OLD TESTAMENT DIETARY LAWS – DO THEY APPLY TODAY

I Timothy 4:3-5 The forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Jesus Teaching

Mark 7:14&15 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”

Mark 7:17-19 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body. (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

“(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)” translates just four Greek words, *“katharizo”* which means to make clean or to cleanse and is so usually translated, the Greek word for all, the definite article (the) and the Greek word *“broma,”* which means food. The phrase is literally, “making all food clean.”

What About Matthew 5:17-19

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

John 17:4 (ESV) “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

Romans 10:4 (NKJV) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

What the Church Decided

Acts 10:9-11 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.

Acts 10:12-15 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice came to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

The Greek word for “clean” is the same here as in Mark 7:19.

Acts 15:5-7 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.” The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them” “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.”

Acts 15:8-11 “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hears by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

Acts 15:28&29 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

The Problem in Ephesus

I Timothy 1:5-7 The goal of this command is love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

I Timothy 4:1&2 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

I Timothy 4:3-5 They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

So What’s the Big Deal about Dietary Laws?

Acts 15:1 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Acts 15:5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

Colossians 2:16&17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Hebrews 10:1a The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming…

Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Romans 6:14 For sin shall no longer be your master; because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Galatians 5:1-4 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to everyman who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Things to Remember

Jesus declared all foods clean, as did Paul.

The law was in effect only until the death of Christ, who fulfilled the law.

To please God by keeping the law one must obey all the law all the time. There is no place in Scripture that divides the law into different categories, some of which must be obeyed and some that do not apply.

Requiring people to keep all or part of the law of Moses usually leads to teaching salvation by keeping the law and by faith, no salvation by grace, something the New Testament emphatically rejects.

Those who teach we must “abstain from certain foods” are in included in the list of “hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron,” who are following “things taught by demons.”