

VEGETARIANISM

Can we eat as in Eden?

We were recently asked; “If Adam was a vegetarian and God called that good, shouldn’t we also only eat plants and fruit if we want to live pleasing to God as well as a long and healthy life?”

John Mackay answers this question as follows.

The answer will take us from Genesis to the last page of the New Testament. Yes - it is true in Genesis 1:29-31 that God did order the created man Adam and all of the animals and birds to eat plants, and vegetarianism became an essential part of a world that the Creator declared very good – the absence of killing and bloodshed to keep creatures alive. In God’s created world man definitely was intended to be vegetarian as were all creatures.

Vegetarians in a perfect world could choose from a range of foods what they would eat - from grassy plants with lots of cellulose, up to fruits and vegetables with much more sugars and carbohydrates. Some plant materials such as nuts and grains also have a lot of proteins in them.

The type of vegetarian a creature can be depends primarily on what materials it is able to digest. Dogs and cats cannot digest cellulose so they don’t live off grass, but they can digest starches, proteins, carbohydrates and so my own dog which is a mastiff cross delights in using its massive jaws to crunch mango seeds. It will eat the mango fruit away first, but largely chews the fruit away so that it can get to the seed it really wants. It pays to remember that dogs and cats do eat grass simply because they can’t digest it and so they use the roughage to clean their gut, and that dog food manufacturers fill dog food with grain because dogs can digest it.

It is also sad to note that when man sinned by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God cursed the ground and part of that curse was that the ground would bring forth thorns and thistles and weeds. (Genesis 3) From that point on, being a vegetarian became harder. Anyone who has tried to pick raspberries or collect prickly pear fruit knows exactly what this means.

From Adam’s fall to the days of Noah there was little change in God’s instruction to man concerning diet. However, by the world is described as being corrupt and full of violence and it is probable that many people who were living in rebellion against God had begun to eat animals and blood.

We know for sure that many of the animals had become scavengers by the days of Noah, since God sent to Noah both the clean creatures and the unclean (Genesis 7:2). Unclean is later defined as eating dead bodies. However, it is of interest to note that there is no record of Mrs. Noah freaking out at the top of the plank when lions, tigers and dinosaurs came on board. It is apparent from the text she had no concept

they were any threat to her, and the animals peaceful entry indicated that the creatures did not perceive any threat from man or any other creature at that time.

Immediately after the flood, in Genesis 8:22 when God tells Noah that from now on there will be summer and winter, cold and heat until the end of the world – God implements a permissible change in diet - the eating of meat. Notice in Genesis 9:1-6, that Noah was permitted to eat the creatures that moved in addition to the creatures that didn't move – the green plants. The fact that God defines this in two ways, tells us that he had to get the point across to Noah, who having been a man who obeyed God in everything, would have been a committed vegetarian prior to the flood. He does however make one restriction – Noah is not to eat blood, and the reason is stated because the life is in the blood. (Gen 9:4) it is also important to observe that God did not forbid Noah to eat Pork or Camels or eels.

From now to the end of the Old Testament era, the major changes in diet that God gave man are applied exclusively to the Jewish race. (Leviticus 11 & 17, Deuteronomy 19). The Israelites were definitely given food rules (commonly called kosher today), that really did and do separate the people of Israel from everybody else. If you have ever tried to invite a Jewish person around for a meal you will encounter this problem. What they are permitted to eat and what they aren't permitted to eat? It did, and still does, form a very effective barrier from letting the children of Israel mix with the pagan world and vice versa.

The Jewish rules, delivered through Moses, entailed things such as not eating scavengers or animals regarded as unclean due to the structure of their hoofs or the way they ate. There also was again the repetition that they were not to eat blood. (Leviticus 7: 26-7, 17:10-14) This certainly cut them off from a pagan world which from Noah's day until now has delighted in black pudding or blood sausage.

It pays to note that when Christ brought the gospel to the people of Israel they mostly rejected it, but those who did accept it were immediately commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel and to do this they would encounter an understandable problem. When they led non-Jews to Christ what rules would they teach about food? Not only did God have to work hard on their very Jewish brains to get them first of all to leave Israel, since to take the gospel to all people was a thought which was seemingly anathema for most of them. God also had to deal in special ways to overcome their dietary presuppositions that Jewish food rules still apply to everybody. Peter had a dream about Jewish clean and unclean food that through its application shows that God wished to include every race into His kingdom and not just the Jews. (Acts 10: 12-28)

What is interesting is that when the disciples met after Christ's return to heaven to decide what to advise the Gentiles to do in regards to food and diet they imposed only the following regulations. The Christians were not to eat food sacrificed to idols, meat from strangled animals and they were not to eat blood. (Acts 14:20) Strangled food still has the blood in it.

For those of you who would wish to go back to Eden's diet as the ideal – several principals have emerged. The disciples didn't send the Gentiles back to Eden, they only took them back to the rules God gave to Noah. The reason is very simple – the

world of Eden lingered only till the destruction caused by the flood when every trace of that perfect world was removed and all the beautiful soil that God had created for wonderful plants was totally annihilated. Eden's world disappeared in Noah's day. You and I live on the remains of a planet earth that came into existence only after the cataclysm that was Noah's flood. So it shouldn't surprise us that the same rules God gave to Noah still apply to us. We are free to eat the moving creatures just as God gave us permission to eat plant foods, but we are not free to eat blood. So no apologies to all you Scots and Germans, etc – God is still opposed to your blood pudding and black sausage and on judgment day He will hold you accountable for breaking His rules for Christians concerning diet.

There is one other factor to consider. Many Christian groups around the planet vigorously pursue the concept that since the Edenic diet was a perfect one and designed for an Adam who was going to live forever, if we want to honour God and glorify Him in our bodies, then we should aim for the same sort of garden of Eden food plan, i.e. we should find the best combinations of grains and fruits, etc to eat. A fatal flaw in this position is soon apparent. Not only can you not go back to Eden because of the destruction due to Noah's flood, there is a far more serious problem. When Adam sinned, God cursed the ground and that curse was not removed by Noah's flood. That curse is still in effect and that curse brought with it - death. There is no plant substitute to fix this. There is no diet nor is there any food plan to get back the everlasting body that Adam would have had in that perfect state. The only way is to go forward to the new Eden - to the new heavens and the new earth where God our Saviour will remove the curse which affects the plants and the grains and the fruits. (Revelation 21 & 22)

But for you and I to get there we must first repent of our sin, accept Christ's death on the cross as just payment for our sin and become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ as we look forward to His new heaven and new earth where the plants will not only cease having thorns, they won't be weedy and none will be poisonous, and as the Scripture says, the leaves of the fruit of the tree of life will be for the healing of the nations. There will be no more sickness and no more death and the diet will be fantastic for there will be no more shedding of blood and no death in all God's Holy Kingdom.

ADDENDA

For those who claim that the red liquid in meat is blood so it can't be wrong to eat blood sausage please note two things: the reason why we are forbidden to eat strangled things is that the animal has not had its blood drained in a manner so you end up eating the blood which He has forbidden; and when he told the people of Israel to drain the blood by slitting the animals throat the result was acceptable to him who tells us not to eat blood, so it should be to us.

Furthermore the red fluid that oozes out of meat is mostly tissue fluid stained with myoglobin – an iron storing compound that makes red meat red. White meat, such as chicken, also contains myoglobin, but not as much as meats like beef or lamb.

Jesus' diet after the resurrection

After Jesus resurrection when He met the disciples on the beach and showed them his hands and his feet, He asked them if they had any meat and the scripture records "they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." (Luke 24:40-43) Some time later he presided over barbeque breakfast of fish and bread with the disciples. (John 21:9-12) In doing so he established that the saints on earth were not committed to vegetarianism.

Can I be a vegetarian?

There is nothing to stop you being a vegetarian if you wish, but please don't make it a doctrine for yourself your family or your church group.

Meat in End Times

In 1Timothy 4:1-3, Paul warns us that in the last days there would arise those who would forbid us to eat meat, so don't be fooled by the let's get back to Eden cults.