

AN ABIDE DISCOVERY SESSION

THE PROGRESSIVE GUARDRAIL

Finding clarity and confidence
in God's unfolding story.

THE ILLUMINATED TRAIL

Does God change His mind?

If you have ever noticed these changing commands and wondered how they can all be true at the same time, you are not alone. It feels like a discrepancy.

WAYPOINT 1
(EDEN)
Eat only
plants.

WAYPOINT 3
(MOSES)
Strict lists of
clean and unclean
animals.

WAYPOINT 2
(NOAH)
All meat is
acceptable.

WAYPOINT 4
(JESUS)
All foods are
clean.

That moment of honest
uncertainty is not a weakness.
It is the doorway to understanding
how God actually wrote the Bible.

God did not deliver His plan all at once.

He unfolded His revelation gradually across centuries, different peoples, and distinct covenants.

What looks like inconsistency is actually preparation.

Seed to Harvest

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God...
(Hebrews 4:14, LSB)

My words which I have put
in your mouth, shall not depart...
from now and forever.
(Isaiah 59:21, LSB)

The journey was not confusion;
it was preparation for a destination.

Two Errors and the Faithful Alternative



Flattening

Treating the entire Bible as one era with one set of instructions.



Severing

Treating the Old Testament as irrelevant or contradicted by the New.



Progressing

Later revelation builds on earlier revelation without contradicting it.

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4, LSB)

The Diagnostic Compass

Before interpreting any passage, the faithful reader pauses to ask three questions.

When was this written?
(Locating the passage on the timeline of redemptive history).



To whom was this written?
(All humanity? Israel?
A specific church?)

What part of God's story is this?
(Creation, the Mosaic Law, the New Covenant?)

These questions do not make the Bible less authoritative.
They make it more intelligible.

Stages 1 & 2: Expansion, Not Contradiction

The world after the flood was fundamentally different from the garden. God adapted His provision to the era His people were actually living in.



Pre-Fall Creation

“I have given to you every plant...
it shall be food for you.”
(Genesis 1:29, LSB)



Post-Flood Reality

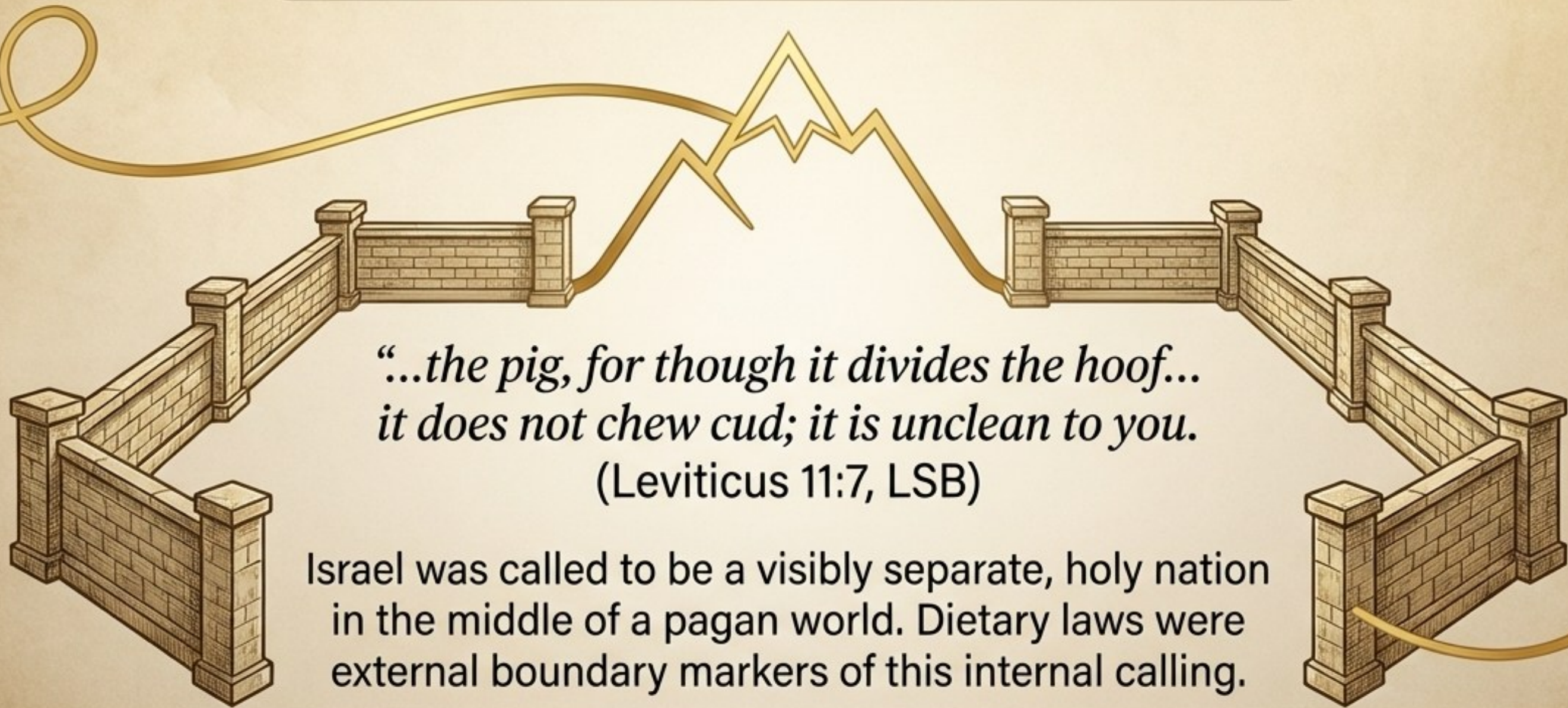
“Every moving thing that is alive shall be
food for you; as with the green plant...”
(Genesis 9:3, LSB)

*Different era. Different situation.
Same generous God.*



Stage 3: The Holy Distinction

Era: Mosaic Covenant | To Whom: Nation of Israel



*“...the pig, for though it divides the hoof...
it does not chew cud; it is unclean to you.
(Leviticus 11:7, LSB)*

Israel was called to be a visibly separate, holy nation in the middle of a pagan world. Dietary laws were external boundary markers of this internal calling.

God expects His people to be distinct. This was faithful instruction for a specific era.

The Shift in Holiness

“There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him;
but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man...
(Thus He declared all foods clean.)
(Mark 7:15, 19, LSB)

External distinctiveness
(What goes on the plate)



Internal distinctiveness
(What proceeds out of the heart)



Jesus did not lower the bar of holiness; He moved it to the heart.
The old boundary markers had served their purpose.

Stage 4: The Ultimate Fulfillment

♦ Era: New Covenant | To Whom: The Early Church (Peter) ♦

Peter:

“By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything defiled...” (Acts 10:14, LSB)

The Voice:

“What God has cleansed, no longer consider defiled.” (Acts 10:15, LSB)



Peter was not being disobedient; he was faithful to the era he had always known. The vision announced a new era: the wall of separation has come down because the Gospel is now for every nation.

The Unfolding Map: Dietary Laws Synthesized

Era	Reference	The Provision	The Purpose
Original Design	Genesis 1	Plant-based only	Provision in a perfect, sinless world.
Post-Flood Reality	Genesis 9	All meat acceptable	Expanded provision for a fractured, dangerous world.
The Holy Distinction	Leviticus 11	Clean/Unclean limits	Visible boundary markers separating Israel from pagan nations.
Ultimate Fulfillment	Mark 7 / Acts 10	All foods clean	The Gospel reaches all nations; holiness is located in the heart.

Walking with the Teacher: A Unified System

The Progressive Guardrail does not stand alone. It is part of an interlocking architecture of faithful reading.

Contextual
Keeps the passage in its surrounding narrative.

Literal
Honors the specific genre of the text.

Exegetical
Draws out the Author's original intent.

One-Meaning
Secures the original meaning across time.

Progressive
Locates the text in the unfolding story.

Remove any one, and the reading drifts. Hold them together, and the story comes into focus.

A Thousand Generations of Faithfulness

“You shall know therefore that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant... to a thousand generations.”

(Deuteronomy 7:9, LSB)

You are not reading a book of competing instructions. You are reading the testimony of a God who kept every word He ever spoke. He was faithful then. He is faithful now.

The Era of Fulfillment

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”

(1 John 5:3, LSB)




The heavy weight of ceremony, sacrifice, and separation has been absorbed by the One who fulfilled it. What remains is the love of God expressed in joyful discipleship.

This is the room the entire progressive plan was building toward. You are already in it.

The Joy of Hearing Him Clearly

God wants to reveal Himself to you more than you want to know Him. He has been preparing this revelation since long before you arrived.



MEDITATE
& OBEY.
STUDY & APPLY.
HEAR & DO.

This is how we abide in Christ. This is how we demonstrate our love for God. Walk confidently in His unfolding Word.