



**grow. pray. study.**

**July 13, 2025    *God, Lost Dogs and Animals in Heaven***

Scripture: Ezekiel 34:15-16, Isaiah 11:6-7, 9a and Revelation 5:13

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak.

The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the young lion will feed together,  
and a little child will lead them.  
The cow and the bear will graze.  
Their young will lie down together,  
and a lion will eat straw like an ox...  
They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.

I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea—I heard everything everywhere say, “Blessing, honor, glory, and power belong to the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb forever and always.”

**Nathan's Parable: One Pet Sheep Changed Everything**  
**MONDAY 7.14.25    2 Samuel 12:1-10, 13**

1 So the LORD sent Nathan to David. When Nathan arrived he said, “There were two men in the same city, one rich, one poor. 2 The rich man had a lot of sheep and cattle, 3 but the poor man had nothing—just one small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised that lamb, and it grew up with him and his children. It would eat from his food and drink from his cup—even sleep in his arms! It was like a daughter to him.

4 “Now a traveler came to visit the rich man, but he wasn't willing to take anything from his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had arrived. Instead, he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the visitor.”

5 David got very angry at the man, and he said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the one who did this is demonic! [Or *as good as dead*; Hebrew *a son of death*]. 6 He must restore the ewe lamb seven times over because he did this and because he had no compassion.”

7 “You are that man!” Nathan told David. “This is what the LORD God of Israel says: I anointed you king over Israel and delivered you from Saul’s power. 8 I gave your master’s house to you, and gave his wives into your embrace. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. If that was too little, I would have given even more. 9 Why have you despised the LORD’s word by doing what is evil in his eyes? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and taken his wife as your own. You used the Ammonites to kill him. 10 Because of that, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite as your own, the sword will never leave your own house.

13 “I’ve sinned against the Lord!” David said to Nathan.

Israel’s King David had fallen, step by step, into an ugly set of moral failures. (If you don’t know the story, it’s in [2 Samuel 11](#).) The prophet Nathan faced the challenge, on God’s behalf, of convincing his friend David away from his destructive course. “The idea of pets... is almost absent from ancient literature, but [Nathan’s] parable of the poor man’s one ewe lamb hints that (as on some farms today) not all animals were treated as mere produce.” \* The story moved David’s heart and opened his eyes.

- People in David’s day mainly viewed animals in a purely functional way (the same way we usually view tractors or kitchen appliances today). Yet the king did not brush off Nathan’s brilliant parable. He had lost sight of the flagrant injustice as well as the gross immorality of his self-serving choices. How can seeing David’s inner response to the parable about the little lamb move you to let the feelings animals trigger in you awaken you to important life issues?
- Nathan’s brave confrontation (David **was** an absolute monarch) led the king to face what he had done. David offered no excuses, but frankly owned up to his reckless, deadly course. He couldn’t undo Uriah’s death. He could honestly seek God’s forgiveness. Pastor Hamilton wrote, “Don’t pretend you’re seeking forgiveness if you’re really not. The kind of half-hearted apologies we sometimes offer don’t cut it here.” \*\* Is there anything you need to honestly face and turn away from?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, it took a simple story about a little lamb to wake David up to his need for you. Send me conviction (not condemnation) about anything I need to own up to and turn away from. Amen.

\* Article “Animals” in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. 28.

\*\* Hamilton, Adam. *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go*, (p. 27). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

## **A Clever Woman Domesticated Jesus' Dog Metaphor**

**TUESDAY 7.15.25 Matthew 15:21-28**

21 From there, Jesus went to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from those territories came out and shouted, “Show me mercy, Son of David. My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession.” 23 But he didn’t respond to her at all.

His disciples came and urged him, “Send her away; she keeps shouting out after us.”

24 Jesus replied, “I’ve been sent only to the lost sheep, the people of Israel.”

25 But she knelt before him and said, “Lord, help me.”

26 He replied, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and toss it to dogs.”

27 She said, “Yes, Lord. But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall off their masters’ table.”

28 Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith. It will be just as you wish.” And right then her daughter was healed.

“The regions of Tyre and Sidon” were Gentile territory, beyond Jewish lands’ northern borders. That may have shaped the woman’s clever response to Jesus in verse 27: “Gentiles sometimes raised dogs as pets; they could clean up scraps of food left by the family. Too desperate to take offense, this woman humbles herself to seize any opportunity for healing.” \* Those surroundings seem to have made the disciples nervous. But it seems Jesus went there, at least in part, to teach them a lesson.

- Written words can’t show tone of voice or expression. If verses 24 and 26 showed Jesus’ true beliefs about this desperate mother, his action and words in verse 28 don’t make sense. Might the story make more sense if we imagine Jesus with an ironic edge to his voice, and a bit of a twinkle in his eye? Clearly, in the end, Jesus honored the mother’s plea. How did his behavior seek to change the disciples’ outlook from verse 23?
- Matthew’s gospel seems to have spoken particularly to Christians of Jewish background, some of whom struggled to accept Gentiles in the church (cf. [Acts 15](#)). How would this story have spoken to the ethnic, cultural and gender divisions the early church faced? How does it speak to divisions today, including between those who wish to silence and “send away” women who’ve faced abuse and those who demand we take them seriously?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you weren’t about to let national or gender barriers keep you from responding to this mother’s heartfelt plea. Give me a willingness to do all I can to respond to pleas for help, even from beyond my comfort zone. Amen.

\* Craig Keener, comment on Matthew 15:27 in NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 8452). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

## **The Creator ultimately owns all living things**

### **WEDNESDAY 7.16.25 Psalm 50:9-12**

9 I won’t accept bulls from your house  
or goats from your corrals  
10 because every forest animal already belongs to me,  
as do the cattle on a thousand hills.  
11 I know every mountain bird;  
even the insects in the fields are mine.  
12 Even if I were hungry, I wouldn’t tell you  
because the whole world and everything in it already belong to me.

Large sections of Israel’s laws laid out detailed prescriptions for the sacrifices Israelite worshippers could bring to God. Sadly, people being people, it was all too easy for the Israelites to think that God **needed** the sacrifices, that their offerings put God in their debt. Psalm 50 addressed that issue directly. As we are learning during this Wild Kingdom series, God created and cares for not just humans, but all living things. Ultimately, they all belong to God as much as we do.

- Psalm 50 reinforced a core Israelite conviction: because God owns everything, none of it is truly “mine.” Jesus also taught that principle. He described what he called “worldly wealth” in [Luke 16:11-12](#) as “someone else’s property.” Ask yourself, would you drive God’s car the same way you do “yours”? Would you watch different things on God’s TV or computer? Would you spend God’s money any differently than you do “yours”?
- “God does not need the sacrifices.... He refuses to go looking for “a bull from your house” or “goats,” when He owns all the beasts in the “forest” and “the cattle on a thousand hills” (v. 10). He “knows” (the Hebrew means “is in relationship with”) all “the birds of the mountains” and “the wild beasts of the field”.... Sacrifices are offered not for God’s sake but for Israel’s.” \* How do you benefit from treating people, animals and possessions as truly belonging to God?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me keep growing in the sense of responsibility I bring to stewarding the portions of your creation that you entrust to my care. Amen.

\* Donald Williams, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 13: Psalms 1–72*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, p. 381.

## **God's Eternal Kingdom: No Predators, Only Peace**

### **THURSDAY 7.17.25 Isaiah 11:6-9, Isaiah 65:17, 25**

#### Isaiah 11

- 6 The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the young lion will feed together,  
and a little child will lead them.
- 7 The cow and the bear will graze.  
Their young will lie down together,  
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.
- 8 A nursing child will play over the snake’s hole;  
toddlers will reach right over the serpent’s den.
- 9 They won’t harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.  
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD,  
just as the water covers the sea.

#### Isaiah 65

- 17 Look! I’m creating a new heaven and a new earth:  
past events won’t be remembered;  
they won’t come to mind.
- 25 Wolf and lamb will graze together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,  
but the snake—its food will be dust.
- They won’t hurt or destroy at any place on my holy mountain,  
says the LORD.

Most mainline scholars believe the book we call “Isaiah” is a composite work, joining material from two or three prophets. “While a few scholars maintain that the whole book originated with Isaiah, most scholars speak of the book’s primary divisions as First Isaiah (Isa 1-39); Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55); and Third Isaiah (Isa 56-66).” \* If so, today’s second passage echoes a vision of God’s future first voiced by “Isaiah of Jerusalem” perhaps 150 to 200 years earlier.

- The lyrical picture of God’s eternal “holy mountain” in today’s passages pictured a whole collection of animals living in peace with one another, and with humans, in God’s eternity. “Animals in heaven?” is not a silly or trivial question. It takes us back to creation. Saying animals we love will miss out on eternity would suggest that God is only interested in human beings, not in all creation. How does God’s creation of animal life strongly suggest that animals will be part of eternity?
- The first gospel writer said at Jesus’ temptation “he was among the wild animals” ([Mark 1:12-13](#)). “Mark alone among the Gospel writers alludes to ‘wild beasts’.... Exciting is the possibility that Mark saw this as a messianic touch; many prophecies... pictured the age of the Messiah as a time when the wild beasts become tame and docile (e.g. Isaiah 11:6).” \*\* Jesus launched God’s future kingdom, but not fully. How will your world be better when Isaiah’s vision of God’s love fully defeating all that hurts or destroys comes true?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, in this troubled world, it seems daring (even unrealistic) to think of the world Isaiah pictured. Yet your purpose is to lead me to the reality of that world for all eternity. Help me to count on it. Amen.

\* Patricia K. Tull, introduction to Isaiah in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 1092 OT.

\*\* John Killinger, *His Power in You (The Devotional Commentary: Mark)*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978, p. 7.

## **All Nature Anticipates God’s Liberation Day**

### **FRIDAY 7.18.25 Romans 8:19-22**

19 The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God’s sons and daughters. 20 Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God’s children. 22 We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now.

For much of human history, most people thought of the earth as “a given,” assuming that the air or the rivers and lakes would remain clean no matter what we put into them. But 2000 years ago, the apostle Paul understood that not just human beings but “the whole creation” was suffering from the effects of departing from God’s path. Yet he didn’t write in despair. His phrase “breathless with anticipation” was “a dramatic image of hope.” \*

- Economic and political factors have created heated debates about the causes of more intense storms (like the flooding in Texas) or the disastrous wildfires in many parts of the world. But no matter how you understand the causes, it’s hard to deny that these conditions and others fit Paul’s view that not just people, but “the whole creation is groaning together.” How can God’s people be actively involved in relieving the suffering, animal as well as human, in our world?

- Paul's hope drew on the long history of God's actions for God's people. "As God had liberated his children from slavery in the exodus, leading them by a cloud of glory...so God would in the future liberate his children most fully and with them all creation." \*\* One regular theme in the Bible, especially in Jesus' story, is that of setting captives free. In what particular ways does it appeal to you to imagine not just yourself, but all of creation, "set free" by the power of God's love?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to care about your creation the way you do. Show me how I can better care for your world and help me encourage the people in my life to do the same. Amen.

\* Michael J. Gorman, study note on Romans 8:19-21 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 289 NT.

\*\* Craig Keener, comment on Matthew 15:27 in *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (p. 10377). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

## **All Creation Joins Heaven's Worship Song**

**SATURDAY 7.19.25 Psalm 69:32-34, Revelation 5:9-13**

Psalm 69

32 Let the afflicted see it and be glad!

You who seek God—

let your hearts beat strong again

33 because the LORD listens to the needy

And doesn't despise his captives.

34 Let heaven and earth praise God,

the oceans too, and all that moves within them!

Revelation 5

9 They took up a new song, saying,

"You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals,

because you were slain,

and by your blood you purchased for God

persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

10 You made them a kingdom and priests to our God,

and they will rule on earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard the sound of many angels surrounding the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. They numbered in the millions—thousands upon thousands. 12 They said in a loud voice,

"Worthy is the slaughtered Lamb

to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and might,

and honor, glory, and blessing."

13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea—I heard everything everywhere say,

"Blessing, honor, glory, and power

belong to the one seated on the throne

and to the Lamb

forever and always."

Centuries apart, the poetry of Psalm 69 and the resonant heavenly music of Revelation 5 both built God's praise higher and higher until they included, not only human voices, but "every creature in heaven and on earth" praising the Creator and Redeemer. "The first song [in Revelation 5], then, praises the lamb for rescuing a people by his death so that they could then take forward God's royal and redemptive purposes ('kingdom and priests') for the wider world. The second song, in which thousands upon thousands of angels join, turns from what the lamb has *achieved* to what he has *deserved*, namely, all the honour and glory of which creation is capable.... so to the third song, in which every creature in every part of God's creation joins in, much as in Paul's vision in [Philippians 2.9-11](#). This time the praise of the lamb has been joined together with the praise of God the creator, as in chapter 4. In thunderous worship the whole creation praises 'the One on the throne and the lamb'." \*

- We've looked for clues (some subtle) to answer the question, "Will there be animals in heaven?" Remember: poets and prophets pictured God's ultimate praise arising just from more than human voices. "This scene ends with every created thing in every realm of the universe joining together in praise and confession of God's and the Lamb's supreme authority." \*\* Does taking seriously the idea of God as creator of all life bring you peace about animals in heaven?
- That has a serious spiritual implication we may not have thought of. "Sadly, many Christians think of Jesus purely in terms of their own comfort and hope ('he has rescued us; he is with us as a friend') and who fail completely to see the sheer scope of his majesty, the sweep of his glory. Many rest content to have Jesus around the place for particular 'spiritual' purposes, but continue to assign riches, power, glory and the rest to earthly forces and rulers." \*\*\* God and Jesus created all and are the Lord of it all. How does that shape the ways you treat all of their creation?

**Prayer:** Jesus, under the nose of Roman emperors who claimed to be divine, John and the first Christians said you are truly Lord. I join in their allegiance to you and your creation, embracing hope. Amen.

\* Wright, N. T., *Revelation for Everyone* (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 57-58). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Catherine A. Cory, study note on Revelation 5:11-14 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 506 NT.

\*\*\* Wright, N. T., *Revelation for Everyone* (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 57-58). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](http://cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To **Mike Ash** following the death of **Timothy Ash** (Brother), who died 7/3/2025.

To **Sharon LaBelle** following the death of **Don LaBelle** (Husband), who died 7/9/2025.

To **Christie Mead** following the death of **Bill Needels** (Father), who died 7/9/2025.