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When Did Man and Animals

Begin

Eating Meat?

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

When did Man and Animals Begin Eating Meat?

The focus of this study is upon discovering when man began to eat meat and when animals began to eat each other it is set out in the following four sections:

1. The beginning of time to the end of the flood.
2. The end of the flood to the Levitical priesthood.
3. When did animals start eating each other?
4. Conclusion.

THE BEGINNING OF TIME TO THE END OF THE FLOOD

In Genesis God said:

- **Genesis 1:29-30:** Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so.

These verses show that in the original creation all living creatures including Adam and Eve only ate y fruit and plants, no one ate meat and no animal killed another for food. The following verses show that Abel sacrificed animals prior to the flood:

- **Genesis 4:3-4:** In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering.

However, from the time of Abel's sacrifice there is no other mention of sacrifices until Noah walked off the Ark and built an altar to the LORD and offered a sacrifice spoken of in the following verses: -

- **Genesis 8:20-22:** Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma.

Though there is no mention of sacrifices from the time of Abel to the time Noah walked off the Ark it appears that the practise of sacrificing animals before the LORD (at least by Noah and the faithful before him) was practised. It is only after the flood and the beginning of the New World that animal sacrifice is directly associated and introduced in to the covenant with the idea of it being a redemptive-substitutionary sacrifice. It is interesting to notice that Noah was to take only the clean animals for sacrifice, this is because these blood sacrifices acted as symbols pointing forward to the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God on the bloodstained cross of Calvary. God introduced the exclusivity of eating only clean animals to be sacrificed to God to point forward to the requirement for a redeemer who would be a holy and perfect substitute for mankind. Prior to Abel's sacrifice Adam had eaten of the forbidden fruit and the LORD said:

- **Genesis 3:17-19:** Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground.

And then cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden:

- **Genesis 3:21-23:** The LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden.

Here we are told that LORD covered Adam and Eve with garments made from animal skins so it is possible from this time onward Adam and Eve and those following them killed animals to make clothing to cover themselves and protect them from the cold and rather than waste the dead animal began to eat it. Even though the LORD says that they shall eat the plants of the field we are also told that the fields will be overrun with thorns and thistles and Adam and Eve would have to work very hard to provide food for themselves and their families (Gen. 3:18-19) which means that food would not always be abundantly available so eating the meat of an already dead animal would make sense.

THE END OF THE FLOOD TO THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

In Genesis chapter eight we read of Noah, his sons, his wife and his sons' wives and every beast and creeping thing, every bird and everything that moves on the earth going out of the Ark because the waters had subsided and earth had dried out (Gen. 8:14-19). Then in Genesis chapter nine God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them:

- **Genesis 9:1-5:** Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ²The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

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These verses show that after the flood, God changed the order that had been established in the Garden of Eden. Before the fall and after the fall up until the flood all living creatures including mankind were to be by God's decree vegetarians. However, it is highly likely that the generation prior to the flood did eat meat since there was no thought toward God or obedience to His law and wickedness was great in the land and every thought of their hearts was continually evil (Gen 6.5). Some may have eaten meat for the following reasons:

- God sacrificed an animal to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness after the fall (Gen. 3.21) and from this time forward they would have killed animals to make clothing and shelter from their hides and skins. Should this be so it is very likely that they ate the dead animal rather than waste it.
- Abel offered the LORD the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions and the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering. (Gen. 4.4-5). Since almost all sacrifices under the Levitical priesthood became food for the priests and their families it is very likely that Abel's sacrifice also became food for his family.
- The fact the LORD explicitly says, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you," (Gen. 9:3) does not necessarily mean that it was only after this that mankind began eating meat. It maybe that God is now validating what men had already been doing without any clear law to eat meat before the flood so God is now saying that mankind can now eat meat with a clear conscience.

This idea could be supported by the fact that plant food was no longer abundant and animals were being killed for clothing and shelter therefore God in His mercy permitted us to eat meat.

Exactly when animals began eating animals for food is a mystery. In the original creation, all animals ate plants, not meat.

- **Genesis 1:30:** To every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

This means that there was no killing before Adam's sin. Prior to the flood there is much spoken about man's violence against each other, but there is no indication in the Bible that any of the animals ate meat or were violent and vicious. There is no hint that God changed this original command between the time of creation and the flood. It is very unlikely that the animals changed overnight to be what they are today as part of the curse (Gen. 9:2-3) since there is no mention of such a thing and Noah was able to take the animals two by two into the Ark. It is far more likely that the animals did not change overnight into the way they are today, but gradually developed overtime as a result of living in man's sinful and violent world.

The following verse shows us that up until the flood animals would still have been living on plant foods alone. The LORD told Noah to:

- **Genesis 6:21:** Take with him every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for him and for them.

This means when they were on the Ark the animals would not have any fear of each other nor would Noah and his family fear them. However, the following verses show that after the flood, God did give mankind official permission to kill animals for food and eat them.

- **Genesis 9:2-3:** The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.

In the world prior to the flood some animals may have died because of natural causes and injuries so it could be that other animals ate their dead carcasses. In actual reality this would be a good thing since it would quickly rid the land of the smelling carcass and stop any form of disease spreading. The flood being the world's greatest disaster would not only have destroyed all the world's lush forests and plant life, but would have also left a certain number of dead animals unburied on the earth's surface which may have been tempting meals for hungry animals to eat. Added to this the earth had been cursed:

- **Genesis 3:17-19:** Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground.

This means that it is possible that hungry animals were forced to compete against each other for survival, because food was no longer abundant and as the taste for meat increased so too did the killing of each other for food. This is all part of sin entering the world and the awful and dreadful scaring that it brought upon God's wonderful, harmless, peaceful original creation.

CONCLUSION

It cannot be stated with absolute certainty when man began to eat meat or when animals began to eat each other for the following two reasons: -

1. Much of what has been said has been based upon certain speculations.

2. Almost all of the covenants made between God and man have the consumption of food associated with them and almost all the blood sacrifices the people offered before the LORD became food for the high priest, the Levitical priesthood and their families.

We cannot know if after the fall Abel and his family ate his sacrifice or whether the generations prior to the flood and God granting mankind to eat meat after the flood (Gen. 9:2-3) actually ate meat. However, what we do know is that in the Garden of Eden and the covenant of creation prior to the flood God provided fruit and plants as food for mankind and the animals. Then in the covenant with Noah in the New World after the flood God changed this to include, both fruit, plants and meat which indicates that there was some very significant change that had occurred from the world prior to the flood and the world after the flood. The first covenant meal was based upon fruit from the Tree of Life. There was no need to include a sacrificial substitutionary animal in the covenant of creation because Adam had not sinned. It is only after man's sin that a redemptive-substitutionary sacrificial animal sacrifice is introduced in the covenant for the New World.

- **Hebrews 9:22:** Under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

The Old Testament ceremonial sacrifices signify the blood of Christ, the Lamb without blemish, shed upon the cross of Calvary. The New Covenant is no longer bloody, because Christ's blood has been shed once for all time.

- **Hebrews 7:27:** the Lord has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

The participation now is not in eating the physical, but the spiritual it has been changed from eating a portion of a sacrificed animal to sharing a meal of bread and wine with brothers and sisters in Christ and spiritually share in his presence and in his once-for-all-time blood sacrifice.

NOTE: religions that legalistically and dogmatically forbid eating meat for religious reasons and thereby force their followers to be vegetarianism are acting against God and putting their followers in direct rebellion against His will as stated in the following verse:

- **Genesis 9:3:** Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.

Some commentators say that even if a person has not chosen vegetarianism for religious reasons it is still a rebellion against God and a slap in His face. However, I would suggest that this is taking things far beyond what God intended since He did not command mankind to eat meat, but gave permission to do so. Added to this many are not comfortable in killing animals and for this reason choose to be vegetarian. These people are not forbidding others to eat meat nor are they acting against God, but are simply being true to their conscience and acting from their heart-filled compassion toward animals.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
