

## Week 8, Clean vs. Unclean

February 19th to 25th

### Discussion Questions

#### Old Testament

1. Why did God give the Israelites so many rules about “clean” and “unclean” animals? Leviticus 11
2. What are we to make of the prohibition against eating blood? Leviticus 17:10-14.
3. Chapter 18 of Leviticus contains a number of prohibited sexual practices. Does God and/or modern society still forbid these practices? Should Christians accept these practices if polls show the majority of Americans favor lifting the restrictions? Leviticus 18:5-30.

#### New Testament

1. Is the purpose of the parables to convey the truth? Or to hide the truth? Or both? Or neither? Mark 4:10-12.
2. Is demon possession in the Bible really just the ancient misunderstanding of mental illness? If not, how do we distinguish between the aberrant behavior caused by mental illness vs. demon possession? Mark 5:1-20.
3. Imagine you were Jairus, and Jesus brought your child back to life. How do you think you would feel? Why did Jesus tell the people standing by to give the girl something to eat?

### Notes and Commentary

#### Old Testament

#### Why did God give the Israelites so many rules about “clean” and “unclean” animals?

Why may not God’s people have as free a use of all the creatures as other people?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The reasons cited are quoted from Matthew Henry’s Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible. Summary phrases at the beginning of each paragraph, in brackets, are annotations from Tom Truex

1. **[Because God says so]** *It is reason enough that God would have it so: his will, as it is law sufficient, so it is reason sufficient; for his will is his wisdom. He saw good thus to try and exercise the obedience of his people, not only in the solemnities of his altar, but in matters of daily occurrence at their own table, that they might remember they were under authority. Thus God had tried the obedience of man in innocency, by forbidding him to eat of one particular tree.*
  
2. **[“Unclean” food really was not safe to eat]** *Most of the meats forbidden as unclean are such as were really unwholesome, and not fit to be eaten; and those of them that we think wholesome enough, and use accordingly, as the rabbit, the hare, and the swine, perhaps in those countries, and to their bodies, might be hurtful. And then God in this law did by them but as a wise and loving father does by his children, whom he restrains from eating that which he knows will make them sick. Note, The Lord is for the body, and it is not only folly, but sin against God, to prejudice our health for the pleasing of our appetite.*
  
3. **[To Separate the Israelites from the Pagans, their practices, and their religions]** *God would thus teach his people to distinguish themselves from other people, not only in their religious worship, but in the common actions of life. Thus he would show them that they must not be numbered among the nations. It should seem there had been, before this, some difference between the Hebrews and other nations in their food, kept up by tradition; for the Egyptians and they would not eat together, Gen. 43:32. And even before the flood there was a distinction of beasts into clean and not clean (Gen. 7:2), which distinction was quite lost, with many other instances of religion, among the Gentiles. But by this law it is reduced to a certainty, and ordered to be kept up among the Jews, that thus, by having a diet peculiar to themselves, they might be kept from familiar conversation with their idolatrous neighbours, and might typify God’s spiritual Israel, who not in these little things, but in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their lives, should be governed by a sober singularity, and not be conformed to this world. The learned observe further, That most of the creatures which by this law were to be abominated as unclean were such as were had in high veneration among the heathen, not so much for food as for divination and sacrifice to their gods; and therefore those are here mentioned as unclean, and an abomination, which yet they would not be in any temptation to eat, that they might keep up a religious loathing of that for which the Gentiles had a superstitious value. The swine, with the later Gentiles, was sacred to Venus, the owl to Minerva, the eagle to Jupiter, the dog to Hecate, &c., and all these are here made unclean.*

**What are we to make of the prohibition against eating blood? Leviticus 17:10-14.**

**[Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]** But the practice

against which the law is here pointed was an idolatrous rite. The Zabians, or worshippers of the heavenly host, were accustomed, in sacrificing animals, to pour out the blood and eat a part of the flesh at the place where the blood was poured out (and sometimes the blood itself) believing that by means of it, friendship, brotherhood, and familiarity were contracted between the worshippers and the deities. They, moreover, supposed that the blood was very beneficial in obtaining for them a vision of the demon during their sleep, and a revelation of future events. The prohibition against eating blood, viewed in the light of this historic commentary and unconnected with the peculiar terms in which it is expressed, seems to have been levelled against idolatrous practices, as is still further evident from Eze 33:25, 26; 1 Co 10:20, 21.

**[Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (1864)]** In Lev 17:10-14 the prohibition of the eating of blood is repeated, and ordered to be observed on pain of extermination; it is also extended to the strangers in Israel; and after a more precise explanation of the reason for the law, is supplemented by instructions for the disposal of the blood of edible game. God threatens that He will inflict the punishment Himself, because the eating of blood was a transgression of the law which might easily escape the notice of the authorities... God appointed the blood for the altar, as containing the soul of the animal, to be the medium of expiation<sup>2</sup> for the souls of men, and therefore prohibited its being used as food... Accordingly, it was not the blood as such, but the blood as the vehicle of the soul, which possessed expiatory virtue; because the animal soul was offered to God upon the altar as a substitute for the human soul. Hence every bleeding sacrifice had an expiatory force, though without being an expiatory sacrifice in the strict sense of the word.

**[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** A reason is given for this law because it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul; and therefore it was appointed to make atonement with, because the life of the flesh is the blood. The sinner deserved to die; therefore the sacrifice must die. Now, the blood being so the life that ordinarily beasts were killed for man's use by the drawing out of all their blood, God appointed the sprinkling or pouring out of the blood of the sacrifice upon the altar to signify that the life of the sacrifice was given to God instead of the sinner's life, and as a ransom or counter-price for it; *therefore without shedding of blood there was no remission.*

**[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible]**

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<sup>2</sup>Expiation is the act of making atonement; or to do something as a way to show that you are sorry about doing something bad.

Here is a confirmation of the law against eating blood. They must eat no blood. But this law was ceremonial, and is now no longer in force; the coming of the substance does away the shadow. The blood of beasts is no longer the ransom, but Christ's blood only; therefore there is not now the reason for abstaining there then was. The blood is now allowed for the nourishment of our bodies; it is no longer appointed to make an atonement for the soul. Now the blood of Christ makes atonement really and effectually; to that, therefore, we must have regard, and not consider it as a common thing, or treat it with indifference.

**Chapter 18 of Leviticus contains a number of prohibited sexual practices. Does God and/or modern society still forbid these practices? Should Christians accept these practices if polls show the majority of Americans favor lifting the restrictions? Leviticus 18:5-30.**

• **VERSE 6**

**[Jamieson, Fausset and David Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]** Very great laxity prevailed amongst the Egyptians in their sentiments and practice about the conjugal relation, as they not only openly sanctioned marriages between brothers and sisters, but even between parents and children. Such incestuous alliances Moses wisely prohibited, and his laws form the basis upon which the marriage regulations of this and other Christian nations are chiefly founded. This [verse 6] contains a general summary of all the particular prohibitions; and the forbidden intercourse is pointed out by the phrase, "to approach to." In the specified prohibitions that follow, all of which are included in this general summary, the prohibited familiarity is indicated by the phrases, to "uncover the nakedness" [Le 18:12-17], to "take" [Le 18:17, 18], and to "lie with" [Le 18:22, 23]. The phrase in this sixth verse, therefore, has the same identical meaning with each of the other three, and the marriages in reference to which it is used are those of consanguinity or too close affinity, amounting to incestuous connections.

**[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** These laws relate to the seventh commandment, and, *no doubt, are obligatory on us under the gospel*, for they are consonant to the very light and law of nature: one of the articles, that of a man's having his father's wife, the apostle speaks of as a sin not so much as named among the Gentiles, 1 Cor. v. 1. Though some of the incests here forbidden were practised by some particular persons among the heathen, yet they were disallowed and detested, unless among those nations who had become barbarous, and were quite given up to vile affections.

- **VERSE 22**

**[The New John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible]**

*[Thou shall not lie with mankind as with womankind,]*

By carnal knowledge of them, and carnal copulation with them, and mixing bodies in like manner: this is the sin commonly called sodomy, from the inhabitants of Sodom, greatly addicted to it, for which their city was destroyed by fire: those that are guilty of this sin, are, by the apostle, called "abusers of themselves with mankind", 1Co 6:9;

*[it [is] abomination;]*

it is so to God, as the above instance of his vengeance shows, and ought to be abominable to men, as being not only contrary to the law of God, but even contrary to nature itself, and what is never to be observed among brute creatures.

The New Testament condemns the sin of homosexuality in very strong terms as well. This is further evidence that God has not changed his mind.

**1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10:** Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, will inherit the Kingdom of God.

**1 TIMOTHY 10:9-11:** Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it law-fully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

## New Testament

**Is the purpose of the parables to convey the truth? Or to hide the truth? Or both? Or neither?**

**Mark 4:10-12 (WEB).** [10] *When he was alone, those who were around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. [11] He said to them, "To you is given the mystery of the Kingdom of*

*God, but to those who are outside, all things are done in parables, [12] that 'seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest perhaps they should turn again, and their sins should be forgiven them.'*"

**ABBOTT:** *"Such has been the dispensation of divine truth in all ages of the world, that the higher spiritualities of religion, though accessible to all who really seek them, are covered by a veil from the open gaze of the profane. It is so down to the present hour. Many listen to the preaching of the gospel all their lives, to whose minds any actual conception of the nature of redemption from sin, by the Son of God, never penetrates. Divine Providence seems designedly so to arrange the dispensation of truth, that, seeing, sinners may, if they choose, not see, and hearing, not hear."*<sup>3</sup>

**MATTHEW HENRY:** *"[Jesus] taught them many things, but it was by parables or similitudes, which would tempt them to hear; for people love to be spoken to in their own language, and careless hearers will catch at a plain comparison borrowed from common things, and will retain and repeat that, when they have lost, or perhaps never took, the truth which it was designed to explain and illustrate: but unless they would take pains to search into it, it would but amuse them; seeing they would see, and not perceive; and so, while it gratified their curiosity, it was the punishment of their stupidity; they wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore justly did Christ put it into the dark lantern of a parable, which had a bright side toward those who applied it to themselves, and were willing to be guided by it; but to those who were only willing for a season to play with it, it only gave a flash of light now and then, but sent them away in the dark. It is just with God to say of those that will not see, that they shall not see, and to hide from their eyes, who only look about them with a great deal of carelessness, and never look before them with any concern upon the things that belong to their peace."*<sup>4</sup>

**BARCLAY:** *"This has always been one of the most difficult passages in all the gospels. The King James Version speaks of the mystery of the Kingdom of God. This word mystery has in Greek a technical meaning; it does not mean something which is complicated and mysterious in our sense of the term. It means something which is quite unintelligible to the person who has not been initiated into its meaning, but is perfectly plain to the person who has been so initiated. ...When the New Testament talks of the mystery of the Kingdom, it does not mean that the Kingdom is remote and abstruse and hard to understand; but it does mean that it is quite unintelligible to the man who has not given his*

<sup>3</sup>John S. C. Abbott and Jacob Abbott, *Illustrated New Testament* (1878).

<sup>4</sup>Matthew Henry's *Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible*

*heart to Jesus, and that only the man who has taken Jesus as Master and Lord can understand what the Kingdom of God means.*<sup>5</sup>

**Is demon possession in the Bible really just the ancient misunderstanding of mental illness? If not, how do we distinguish between the aberrant behavior caused by mental illness vs. demon possession? Mark 5:1-20.**

**[Kretzmann Popular Commentary]** Hardly had Jesus stepped out of the boat when this man came running to meet Him from his home among the tombs in the neighborhood. He was a man in, that is, fully possessed by, an unclean spirit. The power of the devil and his angels is such that it always renders the person whom he gets into his dominion, spiritually unclean. Here the whole person, body, mind, and soul, was possessed of the devil. This demoniac had his dwelling-place in the tombs, probably in some of the burial-places which had been excavated or hewn into the side of the hills. His fierceness was such as to make his confinement by means of fetters and chains absolutely impossible. The piling up of the negatives emphasizes this peculiarity very strongly. All attempts to keep him in constraint by means of foot-guards and with chains had been futile. He tore the chains apart and shattered the foot-guards, whether of metal or rope, and no man was able in any way to keep him in subjection. All the methods employed in the case of wild animals availed nothing in his case. The strength of the devil and his angels in him was too great for human skill and ingenuity. He was given no rest by the tormentors living in him, but always, night and day, he was driven by them through the tombs and through the hills, making it dangerous to travel in that neighborhood. The people that caught sight of him saw that he was usually engaged in striking and mutilating himself with sharp stones, uttering at the same time fierce cries, that might well cause the stoutest heart to quail. It is a terrible thing if the devil gains ascendancy over a person, not one whit less so if this power extends over his mind and soul only than if it includes also the body.

**[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** He was very strong and ungovernable; No man could bind him, as it is requisite both for their own good, and for the safety of others, that those who are distracted should be. Not only cords would not hold him, but chains and fetters of iron would not, 3, 4. Very deplorable is the case of such as need to be thus bound, and of all miserable people in this world they are most to be pitied; *but his case was worst of all, in whom the devil was so strong, that he could not be bound. This*

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<sup>5</sup>William Barclay, The Gospel of Mark. The Daily study Bible series. Revised (1975)

*sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion*; those children of disobedience, in whom that unclean spirit works. Some **notoriously wilful sinners are like this madman**; all are herein like the *horse and the mule, that they need to be held in with bit and bridle*; but some are *like the wild ass, that will not be so held*. The commands and curses of the law are as chains and fetters, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; **but they break those bands in sunder, and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them.**

Jesus spoke of and dealt with demon possession on many occasions. His language was clear. It is difficult to argue that Jesus Christ, the all-knowing Lord of the universe misunderstood the nature of demons and demon possession.

*When we consider Jesus' understanding of demons, however, it is really not satisfactory to suggest that He was limited by a lack of scientific knowledge. Demons, if they exist, are spiritual beings and Jesus came to bring spiritual truth. Surely, He would not accede to erroneous views regarding the influence of evil in human lives? Furthermore, the Gospels provide evidence that Jesus actually saw the casting out of demons as a part of His mission on earth (eg Lk 13: 32), and that He made it a part of the mission of His disciples (eg Lk 9: 1). We must, therefore, be very hesitant to accept any idea that Jesus was simply acceding to, or actively colluding with, a primitive misconception of the nature of mental illness.*

*Jesus clearly cast evil spirits out of many people who He met (Mt 4:24, 8:16; Mk 1:32, 4:41). However, we are told about 6 cases in some detail:*

- *The demon possessed Gerasene(s): Mt 8:28-34; Mk 5:2-20; Lk 8: 26-39*
- *A demon possessed mute man: Mt 9:32-34; Lk 11:14-26*
- *A demon possessed blind and mute man: Mt 12:22-28*
- *The Canaanite or Syro-Phoenecian woman's daughter: Mt 15:22-28; Mk 7:25-30*
- *An epileptic boy: Mt 17:15 -21; Mk 9:14-2 9; Lk 9:3 8-43*
- *The man in the synagogue at Capernaum: Mk 1:21-28; Lk 4:33-36*

*From these accounts, we may see that there is a diversity in the presentation of demon possession.* <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Christian Medical Fellowship, Demon Possession and Mental Illness, From autumn 1997 - Demon Possession and Mental Illness, pp 13-17, by Chris Cook (<http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/authors/?id=126>, viewed 2-20-2014). Chris Cook is

**[Pastor Steven Waterhouse]<sup>7</sup>**

*The Bible itself makes a distinction between disease and possession (Mark 6:13). Thus, Christian theology should recognize the difference.*

*Pastor Steven Waterhouse, in his book called, "Strength for his People: A Ministry for Families of the Mentally Ill" writes that at least six factors differentiate schizophrenia from demonic possession as described in the Bible:*

1. *Attraction to vs. Aversion to Religion. Demons want nothing to do with Christ. Conversely, people with NBD are often devoutly religious.*
2. *Irrational Speech vs. Rational Speech. In New Testament accounts involving demons, the demons spoke in a rational manner. Untreated people with schizophrenia will often speak in nonsense and jump rapidly between unrelated topics.*
3. *Ordinary Learning vs. Supernatural Knowledge Demons in the New Testament would speak through people to convey knowledge that otherwise could not have been known to the possessed individuals. Those with NBD have no such ability to know facts which they have not acquired by normal learning.*
4. *Normal vs. Occultic Phenomena. There is an aspect to demon activity that is just plain spooky (ex.: poltergeists, levitation's, trances, telepathy). These have an impact on others in the room not just the possessed. With schizophrenia, the effect of the disorder is only on the disordered, not others.*
5. *The claim to be possessed Authors who have clinical experience both with demon possession and mental illness, believe those who claim to be possessed are very likely not possessed. Demons wish to be secretive and do not voluntarily claim to be present.*
6. *Effects of Therapy. If prayer solves the problem, then it was probably not schizophrenia. If medicine helps alleviate the problem, it was not demon possession.*

**Imagine you were Jairus, and Jesus brought your child back to life. How do you think you would feel? Why did Jesus tell the people standing by to give the girl something to eat?**

**[Adam Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible] Verse 43. Something should be given her to eat.]**

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Honorary Professorial Fellow in the Department of Theology & Religion, Durham University. He concludes that demon possession and mental illness are separate events. However, demon possession may play a role in some mental illness

<sup>7</sup>Mental Illness Policy Org (<http://mentalillnesspolicy.org/coping/demonic-possession-mental-illness.html>, views 2-20-2014)

For though he had employed an extraordinary power to bring her to life, he wills that she should be continued in existence by the use of ordinary means. The advice of the heathen is a good one:-

*Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus Inciderit.*  
—HORAT.

*"When the miraculous power of God is necessary, let it be resorted to: when it is not necessary, let the ordinary means be used."* To act otherwise would be to tempt God.

**[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** That Christ took care something should be given her to eat. By this it appeared that she was raised not only to life, but to a good state of health, that she had an appetite to her meat; even the new-born babes in Christ's house desire the sincere milk, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. And it is observable, that, as Christ, when at first he had made man, presently provided food for him, and food out of the earth of which he was made (Gen. i. 29), so now when he had given a new life, he took care that something should be given to eat; for as he has given life, he may be trusted to give livelihood, because the life is more than meat, Matt. vi. 25. Where Christ hath given spiritual life, he will provide food for the support and nourishment of it unto life eternal, for he will never forsake, or be wanting to, the work of his own hands.

## Random Quotes

*"There is only one satisfying way to boot a computer."*

— J.H. Goldfuss

*"When I die, I want to go peacefully in my sleep, like my grandfather. Not yelling and screaming, like the passengers in his bus."*

— Anonymous

*I break the chains that bind me.  
I leave the clown I was behind me.  
It was wonderful of you to remind me  
That if I looked I would find me.  
Oh, Selma, Selma, thank you.  
I can never say good-bye.*

—Kurt Vonnegut, Look at the Birdie: A Song for Selma

*The one who made it did not need it.  
The one who bought did not want it.  
The one who used it did not know it.  
What is it?*<sup>8</sup>

**Notes:**

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<sup>8</sup>Answer: a coffin