

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Food Sacrificed to Idols

Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by gtenigma (), on: 2004/12/16 6:41

Hello all.

As I was studying and thinking about the subject "Food Sacrificed to Idols".

Why does Paul in 1 Cor 8 say that it is ok to eat food offered to idols. Later on, he says that it is ok to eat this food because they are just idols.

But in Acts 21.25 and in Rev 2.14 and Rev 2.20, it says that we should never eat such food. Luke and John could have made the same assumptions as Paul but they did not. Why not?

I know that any time, I come across things that seem like contradiction, it is really my ignorance and not a contradiction. Help me out here guys because I am struggling with this. This issue is affecting me spiritually because it is preventing me from really accepting Paul's writings.

Thank You in advance.

Aaron

P.S

One more question. Could you point me to some sermons or writings (study) which validates the Authenticity of the New Testament, especially Paul's writings. I have no problem accepting the Old Testament because Lord Jesus approved it, but my problem is the New Testament.

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by MarKay (), on: 2004/12/16 13:10

Paul speaks that it is ok to eat UNCLEAN animals not

animals sacrificed to idols. He was referring to animals which were declared unclean in the Old Testament Covenant (like Pork). But the New Covenant declares that what was unclean in the Old was no longer in the new. Remember when Jesus said it's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person but what comes out of it.

But eating meat SACRIFICED to idols and blood is forbidden.

Hope this is of help.

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/12/16 13:52

gtenigma:

Concerning authenticity of Paul's writings, at least it seems 2 Peter 3:16 considers his letters along with "other Scriptures". There are many books that discuss NT authenticity.

Concerning food offered to idols, the apparent contradiction is explained by Paul himself.

1. 1 Cor. 8 indicates that they can be eaten because those "gods" are not real and are nothing at all:

"So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (vv. 4-6).

2. Paul seems to contradict himself in 1 Cor. 10, saying that these foods are really offered to demons and we should not participate in anything related to demons.

"Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons" (vv. 18-20).

3. However, Paul quickly points out that meat purchased from the markets can be freely eaten (even historical evidence

said that most often than not, meat sold in Corinthian markets were offered as sacrifices).

Thus, 1. Cor 10:25 *"Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience."*

4. Yet for the sake of the conscience of the unbelievers, one should refrain from eating the meat.

1 Cor. 10:27-29, *"If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, 'This has been offered in sacrifice,' then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake— the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours."*

5. Likewise, we must take care of the conscience of the weak brothers and exercise care with our freedom.

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall" (1 Cor. 8:10-13).

In general, I think Paul is saying you can eat all food *from the market*. But refrain from participating in idolatry by eating *in the temple*. We also have to be careful when we exercise our freedom in this matter, not for the sake of our own conscience, but for the weak brothers and unbelievers.

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/12/16 14:50

Quote:
-----One more question. Could you point me to some sermons or writings (study) which validates the Authenticity of the New Testament, especially Paul's writings. I have no problem accepting the Old Testament because Lord Jesus approved it, but my problem is the New Testament.

Just a quick comment on this part. The Lord pre-authenticated the 'disciples' writings in His prayer of John 17. **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (Joh 17:20 KJV)** He had already promised that the Spirit would both **teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (Joh 14:26 KJV)** and again later in on the same theme **Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (Joh 16:13-14 KJV)** I personally believe the unique receiving of the Spirit that the disciples received in John 20:22 was part of this provision. So that gives us authentication for the disciples. Peter was a disciple and he wrote **And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2Pe 3:15-16 KJV)** If you follow the logic of this sentence you will see that Peter included all Paul's letters among the collective term 'scripture'.

So we have the Lord pre-authenticating Peter, and Peter post-authenticating Paul. How's that for a start?

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by gtenigma (), on: 2004/12/16 16:37

Thank You very much guys. This is definitely a good start.

I will have to think about what you guys explained (study and meditate on it) before I make any comments.

Aaron

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by MarKay (), on: 2004/12/16 16:57

Isn't it strange how it's always Paul's letters that get judged and questioned. I questioned them myself previously. Remember when Paul was converted and the disciples didn't trust him either??? I believe that has something to play in the matter.

The fact that an open persecutor of the early church

is converted to a deep relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ plays on the unconscious mind of the reader. Causing the reader to question his authenticity as a follower of Christ. Some kind of faith tester me thinks??? Will you truly believe salvation can be given to what is classed as murderers and rapists etc. And forgive them whole heartedly yourself like Christ does. This struck me as I was reading Romans chapter 5 awhile ago. What do you think???

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by ravin, on: 2004/12/16 18:47

I believe we are not to eat food that is known to have been offered to idols. food offering to idols and such-drink offerings.

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by gtenigma (), on: 2004/12/17 13:18

I want to Thank You especially Sam and Ron for showing me some of those key verses. It was very insightful when I found out that Peter referred to Paul's writings as scripture. 2Pet3.15 "just as they do the other parts of Scripture-and the result is disaster for them."

This is exactly what I was looking for and I thank the Lord for showing me those exact things that I needed to know. I can now stop searching for books and sermons on this issue because it has been resolved.

Since my conversion two years ago, I do read Paul's writings but I don't sock myself into it like Brother Keith Daniel says. At the same time, I felt convicted by it because I know I was not being true to God's Word. Finally, my conviction caught up to me and I had to finally seek help. And I have to say, you brothers have been a true help to me in this issue.

Thank You again.

Aaron

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by SteveL (), on: 2004/12/18 13:59

A few thoughts:

The prohibition against "things polluted by idols.." contained in the letter to the Gentiles in Acts was based on the principle... "whatever is not of faith is sin." Acts 15:21. "FOR Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him.." Since the Gentile believers were well aware of the teaching of Moses about the idol food (it was a part of their "theology") and since the practice was a real part of their culture, this could have been a great stumbling block to them, causing many to sin. Since I understand the fulfillment of the law of Moses and since idol food is not relevant to me in the least, there is no need for such a prohibition FOR ME. So..the doctrines given to certain peoples at certain times can seem to contradict even though they do not.

The words about being led by the teachings of Balaam and by Jezebel to eat things sacrificed to idols can be looked at in the same light and can also be understood as what they are...allegorical language concerning God's people "fornicating" or having intercourse with the world and thus becoming "idolaters" and "adulterers". See James 4:4.

I do think most of our perceptions of contradictions in the apostles' teachings come from lack of understanding and not from actuality, as you said.

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by ccchhhrrriiss (), on: 2022/11/30 18:39

Greetings!

I know that this is a (very) old topic/thread, but my wife and I were reading through the book of Numbers this week. The words of Jesus in this passage from Revelation 2:14, 20 mentioned by the original post are a direct reference to Numbers chapters 21-24.

Revelation 2:14 (ESV)

"But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality."

If you read Numbers 22-24, it's almost a bit puzzling. Balaam doesn't come across as a particularly bad person. He did speak to YHWH and YHWH spoke to him. He even prophesied about the Messiah being born (Numbers 25:17).

King Balak of Moab wanted to hire Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam only went with Balak's men after consulting God about it. God even opened the mouth of Balaam's donkey when he was in danger and even opened Balaam's eyes to see that danger (i.e., angel of the LORD with sword in hand).

Balak was afraid of Israel and hoped that a curse upon Israel by Balaam would stop them. Yet, Balaam never cursed Israel. In fact, he actually spoke the words that God gave him -- which BLESSED Israel.

Eventually, Balak and Balaam parted company with Balaam never having cursed Israel. So, why is Balaam mentioned so often in the Bible as an example of so much bad? After all, Balaam is referenced in this aspect in Numbers (chapters 22-24, 31), Deuteronomy (chapter 23), Joshua (chapters 13 and 24), Nehemiah (chapter 13), Micah (chapter 6), 2 Peter (chapter 2), Jude and Revelation!

The outcome of Balaam's interaction with Balak is found in Numbers chapter 25 with the subsequent events after Balaam left Balak.

Numbers 25:1-3 (ESV)

- 1 While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab.
- 2 These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.
- 3 So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

Essentially, Balaam (that "profit for hire") taught Balak by what he didn't say. Balaam had revealed to King Balak that God would not curse or destroy Israel. In fact, in Numbers 25:9, Balaam uttered that God would bless those who bless Israel and curse those who cursed Israel. So, this revealed something to Balak: The only way for Israel to be destroyed was from within.

And this is exactly what began to happen!

Women from Moab went down and enticed the men of Israel; and, the men of Israel began engaging in sexual immorality. Moreover, these women enticed the men of Israel to attend the sacrifices that they offered to their gods.

If you remember how the sacrifices of Israel were conducted, it wasn't simply people dropping off livestock to be burned. There was a set of Levitical rules that the priests followed. Part of the sacrifice was to be eaten by the priests (Leviticus 6 and 7). Foreigners also sacrificed to their gods. However, their sacrifices were handled differently. Pagans would strangle the blood from the animals and then eat the meat sacrificed to their gods.

So, essentially, these Moabite and Midianite women not only engaged in immorality with Israeli men, but they enticed them to attend the sacrifices, watch the blood and eat that meat. By doing this, Israel had hastened its own destruction from the inside. Balaam couldn't curse Israel. However, by engaging in this, the people of Israel could curse themselves.

In fact, a plague broke out against Israel. It was only abated after Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, killed an Israelite and a Midianite woman in their tent.

So, when I read New Testament passages referring to food sacrificed to idols, this is what I believe it is referring to. It is the enticement to partake in the table of God and the table of demons (I Corinthians 10:21).

It is also what I believe the apostles were referring to in the first council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29). At that time, a question arose as to whether or not gentiles who were turning to God needed to be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem for an answer.

The apostles rejoiced that many gentiles were being saved. However, they pointed out that the gentiles were having their hearts cleansed -- not by adherence to the Law of Moses -- but by faith (Acts 15:9). After all, Paul later pointed out that this is how God established the covenant with Abraham -- that he "believed God" and it was credited to him as righteousness (hundreds of years before the Covenant Law of Moses).

So, the apostles said that they shouldn't make it difficult for the gentiles who were being saved. Yet, they still felt impressed to warn them to avoid these things: Things sacrificed to idols, the products of strangling and blood and sexual immorality (verses 19-20; 28-29). With this in mind, it is likely that the "products of strangling" and "blood" are a direct reference to what is "sacrificed to idols."

This seems like a direct reference to the error of Balaam -- and how Balak learned that God's chosen people cannot be cursed by God but can bring about a curse upon themselves. This occurred at Peor when the Israelites engaged in sexual immorality with foreign women and partook in their sacrifices (including eating some of the sacrifice).

Don't forget: This was not just the sins of the Israelites in the wilderness. This was also the sin of Solomon.

In I Kings chapter 11, we read about how Solomon -- this man of wisdom and discernment -- tried to partake in both the table of God and demons. Like some of the Israelites in the wilderness, Solomon's heart was smitten by foreign women.

Quote:

1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

I Kings 11:1-8 (ESV)

While it doesn't say that Solomon ate from the food sacrificed to those gods, it does say that he built their high places! This is Solomon -- the son of David to whom God appeared TWICE. Yet, he no longer wholly followed God. He now had something within him that competed with his love for God.

In fact, the whole of the subsequent history of Israel and Judah was a result of the consequences of Solomon's sin. Israel was torn from his son and divided into two. The first thing that King Jeroboam and Israel did after the division? They built TWO golden calves and sacrificed to them! In fact, Jeroboam told the people of Israel that they had gone to Jerusalem long enough -- and that they could sacrifice to these calves who "brought them out of Egypt" (I Kings 12:29-29).

Essentially, the captivity eventually came about because of Solomon's sin. Solomon's sin was essentially the same as the Israelites in Numbers 25 -- when the men of Israel engaged in sexual immorality and ate food sacrificed to idols.

Nowadays, we don't have many groups offering sacrifices to their idols/gods. We don't see many groups who are slaughtering animals, strangling them, pouring out the blood (and using it) and then eating what it left after it is roasted. However, there are some who still do this...and I think that it is prudent to avoid partaking in it.

However, sexual immorality is arguably more rampant today than it was back then! Through hedonism, atheism and antagonistic mockery of God, people have set themselves up as their own "god" -- their own "idol." They live their lives without the very thought of our Creator and what is coming. The covenant that God has made? They scoff at it.

Our faith in Christ is the most important thing in this universe. After all, we "must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:1-6).

So, as Revelation 2:14 puts it, the error of Balaam is about the stumbling blocks of our faith that we partake in. After all, anything that we put before God is an idol. Anything that competes with our devotion to God is an idol.

For the Israelites in the wilderness, this was sexual immorality and food sacrificed to idols. Solomon also fell over this same stumbling block -- and the course of Israeli history was forever changed. This eventually resulted in those who were freed from captivity in Egypt now being carried off into captivity in Assyria, Babylon and Persia.

So, essentially, I would say that the stumbling of sexual immorality is still very much a part of this world. However, the most common modern idols have changed just a bit. It's about partaking in this world and its race to forget or forsake God. It reminds me of how Christian and Faithful refused to partake in the goods sold at "Vanity Fair" in John Bunyan's allegory PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. It also reminds me how Keith Green stopped playing music after he came to Christ until it was no longer his idol.

All of this also reminds me of a song I recently heard:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VkHd7froJo>

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by twayneb (), on: 2022/12/1 9:19

Yes, Paul did talk about eating food sacrifice to Idols. I will try to give you my understanding of what he said and its context.

Paul realized that in Christ, he was free to eat anything, clean, unclean, or even offered to idols. This was a common practice in pagan places. The food sold in the markets had been offered up to the gods or idols of the land before it was eaten or sold. Some Native Americans did something like this as well, stopping to thank their Gods and perform a short ceremony over meat they had just killed.

Paul says, "Look, we know the idol is nothing. It is just an invention of these people's minds. The fact that they offered it to an idol has absolutely no effect upon me as a believer. If I am hungry, I will eat. My conscience is clear." But then Paul goes on to say this, "If in eating that food I cause someone not so established in his faith to stumble, I will go hungry. His faith is more important than my hunger." This is the crux of 1 Cor. 8 and 1 Cor. 10.

However, in Acts 15, the Apostles and Elders advised the new Gentile believers NOT to eat of anything offered to idols. I believe the reason for this was the immaturity of these new believers. They came directly from a culture in which they had always offered their meat to idols. These were examples of the weaker ones Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 8 and 1 Cor. 10.

Let me give you an analogy from my own culture if I can. I have never knowingly consumed alcoholic drinks. But I can not make a Biblical case that consuming alcohol is sinful. If I wanted to drink a glass of wine or cup of beer with my meal, I have every ability to do so and still not be defiled as a believer. However, in the culture of the USA, alcohol is a VERY abused substance. I often minister to people whose lives have been destroyed by alcohol or drugs. So, I will not partake. Why? So I can say honestly, "No, I don't partake of that because I see too many people destroyed by it, and I want you to be free from it as well." My freedom is curtailed by other's weakness, and I willingly do this out of love for them.

Hope that helps.

Re: Food Sacrificed to Idols - posted by twayneb (), on: 2022/12/1 9:27

Yes, Paul did talk about eating food sacrifice to Idols. I will try to give you my understanding of what he said and its context.

Paul realized that in Christ, he was free to eat anything, clean, unclean, or even offered to idols. This was a common practice in pagan places. The food sold in the markets had been offered up to the gods or idols of the land before it was eaten or sold. Some Native Americans did something like this as well, stopping to thank their Gods and perform a short ceremony over meat they had just killed.

Paul says, "Look, we know the idol is nothing. It is just an invention of these people's minds. The fact that they offered it to an idol has absolutely no effect upon me as a believer. If I am hungry, I will eat. My conscience is clear." But then Paul goes on to say this, "If in eating that food I cause someone not so established in his faith to stumble, I will go hungry. His faith is more important than my hunger." This is the crux of 1 Cor. 8 and 1 Cor. 10.

However, in Acts 15, the Apostles and Elders advised the new Gentile believers NOT to eat of anything offered to idols. I believe the reason for this was the immaturity of these new believers. They came directly from a culture in which they had always offered their meat to idols. These were examples of the weaker ones Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 8 and 1 Cor. 10.

Let me give you an analogy from my own culture if I can. I have never knowingly consumed alcoholic drinks. But I can not make a Biblical case that consuming alcohol is sinful. If I wanted to drink a glass of wine or cup of beer with my meal, I have every ability to do so and still not be defiled as a believer. However, in the culture of the USA, alcohol is a VERY abused substance. I often minister to people whose lives have been destroyed by alcohol or drugs. So, I will not partake. Why? So I can say honestly, "No, I don't partake of that because I see too many people destroyed by it, and I want you to be free from it as well." My freedom is curtailed by other's weakness, and I willingly do this out of love for them.

Hope that helps.

Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiss (), on: 2022/12/1 13:24

Good points, Twayne.

I agree with you (and Paul the Apostle) that there is a difference between eating food and not knowing where it came from (but receiving it as "food" and giving thanks to God for it) and knowingly participating in the sacrifice of idols.

Participation in idolatry. This is what the Israelites did after Balaam. That is what Solomon did. That is what many of the kings of Israel (and some from Judah) did.

For me, Solomon's fall is one of those utterly tragic yet rarely-referenced events from the Old Testament. Yet, everything that happened to Israel after it is consequential to this -- including the breaking apart of the Promised Land into Israel and Judah, the captivity of first Israel and then Judah, a remnant's return, the continued scattering of others abroad and the coming of the Messiah (with many believing that he would "restore the KINGDOM of Israel" (Acts 1:6).

Idolatry is one of the basic prohibitions in the Old Covenant. It is the first two commandments of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-6). It is the basis of what became known as the "Shema Yisrael:"
"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one"
(Deuteronomy 6:4).

Just like sexual immorality, one doesn't just "unwittingly" or "unknowingly" engage in it. In the context of the apostle's letter in Acts 15:22-29 (possibly the first recorded epistle): The strangling, blood and the food that was part of the sacrifice is all a part of an aware participation in idolatry.

Not only does Jesus reference the idolatry and sexual immorality of Balaam in Revelation 2:14,20, but idolatry and sexual immorality are two of the issues that preclude someone from entrance into the gates of our heavenly city in Revelation 22:12-15.

Yes, I believe that it is the knowing participation in idolatry that is so wrong. It is knowingly participating in the table of demons. This is what destroys someone from the inside -- the error of Balaam -- which taught Balak to put "a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality" (Revelation 2:14).

It is this type of participation that is wrong under both the old and new covenants. I feel that this is the essence of what Paul stressed this in I Corinthians 10:

Quote:
-----18 Consider the people of Israel: Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?
19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?
20 No, I IMPLY THAT WHAT PAGANS SACRIFICE THEY OFFER TO DEMONS AND NOT TO GOD. I DO NOT WANT YOU TO BE PARTICIPANTS WITH DEMONS.
21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

(I Corinthians 10:18-21)

I suppose that it is a good thing that we don't live in a time of blatant idolatry in the terms of manufactured idols for worship. And, as Paul pointed out, those idols are nothing" (I Corinthians 8:4) but, at the same time, they are "demons" (I Corinthians 8:5-6; 10:21). It's the participation in the idolatry that is wrong and not the unwitting eating of the offerings.

Some ancient culture books explain that Corinth was home to pagan temple idolatry. The pagan temple compounds -- to Aphrodite, Apollo, Poseiden, etc. -- were huge. In fact, the "outer courts" of those temples were part of the main pedestrian thoroughfares through the city.

Food and drink -- some potentially retrieved from sacrifices -- were sold on those thoroughfares. If this is the case, then I can see how someone would walk through the city and buy some food and drink. Perhaps this is what Paul was referring to when people would see them eating and, by doing so, you've become a stumbling block to them and sin against Christ (I Corinthians 8:8-13).

Still, the primary point of Balaam is about knowing participation in idolatry and sexual immorality. During the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, idolatry brought about plagues. And, of course, during the divided kingdom, it was continued idolatry that led to the captivity.

Keith Green sang a song about how the Israelites sometimes would "want to go back to Egypt." They preferred captivity for the sake of the food of Egypt. In the end, they practiced idolatry and became captives once again -- but this time in Assyria, Babylon and Persia. I suspect that the food didn't taste quite as good as they'd thought.

Re: - posted by deltadom (), on: 2022/12/3 14:40

Does hallel food count as food sacrificed to idols