

Leviticus 11 • Clean and Unclean

Introduction

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD,
"When I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,
But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.

Amos 8:11

What will happen in the Last Days has been foreshadowed—taught in advance, if you will—by events that have transpired in history. In particular, what occurred in the last days of Israel before being carried off into captivity and what occurred leading up to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. are examples of the very final, Last Days.

At those times there were—and will be again—famines. And as we know, during a time of famine, people will eat **anything** to survive. Rules and prohibitions and preferences are all cast aside when a person gets hungry enough. But it's important to note that the physical famines of these times—and the one still to come—are symbols of the accompanying famine for the Word of God. In the examples of Samaria, Judah, and Israel in 70 A.D., the people were not only literally starving for lack of physical food, but **spiritually** starving for the lack of teaching of God's Word. Just as a starving person will eat anything to stay alive, a spiritually starving person will grab onto teaching that normally is no good, provides no lasting nutritional value, and never actually satiates the hunger. Biblically speaking, the difference between sound doctrine and false doctrine is expressed as "clean" and "unclean".

⁴⁴For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.
⁴⁵For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy."

⁴⁶This is the law regarding the animal and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters and everything that swarms on the earth, ⁴⁷to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten.

[Read through the entire chapter once before beginning. We are not following the strict order of verses during this study, skipping between sections. The order is purposely NOT sequential.]

[Read v.44-47]

Q: What does it mean to be "consecrated"?

A: The word "consecrate" in Hebrew is "qadash" and is very often translated "sanctify". It is removing something from its common, earthly environment and moving it into the sphere of the sacred—something made pure and acceptable for the presence and service of God. At its most basic, a common item is "unclean" and a consecrated item is "clean".

Q: Why might it be important that the command is "Consecrate YOURSELVES"?

A: Although God provides the rules and stipulations for people and things to become consecrated or "clean", they are undertaken by choice. We **CHOOSE** whether or not to be wholly devoted. It doesn't occur in the presence of God but in **PREPARATION** to come into His presence for worship and service.

Point: Consider some other Scripture concerning the relationship between the Word of God and food.

He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:3

"How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew 16:11-12

Leviticus 11 • Clean and Unclean, Page 1 of 5

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”
John 6:35

Application: Do you see that these laws which are meant to teach us to “make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten” are not just limited to physical food, but spiritual? Are you prepared to cast aside political correctness in order to make these kind of distinctions? Do you see the need to prepare yourself—choosing to be consecrated—as a prelude to coming into God’s presence? Discuss how the following Scripture is relevant to this discussion:

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

Philippians 1:9-10

Observation

Animals are used throughout Scripture to describe not just spiritual things and conditions, but often to teach us about the qualities and nature of Christ. In the rest of this chapter, the “clean” animals teach something about the Messiah—an obvious example being the lamb; the “unclean” animals represent false teachers/leaders, such as when false teachers are referred to in Scripture as “wolves”.

First, let’s read and discuss what we CAN eat.

[Read v.1-3]

¹The LORD spoke again to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, ²“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth. ³Whatever divides a hoof, thus making split hoofs, and chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat.

⁹These you may eat, whatever is in the water: all that have fins and scales, those in the water, in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat.

Q: What are some of the things that were acceptable to eat? How might they typify or teach of the Messiah?

1. **Lamb.** “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) The Passover lamb is a symbol of the Messiah.
2. **Goat.** The Yom Kippur scapegoat was a picture of the Messiah.
3. **Beef.** Such as oxen, the strong would die for the weak as the innocent would die for the guilty.

[Please Note: There are many more examples in Scripture than provided in this brief study and you’re highly encouraged to explore Scripture for more. These are minimally given as examples to support the basic lesson.]

[Read v.9]

Q: What are some of the things that were acceptable to eat? How might they typify or teach of the Messiah?

1. **Fish.** “And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.” (Jonah 1:17) Jesus Himself pointed out that Jonah’s 3 days in the fish was a sign of His authenticity.

Q: Verses 13-19 list unclean birds. What are examples of “clean” birds? How might they typify the Messiah?

1. **Chicken.** “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” (Mathew 23:37)
2. **Dove.** “John testified saying, ‘I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.’” (John 1:32)

Leviticus 11 • Clean and Unclean, Page 2 of 5

²⁰All the winged insects that walk on all fours are detestable to you. ²¹Yet these you may eat among all the winged insects which walk on all fours: those which have above their feet jointed legs with which to jump on the earth. ²²These of them you may eat: the locust in its kinds, and the devastating locust in its kinds, and the cricket in its kinds, and the grasshopper in its kinds.

⁴Nevertheless, you are not to eat of these, among those which chew the cud, or among those which divide the hoof: the camel, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you. ⁵Likewise, the shaphan, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; ⁶the rabbit also, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; ⁷and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you. ⁸You shall not eat of their flesh nor touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.

¹⁰But whatever is in the seas and in the rivers that does not have fins and scales among all the teeming life of the water, and among all the living creatures that are in the water, they are detestable things to you, ¹¹and they shall be abhorrent to you; you may not eat of their flesh, and their carcasses you shall detest. ¹²Whatever in the water does not have fins and scales is abhorrent to you.

¹³These, moreover, you shall detest among the birds; they are abhorrent, not to be eaten: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, ¹⁴and the kite and the falcon in its kind, ¹⁵every raven in its kind, ¹⁶and the ostrich and the owl and the sea gull and the hawk in its kind, ¹⁷and the little

[Read v.20-22]

Q: What are some of the things that were acceptable to eat? How might they typify or teach of the Messiah?

1. **Locusts.** "Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you." (Joel 2:25)
When the people repent, the Lord will restore what the locust has eaten.

Next, let's read and discuss what we are NEVER to eat.

[Read v.4-8]

Q: How might the unclean things typify false beliefs, false teaching?

1. **Camel.** "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:24) These are bad spiritual leaders that focus on the tiniest of imperfections while ignoring the most glaring. Ironically, **both** the gnat and camel are "unclean", so they can't avoid being "unclean" regardless.
2. **Pig.** "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:6) Note: What was the meaning of Jesus casting the demons into the heard of swine at Gerasene and their running off the cliff? (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39) It's a picture of the judgment, sending them to the place prepared for Satan and his angels. Those who mock the Gospel will go into the lake.
3. **Donkey.** "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." Deuteronomy 22:10) A repeated biblical teaching is to **NEVER** mix the "clean" with the "unclean" but to keep them separate and pure.
4. **Wild donkey.** "For they have gone up to Assyria, Like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has hired lovers." (Hosea 8:9) It's a picture of those given over to physical lusts.
5. **Horse.** "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you." (Psalm 32:9) Such animals are directionless, representing those that go from one teaching to the next with no authoritative direction or justification.
6. **Horse.** "A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength." (Psalm 33:17) There are those that trust only in themselves and/or their possessions. They are a god unto themselves.

[Read v.10-12]

Q: How might the unclean things typify false beliefs, false teaching?

1. **Shellfish.** They're closed and at the bottom of the sea. Biblically the sea represents the nations. This represents people who are so far into the world that they won't get saved. They're too closed. Note the contrast to Christ's promise "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19) wherein men are saved out of the sea—out of the nations—and into the kingdom of God.

[Read v.13-19]

Q: How might the unclean things typify false beliefs, false teaching?

1. **Vulture.** "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." (Matthew 24:28) False teachers that feed off the flock without providing anything at all in return, happy to pick the bones clean until total consumption ensues.

Leviticus 11 • Clean and Unclean, Page 3 of 5

owl and the cormorant and the great owl,¹⁸ and the white owl and the pelican and the carrion vulture,¹⁹ and the stork, the heron in its kinds, and the hoopoe, and the bat.

²⁶Concerning all the animals which divide the hoof but do not make a split hoof, or which do not chew cud, they are unclean to you: whoever touches them becomes unclean.

²⁷Also whatever walks on its paws, among all the creatures that walk on all fours, are unclean to you; whoever touches their carcasses becomes unclean until evening,²⁸ and the one who picks up their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening; they are unclean to you.

²⁹Now these are to you the unclean among the swarming things which swarm on the earth: the mole, and the mouse, and the great lizard in its kinds,³⁰ and the gecko, and the crocodile, and the lizard, and the sand reptile, and the chameleon.

2. **Eagle.** "...They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour." (Habakkuk 1:8b) False teachers that are, in reality, predators themselves.
3. **Pelican and Owl.** "I resemble a pelican of the wilderness; I have become like an owl of the waste places. I lie awake, I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop." (Psalm 102:6-7) Those that actually prefer the absence of activity, the void of all spiritual endeavor, offering nothing but spiritual emptiness and desolation. They love doctrines of "vacuum".

[Read v.26-28]

Q: How might the unclean things typify false beliefs, false teaching?

1. **Fox.** Jesus called Herod a fox (Luke 13:32). Herod represents corrupt leaders.
2. **Wolf.** "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them." (John 10:12) These are pastors in name only that treat it like any other job. They are "hirelings" who aren't really worried about the welfare of the sheep.
3. **Wolf.** "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)
4. **Wolf.** "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30) In his farewell address to the leaders of Ephesus, Paul is speaking of false teachers.
5. **Dog.** "For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet." (Psalm 22:16) Unbelievers.
6. **Dog.** "For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'" (2 Peter 2:21-22) Backsliders or the seed on rocky soil. Another iteration of unbeliever.
7. **Dog.** "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;" (Philippians 3:2) False believers.
8. **Dog.** "Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying." (Revelation 22:15) Note the "company" that dogs keep.

[Read v.29-30]

Q: How might the unclean things typify false beliefs, false teaching?

1. **Chameleon.** The Hebrew word for chameleon is "sabua"—something that changes colors, same as the Hebrew word for hypocrite. One day they're teaching the truth, the next day they're teaching heresy. "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." (2 Peter 2:1)
2. **Leviathan.** "He looks on everything that is high; He is king over all the sons of pride." (Job 41:34) Completely governed by self-interest.

⁴¹Now every swarming thing that swarms on the earth is detestable, not to be eaten. ⁴²Whatever crawls on its belly, and whatever walks on all fours, whatever has many feet, in respect to every swarming thing that swarms on the earth, you shall not eat them, for they are detestable. ⁴³Do not render yourselves detestable through any of the swarming things that swarm; and you shall not make yourselves unclean with them so that you become unclean.

[Read v.41-43]

Q: How might the unclean things typify false beliefs, false teaching?

1. **Snake.** Satan as the serpent is the seducer as exemplified when the serpent beguiled Eve. Watch out for spiritual seduction.
2. **Vipers.** “*You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?*” (Matthew 23:33) The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were corrupt, in it for the money, power, and self-aggrandizement. Vipers represent corrupt religious leaders.

Application

- Have any of the above descriptions brought to mind religions, organizations, or individuals? Why do you believe them to be “unclean”? How will you verify this for yourself?
- Can you see why it’s so important to identify the source of “new” things brought into the church, to understand their origins? How do you feel about things based on other religions such as yoga, New Age, labyrinths, etc.?
- What is YOUR best personal protection? What should you do on behalf of others?

[Read v.33-35]

Q: What is this excerpt from v.31-40 expressing in the context of this lesson concerning “clean” and “unclean” teaching and teachers?

A: It’s a teaching about people that attempt to live under two covenants, such as the Seventh Day Adventists or cults like the Ebionites that believed Jesus was the Messiah but not God. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7 neither Jew nor Gentile should give up his identity—that’s not the issue—but we are not to succumb to Satan’s lie to get people’s loyalty devoted to more than one covenant.

Point: This is a way of covering all the different variations of mixing the above things—clean or unclean—to create something that might have the appearance of legitimacy. Remember: Mixing is biblically prohibited. Would you drink a glass of water if it only had one drop of poison in it?

Overall Application

- Give serious thought to your sources of influence. Are they firmly and constantly grounded in the Bible, or do they often wander away, even to right-sounding anecdotes? Do they rely more on illustration than biblical exposition?
- Who are the teachers you listen to most? How well have you measured them against God’s standards? Do their personal lives match the quality of their speech?
- What should you do when faced with the fact that a person or organization fits one of the “unclean” types listed above? Is it alright to let things continue if they’re “mostly” right or have good intentions?
- Discuss what the following means to you in light of this discussion:

Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;
For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.

Jeremiah 15:16

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Leviticus 11 • Clean and Unclean, Page 5 of 5

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