidence with this list of fish.

"Two points to remember," it says, "is that many fish have very small or minute scales and some have merely patches of scales near the head and the tail fin. In either case, such fish are clean and fit for food." So, the rule that God gave does not say that it has to have scales covering the entire body; it just says it has to have fins and scales. There are a number of fish on the list that some might have a question about because they might have scales on only certain patches or parts of the body. As the Church originally published, as long as they have scales, even in patches, along with fins, then it is a clean fish.

Let's begin with the unclean fish. This is a list of the commonly known unclean fish. "[T]hese are scaleless fish—which are not fit for food: catfish, eels, paddlefish, sculpins, sticklebacks, sturgeons and swordfish. . . Together with these creatures are other forms of sea life unfit for human consumption: abalone, clams, crabs, lobsters, oysters, scallops, shrimp, whale." That is the short list of the most common things you might be confronted with and would definitely want to avoid if you are out eating somewhere.

Next, we have, not a complete list, but an abbreviated list of those fish that are deemed clean—meeting the criteria of having both fins and scales. "They are: albacore, anchovy, barracuda, bass, black-fish, bowfin, buffalo, carp, characin, cod, croaker, darter, flounder, gaby, gar, grayling, haddock, halibut, herring, jack, mackerel, minnow, mooneye, mullet, needlefish, perch, pike, salmon, sardine, shad, silver side, smelt, snapper, sole, sucker, sunfish, surffish, tarpons, trout, tuna, weakfish, whitefish."

I always thought before that carp was unclean. I might caution it still because there may be different variations of fish that are called carp. It still might be good to verify that, but carp is considered as clean on the list that the Radio Church of God published.

The article also says, "If any question arises about other fish consult such books as *Field Book of Fresh-Water Fishes* by Ray Schrenkeisen which may be found in public libraries." There may be other sources available since 1958 that might be good for looking up the anatomy of particular kinds of fish if anyone is interested in doing so. I have not had the inclination to do that, but I usually, again, just stick to those that I am comfortable with and don't try anything that might be questionable. At least, when we are dealing with fish and sea creatures, we are dealing with a very simple rule that God gave, just as He did with land animals. Fins and scales are the criteria.

Now we get to the hard one. What about birds—fowl? Let's turn to Leviticus 11:13. What we would like to see is that God provided us a simple rule for fowl, just like He did for land animals and fish—chewing the cud, a parted hoof, fins and scales. Is that what God did with the birds? Did He give us a rule like that in order to evaluate every single bird and know whether it is clean or not? Let's read.

Leviticus 11:13–20:

"And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls . . ." Hmm, wait a minute, seems to me that we are starting right off with a list of unclean birds, but I didn't see a list of clean birds and I didn't see any rules to help us determine a clean bird.

And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray, And the vulture, and the kite after his kind; Every raven after his kind; And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind, And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl, And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle, And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat. All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.

This gives us about two dozen kinds of birds or flying creatures that are not clean, but what is it that is clean to eat? Is it clean to eat anything of the fowl? There is no formula that God gave to determine clean fowl. Why is that? How are we supposed to know with certainty what fowl are clean and what fowl are not clean?

The Bible only lists three specific birds that we can have absolute confidence, because of their usage, are clean. That is the quail, the dove and the pigeon. How do we know? Well, God fed Israel with quail, so we certainly know that He would not have intentionally fed Israel with an unclean bird. The dove and pigeon were both authorized and used in the Levitical priesthood for sacrifices, and God never approved any kind of an unclean animal to be offered before Him in sacrifices.

So, because there are many references to show that doves and pigeons specifically were offered as sacrifices before God, then you can also be sure that they are clean for human consumption.

Deuteronomy 14:11–20:

"Of all clean birds ye shall eat." Here is a specific statement in Deuteronomy, which is not contained in Leviticus 11, certifying that there are clean birds. It wasn't that God intended all birds to be unclean. The problem is, there is not a handy list, rule, or formula which tells us what those clean birds are.

Once again, I have highlighted these birds from *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, which is a compilation of many other commentary sources of so-called experts who have tried to interpret this list of unclean birds and to tell us what they are in modern day. Remember, the names of the birds that are listed here were placed by the *King James* translators; and they attempted, from the Hebrew, to assign what bird they thought was being intended from the original scriptures. It is a very muddy and cloudy issue to be able to understand completely. There is much disagreement and speculation among the best of the scholars as to what many of these birds are.

Of all clean birds ye shall eat. But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage [This is thought to be a species of eagle. The Hebrew word means literally, "a bone breaker."], and the ospry [thought by some commentators to be the black eagle—the specific eagle that is considered the swiftest and the strongest of the species], And the glede [some kind of a great, soaring bird], and the kite [perhaps a vulture or hawk], and the vulture after his kind, And every raven after his kind [including the raven, crow, rook, jackdaw and magpie], And the owl [Most commentators believe this to be the ostrich.], and the night hawk [Some believe this is some sort of oriental owl.], and the cuckow [which is thought by some to be one I am not familiar with, called a sea mew], and the hawk after his kind [From the Hebrew, "one that shoots forth or

springs forward"—it is a bird of prey.], The little owl [Some think this is a bittern, a night raven, or a night owl.], and the great owl [Some think this is the ibis or another species of night bird.], and the swan . . .

We are going to talk about this one a little bit. There is great controversy among the commentators over this. Nobody agrees what this swan really is. Is it what we call a swan? Some of the commentators say it is; many say it is not. Some say it is a different kind of water hen or a different kind of bird altogether than what we refer to as a swan. There is no one who can say with certainty that they know absolutely.

And the pelican, and the gier eagle [thought by some commentators to be a golden vulture], and the cormorant [some kind of a diving sea bird], And the stork, and the heron [Many commentators think this word "heron" might include the woodcock, curlew, peacock, parrot or even the crane.], after her kind, and the lapwing [No one really knows what this lapwing is, but they think it may be some kind of a crested bird.], and the bat. And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten. But of all clean fowls ye may eat.

So, there is our list of unclean birds. Now, how is that going to help us determine what birds are clean to eat? Or, did God intend us to just be limited to the quail, dove and pigeon? And what about our famous animal, the duck? It has become part of the controversy within the last several years, which you could say, in part, has resulted in a number of individuals taking exception with this ministry and has been even some element of a basis for leaving our group. They hold on to their desire to eat duck, to defend the right to eat duck, and they do not even consider the possibility that perhaps, just maybe, God never intended the duck for food.

Let me start with an April 1952 *Good News* article from the Radio Church of God. This was from the question box section of the issue, in a little segment called, "What Fowls Are Not Fit For Food." We find references to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, and then this statement, "The fowl mentioned [all of these unclean birds that we just went through and listed] may be placed into three general categories: birds of prey and scavengers, night birds, and waterfowl." In essence, what we find is a process of taking what information God has given to us—a selection of birds that are unclean—and identifying from them what characteristics they share. This gives us an indication of which birds are to be avoided—birds of prey and scavengers, night birds, and waterfowl.

Then, within this very *Good News* article is this statement, "Since one of the major classifications of unclean birds is waterfowl, the goose and the duck are unclean just as the swan." In April of 1952 in this *Good News* article, that was the policy of the Church. Duck, geese and swan were considered unclean. What happened?

One year later, April 1953 in *The Good News*, a new little piece came out in the question box section called, "Are Ducks and Geese Fit for Food," and this is what it said: "One year ago in the 'Question Box' we printed an answer to the inquiry, 'What fowls are not fit for food?' In the answer to that question it was concluded that since the *swan* was classed among the unclean fowl, both the duck and the goose would also be unclean. It has since been brought to our attention that the word swan in the King James Bible *might be a mistranslation. Through months of careful study, there is no doubt that the word swan is a MISTRANSLATION.*"

The problem is, I don't know what careful study could determine one way or another what was intended by that Hebrew word. There is not a single commentator who agrees whether it really refers to a swan as we know it, or a totally different kind of bird.

Continuing the quote: "Hence the duck, the goose and the swan are clean fowl." So, one year after the original publication in *The Good News* saying that duck, geese and swans are not clean, basically, a retraction takes place and all of a sudden, it is deemed to be clean.

Then, as listed, there are several other attempted proofs in this article. Quoting again, "The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says of the swan, 'A bird of the duck family *wrongly* placed among the abominations in old versions of the Bible . . .'" So, we are going to take the word of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* and their interpretation, even though there is no substantiation available. "Furthermore, since both geese and ducks are plentiful in Palestine and Egypt, and since *the goose was offered by the Egyptians* for pagan sacrifice, *Moses would have included ducks and geese if they were unclean.*" This sounds like the same type of rationalization that I have seen for justification of all kinds of false doctrine that have been embraced by people who were once in the Church. *If God had intended this, then He would have done this; and since He didn't, then we can be sure that we are OK.* I am not buying it, brethren.

Back to the quote: "Moses mentioned the bat, but not the duck or goose despite their abundance and use in pagan services. This fact lends proof to the conclusion that *they are clean fowl*." I wouldn't bet my life on it.

So, which is it? Are duck, geese and swans clean for food, or are they not? Some do not like the fact that Mr. Armstrong made the original decision on duck based upon a bad experience that he had. He had a personal experience where he had duck and got violently ill from it. They say, "What basis is that for doctrine, just because he had digestive problems after eating it himself?"

The thing that people do not seem to recognize and will not admit, is the fact that if Mr. Armstrong were the man through whom God worked to reveal His Truth, then there are myriad ways that He brought certain things to that man's attention. Who is going to question by what means God instructed Mr. Armstrong? They are looking for evidence as if, somehow, an angel appeared to him, handed him a golden, glowing book and said, "Here is the revealed doctrine." I'm sorry, but God doesn't work that way. If Mr. Armstrong were that servant through whom God revealed the Truth, then God could choose any way He wanted in order to give him that knowledge. Yes, much of it was Mr. Armstrong's attempt at Bible study to determine the Truth. If Mr. Armstrong figured out the Truth from his own personal Bible study, then I will throw out everything today.

Yes, he was intent on studying and finding out the Truth, but it was God who was revealing it to him. Bible study is not the means for us to come to the knowledge of the Truth. It never was, it never has been, and it never will be. There are millions of people upon this earth studying the Bible, thinking they are going to come to a knowledge of the Truth, and they don't have truth. Oh, they all come up with their versions of truth, and they are not anything like the versions of truth that the other Bible students come up with.

So, how was it that Mr. Armstrong came to understand so many things that are totally hidden from the Bible scholars? Was he just lucky? Was he really just a better Bible student than the scholars who understood Greek and Hebrew and every other means to interpret the scriptures? No. He was studying his Bible long and hard; the difference was, God was inspiring that very man with the ability to glean from those scriptures that which He had hidden from all other human beings in the last days.

If you read Mr. Armstrong's autobiography and other writings, there are very interesting accounts of how he came to understand certain things. How was it that God revealed many doctrines and principles that became a part of the original Truth? Many of them were through the very personal experiences of Mr. Armstrong. Those things became very compelling in his mind. Now, we can question and say, *Well, I think that was just Mr. Armstrong; I don't think God was speaking to him or guiding him at all.* We are each going to have to make that decision in our own minds. The decision I am going to make is to accept the fact that when we identify the man through whom God worked, we should take it very seriously when he had certain personal experiences which became very compelling and guided him to make certain administrative decisions and judgments.

I don't have a problem at all with thinking that the very means by which God revealed to Mr. Armstrong that duck is unclean, is by letting Mr. Armstrong have a very bad personal experience when he ate it. I don't have a problem with that, do you? Let me ask you this, how much of a chance are you willing to take for the sake of enforcing your right to interpret the scriptures or to listen to someone else? I don't want it that bad.

The very fact that the Church came out originally in April of 1952 to say that duck, geese and swan are unclean, and then retracted it one year later, says to me that something is not right—especially when you understand the history behind that change. Was this really because the evangelists sat down and independently decided to evaluate this? No, it actually came because of pressure from a prominent Church member in Aransas Pass, Texas, who was an avid duck hunter. Because he did not like the Church ruling, he set about to try and find an explanation that he could submit to a key evangelist in Pasadena to get that decision changed and overruled. That is what prompted the change, brethren. Because of the influence of this man to get the study going, you ultimately had this scholarly rejection of the original decision that Mr. Armstrong made, and it was based upon the interpretation of the Hebrew word translated "swan" in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. How legitimate do you think that whole orientation is? I don't buy it.

How many of you have copies of the original *Bible Story* books? We have the entire series. This is another one of the sources that very succinctly laid out the laws of clean and unclean meats, including the fowl. Several months ago I pulled this volume out, and I turned to the page entitled *Rules for Identifying Clean Birds*. Of course, this was written and compiled after that final change in 1953 to accept duck, geese and swan, so you have a nice little picture of a duck listed right here as a clean animal.

What the Church did publish was a list of rules to determine clean fowl. This is what is really fascinating. Here is what we find: "By comparing the differences between these clean birds and those listed as unclean, we can arrive at the following six characteristics of clean birds . . ." This is the same list from *The Bible Story* book, only in a different order. There are six criteria for determining clean birds. Now, these six criteria are not in the Bible. This did not come out of Leviticus or Deuteronomy. The first question I had, which I will answer in a moment after I read them, is where did this list of six come from? Let's read them:

. . . 1) they must not be birds of prey; 2) they catch food thrown to them in the air, but they bring it to the ground, where they divide it with their bills, if possible, before eating it; whereas unclean birds devour it in the air, or press it with one foot to the ground and tear it with their bills . . .

So, it is an attribute or characteristic of a bird that one, doesn't eat food in the air, as some of the predator birds do, and two, doesn't hold it down on the ground with one claw while it tears it with its bill. In *The Bible Story* book, they simplified that one and just said that they don't devour food while flying.

. . . 3) they must have an elongated middle front toe and a hind toe . . .

This is very important; pay attention to this one. In *The Bible Story* book, it says more specifically, ". . . its hind toe and middle front toe are both long."

. . . 4) they must spread their toes so that three front toes are on one side of a perch and the hind toe is on the other side . . .

It is a bird that has four toes, three of which they wrap around the front of a perch, and that hind toe must grasp the perch from behind.

. . . 5) they must have craws or crops . . .

What is a craw? It is actually a bulging sac in the bird's esophagus that is used to store food temporarily before it goes into the stomach. A bird might eat more food at one time than it is actually ready to digest, so only part of it may actually go immediately into the stomach where the digestive juices begin to break it down. Another portion of the food that they take in may actually stay in this sack-like organ, called a craw or crop, until it is ready to be digested. Remember, birds don't have teeth, so their digestive process does not allow them to chew up food, as we do,

before it goes into the stomach. A clean bird has a digestive system that includes this craw, or otherwise called a crop, for temporarily holding food before it goes into the stomach.

. . . 6) they must have a gizzard with a double lining which can easily be separated.

The gizzard is like a second stomach. After the food leaves the craw, it goes into the stomach where the digestive juices begin to break it down. Then, it passes from the stomach into the gizzard. The gizzard is basically a very strong muscular organ which grinds the food. Certain animals, like ducks, even take in pieces of gravel and rock which, when they pass through their systems, help to grind and break down the food within the gizzard. The duck does have a craw and gizzard.

Now, where did this list of six come from? When you read it, it makes sense, doesn't it? That is what I thought. It seems like a reasonable list to determine clean and unclean fowl. It actually comes out of the Talmud. The Jews created this list at some point in antiquity by taking the information which God gave in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 concerning fowl, and making it applicable to determine clean from unclean fowl. Is it a legitimate source? It is hard to know for sure.

Years ago, the Church adopted it as a reasonable rule to determine the difference in clean and unclean fowl. If you use it, it will do a good job of distinguishing the birds that fall into those three categories. Remember, you had birds of prey and scavengers, night birds, and waterfowl. All of the birds in those three categories do not fit the definition of these six rules for clean birds.

"Besides the pigeon and dove, the following birds are clean: chicken, pheasant, quail, partridge, grouse, turkey, all songbirds . . ." Then, they include duck, geese and swan here, because this was printed in 1958. "Unclean birds not listed specifically in the Bible are roadrunners, woodpeckers and the parrot family (which divide their toes so that two are on either side of a perch), aquatic and wading birds and gulls which have no crops or craws, no double lining of gizzards, and often no hind toe or no elongated middle front toe."

Remember, this list, which the Church adopted, said that for a bird to be clean it had to have all six of the characteristics. One of those said that the middle toe and hind toe had to be elongated, and the bird had to perch. Now tell me, does a duck perch? Does a duck, swan or goose perch in a tree?

Last week, I had the opportunity to examine a swan. My family and I were in Hyde Park in London. While walking through the park, we were giving breadcrumbs to these big, beautiful, white swans that were there, which were very tame because they are used to all of the attention from people. So, my sons are over there holding out breadcrumbs and the swans are eating. I saw it as an opportunity, because I knew I had this sermon coming up, to examine the anatomy of a swan. While my boys are feeding them, I am down on my hands and knees examining the feet of this swan. I can tell you what a swan has. It does not have a hind toe, certainly not a long toe at all. It has webbed toes that point forward. It does have a small little thing that looks like a toe with a little bit of a claw on it, up on the back of the leg. Those who are more familiar with waterfowl than I am, which would not be hard, will know a lot more about that. However, that little protrusion on the back of the leg is not anything that is used at all for perching. It certainly is not considered, by appearances, as a hind toe, and it definitely cannot be used to grasp a perch. It is up on the back of the leg. A duck, goose or swan does not perch in a tree. It does not have a long hind toe.

So, how could the Church accept and publish this list of six rules that they took from the Talmud, and include the duck? If you use the rules that the Church published, the duck doesn't fit. If you have access to *The Bible Story* book, look at it. In every picture of a clean bird, they show the feet—except for the duck. What did they do? They show the duck swimming in water so that the feet are hidden. Now, tell me, why did that happen? Every other bird is shown standing on the ground so that you can see the long hind toe which is used for grasping a perch. They show the duck in the water so that you can't see his feet. Anyone who saw the duck's feet against the page that had the list of criteria for clean fowl would think, *Wait a minute, this doesn't match. It doesn't fit.*

Another thing that is perplexing, which I don't have an answer for, is that the Jews who use this list of six, consider duck, geese and swan as clean. I would like to have an explanation for how they determine that. I haven't been able to find it yet; I haven't spent the time to do it. Somehow, despite their list of six, they have rationalized and accepted duck as clean, even though it is in those three categories of waterfowl which are generally shown to be unclean.

So, what are we going to do, brethren? I'll tell you what I am going to do. I'm not going to eat duck. Mr. Armstrong had a bad experience with it and said it was unclean. It was the scholars who later tried to rationalize it away for the sake of a prominent duck hunter in the Church, which was not a legitimate basis whatsoever to change a doctrine of the Church.

There is one other interesting thing I want to point out to you. I found an interesting piece on a special species of duck. Some of you may be familiar with it; it is called a Muscovy duck. Let me read to you the unique characteristics of this particular duck. "Muscovies are the only domestic ducks that are not derived from Mallard stock." So, there is something about a Muscovy that is very different and unique from all of the other ducks, which come from Mallard stock. "Their feet have strong sharp claws and are built to grasp, so that they can perch on branches." Very unusual. "Unlike most domestic waterfowl, Muscovies will often fly up and roost." Here is a very distinctive fowl, which is called a duck, but does not have the same characteristics of the Mallard whatsoever. This is a duck that actually perches. It meets the specific criteria that the others don't. I wonder if the meat might be clean. Listen to this statement. "The meat of the Muscovy is unlike that of the other domestic ducks. It is not greasy and is much more like veal than like poultry." I don't know whether a Muscovy duck is actually clean to eat or not, but I found it very interesting. This is a totally secular resource from the Internet, giving all of this information on a Muscovy duck. What struck me is the fact that here, you have the one kind of duck which, unlike all of the others, actually perches and roosts in trees, has claws, and at the very same time, the meat is totally different from the greasy stuff that is part of a Mallard.

Tell me if there is not a very strong likelihood that we are talking about a verification of those rules that the Jews came up with to interpret the very laws that God listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. If you are going to insist on eating a duck, make it a Muscovy duck; that would be my recommendation.

A Mallard duck is so greasy, the fibers are elongated, and it is unlike any other "clean meat." It is very, very greasy. In this retraction in the April 1953 *Good News* where they said that duck, geese and swan were clean—at the very end of their technical justification for how clean it was—it ends by saying this, "In preparing geese especially, be sure to allow for the removal of as much excess fat as possible." It is extremely fatty, brethren. It is a stretch for anyone who is in the Church and led by the Holy Spirit to justify that duck, geese and swan are clean. I am certainly not going to do it. Do so at your own risk.

Moving on, let's get back to Leviticus 11 and read what God says about insects.

Leviticus 11:21–23, 27–31, 41–47:

Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind [The commentators say that this is not the beetle that we are familiar with, but another form of locust.], and the grasshopper after his kind.

Have any of you ever eaten grasshopper? I had an opportunity, I think when I was about four or five years old. I guess it must have been one of those things that, when certain people in the Church found out that grasshoppers were clean and that John the Baptist subsisted on a diet of locusts and honey, they thought it would be neat to try it out. I remember us going out one afternoon and catching a lot of these big, green grasshoppers jumping around in the tall grass. We put them all in a jar and brought them in. Then, Mom put them in the frying pan—after we pulled the heads and legs off and took out the guts—and fried them in peanut oil. They were actually pretty tasty, very crunchy, and not bad eating at all. I wouldn't go out of my way to eat any now, but obviously, if you were in a hardship and needed to find something, that wouldn't be a bad option. So, grasshoppers and locusts are OK.

But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you. (Verse 27) And whatsoever goeth upon his paws [which includes apes, monkeys, bears, etc.], among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even. And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you. These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel [Commentators think this may not be what we consider a weasel, but maybe a mole.], and the mouse [including the rat and hamster], and the tortoise after his kind [Some of the scholars really debate about whether or not this is really what we call the tortoise; they think it actually might be the crocodile, frog or toad.], And the ferret [which actually may be a species of lizard], and the chameleon [Some think this may be the mongoose.], and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.

Here, they think the mole might be the chameleon, so who knows in the interpretation. However, we do have the classification to know that all of these creeping things are certainly not fit for food.

These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even. (Verse 41) And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly [meaning all of the snakes], and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet . . .

That means more than four feet, including all of your spiders, arachnids, and other things that have more than four legs.

. . . among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination. Ye shall not make your selves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby. For I am the [Eternal] your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the [Eternal] that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

This is almost a direct correlation to the very concept we began with: the fact that our human bodies were designed as temples to be used in God's service and as repositories for the Holy Spirit. If we think about our bodies that way, it makes a big difference in how we view the kinds of food or "non-food" that we decide to put into them.

This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth [This is the summary after all of these classifications that we have gone through.]: To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

Brethren, these were not just Old Testament laws written for Israel. They were given from the very beginning; and as we have seen, they apply to all humanity, at least for those who want to be healthy. If you or I want to do what we want, we can certainly feel free to break all of these cardinal principles and laws, but we are going to pay automatically the prices and penalties that God has built in for putting poison into our bodies. We know better than to take an automobile and put something other

than the proper fuel in it, don't we? You would never pour sugar into your gasoline tank, because it would seize up the engine immediately. Let me not get off on the topic of sugar, but I warn you, it is coming in the next sermon.

Lest anyone believe that these laws of clean and unclean meats are not applicable today, God even shows that they will be enforced when Christ returns.

Isaiah 66:15–18:

For, behold, the [Eternal] will come with fire [We are talking about a last-day prophecy.], and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the [Eternal] plead with all flesh: and the slain of the [Eternal] shall be many. They that sanctify themselves . . .

Are we talking about those who are cleansing themselves appropriately in the name of God in order to worship Him in a right spirit, mind and heart? No, we are talking about those who are sanctifying themselves—meaning, using their own imaginations to do what they think is right, to do what they think is sanctification and holiness.

They that sanctify themselves [meaning, apart from God], and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the [Eternal].

Even at the very return of Jesus Christ, when He comes to take dominion of this earth, to possess His Kingdom and establish His laws, there are those who are going to use their own orientation to determine what they think is right and wrong, apart from that which Jesus Christ has revealed. In secret, they will still try to do these abominable things, including eating swine's flesh, mice and all kinds of other abominations.

For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

Those people are going to be consumed. Anyone who rejects God's laws—including His health laws—in that day when He is established on this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is going to pay a price for his rebellion. The

question is, brethren, are we willing to learn from the laws that God has given to us as a blessing? They are not for our detriment. He did not give us those laws in order to forbid things that are good, but He gave them as a blessing so that we might have the health within our physical bodies to fulfill His will in every way.

Understanding the laws of clean and unclean meats is the first step in accepting those laws. It is the first step in having an opportunity to share in those blessings which God desires for us. Next time, we will get into some of the other important topics that affect how we are taking care of these temples of the Holy Spirit.