

Are People Just Animals?

It's not uncommon in our culture today to find people who refer to human beings as "just another animal." What they mean by this is that the life of a human is no more important than the life of any other living creature. If it's wrong to kill a man then it's also wrong to kill a squirrel. Some people refer to Thanksgiving as "Turkey Murder Day" and speak of the "execution" of thousands of turkeys as if it was some sort of modern holocaust. These people see no distinction between human beings and the animal kingdom. "We're all just animals!" is their battle cry.

While the world may not see a difference between people and porcupines, the Bible presents a very different view of creation. It teaches that mankind is entirely different from any animal. This can be seen right from the very first chapter in the Bible. In Genesis 1 we find this account of God's creation of the animal kingdom:

Genesis 1:20-25: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his 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 fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his

kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.”

This passage tells us about the time God created aquatic life, birds, insects, and land animals – but it doesn't mention mankind. God created human beings in a separate act of creation:

Genesis 1:26-28: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

Here we learn several remarkable things. First, only mankind was created in the image of God. No animals, birds, or insects can make that claim! There's something unique about us. We are like God in a way that separates us from all animal life. Second, God gave mankind dominion over all forms of life on Earth. Not only is mankind not “just another life form”, but we also have authority over all other living creatures.

This authority even extends to the point of being allowed to eat animals. Some people claim that it's immoral to eat meat because that requires the death of an animal. They say that people should be vegetarians (or vegans) because that's more humane. However, *God* is the one who gave mankind the right to eat meat. He did this right after the Flood:

Genesis 9:3-4: “Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”

As we can see, God placed just one restriction on this: we aren't allowed to consume blood¹. *God doesn't condemn eating meat* or criticize that practice in any way. Instead He explicitly tells people that it's their right to eat meat if they so choose. People who condemn others for eating meat are going beyond anything that God Himself commands.

Nor has God changed His mind on this issue. In the New Testament we find that Jesus Himself talked about this, and He did *not* believe that animals were as valuable as people. In fact, He thought that the life of a human being was *far more valuable* than the life of an animal. Look at what He said in the book of Matthew:

Matthew 10:29-31: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

Do you see what verse 31 says? Christ did *not* tell His disciples “The life of a bird is just as important as your own life”. Instead He taught that men were more valuable than *many* sparrows! In His eyes the value of a human being was far greater

1 Incidentally, this verse isn't related to blood transfusions in any way. Receiving a transfusion of blood isn't even remotely similar to eating blood. This is because eating blood destroys it, as our body breaks it down for nutrients. A blood transfusion incorporates that blood into our veins so it can give us life.

than the life of any animal. We can also see this taught in the sacrificial system, which required the death of *countless* animals. That system was instituted by God Himself.

I also wanted to point out that Jesus, who was utterly sinless, ate meat:

Luke 24:41-43: “And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.”

The apostle Paul said that those who refused to eat meat, and ate only plants, were weak in the faith. They weren't the ones who had the moral high ground:

Romans 14:1-3: “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.”

It's not a sin to be a vegetarian. That's perfectly fine – but those who don't eat meat must not despise those who do (and vice versa).

Now, it's not that God doesn't care about animals because He clearly does. As Matthew 10:29 says, God notices every sparrow that falls. When God decided to destroy the entire world in the Flood, He first commanded Noah to build an ark so that animals could enter into it and be saved. That ark only contained eight people (1 Peter 3:20) – but it had thousands of animal species (Genesis 6:19-20).

Proverbs 12:10 tells us that the righteous are concerned about the lives of their animals and take care of them. The real

issue is that animals are *not* more valuable than people. This means that, among other things, it's *not* acceptable to murder people to save the lives of laboratory animals.

The Bible doesn't teach that people are just another kind of animal. It was people, not animals, who were made in the image of God. The Lord gave mankind sovereignty over the animal kingdom and He also gave us the right to eat meat. Jesus Himself said that the life of a person was worth more than the lives of many animals.

This is why it's such a bad thing when human lives are put at risk to spare the habitat of an endangered species. The same is true when a decision is made to not use a pesticide that might endanger some birds, but which would save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. If the life of an endangered snail is just as valuable as the life of a person then it may make sense to put human lives in danger in order to save that snail – but that's simply not the case.

People were made in God's image, and endangering them to protect wildlife is a horrible thing to do. The world may praise people who are so against cutting down trees that they attempt to murder loggers, but to God that's an abomination. One day He will judge those who have endangered so many innocent lives, and when that day comes they will have much to answer for.