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Noah Could He Eat All Things?

Before the flood we are clearly told that there is a difference between clean and unclean animals.

Genesis 7:2

*“You shall take with you of every *clean* animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are *not clean* two, a male and his female;”*

Even after the flood we see a difference between clean and unclean animals.

Genesis 8:20

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD (Yahweh), and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

This difference between clean and unclean animals is completely consistent with Leviticus chapter 11.

Leviticus 11:46-47

This 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, to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten.

We also understand that the Word of God is said not to change.

Psalms 105:8

He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations.

Isaiah 40:8

The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Psalm 119 : 89-92

Forever, O LORD (Yahweh), your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands. They stand this day according to Your ordinances, For all things are Your servants. If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.

We can even see this in the New Testament. It is clearly taught Yeshua is the Word of God.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

and

Revelation 19:13

He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God.

We are also told that Yeshua, our Messiah, the Word of God is and has always been the same.

Hebrew 13:8

Jesus Christ (Yeshua Ha'Mashiach) is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Thus the Word of God is the same yesterday, today forever.

This of course, just like the sample of other verses we read, leads us to the same conclusion – the Word of God does not change. Therefore when we see the biblical difference between clean and unclean animals immediately before and after the flood and then see the exact same understanding presented in Leviticus chapter 11, then we should not be surprised. The word did not change and does not change. There is and has always been a difference between clean and unclean animals and we have never been permitted to eat unclean things.

The Law of God always existed before it was written down at Sinai. They simply passed it on from generation to generation, whether orally or perhaps it was even written down many times before. We know that God's people have always had his law – his Torah and we can only assume that the same law was given to God's people since Adam and Eve. How else would Cain and Able know the particulars of offerings. Or that it was wrong to murder?

Some confuse the fact that since the law was written down at Mt. Sinai that the same law did not exist before, that it must be new? That would not make any sense. The law is the same yesterday, today and forever. It was simply written down so it could be easily disseminate to about two and a half million people.

Because we understand that the law of God does not change – we should not be surprised that clean and unclean animals *also* existed before and after the flood and that we were to always eat clean, not unclean animals. It is to be the same law for all - for all time. Yet Genesis 9:3 presents a challenge

Genesis 9:2-3

The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the

green plant.

If the law does not change from before the flood till after the flood, till Sinai and even after the cross then how is it that Noah is told he can eat every moving thing? Would that not include all unclean animals? Unclean animals move and here in the English it says that Noah was permitted to eat every moving thing. How can the Word of God never change but Noah be permitted to eat everything which is contrary to Leviticus 11? Was Noah told that he could eat unclean animals?

It seems to be a contradiction. But is it really?

We have heard it once said that reading the Word of God through a translation is like kissing your bride through a veil. It simply isn't exactly the same. Something is always lost in translation. Let's read verse 3 again.

Genesis 9:3

Every moving thing (*reh'mes*) that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.

We need not overlook that God gave Noah permission to only eat a specific category of animal - the *reh'mes*.

The NASB, NKJV and the ESV all translate *reh'mes* as 'moving thing'. While *reh'mes* is often defined as moving thing, we may just want to invest more analysis in this word.

John H. Walton, a mainstream Christian scholar, makes some very careful observations that we need to pay close attention to. He says,

"The noun (remes) and the associated verb (rms) each occur seventeen times in the Old Testament, ten times each in Genesis 1-9. This word group is distinct from both the wild (predatory) beasts and the domesticated flocks and herds. Neither verb nor noun is ever used to refer to larger wild animals or to domesticated animals.

In no place is remes a catch-all category for all creatures. It is one category of creature only. The division of the Hebrew terms used up to this point in Genesis reflects the nature of the animal..."

What Walton is stating quite simply is that the word *remes* certainly does not and can not literally mean all creatures like it seems to be commonly rendered in the English. He is saying that in the usage of the word in Scripture implies that this group of animals has some sort of separation from the other animals. This would mean that Noah could not eat all things, but only animals that were *remes*.

What is *remes*?

Walton continues – *"These animals were typically characterized as being the prey of hunters and predatory beasts"*

This agrees with Yahweh's preceding statement in Noah.

Genesis 9:2

The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps (*remes*) on the ground,

Verse 3 is then allowing Noah to go out and hunt certain food. Interestingly enough, the animals Walton lists that would principally fall into this *remes* category includes wild cattle, antelope, fallow deer, gazelle and ibex. These are all animals considered clean on the specific food list of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The *remes* animals would have been clean animals but many would have needed to be hunted and/or tamed in order to actually be eaten. The fear that such animals would have for humans would come as they as they are hunted for food and or herded or domesticated for food.

Noah just needed approval from God to go out and get them. So that solves the issue of Noah being able to eat everything – including unclean animals. When we examine how the Hebrew word *remes* is used we discover that it is predominantly used for clean animals. This means that Noah was not instructed that he could eat all things, since the Hebrew word *remes* seems to be consistently used in the context of animals that would be defined as clean. This would not be granting permission for Noah to eat unclean animals, as unclean animals are not included in the Hebrew word of *remes*. Thus verse 3 would read better as follows:

Genesis 9:3

Every (*clean*) moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.

Yet we still have a problem. There is now another challenging question to consider. Why is Noah suddenly allowed to eat clean animals? If the law of God never changes, why does it seem to imply that he was not able to eat clean animals before the flood? If the law of God never changes, he should have been able to eat clean animals before and after the flood. Why would Noah seemingly need permission again to eat clean animals after the flood, as if this was a new opportunity?

Consider this. Perhaps Noah, or any others in the ark, were not permitted to eat any of the animals. Consider the implications if those in the ark ate bbq chicken every night until they ran out of chicken? We would simply not have any chicken today. Chickens would be extinct. Maybe it might just make perfect sense that those in the ark were instructed by Yahweh to eat as vegetarians while aboard the ark so that Yahweh's mission of preserving animals from extinction could be possible. It clearly doesn't make any sense whatsoever for man to bring animals into the ark to save them from extinction by the flood just for those on the ark to eat them all. After considering this it might just seem obvious. This would explain why Yahweh had to give permission to Noah to eat clean animals again. Yahweh had to temporarily restrict the eating of animals while on the boat so that we would still have chickens, sheep, cows, etc today. If they ate all the clean animals on the ark, we would have no clean animals today.

Clearly this should go without saying, but sometimes we need to step back and consider these things. Logically this makes sense and clearly this must be the case. However, do we see this Scripturally revealed in the flood account? Were they told not to eat animals and only eat grain? Actually, yes!

Genesis 6:20-21

Of the birds after their kind of animals after their kind, and of every creeping ting of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. And you shall take food for your self of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; it shall be food for you and for them.

So at least two things are revealed to us – two very important things to consider.

Number One, Noah is commanded to keep the animals alive. That means they can't eat the animals on the ark. That means that for a short time the eating of animals was revoked to accomplish a purpose because of the circumstances of the flood.

Number two; the same food that was gathered for the animals is the same food that is for Noah. This would likely be different grains that were fed to the animals and that's what those on the ark were also to eat. Once they exited the ark Yahweh restored their right to eat clean animals.

Genesis 9:3

Every (clean) moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.

In context this even makes sense because Noah had just sacrificed animals – and not just any animal – *clean animals!*

Genesis 8:20

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD (Yahweh) and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

So what Gen 9:3 is teaching us is *not* that Noah could eat all animals and before the flood they were all vegetarians. Such an understanding is contrary to Leviticus 11 and the fact that the Word of God is the same yesterday, today and forever. After further Hebraic analysis and scriptural context of the flood account, we find that man was simply restored to being able to eat clean animals, which was placed temporarily on hold in the ark to prevent the extinction of animal species. Thus, Leviticus 11 is applicable before and after the flood, just as clean and unclean is clearly present before and after the flood.

Yet Genesis 9:3 is simply a result of Yahweh having to temporarily changing the diet of those in the ark and then restoring the eating of clean meat after they exited the ark.

It is certainly confusing in the English, however through the study of even mainstream Christian scholars we find that their analysis even does not leave room for Noah being permitted to eat all things. We wanted to show the interpretation by a main stream Christian scholar on Genesis 9:3 just to demonstrate that we are not attempting to be biased or serve our own theology through our interpretation. If mainstream Christianity can teach and believe that Noah could not eat all unclean animals, then it should not be of any concern that we arrived to the same conclusions.

And just to offer another example, not that we even come close to agreeing with John Calvin on most of his theology, but just to demonstrate that we are not being biased in our own interpretation of Genesis 9:3 we find that John Calvin came to the same perspective.

Even John Calvin does not believe that Noah could eat all things or was a vegetarian before the flood.

Consider his comment, Calvin argued,

“God here does not bestow on men more than he had previously given, but only restored that what had been taken away, that they might again enter on the possession of those good things from which they had been excluded.”

Thus those that are forcing Genesis 9:3 to say that Noah could eat all things most certainly cannot say that with 100% confidence. Even mainstream Christian scholars would disagree with such a statement – and actually, so would we.

We hope that this study has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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