



CAN WE EAT ALL MOVING THINGS? (GENESIS 9:3)

By George Lujack

Noah, when he disembarked from the ark after the great flood, was told that he could eat all moving things. Many have used this verse to justify eating all creatures, clean and unclean, and to disregard God's dietary commands concerning clean and unclean creatures listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. This article will address and clarify Genesis 9:3.

GENESIS 9:3:

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

Genesis 9:3 cannot be taken literally to mean that man can eat all moving creatures. There are some creatures that can kill us if consumed and some creatures are lethal even just by touching them. Every moving creature that God has ever created is not food for man.

The true meaning and proper interpretation of what Moses wrote here, as directed by God, is that God has given mankind every *kind of clean* moving thing to eat. Among the moving things of the Earth, God has given us clean mammals, clean fowl, clean fish, and clean insects, just *as* He has given us green herbs for food. How has God given us green herbs to eat? God allows us to eat certain green herbs, but not all of them.

GENESIS 1:29:

And God said, "See, I have given you every herb *that yields seed* which is on the face of all the earth..."

Every type of moving thing is not meant for food, just as every type of green herb is not meant for food. Man is not permitted to eat non-seed bearing herbs.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

The phrase, 'moving thing' is translated from the Hebrew word 'reh'mes,' which refers to only specific types of animals that are preyed upon, or clean animals. Therefore, Genesis 9:3 should more correctly be interpreted to read, "Every clean moving thing that lives shall be food for you..." [1].

A question arises... If God's laws were already in place and are eternal, including His dietary laws, then why did Noah suddenly need permission to eat clean animals? The answer is that Noah and his family were temporarily restricted from eating clean animals while on the ark, for the purpose of animal preservation, so that the clean animals would not become extinct.

GENESIS 6:21:

And you shall take **FOR YOURSELF of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and **IT SHALL BE FOOD FOR YOU** and for them.**

Grain and other vegetation were gathered, stored on the ark and used for food. When read in proper context, God restricted Noah and his family, and the animals on the ark, from eating other animals. God's declaration in Genesis 9:3 lifted the temporary restriction from eating living creatures that He placed upon Noah and his family while they were on the ark during the worldwide flood. When Noah and his family got off the ark, God removed the restriction that He issued in Genesis 6:21 and once again gave Noah and his family permission to eat every moving thing that they had eaten before.

There are those who wish to use this one Scripture verse as a license to eat whatever they desire. To understand Scripture correctly, we must compare verse upon verse, precept upon precept, and read Scripture in context to get a complete understanding (Isaiah 28:9-14). One verse should not be used to overturn and nullify numerous other verses in Scripture that clearly command what man can and cannot eat.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST VEGETARIAN BELIEF

Seventh Day Adventists have argued that man was originally only permitted to eat vegetation and that *after* the flood God gave man animals to eat, thus Seventh Day Adventists promote vegetarianism, as they have concluded man's lifespan began to decline after meat was introduced into his diet. There are a few things wrong with this weak SDA doctrinal belief (Romans 14:2).

God originally gave man, as well as all living creatures, plants and fruits to eat that were *as nutritionally beneficial* as eating meat (Genesis 1:29-30). God was compelled to punish man for sin, for our sake, and cursed the ground (Genesis 3:17-19). Before the curse, plants likely had other nutritional benefits, such as higher protein levels, than they did after the curse was implemented. After the implementation of the curse, God gave man every type of living creature to eat as He had originally given us the green seed-bearing herbs and seed-bearing fruit from trees (Genesis 9:3). Cain raised sheep indicating that sheep were used for food before the great flood of Noah (Genesis 4:2).

EATERS OF "ALL" THINGS

Many Christians argue that Genesis 9:3 meant that God created all things to be eaten and that God's Dietary Commandments, given in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, were a type of temporary restrictive law. Thus, they further perpetuate the false teaching that God's dietary laws were temporary and possibly some type of punishment imposed *only* upon the people of Israel, and erroneously believe all moving creatures were originally blessed and created by God to be consumed as food.

To those who insist on the interpretation of Genesis 9:3 to mean that God allows man to eat *all* moving things, including unclean creatures, this viewpoint can easily be dismissed. No person really believes that he or she can eat *all* moving things. Put their stated faith to the test by having them eat some of the many moving things, of "all moving things," that they claim God allows man to eat such as mice, rats, roaches, skunks, slugs, toads, and worms. "Oh," they will protest, "God didn't mean for us to eat *those* moving things, but pork and shellfish are OK." Thus these "eaters of 'all' things" nullify God's dietary commands found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 while determining for themselves what moving things they will or will not eat, but they will not actually eat *all* moving things. The incorrect Genesis 9:3 interpretation of "*every moving thing shall be food*," in application and practice, then actually becomes "*every moving thing that I decide to eat shall be food*." All moving things are not food for man.

Cover art illustration: 119 Ministries.

1. 119 Ministries, < <http://119ministries.com/noah-could-he-eat-all-things> >.