

CREATURES OF THE CREATOR

Part One: The Dove

When God made the world, He filled it with living creatures. There are so many different kinds of animals to be found that we are still discovering them. We will never know everything there is to know about this fascinating aspect of creation.

Animals also play an interesting role in many Bible stories, and animals have come to be used as symbols of Biblical truth. In this series we will be learning about some of the creatures God has made, and we will also see how these animals have taken part in familiar (and perhaps not so familiar) Bible lessons.

The Dove

The first of our Biblical animals is the dove. The term *dove* and *pigeon* are used interchangeably. Doves are from the family *Columbidae* which includes about 300 species of birds. Some have unusual names and features like the Luzon Bleeding Heart Dove, the Tambourine Dove, and the Olive Pigeon.



Bleeding Heart Dove

The species that are most commonly known to us are the ones that are raised and kept in captivity. The Ringneck Dove is the most common domestic dove and measures about 12 inches from head to tail. The Ringneck comes in at least 40 different color combinations. The common "white dove" that is so often shown in pictures is actually a variety of Ringneck.



Ringneck Dove

They are so named because the wild colored bird has black feathers at the neck that make the shape of a ring or collar.

The Ringneck dove is sometimes known as a "Turtle Dove". They are popular pets in North America and elsewhere. There are several associations that specialize in the breeding and keeping of domestic doves, including the American Dove Association (ADA).

The Passenger Pigeon

One of the most famous "doves" is the Passenger Pigeon. Its history is both interesting and sad. The Passenger was a large, wild pigeon that was once the most numerous bird in the world (3-5 billion population). It was so named because during migrations tremendous "clouds" of birds would pass overhead.



Martha, the last living Passenger Pigeon, died in 1914 at the age of 29.

The bird, however, became extinct by 1900. In the late 1870s to 1885 the last natural breeding grounds for the pigeon were in Michigan and Wisconsin. The final sighting of a Passenger Pigeon in the wild was on March 24, 1900 when a teenager in Ohio shot one and had it mounted. The last one in captivity died on September 1, 1914 and is on display at the Smithsonian. There is nobody alive anymore today who has seen first-hand those birds crossing the country.

The Passenger Pigeon is not to be confused with the domestic Carrier Pigeon (also known as the Homing Pigeon). Homing Pigeons can be trained to fly back to a particular location. Have you ever wondered what happens to all those white doves that are sometimes released at special events? They are actually white Homing Pigeons that simply return to their owners.

Doves In the Bible

This beautiful creature of God makes several important appearances in the Scriptures.

Genesis 8:8-12 Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove could find no place to set its feet because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

After the worldwide flood, Noah used a dove to determine whether or not the ground was dry. In literature and art, the dove bearing an olive branch has become a symbol of peace because of this Bible story. The dove showed Noah that God's great judgment against the world was completed and there was peace once again.

The peace, however, was not to last long. For man was still sinful at heart. He disobeyed God and the world became deceitful and corrupt.

God had a plan, however, to bring peace. He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to do something about the sins of the world. On the cross, Jesus would be punished for all sin – in place of the sinners themselves – so that there could be peace between us and our Creator. Jesus turned away God's wrath and all those who are connected to Jesus by faith do indeed escape the judgment of eternal death.

Thus the dove makes an appearance once again. Read Luke 3:21-22:

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."



When God the Holy Spirit made His presence visible at Jesus' baptism, He took the form of a dove. It was most meaningful, indeed. For the One being baptized was not only the Savior who would earn peace for all people, but the Spirit is the One who brings us to faith, causing that blessing of peace to become our own. The dove is therefore well used of as a sign of our peace with God and a symbol of the Holy Spirit who brings us to that peace.

Resources

http://agham.asti.dost.gov.ph/1998/8th/focus/johnt/bleeding_heart.jpg
http://animal-world.com/encyclo/birds/doves_pigeons/DovePigeon.htm
http://www.stansdoves.com/doves_photos.htm
http://www.ulala.org/P_Pigeon/George.html
http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/Dove_symbol_of_HS.html