

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

Leviticus 11:9-19

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Leviticus Chapter 11. We will read verses 9 to 19 today.

The dietary laws clearly define clean and unclean foods, allowing the Israelites to distinguish them in their daily lives and remain untainted. These dietary laws became a ceremonial law that the Israelites valued and adhered to. In the Old Testament era, these dietary laws were an important factor in distinguishing the Israelites from the Gentiles, as sharing a meal made it difficult to live together. God specifically commanded the Israelites in the Old Testament to strictly observe these dietary laws to preserve the racial purity of the Israelites, ensuring that God's Son, Jesus Christ, could be born in the tribe of Judah, from the family of David, as prophesied by the prophets. After Jesus was born, He lived a perfect human life, was crucified for the sins of humanity, rose again three days later, ascended to heaven, and gave the Holy Spirit, thus initiating the New Covenant.

In the New Covenant, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people. John 1:12 states, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." As long as one believes, they are reborn of the Holy Spirit, possessing the life of God, and becoming children of God. This is not related to one's background, race, or culture; anyone willing to believe can become a child of God. Therefore, New Covenant saints are no longer required to observe dietary laws.

As we read Chapter 11 concerning the dietary laws, we should approach it from a spiritual perspective; that is, we need to interpret it spiritually. Some denominations strongly oppose spiritual interpretation, fearing it may become too free and lack standards, leading to confusion. Such concerns are indeed necessary; however, good spiritual interpretation is not about personal whims, but must be based on the entire New Testament to explain the Old Testament. Importantly, the

interpretations must be consistent, meaning that there should not be contradictory explanations found throughout the Bible.

Believers who have read the Scriptures with me for some time are accustomed to my frequent citations of many verses to support the spiritual meanings I discuss. I truly do not dare to claim that my interpretations are completely free of contradictions, but most of the time, any contradictions are not immediately apparent. If I personally feel that there is a contradiction, I usually point it out and let the saints know that this is an area I do not understand. Of course, some explanations may still be immature and sound a bit forced; in such cases, I will state that it is my personal opinion, and we should continue to seek better explanations. After saying so much, mainly regarding the dietary laws, if we do not approach it from a spiritual perspective, I honestly do not know how New Covenant saints should apply them.

Yesterday, we read that clean land animals must have split hooves and chew the cud. This indicates that New Covenant saints, while walking on the earth, should treat God's Word as food, chewing it repeatedly. This means that you should familiarize yourself with God's Word and reflect on it continuously. On the other hand, in our actions on earth, we should discern between the earthly and the heavenly, the fleshly and the spiritual, the worldly and the divine according to the Lord's Word. Only then can we lead a life that is separate from the world. From verses 9 to 12, it begins to speak about the second category of living creatures: aquatic creatures.

Verse 9: "These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers—that you may eat."

Living creatures in the water, whether in rivers or in seas, whether in freshwater or saltwater, are clean and can be eaten as long as they have fins and scales. Before discussing living creatures in the water, we must first give water a proper definition because, in the Bible, water can be both positive and negative. For example, in John 4:14, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "but whoever drinks the water that I shall

give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Here, the water symbolizes the Holy Spirit granting life to people, which is indeed positive. However, in Mark 5, when Jesus arrived in the country of the Gadarenes, there was a man living among the tombs who had an unclean spirit. Jesus cast out the demons from him, and in 5:12, "So all the demons begged Him, saying, 'Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.'" As a result, Jesus agreed, and the 2,000 pigs all ran into the sea and drowned. The sea is originally the dwelling place of demons, so the water there is negative.

So how can we discern whether the water in the Bible is speaking positively or negatively? The answer lies in the original creation of God. In Genesis 1:6-8, it talks about God's creation on the second day, where He divided the waters into above and below, with air separating them. Notably, there is no record of God seeing this creation as good. The goodness or badness of water depends on its source; if the source is from above, it is good, and if it is from below, it is not good. In the creation of the third day, dry land was to appear from the waters below, indicating that God set a limit on the waters below so they could not cross the dry land, because the waters below are bad. After the waters below were restricted, vegetation could grow on the dry land, and life began to develop.

With this understanding, we return to Leviticus. Rivers and seas are the waters from below, which are corrupted, while rainwater and dew come from the waters above, nourishing the heart and being good. Aquatic creatures all dwell in the waters below, meaning they live in corruption. Therefore, aquatic creatures must have fins and scales to be considered clean. Fish with fins swim with power and can swim against the current; the best example is the salmon. During spawning season, the salmon must return from the sea to the streams on land, swimming upstream and jumping over obstacles.

Fish with fins symbolize Christians who, unlike the world, swim against the tide. Aquatic creatures not only need fins but also scales to be clean. Fish scales act as armor for the fish, which corresponds to the full armor of God for Christians. This symbolizes that Christians living in a fallen world must put on the full armor of God

to withstand the various attacks of Satan. Thus, aquatic creatures with fins and scales represent saints living in a corrupt world who can resist the trends of the world, remain untainted, and wear the full armor of God, standing firm against the attacks of Satan.

Verse 10: "But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales, all that move in the water or any living thing which is in the water, they are an abomination to you."

Aquatic creatures without fins drift with the currents, following the tide of the world towards death. Aquatic creatures without scales lack proper protection, thus becoming covered with the filth of the world. For the Israelites, aquatic creatures without fins and scales, such as eels and ribbonfish, are unclean and cannot be eaten. We should thank the Lord that in the New Covenant, saints do not need to observe dietary laws; otherwise, it would be difficult for Japanese people who love to eat grilled eel to be saved.

Verses 11-12: "They shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat their flesh, but you shall regard their carcasses as an abomination. Whatever in the water does not have fins or scales— that shall be an abomination to you."

Aquatic creatures without fins and scales are to be regarded as detestable; their flesh must not be eaten while they are alive, nor should they be regarded as anything but detestable when dead. Beloved brothers and sisters, Jesus tells us that while living in the world, we must not belong to it, meaning we should not be possessed by the world or be pushed along by it. The currents of the world are always present, and the corrupting power of the world is always looking for gaps to ruin us. Therefore, it is difficult for saints to withstand the world on their own. That is why God has prepared the church for us; the church is our harbor, our place of refuge. Within the church, we should build appropriate partnerships with the

saints, becoming a solid rock that can withstand the currents of the world and various forms of erosion.

From verses 12 to 19, the third category of living creatures mentioned is birds. The Bible's account of birds is entirely different. For the first two categories, the clean animals and aquatic creatures, the Bible points out their physiological characteristics. For instance, clean land animals are those that have split hooves and chew the cud, or aquatic creatures that have fins and scales are clean. Those that do not meet these criteria are unclean. However, for birds, the Bible does not specify their physiological characteristics but directly states which birds are unclean and should be regarded as detestable and not eaten. T

here are thousands of species of birds, and the Bible lists only a few that are prohibited. By that list, we can extend the classification to similar birds as being unclean, but those outside the list are clean and can be eaten. Birds differ from fish; fish grow in corrupt waters and must have fins and scales to withstand corruption and be considered clean. Birds can soar in the sky, escaping earthly attractions and temptations. Therefore, birds, by their very existence, are clean, and the Bible only lists those that are unclean. We should try to deduce the reasons for the unclean birds listed and develop the spiritual meanings behind them as applications for New Testament saints.

Verses 13-15: "‘And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, and the falcon after its kind; every raven after its kind, ’"

When reading about birds, we encounter many names, and we may not recognize which birds they refer to. Here, I basically refer to the translations from the Chinese Union Version along with the NIV and KJV English translations, without delving deeper. If saints are interested, they can look up encyclopedias on birds to gain a deeper understanding of those mentioned in the Bible. I will only briefly summarize some spiritual meanings.

The Bible directly lists the detestable and inedible birds. First, let's look at the first six: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, the raven, and their kinds. These are all carnivorous birds. Generally, birds are much smaller than land animals and lack the strength to attack living creatures; therefore, they often feed on the corpses of decaying animals. Because of their unclean food, these birds are also detestable and unclean, especially the raven, which particularly enjoys decaying corpses.

In contrast to carnivorous birds are herbivorous birds, such as sparrows, doves, and turtle doves, which feed on seeds of vegetables and herbs. In Jesus' parable of the sower, He compares seeds to the word of life, symbolizing that Christians, like birds, have a heavenly position and the ability to escape earthly attractions. If they love the word of life and consume God's word as their food, they are clean. Conversely, if they prefer unclean food, such as decaying corpses, they may have the ability to escape earthly ties but because of lacking of the heavenly experience, becoming unclean.

Verses 16-17: "the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl;"

This verse first mentions the ostrich. Although the ostrich is classified among birds, it is large and cannot fly. For the Israelites, the ostrich is unclean; for New Testament saints, it represents a loss of a heavenly and transcendent position, making it impossible to escape earthly attractions. They cannot fly and can only run on the ground, representing a failed Christian life. Next, from the nightingale to the owl, these types of birds are generally nocturnal, preferring darkness. Symbolically, saints should be children of light, having escaped the power of darkness and moved into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. They should conduct themselves as children of light. If they continue to behave in darkness, they become unclean.

Verses 18-19: "the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture; the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat."

From the stork to the heron and similar kinds, most of these birds live in watery areas, feeding on fish, shrimp, snakes, and other creatures. Because their food is unclean, such birds are not to be eaten by the Israelites. For New Testament saints, the spiritual application suggests that they should originally have a heavenly status. However, due to living conditions or for the sake of profit, they find themselves living day by day in waters filled with death, making it impossible for them to transcend, leading them to become unclean, which is quite unfortunate.

The last two types of birds are quite interesting: the hoopoe, which is translated as "hoopoe" in the NIV, is a very beautiful bird with a lovely crown on its head and vibrant colors. In 2008, Israel even designated the hoopoe as its national bird. This is quite ironic because Leviticus clearly states that it is an unclean bird. The spiritual implication suggests that saints who enjoy self-decoration will ultimately lose their transcendent heavenly position.

The final bird mentioned is the bat, which is interestingly placed alongside the hoopoe. The hoopoe is very beautiful, while the bat is quite ugly. In fact, bats are not birds at all; they are mammals. However, because they can fly, they are often mistakenly thought of as birds. Bats are also nocturnal, living in damp, dark places, and they have a higher body temperature than other animals, carrying various viruses. While bats themselves do not get sick, they can transmit severe outbreaks to other animals, especially to humans. In recent years, scientists have suspected that bats were the original hosts of Covid. The Bible classifies bats as unclean for good reason. Aquatic creatures must have fins and scales to be clean, and birds must be free from death and darkness to maintain their heavenly transcendent status.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. After being saved by grace, You have given us a heavenly transcendent position. Although we still live in the world, You instruct us to live in the world but not to belong to it. Help us to be Christians with fins and scales, able to resist the currents of the world and wear the full armor of God to

withstand the attacks of Satan. In our lives, help us to stay away from death and darkness, and not to pursue our own glory, but daily enjoy the supply of life, living a life on earth as it is in heaven. Bless my church to be a haven of rest for the saints, allowing us to love one another and run together on the heavenly road. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.