



December 3, 2021

Worship Our Creator, or the Creation?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Last Friday evening, my letter "Killers of Faith" reached a little larger audience it seems. One never knows how far a message may reach in this high tech information age that we live in.

A question was asked that I'd like to answer, because many others may have the same question.

I'll preface my letter this week with, it never ceases to amaze me the events that make the "big news" headlines, at least here in the United States where I live.

I remember back in about 2015, alternative media revealed the agenda of so-called Planned Parenthood that had been involved in promoting abortions in the U.S. for decades. At that time they were exposed for being involved in the harvesting and selling body parts from aborted babies. But the mainstream media was focusing more on Tom Brady and "deflategate" and the decision about penalizing him for supposedly deflating footballs prior to a championship game...that continued to grab headlines.

Around that same time social media lit up with the shooting of a lion in Zimbabwe by a Minnesota dentist who paid a significant amount of money to get a license and hire guides, etc. It caught the worldwide attention of many and caused an uproar. For weeks there were posts on a popular social media, Facebook. Some were wanting the dentist to be arrested and even hanged. Unfortunately, he thought everything was in order in hunting the lion, but the men he hired to guide him and take care of the details not only failed to get the hunting permit but also did not inform the dentist that "Cecil the lion" was supposedly a favorite in the game preserve. It became a large focus of many with enormous outcry.

If we know our history, former U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt and his son went on a yearlong safari and hunting expedition many years ago in Africa and killed hundreds of wild animals including a number of lions, elephants and rhinoceroses. It appears that the number of animals killed may have been excessive, but I doubt if that caused a huge uproar back when it happened. President Roosevelt was known to do most things with gusto and exuberance.

We're seeing a shift culturally in society to focus on worshiping the creation more than the

Creator as it discusses in the book of Romans. (Romans 1:25 “who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever”).

So, the question that has come up from time to time is this. Are wild animals somehow sacred? Is killing an animal a serious offence? Is it okay to hunt animals? Let’s examine the scriptures.

It was God who created the animals (Genesis 1:24-25) and then created mankind. God gave mankind dominion over all of the animals and creatures (Genesis 1:26, 28).

What was the relationship of man and animals in the Garden of Eden? I gather that they lived in harmony and the nature of animals was not predatory. God brought the various beasts and birds to Adam to see what he would name them and it seems they were not a danger to Adam. (Genesis 2:19)

Following the sin of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, curses were placed on the earth. Was the nature of some of the animals changed then? The first record of killing animals is recorded when the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve with skins. (Genesis 3:21) Obviously an animal had to be killed to remove the skin. We find that one of the sons of Adam and Eve was praised when he brought an animal offering to the Lord. He obviously killed the animal because the fat of the animal is mentioned. (Genesis 4:4)

Following the great worldwide flood, Noah sacrificed some of the clean animals and birds that he had transported on the ark. (Genesis 8:20) The Lord responded positively to the aroma of the burnt offerings of the animals. (v.21) The Lord specifically authorized Noah and mankind to eat animal as food as long as they were bled properly. (Genesis 9:3) The post-flood world saw the rise of a notable ruler, Nimrod. He was noted as a great hunter. (Genesis 10:8-9) One analysis of his name is that it means leopard-subduer. Legend claims that he built cities and walls around them to protect people from wild animals that were both numerous and a danger to humans.

Carnivorous wild beasts were noted as roaming in the land of Canaan. When Joseph was thrown into the pit by his brothers, they were going to tell Jacob that “a wild beast had killed him”. (Genesis 37:20, 33) One of the curses found in Leviticus 26 is the presence of wild beasts that would be marauding and killing. (v.22)

Let's examine the killing of a lion by a well-known biblical character. "So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his

hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done." (Judges 14:5-6) The Lord gave Samson the strength to kill the lion. David also killed several wild animals that threatened the sheep he was tending. (1 Samuel 17:34)

God Himself instructed the killing and sacrificing of animals as part of the Tabernacle and Temple rituals. A young lamb was killed, bled, and sacrificed morning and evening. Various animals were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement during some of the ceremonies. (Leviticus 16)

Following the deportation of the tribes of Israel by the Assyrians, the king of Assyria bought people from Babylon and other nations to populate Samaria. (2 Kings 17:24) These people did not fear or honor the Lord, and as a result lions were sent to attack and kill some of them. (vv.25-26)

Where I grew up in Nebraska, it and other states issued licenses for hunting various animals including mountain lions. When their populations get out of control they become a danger to humans as they get closer to human habitations and lose their fear of humans. In the game refuges in Africa, they issue licenses for big game hunters to come in and kill some of the animals to keep the population in control and in balance. They charge a hefty sum for the licenses but the income helps them to have the funds to manage the parks. When my wife and I visited Masai Mara and Amboseli National Game Parks in 2000, we had a guide for our tours. He usually had access to, or carried a big game rifle just in case we had an encounter that went bad! He said that "if he had to use the rifle to kill a rhino he would be on probation for a year, because they would lose the income from a hunter paying big bucks to kill one". It is great to have game preserves where people can view wild animals in a near natural habitat. But even these preserves do have controlled hunts. So, yes, it's too bad that the killing of Cecil the lion was not conducted properly. The men whom the Minnesota hunter hired have been arrested.

All this being said, men have hunted animals for centuries. In some cases, it was to obtain food. In other cases, it was to bag a trophy to display. In other circumstances the hide was used to make clothing of various kinds such as fur coats and beaver hats. It is one thing to have controlled hunts and issue licenses based on controlling the population of various animals. It is another to have mass slaughters such as the buffalo or bison of decades ago on the prairies of the United States. That was unacceptable.

But, let's from scripture realize there is *no biblical prohibition against killing animals*. Scripture condemns mistreating animals and causing unnecessary suffering. Isaiah predicts the time of the rule of the kingdom of God when the wild animals "shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." (Isaiah 11:6-9) Will animals still be used for food then? How about the reinstatement of rituals including animal sacrifices during the reign of the Christ? (Ezekiel 40:39-42; Zechariah 14:20-21) It will be interesting to see what changes will take place in the harvesting of animals

for food and other uses as the Millennium unfolds...

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

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