

## **Lessons from the Animals**

Special Topical Lesson for those Young at Heart

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### **I. A Lesson on Animals?**

- a. This lesson was put together in honor of Adam, one of the members of our group who is very young at heart, who has a special love for the animals.
- b. In this lesson we will look at how God has used animals in both the Old Testament and New Testament to convey important spiritual lessons to us.

### **II. The Story of Noah's Ark**

- a. The most famous story in the Bible about animals (well known to all children) is the story of Noah's ark, in **Genesis 6-7**.
  - i. We think of Noah preparing the ark with space for all the animals.
  - ii. Also, we think of the animals going 2x2 into the ark (or by 7's for the clean animals?) before the door is closed and the rain of the flood begins. There are many cute pictures and models of Noah overseeing the parade of animals proceeding into the ark.
  - iii. However, let's not forget *why* pairs of animals were brought into the ark. God had decided to wipe out all the people (and creatures) on the earth, except for those preserved within the ark with Noah!
  - iv. **Question:** Why did God go to all the trouble to save all the different kinds of animals?
    - 1. Perhaps this was to provide a spiritual lesson, to foreshadow something important that would happen in the future.
      - a. Peter said that the water in Noah's ark story symbolized (was an antitype for) Christian baptism. A righteous few (8 people) were saved "through water".
        - i. "...who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (**1 Peter 3:20-21**, NKJV)

- b. Justin Martyr, a philosopher from Samaria who became a convert to the Christian faith, writing in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jew (c. 160 AD), also points to the Noah story as foreshadowing what Christ was later to accomplish:
  - i. “For Christ, being the first-born of every creature, became again the chief of another race regenerated by Himself through water, and faith, and wood, containing the mystery of the cross; even as Noah was saved by wood when he rode over the waters with his household.
  - ii. “...But the whole earth, as the Scripture says, was inundated, and the water rose in height fifteen cubits above all the mountains: so that it is evident this was not spoken to the land, but to the people who obeyed Him: for whom also He had before prepared a resting-place in Jerusalem, as was previously demonstrated by all the symbols of the deluge; I mean, that *by water, faith, and wood*, those who are afore-prepared, and who repent of the sins which they have committed, shall escape from the impending judgment of God.”
  - iii. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 138; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 268)
- c. Peter connected the water of the flood with baptism, and those in the boat with the few who will be saved on the last day (Christians). Justin points to the parallel in that those on the ark were saved *by faith + water + wood*. (The boat being wood in the Noah story; the cross being wood in the salvation accomplished by Jesus.)
  - i. Note that “some of all kinds” were saved on the ark of Noah, just as some from all nations will be saved on the Last Day by Jesus.
  - ii. So perhaps all the different animals foreshadow that God’s plan would lead to *some of all kinds of people*, from all nations and races, being saved in the end (by faith + wood + water).
    - 1. “Similarly, the flock built by Jacob consisted of diverse-looking sheep bearing all kinds of different colors and markings. Jacob served Laban for speckled and many-spotted sheep; and Christ served, even to the slavery of the cross, for the various and many-formed races of mankind, acquiring them by the blood and mystery of the cross.”

2. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 134; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 267).

2. Perhaps the second reason why God saved all kinds of animals is that He would need them to teach us important spiritual lessons, later!

### III. Other Examples of Animals Used by God

- a. Some of the animals God used for special purposes in Bible stories, some of which also were mentioned in prophecies, include:
  - i. Donkey (Balaam story in **Numbers 22**; carrying Jesus into Jerusalem)
  - ii. Whale (or great fish) that swallowed the prophet Jonah, in **Jonah 1-2**
  - iii. Worm provided by God, that destroyed the plant under which Jonah took shade (**Jonah 4**)
  - iv. Rooster that crowed immediately after Peter denied Jesus
  - v. Scapegoat (**Leviticus 16**)
  - vi. All the animals (bulls, lambs, etc.) that were sacrificed at the temple
  - vii. Dove, the form taken by the Holy Spirit at the baptism of Jesus (**Matthew 3:16, John 1:32**)
  - viii. Serpent (form taken by Satan in **Genesis 3**)
  - ix. Lions (several references: in the famous den in **Daniel 6**; representing Jesus in **Genesis 49:9** and **Revelation 5:5**; representing Satan in **1 Peter 5:8**; etc.)
  - x. Goat, ram, bear in Daniel's visions (**Daniel 7-8**)

### IV. Animals Used as Examples of Good or Bad (Sometimes Good or Bad Characteristics)

- a. Examples of good traits
  - i. Ant (**Proverbs 6**)
  - ii. Sheep (**Matthew 25**)
  - iii. Four small animals called "very wise" in **Proverbs 30**
  - iv. Lion (boldness of the righteous, in **Proverbs 28:1**)

- v. Oxen treading out the grain (**Deuteronomy 5:5, 1 Timothy 5:18; 1 Corinthians 9:9**)
- vi. Good fish captured in the net (**Matthew 13**)
- b. Examples of bad traits
  - i. Pigs (**Matthew 7:6, 2 Peter 2:22**)
  - ii. Dogs (**Matthew 7:6, Matthew 15:26-27, Philippians 3:2, 2 Peter 2:22, Revelation 22:15**)
  - iii. Snakes, vipers (**Matthew 12:34, Matthew 23:33**)
    - 1. Note that while most of the references to snakes in Scripture are extremely negative, there is *one instance* where Jesus refers to snakes in a *positive* sense:
      - a. “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be *wise as serpents* and harmless as doves.” (**Matthew 10:16**, NKJV)
  - iv. Leeches, which are parasites (blood-sucking worms). They are never satisfied, and always want more (**Proverbs 30**)
  - v. Wolves
    - 1. Jesus said: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are *ravenous wolves*.” (**Matthew 7:15**, NKJV)
    - 2. Jesus also said: “Behold, I send you out as sheep *in the midst of wolves*. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (**Matthew 10:16**, NKJV)
    - 3. Paul told the Ephesian elders: “For I know this, that after my departure *savage wolves* will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” (**Acts 20:29**, NKJV)
      - a. Paul knew this would happen soon after his departure, even though he had taught a great deal in Ephesus. Therefore, *we should not be surprised* to see this happening in our own day!
  - vi. Foxes, a term applied to Herod
    - 1. “And He said to them, ‘Go, tell that fox, “Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.”’” (**Luke 13:32**, NKJV)

2. I assume this points to the *craftiness of a fox*, for example in stealing a goose or hen from a pen.
- vii. Lion (Satan, prowling)
    1. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (**1 Peter 5:8**, NKJV)
    2. Note that while Jesus is described as a lion (**Genesis 49:9**, **Revelation 5:5**), Satan is described as a lion as well! Satan is no joke; he is a powerful and dangerous adversary, who seeks to destroy and devour us!
  - viii. Goats (typifying those who will be rejected and condemned by Jesus Day of Judgment, **Matthew 25**)
  - ix. Bad fish captured in the net (parable of dragnet, **Matthew 13**)

## V. The Ant (and the Honeybee?): Hard Work vs. Laziness

- a. The Ant (also the Honeybee, in the LXX): Hard Work vs. Laziness
  - i. **Book of Proverbs** was written to help a young man to become wise. This book deals a lot with *character sins*, with emphasis on things like: lack of self-control, laziness, lying, being prideful, parents neglecting to discipline their children and sexual immorality.
  - ii. Read **Proverbs 6:6-12** (NKJV and other versions similarly based on Masoretic Text).
  - iii. Also read parallel text, **Proverbs 6:7-16** from version based on the Septuagint (LXX). There, it also mentions the honeybee.
    1. Note that Jesus and the apostles generally followed the LXX when quoting from the Old Testament. This included when they were quoting from the **Proverbs**.
      - a. With an interlinear Septuagint and an interlinear New Testament, you can see this for yourself by comparing what Peter and James quote with the corresponding verse in Proverbs (in Greek).
      - b. For example, compare **1 Peter 5:5** and **James 4:6** in the New Testament Greek with **Proverbs 3:34** in the LXX: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble".
    2. If that is the text predominantly used by Jesus, the apostles and the early Christians, I think we should at least consider using it as well.

- b. The lazy person (the sluggard) is told to *go study the ant* to become wiser.
  - i. Consider how insulting this is, to the lazy person, that he should look up to a small insect like an ant!
- c. Positive characteristics of the ant include:
  - i. The ant is a hard worker (very strong for their size, and always working)
  - ii. No one bossing the ant around, telling him what to do. He works naturally, without being pushed by someone else.
  - iii. The ant is concerned about the future. It stores up during the summer (when he is able; does not consume everything during prosperous times). Therefore, it is prepared when winter comes.
- d. In LXX it adds, “or go to the honeybee”.
  - i. It (like the ant) also is a diligent worker.
  - ii. It is productive, doing work that provides a benefit to others. It produces something that kings and common people use for health (honey).
  - iii. Although a very weak creature by nature, it is leading the way in wisdom.
- e. Proverbs writer challenges: get out of bed, don’t lie around, get to work! Repent of laziness! This sentiment is repeated many places throughout the book of **Proverbs**. Examples include:
  - i. “The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.” (**Proverbs 21:25**, NKJV; similar to **Proverbs 21:24** in the LXX)
  - ii. “The lazy man says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!’” (**Proverbs 22:13**, NKJV; similar to **Proverbs 22:15** in LXX)
    - 1. Lazy people make excuses rather than take responsibility and repent.
    - 2. Don’t be a person who makes excuses, like the sluggard!
- f. **Question:** Is this just an OT idea (work hard to not be poor), or does it carry over for Christians as well? Now that Jesus has done all the hard work to save us, do we still need to work hard, or can we relax now?
  - i. New Testament writings on laziness vs. hard work
    - 1. At the end of **Matthew 24**, Jesus explains what He will be looking for, from His disciples, when He returns.

- a. “Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (**Matthew 24:44–51**, NKJV)
- i. Jesus said that when He returns, He will look to see if His servants have been *faithful*, doing the work that He gave them to do. (Or will he find them ignoring his commands, not doing the work left for them, and even abusing the fellow-servants).
- ii. Jesus then follows up this teaching with three parables to illustrate what He will be looking for from His disciples when He returns (and what will be their fates, depending on whether they did the work left for them or not).
- iii. The three follow-up parables (in **Matthew 25**) are:
  - 1. Parable of the Ten Virgins
  - 2. Parable of the Talents
  - 3. Parable (or Story) of the Sheep and Goats
- 2. Read the Parable of the Talents, in **Matthew 25:14–30**. When the master returns, he finds out whether his servants have been faithful or not.
  - a. The two who put their talents to work are commended for being “good and faithful servants”; and they are rewarded.
  - b. In contrast, the servant who was given one talent is found to have been unfaithful. Consider the response of the master: “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘*You wicked and lazy servant*, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.” (**Matthew 25:26**, NKJV)
  - c. “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out *laborers* into His harvest.’” (**Matthew 9:37–38**, NKJV)

- d. “The *hardworking farmer* must be first to partake of the crops.” (2 **Timothy 2:6**, NKJV)
- e. “For God is not unjust to forget *your work and labor of love* which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,” (**Hebrews 6:10–11**, NKJV)
- g. This call to be a hard worker is a real challenge to me, personally. While I work harder than many Christians, I have to battle with the flesh all the time against the temptation to be lazy!
- h. Over the past 30+ years, I have observed the sharp difference between churches where the leaders and members are hard workers evangelistically, versus when they are lazy instead.
  - i. My own observations, in a very large church over decades: when the leaders and members were hard workers in spreading the gospel, the church grew rapidly; and when they stopped working, the growth trailed off as well!
  - ii. What is the difference between churches that are effective in seeking and saving the lost, versus those that see minimal results in that area?
    - 1. Sometimes a major factor is righteousness vs. sin in the church.
    - 2. However, I have seen that one of the greatest factors is often: plain and simple *hard work*.
    - 3. When we were led by Christian leaders who worked hard, and we worked hard as well to spread the gospel, the church grew rapidly for a period of time.
    - 4. However, when “third soil” weeds and thorns took over (life’s worries, riches and pleasures), members of the church stopped working hard. Consequently, the growth of the church slowed down.
    - 5. God blesses hard work; in **Romans 16**, Paul commends hard workers in the church.
  - iii. I am always on the lookout for people who are hard workers in the kingdom. They call me higher! I admire that hard-working spirit, and want to imitate their hard-working character.
- i. Don’t forget the ant (and the honeybee).

## VI. Four Small Animals in Proverbs 30, Called “Wiser than the Wise”



- a. Read **Proverbs 30:24-28** in NKJV. Compare with **Proverbs 30:26-30** in LXX, OSB
- b. The four small animals discussed here are:
  - i. **Ants**
    1. They prepare for the future (as we discussed previously in this lesson, in connection with **Proverbs 6**).
    2. The wise Christian will be concerned about the future: the Day of Judgment and eternal life. Don't just live concerned about the short term (this brief life on earth).
    3. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." (**Matthew 6:19-20**, NKJV)
    4. "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (**1 Timothy 6:18-19**, NKJV)
  - ii. **Rock badgers (or conies or rabbits)**
    1. They make their homes in crags (narrow gaps) in the rocks.
      - a. They are little furry creatures with no ability to defend themselves against predators.
    2. The wise person will seek to hide in God, to protect us from our powerful enemy, Satan, who is out to destroy us.
      - a. "I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." (**Psalms 18:1-2**, NKJV)
  - iii. **Locusts**
    1. Locusts somehow move together as a mass, without having anyone to compel them to go in a specific direction. They are incredibly unified.
    2. Jesus prayed for us in **John 17**, that those who would believe through the work of the apostles, that we would be unified.

3. Unity is an incredibly powerful thing! *Even if people are unified for evil purposes, they are often able to do remarkable things.* Consider the people who built the Tower of Babel, in **Genesis 11**.

a. “But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now *nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.*’” (**Genesis 11:5–6**, NKJV)

4. Unity is critically important in a marriage, a family and the church.

iv. **Lizards (or spiders)**

1. They dwell in the palace of the king, even though they are small creatures that can be caught by hand.

2. The wise person will find a way to enter into *Jesus’ kingdom*.

**VII. Clean vs. Unclean Animals in the Law of Moses**

a. There is an odd statement in the Law of Moses regarding an ox, that is quoted twice in the New Testament.

i. “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” (**Deuteronomy 25:4**, NKJV)

1. **Question:** Why would Moses be so concerned about *an ox*? This is an animal that is walking around, treading out the grain to process it for human use. (Moses explains that if the ox gets hungry while doing this work, the animal should be able to eat some of the grain.)

ii. Paul wrote: “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’...” (**1 Timothy 5:18**, NKJV)

iii. Paul also wrote: “For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ *Is it oxen God is concerned about?* Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? *For our sakes, no doubt, this is written*, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.” (**1 Corinthians 9:9–10**, NKJV)

iv. We see that this statement about *oxen* in **Deuteronomy 25** was written for the benefit of Christians, to teach them that those working among them spiritually (apostles, evangelists, etc.) should receive financial support from those they were serving.

- b. Several early Christian writers saw *another* reference to animals in the Law of Moses as also *providing an important spiritual lesson for Christians*. Read **Leviticus 11:1-8**.
  - i. Here we find a list of clean animals (which a Jew was allowed to eat) and unclean animals (which Jews were forbidden to eat). The clean animals (land animals) must BOTH:
    - 1. Have cloven (split) hooves, AND
    - 2. Chew the cud (after eating grass, able to cough it up and chew it more later on).
    - 3. Note that if an animal only met one of the two criteria, it was still considered 'unclean' and the Jews were not permitted to eat it.
  - ii. Of course, these dietary requirements were only under the Law of Moses; Christians are no longer bound by these restrictions, as Paul explains in **Colossians 2** and as was confirmed by the apostles at the Jerusalem Council in **Acts 15**.
  - iii. **Question:** Why these two unusual requirements, and why did they BOTH have to be met, in order for an animal to be considered "clean"?
- c. A few early Christian writers commented on the significance (for Christians) of the rules for clean vs. unclean animals in the Law of Moses. We will consider insights from two of the earliest Christian writers here.
  - i. From one of the earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament, the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 70-100 AD):
    - 1. "Now, wherefore did Moses say, 'Thou shalt not eat the swine, nor the eagle, nor the hawk, nor the raven, nor any fish which is not possessed of scales?' He embraced three doctrines in his mind [in doing so]. Moreover, the Lord saith to them in **Deuteronomy**, 'And I will establish my ordinances among this people.' Is there then not a command of God they should not eat [these things]? There is, but Moses spoke with a *spiritual* reference.
    - 2. "For this reason he named the swine, as much as to say, 'Thou shalt not join thyself to men who resemble swine.' For when *they live in pleasure*, they forget their Lord; but when they come to want, they acknowledge the Lord. And [in like manner] the swine, when it has eaten, *does not recognize its master*; but when hungry it cries out, and on receiving food is quiet again.

3. “Neither shalt thou eat,’ says he ‘the eagle, nor the hawk, nor the kite, nor the raven.’ ‘Thou shalt not join thyself,’ he means, ‘to such men as know not how to procure food for themselves by labor and sweat, but seize on that of others in their iniquity, and although wearing an aspect of simplicity, are on the watch to plunder others.’ So these birds, while they *sit idle*, inquire *how they may devour the flesh of others*, proving themselves pests [to all] by their wickedness.
  4. “...Moreover, ‘Thou shalt not,’ he says, ‘eat the hare.’ Wherefore? ‘Thou shalt not be a corrupter of boys, nor like unto such.’ Because the hare multiplies, year by year, the places of its conception; for as many years as it lives so many it has.
  5. “Moreover, ‘Thou shalt not eat the hyena.’ He means, ‘Thou shalt not be an adulterer, nor a corrupter, nor be like to them that are such.’ Wherefore? Because that animal annually changes its sex, and is at one time male, and at another female. [*Apparently this was the belief of some at this time, that the hyena had the ability to change its sex (= hermaphrodite). While there are in fact some animals in nature that can do this, we know that the hyena is not one of them! -CP*]
  6. “...Moses then issued three doctrines concerning meats with a spiritual significance.... But Moses says still further, ‘Ye shall eat every animal that is cloven-footed and ruminant.’ What does he mean? [The ruminant animal denotes him] who, on receiving food, recognizes Him that nourishes him, and being satisfied by Him, is visibly made glad. Well spake [Moses], having respect to the commandment. What, then, does he mean? That we ought to join ourselves to those that fear the Lord, *those who meditate in their heart on the commandment which they have received*, those who both utter the judgments of the Lord and observe them, those who know that meditation is a work of gladness, and *who ruminate upon the word of the Lord*.
  7. “But what means the cloven-footed? That the righteous man also *walks in this world; yet looks forward to the holy state [to come]*.
  8. “Behold how well Moses legislated. But how was it possible for them to understand or comprehend these things? We then, rightly understanding his commandments, explain them as the Lord intended. For this purpose He circumcised our ears and our hearts, that we might understand these things.”
    - a. (Source: *Epistle of Barnabas*, Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, pp. 143–144)
- ii. From Irenaeus (130-200 AD), bishop of the church in Lyons, located in modern-day France:

1. "Now the law has figuratively predicted all these, delineating man by the [various] animals: whatsoever of these, says [the Scripture], have a double hoof and ruminant, it proclaims as clean; but whatsoever of them do not possess one or other of these [properties], it sets aside by themselves as unclean. Who then are the clean? Those who make their way by faith steadily towards the Father and the Son; for this is denoted by the steadiness of those which divide the hoof; and they meditate day and night upon the words of God, that they may be adorned with good works: for this is the meaning of the ruminants.
  2. "The unclean, however, are those which do neither divide the hoof nor ruminant; that is, *those persons who have neither faith in God, nor do meditate on His words*: and such is the abomination of the Gentiles.
  3. "But as to those animals which do indeed chew the cud, but have not the double hoof, and are themselves unclean, we have in them a figurative description of *the Jews, who certainly have the words of God in their mouth, but who do not fix their rooted steadfastness in the Father and in the Son; wherefore they are an unstable generation*. For those animals which have the hoof all in one piece easily slip; but those which have it divided are more sure-footed, their cleft hoofs succeeding each other as they advance, and the one hoof supporting the other.
  4. "In like manner, too, those are unclean which have the double hoof but do not ruminant: this is plainly an indication of *all heretics*, and of those who *do not meditate on the words of God*, neither are adorned with works of righteousness; to whom also the Lord says, 'Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say to you?' For men of this stamp do indeed say that they believe in the Father and the Son, but they never meditate as they should upon the things of God, neither are they adorned with works of righteousness; but, as I have already observed, they have adopted the lives of swine and of dogs, giving themselves over to filthiness, to gluttony, and recklessness of all sorts. Justly, therefore, did the apostle call all such 'carnal' and 'animal,' [all those, namely], who through their own unbelief and luxury do not receive the Divine Spirit, and in their various phases cast out from themselves the life-giving Word, and walk stupidly after their own lusts: the prophets, too, spake of them as beasts of burden and wild beasts; custom likewise has viewed them in the light of cattle and irrational creatures; and the law has pronounced them unclean."
    - a. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 8; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 534)
- iii. Note that while pigs eat anything (including garbage), ruminants (animals that chew the cud) only eat the pure grass. Then ruminants, after they first

eat the grass, will continue to cough it up and chew on it further throughout the day, to extract all the nutrients in it.

1. Let us be like the ruminants: reading the word of God and then working on it, *meditating on it all day long* (as it says in **Psalm 1**).
2. Regarding the necessity for cloven (split hooves):
  - a. An animal with split hooves (like a goat or sheep) is more sure-footed on rugged terrain than an animal with a single hoof (like a horse).
  - b. Irenaeus saw in this those (the Christians) who had faith in both the Father and the Son; unlike the Jews who, although they meditated on the Scriptures, only had faith in the Father (not the Son).
  - c. On the other hand, in the *Epistle of Barnabas* that writer saw the split hooves as referring to one who had greater stability because they were attending to both matters *in this life* and matters of *the next life* (after death).

#### VIII. Don't Be Like Dogs or Pigs (Turn Back to Depravity)

- a. Read **2 Peter 2:20-22**, a very sobering warning for all Christians:
  - i. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A *dog* returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a *sow, having washed*, to her wallowing in the mire.'" (**2 Peter 2:20-22**, NKJV)
  - b. Dogs may be treated rather well here in Massachusetts, in the US (where we have professional dog-walkers and commercial establishments devoted to grooming, bathing and providing accessories for pets), it is not like that in much of the world. Furthermore, dogs certainly were not treated like this in the first century!
    - i. I recall that when our family lived in Tirana, Albania in the early 2000's, we saw packs of wild dogs roaming the streets. They were mangy looking, and often ate what they could find from piles of garbage along the side of the road.
  - c. Peter says that someone who becomes a Christian and then turns back to their old sinful ways is like a dog that vomited up something rotten that it had eaten, and then after that goes back and licks up that vomit. *Disgusting!*

- d. Peter also says that this is like a pig, after being washed (strikes me as a reference to a Gentile being baptized) takes a swan dive back into the filth and mud!

## IX. Conclusion

- a. Let us learn valuable lessons, which could end up saving our spiritual lives, from these Biblical references involving animals.
- b. They are lessons that are easy to remember, very graphic illustrations that will stick with us.
- c. Imitate the character of the *good examples*, including:
  - i. the hard-working ant,
  - ii. the four small animals that are considered very wise, and
  - iii. the 'clean' animals that chew the cud and have split hooves.
- d. Learn also from the *bad examples*.
  - i. Don't be like the vomit-eating dog or the pig that was washed and dove back into the mud.
  - ii. Now that you have been washed, don't ever go back to the old, disgusting sinful way of life you came out of!