



Reverend Dr. Charles L. McNeil, Sr., Senior Pastor  
15 E. Charleston Avenue Lawnside, New Jersey 08045  
[www.gracetemplebaptist.org](http://www.gracetemplebaptist.org)

## A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

### THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

---

#### CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEATS (11:1–47)

##### **The Place of the Passage**

Toward the end of the previous section, the Lord gave Aaron these instructions: “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel” (10:10–11). Those two categories are the focus for the next several sections of Leviticus: chapters 11–15 contain laws about distinguishing clean and unclean (purity laws); chapters 17–20 contain laws about distinguishing holy and common.

The purity laws extended Israel’s “acted theology” beyond worship into daily life. The rituals of worship expressed Israel’s fellowship with the Lord in his house. Purity laws taught Israel to live as God’s forgiven people in their own houses. The New Testament apostles set aside these purity laws because they were temporary “object lessons” superseded by the reality to which they pointed, completed in the work of Christ. Like sacrifices, purity laws are no longer applicable as Christian practice. But, like sacrifices, purity laws still offer rich insights into the work Christ came to accomplish.

The first set of purity laws distinguishes clean and unclean animals, with particular concern for the household diets of those living in the camp around the tabernacle.

##### **The Big Picture**

As the society of God’s favor, Israel was a royal nation living like privileged nobility around God’s palace.

##### **Gospel Glimpses**

**DELIVERANCE.** The summary verses at the end of this chapter (Leviticus 11:44–47) state that these dietary laws were designed as a reminder that God delivered his people from bondage in Egypt to make them holy unto himself. Whatever the particular logic for marking certain animals as clean and others as unclean, every meal in Israel was to be a reminder of the congregation’s special status as a people delivered from sin and bondage.

**CREATION IDEAL.** The logic behind the classification of clean and unclean animals is famously difficult. There is no consensus among scholars about the reasoning behind this system. However, the system may represent an ancient understanding of creation ideals based on the opening chapters of Genesis. Indicators of this include the fact that animals are classified by realms similar to those of the creation account (Genesis 1:20–25), and a special addendum is added at the end of the

passage for absolute rejection of “swarming things,” beginning with “whatever goes on its belly” (11:41–43). Thus the animal taxonomy in Leviticus 11 may represent a dietary vision based on Edenic categories. It may also have been designed to lead Hebrew believers to identify at every meal with the vision of a restored creation society living in God’s presence.

### **Whole Bible Connections**

**WALL OF SEPARATION.** One of the most significant distinctions between the Old and New Testaments is a change in the relationship of Israel and the Gentiles. In the Old Covenant, Israel alone had the Spirit-filled house of worship in their midst. Therefore, Hebrew society alone was rendered “clean” by the presence of the temple. The food laws were designed to demonstrate and maintain this unique status of Israel among the nations. However, when the Spirit descended on the church in the New Testament, empowering believers for witness and worship in Spirit-filled assemblies in all nations (Acts 2:1–41), the “wall of separation” and the dividing ordinances were removed (Ephesians 2:11–22). Israel did not lose its status as “clean,” but now Gentiles also were made clean. Centers for worship—bringing the presence of God in grace among people—were now to be established in all nations throughout the world. The removal of the food laws as a distinction of social privilege marked a dramatic advance in the work of God’s grace.

### **Theological Soundings**

**CONSECRATION.** The food laws are about separation from the sin-stained world and hope in God’s promise of a new kingdom of holiness and perfection. Even though the ritual categories of clean and unclean meats are no longer to be observed in the church, the lessons on consecration they teach are still relevant. The apostle Peter was one of the first leaders in the New Testament church to recognize the fact that the dietary laws were expiring (Acts 10:9–16). Nevertheless, the truth behind them continues. Thus Peter quoted from Leviticus 11 in an epistle to Gentile churches in Asia Minor: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (I Peter 1:14–16). Although the dietary laws themselves are obsolete, their lessons on consecration to God are still relevant.

### **Glossary of Terms**

**THEOLOGY.** The study of God and religious beliefs.

**Please answer the following questions:**

## **Leviticus Chapter 11**

1. What animals and creatures could the Israelites eat? (11:3-9, 21-22)
2. Name some of the animals that didn't qualify and tell why. (11:4-7)
3. Not only could they not eat of them they also must not what? (11:8-11)
4. What birds could they not eat? (11:13-14)
5. What could they not eat of the insects? (11:20)
6. Of the animals that walk on all fours, which were unclean? (11:27)
7. What was a person to do that picked up the carcass of an unclean animal? (11:25-28)
8. What animals that move on the ground are unclean? (11:29)
9. If an animal that moves about on the ground dies and falls on something that thing became unclean if it is of what material? What was to be done to it? (11:32)
10. What if the article is made of clay? (11:33)
11. The water in the pot or on the food was unclean, what water did not become unclean?

(11:36)

12. What about seeds? (11:37)

13. What about touching carcass of clean animal that dies? (11:39)

14. What were the regulations concerning creatures that move about on the ground?  
(11:41-44)

15. What did the Lord want the Israelites to be? (11:45)

16. What were the Israelites to distinguish between? (11:47)