

Elder Vernon Johnson Animals

Bear

Oftentimes in the scriptures animals are closely associated with bible subjects and principles. The characteristics of the animals are frequently used to illustrate spiritual lessons.

The animal called a bear is mentioned 13 times in the scriptures. It is very closely associated with the lion. Eight of the thirteen times the bear and the lion are mentioned together.

In nature the bear is not often known to use aggression towards humans. However, the exception is when the bear feels that its whelps are in danger. When the bear feels its whelps are in danger, the bear can become ferocious and deadly. Three of the thirteen times the bear is mentioned, it is mentioned in connection of a bear robbed of her whelps:

1. 2 Sam. 17:8 “For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.”

In this passage the men with David the king are compared in their ferocity to a bear robbed of her whelps. The thought is that David and his men would come out against the opposing foe with great anger and superhuman ferocity to do battle.

2. Prov. 17:12 “Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.” In this verse the principle put forth is that it would be better to meet a bear that is robbed of her whelps than to meet a fool in his folly. Of course, no one wants to meet a bear that is robbed of her whelps.

3. Hos. 13:8 “I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.” In this passage, the Lord compares his judgment of Israel because of her idolatries to that of a bear bereaved of her whelps. In other words, it will be extremely severe because of her continual adulteries and idolatries.

When the prophet Elisha, who had been such a blessing to Israel, came forth to Bethel, little children came out and mocked him and ridiculed him because he was bald-headed. Elisha cursed them and we read what happened in 2 Kings 2:24 “And he

turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.” Obviously the Lord did not look kindly upon the mocking and ridicule of his prophet.

As we previously noted, the lion and the bear are listed together eight times in the scriptures. The last time is in Rev. 13:2 “And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” This passage describes a seven headed, ten horned beast that received its power, and position, and authority from the great red dragon. The seven headed, ten horn beast is developed throughout the scriptures as a multi-national kingdom with desire to reign over all mankind. The use of the feet of a bear to describe one of the characteristics of the beast simply points us to the angry destructive characteristic of the beast to destroy that which it believes to be its enemies. For instance, we can look into the kingdom builders of the last hundred years and see their wrathful blood thirsty destruction of its perceived enemies. We know that Adolph Hitler killed over six million Jews and another five million of his perceived enemies. Likewise, both Stalin and Mao each were responsible for the destruction of tens of millions of people whom they deemed as threats to their ideology. One group they went after were capitalists and free market advocates and anyone who they deemed were ideological proponents of capitalism. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were often targets of these kingdom builders. Syria sought to destroy Israel, and then later Assyria destroyed and took captive the divided the kingdom of Israel with its headquarters at Samaria. Later, Assyria sought to destroy the Jews at Jerusalem, but God intervened on behalf of Hezekiah and the Jews. There are many other examples in the Old Testament.