



WHAT IS FOOD?

By George Lujack

In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, God declares which creatures are clean and unclean, making a distinction as to which creatures may be eaten for food and which creatures may not be eaten. God does not classify any unclean creature as *unclean food* or *unclean meat*, for such a classification would inappropriately allow people to consider unclean creatures as a type of food, albeit a less healthy or unclean food.

It is the very definition of 'food' that confuses and causes many to stumble over God's dietary commands. Whenever the word 'food' is used in Scripture, it is a reference to clean creatures or vegetation. Unclean creatures *are not food*.

With a contextual precept knowledge and understanding that unclean creatures are never to be considered food, the following verses should not be twisted and used to justify the eating of unclean creatures:

ROMANS 14:14-23 (NKJV):

I know and am convinced by the Lord Yeshua (Jesus) that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your *food*, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your *food* the one for whom Messiah (Christ) died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Messiah (Christ) in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things that make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of *food*. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Romans 14:14-23 states that there is no *food* unclean of itself. Unclean creatures *are not food*. Unclean creatures *are unclean*, which is why they are called 'unclean' creatures. Clean creatures that are food are not unclean of themselves. These verses speak of food that was first offered to idols or pagan gods that some believers may consider to have become unclean. The Apostle Paul proclaimed that he was convinced by Yeshua (Jesus) that food does not become unclean of itself. Idols and pagan gods have no effect on food, so if someone were to bless or sacrifice food to a pagan god or idol, that food does not miraculously become cursed and unclean of itself, as a result of a pagan blessing or sacrifice.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:25-30 (NKJV):

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the *food* over which I give thanks?

'Meat' sold in the market does not include pork (swine) in these passages. The context of this statement refers to whatever *food* is sold in the meat market (1 Corinthians 10:30). Pork meat and other unclean creature meats *are not food*. These verses address *food* sold in the meat market that may have first been offered to idols. Idols have no effect on food, so it should not bother a believer's conscious to consume food that may have first been offered or sacrificed to an idol or a pagan god. However, some believers may think it is wrong to eat food that was first offered to idols and for their sake believers should not consume such food in the presence of their brethren if it offends them.

Should a modern-day believer eat *whatever* is sold in the meat market? If a believer is offered pork, lobster, or shrimp for dinner, the believer should politely decline to eat these creatures. Pork, lobster, shrimp, and other unclean creatures *are not food*. If someone were to say to a believer, "Eat *whatever* is in the refrigerator," logically the believer would not eat the egg cartons, ice cube trays, and milk containers. Egg cartons, ice cube trays, and milk containers *are not food*.

COLOSSIANS 2:16 (NKJV):

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths...

Mainstream Christians often cite Colossians 2:16 in proclaiming that they should not be judged (rebuked) for consuming unclean creatures, and state that it is wrong for anyone to use God's 'abolished' dietary laws to try to restrain them from eating whatever they desire. Modern-day mainstream Christians lack a fundamental understanding of whom Paul addressed in his Colossian epistles and the context and era in which he wrote them. Colossians 2:16, when viewed from its proper historical context and perspective, has a completely different meaning than what many modern-day mainstream Christians understand it to be.

Paul was addressing new Messianic Colossian converts who lived among the heavy influence of Babylonian, Greek, and Roman cultures (Colossians 1:1-2). The Babylonian, Greek, and Roman culture of the time, which the new Colossian converts came out of, consumed all manner of unclean creatures, celebrated pagan festivals, and observed the first-day Sunday as the Sabbath day. Paul was instructing the Colossian converts to not be concerned with those who judged (mocked / ridiculed) them in eating food and drink according to God's dietary laws (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14), or regarding God's festivals (Leviticus 23), or new moon celebrations (Numbers 29:6), or the seventh-day Saturday Sabbath (Exodus 31:16).

Christianity adopted Babylonian, Greek, and Roman culture (and diet) unto itself. Colossian believers observed new moon celebrations in accordance with Scripture. Christianity does not observe new moons, so Paul was NOT addressing modern-day mainstream Christians in Colossians 2:16.

Colossians 2:16 is an applicable verse to Messianic believers who often receive judgment (mocking / ridicule) from their Christian brethren for observing God's dietary commandments found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.