



Conducted by
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“WHY did God designate for the Jews clean and unclean animals? What determined a clean or unclean animal?”

God's Choices

IT seems to me that it is in the province of God to make choices consistent with His will. Such choices could be made irrespective of the people concerned, or they could be so arranged that the compliance of the people would be necessary in order to make them effective. This would surely be consistent with what we know and understand of God.

Furthermore, we can understand that the choices of God would be fully consistent with what we call His Omniscience, i.e. His ability to foreknow the end from the beginning. The idea of foreknowledge should not lead us to think that because God *knows* the end from the beginning that He actually *makes* things happen to verify His foreknowledge.

In order to illustrate this point let us consider the choice by God of the nation of Israel as His personal choice from among all the nations of the earth. We need to ask ourselves the question, “Did God choose the Jews because He wanted to *make* them do as He willed, or because He foreknew that their actions and development would *best suit* His will? Admittedly, He did on occasions directly intervene in their affairs, but don't forget that all the prophecies were Messianic in content, and were in

preparation for that precise time when the Messiah would come. In Acts of Apostles, Peter makes two statements which substantiate what we are saying. Concerning the crucifixion of Jesus he says, "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But *this is how* God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that His Christ would suffer" (Acts 3:17,18). Also in Acts 4:27,28, we have Peter telling us that God acted at the precise time that only His foreknowledge could have determined, "Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen". What God did *make* happen at that time was the death of His Son on the cross; every other circumstance, I believe, He *used* for His prime purpose.

Therefore, I conclude that every instruction which God gave to His chosen people was fully consistent with His Divine Will and Nature, and that His Will and Nature were ideally expressed in the sacrificial offering of His Son Jesus.

The Eternal Nature

The word AIONIOS in the Greek describes duration. When applied to God as in Rom. 16:26; of His power, 1 Tim. 6:16; and of His glory, 1 Pet. 5:10; it means 'endless'. It is also used of the redemption effected by Christ (Heb. 9:14), i.e. and endless redemption. So we understand that God's nature is endless, and that whatever emanates from that nature must also be endless. Therefore we can say that Jesus, who in self-sacrifice offered to God His perfect humanity, was Himself eternal (endless) by nature. It is important to realise this because if the redemption (deliverance) effected by Christ was 'once for all', then of necessity the sacrificial offering (in this case Christ Himself) must have been a clean (pure) sacrifice: as the Hebrew letter says, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14. But read the whole chapter to get the full implication of purification).

We need to understand the sacrifices of the old covenant in order to fully understand the importance of the sacrifice of Christ. The Hebrew letter goes on, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:22). Ritual sacrifice, conducted ceremonially, had the efficacy under the Old covenant to cleanse the body from ritual sins, "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean" (9:13). Therefore the Hebrew letter seems to be saying, 'if the ritual sacrifice can effect external purity, then surely the self-sacrifice of the spotless Son of God will cleanse for ever the sins of the soul'. The *limited* efficacy of the sacrificial animal offerings was no match for the *endless* redemption accomplished by Christ.

It is my view that purification from sin was always in the mind of God after sin had entered into the world, and death by sin. If this is so, then we can readily understand that purification could not come from that which in itself was unclean. Therefore, God had to designate clean animals as offerings for ritualistic sacrifices; by the same reasoning under the new covenant God had to provide a spotless lamb whose life should be given for the inner cleansing of the soul, and the self-oblation of Christ was and is a standing testimony to this.

Clean and Unclean Animals

The Book of Leviticus tells us about this; "The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Say to the Israelites: Of all the animals that live on land these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud'" (Lev. 11:1-3). These were the animals which were ceremonially clean. Leviticus then goes on to tell of those animals which were ceremonially unclean.

Purification from defilement was something which God insisted on quite strictly. Not only does such purification refer to animals only, but it covered the whole spectrum of Israelite living. Such was (and is) God's concern for purity in that which He asks for. I think that we must understand that God has the power to designate cleanliness and uncleanness; this is in His nature. We must always be conscious of what He said to Peter, "What *God* has cleansed, call not that unclean".

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