

Does Inspiration Support Veganism?

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Should Christians be vegetarians or vegans in these final days of Earth's history? And if so, than why didn't the Bible clearly tell us so? An overview of the history of God's instructions to His people regarding diet may be useful to see what He expects of us today. We might discover that in fact there are no real restrictions of our diet, but rather a blessing that God wants us to claim by following His superior knowledge of how the bodies He designed are fueled most efficiently.

In Genesis 1-2, Moses described the perfect creation in the Garden of Eden. No death or killing of any kind took place, as everything was immortal. All animals were vegetarian. And so were Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1:29 they were given plants for food rather than animals. They were in fact totally vegan. This was supposed to be forever, but sin occurred and that changed everything. (Genesis 3) Death became the dominant feature of our world, infecting everyone.

Did permission to eat animals occur immediately after the Fall? No. For nearly two thousand years, all those faithful to God remained at least vegetarian. They may have been vegan as well but we have no scriptural evidence one way or the other. Those who defied God's will began to kill animals and this actually increased their bloodthirsty nature. (Patriarchs and Prophets 92) Eventually, wickedness became so great that the faithful were in danger of being wiped out and God started over with the Flood. (Genesis 6-7) Only eight survivors remained, along with the animals on the ark. (Genesis 8) With the land ruined and plant life destroyed, food became a critical issue. For the first time in the Bible, God gave permission for humans to eat animals for survival. (Genesis 9)

But how do we know meat-eating was only for survival? Key restrictions were imposed by God when He gave permission to eat meat. Only specifically listed "clean" animals could be eaten. This is mainly a health provision, but also limits what can be taken. But by far the most important rule is found in Genesis 9:4: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." No blood was EVER to be eaten. Why? Health again is a factor, as most of the diseases and contamination of meat comes with the blood. But so does the flavor. Without blood, meat loses most of its appeal and becomes tasteless. It has been described as like eating cardboard.

This is crucial to our understanding of meat eating in Scripture. Meat eating was allowed only when there was nothing else available and was never supposed to be enjoyable. So it would appear logical to conclude that the removal of blood was a perpetual safeguard against addiction to meat. Many cultures in all ages since have had a justifiable need for meat, when better food was unavailable. Without refrigeration, fresh fruits and vegetables, and proper nutrition sources, people often can't survive without some meat.

After the flood, another thousand years goes by with no further discussion of diet in the Bible. When the children of Israel were led out of Egyptian slavery by Moses, God had to start virtually from scratch in teaching them. At Mount Sinai, God gave them His eternal law and then spelled out specific details for daily life. (Exodus 20 and onward) He listed the clean and unclean animals for food, reinstating the restrictions already in effect for a millennia. (Leviticus 11) Blood eating was again completely condemned. (Leviticus 17:10-14) Eating of fat was also restricted, probably for health reasons as well. (Leviticus 3:17)

For about the next 1500 years, faithful Jews could be recognized by their diet. If they ate any blood they were considered apostate. But often Israel turned away from worship of God to idol worship and sin. Ezekiel 33:25-26 lists the eating of blood with idol worship, murder, and adultery as Israel's chief sins. This indicates how serious God considers this sin.

After Christ's death and resurrection, the Jewish religion was rejected by those who followed Jesus. Soon important discussions began among the leaders of the new movement to decide which of the Jewish rules would be enforced in the new faith. An official statement was sent out as a result of their decisions: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well." (Acts 15:28-29, repeated by Paul in Acts 21:25) The great moral law of the Ten Commandments was never questioned by Christ's followers, as Jesus had told them that these laws were eternal. But of all the ceremonial and civil laws of Israel, only a few were carried over to Christianity. The key ones for us here are no eating of meat containing blood and no eating of strangled food (because no blood would be removed from a strangled animal).

This is a crucial fact of Christianity that is usually ignored. At no point in the history of Scripture, Old or New Testament, is permission to eat blood granted by God. During the centuries that followed, this was lost sight of and ignored, first by the Catholic Church and later by the various Protestant groups. This is a tragedy, since it has turned meat eating into a constant vice that is addictive and destructive.

One other point must be briefly mentioned, even though it could be studied in depth. People badly misuse Paul's writings to defend indiscriminate meat eating. But meat-eating vs. vegetarianism was never discussed at all by Paul. He dealt with a controversy among early Christians about whether it was acceptable to eat any food that had been offered to idols. Paul, raised a strict Jew, would never have considered eating unclean meat or blood. Any other interpretation is a total misrepresentation of Paul's meaning.

For the next 1800 years, God gave no new light on our diet. The Biblical principles were so badly mangled and forgotten that we look back on the Dark Ages with horror at the nonsense that was accepted and defended. Legalistic and temporary "sacrifices" like Lent were invented and silly ways of breaking the rules were immediately concocted. Lent's rules prohibit meat but allow fish. So then everything that swims is called a fish, like seals and turtles and capybaras and beavers. It's best not to dwell on the foolishness of

man. There were bright lights throughout the darkness, vegetarians who made a point of trying to get back to the original diet of Eden. Examples include Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Boniface, Origen, and John Wesley but there are actually hundreds of vegetarians famous enough to be remembered by history.

Then in the nineteenth century a new movement arose looking forward to the soon return of Christ. Adventism emerged out of this movement and God provided a prophetic voice to help them draw closer to Him than ever before. Ellen White clarified Biblical principles that had been forgotten by the apostasy of centuries. At first diet was not addressed as there were even more basic issues of truth that had to be settled. Like the Protestant believers they emerged from, Adventists ate unclean meat and it was full of blood. Then in 1863 God gave a vision to Ellen White that revealed His will on diet for the end times. Instead of any half way measures of meat without blood, God decided the time had come to live as close to the Eden ideal as modern food availability allowed. Meat was forbidden totally except when rare cases of need demanded. (Counsels on Diet and Foods 380-386)

Ellen White followed the directions given to her in vision, even though she personally struggled with her own addictions to meat. She mostly stopped eating meat herself but still allowed it on her table. Then in 1894 a convert from the Catholic faith confronted Ellen White with her support of animal cruelty by allowing meat eating in her house. This shocked Ellen, who realized she hadn't seen it this way before, but that this was exactly what God had intended with the health message. (Testimony Studies on Diet and Foods 67) She removed cow and chicken meat from her table permanently, followed a few years later by all fish, and began to write extensively on the wickedness involved in animal abuse and how meat eating was a prime cause of abuse. Her later writings are very powerful statements of God's will for His people to always oppose cruelty to both humans and animals.

Dairy and eggs were still allowed with the caveat that as disease increased and cruelty spread, these would eventually be dropped as well. (Counsels on Diet and Foods 384) Since the development of factory farming over the last century, the dairy and egg industries have become as contaminated and cruel as other products of the meat industry. It is now difficult to impossible to obtain meat or dairy that would have qualified as "clean" under Biblical standards. Even "cage-free" eggs and "grass-fed" beef are mostly marketing ploys that still support massive cruelty and waste. Eliminating meat, eggs and dairy is the current ideal laid before us as the best way to stay healthy and divest ourselves from supporting unnecessary brutality.

The ultimate future will be Heaven and the New Earth to come. (Revelation 21-22) There the model of Eden will be perfectly repeated, where no more death or cruelty will ever occur again. The tables of God will carry no animal corpses or their products, and everyone there will rejoice at the bounty provided. That is the ideal we strive toward now, for it is our great privilege to be given the opportunity to match it as closely as possible. And true science is showing that an animal free diet gives us better health and mental clarity, even now in our current sinful world. God designed our bodies to be fueled by plants, as we know from our digestive system, intestines, and teeth. When we stray from that pattern, our bodies fail and our minds

suffer. Why would we want to do anything that damages the body temple we have been given? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

In this brief overview of diet in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, we see a new picture of meat eating. Not as a gluttonous convenience that destroys both the eater and the eaten, but as an unfortunate last resort for survival. And today, with all the food options and food preservation and meat substitutes available, meat eating becomes for the true Christian something to be abhorred, rather than defended. Only then will we approach as closely as possible to the Peaceable Kingdom described in Isaiah 11, where no one hurts anyone else and all live together in God's love. As the only lifestyle that comes near to that now, veganism is a valid goal for all Christians to strive for. May that day come very soon where once again all are vegans like God's creation was in Eden and will be in the New Earth to come.