

## Jesus and Animals II: What did he Practise?

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In the previous chapter we studied the evidence of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels. There remains the question of how Jesus related to animals in practice. The evidence to answer this question is even less extensive than his recorded teaching about animals, but still it is not negligible.

From Jesus' general teaching and its roots in the Jewish tradition, we should certainly expect that Jesus treated animals with care and compassion. In so far as Christians look to Jesus for an example of the ethical lifestyle which they should follow, Jesus' general practice of love and compassion is of great importance for their treatment of animals. Even though the Gospels do not record specific instances of Jesus exercising compassion for animals (the apocryphal story quoted in the last chapter is the only known instance of this in any ancient literature about Jesus), nevertheless readers of the Gospels find it hard to imagine him failing to do so. (This is why the incident of the demons and the pigs, discussed in the last chapter, seems to many readers problematic in that Jesus appears to act out of character.)

However, beyond this general point, there are two specific issues we can explore. The first is whether Jesus ate meat. The answer is not immediately obvious in the Gospels, but there are a number of indications and pieces of evidence which we can consider. The second issue is whether Jesus in any way brought animals within the scope of his messianic mission. Most of the acts of Jesus recorded in the Gospels are illustrations and examples of the healing and forgiveness and deliverance from evil which he brought to human life. But did the salvation he brought from God extend in any way beyond the human world to the other living creatures with whom we share God's world? One brief but decisive reference to animals in Mark's Gospel (1.13) provides, as we shall see, a richly significant answer to this question.

*Sacrifices and meat-eating*

We have seen that Jesus' attitude to animals belongs wholly within the Old Testament and Jewish tradition. In this tradition it was permitted to kill certain animals for sacrifice to God in the temple and for food. For Jesus to have rejected either of these practices in principle would have been a significant innovation. Of course, there were innovatory aspects of Jesus' interpretation of the law of Moses, but there is no evidence at all that he innovated in either of these two ways.

With regard to sacrifice, had there been any tradition of words of Jesus rejecting the sacrificial system, then the Gospels, probably all written by and for Christians who had abandoned the practice of sacrifice in the temple, would surely have recorded it. The so-called cleansing of the temple (Mark 12.15–17), which has sometimes been interpreted as a symbolic rejection of the system of sacrificial worship, would certainly not have been so understood by Jesus' contemporaries. Jesus objected to the way the priestly aristocracy who ran the temple were exploiting the sacrificial system as a means of financial profit, thus distorting the real purpose of sacrifices as a vehicle of prayer.<sup>1</sup> Matthew twice attributes to Jesus, in his debates with the Pharisees, a quotation from Hosea 6.6: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice' (Matt. 9.13, 12.7). In neither context is a reference to sacrifice as such especially relevant. Sacrifice must be taken here as representative of the ritual aspect of Jewish religion, which the Pharisees are seen as giving precedence over the ethical demand of God's law. But the sharp antithesis is not really intended, any more than it is in its original context in Hosea, to mean that sacrifice is not God's will. The meaning is that mere ritual observance is of no value in God's sight. We can be sure that Matthew does not understand Jesus to be rejecting the sacrificial system, because in Matthew 5.23–24 he preserves a saying of Jesus which takes it for granted that his hearers, like almost all Jews, would be following the practice of offering sacrifice in the temple.<sup>2</sup> It seems clear that, despite his criticism of the way the priestly hierarchy ran the temple, Jesus did not go as far as the Qumran sect, who rejected the legitimacy of the worship in the temple (while not rejecting sacrifice in principle). We must also take it as virtually certain that he himself participated in sacrificial worship, both in attending the prayers that accompanied the regular sacrifices in the temple, and in offering sacrifices himself (which were not of course only offered in atonement for personal sin, but also for purification from ritual impurity and as offerings of praise and thanksgiving).<sup>3</sup> His attendance at the regular annual festivals in Jerusalem (Luke

2.41–42, John 2.13, 7.1–10, 10.22–23) would have involved this. If the impression the Synoptic Gospels give that the last supper was a passover meal is correct (Mark 14.12–16; Luke 22.14; but contrast John 18.28, 19.14, 31), then Jesus ate with his disciples the passover lamb which had been sacrificed in the temple that afternoon.

Eventually most early Christians came to believe that the sacrificial system, or at any rate sin-offerings, had been rendered redundant by the sacrificial death of Christ (see especially Hebrews), while the principle of the Pauline mission to the Gentiles was that Gentile converts to Christianity were free from all the ritual requirements of the Mosaic law. But there is no suggestion in any of the New Testament writers (not even in Stephen's speech in Acts)<sup>4</sup> that God had not really commanded Israel to offer animal sacrifices.<sup>5</sup> However, this does seem to have been the view adopted by the later Jewish Christian sect of the Ebionites (to be distinguished from the majority of Jewish Christians, who were known as Nazarenes), doubtless in reaction to the destruction of the temple and the end of the temple cult in AD 70.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, in the Gospel of the Ebionites, which is based on the three Synoptic Gospels,<sup>7</sup> they attributed to Jesus the saying: 'I came to abolish sacrifices, and if you do not cease from sacrificing the wrath will not cease from you' (*ap. Epiphanius, Pan. 30.16.5*). In the account of the preparation for the last supper, this Gospel borrowed from Matthew 26.17 the disciples' question to Jesus, 'Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the passover?' For Jesus' answer the words of Luke 22.15 ('I have eagerly desired to eat this passover with you') were used, but turned into a question expecting the answer 'no': 'Have I eagerly desired to eat meat with you this passover?' (*ap. Epiphanius, Pan. 30.22.4*). The addition of 'meat' to the words taken from Luke probably indicates not only that the Ebionites could not accept that Jesus would have eaten a sacrificial animal, but also that they thought Jesus was vegetarian. To the latter point we shall return below. But it is clear that these features of the Gospel of the Ebionites are late adaptations of the Gospel tradition, designed to bring it into line with the particular views of the Ebionite sect and of no historical value.

Just as we can scarcely doubt that Jesus participated in the sacrificial system, so we can scarcely doubt that he also ate meat other than that of sacrificial animals. It is true that meat was a luxury in Jewish Palestine (cf. Sir. 39.26–7).<sup>8</sup> Jesus would not have eaten it regularly. But the meals to which he was invited in the houses of the wealthy (Mark 2.15; Luke 7.36, 11.37, 14.1, 19.5) are likely to have included meat. Jesus does not seem to have disapproved of the employment of those of his disciples who had been

fishermen (see especially Luke 5.3–10). In the feeding miracles, he multiplied fish, along with loaves, to provide food for the crowd (Mark 6.38–43, 8.7), while after his resurrection he not only cooked and served fish for the disciples (John 21.9–13) but also ate fish himself (Luke 24.42–43). Even though the historical value of some of these passages in the Gospels is widely disputed, it is hard to believe that if Jesus had been vegetarian such traditions could have arisen in the early church.

Some Jews in Jesus' time did practise abstention from meat, for two main reasons.<sup>9</sup> One was the need, in a Gentile context, to avoid the defilement which eating Gentile food might incur (Dan. 1.5–16; Tob. 1.10–13; Judith 10.5, 12.2). Red meat would not have been correctly slaughtered and drained of blood. Especially there was the probability that Gentile meat had been offered to idols in pagan temples before being sold in the market. This is almost certainly the reason why some Jewish Christians in the church in Rome were vegetarian (Rom. 14.2). But such problems did not occur in Jewish Palestine where Jesus lived.

The second reason for abstention from meat was as an ascetic practice of self-denial. As such, it was relatively unusual. Jews regularly practised fasting, which meant complete abstention from food and drink for short periods. The traditional form of long-term self-denial was the Nazirite vow, which required abstention from alcoholic drink but not from meat (Num. 6.3; Judg. 13.4, 7, 14). According to Luke 1.15 John the Baptist, like Samson, was a Nazirite from birth, which did not therefore prevent him from making locusts part of his ascetic diet in the wilderness (Mark 1.6). However, because meat was regarded as a luxury, the practice of abstaining from wine and meat was sometimes adopted as a kind of semi-fast which, unlike true fasting, could be maintained over a long period. It was considered a form of mourning (Dan. 10.2; T. Reub. 1.10). It might be practised for a few days or weeks (Dan. 10.2; IV Ezra 9.23–26, 12.51) or, exceptionally, for several years (T. Reub. 1.9–10) or a lifetime (T. Jud. 15.4). The Therapeutae, a Jewish community who lived a kind of monastic life in Egypt, never drank wine or ate meat (Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 73–4). Apparently, after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, many Jews abstained permanently from wine and meat, as a form of mourning for the temple (t. Sot. 15.11–15). In an account of James the Lord's brother, which is largely legendary but probably does derive from second-century Palestinian Jewish-Christian tradition, in which the memory of James was revered, Hegesippus represents him as, in effect, a Nazirite who augmented his vow by abstaining from meat as well as from wine. Since he is also said to have been constantly in prayer for the forgiveness of the

Jewish people, his asceticism is probably to be understood as a form of mourning for their sins (*ap.* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.5–6).

In the Gospel of the Ebionites, John the Baptist's diet in the wilderness is said to have been, not locusts (Greek *akris*) and wild honey (as in Matt. 3.4; Mark 1.6), but wild honey that tasted like a cake (Greek *ekris*) in oil (*ap.* Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.4). Clearly the change is designed to make the Baptist the kind of ascetic who abstained not only from wine but also from meat. Probably, in representing Jesus also as vegetarian (as we noticed above), this Gospel was making Jesus also into this kind of ascetic. Perhaps the Ebionites took the Jewish Christian tradition about the asceticism of James the Lord's brother as the model to which they conformed both John the Baptist and Jesus. It does not necessarily follow that the Ebionites themselves were all lifelong vegetarians.

However, we can be sure that Jesus did not practise this form of asceticism. A reliable Gospel tradition strikingly contrasts him with the ascetic figure of John the Baptist:

For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!' (Luke 7.33–34; par. Matt. 11.18–19).

Moreover, Jesus' vow of abstention from wine taken at the last supper (Mark 14.25) implies that he had not previously abstained from wine, and abstention from meat without abstention from wine is unknown in Jewish or early Christian ascetic practice. When Jesus was asked why his disciples did not follow the normal Jewish practice of regular fasting, he compared his ministry with the festivities of a wedding celebration in which it is inappropriate to fast (Mark 2.18–20). With this view of his ministry, we cannot imagine Jesus adopting a practice which symbolized mourning.

According to Genesis, both meat eating (Gen 1.29, 9.3) and wine drinking (Gen. 9.20–21) began after the Flood. So it is possible that the ascetic practice of abstaining from both was associated with a return to the practice of early humanity, before divine concessions to human corruption. But there is no evidence for this, and it is not easy to relate this notion to the fact that abstention from meat and wine symbolized mourning. Nor is there any evidence of any Jews or early Christians adopting vegetarianism out of a desire to return to the paradisaical condition of humanity.<sup>10</sup> We might think this would have been appropriate in Jesus' case (especially in view of Mark 1.13, to be discussed in our next section), but the evidence is entirely

against it. We must conclude that Jesus neither adopted vegetarianism for reasons which other Jews had for doing so nor adopted it for innovatory reasons of his own. Of course, it does not follow that there cannot be any kinds of valid Christian arguments for vegetarianism,<sup>11</sup> but an argument that meat eating is absolutely wrong would clearly contradict the Christian belief in the sinlessness of Jesus. It would also cut Christianity's roots in the Jewish tradition of faith to which Jesus so clearly belonged.

### *The messianic peace with wild animals*

Mark's account of the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness following his baptism (Mark 1.13) falls into a different category from most of the material in the Gospels which we have studied so far, and for this reason has been left till last. In the first place, whereas we have so far been concerned for the most part with Gospel traditions which we can be fairly sure preserve accurately the teaching of Jesus, it is much more difficult to assess the historical character of Mark 1.13. Even if Jesus did spend a period alone in the wilderness before the commencement of his public ministry, which is likely enough, many scholars would regard the details of Mark's account of this as not so much a historical report as an early Christian attempt to express the theological significance of Jesus and his messianic mission. So we shall here be content to understand the significance Mark and his readers would have seen in the statement that Jesus 'was with the wild animals', without attempting to decide the historical question. But, secondly, Mark 1.13 differs from the other Gospel material we have studied in that, whereas other references to animals are incidental, in the sense that they take for granted a well-established Jewish attitude to animals in order to make a point which is not primarily about animals, in Mark 1.13 the evangelist, as we shall see, understands Jesus' mission as designed to make a difference to the human relationship with wild animals.

Mark 1.13 reads: Jesus 'was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.' The statement that Jesus was with the wild animals<sup>12</sup> is a mere four words of the Greek text, but we should not be misled by its brevity into thinking it insignificant or merely incidental. In Mark's concise account of Jesus in the wilderness no words are wasted. Each of the three clauses has its own significance.

Mark's prologue (1.1-5), in which this verse occurs, presents Jesus as the messianic Son of God embarking on his mission to inaugurate the kingdom of God. Following his anointing with the Spirit at the baptism, the Spirit

drives him into the wilderness (v. 12) for a task which evidently must be fulfilled before he can embark on his preaching of the kingdom (v. 14). The wilderness had gathered rich symbolic associations in Jewish tradition, but we should not be distracted by the symbolism it carries in the fuller Matthean and Lukan accounts of the temptation (Matt. 4.1-11; Luke 4.1-13). Nor should we describe Mark 1.13 as Mark's temptation narrative: the testing by Satan is for Mark only the first of three encounters, all important. In Mark 1.13 the wilderness carries its most fundamental biblical and natural significance: it is the non-human sphere. In contrast to the cultivated land, where humans live with their domesticated animals, the wilderness was the world outside human control, uninhabitable by humans, feared as it threatened to encroach on the precarious fertility of the cultivated land and as the haunt of beings hostile to humans.<sup>13</sup> It was the natural home not only of the wild animals but also of the demonic. Hence Jesus goes into the wilderness precisely to encounter the beings of the non-human world: he must establish his messianic relationship to these before he can preach and practise the kingdom of God in the human world. Significantly, none of the three non-human beings he encounters in the wilderness – Satan, the wild animals, the angels – subsequently appear in Mark's narrative of Jesus' activity in the human world.

The order of the non-human beings in Mark 1.13 – Satan, the wild animals, the angels – is not accidental. Satan is the natural enemy of the righteous person and can only be resisted: Jesus in the wilderness wins the fundamental victory over satanic temptation which he can then carry through against the activity of Satan's minions in the human world later in the Gospel (see especially Mark 3.27). The angels, on the other hand, are the natural friends of the righteous person: they minister to Jesus as they did to Elijah in the wilderness (I Kings 19.5-8) and to Adam and Eve in paradise (b. Sanh. 59b). Between Satan and the angels the wild animals are more ambiguous: they are enemies of whom Jesus makes friends. This is the point that we shall shortly establish.

We must first ask: Which animals are designated by the word *theria* ('wild beasts') in Mark 1.13? The word usually refers to wild animals in distinction from animals owned by humans, and usually to fourfooted animals in distinction from birds, reptiles, and fish, though snakes can be called *theria* (e.g. Acts 28.4-5). However, the word can also have the more limited sense of beasts of prey or animals dangerous to humans. Though sometimes supplied by the context or an adjective, this sense of 'dangerous beast of prey' seems quite often required by the word *therion* alone.

This linguistic phenomenon corresponds to an ancient tendency, at least in the Jewish tradition, to consider wild animals primarily as threats to humanity, either as direct threats to human life (e.g. Gen. 37.20, 33; Lev. 26.6, 22; II Kings 2.24, 17.25–26; Prov. 28.15; Jer. 5.6; Lam. 3.10–11; Ezek. 5.17, 14.15, 34.25, 28; Hos. 13.7–8; Amos 5.19; Rev. 6.8) or, by attacks on flocks and herds, as threats to human livelihood (Lev. 26.22; I Sam. 17.34–37; Hos. 2.12; Amos 3.12; John 10.12). The sense of wild animals as threatening belongs to the prevalent conceptualization of the world as conflict between the human world (human beings, their animals, and their cultivated land) and wild nature. Not many wild animals (as distinct from birds and fish) were hunted for food in Jewish Palestine, and so interest in them tended to be limited to those which were threats to humanity. Seeing these animals purely from the perspective of sporadic human contact with them could produce a distorted and exaggerated view of their enmity to humans, as is shown in a remarkable passage by Philo of Alexandria (*Praem.* 85–90), who portrays wild animals, meaning the dangerous beasts of prey, as engaged in a continuous war against humans, constantly waiting the opportunity to attack their human victims. That Philo, living in Egypt, thinks this is true of the Indian elephant is only mildly surprising, but that he considers the Egyptian hippopotamus to be a man-eater shows the level of paranoia involved. Alien and excluded from the human world, wild animals had human fears projected on to them. It is also worth noting that the staging of conflicts between people and wild animals in the Roman amphitheatres, in which of course the animals were provoked into antagonism, would have heightened first-century people's sense of the enmity of wild animals. Of course, ancient peoples who perceived wild animals primarily as a threat did not notice that they themselves were also a threat to wild animals by steadily reducing their habitats as they extended the area of cultivated or deforested land.

The Jewish tradition, in the context of which Mark 1.13 should be read, saw the enmity of the wild animals as a distortion of the created relationship between humans and animals and the result of human sin. In creation God established human dominion over the animals (Gen. 1.26, 28; Ps. 8.6–8; Sir. 17.2–4; Wisd. 9.2–3), which should have been peaceful and harmonious, but was subsequently disrupted by violence. The Noahic covenant (Gen. 9.1–7) takes account of the violence. But that humans should live in fear of animals should not be the case even by the terms of the Noahic covenant, which promises that animals shall go in fear of humans (Gen. 9.2). In fact, wild animals were perceived as menacing. Jewish literature therefore envisaged two ways in which the true relation-

ship of humans and wild animals might be restored: one individual, one eschatological. In the first place, it could be thought that the truly righteous person should enjoy divine protection from wild animals as from other threats to human life: as Eliphaz told Job: 'At destruction and famine you shall laugh, and shall not fear the wild animals of the earth . . . [They] shall be at peace with you' (Job 5.22–23). In later Jewish literature the idea is that the truly righteous person exercises the human dominion over the animals as it was first intended, as it was given at creation (b. Sanh. 38b; b. Shabb. 151b; Gen. R. 8.12).<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, Jewish eschatological expectation included the hope that the righting of all wrongs in the messianic age would bring peace between wild animals and humans. The classic scriptural expression of this hope is Isaiah 11.6–9:<sup>15</sup>

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.  
They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD,  
as the waters cover the sea.

This has often been misunderstood by modern readers as a picture simply of peace between animals. In fact, it depicts peace between the human world, with its domesticated animals (lamb, kid, calf, bullock, cow), and the wild animals (wolf, leopard, lion, bear, poisonous snakes) which were normally perceived as threats both to human livelihood (dependent on domestic animals) and to human life. Peace between all animals is certainly implied, both in the fact that the bear and the lion become vegetarian (11.7) and the snakes harmless (11.8), and in the cessation of all harm and destruction (11.9), which must also mean that humans are to be vegetarian. The picture is of a restoration of paradise ('my holy mountain' is Eden, as in Ezek. 28.13–14) and the original vegetarianism of all living creatures (Gen. 1.29–30), but it is presented from the perspective of ancient people's sense of threat from dangerous wild animals. That threat is to be

removed, the enmity between humans and wild animals healed. Later Jewish literature, down to the New Testament period, continued the same expectation, primarily inspired by Isaiah 11.6–9 (see Isa. 65.25; Sib. Or. 3.788–95; Philo. *Praem.* 87–90; II Bar. 73.6). In such passages, the dominant notion is that the original, paradisaical situation, in which humans and wild animals lived in peace and harmony, will be restored in the messianic age.

We need not limit the wild animals (*theria*) of Mark 1.13 to the somewhat dangerous animals that might be encountered in the wilderness of Judaea: bears, leopards, wolves, poisonous snakes (cobras, desert vipers, and others), scorpions. The word does not prohibit well-informed readers from thinking also of other animals: hyenas, jackals, caracals (the desert lynx), desert foxes, fennec foxes, wild boars, wild asses (the onager and the Syrian wild ass), antelopes (the desert oryx and the addax), gazelles, wild goats (the Nubian ibex), porcupines, hares, Syrian hyraxes, and so on.<sup>16</sup> But both the use of the word and the habits of thought which went with it would be likely to bring especially the dangerous animals to mind.

Mark's simple but effective phrase indicates Jesus' peaceable presence with them. The expression 'to be with someone' (*einai meta tinos*) frequently has the strongly positive sense of close association or friendship or agreement or assistance (e.g. Matt. 12.30, 26.69, 71, 28.20; Luke 22.59; John 3.2, 8.29, 15.27, 16.32, 17.24; Acts 7.9, 10.38, 18.10; Rom. 15.33), and in Mark's own usage elsewhere in his Gospel, the idea of close, friendly association predominates (3.14, 5.18, 14.67; cf. 4.36). Mark 1.13 depicts Jesus enjoying the peaceable harmony with wild animals which had been God's original intention for humanity but which is usually disrupted by the threat of violence.

Apart from the context, we might class Jesus, in terms of the Jewish traditions we have outlined, simply as the individual righteous person who is at peace with the wild animals. But Jesus in Mark's prologue is no mere individual. Just as he resists Satan not as merely an individual righteous person but as the messianic Son of God on behalf of and for the sake of others, so he establishes, representatively, the messianic peace with wild animals. He does so only representatively, in his own person, and so the objection that a restoration of paradise should not be located in the wilderness is beside the point. More to the point is that all the wild animals of Isaiah 11 would be most easily encountered in the wilderness. Jesus does not restore the paradisaical state as such, but he sets the messianic precedent for it.

If Mark's phrase 'with the wild animals', indicating a friendly com-

panionship with the animals, would certainly evoke, for his original readers, the Jewish expectation of the age of messianic salvation, it also contrasts with some aspects of the way the restoration of the proper human relationship to wild animals was sometimes portrayed in the Jewish literature. There the animals are portrayed as fearing humans (a reversal of the present situation of human fear of the animals and no doubt thought to be the proper attitude of respect for their human rulers: T. Napht. 8.4; T. Benj. 5.2; Philo, *Praem.* 89; cf. Sir. 17.4; Ap. Mos. 10.3; Gen. R. 34.12) and the expectation is that they will serve humans (II Bar. 73.6). In other words, they too will become domestic animals. The human dominion over them is conceived as domination for human benefit. Such ideas of the ideal human relationship to the wild animals as one of lordship over subjects or domestic servants did continue in Christianity, but they are very notably absent from Mark 1.13. Mark says nothing of that sort at all. Jesus does not terrorize or dominate the wild animals, he does not domesticate or even make pets of them. He is simply 'with them'.

The context to which Mark 1.13 originally spoke was one in which wild animals threatened humanity and their wilderness threatened to encroach on the human world. The messianic peace with wild animals promised, by healing the alienation and enmity between humans and animals, to liberate humans from that threat. Christians who read Mark 1.13 today do so in a very different context, one in which it is now clearly we who threaten the survival of wild animals, encroach on their habitat, threaten to turn their wilderness into a wasteland they cannot inhabit. To make the point one need only notice how many of the animals Jesus could have encountered in the Judaeian wilderness have become extinct in Palestine this century: the bear, the onager, the desert oryx, the addax, the ostrich, and no doubt others. Others, such as the leopard and the gazelle, would not have survived without modern conservation measures. But Mark's image of Jesus' peaceable companionship with the animals in the wilderness can survive this reversal of situation. Its pregnant simplicity gains a new power for modern Christians in a world of ecological destruction. For us Jesus' companionable presence with the wild animals affirms their independent value for themselves and for God. He does not adopt them into the human world, but lets them be themselves in peace, leaving them their wilderness, affirming them as creatures who share the world with us in the community of God's creation. Mark's image of Jesus with the animals provides a christological warrant for and a biblical symbol of the human possibility of living fraternally with other living creatures, a possibility given by God in creation and given back in messianic redemption. Like all aspects of Jesus'

inauguration of the kingdom of God, its fullness will be realized only in the eschatological future, but it can be significantly anticipated in the present.