

## 2. Justin Martyr (extracts) - 100—165AD

On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a given city or rural district. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we all rise together and send up prayers. When we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine and water. The president in the same manner sends up prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people sing out their assent, saying the “Amen.” A distribution and participation of the elements for which thanks have been given is made to each person, and to those who are not present they are sent by the deacons.

Those who have means and are willing, each according to his own choice, gives what he wills, and what is collected is deposited with the president. He provides for the orphans and widows, those who are in need on account of sickness or some other cause, those who are in bonds, strangers who are sojourning, and in a word he becomes the protector of all who are in need.

We all make our assembly in common on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God changed the darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturn’s day, and on the day after (which is the day of the Sun) he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught these things, which we have offered for your consideration.

Reference link: <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/how-we-christians-worship/>

IS IT WRONG TO  
EAT FOODS CONSIDERED  
UNCLEAN  
(SUCH AS PORK)?

IS IT WRONG TO  
WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS?



## INTRODUCTION

With the exile in Babylon being a reality among the Children of Israel in approximately 586 BCE, the priestly writers (between 500-450 BCE) were more focussed on what was happening during the reconstruction of community life, as the Israelites sought to adapt to the exile. According to McSweeney (2015), out of this reconstruction came various laws and regulations, a recall of their genealogies (to establish their identity as God's chosen people), and the ways in which they were to maintain their Jewish identity (by keeping the Sabbath and becoming circumcised). These established laws were the result of God's abundant love and willingness to forgive the Israelite community, after they built and worshipped a golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai.

The laws associated with purity of the Israelites, are seen in Leviticus 11-15, and should be read in its entirety. They were given to demonstrate that as a people who are called to be holy, worship was not only about the spiritual (soul), but also about caring for the physical body as well. So, in chapter 11, the Israelites were advised about what should or should not go into the body. This was because such foods could make them sick if they were not properly cooked. Therefore, failure to obey this law would result in their physical health being affected. As a result, these foods were declared unclean. As for chapters 12-15, we see issues associated with outer body purity and what should be done to be cleansed if one becomes unclean. This include discharges from the body, skin infections, and touching objects which were declared unclean because they either have mildew, for instance, or they were touched by someone who was considered to be unclean. So, for the Jews, to be declared unclean was a part of their culture, as every Jew at some point would have been involved in an activity stated in these four chapters. From these passages, therefore, we can conclude that the issue of declaring something clean

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: NON- BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION AND SUNDAY WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

### 1. Pliny's letter to the Emperor, Trajan (extracts)

*Pliny - a civil servant who served as governor of Bithynia, in the north of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), from 111-113 AD.*

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never before participated in trials of Christians, so I do not know what offenses are to be punished or investigated, or to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age, or no difference recognized between the very young and the more mature. Is pardon to be granted for repentance, or if a man has once been a Christian is it irrelevant whether he has ceased to be one? Is the name itself to be punished, even without offenses, or only the offenses perpetrated in connection with the name?

Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have followed the following procedure: I interrogated them as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.

Reference link: <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/pliny/>

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

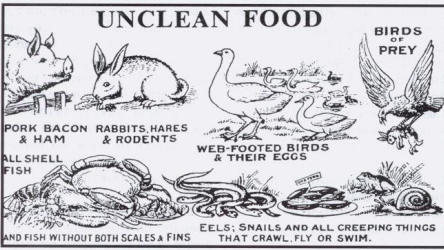
---

---

or unclean, was not only associated with food, but even people and physical objects, were declared the same. So, whereas the emphasis today is placed mainly on foods which are clean or unclean, this was definitely not the case for the Israelites.

### AN UNDERSTANDING OF 'CLEAN' & 'UNCLEAN'

According to *NIV Student Bible Notes* (1992), the issue of germs and other harmful microbes was not fully understood. So in order to deal with meats, (such as pork and lobster), which if not properly cooked can make one sick, it was best to declare them unclean (as seen in Deuteronomy 14:3-21). There was not much knowledge of bacteria, during Moses'



time, neither did they have the technology to properly cook meats (such as pork, lobster, crocodile, owl, oyster, shark and rabbit). Therefore, given the absence of good medical care (as we have today), in order to preserve the health and well being of the entire Israelite community, certain foods and persons were declared unclean by law in the land. Also, notice in Leviticus 11: 1-8, clean and unclean was not all about the animals they were not to kill and eat; it was also about not touching the dead animals (carcasses).

The same may be said about persons who had a contagious condition such as leprosy. The priest declaring them unclean, would isolate them outside the camp, thus preventing the condition from spreading among the Israelite community. With more scientific knowledge available today about leprosy, such a condition is treatable and it has even been realized that it is not as contagious as they thought it was. Additionally, women having their monthly cycle, were also declared unclean along with anything they touched, and anyone who touched them, in order to

reduce the spread of harmful microbes, which could make them ill.

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FOODS

If one understands the text in its context, therefore, one can see that the issue of unclean is much more than eating particular meats. In putting some rational thinking to this, the question would be “How can eating certain foods (such as pork) affect me spiritually, and make me unclean?”



“Does it corrupt my mind and causes me to not do the will of God?” These are important questions, and the three pillars of

the Anglican Church, (which are scripture, tradition and reasoning), will be used to help us examine the issue of clean and unclean foods. Reasoning (which is simply the use of common sense) is an invitation to ask and reflect on the question “Does this make sense?” This we will demonstrate using supporting evidence from both the context of the time of Jesus as well as the Early Church writings of the Apostles.

Consequently, one can appreciate the fact that Jesus, (in addressing the Jewish Elders about the issue of his disciples eating with unwashed hands, in Matthew 15:1-20), was really encouraging the use of this same concept - reasoning. So in Matthew 15:10-11, we see that Jesus called the gathered crowd together and said to them, “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, [and makes him/her unclean], but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” This he evidenced in verse 17 on the fact that “...whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer”, as He explained to his disciples what He meant by what was said in verse 11. In saying this, Jesus forced the Pharisees to stop and think, as to whether or not food can really affect the character/heart as believers/Christians.

were now free to worship on the day that they had always been worshipping - the first day of the week. Other non-Biblical sources can be referred to at this stage such as Justin Martyr, *Saint* (app. 100-165), a philosopher, theologian, and apologists of the Early Christian church (who wrote two Christian apologies: (1) *The defense of Christians against charges of atheism and sedition in the Roman state*, and *the Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*), and Pliny, *the younger* (62-113), a Roman Official (who wrote a letter to the Roman Emperor, Trajan, concerning the policy against the Christians). From these Early Church documents, we get a true sense of what were some of the struggles that the church faced, and even some of the Church’s practices which today are still in existence.

From the commencement of Christianity, at Pentecost, Christians had deliberately chosen Sunday to commemorate the Lord’s day - the day of resurrection. This tradition has continued over the years, from the time of the apostles, when they gather on the first day of the week to break bread. However, it must be noted that this is not our only day of worship, as like the early church, we believe the church can be gathered on any day of the week for worship, as is still the custom in many of our churches today.

## REFERENCES

- Carson, D. A. (1999). *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*. Oregon, U.S.A.: Wipf and Stock Publishers .
- Kraus H. (1960). *Worship in Israel*.
- McSweeney, K. (2015). *Daniel – The Final Revelation*. Kingston, Jamaica: UTC – Manuscript.
- Reid, A. Bp.(2015). *Understanding the Sabbath*.—Manuscript

## NOTES

---

only be fighting against God.” Being convinced the Jews ordered the apostles to not teach in the name of Jesus, had them flogged, and then released them.

In approximately 64 AD, a great persecution broke out against the Christians under Emperor Nero, because he had built an image of himself and ordered everyone in the land to worship it. The Christians however refused, and this caused them to become severely persecuted by the Roman authorities. To aid his drive to persecute the Christians, Nero started a fire in Rome and blamed it on the Christians. If this was not enough, he further established his authority by destroying the temple - all with a view of deterring them from their worship of God. Bear in mind that the temple was really designed for Jewish worship, so even Jews were affected. Also, the Roman emperors, viewed themselves as gods, and so the image Nero had made of himself was to support this claim, as one who has “ultimate power and authority”.

Therefore, no longer could Christianity be viewed as a sect which was protected under Judaism, and at this point, they went into hiding. They hid and had their worship services, and the picture of a fish was placed on doors, all because Christianity had become illegal and it was a persecuted religion. The symbol of the fish (placed on such buildings) is the Greek spelling **ΙΧΘΥΕ** (pronounced: ICTHUS), which was an abbreviation, which when translated meant **I** = Jesus, **X** (C) = Christ, **Θ**(TH) = God's, **Y**(U) = Son, **E**(S) = Savior. In spite of the persecution, Christians continued to meet in hiding to share a common/fellowship meal of bread and wine, which later evolved into what we call Holy Communion. This meal we see being referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Almost three decades passed, and Christians still continued to worship in secret. In 331 AD, however, Emperor Constantine declared religious freedom in the famous edict of Milan. Consequently, Christians

Prior to Jesus saying this, however, the Pharisees had taken offense at what He had said, and so Jesus bluntly called them blind guides in verse 14, because of their failure to properly lead and direct the spiritual lives of the people whom they were called to do. If this was not sufficient, we see in verses 18-20, where Jesus provided further clarification to the disciples, as He informed them how it is that an individual may become unclean. Here, in this text, Jesus declared that “...what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart comes evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.” The consumption of food of certain kind, therefore, does not make an individual become unclean, but rather it is evil thoughts and deeds that come from within.



The Jewish leaders were not pleased when Jesus said these words, as what Jesus was saying, was going against the laws of the Jews, some of which had nothing to do with enabling God’s people to be saved. Jesus, therefore, in doing this, challenged the people to use their common sense, intellect and ability to reason, to decipher if eating certain foods can really cause an individual to become unclean. Paul also followed in this same notion, as in his letter to the Roman Church, he challenged the people who were having disputes among themselves in Romans 14:1-3, not to condemn each other, if they decide to eat everything or only vegetables. In fact, Paul said that persons who eat the latter have weak faith; however, for the sake of unity within the church, such practices of putting down each other because of what they eat should not be encouraged, because God has welcomed them all, and so each person must be convinced in his/her own mind of what they do. This, Paul said in Romans 14:6, is because each person does what he/she does to the honour of God, whether they eat or

abstain, because they both give thanks to God. As a result, it is the tradition of the Anglican Church to not judge/put down other denominations for their beliefs and practices, because collectively, we all worship the same God.

Additionally, Paul reminded the Romans that “The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking,” in verse 17, but is instead “...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Consequently, Paul encouraged the church, in verse 20a, to “...pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding”, and they should “...not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God.” Even though Paul assures us, in verse 20b, that “Everything is indeed clean...”, he went on to remind us that “...it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat” This therefore calls for wisdom on our part as Christians, to respect the beliefs and practices of others, as seen in verse 15, and not injure the faith of those who are weak, remembering always that Christ died for them also. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church, he did so in a context in which there was division between the Jewish converts to Christianity and the Gentiles who had become Christians. This division was due to the issue of whether or not they could consume food that was sacrificed to idols. In 1 Corinthians 8, we see again the use of rational thinking by Paul, as he challenged the church to recognize that an idol is nothing, in 8:4. Following this, Paul sternly ‘hits the nail on the head’ in 8:7, as he explicitly stated the problem, “Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.” Food sacrificed to idols was sold in the marketplace, and so the Gentiles were the ones who would often times go and buy this type of food. Even though this text does not deal with eating foods which the Jews considered unclean, Paul’s concept here specifically demonstrates the fact that “Food does not bring us closer to God and we are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.” Paul, however, again cautioned the church

one mandated by God. In other words, seventh day worship evolved out of their cultural experience, so much so that it became a way of life for them.

## **THE CHRISTIANITY MOVEMENT**

With Jesus dying on a cross and overcoming the sting of sin and death, came a new movement known as Christianity. When Christianity just started, it like the Sadducees and Pharisees began as a sect of Judaism. As a result, the then converts to Christianity still would go to worship at the temple everyday (Acts 5:42), and on the first day of the week, they would come together and break bread (Acts 20:7). This therefore showed that the Early Church had always been worshipping on the Sunday, ever since Jesus was raised from the dead.

From Acts 5: 42, one can see that Christians sought to worship everyday of the week. No day was considered more important than the other, which is what Paul in his letter to the Romans was alluding to in Romans 14: 5, which will be dealt with in greater details at a later stage.

## **PERSECUTION OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS**

As the number of Christians increases, the Jewish leaders felt jealous/threatened, and as a result, a persecution broke out against the Christians in Acts 5:17-42. It is here that we see Gamaliel (a Pharisee) rising to the defence of the apostles, who were placed in public prison, but were set free by an angel in the night (Acts 15:17-19). At the council which was held to convict the apostles for teaching in the name of Jesus, Gamaliel came to their defence, (Acts 5:34-39), as he challenged the council to “Consider carefully what they do to these people... because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail, but if it is of God, you would not be able to overthrow them. As a result, you would

and that is:

- (1) It is a day of rest, and this we should be doing to the honour and glory of God. Therefore, no work is to be done by anyone, and this include not only people, but even the animals owned by the Jews.
- (2) There is nothing in this passage that says anything about worship. The day is kept holy by not doing anything. Just relaxing and taking a break from all the busyness of life.

Additionally, there is also a Sabbath year, in which the soil should not be tilled for an entire year, thus giving the land time to replenish itself (Leviticus 25:1-7).

## HISTORY OF WORSHIPPING ON THE SABBATH

The concept of the seventh day (Sabbath) being a day of rest, changed however in 586 BCE, when the children of Israel were taken into captivity in Babylon. No longer could they worship in their temple as they were accustomed, (as it was destroyed by the Babylonians), and they were also in a strange land (Psalm 137), so they had to reorganize their lives in order to facilitate their worship of Yahweh. It was out of this that the Sabbath came. After the exile which lasted for approximately 70 years, the Israelites build synagogues (which faces Jerusalem), so as to recall their association with the temple that was in Jerusalem., and it was from this point onward that Sabbath worship became a part of the culture. Therefore, it was not something mandated by God.

Jesus himself was born and raised as a Jew. He also worshipped on the Sabbath in synagogues, and He even went into the temple (which was rebuilt under the instruction of King Cyrus, of Persia, who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild it, as seen in Ezra 1:1-2). Jesus himself told no one that they must worship on the seventh day of the week, so this commandment was one more of human design/law, and not

about the extent to which they should exercise their liberty/knowledge, so that it does not affect the faith of individuals who are weak.



However, let us also be mindful that some persons may be quick to point out verses such as that of 2 Corinthians 6:17, in which Paul in his second letter to the Church of Corinth, stated "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." Such a verse is not to be taken literally, but must be understood in the context in which it was said. If this portion of text is read in its entirety, (2 Corinthians 14-18), one will see that Paul was really speaking about not associating themselves with unbelievers, because we are the temple of the living God. In saying this, Paul was encouraging the Christians of the early church not to associate themselves with pagans out of fear that they may adopt their idolatrous lifestyle and practices. Unclean in this context has nothing to do with food. In fact, the temple of which Paul spoke is the temple in Corinth where the pagans would go to worship their pagan gods, offer sacrifices, and even prostitute themselves. Consequently, Paul out-rightly told them to "...touch nothing unclean", in order to remind them of the need to keep away from such forces of evil (idolatry), as their indulgence in such practices, would cause them to be having other gods. Their heart and mind would hence have become defiled/unclean should they decide to go against the teachings/will of God. Food therefore does not cause an individual to become unclean. This is also alluded to in Acts 10:9-16, where Peter got a vision in which he saw a sheet being lowered from heaven with all kinds of animals in it of which the Lord told him to partake. Peter, however, with his Jewish background refused and said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." The voice then said to him, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This, happened three times after which it was lifted up back into heaven. Even though this vision was given to advise Peter to receive the Gentile visitors who were coming to see him (whom traditionally, as a Jew,

he would not associate), the response given by Jesus is a demonstration of the fact that foods in and of themselves are clean, and God has declared them so to be. Logically speaking therefore, nothing is wrong with: eating foods of certain kind, and nothing is wrong with using the concept of reasoning to recognize/deduce that food cannot defile or affect our relationship with God.

As Christians, if our faith allows us to use this concept of reasoning, (like Jesus and Paul did), to recognize that no food is unclean, and cannot defile us, then this is very good. However, we should not use this knowledge/understanding of ours to oppress or cause the faith of others to be weakened, because this is not the reason for which Christ came to earth, died and rose. Jesus came so that we all can experience the fullness of life in God via what we say, think and do to others here on earth. The kingdom of God is about right living. It is not about food, and so if we want to be clean, and not be defiled, good/pure thoughts and practices/behaviours must come from within (our hearts) via our thoughts, mouths and actions. This is how we become clean as individuals.

## THE PRIESTLY MATERIAL AND SABBATH KEEPING

The issue of worshipping on the Sabbath came also out of the priestly writings. The Priestly Writer wrote in the late exilic or early restoration period, and “was concerned with supplementing the old traditions with materials that would underscore the institutional and ritual constitution of Israel as a unique community separated from other people” (McSweeney, 2015). She further added that there is not much information available on worship during the period of the exile. However, there is some belief that synagogues originated during this time (the exilic period), but there is no firm evidence to support this.

Additionally, in the absence of other religious observances, institutions, such as the Sabbath, and rites, such as circumcision, became prominent (Kraus, 1966). As a result, it is claimed that since the “holy place” was lost, (when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed prior to the exile), the “holy time” became more important. Consequently, McSweeney (2015) suggested that “It developed the ritual features of observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, dietary provisions, treatment of diseases,” as well as “instructions on the priesthood and sacrifices.”

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE SABBATH

“The historical and theological foundation of the Sabbath is tied up with the socially determined purpose of a day of rest” (Carson, 1999). In Genesis 2:2, when God created the Heaven and the earth, we see it being declared as a day of rest, which belongs to the Lord.



**N.B.** *The Hebrew for ‘rested’ here means ‘ceased’.*

According to Reid (2014), “The entire Sabbath legislation, (including the seventh day, the seventh year, The Jubilee and The Land of Promise) was originally a festival of freedom celebrating the Exodus from Egypt.” As a result, Reid suggested that: “Deuteronomy 5:12-15 interprets the seventh day from this point of view and no other. The priestly version in Exodus 20:8-11 deviates from all other Sabbath laws in that it is the only one, of the Ten Commandments, that can be interpreted in a ceremonial sense.”

However, in the commandment, Exodus 20:8-11, we see where it says that we should, “Remember the Sabbath to keep it Holy. Six days shall you labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a day of rest, which belongs to me (God).” Two things are of great interest here,