**Clean and Unclean Food**

In chapter 14, Moses began by forbidding the people from cutting themselves or shaving their heads as they mourned for a loved one who had died. This was a pagan practice that seemed to be an attempt to symbolically join the person in death. Matthew Henry quoted an unnamed Jewish writer who observed *If your father* (for instance) *die, you shall not cut yourselves,* that is, *you shall not sorrow more than is meet, for you are not fatherless, you have a Father, who is great, living, and permanent, even the holy blessed God,* whose children you are, *But an infidel* (says he), *when his father dies, hath no father that can help him in time of need; for he hath said to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth* *therefore he weeps, cuts himself, and makes himself bald.*  In Romans chapter 6, Paul makes it clear that while we are baptized into the death of Jesus, we are also united with Him in His resurrection Moses then repeats law given in Leviticus regarding clean vs. unclean animals. Instructions were previously covered in chapter 11 of Leviticus. In Deuteronomy, Moses provides a list of animals that are *acceptable* to eat. Since numerous animals were considered acceptable, Moses was telling them that God provided ample food for them so they would not have to resort to eating unclean animals. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from all but one of the trees in the Garden of Eden, yet they chose to concentrate not on God’s provision, but what was withheld from them. Note that in verses 9 and 11, Moses again leads with what is allowed. The prohibition against eating anything found dead first stated in Lev. 22:8 is repeated here. As we have previously discussed, God gave these laws partly to promote good health. Some animals and shellfish were disease vectors and the carcass of even a clean animal would likely be contaminated with bacteria. Finally, the prohibition of cooking a young goat in its mother’s milk is repeated (first covered in Ex. 23:19). This was apparently a practice associated with superstitious rituals performed by Canaanites. David Guzik noted that Jews today who strictly observe the Law do not consumer milk and meat at the same meal (including cheese) since the milk and meat could from the same cow.

Next Moses reminded the Israelites that they were to set aside one tenth of what their fields produced each year. He instructed them to eat the tithe of their grain, wine, oil and firstborn animals in God’s presence at His dwelling place. These instructions were to apply to them when they entered Canaan. Since some tribes might be located a far distance from the tabernacle, Moses made special provision to allow the people to exchange their tithe for silver which they could carry on their journey to God’s dwelling place where they could buy offering that could be presented to God. The chapter ends with a special instruction to store the tithes locally every three years so that the Levites, aliens, the fatherless and widows in their communities could be provided for.

Matthew Henry noted that God had blessed the Israelites as a peculiar people with 3 distinguishing characteristics: First they were God’s elect, chosen by Him not for their own merit but by His grace alone. Next they were His adopted children. He chose Israel as His son, not because He needed a son but because Israel needed a father. Lastly they were sanctified. Verse 2 says they were a holy people unto God. Henry noted they were, *devoted to his service, designed for his praise, governed by a holy law, graced by a holy tabernacle, and the holy ordinances relating to it. God's people are under the strongest obligations to be holy, and, if they are holy, are indebted to the grace of God that makes them so. The Lord has set them apart for himself, and qualified them for his service and the enjoyment of him, and so has made them holy to himself.*  In Romans chapter 8, Paul shows a similar progression of God’s blessings “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (verses 8-9)” The verse preceding this is one of the most comforting contained in the Bible “And we know that in all things**God works for the good of those who love him**, who have been called according to his purpose.”