

## **What Kind of Animal are You?**

‘An old snake decided he better get some glasses since his sight was so bad. They fitted him for a pair of contacts since he had no ears to hold up the frames. The next day another snake said, “Do you like your new glasses[, er, contacts]?” “Yeah”, he answered. “They are the best thing to happen to me in a long time. In fact, they have completely changed my life”. “In what way?” “Well, for one thing, I found out that for three years I have been dating a garden hose”.’

No wonder the snake never got any traction! Now if that green garden hose looked like a fellow snake when slightly out of focus, perhaps you can imagine how, in a spiritual sense, we humans can resemble one or other animals. In a way, as we humans are made in God’s image, so is the animal kingdom made in man’s image, so to speak. Which helps explain why we humans tend to anthropomorphize the animals we come across, especially our pets. For any human who has kept pets, or raised and cared for farm animals, even hunters, etc., we know that just about any animal, even fish, has a personality. Having grown up on an angus cattle farm, I can tell you from personal experience that there is wide variety in the intelligence of cattle, even of the same breed. Some are profoundly skittish, while others are more

even keel and calm. Some are just as profoundly imbeciles, who can't see the difference between the broad side of a barn and an open gate, while others have really "good" heads on them, and can figure out how to open fastened gates and escape to partake of the greener grass on the other side of a fence. All of this sounds suspiciously like some human beings we can think of. Any good farmer knows that when moving a herd from one pasture to another, you've got to get the smart ones at the front so that the less well-endowed in the brains department will fall in line and follow along to where they need to go.

With all that in mind, then it should not come as a surprise that the reverse can be equally enlightening. When a person's dominant trait is strikingly similar to the primary characteristic of a particular animal species, then it makes perfect sense to refer to a particular person or even group of people as one or other kind of animal. We see such often in God's Word. For often the image of a particular kind of animal provides a fuller understanding of a person or nation than thousands of descriptive words. Which is why our patriarch Jacob, who had already been given a new name, "Israel", by God, was led to equate seven of his sons with animals as he was giving them his final blessing before he died.

Getting back to our "friendly" snake with the poor eyesight, generally speaking, most of us humans, if we're truly honest with ourselves, are prejudiced against snakes. Frankly, we just don't like them. Most of us will walk away, or jump, scream and run,

when we encounter one. Don't you think that offends the snake? How do you think he feels? For "Snake Lives Matter!" In the real world, the snake is probably glad we got out of its way, since snakes don't much like us either. And when the devil himself spoke through a snake in the Garden of Eden, tempting gullible Eve to disobey God's one and only explicit command, well, it's not hard to see why the human race has forever after associated snakes with evil. So when we come across a human who exhibits many of the primary characteristics we associate with snakes, namely stealth, cunning, and nefarious motives to hurt or defraud others, he or she is often called a "snake". Or how many people have we called "dirty rats", "jackasses", or worse?

As he gave his final blessings, our father Jacob named seven of his twelve sons as various animals. Issachar was a donkey. Naphtali was a doe, a female deer. Joseph was a young wild donkey. Benjamin was a wolf, a very hungry one. Dan, by the way, was a snake, and a poisonous one who actually bites! Most importantly, Judah is named a lion, a young strong lion. We note here that these blessings are actually prophecies over what these sons and the tribes they will sire will become and do in the distant future. What's really remarkable is what a poor motley crew these sons are. Jacob doesn't recite all their sins in his blessings, but just recalls some of their most defining actions, good or bad. Mostly bad! Reuben was an incestuous rapist, and thereby lost his special place as the firstborn son. Simeon and Levi, jointly

took revenge over the rape of their sister Dinah by the pagan Canaanite king Shechem, deceiving the king and all his men, killing all of them, and hamstringing oxen just for the fun of it. Cruel they were, and for that, neither of them received an allotment of territory in the Promised Land. Because centuries later Moses and Aaron were both of the tribe of Levi, the Levites became the priestly tribe and were forbidden from owning any land, for they were to serve God as priests forever. The tribe of Simeon were only granted a few towns within the lands of Judah, and eventually disappeared, absorbed into Judah itself.

Joseph was Jacob's youngest son, and the favorite. At age 17, the other brothers kidnapped him, jealous of his coat of many colors and his bragging. They then sold him to Egyptian traders. While in Egypt, he became a forerunner of Christ Jesus, after 13 years as a slave and prisoner, when he became prime minister of Egypt, second only to the pharaoh. From that position blessed by God, Joseph was able to save both Egypt and surrounding peoples from dying of famine, enriching both Egypt and the pharaoh in the process. Most importantly by virtue of his Providentially-exalted political position, he saved his own family, that is his estranged brothers and bereaved father and their families ensuring the future birth of the nation of Israel. Even his own two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, half Egyptian, would be adopted by their grandfather Jacob and become tribes of their own.

But while Joseph was Jacob's favorite son, and receives an

extensive blessing from his father, it was Judah that oddly also receives a long blessing with far-reaching prophecy. The central, key point is verse 10: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from his descendants, until the coming of the One to Whom it belongs, the One Whom all nations will honor”. This verse, and the rest of Judah’s blessing actually speaks of Judah’s greatest descendant, Someone famous worldwide, Christ Jesus the Messiah. In the previous verse, Judah is described as a lion. And Lord Jesus is clearly identified as *the* “Lion of the tribe of Judah” in Revelation 5:5. In animal terms, we usually tend to think of Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, for His Majesty is so named in John 1 and I Peter 1. Yes, He is the once-and-for-all sacrificial Lamb of God, Whose death takes away the sin of the world, of all those who accept His free gift of love and grace and take upon themselves His name and serve Him. He is forever the Lamb of God. Yet in Revelation He is the Lion of Judah, for now, in the end of time, when He will soon come back to earth the second time. He doesn’t need to return as the Lamb of God, for He was already sacrificed for sin. Two thousand years ago. But now He’s about to come back, this time to set up His millennial kingdom on earth, to rule and reign all nations with a rod of iron, as Psalm 2:9, Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15 explicitly declare. In so doing, our sire, King Jesus, fulfills Jacob’s prophecy in Genesis 49:10: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from his descendants, until the coming of the One to Whom it

belongs, the One Whom all nations will honor”.

So if even our Lord is associated with two animals, the lamb and the lion, what kind of animals are you and I? Well, how are the followers of Christ described? Consider just this one scripture passage, John 21:15-17, wherein the Lord commands Peter to “feed My lambs”, “take care of My sheep”, “feed My sheep”. So what are we? “Lambs”, well, only while we’re young in Christ. We’re not supposed to stay “children” forever. We are supposed to grow up. Lambs grow up to become sheep. So we grow up to become sheep. Sheep need a shepherd, and our Shepherd is Christ. And we stay sheep in the sense that we must never, ever stop following Him. But in following Him, there will soon come another time when He leads us into battle against the antichrist and the devil and all the evil they have churned up in this world they are deceitfully, fraudulently and illegally occupying since Christ’s death on the cross.

As the rank and file of Five-Star General of Heaven Christ Jesus’ army, I somehow doubt that if we’re still sheep we’d be very effective. But if we become lions, young lions, why, lions are ferocious fighting animals and the lion is not known as the King of the Jungle for nothing! I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to stay a sheep forever, but like our Lord, become like Him as a lion of Judah who rules and reigns with Him as His princes in His perfect Kingdom of Peace. Metaphorically, and spiritually, let’s start roaring the truth that many Americans may yet hear and repent.

