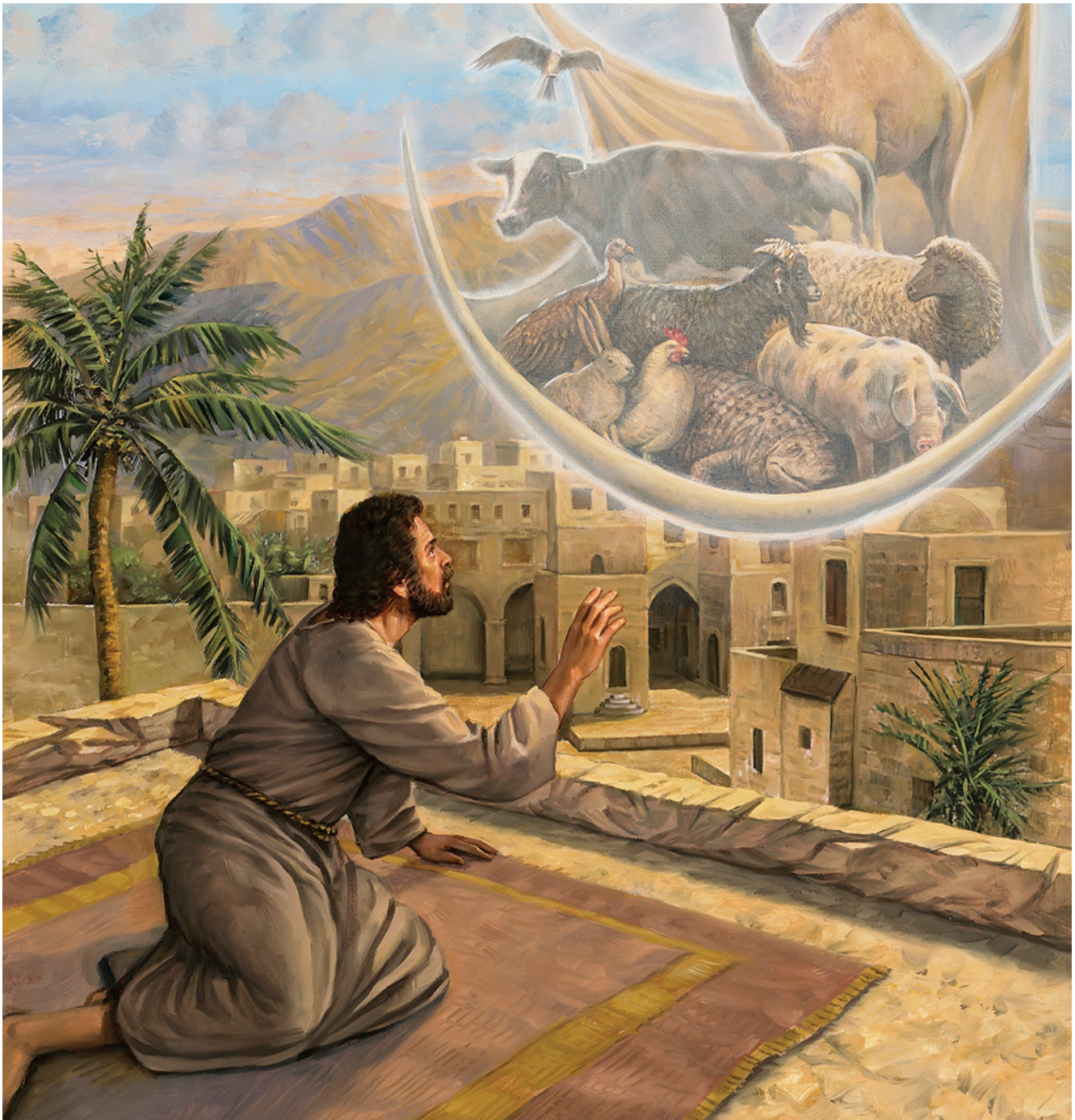

R.J. Parish

A Bite of Christian Diet



A Bite of Christian Diet

On the Subject of Food in the Bible.

When questions arise about food, as they inevitably will, especially among those new to the Bible, doctrine often clashes against the clear and direct Instructions of Scripture. Yet few notice, because we are taught to pivot rather than to pay attention. From the beginning we determine that we are free to eat anything we want and to call that “food”, but for the life of us, we can’t seem to settle on where exactly in Scripture we are told this is holy. Most have a vague idea of why it’s fine to stuff our faces with shrimp and swine, to scarf down as we wish catfish and crawdads, but when called to cough up clear commandments that make it okay, little to nothing can be found or finagled to give us permission.

Some start spouting out about Mark 7, while others wax eloquently of Acts 10, still others toss out verses from Romans, 1 Corinthians or Colossians or postulate vague references to something about Paul. But nothing concrete, conclusive or contextual. Every reference is biased and brought up only to verify vices, rather than to discover truth, to justify our behavior instead of investigating the desire of the Savior. And finally, resorting to Scripture hopping. When one verse we were holding out as a shield for our sinful behavior falls to grammar, history, culture and context, we are taught just to jump to another. Never to notice we were seeing the previous passage inaccurately. Never to wonder if perhaps we may be seeing the next in the same way. Never to question whether the problem may be our view point.

But suppose we could accomplish that. Suppose we were able once and for all to step out of our own way and look at the issue from 1000 feet, to look with the bird’s eye view as it were. If we could manage to investigate the subject of food from a Scriptural perspective as opposed to looking at Scripture about food through our own perspective, what would we find? That will be our aim in this article.

We will endeavor to observe the subject in its grammatical, historical, and cultural context in two ways. First forsaking our own biases of custom, culture and conditioning. And secondly, attempting to argue against our own aforementioned biases through the grammatical, historical, and cultural context in which the Scriptures were written and through which they must be read.

Finding the Starting Point

We are tempted of course to begin in the usual place with Mark 7 or Acts 10 or Romans 14 or 1 Corinthians 2, or Colossians 2, but that would be following our biases of beginning at the end. Beginning at the end of the book and working backward to superimpose our bias on the beginning or otherwise to begin with that preconception and ignore the start entirely.

But the real starting point is in Leviticus 11, where the Heavenly Father through His servant, Moses, instructs us what is “food” and what is not.

Here in the Torah we are taught that there are animals which are in a category called “Tamei” and others called “Tahor”. Poorly but commonly translated as “unclean” and “clean”. And herein we are shown which fall into which category and why. If a land animal has a split hoof completely divided and chews the cud it is “tahor” (clean). But if it does not possess these qualities, it is called “Tamei”. If an animal is in the water, it must have fins and scales in order to be considered tahor. Otherwise it is tamei. As for fowl no criteria is stated but only a list of particular birds are provided as tahor and another list that is tamei. (There is also a description of which bugs are considered Tamei and which tahor aswell. But that pretty much narrows it down to a specific type of locust which almost no one eats or argues over so we will avoid the point at present.)

All our prejudices aside, what puts creatures into one category or another? Biology. Before we even get all the way to the so-called “New” Testament where we “get to” gladly toss out all the Instructions with glee, we find the standard established in the so-called “Old” Testament, specifically in the Torah, the foundation of all true faith. And we find a list of birds and a biological description for all other creatures. So the standard for clean and unclean is established in the beginning of the Book. Which means that if we believe it is abrogated at the end of the Book, we must needs know the standard that was abolished and how it was abolished and why it was. And we must of necessity find that the abolition we believe in matches the standard that we claim is being changed.

Thereafter we must explain away aswell the only other reasoning provided in the passage. What did the Father Almighty say is reason for these biological distinctions? He said it is because He is YHWH, and because His people must be set apart...Not to mention all the Instructions given in Scripture are said to be for our benefit and wellbeing.

So that is the beginning. Therefore we have to ask, “Since the Creator made it clear that certain animals are “clean” and others “unclean” for consideration as food, and since He set that distinction in their anatomical structure, and since He has as yet left that

biology unaltered, how do we get from the written declaration long ago to our decision today that everything is on the table? Since the Most High put His NAME on these food Instructions, how do we manage to make them go away? How do we propose that these things which were intended to set us apart from all other peoples should no longer be regarded for that purpose? And when we were told these and all other Instructions were given for our benefit and wellbeing, where do we develop the deceptive doctrine that they were actually burdens we needed to be freed from?

Who Changed The Rules

As mentioned most Christians are certain “Christ” can overrule His Heavenly Father, and change the rules all willy nilly...but we never seem to agree on *how* He did this or *why* He would/did, let alone *when* this is thought to have taken place. It’s generally at this point one will jump to Mark 7 or Acts 10, starting with one and then leaping to the other, but these are not proofs, and one need choose between them too. If the Messiah changed the rules in Mark 7 then it was arbitrary based solely on His own position as ‘Son’ of the Most High. If in Acts 10, He made the change by bringing the rules to their natural conclusion by His death. If He changed the rules by His Authority in Mark 7, why did He tell no one until Acts 10, well over 30 years later? If He ended the rules by His death, why did He tell no one for over 20 years? While it is our nature to be indecisive about such matters, we must choose. Let’s begin by looking at Mark 7.

Mark 7 - He Made All Foods Clean?

In this particular passage the Pharisees have been arguing with Yahshua (Whom most of us have been taught to call “Jesus”) over a matter of ritual hand washing before meals. The food laws are not being addressed anywhere in the entire passage nor any other aspect of Torah. And that is exactly the point infact - Yahshua is calling out the Pharisees for setting aside the Torah in favor of their own tradition...and ironically this is one of the go-to passages for many Christians who want to set aside the Torah for our own tradition.

In this passage the Pharisees accuse the Savior of breaking the “tradition of the elders” by eating with unwashed hands, and Yahshua proceeds to dress them down as hypocrites for their slander and even blasphemy. The Pharisees had developed the tradition not only of ritually washing hands before eating but also of claiming those who do not follow this custom were Tamei (unclean) when they eat ordinary food which is otherwise tahor

(clean). In essence, these men had superimposed their own private principle on all the peoples and then elevated that man made ritual to a place of prominence equal to the commandments of the Most High...and ultimately supplanting them.

Yahshua puts them in their place by showing how they themselves are full of greed and self indulgence yet claim to be clean. By using the bodily system as His example, Yahshua illustrates that what goes into the front of the body eventually comes out the back of the body and is discarded as waste, therefore it does not make a man tamei to consume what was tahor to begin with since that which He consumes eventually leaves him. Contrariwise, the evils that proceed from the heart that we do keep and allow to become part of ourselves, these make us tamei ...even though outwardly we may appear to be tahor.

This is the context and entirety of the passage. The food laws are not only not the subject, they are not even addressed at all. All persons involved in the conversation are Torah observant Jews or *believe themselves to be*. All persons involved, whether they do them rightly or not, adhere to the aforementioned instructions of Leviticus 11. Therefore it is in the context of Leviticus 11 that this conversation is taking place. One desperate to continue doing as we desire will disregard the context of the exchange and super impose our own cultural biases upon it instead. But this is not only inappropriate, it is not allowed at all by logic or proper theology. We must text in context. As it is said, "A Text without a Context is a Pretext."

When we are speaking to folk of our own or a comparative cultural background much and more goes unspoken between us as a casual reference denotes complete understanding, whereas a third party completely removed from custom, culture, and conditioning requires more explanation to comprehend the same information. And a third party spying on the exchange, whether surreptitiously or centuries later in reading the account, will be often at a loss to understand properly...especially when we are in a rush to interpret what we are reading through their own unrelated religious background and cultural baggage. When we are in a hurry to make it say that what we want to do, what we are already used to, and what we already believe is true, is infact approved and proper behavior and that this passage says so, the chances of misinterpretation are 100%.

So why are we so quick to read into this conversation details that are never mentioned? Why are we in a hurry to infuse into the scene subjects not addressed? And why are we so hasty to have this conversation be accounted contrary to established commandments when such commands are never covered therein? Is it simply because we want to?...And are we typically seeking an excuse rather than a reason.

We infuse these foreign issues into the Text in question because we lack in Christendom a working knowledge of the Torah. Not only was this conversation strictly

about ritual hand washing and not the commandments at all, but if one had a working understanding of the Torah commands regarding food, he would not be able to make this claim that the Saviour in this passage or otherwise “made all foods clean”. Why? Because according to the Torah there is no such thing as “food” that is unclean. By the Instructions of the Most High, if it is food, it is because it is clean. And if it is unclean it is automatically not food...at least not for the people of the Book. So the very notion that food could be “made clean” requires the misperception that things which are unclean can be food...which the Text does not allow for. So the example about the digestive system and waste elimination should be phrased “purging all meats” instead of “cleansing all foods”.

And then of course there is the lack of reaction from anyone present. If Yahshua, Who had been addressing the subject of hand washing and hypocrisy had randomly switched subjects to say that all the Instructions on what is and is not food is now abolished (right after accusing the Pharisees of abolishing commandments by the way) we’d expect a reaction to this overturning of such an imperative aspect. But instead there is no response. The hypocrites did not charge Him back with hypocrisy which they would have had every right to do had he changed the rules. They do not react in surprise or respond to an overthrow of the established order. But instead there is no notice of any change...because of course none was made here....but was a change made elsewhere? Clearly the Messiah didn’t arbitrarily alter the Instructions of His Father to the people just by say so, merely by His own nature and on His own authority. But is it possible that He did so by His death on the cross? Were the Instructions only in place till the Saviour laid down His life for ours? Could it be? Did the ‘Son’ of the Most High suffer and die so we could delight ourselves in consumption of shrimp and swine and shellfish and such? Let’s take a look at the other oft asserted passage in Acts chapter 10 and see if the Messiah made any alterations later.

When shown the utter futility of attempting to abolish the Instructions by Mark 7, most often the antinomian apologist will jump clean over to Acts 10 and pick up the argument from there instead. But before being allowed to pivot to a new standing point, we must be asked to take a hard look at what we *thought* Mark 7 said, and how erroneous our assumptions were. We need to take a bird’s eye view of the passage in the light of what we have *learned* versus what we had *believed*. We had the wrong idea about the nature of Tahor (clean) and Tamei (unclean), what food is, what the subject is in the passage, and what the conclusion was to the matter... and without this introspection, the same mistake will be made with a different verse. Once this has been considered, only then are we ready to move on.

Assuming we grasp the understanding that all food is tahor (clean) and nothing tamei (unclean) is food, what should be the next and most obvious question to ask is, “If Messiah

did not make all creatures clean to eat before His death, did He make all creatures clean to eat by His death?” The typical Christian argument will usually begin in Mark 7 yet never really taken into consideration the reason why it is believed that He made all things clean to eat. If we are just trying to make the story fit our life narrative, then no reason is necessary, nor will one be sought; But if we are not in a hurry to find that we were right all along, we will be surprised to find that we don't know *why* we believed *what* we believed.

Did He cleanse all things in Mark 7? We have demonstrated already that He did not. If He had, however, it would have simply been by the nature of His authority as the 'Son' of the Most High, because He had not yet died to satisfy the burden of the Torah. And if we think about that for half a moment, we will find how evil the idea is too. We actually think... If we did actually *think*... That the Almighty gave us rules that were too harsh for us, and then sent His 'Son' to live as a Man and to remove them. Why would a loving Father give us rules that were too harsh for us, punish us, ferociously for breaking them, even end His relationship with most of them over this rule breaking, and then remove the rules for a brand new people in a brand new day? Not only is that unfair, it is unjust... And it is, in fact, very very cruel.

If we ponder briefly our belief about what the Messiah did, we will find to our surprise we believe Him to be a monster. We think the Messiah is born as a Man and encounters the rules that all Men have had to obey in Israel, but instead of obeying them, He just removes them - a princeling, pulling rank. What sort of goodness is this? This would make the Messiah, the kind of ruler that says, "Rules for thee, but not for Me". You had to do them as Men or die for disobedience, but when I encounter them as a Man, I just say they don't exist anymore and then they're gone, so I didn't have to do them. And isn't that the same exact act that made Israel suffer Divine wrath over and over? They threw out the rules generation after generation and were subsequently punished over and over again.

But thankfully we do not follow such a Messiah as this. We follow the Messiah, who *obeys* His Father's Instructions and *explains* them to us. We follow the Messiah, who restores His Father's Instructions to us, because they were good and right, and true (and remain so) and moves aside the man-made rules which were lies and graft and true cruelty.

Do we see how much irrational thought we were holding to believe that the Messiah "made all foods clean" in Mark 7? Not only were we holding faulty ideas about food, and what is written in the Torah and what the whole scene was about... But we were also and moreover holding, false beliefs about the nature of why our Messiah was sent and Who our Father in Heaven is and why He has given us His Instructions.

So now, let us try to wipe aside that distorted mindset, and look at Acts, chapter 10 with fresh eyes. The Messiah did not do away with His Father's Instructions, simply by the

nature of His authority, as we have seen, because this would have been evil not just to remove the Instructions, but it would have been totalitarian in the extreme... Rules for thee, but not for Me... And then anarchistic in the aftermath... no rules for anyone.

Acts 10 - Rise, Kill, & Eat

Perhaps, however, He removed the rules and cleansed all “foods” by dying on the Tree. Maybe the rules were just there for a time-period. Maybe they came to their natural conclusion at the Cross. Nailed there with all our sins and completed... Never needed again. That is the prevailing theory of those who hold to Acts, chapter 10, and usually the unconscious assumption of those who pivot from Mark 7 to Acts 10. Mark 7, as we have mentioned is prior to the crucifixion and over 20 years separated from Acts 10. So the average person needs to ask themselves, which is it? Mark 7 or Acts 10? Because we cannot have both the one before the Cross, and by the authority of who He was/is, while the other is after the Cross, and by the authority of the Cross itself. But also if it happened in Mark 7 that everything was “made clean” then why over 20 years later is Peter shocked at seeing a vision of all manner of animals both clean and unclean which he is told in his dream to rise, kill and eat? Why is Peter’s response to this vision, over 20 years later from when everything was supposedly thought by many modern Christians to have been cleansed, saying that he has *never* eaten anything common or unclean? If all the rest of the arguments against the distortion of Mark 7 were ignored, this alone, makes the traditional Christian interpretation of Mark 7 to be severely foolish as the person whom Christianity identifies as the Rock that the Church is built upon, well over two decades later is saying that he has *never* eaten anything common or unclean after everything was supposedly cleaned and made clean *and* he is shocked to be told to do so. Mark 7 therefore should be way out the window by now as an argument against obeying the Instruction of the Heavenly Father about what is and is not food.

So let’s look at Acts 10. What is taking place? We see Peter on the roof of a house that he is staying in. He is hungry, and he is praying. While food is being prepared in the house beneath and the smell of the cooking is wafting up to him, he falls into a trance and sees in his daydream a vision. The dream of Peter is a sheet, let down from heaven by its four corners filled with all kinds of unclean animals. Peter is told that he should rise, kill, and eat... To which he *refuses* saying that he has *never* eaten anything common or unclean. But the voice from Heaven says not to call anything that He has cleansed, common or unclean. We are told this happened three times, and then the sheet was taken up to Heaven. At which point Peter is awakened to find that three strangers are at the gate asking to see him. The strangers say that they are sent from a man named Cornelius, who was also visited

in a dream, and told to send for Peter. So Peter goes with them and meets Cornelius and sees their conversion from idolatry to the worship of the true Elohim of Israel. Peter witnesses the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit upon them and Peter concludes that pagans are being allowed entry into the community of Israel, through repentance and the blood of the Messiah.

From context of the passage it is easy to see why food was the form the vision took. Peter was hungry and food was being prepared which he could smell, but was not ready yet. In that condition, he falls asleep, thinking about food, smelling food cooking and expecting food soon. Ergo, entering a trance-like state, Peter dreams of, of all things, food.

It's a very simple explanation when we analyze the scene playing out. Had Peter been overwhelmed with some other sense, besides hunger, most likely the vision would have taken a different form. The point being that the elements of the dream were clearly based on waking circumstances, rather than being the focal point. These were the tools of deliver for the message, but not point of the message itself.

Take a moment if you will to ponder the totality of revealed visions throughout the Scriptures.... Can we recall a single one, a lone example of a dream or vision from Genesis to Revelation, which was ever intended to be taken literally? Can we think of a solitary aspect of a visionary dream that was meant to be understood in real life by exactly the elements used to relay the message? Did the sun, moon, and stars really all bow down to Joseph? Did seven lean cows actually cannibalize seven fat cows? What of Daniel dreaming of strange beasts and Ezekiel, flying wheels within wheels? What of their dreams of a statue made of all kinds of metals smashed to smithereens by a small stone that grew into a mountain? Or of the valley of dry bones all of which come back to life?

Or consider the Revelation... Are we to believe that our Saviour is literally a Lamb? Is there literally a document sealed with many seals? Will He truly return with a sword in His mouth like a pirate boarding a ship and bearing many crowns on His one single head? Are we to believe that famine, death and war and the grave all ride across the world on different color horses? Do you suppose that an actual star is going to fall out of the sky holding a key? Or how about a mountain that falls into the sea and does not wipe out the world entirely with a shockwave and tsunami, but instead only turns a third of the ocean into blood? Or that mankind will literally face monstrous locusts with women's hair, men's faces, lion's teeth, and scorpion's tails?

When it comes to visions and dreams, we know they will happen, but we cannot always know, until they do happen what the elements in the vision represent in the corporeal world. However, we have not one single example in all of Scripture in which a vision was intended to be understood, without the use of metaphor. We take these dreams and visions from the

prophets naturally, as they were intended, metaphoric representations of something else that would later take place.

Therefore, on this basis alone, we should not assume the vision showing unclean animals and a command to eat them is literally about unclean animals and a command to eat them. There is clearly something more going on here.

We should also ask ourselves why we are not skeptical of our own interpretation, when we formed it without investigation. We decided instantaneously that this vision is a divine revelation that makes all animals clean to eat. We ignored the entire story and lifted out just the dream... Or rather just the part of the dream that we want to focus on. We ignore Peter's response to the command to rise, kill and eat, which is utter shock and horror and refusal. Once again, if everything had been clean long ago, why would he be horrified at the suggestion 20+ years later? But we know from our study so far that no animals have been made clean that were not already, so not 20 years prior to that moment at any rate.

Above all, however, what is strangest is our instantaneous trust in our interpretation of Peter's dream when Peter himself woke up, wondering what it could mean. Why are we so certain what his dream meant *without checking*, when the man himself to whom it was sent woke up not knowing nor understanding the meaning. Sure we know the rest of the story so we know more than he did waking up in that moment... But that won't help us in our prejudice that this is about food, because the rest of what we know reveals that it was never about food. And so our knowledge of events to come only condemns our interpretation now.

We rushed past reason in our effort to declare our desires and our practiced habits to be righteous, but we have no reason to believe as we do about this dream of Peter. A little logic would go along way to aiding our understanding of this vision, as well as the rest of Scripture. For example, if the issue is about food and changing the dietary Instructions of the Scriptures is so important that a vision from Heaven needs to be given and repeated three times in order to get the point across, why would the Most High not say anything about it for over 20 years? And if it's so important that we need a vision from Heaven to reveal it, why is it not the main point of its own story but instead a parenthetical element of an unrelated story? It does not follow that we should believe over two decades would pass between the ascension of the Messiah, and the revelation of the abolition of dietary restrictions if the issue was so dire as to demand a divine revelation. It is absurd to think that a passage entirely devoted to a different subject, would in medias res arbitrarily address, an unrelated issue, only to then return to the original subject, as if nothing had happened.

The ability to reason is ours in abundance, and yet when we approach these passages, we seem to leave our logic back in the locker room. Any reasonable person can conclude without much mental activity that anything which exists has a *reason* even if it is a foolish one. The Most High set His standard for what makes a beast food or not, and who would have a better reason than the Author of all things including reason itself. So obviously the rules exist for a purpose...therefore any alteration thereof must needs also have a good cause. But what would that reason be ? "I like bacon" is not reason enough to change the rules of the universe.

If any alteration is made it must be in the initial standard not an arbitrary declaration. So what was the standard that established what is Tahor (clean) and Tamei (unclean) for eating? - The biology of the animals. Therefore a miraculous change in biology would have to happen to make all animals fit this standard for food. Yet such a change has never occurred. Land mammals are supposed to have a split hoof completely divided and chew the cud.... yet cats and dogs still run about on paws; snakes still crawl about legless, and gators still have claws. Anything in the waters that has both fins and scales are food... therefore, if everything was cleansed as many Christians claim, all sea creatures would have miraculously been altered to fit this standard. Yet clams and crabs, lobsters, and oysters, still do not fit this description. The only other alternative would be for the declaration to have been made differently. But it was not. The claim is that all animals are now clean, but the standard for clean was already set according to the biology. So logically speaking, the claim would have had to have been that the *standard* for clean was now different, but that claim was never made. Instead, the claim is that everything now fits the standard.... Which is obviously untrue.

Since the standard was biological, if Messiah made all things clean, He would have to have miraculously made all animal physiology match the standard of clean or altered the definition of clean. Since animal anatomy remains unchanged, He must have changed the meaning of clean, if indeed He cleansed all things. So where is the new standard written? We are supposed to believe that eating anything we want to eat is so important that a divine revelation had to be given, but despite it's supposed utmost importance, it was not done for 20+ years, and when it was finally given, it was in a dream that was making a completely different point entirely; no one in the whole story concludes that food rules have changed, and the meaning of the dream is declared to be completely different than being about food.

Essentially the only way to make this about food is to not know anything about the standard that made some animals unclean in the first place, avoiding any amount of reason, and essentially formulating wish-fulfillment theology. We want shrimp and swine's flesh so therefore we need to find something that says it's okay... Why not just say that it is okay? Well, because we also say that we follow the Bible... But the Bible says that it is not okay,

therefore, we must *make* it say what we *want* it to say, so we can feel better about our disobedience.

So the long and short of it is that the Messiah did not clean all the meats in a speech in Mark 7, and He didn't do it in a vision or otherwise in Acts 10. But pivoting again we are taught to fall on Paul. Paul declared and so it is...as if Paul is greater than Peter or as if Paul stood as lone apostle. Or as if Paul is the Messiah or the Most High... Is Paul our Messiah? Did Paul die for us? Who is Paul that he should be allowed to alter the Instructions of the Creator? And if he had attempted to do so, who are we to heed him?

But let us look at this lie for a little longer. Let us look over through the Pauline epistles at the last logical leaps we believe in and see what, if any cause their might be to consider tossing out the food laws.

Romans 14 - Faith to Eat All Things

If it was Sha'ul (Paul) who changed it, how did he have the right? Or perhaps we should first ask, "Would he change the rules on his own authority"? Based on all we saw in the Acts of the Apostles, example after example of Paul, teaching the Torah, and calling others to obey it, it does not follow that he would thereafter in his letters tell people to do contrary to what he said in person. Furthermore, in the book of Acts at the end of his life Paul testifies before the masses that he never taught anything contrary to the Torah and the prophets, that he was still a Jew to that day, and that he was a follower of The Way... So in the knowledge that he never would, we should be asking, "Why do we think that he did?" And then we should be asking ourselves why we would listen to him if we thought that he did?...

The Messiah Himself did not alter the rules of the Heavenly Father. And He said that "a student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master", but that "it is enough for a student to be like his teacher, and a servant to be like his master"... So we must ask, "Was Paul, the master or the servant? Was Paul the teacher or the student?"... Paul was the student of the Messiah, and he was the servant of the Messiah. If the Messiah Himself did not alter the rules, His servant, His student certainly would not alter the rules... Unless he was a bad servant, and a bad student in which case we must ask again, "Why are we listening to him?"...

If we truly believe that Paul made alterations to The Way, then we should not hear anything he has to say. Thankfully, however, we can be sure based off of everything that he did say and do throughout his whole life and all his letters that he was expounding upon The

Way, rather than altering The Way in any way. So then, what is the issue that is misunderstood? And it is indeed, misunderstood!

In Romans 14, we read about food, and those who are weak in faith. Many traditional Christians will say that the man who is weak in faith will believe he cannot eat what is forbidden in the Torah, because he has established the fact in his mind beforehand that the Messiah has made changes to the Torah. Tradition will tell us that the Messiah has done away with the rules - rules that common Christian custom requires us to not know nor to care about. How convenient that the rules we do not *want* to know and the rules we do not *care* to know should magically be removed from our *need* to know or care about. How very, very convenient indeed.

When we come to Romans 14, we find the discussion is food, and therefore should be taken in consideration of what the Torah calls food. So immediately the subject removes all possibilities of unclean animals being addressed here because they are not food. They were not food, and they cannot be made food for people of the Most High. Since obedience is not weakness, but the strength of faith itself, we should not consider that a person eating things unclean is strong in their faith, but rather that they do not understand the meaning of faith at all. And when Paul speaks about disputable matters, eating according to the biblical commandments does not fall into this category. The Creator gave us His Instructions, and they were not a list of opinions. There were no disputes over this list, and only those who have already decided the rules don't apply anymore will be able to make this a matter of opinion.

Paul goes on to say that one man has faith to eat all things, and the other, who is weak in faith, eats only vegetables. If we were to prooftext this passage, as is the usual practice among many Christians, we would be able to throw out the entire Torah of the Most High. And that is the way of most Christian preachers. The rules go in the trash because Paul said... But what did Paul actually say? Did Paul say this one verse? Or did Paul say a lot more that *included* this verse? Indeed, he did say a lot more, and we will not behave as poorly as the preacher who ignores everything Paul *said* in favor of what we *want* Paul to *mean*.

Paul is speaking as one who *keeps* the Torah... And he is speaking to those who are *trying* to keep the Torah. What he is addressing is how to deal with the new people who are *learning* to keep the Torah. Therefore, when he says that one man has faith to eat all things, he is speaking *within* the context of the Torah. And context is everything.

By juxtaposing all things with vegetables, clearly, the issue is over otherwise clean meats, which might have been contaminated unbeknownst to the consumer, and this by having been sacrificed to an idol before being sold in the marketplace. Which is why Paul brings up the subject of victuals to say that an idol is nothing. If the subject was about clean

and unclean foods, he would not have juxtaposed meat with vegetables, and he would not have brought up the subject of idols. In the congregation of Rome, there was an issue over the consumption of food offered to idols. Some thought it was okay to eat, because an idol is nothing. While others thought that it was wrong, because it had been offered to an idol. Since the Torah did not say, yay or nay, on the subject, it is an opinion, and therefore a disputable matter, which is why Paul said not to judge people over it. But those who eat do so to the Most High, and those who abstain do so to the Most High. So both are approved.

Under no circumstances, does this passage address the subject of clean and unclean meats, but of what to do with food (clean meat) offered to idols. Completely separate issues from anything described in the Torah. Once again, we see that our imagined subject that we superimpose on top of the words of the Text is not present and not possible.... But what about elsewhere? Surely Paul covers the subject in one of his other many letters... Let's take a look.

1 Corinthians 8 & 10 - Meat Does Not Condemn Us?

We could jump over to 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 8 in which we are told by most preachers that it tells us we are not condemned for what we eat. But is that what Paul actually said here? No. Once again, we have to ignore the Torah or be entirely ignorant of it in order to get that interpretation. Paul actually said that meat does not commend us before the Most High. Not that meat cannot *condemn* us, but that meat cannot *commend* us. In other words, we don't get brownie points for doing the right thing. It's just what we're supposed to be doing already. But in this case, the context again is meat offered to idols. The same as in Romans 14. Paul is encouraging the Corinthians not to allow their liberty to consume something that is already kosher (but was sacrificed to an idol) to harm the conscience of someone who is newly coming to The Way. Paul's entire concern in 1Corinthians 8 is for the welfare of the weak minded.

A person who does not worship an idol knows that the idol is nothing, and therefore the meat sacrificed to it is nothing. So eating the meat in the temple of the idol for him is the same as eating meat elsewhere, but for the person who had recently been worshiping idols and only newly come to a knowledge of the truth, such a person would look up to the strong believer and mimic what they were doing. Seeing that strong believer practicing what looks to him like the worship of an idol would embolden the weak minded new believer into not just eating meat, which would be fine, but eating meat offered to the idol, thinking that there was some merit to the sacrifice.

Here in 1 Corinthians Paul is covering the same subject as before, with the Romans, and the subject is not clean meat versus unclean meat. But in the context of the passage, it is meat that is already approved according to the Leviticus 11 list, and the only possible problem with it is that it was offered to an idol. What Christians should take away from this passage, if we think that we can eat whatever we want and that that means we are strong in the faith, is that we should take Paul's advice and forgo such things in favor of the weak-minded and weak-willed, so as not to cause them to stumble, because Paul advises us that we should not do anything that makes our brother stumble. But it is more convenient for us to lift out selective lines from the passage instead of reading the whole thing in the context and keeping our responsibility to reason through it.

Jumping forward, a few chapters, we see Paul, continuing this narrative to explain about meat offered to idols. He says "all things are lawful to me, but not all things are beneficial". Should we take this like the contemporary Christian does? Should we say that *all things* are literally lawful? All things? Murder? Rape? Adultery? Kidnapping?... Of course not! That would be ridiculous!...But no more ridiculous than removing the context of what Paul is actually talking about.

The context is within the Torah, because he's speaking to people who *keep* the Torah as one who himself *keeps* the Torah, again instructing people who are *newly* coming to The Way of the Torah. All things are lawful does not literally mean that nothing is illegal either criminally or morally. But rather Paul is speaking about everything *that is lawful* and setting that against what is *wise*. Not everything that we are *allowed* to do is something that *should* be done. Especially when the liberty exercised could cause harm to a person who is not yet strong in The Way. Before, and after the passage typically lifted out of this chapter to justify eating anything and everything regardless of its status as clean, the subject is meat offered to idols. Therefore, if we do not ignore the context, again we will find that the entire passage has *nothing* to do with kosher instruction at all, but *everything* to do with meat that is otherwise kosher, but has been offered to an idol.

The same goes with the part when Paul says that we shouldn't be condemned if we eat with Thanksgiving. Paul tells us that whether we eat or drink, we should do it all to the glory of the Most High, which leads many Christians to say that as long as we thank Him for our swine we are consuming, as long as we are praying over our shrimp, so long as we ask Him to bless the lobster and crab, so long as we show our gratitude for being able to eat oysters and clams, that makes it all okay. As if the Creator is going to bless our consumption of something He told us we were to regard as abomination. It doesn't matter if we thank Him for the things He did not give us to eat. What difference does it make if we are grateful for gobbling down the things that were not provided for us as food? Paul said that whether we eat or drink to do it all to the glory of the Most High. Does that mean saying "thank you"? Does that mean asking for a blessing on what we falsely call food? Does that mean saying a

prayer over something the Creator called perverse? No... That means eating what He said is food, and only what He said is food... while also giving no cause for our consumption to be considered part of idolatry.

Colossians 2 - Let No One Judge You

Well, I guess we can throw it all out now. Because Paul said not to let anyone judge you in matters of food and drink. So the rules must not apply anymore. Who am I to say? Who is Paul? Who is Messiah?... It's all just a shadow, but the reality is the Messiah, so that's all that matters. Scarfed down as much swine as you wish everyone! They don't have the right to judge you, because Paul said so...But did Paul say so? Did he really say so, or did he say something entirely different? If we ignore the Torah, or if we ignorant all of it, we will look at this passage, as if Torah observant people are condemning those who are free in the Messiah to do whatever they want. But if we pay attention to the context of the passage, and we know that the author himself is Torah observant, as is the audience, we will come to a different conclusion than the one we have arbitrarily reached without research. Paul is speaking *within* the Torah to others who are *within* the Torah, who are being judged by those who are *not within* the Torah for doing things that are *within* the Torah. In this light, we read again. Paul tells to the Colossians not to let anyone judge them in matters of food and drink, and the celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath and the feast days. In other words, they are not to let anyone judge them in matters of the Torah.

It is not about whether or not we keep the Torah that we are being judged on. The judgment being referenced here is by those who are *outside* of the Torah, judging those on the *inside* on the fact that they keep it. And those who *pretend* to follow the Torah judging us on *how* we keep it. Traditional Christendom will say that these were *no more than* shadows of things that *were* to come, but *the reality* is now in the Messiah meaning that we no longer need these things, because we have the Messiah. But that is not what Paul wrote. Paul said that these *are* a shadow of things that are *still yet* to come.... But what's more is - what kind of reality does not cast a shadow? When we cannot see the reality for ourselves, because it is in Heaven, why would we not look to the shadow that that Reality Above is casting on the earth below? We are fooling ourselves, when we think we are living by faith, if we do not do the things shaped like that shadow. We are living by a kingdom that is not the Kingdom of Heaven. And after all, the shadow of the reality, yet to come, is far greater than the reality we have now. Especially when our current reality casts now shadow...proving that it has no true substance in itself.

After his comments on, judging based on Torah observance, Paul begins to address some other issues that the Colossians are facing. Many Christian preachers teach us to go on to make these verses about food as well. Yet all the elements are addressing other issues. He asks us that if we died with Messiah, why do we subject ourselves to regulations such as “do not touch, do not taste, do not handle”. Once again, if we simply lift this verse out alone, it would sound as if this could be “freeing us” to do whatever we want with whatever we want. But Paul did not speak in a vacuum. What he had to say must be taken in the context of all that he has said, and all that he has done. No exception.

If we read before, we find that there is something involving “the worship of angels” that is the attributed issue... Either worshipping angels *themselves*, or trying to worship *like* the angels but either way, the “do not taste, do not touch, and do not handle” comments are in light of whatever this form of “worship” was, which was clearly not the Torah... And they were being encouraged in it. Which is why Paul goes on to say that this has the “appearance of wisdom” in it’s “man-made doctrine”, and “self-imposed worship” all of which he says are severe to the body.

Not only contextually is he not speaking about the Torah, he is also describing things that are not even related to the Torah. Even the average Christian will admit that the Torah was given at Sinai by the Most High, therefore it is not man-made regulation. If one believes that it is no longer in effect that is a different matter. We have seen that that is not a true reality, yet nevertheless it is exactly what the church claims. So if this passage is confirming a removal that was never spoken of before, there should be mention of it somewhere not a reference to the Divine Commandments being man-made. Maybe it’s man-made that they still apply. But that is not what was written here. Herein Paul writes that he is referring to man-made commandments, and the appearance of wisdom, rather than the Torah, which is actually referred to throughout Scripture as being Wisdom personified - real, true, and actual.

Moreover whatever that was addressing cannot be the clean and unclean regulation subscription, because the following chapter will see Paul telling us to flee from all that is on a list of evil, including uncleanness. Why would he tell us to flee uncleanness, if it had been nullified as a system? If everything is now clean, why would he tell us to flee that which does not exist anymore? And how would we go about doing that?

The fact is we can read all of Paul, as if he is abrogating all of the Commandments, and instituting a new religion, but when we read with humility and no presuppositions, except those that are eternal and original, when we read the *words* of Paul in light of the *acts* of Paul, and what Paul has said about himself, that he *never* taught against the Torah, we find him to be one of the greatest Torah teachers of all time. We find that he affirmed and

reaffirmed everything that came before, everything Moses taught and everything that Messiah taught, and everything that the other Disciples had been teaching all along.

The Meat of the Matter

So, when questions arise about food, as they inevitably will, this is how the conversation should be had. As seen through the lens of the grammatical, historical, cultural and contextual framework of the entirety of Scripture. Nowhere are we told that there will be any alteration of the Instruction, and never are we given a reason for why it should be changed. We are given Instruction by the Heavenly Father about His Creation. We are told which things are food and which things are to be regarded as not being food. And who would know better the reason?

Science is starting to catch up to why, or at least most likely why, some creatures are on the list that is forbidden for food. Science is discovering the health problems that follow the consumption of these creatures. Science is discovering the function of these animals in the ecosystem. Science is discovering the diseases that can follow the consumption of animals that are not intended to be comestibles. But the Most High does not tell us ever in His Word *why* He sets the standard The Way He does. There is a list of birds that is not described by reason, a list of the qualities that belong to a land animal that is allowed to be eaten, but never specified in Scripture for their cause. And the qualifications for a sea creature being considered clean for food are given but not the reason. We are never given a reason, except to be told that we are to be set apart, and therefore we will eat differently than the nations if we belong to the Most High.

But of all the reasons we have for holding to the Torah and living by it, unchangingly, of all the causes we have to keep it eternally, of all the reasons that we can look at the Scriptures and know that the Most High did not send His 'Son' to abrogate any of the Commandments, and that the Messiah did not authorize any of His Disciples to end the Instructions of the Heavenly Father, that He did not have a vision sent down from Heaven to tell us that we can eat bacon and bullfrogs, and nowhere in the letters of Paul is anything ended that was established at Mount Sinai... Of all the reasons we have to know that nothing will ever change so long as the sun and moon are in the sky and heaven and earth survive, is the presence and application of the Divine NAME upon the Commandment itself. When the Most High gave this Instruction about what is food and what is not food, what is clean and what is unclean, Tahor and Tamei, what is to be received and what is to be considered an abomination, at the end of all of it, he said, "I Am YHWH."

He put His Divine NAME upon the Commandment. The reason people who worship Him are to eat what He said is food and to avoid what He said is not food is because it is part of His worship. Worship is not bowing down, saying prayers, singing songs, going to church, reading the Bible, wearing a cross... Worship is in *everything* we do, *all* of the time...and in *everything* we avoid. When the Most High sets something under His NAME, it is an object of His worship. And therefore it cannot change. No matter the age or circumstance of the world. What the Divine NAME has been placed upon does not get altered, because YHWH does not change. And this is the reason why He places His NAME upon certain things. To illustrate their importance. To align them with Himself. To ensure His people know what belongs to Him. And to establish them forever.

Time may change, but truth does not. We were given Instructions in the beginning. And we don't have reason to believe that they had no reason. We were given only enough to know that we were supposed to do this or that to set ourselves apart, and because the Divine NAME is upon them. Now we have the ability to know that there was likely a mercy in this we were unaware of all along, because of all the diseases that can develop from consuming the creatures that are not made for food. But we were given these rules for a reason whatever it is and we don't have reason to believe that there should ever be an alteration or ending to them. We know they were for our benefit, and we know that they have the NAME of the Heavenly Father upon them. Therefore, we hold to them. We don't try to explain them away. We don't decide they are gone and then hunt through the Scriptures to try to find verses, that seem to indicate that the Instructions are at an end or are just for a particular group of people or were just for a time... or just because we don't want to obey them.

We have to face ourselves and make a choice. We do not get to keep playing this game where we pick and choose which parts of Scripture matter. We don't get to pretend that the details are different than they are just because we want them to be different. We don't get to act as if it is not written in the Scriptures that we are to be set apart *by* what we do and don't do, *by* what we eat or refuse to consume. We do not get to play act that it does not matter what we eat, because "Jesus' died for us" or because He did it for us on our behalf so we don't have to. And we most certainly do not get to read one verse without any of the verses around it, and in opposition to the rest of Scripture as if it was the only thing spoken and superimpose upon that passage our own private interpretation. We do not get to act as if, unrelated passages tell us all about the things that we wanted to find therein. The Heavenly Father, YHWH gave us Instruction on what to consume, because He is holy and wants us to be holy like Him. Because it is for our benefit and well-being. And because He put His NAME upon it. We should need no more than this to understand, and except the decision that He has made for His own things in His own world.