

Preface

In 1996 I began to entertain a belief contrary to my Jewish friends and family—that Jesus is the promised Messiah.¹

What was I thinking? That Jesus is *not* the Messiah is a belief deeply entrenched in my family history. Was I really qualified to reevaluate this? How could I veer off the path that my forefathers had walked for thousands of years?

After struggling with these questions for several months, I realized that the generations before me probably had not approached the “Jesus question” as intentionally as I was. I didn’t know any family members who read the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) in which the Messiah is foreshadowed, let alone study the New Testament to see if Jesus fit the bill. Instead, most of them—consciously or unconsciously—inherited their rejection of Jesus from their parents, grandparents and rabbis.

A little knowledge of history reinforced their view. During the Crusades, Jews were slaughtered in Jesus’ name. During the Spanish Inquisition, “Convert to Christianity or die” was the theme. During the Reformation, Martin Luther called for believers to destroy Jewish synagogues and religious books. Although I was ignorant of this history, my deeply ingrained rejection of Jesus was solidified by seeing TV evangelist antics and crosses burning at Ku Klux Klan rallies. These people appeared to be Jesus’ most visible representatives, so I wanted nothing to do with him.

1. The word “messiah” comes from the Hebrew word *moshiach*, which means “anointed one.” In the Greek, *moshiach* is translated *Christos*, which is often translated into English as “Christ.” Most Jewish folks, myself included, grow up believing that “Christ” is Jesus’ last name (or a swear word) rather than an affirmation of His his messiahship. As such, I like to refer to Jesus as “Messiah” rather than “Christ.”

What Softened My Stance?

While recovering from a series of personal trials, I was encouraged by friends to pray for strength and wisdom. Desperate, I dabbled in prayer, and within a few days I sensed that the God of my ancestors was indeed still alive and well. Unable to ignore his existence, I set out to learn more about Him. But where to start?

It was Christians who seemed most interested in talking about God. These people focused on growing, learning and healing—with God at the center of their lives. But the thought of becoming a “Christian” seemed strange. How could I make that leap when I knew nothing about Jesus? I realized how strongly held my disbelief was, yet how little I knew. As an educated, intelligent businesswoman, I reckoned that it was time to investigate.

In spite of my (real or imagined) family opposition, I braved the journey with an open mind as best I could. Discovering information about Jesus that contradicted my core disbeliefs disturbed me, but it eventually produced fruit in every area of my life—beyond my wildest expectations. Had I not ventured outside of my pre-conceived theology and my ancestors’ belief system, I would have missed it.

Shortly after coming to faith in Jesus I had my fateful lunch with Elizabeth (see the Prologue). It was the beginning of realizing that I hadn’t “converted” from Judaism to Christianity, but rather, I had become a Jewish believer in Messiah. Learning about the Hebraic roots of Christianity helped me better understand the Bible and the historical context in which it was written.

In 2003 I wrote an 8-page paper for my friends at church. It was called “Why I Don’t Eat Pork,” and it was born out of a need to explain my new eating habits to my Christian friends. Several years later, while working as an editor for First Fruits of Zion (FFOZ), I was asked to compile the writings of D. Thomas Lancaster that related to the Bible’s food laws, especially clean and unclean meats of Leviticus 11. I thought that the book needed an introduction, so I offered to write it.

I guess I had a lot to say. The book eventually morphed into *Holy Cow!* and was first published by FFOZ in 2005. Although it was not the

first book on biblical eating, it was unique in the territory it covered and how it was addressed.

In 2006 my son was born, which began my slow drift away from FFOZ due to motherhood demands. Parenting, gardening, family nutrition became my new areas of interest. In 2009 I co-wrote the *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living Cookbook*, and I happily immersed myself in “life application.” While I was not actively spreading *Holy Cow!*’s message, its content was still important to me.

Since then, my interest in biblical eating was mostly for my family’s benefit; after moving to Richmond from Chicago in 2011, just getting meals on the table was a feat. Between moving twice, parenting, finishing *Holy Cow!*’s second edition, hosting a radio show and creating a new life on the other side of the country, I had no interest in being a voice for this topic. When I restarted my real estate vocation on top of that, being a public biblical eating advocate really dropped off the radar.

You want me to do what?

In 2012 my son’s Christian school was having a fundraiser and needed volunteers. I signed up to help and found myself serving pulled pork, fried clams and baked beans with ham.

To say I felt conflicted was an understatement.

On one hand, this group of teachers, parents and students were some of the kindest, most joy-filled, devoted, Bible believing followers of Jesus that I’d ever met. Did God *really* care about what they were eating?

On the other hand, I had just updated the second edition of this work and was more convinced than ever that logically, theologically and physiologically, God designed certain meats to be eaten. The stuff I was serving wasn’t it.

What did God think? What did I think? What did their bodies think? I pushed aside the questions and focused on loving my neighbor.

In my new life in Richmond, I usually held my tongue when the topic of faith and food / health came up. In my experience, sharing thoughts about God’s design for eating (especially my views on unclean meat) was not the best way to make new friends in the land flowing with bacon and barbeque (pulled pork).

But the reality of our society’s deteriorating health—especially in Christianity—haunted me. Many friends have been diagnosed with and died from cancer. Well-meaning Christians earnestly seek prayer *after* loved ones are diagnosed, but seeking prevention wisdom, courtesy of the Creator, seemed to fall on deaf ears.

Why?

In 2018 my husband and I read *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* by Dr. Michael Heiser. (Side note, this book is written towards scholars. If I had to do it again, I’d buy and read his simpler book, *Supernatural: What the Bible Teaches about the Unseen World And Why It Matters*.)

In a nutshell, it opened my eyes to both the reality of spiritual warfare and the power we have as Believers—through Messiah and the Holy Spirit—to overcome and defeat the enemy. What was previously a Sunday school lesson (think full armor of God costumes, songs and posters) was becoming real to me.

A short time after my eyes were opened to the unseen realm, I encountered some of the most intense personal struggles I had ever experienced. Although I was a “Believer” in Jesus, the truth was that over the years the enemy had deeply infiltrated my faith life, as evidenced by the fear, anger and anxiety I lived under. This wake-up call forced me into a season of repentance, healing and restoration of my faith, more committed to and focused on Jesus than I ever had been.

As the concept of spiritual warfare and the power to overcome through Jesus became more vivid, *it became clear that there are truly crafty powers and principalities that are intent on derailing believers in Messiah in any way possible*. Most of us “believe” that—but do we *live* like we believe it? We ignore that reality to our own peril.

What does this have to do with what we eat?

I believe that the church’s refusal to heed God’s call to care for their bodies is a huge asset for the enemy. Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and chronic fatigue all help Satan’s cause. The fewer, healthier Christians in the world, the fewer voices for the Lord. By tempting us away from God’s ingredients, he lures us towards foods that weaken our bodies and therefore our ability to fight for the Gospel. Echoes of Eden plague us: “Did God really say not to eat...?”

Fighting the Corona Virus

After many years of ruminating on all of this, I was ready to revisit and advocate for biblical eating, but I had no opportunity. Sitting on the sidelines had become uncomfortable.

Then in March, 2020 COVID-19 overtook our country. Barry Rubin called and wanted to enlist me and *Holy Cow!* into battle.

Huh? What did *Holy Cow!* have to do with the corona virus?

A conversation between him and his wife reflected their belief that unclean meat may have been the source of the pandemic. They sent me several scientific articles that appeared to link bats (which are unclean) to this global catastrophe. I wasn't convinced, since there were other theories that seemed just as probable. I don't think eating bats is healthy or God's design, but I wasn't comfortable linking them so directly. But then I saw it.

Buried in the science was the fact that the Chinese government outlawed the consumption of wildlife.

On February 24 the nation announced a permanent ban on wildlife consumption and trade except for research or medicinal or display purposes—which will stamp out an industry worth \$76 billion and put approximately 14 million people out of jobs, according to a 2017 report commissioned by the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Source: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-chinas-bat-woman-hunted-down-viruses-from-sars-to-the-new-coronavirus1/>

Although this ban turned out to be temporary, and I still wasn't convinced that the bats caused the virus, I was intrigued that China believed (for a while anyhow) that the health benefits of avoiding eating these animals outweighed the enormous cost. I address pandemics (including Covid-19) and other health issues in chapter 8, a new chapter in this edition of the book.

I am thankful to the Rubins for their passion for the cause of biblical eating. If you are a believer in Jesus, we pray that this book encourages and motivates you to seek God's design for your food choices. If you are not yet a believer, we invite you to explore the claims of Jesus. Regardless of your background and beliefs, I invite you "sit in the tension" and open-handedly explore perspectives radically different than what you've believed in the past.