

Can a Christian eat blood?

By

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The Old Testament repeatedly warns against eating blood, or eating meat with the blood in it. Leviticus 19:26 explicitly says: “ You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it ”. When an animal was butchered, it was therefore important to ensure proper bleeding before processing the meat. For Jews, this still is an important requirement for kosher meat.

Atonement by blood

The reason of this prohibition to eat blood, is that God gave the blood to make atonement (Leviticus 17:11). Whoever would eat blood, would thereby disdain the atonement God offered. He should be “ cut off ” (Leviticus 17:14).

How is that worked out in the New Testament? The Lord Jesus fulfilled the law. His blood has made atonement, therefore there is no longer any need to treat animal blood especially carefully. Jesus told His disciples that a person

is defiled by what comes out of him (his sinful thoughts and words), not by what he is eating. Mark concludes: “ Thus He declared all foods clean ” (Mark 7:19).

In Acts 10:15, Peter sees a vision and is told not to consider unclean or common what God has made clean. This primarily refers to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, but it seems logical to extend this commandment to food laws. Paul does so in 1 Timothy 4:4. He strongly disagrees with people who require abstinence from certain foods, “ for everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving ”.

Different opinions

Some Christians do not agree with the view explained above. They point out that the prohibition of eating blood doesn't originate in the laws of Moses, but was previously given to Noah (Genesis 9:4).

And there is a New Testament passage that repeats the prohibition of eating blood: “ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn

to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood ” (Acts 15:19-20).

But most Christians think this isn't a lasting prohibition, but advice in a situation where Jewish and non-Jewish Christians lived together (see Acts 15:21, compare May a Christian eat meat used for a sacrifice in another religion?).

There are no food laws for Christians

The New Testament gives no constraints or restrictions on what we can eat. Nor are there special foods that should be eaten – although some religious groups thought so. “ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them ” (Hebrews 13:9).

Foods have no special religious value. They are given by God to sustain our bodies and are therefore “good”, to be “ received with thanksgiving ” (1 Timothy 4:4).

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