

Question: I was reading in Genesis 1 last week with some family and my brother asked about the true interpretation of Genesis 1: 29-30. There was some confusion as to if God put the fruit, herb bearing seeds, etc for us and the animals to eat (only). We wanted to know if He meant it we were meant to eat that and not animals and were to be herbivores, animals included.

Although Genesis 1:29-30 seems to imply that the only lawful diet for man consisted of plant-based foods, we cannot be certain that large fish did not eat small fish and large animals did not eat small animals since the scripture does not say. What it does tell us is that after the introduction of sin through Adam and Eve, the restriction on what man could eat was expanded and there is scriptural reference to animal sacrifices by Abel. We see many examples in the Bible after the expulsion from the garden of God's people eating meat and examples of Jesus taking the Passover (which included roasted lamb) as well as feeding thousands with fish (although, arguably, fish is not meat).

The short answer to the question is 'No, there is no command to us from God for us consume a meatless/fishless diet.'

In Genesis 9:3-4, God gives permission to eat "flesh" so long as it does not contain "its life"; that, is to say, its blood.

In Exodus 12:8, God instructs Moses and Aaron concerning the Passover meal in which an unblemished lamb is to be roasted: "And they shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it ..."

In Luke 22:15, Jesus, in the upper room, spoke to the apostles: "And He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;'" which would imply that Jesus, being a Jew, ate the traditional Passover meal.

There are examples in the gospels of Jesus feeding thousands with fish.

In Acts 10:9-16, Peter describes his vision: verses 12, 13: "...and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, 'Arise Peter, kill and eat!'"

Whether we choose to eat meat/fish or not is not something by which to judge others nor is it an all-important issue of salvation as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians where he is speaking of eating food offered to idols:

1 Cor 8:8-13, "But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat it nor the better if we do eat. ...Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I may not cause my brother to stumble."

Paul seems to be saying that what we eat is not so important as the peace and spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters. We are to live our lives to do nothing that would negatively influence believers and the nonbelievers away from walking as Christ walked. Paul digs deeper into this message in 1 Cor 10: 23-33. In verses 23-24, he writes "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience sake...Whether then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Gentiles or to Greeks or to the church of God..."