

# GOD'S CREATURES

A Biblical View of Animals



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Susan Bulanda



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*To my son Thomas, USMC, and to all the men and women who  
serve and have served in our armed forces: Thank you.*



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# INTRODUCTION

ALL MY LIFE I have been involved with animals, mostly dogs, cats and horses. One of my earliest pets was a cat named Puff. I named her after the cat in the *Dick, Jane and Sally* reader series. Puff and I grew up together and I was a young adult when she died at age thirteen. I assumed that she went to heaven.

As I grew in my Christian faith, however, I heard many different opinions about whether or not animals will be in heaven. It seemed as though no one knew for certain; they merely made assumptions based on what they heard or read. Some religious leaders simply did not think that the matter was important or worthy of consideration.

Now, as a dog trainer and an animal behavior consultant I am often called to help people cope with the loss of their beloved pets. I am frequently asked whether or not animals will be in heaven. As my clients look to me for answers, I have come to realize this is an important issue to many people.

This book is a result of my quest for answers. I will share with you what the Bible teaches about animals; how animals have a special place in the Scriptures; and how God uses them to teach us some important lessons.

Do not look at the material in this book with second-hand information about the Bible. Do not believe rumors or other people's opinions about what the Bible says. Go to the source. If you have never read the Bible, I urge you to do so.

I have met people whose belief that Christian theology

excludes animals from heaven caused them to lose their faith in God. How could God ignore this wonderful part of his creation, they ask. It may help to remind these people that what is implied in the Bible about animals is important, as well as what is stated explicitly. Although animals are not the main focus of the Bible, they are a big part of God's created world and have a special place in his Word. However I want to make it clear that in no way do I mean to say or imply that animals are equal to or better than humans. Animals are part of the plan and will of God, just like all the rest of his creation.

Please, open your mind, ask questions, seek answers, and explore the information in this book. But more importantly, read your Bible. Do not take what I say at face value; learn for yourself. In *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, Andrew Linzey (who is both a chaplain and an animal lover) states, "Christian theology provides some of the best arguments for respecting animal life and for taking seriously animals as partners with us within God's creation." Linzey also points out that, though he has researched Christianity and animals, he has found no major study devoted to this topic. In his opinion the theological significance of animals has yet to be explored. Linzey writes, "We have to face the fact that when it comes to determining Jesus' actual attitude to animals, in the records as we now have them at least, we have to work largely from hints and guesses. But these are on the whole certainly more positive than negative."

This book will help you develop a better understanding of the nature and mind of animals, according to Scripture and recent scientific research. May you be encouraged and blessed as you read.

# 1 CREATED WILD AND DOMESTIC

AS I GAZE into the eyes of my beloved pets, both dogs and cats, I have often wondered about the depths of their feelings, what their thoughts are. Is there more to the relationship between humans and animals than is obvious? All through my life, my animals have been there to share my sorrows and my joys. I think God must have had good reasons for making them the way he did.

One time as a young girl I buried my face in my cat Puff's fur while I cried over some now-forgotten incident. I remember the connection that I felt, the comfort that she gave me when I needed it—how she gently licked the tears from my cheeks and tried to cheer me with her purring.

Did God create animals to be helpers for us in ways that we don't understand?

The book of Genesis provides the foundation for understanding the role of animals, in our lives as well as in God's overall plan. Therefore we will start in the very beginning with the act of creation and the events which took place in the Garden of Eden. Here are revealed some of the answers to the mysteries that surround our relationship with animals.

First let us look at the creation story as recorded in the Bible:

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of

living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:20-25 NRSV)

Notice the Bible makes a clear distinction between wild and domestic animals. Although humans may tame a wild animal, they may never make it domestic; a domestic animal has an entirely different role to play. God created animals for specific purposes. Some of those purposes are obvious, some are not. This raises questions about whether or not some animals descended from others, such as the dog from the wolf, as has been believed.

Genesis tells us that humans, not animals, were made in the image of God. Although only humans were made in God's image, he loves the wild and domestic animals so much that he uses them, along with humankind, to accomplish his purposes.

Often when we read the Bible, we only study the relationship between people and God, sin and salvation. While this is the main focus of the Bible, there are also many more subtle aspects of life on earth that the Bible can teach us. God created this earth

and all that is in it, for two purposes: first, for his own pleasure, and second, to support humans. God and his angels did not need the earthly world. They were doing just fine in heaven.

We see that God had a specific order to his creation. First he created the heavens as we know them. Next he created the earth as we know it, with land, water, air, day, and night. The air, earth and water are necessary to support vegetation. So next God created the vegetation needed to support other kinds of life. After that he created the stars, sun and moon. At this point, all the earthly and heavenly systems were in place to support all life.

Next God created the creatures of the sea and the air. After that he created land animals, cattle and creeping things. Even before humans were created, God makes a distinction between wild and domestic animals (verse 25). “Cattle” refer to all domestic animals, and “wild animals” is sometimes translated “beasts.”

This is not the only place in the Bible where there is a distinction made between wild animals and domestic animals. Today we know that certain kinds of animals live well with people and others do not. Although some wild animals can be tamed, they are never really domesticated. Circus animals are good examples of this. Although the big cats can be taught to perform, they are never fully trustworthy because they are not domesticated. They do not have the total willingness to work and live with humans and cannot be trusted not to harm them.

Another example of this is the peculiar situation that exists in the United States regarding tigers. According to the Animal Centers of Excellence, there are three times more captive, backyard bred<sup>1</sup> tigers in the United States than there are in the wild. People purchase the cubs hoping to make them pets. However, they are finding that tigers, even after generations of captive backyard breeding, cannot be completely domesticated and may still attack their owners without warning.

Monkeys are another example of wild animals who resist domestication. Attempts to teach monkeys to be service animals for the handicapped have been unsuccessful. In 2005 a California man visiting a chimpanzee in a rescue facility for monkeys that can no longer be kept as pets was attacked and mutilated by two male chimps. While the one he himself had raised was not one of the two which attacked him, the man had had to give up his chimp in the first place because the animal was prone to acts of violence; it had injured a police officer and bitten a woman's finger.

The Animal Protection Institute's list of primate attacks shows that all types of pet monkeys will attack their owners. The list comprises only those incidents which have been reported; it may be inferred that there are many more which have not been acknowledged.

Still another reference to our inability to tame certain types of animals is found in an article by Jared Diamond, "The Shape of Africa," published in the September 2005 *National Geographic*:

The domesticated sheep and cattle for Fertile Crescent origins took about 5,000 years to spread from the Mediterranean down to the southern tip of Africa. The continent's own native animals—with the exception of guinea fowl and possibly donkeys and one breed of cattle—proved impossible to domesticate.

Researchers continue to raise questions about the origin of animals and how some animals, such as dogs, became companions to humans. The most recent evidence supports the distinction made in the Bible, that certain animals were created wild and others domesticated.

An example of this shift in thinking is found in an article

in the *Smithsonian*, March 1999 titled, “Tracking America’s First Dog” by Scott Weidensaul. In it, the author explores the origins of the Carolina dog. It is believed that the Carolina dog, found in the rural areas of South Carolina, may be what is left of the original dogs that crossed the Bering land bridge into North America. These dogs appear in paintings of Native Americans. Weidensaul reports in his article that in 1997 a team of evolutionary biologists studied the DNA of wild canids and wolves and decided that there was a split between dogs and wolves before anyone suspected that domestication was possible.

The article quotes archaeozoologist Susan Crockford as saying that the standard explanation of domestication—bringing young wild animals into the home, taming and breeding them to create domesticated animals—is a myth. Weidensaul goes on to say that “Whether you’re talking about dogs, sheep, cows, goats, pigs or water buffalo, there are consistent differences between the wild and domesticated forms.”

In a related study, Dr. Gustavo Aguirre, at Cornell University’s Institute for Animal Health, found that dogs’ mitochondria DNA (mtDNA) reveal that they split off from wolves about 130,000 years ago, long before they were domesticated by man.

The Bible tells us what God did when he created animals, but does not give us all the details. The latest research suggests that the commonly-held belief that humans interacted with the friendliest wild animals and then bred them to be the domestic animals of today seems to be inaccurate.<sup>2</sup>

Note that the Bible’s creation account states more than once that each animal was made according to its kind, or “of every kind,” each distinct and separate, not from another earlier animal as evolutionists would have us believe.

But just what does “kind” mean? Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, a well-known scholar and theologian, comments,

There are fixed boundaries beyond which reproductive variations cannot go, but it is impossible to know whether 'kind' is to be equated with families, genera, or some other category of biological classification.

After God created all the earth, its vegetation, animals and creatures, he said it was good. He also blessed all creatures, telling them to be fruitful and multiply.<sup>3</sup>

Humans were the last beings that God created. This is not because humans are less valuable than the rest of creation, but because all things were finally prepared for humans. The Bible does make it clear that the animals of earth were made from the same material as humans.

Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath or spirit of life, and man became a living being. . . . Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky. (Gen. 2:7, 19 AMP)

In this case, the breath or spirit of life refers to the whole spiritual being of humans, the soul and spirit. In the Ryrie Study Bible, Dr. Ryrie has this to say in his notes for Genesis 2:7:

Man's body was formed from small particles of the earth (the Hebrew words for man and earth are similar; cf. 1 Cor. 15:47), but his life came from the breath of God, a living being, i.e., a living person. The phrase is also used of animals (1:21, 24). Man is distinguished from animals by being created in the image of God.

Humans were created in a natural and moral likeness to God.

Then God said, ‘Let Us<sup>4</sup> make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ (Gen. 1:26)

The natural likeness refers to a human’s intellectual and emotional make-up, which is similar to that of God. Also, a human’s right to rule is assigned by God. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their moral aspect but retained their natural resemblance to God. This of course was passed on and applies to the whole human race.

Another major difference between humans and animals is that God breathed the spirit of life into humans, which includes the soul. While God certainly created all of the animals alive, humans received a soul which animals did not receive.<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the difference between spirit and soul see chapter 14, “Will Animals Go to heaven?”

So we see that all of creation—earth, sun, stars, air, plants, animals, everything—was created for the glory and pleasure of God. It was also created to benefit humans, both for our enjoyment and our survival.

The order of events was as follows:

1. God created the earth.
2. He created the environment to support life.
3. He created the plants and animals on the earth.
4. He created humans.

Everything was created to support humans—not only to provide them with shelter and food, but to provide physical, aesthetic pleasure and comfort. As we learn more about the

interdependency of all earth's inhabitants, we get a glimpse of the immensity and intricacy of God's creation. We clearly see that it is beyond our human ability to fully understand and comprehend.