rule that God has given—animals that are both cloven hoofed and who chew the cud, and fish with both fins and scales are allowed. But both characteristics must be present. God specifically says,

The hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean. ... And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean (Leviticus 11:6, 7).

With such a clear word from God—the original diet from Eden and the detailed instructions found in Leviticus 11—how is it that there is such a difference of opinion among Christians about what should be eaten and what should not? Why is it that some Christians believe one should eat only a vegetarian diet (or at most only clean meat) while others seem to feel that they can eat anything that doesn’t eat them first?

Texts that aren’t easy to understand

Well, to be perfectly fair, there are some texts in the Bible on this topic that are not easy to understand at first. And some Christians point to these texts to prove that they can eat anything they choose with God’s blessing.

Does the Bible contradict itself? Is it possible that these health laws were nailed to Jesus’ cross as part of the ceremonial law? Let’s find out by turning to the Bible itself. We want to look at what it says about the Christian and his diet and see if we can find a harmonizing thread that runs through the whole Word of God.

Acts 10

Some believe that the story of Peter’s vision in Acts 10 is evidence that God has changed His mind about some food being unclean—that it proves we can eat whatever we want. Here is the story.
Joppa, to a house by the seaside, and ask for a man named Peter who would tell him more about God’s will for his life. You can read all this in Acts 10.

So Cornelius told his servants to go to Joppa and find Peter. He wanted to know and follow all the light Peter could give him. As the servants drew near to Joppa, Peter was on the rooftop of the house by the sea, praying. He became very hungry and wanted to eat. But while food was being prepared, God gave Peter a vision. Let’s pick up the story from the Bible at this point. In his vision, Peter

... saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts

Some Christians believe that the vision God gave Peter of a great sheet filled with unclean animals means that He has cleansed all the animals making them acceptable as food. But what did Peter understand the vision to mean?

Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army who lived in Caesarea. He was a godly man who wanted to follow God’s will for his life as far as he understood it. One day, God told him in a vision that he should send servants to
of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius . . . stood before the gate (Acts 10:11-17).

Some Christians believe that this vision God gave to Peter means that He has cleansed all unclean food and animals, making them acceptable as food. After all, didn’t He show Peter a great sheet filled with all kinds of unclean animals and then told Peter not to call unclean what He had cleansed?

Is that what Peter understood the vision to mean? Peter was horrified to think that God would tell him to eat these unclean animals! He had never eaten anything like that before. Peter “doubted in himself what this vision he had seen should mean” (verse 17). But he wasn’t to remain in doubt very long.

The men from Cornelius were at his door. They told him of the vision God had given their master and begged Peter to come with them and explain God’s truth more completely. The Holy Spirit told Peter to accompany these men for He had sent them.

The next day, Peter and some others went to Caesarea to Cornelius’s house. Now that may not seem particularly amazing to us, but for Peter, it was an extremely unusual and extraordinary thing to do.