

## God, Man, and Animals

Folks do love their animals. So much so that some give them people names, dress them like people, talk to them like people, feed them like people, provide health care for them like people, and basically love and have more regard for them than other people! Perhaps there are reasons to feel and act this way. And certainly, each is at liberty to spend their time, money, efforts, and affections toward animals if they desire to do so, but there are a few points to be understood and remembered...

- **God** gave man dominion over all animals to *rule over* and *subdue* them, Genesis 1:26,28;
- **God** presumably used animals when He “*made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them,*” Genesis 3:21;
- **God** instituted animal sacrifice as part of man’s worship to Him, Genesis 4:4 (Abel’s sacrifice of the flocks could not have been “*by faith*” as Hebrews 11:4 indicates unless God had commanded it, cf. Romans 10:17);
- **God** commanded that “*seven pairs*” of “*every clean animal*” be taken upon the ark—the reason for the “extras” is made clear in Genesis 8:20-21 when they were sacrificed to Him as “*burnt offerings*” after the flood, Genesis 7:2; and,
- **God** declared that “*Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant,*” Genesis 9:3.

From these things, let’s note a couple of salient points:

- 1) **Animals are not equal to (or better than) humans.** We may love them and treat them in *humane* ways, but they are not people. 1Corinthians 15:39 says so. Therefore, they are not entitled to “human rights.” This doesn’t mean that they should be abused or mistreated, but it does mean that there is a substantial difference between humans and animals. It also means that this distinction should be recognized and maintained in our laws and in our lives.
- 2) **No one has to eat meat that doesn’t desire to do so- whatever their personal reasons.** But the fact remains that animal flesh was given to man by God as “*food,*” Genesis 9:3. “Animal rights activists” who want to ban all meat-eating are therefore advocating for “*abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth,*” 1Timothy 4:3.
- 3) **Animals, as much as we might love, provide for, and protect them, do not have souls.** Man is the only creation of God who was given a soul. Birds, cattle, and beasts were made “*after their kind,*” but man alone was created “*in the image of God,*” Genesis 1:21-27. Into man alone God breathed a *living soul*, Genesis 2:7. Therefore, animals are for this life only. While we may earnestly want to “save the animals,” remember that human souls have an eternal worth, value, and need of saving that far surpasses that of any animal. The Son of God was not born of virgin to live and cruelly die on the cross, spend three days in the tomb, and then rise and ascend to heaven to “save” or provide “rights” to animals so that they would be treated “humanely.” He did so to provide salvation to the souls of men!

Look, I realize how much some of you love your pets, and how devoted you are to protecting and caring for all animals. Good for you, **really**. “*A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruel.*” Proverbs 12:10. But, our world is rapidly moving toward having more regard for animal life than human life. Again, I’m not suggesting that animals should be abused, neglected, or mistreated, but when we are more concerned with “saving,” or the “ethical” and

“humane” treatment of animals than we are with the same for people, our priorities have become skewed and need a bit of readjustment. Jesus didn’t say, “Love your *animals* as yourself.” He said to love “*your neighbor as yourself,*” Luke 10:27. This doesn’t mean that we *can’t* or even *shouldn’t* love and care for animals- our pets, or just in general. But it does mean that we should recognize and maintain a subordinate distinction in our affections, our activities, and even our laws, between animals and people. I understand that some folks may not like to hear these things, but please consider them honestly, openly, and in light of the Scriptures. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at [southportcofc.org](http://southportcofc.org); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))