

# Animals in the Bible



Issue #39

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**I**n the beginning, the days of creation were positively filled with awesome events! After all, how exciting must it have been for God to create the heavens and the earth out of “nothing.” So, what is your favorite day of creation? I would probably pick days five and six because they were filled with excitement! From total silence, the world was miraculously coming alive with the unfamiliar sounds of animal life. On these days He created all the animals, large and small, some loud like the laughing hyena and others quiet as a mouse.

The events of day five are recorded in Genesis 1:20-22 *“Then God said, ‘let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens,’ and God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind and every winged bird after its kind and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’”* Yes, day five was filled with excitement as God created the fish and the birds.

The following day, God continued His great creative activities by speaking into existence the animals that live on dry land. Genesis 1:24-25 states, *“Then God said, ‘let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind; cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind,’ and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind and every thing that creeps on the ground after its kind, and God saw that it was good.”* How would you like to have watched God create the animals, from

mighty beasts all the way down to the smallest living organisms?

We must remember that God created all these magnificent animals before mankind was yet created. So did the animals come first? Yes they did! Later we learn that Adam was created and given the responsibility to name all the animals. I wonder how he came up with names like: hippopotamus, aardvark or koala? From this responsibility, we can see that the first animals probably lived in the garden of Eden with Adam. Adam did a good job naming the animals, but while doing this he learned that there wasn’t any creature quite like him. That’s when God took one of his ribs and fashioned it into a woman, a companion suitable for Adam.

The Scriptures use the attributes of various animals to teach us lessons. In this publication issue we’ll examine several of these. For instance, Proverbs 6:6-11 mentions an animal that we’re all familiar with. *“Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and your poverty will come in like a vagabond, and your need like an armed man.”*

Have you ever enjoyed a picnic in the park or your backyard? Now think carefully, did you ever enjoy this family outing without an ant, or two, or several inviting themselves to your picnic? Ants seem to always be on the go, they are looking for food.

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Solomon used the ants' common, yet powerful example to encourage us to be doing whatever needs to be done—now. The ants don't have anyone to tell them to clean their room, or set the table, or mow the grass. They just do it without complaining. And all the ants in the ant hill enjoy the benefits; they each have their job, but together they all have something to eat when it is cold and rainy outside. A lazy person often puts off to tomorrow what is best done today. We can learn similar lessons from other animals too, like the bees.

We can learn another lesson from the lowly ox. Oxen were like tractors to farmers of old; they were used to pull plows through the fields to till the land and to pull carts and wagons. Proverbs 14:4 talks about the consequences of not having oxen, *"where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox."* As we think about the importance of oxen, sooner or later we'll probably discover the following command concerning oxen. Deuteronomy 25:4 states, *"You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing."* The farmer obviously has an obligation to take care of the animal who serves him faithfully, but perhaps there is a deeper lesson for us in this command.

1 Corinthians 9:9-10 reads, *"For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops."* The lesson for us

is that servants of the Lord, like evangelists, should expect to be paid for their labors in the Lord's kingdom, just like the ox should expect to be fed as he threshes the grain.

Please share this publication issue about "Animals in the Bible" with your children. We've attempted to write this issue so that they can read it themselves, or have parents or grandparents read it to them.

## Wolves

Mary Teague

I took a step forward then paused. The forest had grown quiet except for a slight rustle in the leaves behind me. I should never have gone out this late by myself. I turned around, and squinted my eyes. Nothing. But wait. Two small glowing spots started moving towards me. Then two more. Wolves!! I immediately realized how foolish I had been, and started to run. I'm not sure I'm going to make it. I should have listened.

We all know people in the world with the following characteristics: fierce, hiding in the dark, waiting to strike, with no thought as to what will be left of us. And there were probably times when **you** thought, "I'm not sure I'm going to make it." With God's help, though, we can know the wolves for who they are. Let's look in the Bible at those whom God called wolves: the evil leaders, the false teachers and the unrighteous around us.



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We don't read in the Bible about the kind and gentle wolf. In Ezekiel 22:27 we find: *"Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain."* And Zephaniah 3:3 shows us: *"Her officials within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning."* One of the saddest things we see is that God was not speaking of foreign nations, but of Israel's own leaders. The ones that should have been building up the nation were instead destroying it and scattering the people.

In the New Testament, God describes false teachers as wolves. In Matthew 7:15, Jesus warned, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* And just like starving wolves, false prophets will devour anyone they come in contact with. And in Acts 20:29 Paul states, *"I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."* Wolves are not picky about what they kill. They will slaughter any animal that cannot outrun those sharp and dangerous claws and teeth.

Jesus also tried to prepare Christians for dealing with the evil of the world. In Matthew 10:16 He cautioned the apostles, *"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."* And in Luke 10:3 Jesus warned them by saying, *"Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."* The apostles weren't being sent to fluffy bunnies and playful kittens. They were entering the forest of the wolves.

Jesus laid down His life to save us from

the wolves. In John 10:11-15 Jesus told us, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

As we can see, the wolf is an apt description of the wicked. Evil leaders, false teachers, and the unrighteous of the world are waiting to destroy us. They will hide in the dark, trying to snatch us and tear us apart. They are not afraid, but are fierce. We must be on the lookout. We must take God with us, so that we are never in the forest alone.

Little Red Riding Hood said it plainly, "Oh! but, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!" And the wolf's response, "All the better to eat you with!"

## Ravens

Craig Sweet

**T**he common raven first appeared in the Bible in the story of Noah and the flood. Noah sent the raven through the window to see if it was time to leave the ark. The raven *"flew here and there"* (Genesis 8:7) which means it likely went searching for food and then returned to rest on the top of ark. It probably did not go back inside the ark. Noah likely thought it probably found some food (because the raven eats dead animals

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and such), but it still was not time to leave the ark because the raven did not fly away, but *“flew here and there.”*

The raven is a very large, smart, and pretty black bird with huge wings. The wings of a raven can be over four feet wide. This is so it can fly very high and far away without resting. While flying, it can find food because it can see so much when it is high above the earth. This is probably why Noah chose the raven to be the first bird sent out of the ark. It could fly a long way to find any land if there was any that could be seen. It is thought that the raven can even smell food from a great distance and be able to find it quickly. The raven is always hungry and looking for food.

When God was leading the Israelites, He told them that the raven was unclean and was not to be eaten. In Leviticus 11:15, the raven is in the list of other wonderful birds not to be eaten, like the eagle, vulture, buzzard, kite, falcon, owl, and the hawk, as well as others. Since they ate dead animals, it was not good for people to eat them.

Later in the Bible, one of God’s prophets, Elijah, told Ahab that there was going to be no rain for many years. People cannot live without water so even Elijah was worried about how he was going to live if he could not get water. God told him to go hide by the brook Cherith which is close to the Jordan River. God told him he could drink that water and He would send the ravens to bring him food. God chose the raven because of their great size, the ability to fly a long way, and because their beaks are razor

sharp which helps them tear food. So, God took care of Elijah, using ravens to bring him food.

Scientists have studied the raven and found that the raven babies stay in their nest until they are able to fly. As soon as that happens, the parent ravens kick them out of the nest and the baby ravens must now find their own food. When they first leave the nest, it is common for the baby ravens to cry for their parents to help them. But, the parents do not come. The babies must learn to find their own food. In Psalms 147:9, it tells us that God takes care of the young ravens that cry. Since we are so much more important to God than the ravens, we should feel comforted that God will take care of us even when our parents are not around.



Jesus also taught us not to worry by using the raven as an example. In Luke 12, Jesus was teaching his disciples that the raven needs food like all other animals. However, it does not plant or grow any food or have a need to harvest any food to eat. But, God takes care of the raven and makes sure it gets the food it needs. Jesus continues by making sure we all know that we are more important than the raven and that God will take care of all our needs. We do not need to worry about those types of things. However, we must obey him.

The raven is a very beautiful bird and God chose it to be special in His plan for us. So, when you see a raven, you can know that God is watching us and taking care of our needs.

## Foxes

Gary Mangus

The fox is a relatively small, slender animal of the canine family with a long bushy tail. It has large ears with acute hearing that allows it to pinpoint its prey underground, under snow or some distance away. Foxes live in dens dug in the soil and will quickly move to a new den site if disturbed. The fox can run faster than most other animals. It moves and has eyes like a cat and sees at night. Because of these traits it is hard to see a fox even when a large number of foxes may live close to you. In literature the fox is known for being sly, clever and cunning.

Its hunts at night and sometimes during the day for food. The fox will gather and kill more than it can eat and hide it for eating later. It eats smaller animals, insects, fruits, berries and is known for raiding farms, vineyards, orchards, and garbage. The fox can be quite destructive to vineyards being a plunderer of ripe grapes as recorded in Song of Solomon 2:15: *"Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."*

### Jesus and the Fox

When warned by some Pharisees that Herod, the ruler of the Romans, is going to kill him, Jesus in Luke 13:32 tells them to, *"...Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'"*

*"That fox,"* here Jesus alludes to the cunning in Herod's endeavor to remove Him from the territory and brushes off the threat of Herod by implying He has much more important things to do today and tomorrow and when ready He will leave. However in the very next verse Jesus implies he must be going on his way that day and the next day, that He is not in the proper time and place for His death as alluded to by; *"a prophet should not perish away from Jerusalem."*

### Samson and 300 Foxes

Judges 14 & 15 provide an account of love, betrayal, anger, and how Samson cleverly uses the Fox to punish the Philistines for what they did.



We pick up the storyline starting in Judges 14:19. After being betrayed by his wife when she gave out the solution to his riddle to the Philistines, Samson settled his account with the young men of the wedding party with

the ill gotten garments he took from thirty men of Ashkelon. Still in anger he went to his father's house to cool off. After some days, at wheat harvest time, Samson went to visit his wife, hoping to see her, but he finds out from her father that she had instead been given to his companion, his best man.

At this point Samson, wants to punish them, for taking away his wife. Judges 15:3

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*“And Samson said to them, This time I shall be innocent in regard to the Philistines, when I do them harm.”* Here, Samson acts like the judge, proclaiming that some harm will come to them.

Samson uses the small, quick and fast Fox; to do his mischief. First, he hunts and catches 300 foxes. Next, he turns them tail to tail and ties a torch between each pair of tails and then sets fire to the torches. Then he let the foxes go into the standing grain, the stacked grain, the vineyards, and the olive gardens of the Philistines. Each fox is doing its best to get away from the hot burning torch between the tip of his tail and the other fox’s tail. Each fox pair would most likely run in zigzag way, greatly increasing the damage to the fields and vineyards.

When the Philistines found out, they burned his wife and her father with fire. Here Samson declares he will be avenged on Philistines and then he will quit. And he struck them with a great blow and slaughter. But the acts of revenge between the Philistines and Samson does not stop here, but continues on in the storyline after Judges 15:9.

Samson had fallen in love with a Philistine woman and against the good advice from his father and mother married her anyway. Her action of betraying her husband, thinking her life would be saved, set off events that took her life anyway. Samson in his anger punished the Philistines for their actions against him and lost the wife he loved in doing so.

Thus, we should always do what is pleasing to God.

## Sheep

Steven D. Baxley

Sheep are some of the most-often mentioned animals in the Bible, they are mentioned over 700 times. They were very important to people in the Biblical world. They provided meat and milk as well as wool that could be woven into clothing and household goods. They were a mark of wealth among the people of the ancient world (most of whom lived in country settings). As a result, sheep and tending sheep was very familiar to virtually everyone who lived during the Old Testament and New Testament periods.

The first recorded sacrifice in the Bible was the sacrifice of sheep (or perhaps a goat since the word “flock” could include either animal. They were important as sacrificial animals throughout the Bible. In fact, Jesus becomes the ultimate sacrifice, and is thus called *“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* John 1:29 In 1 Peter 1:19, Peter compares the blood of Jesus to that of a lamb without blemish or spot. Paul calls Jesus the Passover Lamb who had been sacrificed in 1 Corinthians 5:7. Jesus is called the “Lamb” in 27 different verses in the Book of Revelation.

Not only were sheep important, but the entire manner in which they were cared for was important as well. Although not entirely defenseless on their own, they generally were easy prey for wolves, lions, and bears. As a result, men carefully watched their flocks, keeping them in specially protective sheepfolds, and building watchtowers to keep watch over them, especially at

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night. It was not unusual for shepherds to sleep with their flocks in the fields at night. Often entrusted to younger members of the family, shepherding could be dangerous work. David spoke of this in 1 Samuel 17:34-37:

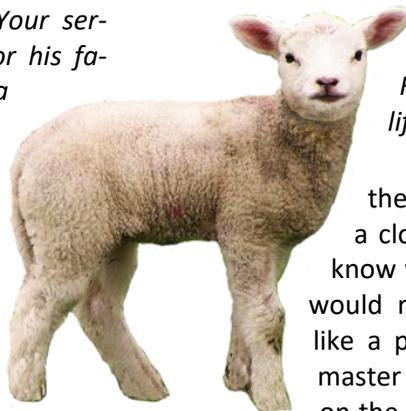
*“But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.””*

Since David had been a shepherd, the words of Psalm 23 take that relationship and apply them to the care that God has for His people.

It is against this background that Jesus, in addition to being the Lamb of God, is also called the Shepherd. Notice what Jesus says in John 10:11-15:

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and*

*leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*



The relationship between the shepherd and his flock was a close one. The sheep came to know who their shepherd was and would respond to his voice, much like a pet dog will come when his master calls. The sheep depended on the shepherd for protection and care, and the shepherd took good care of his flock.

So, the images of sheep and shepherding describe to us very vividly how Jesus cared for people enough to die for them, and how He cares enough for Christians to guard them and care for them as the shepherd does his sheep.

## **Camels**

Ron Gray

**C**amels are spoken of throughout the Bible. The book of Genesis includes more references than any other book. In Genesis 24, camels are mentioned in 15 of its verses.

Since camels are rare here in the United States, we may look at them as odd and not very useful. In fact, in the lands of the Bible,

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camels were prized possessions and those who owned them were seen as wealthy.

The camel was quite useful in desert lands. They could carry heavy loads and walk for days with very little food or water. The feet of the camel are large and flat with two large toes, perfect for walking in desert sands. Horses, donkeys, or mules would not fare so well in the desert since their hooves would sink into the sand, also, they would require water and grass on a regular basis.

Horses are generally faster than camels on hard surfaces and donkeys are better in mountainous terrains, but camels are able to make long trips and carry larger, heavier loads. Horses would compare to our cars. Donkeys are comparable to pickup trucks. Camels are basically like the long haul, 4-wheel drive trucks that our military personnel use today.

When Abraham was old, he sent his trusted servant more than 500 miles back to the land of his relatives. There the servant was to find a wife for Abraham's son Isaac. The women who lived nearby were Canaanites who worshipped idols. Abraham wanted his new daughter-in-law to worship the true God and to raise children who would love the Lord. The servant took ten camels from Abraham's herd and loaded fine gifts upon them for the family of Isaac's new bride.

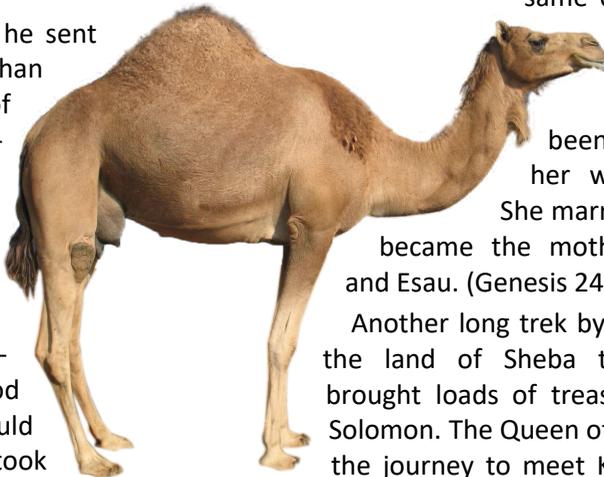
When the servant arrived in Mesopotamia he made the camels kneel near a well of

water. There he prayed that a young lady of God's choosing would give him a drink and then would offer to water the camels as well. This would be a big job to draw water for ten thirsty camels which had walked for days carrying their loads.

A beautiful maiden named Rebekah who was from the same family as Abraham came out and gave the faithful servant a cool drink. Then, she volunteered to water the camels *"until they have finished drinking."* The happy servant had a beautiful answer to his prayer! Then he went to her home where he delivered the generous gifts and received the blessing of Rebekah's parents for the marriage.

The servant made haste to take her to Abraham's home and to her groom. Rebekah and her young women rode on the same camels which had carried the gifts and had been watered by her willing hands. She married Isaac and became the mother of Jacob and Esau. (Genesis 24).

Another long trek by camels from the land of Sheba to Jerusalem brought loads of treasure for King Solomon. The Queen of Sheba made the journey to meet King Solomon and to listen to the wisdom which God had given him. She was also amazed at the majesty of the buildings and furnishings. Besides jewels and valuable spices, the Queen



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brought Solomon nearly eight tons of gold, worth over 200 million dollars in today's money! (1 Kings 10 & 2 Chronicles 9).

Camels were so important that they were a symbol of a person's wealth. Before Job had all of his possessions taken away by Satan, he owned 3000 camels. After Job had suffered and proven himself to be a true servant of God, the Lord blessed him with twice as much as he had before. This included 6000 camels.

In the New Testament, camels are rarely mentioned though their usefulness had not diminished. John the Baptizer wore a garment of camel's hair. (Matthew 3:4) In two other examples, Jesus used the images of camels in impossible situations (hyperbole) to make a point. You can read of a camel going through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19:24) and of Scribes and Pharisees straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (Matthew 23:24).

Camels are not just gawky, hairy, long-necked animals with two odd humps on their backs. They are God's creations and have proven themselves to be useful to mankind. In fact, camels actually have admirable qualities that we can learn from.

Camels can carry large heavy loads for long hours over rough, hot lands without resting. They eat and drink when food and water are available. Camels trust their masters to care for them, provide for them, and lead them in the right paths to reach the goal.

Sometimes in our lives, the way seems hard, the burdens are heavy, and the comforts seem far apart. But, like the camel, we

can have faith that our Master will safely lead us through the journey and bring us to refreshing rest when all of our labors end.

## Lions

Tom Ford

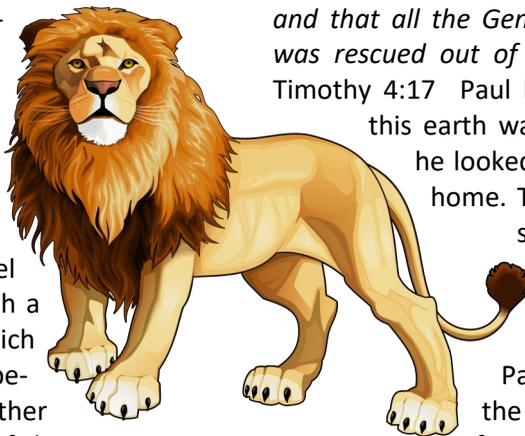
Lions throughout history have represented many beliefs and concepts from ancient times until today. The Chinese placed stone lions in front of tombs, palaces, and other buildings. The ancient Greeks sculpted lions and also placed their images on coins, buildings, and temples. Sculptured images of lions can still be seen in the ancient Persian capital of Persepolis and on the glazed bricks of the Ishtar Gate from ancient Babylon. There were also images of the lion in King Solomon's temple. The symbol of the Italian city of Venice is the winged lion. It represents "St. Mark" and sits atop a column in St. Mark's Square. Lions once roamed in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Judea, but have disappeared due to over hunting. Throughout history, the lion has symbolized qualities such as power, aggression, justice, divinity, wisdom, wealth, protection and royalty just to name a few. The lion is often referred to as the king of beasts. The Bible makes many references to lions in both the Old and New Testaments.

In 1 Samuel 17, David spoke to King Saul and volunteered to challenge the giant Philistine, Goliath. Saul told David that he was too young to fight Goliath. David showed his courage, when he told Saul that he had killed a lion while protecting his flock and he would slay the Philistine Goliath. "And David said,

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*“The Lord who delivered me from the **paw of the lion** and from the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you.”* 1 Samuel 17:37 David’s encounter with a lion while protecting his flock and his confrontation with Goliath showed his courage. He was courageous because of his faith in the Lord. Like David, the Lord gives us courage through our faith in him in difficult situations.

Daniel and the lions’ den takes place in Daniel 6. King Darius the Mede appointed Daniel as one of three commissioners to oversee 120 satraps (kingdom officials). King Darius planned to appoint Daniel over the entire kingdom. The other commissioners and satraps plotted against Daniel by having the king establish a statute and injunction, which stated that no-one could petition any man or god other than the king for 30 days. If the injunction was not obeyed, the violator would be cast into the lions’ den. Daniel was aware of the injunction, but continued to pray three times a day to the Lord. The satraps and commissioners reported David’s violation to King Darius and he became distressed, but could not change the injunction. The king had Daniel cast into the lions’ den and had it sealed. The next morning, the king came to the lions’ den to check if Daniel had been spared by his God. Daniel spoke, *“My God sent his angels and **shut the lions’ mouths** and they have not*



*harmed me, in as much as I was found innocent before him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.”* Daniel 6:22 Daniel’s faith in the Lord was strong even when facing death in the Lions den. Around the world, many Christians today face persecution and possible death for their faith. Like Daniel, we must stand firm and have unwavering faith in our Lord.

Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a prison cell in Rome. *“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the **lion’s mouth**.”* 2 Timothy 4:17 Paul knew that his work on this earth was nearly complete and he looked forward to a heavenly home. The Lord had given him strength in proclaiming the gospel to all who would listen and primarily to the gentiles. Paul was thankful that the Lord had delivered him from a difficult situation,

*“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever, Amen.”* 2 Timothy 4:18 Just as Paul had faith in the Lord, as Christians, we must also look to our faith in dealing with the challenges in our lives.

The book of Revelation was written in apocalyptic language. John wrote about a book with seven seals and of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in Revelation 5. The lion was the symbol of the tribe of Judah and was

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also a symbol of strength, courage, and sovereignty. *"Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, "stop weeping; behold the **Lion** that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."* Revelation 5; 4-5 The lion in the verse is Jesus Christ, a descendent of King David and from the tribe of Judah. He was the only one worthy to open the seven seals because he had overcome death.

The lion often represents opposite sides of the spectrum in scripture, from the devil to Jesus Christ. For example, the devil, *"... Your enemy the devil prowls around like a **roaring lion** looking for someone to devour."* 1 Peter 5:8 and Jesus Christ, *"... "Do not weep! See, the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed."* Revelation 5:5 There are many other examples in scripture pertaining to the qualities and attributes of lions. In the bible, the lion is both actuality and symbolism.

## Cats

Keen Villarreal

**O**ne of the most common pets most people have is a domestic house cat. People love cats because they are soft and cuddly, and sometimes they bring a smile or laughter to our lives.

If we open up The Bible to see if they are mentioned, we find that they are not. There is no indication as to what the Hebrew name of the cat may have been. Possibly there was not any; although the cat

was very familiar to the Egyptians, it seems to have been unknown to the Jews, as well as to the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans before the conquest of Egypt.

For what it is worth, in the bible, four-footed animals with paws are considered unclean animals. Unclean animals are unfit for human consumption

Only large wildcats are referred to in the bible. The lion and leopard, but there is apparently no mention of domestic cats. On first glance this might seem strange and a lot of people wonder why.

According to a search in The Bible Gateway, lions are mentioned 119 times in the Bible. Lions are a classical symbol of strength, power, courage, dignity, ferocity. Very likely as a type of power. In 1 Peter 5:8 We are warned to be aware of the powers of Satan. He's he is described as a lion who could eat you (your soul) if you are not careful. *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

In Daniel 6 we read about how Daniel is thrown into a den of lions because of his belief in God. God saved Daniel from the powerful jaws of the lions and kept him safe. In Revelation 4, 5, 9, 10 and 13, John is shown visions of Heaven and several times lions are mentioned.

Leopards are found 7 times in The Bible according to The Bible Gateway. Here are a few verses.

Habakkuk 1:8, *"Their horses are swifter*



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than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour."

Isaiah 11:6, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them."

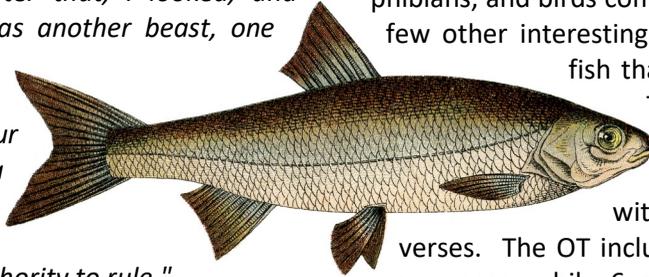
Jeremiah 5:6, "Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will devastate them. A leopard is watching their towns, and everyone who goes out of them will be torn to pieces."

Daniel 7:6, "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule."

Hosea 13:7, "So I will be like a lion to them, like a leopard I will lurk by the path."

As a cat lover and owner of one, it's hard for me to understand why kitties aren't mentioned. Seeing a cat play, run, jump and sometime getting into places they don't belong is funny.

Perhaps it's because cats have to connection with interesting stories to tell in reference to going to Heaven or cats played no part in teaching of stories about being saved. Whatever the reason, I love my cat and I'm certain you do to.



## Fish

Ephriam Davis

God created all water dwelling and sea creatures, including all kinds of fish, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day. (Genesis 1:20-23) God specifically identified them as "the fish of the sea" on the 6<sup>th</sup> day when he created mankind giving him dominion over all animals including fish. (Genesis 1:26) A "Google-Search" identifies an interesting fact that "There are over 25,001 different types of fish in the world which is more than the total of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds combined." There are a few other interesting biblical facts about fish that are worth noting.

The word fish occurs 36 times in the KJV of the Bible within a total of 32 verses. The OT includes 28 of these occurrences, while 6 are in the NT. The phrase "fish of the sea" occurs 4 times. In this article, we will address 2 biblical stories that feature fish, and we will also offer an explanation for the "Christian" fish-symbol which is frequently seen even in these modern times.

**Jonah and The Great Fish:** Nearly everyone has at least heard of this "story", even if they don't acknowledge it as a true historical account. God commands Jonah to go and preach repentance to Nineveh, but he instead boards a ship to Tarshish. So, God causes a great storm that nearly destroys the ship and all its occupants. Jonah ends up being thrown into the sea, so that the ship might be saved. (Jonah 1:1-15)

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*“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.”* Jonah 1:17 Please note, two very important points in the verse. First, it actually says “great fish.” Many erroneously try to make this say “great whale.” While a fish and a whale are both water/sea creatures that have fins to propel themselves through the waters, they are uniquely different in how they get oxygen that is necessary to live. Whales are mammals and must breathe air. They breathe in air/oxygen through their blow-hole, which is on the top of their body near the front. They have to come to the surface of the ocean to breathe, so there is a limit to how long they can dive and swim underwater in between breaths. Fish rely on special organs called “gills.” A gill is a respiratory organ found in many aquatic organisms that extracts dissolved oxygen from water and excretes carbon dioxide. Therefore, most fish unlike whales, can stay underwater almost indefinitely. Second, one could therefore easily speculate that this attribute, as designed into the fish that God prepared for Jonah, who had lungs and needed oxygen to breath, was fully capable to sustain his life *“in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.”* Finally, this point was so important that Jesus referenced it at least once when he taught the scribes and of the Pharisees. (Matthew 12:38-40)

**Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Be Fishers of Men:** (Luke 5:1-11) In this passage, Jesus was sitting on Simon Peter’s boat teaching a multitude who wanted to hear the word of God. Peter and his partners where fisher-

man by trade, and they had an unsuccessful night trying to catch fish. Jesus was so aware this fact, that He saw a teaching opportunity. He simply asked Peter to, *“Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”* Luke 5:4 Peter, based on human reasoning linked to his experience the night before, did not think there were fish to be caught. However, he trusted Jesus’ word, and he and his partners caught a great number of fish, and were all astonished. This miraculous literal catch of fish confirmed Jesus’ word and strengthened their faith, so much so that they forsook all and followed Him to become evangelistic fishers of men.



**The “Christian” Fish-Symbol Explained:**

The Greek word for ‘fish’ is ‘ichthus’ (transliterated from the Greek). Early Christians formed an acrostic from these letters: I= Iesous (Jesus); CH=Christos (Christ); TH=Theous (God); U= UIOS (Son); SOTER (Savior). Therefore, the idea of the fish-symbol would immediately bring to the believer’s mind the good news of Jesus Christ. During Jesus’ ministry, He referred to His disciples as “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17) and He also fed huge groups of His followers meals of fish. (Matthew 14:13-21, 15:33-39) The common fish-symbol seen on cars, and in other places, is a “symbol of Christianity.” It allowed Christians to identify each other, and prevent those hostile to Christianity from identifying believers.

## Doves

Anna Baxleyova

The dove is one of the most-mentioned birds in the Bible. In fact, it is the second species of bird mentioned, right after the raven. Just like us today, the Israelites would have been very familiar with doves. Because of that, it makes sense that the dove is used as an image throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Doves have many characteristics that separate them from other types of birds. Their voice was said to sound like a moan, or mournful (Isaiah 38:14 and 59:11). They are seen as peaceful, gentle, and harmless. They symbolize ideas from love, to purity, to forgiveness.

The first use of a dove in the Bible is in the account of the Flood (Genesis 8:6-12). Noah initially sent out a raven, but then he ended up sending a dove out three times. The first time, there was still water over the earth, and so it returned. The second time it returned with an olive leaf in its beak, and the third time it did not return at all. The image of a dove holding an olive branch in its beak is one we see today as a symbol of peace.

Another well-known use of the dove in the Bible happens in all four Gospels. Matthew 3:16 says this: *“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him...”*

In this instance, the dove is representa-

tive of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also portrayed as tongues of fire in Acts 2, which is a much different characterization than the one in the Gospels. It is possible that this has to do with the fact that doves (esp. turtle doves) were to be used as sacrifices by those who couldn't afford to sacrifice a lamb (Leviticus 5:7). Jesus came to earth to die for the remission of our sins, a perfect sacrifice that would far outweigh all the lambs and doves that Israel made as sin offerings. The dove was a symbol of forgiveness for the people of Israel (a symbol that harkened back to the Flood), and Jesus came to bring forgiveness and salvation to all who followed His word.



Jesus Himself also used the dove as an image while speaking to His disciples. In Matthew 10:16 He says this: *“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”* In this case, the focus often falls onto the first part of the passage, where He tells them that they are like sheep in the middle of wolves. However, it is the second half of the statement that can be quite interesting. By their very nature, serpents and doves are complete opposites. Jesus, however, links those two opposites together in this passage. He admonishes his disciples that in order to survive as sheep among wolves, they must adopt the characteristics of both a serpent and a dove, namely, wisdom and innocence.

Thus, the dove serves as a potent symbol in Scripture of peace, of forgiveness, and of the innocence that should characterize Christians.

## Donkey

Kelly Johnson

There are many creatures on this planet, all made by God. Some are mentioned in the Bible frequently, while others are hardly mentioned at all. The humble donkey is mentioned 82 times in my translation. That is quite a few mentions for an animal that is only used as a key element in two biblical stories: one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. We will look at the story in the Old Testament, but do you know the story in the New Testament? (Matthew 21:1-10, John 12:12-15)

In Numbers 22, we read how Balaam's donkey saved his life. Balaam was asked to curse Israel by Balak king of Moab. At first Balaam refused to go to Balak. But then God said Balaam could go, but he was to only say what God told him to say. However, God was angry because Balaam was going so He sent an angel to kill Balaam along the way. (Numbers 22:22 – 35)

Balaam could not see the angel, but the donkey could. Three times the donkey saved Balaam's life. First the donkey saw the angel of the Lord with his sword drawn ready to strike Balaam. The donkey turned aside into a field. Balaam struck the donkey to get her to go the way he wanted. The second time the donkey saw the angel, she moved to the side and pressed Balaam's foot against a wall. Again, Balaam hit the donkey, because he did not see the angel as the donkey did.

Finally, the angel appeared in a place

where the donkey could not turn aside or squeeze by. To save Balaam, the donkey lay down. Balaam struck the donkey again. This time God allowed the donkey to speak to Balaam. Can you imagine how startled Balaam must have been when the donkey talked! The donkey asked Balaam *"What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?"* Balaam was very angry with the donkey and told her that if he had a sword, he would have killed her. The donkey pointed out that she had been his donkey for a long time and was not in the habit of going against Balaam's wishes. Balaam agreed that the donkey usually went the right way.

It was at this point that God opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel. The angel also asked Balaam why he had hit the donkey three times and told Balaam that the donkey had turned aside to save him. When Balaam heard this news, he realized he had sinned and was ready to turn back but the angel told him to continue on, but to only speak the words that the Lord gave him.

What an amazing donkey!

She was willing to suffer in order to save her master. Does that sound familiar, someone being willing to sacrifice for the good of another? If you think about it that is what Jesus did for all mankind. He suffered and died to save people from their sins. Just like Balaam, sometimes people do not realize their sins and do not accept what has been done for them. Balaam was blessed to have the donkey that cared for him and we are blessed to have Jesus who cares for us.



## Eagles

Russ Ward

All of God's creatures reflect the gloriousness of God's handiwork. Some make us smile like a panda bear, others such as the spider monkey make us laugh, and some even scare us like the face of a crocodile, while others like the pink flamingo are so unique that we don't know how we should react. The eagle though is different because we get an immediate picture in our minds eye of the majesty of an eagle soaring in the wind high above the trees, and rocky crags, or swept up and over rivers, lakes, and oceans. To Americans our view of eagles is closely related to our view of our country and the blessings and freedoms we enjoy; especially our ability to worship God freely.

The eagle is the largest bird of prey and as such they are carnivorous. They are listed amongst the animals that were considered unclean because of the manner in which they sustained their lives. All animals of prey were prohibited to be eaten according to the Law. Yet though considered unclean, the Lord uses both the majesty & ferocity of the eagle to portray not only various aspects of mankind, but also in describing spiritual beings. We will consider three aspects of the eagle represented in the scriptures; Descriptions of Spiritual Beings, the Hunt, and their Flight.

Ezekiel and Daniel in the Old Testament and John in the New Testament record visions in which they were allowed to look into the spiritual world. What they saw they re-

corded and all three record creatures such as have never been seen upon this earth. Ezekiel's creatures had four faces and one of the faces was that of an eagle. (Ezekiel chapters 1 &10) The remaining features are so fantastic that even today's movie makers could not have come up with such fantastic beasts. Daniel and John's are different in that there are four separate beasts. (Daniel 7:4 and Revelation 4:7) Daniel's creature was a lion with Eagle's wings while John's creature had the face of an eagle. In describing these creatures in such a way we are able to visualize a spiritual being. The scriptures also provide additional insight by the way in which God Himself directs our thoughts through seeing the strength of flight and sight of eagles and of their majestic features that are a part of the largest bird of prey. By putting all of these together we not only can visualize these spiritual creatures but we can understand to a limited degree the representation they bring and the power and attributes afforded to them in scripture.



As birds of prey eagles are the perfect creatures for both aerial and alternate terrain hunting. Eagles have been known to pluck animals from the air, the water, and from the ground. They can be viewed soaring amongst the earth's wind currents ever watchful for something to attack and devour, and although they may have preferences in food they are indiscriminate in what they will kill and eat. They are swift in their approach and have pinpoint accuracy

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in what they are hunting; from prey as small as a mouse to animals as large as sheep and goats. Because they approach the hunt from above they are often unsuspected by the animals they hunt, who normally focus on predators from the ground. The scriptures refer to these aspects of the eagle when they are attributed to both the Babylonian and Roman armies who come into the land as conquerors. (Jeremiah 4:13, Matthew 24:28, Luke 17:37)

Eagles are known to live for an extremely long time both in captivity and in the wild. This long life has been attributed to: 1) the effective manner in which eagles sustain flight without burning energy, seemingly effortless as they soar at great heights in the high wind currents of the earth, and 2) the preening and molting of the eagle during their growth and after maturation seem to provide an effect of youthfulness or rejuvenation. It seems that even as they age they continue to appear as if their strength never falters and the effects of age do not slow them down in both their flight and their hunt. Psalms 103:5 reflects how the Lord renews our strength in what he provides as food in similar fashion as he doth the eagle. Isaiah 40:31 is widely recognized both in song and in poetry for what God does for the weary and faint of heart who believe and trust in him.

As magnificent a creature as the eagle is, it can't compare to how magnificent and wonderfully made we as humans are in God's eyes. To breathe within us not only life, but a soul and to remind us that He is ever watchful over us. To this day I can still see the vivid

green of the Arkansas forest with the steel blue waters of the Little Red as the river cascaded in ripples down below the elevated river bank, when out of an overcast grey sky dropped the sweeping form of a bald eagle as it brushed the top of the water causing barely a splash, then lifting up and over the hood of the car as we met while rounding a bend with a trout clasped firmly between both claws. How many people in the world would ever have an opportunity to witness such a sight so up close and personal? We were speechless. In contrast what is it like in life to trust in an all knowing, powerful and loving God, to be renewed in purpose and strength, to mount up on wings as an eagle, to have God be the wind beneath my feet so that I soar and faint not.

## Behemoth & Leviathan

James Hinton



**T**urn in your bibles to Job 40:15 and read to the end of chapter 41. I read those and my mind starts to think of all that God created that we have never seen. I grew up as a child

that loved anything and everything about dinosaurs. Now I know that nowhere in scripture is the word dinosaur spoken and this article does not try to make that true.

A few quarters ago, I asked the junior high class to draw what they thought of when we read those verses and the result

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was quite interesting, dinosaurs were drawn. I showed a few images that artists have rendered of what is described to us. I explained to them that how the world view these two creatures in a direct result of how the world views God. A being that their world disregards almost entirely. God created all that is around us, all that we see and all that we have not seen. Just as we have been commanded not to add or take away from God's word, we should not start to play as with we are God.

Behemoth and Leviathan show to us, just as God showed to Job, that He is all powerful. We think of the animals that we have as pets, the animals that we see at zoo as the animal and creatures we know. Do we see in them the power of God's creation? I would be willing to say that if Behemoth and Leviathan were around us today we would without a shadow of a doubt. We know that Job did. There is very little we know about the two creatures yet they teach us so much.

## Chickens

Carol Fertig

**W**hat? Chickens in the Bible? Yes, there are chickens in the Bible! And it was Jesus Himself who used these animals to teach lessons to His people. Jesus used a hen to express his love and sorrow at the coming fate of Jerusalem. To impress Peter and the other apostles with how hard it would be to remain steadfast in the face of coming persecution, Jesus used a literal rooster. Even these lowly animals were useful to our Lord in teaching us.

A mother hen sits patiently on the eggs in her nest in order to hatch the eggs and to protect them. The baby chicks inside the eggs need the hen's warmth in order to develop and grow. If you've ever watched a hen on her nest of eggs, you've seen her turn the eggs occasionally to give them even heat. She will defend her unborn chicks from such predators as snakes, raccoons, and others. When the chicks are hatched, the hen keeps her brood safe by constantly "gathering" them together, and when nighttime comes, she settles the babies under her wings back on the nest. Jesus lets us know He would have cared for His people, the Jews, just as the mother hen does for her babies, if they would have let Him.

Three times Jesus lamented over Jerusalem: twice when He was preaching in His traveling around and once as He entered Jerusalem for the final time. Perhaps the most poignant expression is recorded in Luke 13:34-35:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"*

Luke records in 19:41 that ". . . when He drew near and saw the city, he wept over it." Jesus knew the people of God were turning down salvation when they rebuffed the prophets, and especially because they were about to completely refuse Him, God's son. Also, physical Jerusalem itself had not long to continue before complete destruction.

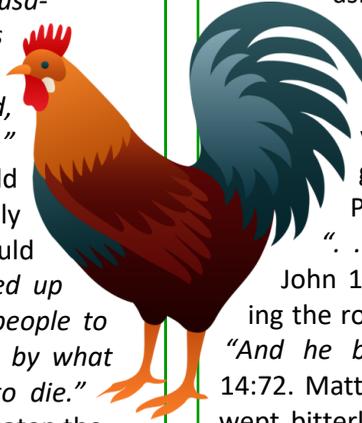
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Jesus had reason to be sad. May we gladly accept the safety and love our Lord offers to us, just as the hen gives to her young.

Jesus used a rooster to teach Peter and the other disciples a lesson about how difficult it was going to be to remain steadfast under persecution. Jesus had clearly told His followers that He would suffer and die at the hands of the Jews. Matthew 16:21 says, *“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”*

At least three times Jesus told this to His followers, and finally He even told them how He would die. *“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.”* He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die.” John 12:32-33. After they had eaten the Lord’s Supper, Jesus and His disciples went out to the Mount of Olives where He told them they would all fall away from Him that night, as scripture foretold. *“Peter answered him, ‘Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”* Matthew 26:34-35.

Jesus knew the rooster could be counted upon to greet the new day by crowing: that was his job, and he never failed. Proverbs 30:29-31 classes the rooster with things that are stately in their tread, stately in their stride. Verse 31 calls him *“the strutting rooster,”* hinting that this is a bird full of



pride and responsibility. Because the rooster was reliable, Jesus used his morning crowing to be a timeline for the temporary defection of Peter from the ranks. In fact, all the others deserted Jesus then also, but it was Peter who had stated confidently that he would never do that. Sure enough, Peter denied to a servant girl outside the court of the high priest that he was Jesus’ disciple. Some of the others standing around keeping warm asked Peter outright if he was a disciple, to which he replied, *“I am not.”* John 18:25. Finally, one of the high priest’s servants asked if Peter was in the garden with Jesus, and when Peter denied it for the third time, *“. . . at once a rooster crowed.”*

John 18:27. Peter realized upon hearing the rooster’s crow what he had done, *“And he broke down and wept.”* Mark 14:72. Matthew says that he went out and wept bitterly. Matthew 26:75. Jesus knew that in the time before the crowing of the rooster Peter would deny Him rather than suffer with Him. We need to look at ourselves and remain committed to our Lord so that we will serve Him faithfully despite persecution in whatever form it comes into our lives. We do not want to disappoint Jesus and have to feel the bitter remorse Peter felt when the rooster crowed.

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