

# THE INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH OF GOD

## SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDIES - BIBLE FOODS - FISH

**SUBJECT:** Bible Foods - Fish

### FISH

(dagh, daghah, da'gh; ichthus, ichthudion, opsarion):

1. Natural History: Fishes abound in the inland waters of Palestine as well as the Mediterranean. They are often mentioned or indirectly referred to both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, but it is remarkable that no particular kind is distinguished by name. In Lev 11:9-12 and Deut 14; 9 f, "whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters" is declared clean, while all that "have not fins and scales" are forbidden. This excluded not only reptiles and amphibians, but also, among fishes, siluroids and eels, sharks, rays and lampreys. For our knowledge of the inland fishes of Palestine we are mainly indebted to Tristram, *Natural History of the Bible and Fauna and Flora of Palestine*; Lortet, *Poissons et reptiles du Lac de Tiberiade*; and Russegger, *Reisen in Europa, Asien, Afrika, 1835-1841*. The most remarkable feature of the fish fauna of the Jordan valley is its relationship to that of the Nile and of East Central Africa.

Two Nile fishes, *Chromis nilotica* Hasselquist, and *Clarias macracanthus* Gunth., are found in the Jordan valley, and a number of other species found only in the Jordan valley belong to genera (*Chromis* and *Hemichromis*) which are otherwise exclusively African. This seems to indicate that at some time, probably in the early Tertiary, there was some connection between the Palestinian and African river systems. No fish can live in the Dead Sea, and many perish through being carried down by the swift currents of the Jordan and other streams. There are, however, several kinds of small fish which live in salt springs on the borders of the Dead Sea, springs which are as salt as the Dead Sea but which, according to Lortet, lack the magnesium chloride which is a constituent of the Dead Sea water and is fatal to the fish. *Capoeta damascina* Cuv. and Val., one of the commonest fishes of Syria and Palestine, has been taken by the writer in large numbers in the Arnon and other streams flowing into the Dead Sea. This is surprising in view of the fact that the Dead Sea seems to form an effective barrier between the fishes of the different streams flowing into it. The indiscriminate mention of fishes without reference to the different kinds is well illustrated by the numerous passages in which "the fishes of the sea, the birds of the heavens, and the beasts of the field," or some equivalent expression, is used to denote all living creatures, e.g. Gen 1:26; 9:2; Num 11:22; Deut 4:18; 1 Kings 4:33; Job 12:8; Ps 8:8; Ezek 38:20; Hos 4:3; Zeph 1:3; 1 Cor 15:39,

2. Jonah's Fish: An unusually large shark might fulfil the conditions of Jonah's fish (dagh, daghah; but Matt 12:40, ketos, "whale" or "sea monster"). The whale that is found in the Mediterranean (*Balaena australis*) has a narrow throat and could not swallow a man. No natural explanation is possible of Jonah's remaining alive and conscious for three days in the creature's belly. Those who consider the book historical must regard the whole event as miraculous. For those who consider it to be a story with a purpose, no explanation is required.

3. Fishing: The present inhabitants of Moab and Edom make no use of the fish that swarm in the Arnon, the Hisa and other streams, but fishing is an important industry in Galilee and Western Palestine Now, as formerly, spear hooks and nets are employed. The fish-spear (Job 41:7) is little used. Most of the Old Testament references to nets have to do with the taking of birds and beasts and not of fishes, and, while in Hab 1:15 cherem is rendered "net" and mikhmereth "drag," it is not clear that these and the other words rendered "net" refer to particular kinds of nets. In the New Testament, however, sagene (Matt 13:47), is clearly the dragnet, and amphiblestron (Matt 4:18), is clearly the casting net. The word oftenest used is diktuon. Though this word is from dikein, "to throw," or "to cast," the context in several places (e.g. Luke 5:4; John 21:11) suggests that a dragnet is meant. The dragnet may be several hundred feet long. The upper edge is buoyed and the lower edge is weighted. It is let down from a boat in a line parallel to the shore and is then pulled in by ropes attached to the two ends, several men and boys usually pulling at each end. The use of the casting net requires much skill. It forms a circle of from 10 to 20 feet in diameter with numerous small leaden weights at the circumference. It is lifted by the center and carefully gathered over the right arm. When well thrown it goes to some distance, at the same time spreading out into a wide circle. A cord may be attached to the center, but this is not always the case. When lifted again by the center, the leads come together, dragging over the bottom, and sometimes a large number of fish may be enclosed. The novice has only to try, to realize the dexterity of the practiced fishermen.

Figurative: The fact that so many of Our Lord's disciples were fishermen lends a profound interest to their profession. Christ tells Simon and Andrew (Matt 4:19; Mark 1:17) that He will make them fishers of men. The Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 13:47) is likened unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which,

when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. Tristram (Natural History of the Bible) says that he has seen the fishermen go through their net and throw out into the sea those that were too small for the market or were considered unclean. In Jer 16:16, we read: "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith Yahweh, and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks." In the vision of Ezekiel (Ezek 47:9 f), the multitude of fish and the nets spread from En-gedi to En-eglaim are marks of the marvelous change wrought in the Dead Sea by the stream issuing from the temple. The same sign, i.e. of the spreading of nets (Ezek 26:5,14), marks the desolation of Tyre. It is a piece of broiled fish that the risen Lord eats with the Eleven in Jerusalem (Luke 24:42), and by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:13) He gives the disciples bread and fish. (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia)

## **FISH**

And they offered him a piece of boiled fish and a honeycomb. And when he had eaten in their presence, he took what remained and gave it to them. (Luke 24:42-43)

Fishing on the sea of Galilee and the river Jordan was a huge industry. During their exile in Egypt, the Israelites learned to prize the fish from Red Sea. For the people of the Old Testament, there were precise dietary laws of sea food.

We know that fish low cholesterol and contain healthy polyunsaturated fats.

Since there was no way of preserving fish (except by salting), most people in Bible times ate their fish fresh-a wonderfully rich source of proteins, potassium, vitamins and minerals with only a moderate amount of sodium.

We know that the fish:-

1. Thins the blood.
2. Protects arteries from damage.
3. Inhibits blood clots( anti -thrombin)
4. Reduces blood triglycerides.
5. Lowers LDL blood pressure.
6. Lowers blood pressure.
7. Reduces risk of heart attack and stroke.
8. Eases symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.
9. Reduces risk of lupus.
10. Relieves migraine headaches.
11. Fights inflammation.
12. Helps regulate the immune system.
13. Inhibits cancer in animals.
14. Soothes bronchial asthma.
15. Combats early kidney disease.

The key to the healing powers of fish lies in the omega-3 fatty acids. These are particularly concentrated in cold water fish such as anchovies, bluefish, tuna, salmon, mackerel and sardines.

These are the things that breed in the water, and which it is lawful to eat. All that hath fins, and scales, as well as in the sea, as in the rivers, and the pools, you shall eat. But whatsoever hath not fins and scales----- shall be an abomination to you: their flesh you shall not eat and their carcasses you shall avoid.( Lev 11:9-12) For more than 200 years, cod-liver oil was prescribed for a number of ailments, including rheumatism and arthritis, because, it was believed it could lubricate the joints.

Dr. Judith Wurtman, head of a research team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, discovered that seafood is high in this potent amino acid. it apparently stimulates the brain into producing extra nor epinephrine and dopamine. These are the neurotransmitters that the brain needs to keep functioning at peak efficiency. And makes us feel more alert.