

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 11:1-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Leviticus Chapter 11, and today we will read verses 1-8.

The entire Book of Leviticus is God speaking to Moses in the Tabernacle, with the purpose of bringing the Israelites into alignment with God's will. There are two main obstacles preventing people from coming before God: impurity and unholiness. Chapters 1-15 address the issue of impurity, followed by Chapter 16, which introduces the sacrificial offerings on the Day of Atonement. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest Aaron must enter the Holy of Holies behind the veil and burn incense before God. Impurity must be removed for people to be able to fully come into God's presence. From Chapters 17-27, the issue of unholiness is addressed, enabling people to be set apart and fully dedicated to God.

Returning to the issue of impurity, which is dealt with in Chapters 1-15, God reveals the process in two stages: Chapters 1-10 establish the priestly system of service, allowing the Israelites to cover their sins through sacrifices. This enables them to be accepted by God, ultimately achieving peace between God and man, giving people the status to come before God. This is the negative side, removing the difficulties and barriers caused by sin.

In the second section, Chapters 11-15, God goes a step further, revealing to Moses and Aaron what is clean and unclean in daily life. This helps the Israelites avoid contact with unclean things and teaches them how to deal with impurity when it occurs, allowing them to be restored to cleanliness.

These two stages of revelation follow the same pattern in the New Testament. New Testament believers are first born again through the gospel of Jesus Christ, then are taught by the apostles how to live a holy life, bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

Among the revelations about what is clean and unclean, the issue most directly related to life is food. Chapter 11 tells the Israelites what clean animals they can eat and what unclean animals they cannot eat. These dietary laws directly governed the Israelites' daily lives, setting them apart from the Gentiles, making them God's unique chosen people.

For the Israelites, these dietary laws were very important ceremonial laws. God wanted the Israelites to strictly observe the dietary laws to separate them from the Gentiles and maintain their racial purity until Jesus Christ could be born from the tribe of Judah, the family of David, among the Israelites. Through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ would spread to every corner of the world. God's salvation was originally intended for all nations.

In modern times, with the advancement of science, many nutritionists have examined these dietary laws from a scientific perspective and have tried to explain why God made such laws. Perhaps their explanations are reasonable, but I do not approach this issue from that angle. I have always believed that God's word does not need to be proven by humans; it is for people to obey. The more relevant question for New Testament believers is whether we still need to follow these dietary laws. Let me give the believers the answer first: No, we do not.

During His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ often faced challenges and condemnation from the Pharisees regarding dietary laws. When faced with these questions, Jesus always responded directly and decisively. For example, in Mark 7:15, Jesus said, "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man." When the disciples did not understand, they asked Jesus privately, and His response was even clearer. In Mark 7:18-19, Jesus said, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" I hope all believers will firmly hold onto what Jesus Christ said: "All foods are clean."

The Apostle Paul developed this teaching further based on Jesus' words. In Romans 14:14, Paul said, "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is uncleaned." All food is inherently clean, but because of some people's weak faith, they may think certain foods are unclean. Paul was particularly referring to food sacrificed to idols, as at that time the meat sold in the market had often been offered to idols.

Regarding eating food sacrificed to idols, Paul answers very directly in 1 Corinthians 10:27-30: "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?" So Paul's answer is very straightforward: Just eat and don't ask questions; but if someone kindly tells you the food was sacrificed to idols, you should refrain from eating for the sake of that person's conscience. As long as we give thanks in prayer, we can eat anything.

Since the dietary laws are abolished in the New Testament and all things are clean, and as long as we pray and give thanks, we can eat freely, why should we study this chapter on dietary laws? We should approach it from a spiritual perspective. Chapter 11 speaks of five categories of creatures: land animals, sea creatures, birds, insects, and reptiles. The first four categories contain both clean and unclean animals, but the fifth category, reptiles, is entirely unclean.

In the New Testament, what do these animals represent? The answer is found in Acts Chapter 10. The Book of Acts records the disciples of the Lord establishing the church on earth and, according to Jesus' command before His ascension, spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. In Chapter 10, a pivotal moment occurs when the gospel turns to the Gentiles, but Peter could not keep up with this change. While Peter was staying in Joppa, at noon, when it was time to eat, he was praying and fell into a trance. God showed him a vision of a large sheet descending from heaven.

Let's read Acts 10:12-15: "In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.' And a voice spoke to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'"

Immediately after this vision, people from Cornelius' household came to invite Peter to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The various animals, birds, and insects in the sheet symbolized different types of people. Therefore, the animals in Leviticus 11 are a typology of people, and whether they are clean or unclean depends on their response to heavenly and earthly matters. I will not focus too much on whether the animals themselves are clean or unclean because these distinctions no longer apply in the New Testament. I will spend more time on the spiritual meaning behind these animals, which is applicable to New Testament believers.

Verse 1: "Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them,"

At this time, Aaron had already taken office as the high priest. The high priest's duties included offering sacrifices on behalf of the Israelites, blessing the people, and teaching them the law. In Chapters 11-15, there are several instances where God speaks to both Moses and Aaron, signifying that God had already recognized Aaron's role as high priest.

Verse 2: "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth:'"

In this chapter, the animals are divided into five categories: land animals, aquatic animals, birds, insects, and reptiles. Verses 1-8 address land animals. God tells Moses and Aaron that these are the animals among all the land animals that can be eaten. In life, eating is of utmost importance. There is an old Chinese saying: 'Food

is the paramount necessity of the people.' Without food, the people will revolt, so a wise ruler will always ensure that the people's bellies are full."

Eating means receiving things from the outside into a person, and then, through digestion and absorption, they become part of the person, forming their constitution. In English, it is often said, "you are what you eat," meaning you become what you consume. For the Israelites, this is to be taken literally: which animals on earth can be eaten and which cannot. But for the saints in the New Testament, these animals represent people—what kind of person is clean and can be associated with, and what kind of person is unclean, and you will be defiled if you associate with them.

Verse 3: "Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat."

God first lays out the general principle for animals: those that divide the hoof, having cloven hooves and chew the cud, are clean and may be eaten; otherwise, they may not be eaten. Animals are naturally able to walk everywhere, and those that divide the hoof represent discernment in action. The two parts represent the heavenly and the earthly; the spiritual and the fleshly; the new man and the old man; what pleases God and what does not please God. There can only be two parts—there is no middle ground, and there cannot be a third or fourth part.

In fact, in daily life, when faced with decisions, there are essentially two choices: will you obey God, or will you follow the trends of the world? Those that do not divide the hoof lack discernment, unable to distinguish what is God's will and what is their own desire. Even more so, they cannot differentiate between what is God's perfect will and what is God's permissive will. Animals that do not divide the hoof cannot be eaten.

The second principle is chewing the cud, which means the food eaten is ruminated, allowing it to be fully digested or absorbed. Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

This clearly tells us that God's word is food for man, and we should take God's word as food to eat. Psalm 1:2 says, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." Here, the law refers to God's word. To meditate on God's word day and night is to be a blessed person.

These two verses show us that we should take God's word as food to eat and frequently ruminate on it, meditating on it repeatedly. This is the only way to truly understand God's word, digest it, and absorb it. Let God's word become our life, our motivation for living, and our standard for speaking, acting, and being.

Verse 4: "Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you."

Among the animals, it must both divide the hoof and chew the cud for it to be eaten—both conditions are necessary. In typology, this means we must let God's word dwell richly in our hearts and frequently meditate on it. This way, in our daily actions, we can discern between what is earthly and what is heavenly, what comes from God and what comes from the world.

Next, he mentions that some animals chew the cud but do not divide the hoof, and these are unclean and cannot be eaten. The camel is one such animal. As we mentioned earlier, animals typify people, and this type of Christian loves God's word and often meditates on it, but they are unwilling to live a life separate from the world. When worldly trends come, they follow them, making it impossible for them to wholeheartedly follow God. Although they read God's word, they cannot follow it, allowing God's word to control their mind, emotions, and will. Ultimately, they drift with the world, losing God's blessing.

Verses 5-6: "The rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you."

The rock hyrax and the hare are like the camel, chewing the cud but not dividing the hoof, and therefore they are unclean. The rock hyrax, which is uncertain which animal it refers to, is often translated as "coney" in English. It is a rock-dwelling animal similar to a rabbit, scientifically named "hyrax," commonly known as the "rock badger" or "rock rabbit." Both the rock hyrax and the hare chew the cud but do not divide the hoof, making them unclean.

Verse 7: "And the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you."

The pig divides the hoof but does not chew the cud. This type of Christian is willing to live a life separate from the world but does not love God's word. Although they read God's word, they do not meditate on it, so God's word cannot take root in them, and their life cannot grow. They remain shallow Christians, unable to withstand the temptations of the world or endure trials, and they cannot become Christians after God's heart.

Verse 8: "Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you."

Those that chew the cud but do not divide the hoof, or divide the hoof but do not chew the cud, are all unclean, and the Israelites must not eat them. For New Testament saints, there is no longer a need to keep dietary regulations. We can eat these animals with thanksgiving, receiving them with prayer without concern. However, we must take the spiritual lesson: we must be Christians who chew the cud and divide the hoof. On the one hand, we must love God's word, not only eating it but also meditating on it frequently, allowing it to take root in us and guide our

lives. In our actions, we must discern between what is God's will and what are Satan's schemes, so we can always walk in God's will.

The Israelites must not eat the unclean animals. When these animals die, they must not even touch them because they are unclean. In God's original creation, there was supposed to be no death because God is the living God. Man was made in the image and likeness of God, and when God originally created man, man was not supposed to die. However, after humanity's ancestors sinned, sin entered the world, and with it came death. So, death is the result of sin. Therefore, death is unclean, and the Israelites were not to touch it. For New Testament saints, this means we must beware of spiritual death and live in the vibrant life of enjoying God's presence.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us to be Christians who divide the hoof and chew the cud. Thank You for giving us Your word every day. Let us not only take Your word as food but also meditate on it frequently. In my daily actions, grant me spiritual discernment so that I may be a Christian who divides the hoof, knowing what comes from Your will and what comes from the temptations of the world. Let me not only discern but also be willing to obey. Help me become a saint formed by Your word, bearing a good testimony for the gospel in my daily life. Bless my life. I pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.