

"How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished." Jeremiah 12:4

In the course of my missionary work, which has often been spent in bush areas among wildlife, my love for animals has grown and I have sought to learn what the Bible teaches concerning them.

Often I have been asked:

"Will animals be in Heaven?"

"What does God think about 'scientific' experiments on animals?"

"What should our attitude to animals be?"

This is some of what I have found in my studies of animals in the Bible.

ANIMALS AND GOD

God created all the animals (Psalm 104).

"Then God commanded, 'Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life; domestic and wild, large and small, and it was done. So God made them all, and He was pleased with what He saw.'"
Genesis 1:24, 25

All animals belong to God (Psalm 24:1).

"All the animals in the forest are Mine and the cattle on thousands of hills. All the wild birds are Mine and all living things in the fields." Psalm 50:10, 11

God cares for the animals (1 John 4:16).

"Look at the birds flying around . . . your Father in Heaven takes care of them" Matthew 6:26

"He gives animals their food and feeds the young ravens when they call." Psalm 147:9

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Jesus is described as *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* John 1:29
Jesus identified Himself with all the innocent animals who had been sacrificed for the sins of mankind and declared that His was the final sacrifice. Jesus abolished animal sacrifices and so Christianity has always rejected the need for further bloodshed of animals (Hebrews 9:12, 26).

"For the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins. For this reason, when Christ was about to come into the world, He said to God:

You do not want sacrifices and offerings, but You have prepared a body for Me. You are not pleased with animals burnt whole on the altar or with sacrifices to take away sins. Then I said, 'Here I am to do Your will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:4-7

The Scriptures reveal God's anger against man's sinfulness. God condemned the type of wholesale slaughter of animals in Judaism as a cover-up for their disobedience (Psalm 40:6-10).

"I gave your ancestors no commands about burnt offerings or any other kinds of sacrifices, when I brought them out of Egypt. But I did command them to obey Me, so that I would be their God and they would be My people. And I told them to live as I commanded them, so that things would go well for them. But they did not obey Me or pay any attention. Instead, they did whatever their stubborn and evil hearts told them to do and they became worse instead of better." Jeremiah 7:22;24

There is only one way of salvation and that is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - the Lamb of God who died to redeem sinful mankind (Revelation 5:12, 13). He died with the result that no other animals need die . . . for man's sinfulness.

Jesus is also known as *"The Lion of the tribe of Judah"* (Revelation 5:5) and it is interesting to notice that He was born in a stable among animals rather than in an inn among sinful people (Luke 2:7), that He rode a lowly donkey in triumph into Jerusalem on that great day of the feast (Matthew 21:5) and that He is prophesied to return again in glory as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, riding on a white horse (Revelation 19:11).

The Holy Spirit is symbolised by a dove (John 1:32), and He chose to reveal Himself as like a pure and gentle bird (Matthew 3:16) at Jesus' baptism.

The Bible records at least one occasion when God spoke through an animal (Numbers 22:28-33). Balaam's donkey showed greater spiritual perception than the prophet himself did. Obviously animals matter to God because the presence of animals in Nineveh is recorded as a reason for God's mercy in not destroying that sinful city.

"How much more then, should I have pity on Nineveh, that great city. After all, it has more than 120000 innocent children in it, as well as many animals." Jonah 4:11

ANIMALS IN HEAVEN

A controversial question is whether it is God's plan for animals to be in heaven or not. Many Christians believe that heaven just would not be heaven without animals. Certainly I believe that the Creator of millions of different species of animals, birds, insects and fish is a God who loves variety and prizes His creation. I cannot believe that Heaven will only be populated by angels and saints. From a careful study of the Bible I have become convinced that Heaven will be richer in vegetation and animal life than the most paradise-like part of earth could ever be. Where people get the idea of harps and clouds from, I don't know. God has a far greater plan than we can imagine.

"This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head." Ephesians 1:10



"Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, and leopards will lie down with young goats, calves and sheep will graze together."

"Search in the Lord's book of living creatures and read what it says. Not one of these creatures

will be missing and not one will be without its mate. The Lord has commanded it to be so; He Himself will bring them together. It is the Lord who will divide the land among them and give each of them a share. They will live in the land age after age, and it will belong to them for ever." Isaiah 34:16, 17

When the revealed Word of God teaches us that God's eternal plan is for "all creation" to be brought together under Christ then it includes all wildlife too. When God says "everything", He means everything - animals included.

When He says that they will live for "age after age", "forever", this means eternal life. Only one place will last forever, and that is Heaven.

That great book of worship in the Bible - the Psalms - reveals that all God's creation have contact with God (Psalm 93). All God's creatures praise Him (Psalm 145:10). It is only mankind who needs forgiving and saving and teaching as to how to worship (Psalm 36 & 51), the animal kingdom worships God continually and naturally.

"Praise Him, hills and mountains, fruit trees and forests; all animals, tame and wild, reptiles and birds." Psalm 148:9, 10

"Be glad, earth and sky! Roar sea and every creature in you: be glad fields and everything in you! The trees in the woods will shout for joy." Psalm 96:11, 12

The last book of the Bible presents the final climax of the ages when all creation faces the Creator. First the four living creatures (the animal-like angels around God's throne as described in Ezekiel) praise God, then the twenty-four elders, then the redeemed people of God, then the angels (Revelation 4:6 - 5:12), until finally the great scene is described when all living beings present their worship to Almighty God.

"And then I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, in the world below, and in the sea - all living beings in the universe - and they were singing: 'To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honour, glory and might, forever and ever'." Revelation 5:13

In the light of these Scriptures, I firmly believe that our loving almighty Creator intends all His creatures to enjoy heaven with Him forever. The only part of creation that will be missing from Heaven, according to the Bible, are those sinful human beings who neglect the great salvation that God has revealed in the Bible and provided through Christ. So while all the animal victims of scientific experiments will be in Heaven, the same cannot be said for all the hardhearted vivisectionists and ivory poachers.

ANIMALS AND MAN

Millions of wild animals die painful, lingering deaths in vicious traps every year. Not for food - for furs! Millions more are bred on fur farms and slaughtered for fashion.

Then the beauty industry inflicts untold agony on almost a million animals every year for perfumes, lipsticks and other cosmetics. There are adequate synthetic alternatives, but such is man's inhumanity towards animals that the slaughter continues.

In the name of science, millions more animals suffer in laboratories worldwide every year. In the first chapter of the Bible, God made mankind responsible for His animals (Genesis 1-28). All animals are God's animals (Psalm 50:10) and we are answerable to God for our treatment, care and protection of them.

"For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by Him. Each one will receive what he deserves, according to everything he has done, good or bad, in his bodily life." 2 Corinthians 5:10

What does God think of men battering baby seals to death so that some women can wear glamorous fur coats? What will God do to scientists who burn, infect, cripple, blind, shock, radiate, starve, asphyxiate and dissect cats, dogs, mice, monkeys, rabbits and other innocent victims for 'research' and often just trivial curiosity? How could we expect God to ignore the slaughter of magnificent elephants just to provide ivory ornaments, bracelets and necklaces?

When Jesus is identified as the Lamb of God, how can we remain unmoved at the killing and skinning of newborn karakul lambs to provide fur garments? He has provided us with cotton and the ability to make synthetic materials like nylon. We can shear sheep of their wool in summer. How can fashion justify the butchering of baby lambs for their skins?

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pards. What Christian can approve the killing of the

All animals belong to God. What gives us the right to torture them to satisfy our curiosity in the name of "science"?



We are answerable to God for our treatment of animals. What are we going to say about trapping animals

"A good man takes care of his animals, but wicked men are cruel to theirs." Proverbs 12:10

The Bible says that God has fixed a day in which He will judge the whole world with justice (Acts 17:31). It is well to remember that although man was created in the image of God, the whole message of the Bible is that all mankind has fallen into sinful rebellion against God.

"They are quick to hurt and kill; they leave ruin and destruction wherever they go. They have not known the path of peace, nor have they learnt to fear God . . . Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence." Romans 3:15-17, 23

On the other hand, the Bible indicates that all animals are acceptable in God's sight. They never degenerated into rebellion against God. While all human beings need forgiveness and salvation, all animals are already in a right relationship with God. We should remember this and be humbled.

In the light of the clear teaching of Scripture concerning creation and mankind's responsibility for it, we should treat animals with the love and concern of those who must give an account of our conduct to God.

We must recognise that the welfare and protection of animals is an essential part of our

Christian responsibility. I would challenge all Christians to make plain their opposition to such cruel practices as vivisection. We must determine to do all in our power to bring about the speedy abolition of all such mistreatment and tortures of animals. (I recommend the work of Animal Voice Postnet Suite 191, Private Bag X29, Somerset West 7129. Email: