

Nature in the Bible

Animals in the Bible

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_animals_in_the_Bible

In this treatise I am not setting out to give the details of all the animals mentioned in the Bible, rather to give general examples of how animals think, feel, and act.

Like every being with a body, animals have spirits and souls. That animals have spirits is seen in Ecclesiastes 3:21, which says, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" That animals have souls is seen in Job 12:7-10, which says, "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." Also, Numbers 31:28 says, "And levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep."

The very word "animal" is from the Latin word *animalis*, meaning "living" or *anima*, meaning "soul."

We can see examples of various animal's soul and spirit activities in pets; in their personalities, memories, ability to communicate their needs and wants, anger, love, knowledge, and other attributes of the soul and spirit. In Numbers 22 the prophet Balaam was going against the Lord's word and "God's anger was kindled" against Balaam (Numbers 22:22). The Lord stood in the way of Balaam's path with a sword in hand, ready to slay Balaam (Numbers 22:23). Balaam's ass refused to go any further because she saw the Lord standing there poised to slay Balaam should he go forward in his rebellion from the word of the Lord (Numbers 22:23-27). Balaam had struck the ass three times because she refused to move, and then the Lord allowed the ass to speak "with a man's voice" (2 Peter 2:16).

Let us start the story from there:

Numbers 22:28-30 28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? 29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. 30 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

The Lord opened Balaam's eyes to see the Lord standing there with "his sword drawn in his hand" (Numbers 22:31). The Lord said, "And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive" (Numbers 22:33). We see many things about animals here:

1. Desire to protect their masters (Numbers 22:25-27).
2. Real feelings of concern and questioning (Numbers 22:28).
3. Understanding of punishment and unjust punishment (Numbers 22:28).
4. Personal knowledge of their place in life (Numbers 22:30).
5. Memory of events in the past (Numbers 22:30).
6. Loyalty to their masters (Numbers 22:30).

This story is one of the few in the Bible that shows the many soul and spirit attributes of an animal. They have souls that feel and have emotions, and they have spirits that know and understand. The Lord allowed the ass to say what it was thinking, and it revealed many sensible and dedicated thoughts. The text does not say that the Lord spoke through the ass, for it was clearly the ass speaking of things relating to herself and to her master. The ass showed soul faculties by expressing emotion such as anger and confusion as to why she had been struck three times (v.28), and loyalty to her master (v.30). The ass showed spirit faculties by deciding not to go forward toward the Lord in order to protect her master (v.23), by questioning Balaam (v.28, 30), and by reasoning with Balaam (v.30). All of these actions of the ass prove that animals have souls and spirits by which they feel and know.

WHAT IS THE ETERNAL STATE OF ANIMALS

Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. 20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

This is all we know about the eternal state of animals. Both man and animal are alike in the sense that both die and their bodies go to the dust from whence they came, but man's spirit "goeth upward" and "the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth." While there are spirit animals and the like in Heaven (2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; Zechariah 1:8, 10; 6:1-5; Revelation 5:13; 19:11, 14, 21), nothing is said of an afterlife or eternal abode for animals. While many children question where animals go when they die, we have no authority to say they go to heaven when the Bible never says such a thing.

Animals are a beautiful creation of the Lord that serve many purposes for mankind. They should be treated as well as possible, as in the case with Balaam the Lord said, "And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive" (Numbers 22:33). The Lord would have slain Balaam and yet saved the ass. He would not have killed her for no reason or even hurt her in the least. She was faithful to her master and the Lord saw fit to protect her should He need to slay Balaam.

As stewards of animals and others creations of God that He has placed under our stewardship (Genesis 1:28), we should not abuse them or misuse them. Some are created for food (Genesis 9:3; 1 Timothy 4:3), some for companionship as pets, others for service like the example of Ox and Ass (Deuteronomy 22:10; Numbers 22; etc.), and others unknown to or unused by man serve God's pleasure (Revelation 4:11). Let us always honor the creation God has placed us as stewards over and never abuse our stewardship in the Lord.

Behemoth

Behemoth (See: Job 40:15-24)

Behemoth means kingly, gigantic beasts. The Bible's best description of a dinosaur-like animal is recorded in Job chapter 40. "Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. He ranks first among the works of God..." (Job 40:15-19) The book of Job is very old, probably written around 2,000 years before Jesus was born. Here God describes a great king of the land animals like some of the biggest dinosaurs, the Diplodocus and Apatosaurus. It was a gigantic plant-eater with great muscles and very strong bones. The long Diplodocus had leg bones so strong that he could have held three others on his back.

The behemoth were not afraid. They did not need to be; they were huge. Their tails were so long and strong that God compared them to cedars - one of the largest and most spectacular trees of the ancient world.

After all the behemoth had died out, many people forgot them. Dinosaurs were extinct and the fossil skeletons that are in museums today did not begin to be put together until about 150 years ago. Today, some people have mistakenly guessed that the behemoth mentioned in the Bible might be an elephant or a hippopotamus. But those animals certainly do not have tails like the thick, tall trunks of cedar trees! Although it cannot be stated with certainty, it appears that dinosaurs may have actually been mentioned in the Bible. This should not sound so strange. After all, God tells us that He created all the land animals on the 6th day of creation, the same day that he created mankind. Man and dinosaurs lived at the same time. There was never a time when dinosaurs ruled the earth. From the very beginning of creation, God gave man dominion over all that was made, even over the dinosaurs.

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THE BIBLE AND ANIMALS (Download PDF leaflet of this article)

"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?"

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

The Bible describes the Angels around God's throne as having features and characteristics like those of a lion, a bull and an eagle (Ezekiel 1).
God Himself is likened in Scripture to a lion, a leopard, a bear (Hosea 13:7, 8), and to an eagle (Deut. 32:11).

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 120 000 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 lion cubs will feed together, and little children will take care of them. Cows and bears will eat together, and their calves and cubs will lie down in peace. Lions will eat straw as cattle do . . . The land will be as full of knowledge of the Lord as the seas are full of water." Isaiah 11:6-9

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?

God identifies Himself with bears, lions and leopards. What Christian can approve the killing of these majestic wild animals for fur coats and carpets? God gave animals fur to keep them warm. He gave us the brains to make synthetic materials from plants. Why don't we use them more?

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 for furs, forcing them to do unnatural acts in circuses, confining and abusing them for our amusement? How can smokers justify the torture and killing of thousands of dogs and monkeys in "tobacco research"?

"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. See ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANISATIONS

No Christian should be a party to this evil abuse of God's creation. I would call on all those who seek to love and obey God to resolve never to buy or wear real fur or ivory. It is our responsibility to carefully boycott all cosmetics which are a result of cruelty to animals. (There are enough synthetic alternatives listed by Beauty Without Cruelty, PO Box 23321, Claremont 7735, South Africa, Tel: 021- 671-4583.)

We must all do what we can to secure the well-being of all animals who, with ourselves, inhabit the earth and so fulfil the creative joy and purpose of Almighty God.

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless." Proverbs 31:8

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Clean and Unclean Animals

Which Animals Does the Bible Designate as 'Clean' and 'Unclean'? God reveals which animals-including fish and birds-are suitable and unsuitable for human consumption in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Although the lists aren't exhaustive, He reveals guidelines for recognizing animals that are acceptable for food.

God states that cud-chewing animals with split hooves can be eaten (Leviticus 11:3; Deuteronomy 14:6). These specifically include the cattle, sheep, goat, deer and gazelle families (Deuteronomy 14:4-5). He also lists such animals as camels, rabbits and pigs as being unclean, or unfit to eat (Leviticus 11:4-8). He later lists such "creeping things" as moles, mice and lizards as unfit to eat (verses 29-31), as well as four-footed animals with paws (cats, dogs, bears, lions, tigers, etc.) as unclean (verse 27).

He tells us that salt- and freshwater fish with fins and scales may be eaten (verses 9-12), but water creatures without those characteristics (catfish, lobsters, oysters, shrimp, crabs, clams, mussels, squid, frogs, octopi, etc.) should not be eaten.

God also lists birds and other flying creatures that are unclean for consumption (verses 13-19). He identifies carrion eaters and birds of prey as unclean, plus ostriches, storks, herons and bats.

Birds such as chickens, turkeys and pheasants are not on the unclean list and therefore can be eaten. Insects, with the exception of locusts, crickets and grasshoppers, are listed as unclean (verses 20-23).

Why does God identify some animals as suitable for human consumption and others as unsuitable? God didn't give laws to arbitrarily assert control over humans. He gave His laws (including those of which meats are clean or unclean) "that it might be well" with those who seek to obey Him (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Although God did not reveal the specific reasons some animals may be eaten and others must be avoided, we can make generalized conclusions based on the animals included in the two categories.

In listing the animals that should not be eaten, God forbids the consumption of scavengers and carrion eaters, which devour other animals for their food.

Animals such as pigs, bears, vultures and raptors can eat (and thrive) on decaying flesh. Predatory animals such as wolves, lions, leopards and cheetahs most often prey on the weakest (and at times the diseased) in animal herds.

When it comes to sea creatures, bottom dwellers such as lobsters and crabs scavenge for dead animals on the sea floor. Shellfish such as oysters, clams and mussels similarly consume decaying organic matter that sinks to the sea floor, including sewage.

A common denominator of many of the animals God designates as unclean is that they routinely eat flesh that would sicken or kill humans. When we eat such animals we partake of a food chain that includes things harmful to humans.

As nutritionist David Meinz observes: "Could it be that God, in His wisdom, created certain creatures whose sole purpose is to clean up after the others? Their entire 'calling' may be to act exclusively as the sanitation workers of our ecology. God may simply be telling us that it's better for us believers not to consume the meat of these trash collectors" (Eating by the Book, 1999, p. 225).

The following list, based on Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, identifies many of the animals God designates as clean and unclean. The list uses their common names.

Clean Animals Animals That Chew the Cud and Part the Hoof

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