

WAS THE PRE-FLOOD ANIMAL KINGDOM VEGETARIAN?

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It is commonly assumed that much of the animal kingdom became carnivorous or at least omnivorous after the Fall, though no mention of such a change is recorded in Genesis 3. Here, a case is made from the scriptures for creatures being exclusively vegetarian before the flood.

First, relevant palaeontological evidence must be mentioned, however. Clear evidence for the existence of carnivores is found in most fossiliferous strata. This is not only inferred from the nature of individual skeletal remains, but from associations of organisms either locked in combat or in the process of capturing or digesting their prey at the time of their demise. Thus, if most of the fossil record were deposited in the flood,¹ these carnivores must have existed before the flood and the question is thereby answered without further ado. Recently, however, Morton has raised the serious possibility that the fossil record (at least from the Cambrian onwards) represents 'a partial capturing of the repopulation of the world following the flood.'² If this 'reproductive-repopulation' model is correct, there are no substantial pre-flood fossil deposits of eukaryotic organisms with which to answer the above question. Biblical evidence only can be adduced.

It is certain that in the original creation both man and animals were vegetarian, since God gave Adam and Eve permission to eat only every green plant yielding seed (Gen. 1:29) and permission to eat every green plant to other creatures also (Gen. 1:30). After the Fall, man remained a vegetarian (Gen. 3:18) (It is conceivable, however, that some men ate animal flesh before the flood as they disobeyed God in most other respects.) until shortly after the flood; God gave Noah and his sons 'every moving thing that lives' in addition to the green plants (Gen. 9:3).

In the case of other creatures, no such definitive decrees are recorded, though interesting polemics and cautious conclusions are possible. If carnivorous creatures came into being after the Fall, it is surprising that there is no mention of this, no provision or warning to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Exactly the kind of warning and provision one would expect is only made after the flood in Genesis 9. Here, God puts the fear and dread of man upon the animals, birds and fish (verse 2). It is significant that this occurs *immediately* after God has decreed that Noah and his sons be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (v. 1). While aggressive carnivores might not seem formidable to humans reared in 20th century suburbia, the sons of Noah would have been hard pressed to survive let alone fill the earth in the absence of God's gracious

enabling provision. At this time, it is also commanded that any beast which kills a man must be put to death (v. 5).

Since the fear and dread of man is put upon the animal kingdom after the flood, it would seem reasonable to conclude that this was not the case beforehand. Thus, if the pre-flood world had carnivores, these had no fear of man and must have made human life extremely hazardous. That the early descendants of Adam not only survived, but multiplied and routinely attained to a 900 year life-span is remarkable.

Moreover, it would appear that the food eaten on the ark was vegetarian, and that man and animals ate from common food reserves (Gen. 6:21, 22). If the pre-flood world were vegetarian, the coexistence of these creatures with each other and with man during their gathering and year together in the ark does not require miraculous intervention by God. Rather it is symptomatic of a peaceful coexistence which had prevailed throughout the pre-flood period.

Considering the possibility of a pre-flood vegetarian world, a natural question is why the change to include carnivores and omnivores was decreed after the flood. Such a change would, of course, have profound effects on the entire earth ecosystem. A possible answer to this question is found in the comparative harshness of the post-flood world. Many have assumed that the pre-flood world had an equable climate and low mutation rates as a consequence of the water vapor canopy, while the post-flood world was harsher with climatic variation and higher mutation rates largely due to solar ray penetration to the earth's surface. This being the case, the tendency of organisms to degenerate genetically would be significantly greater after the flood (witness, for example, the decreased life-span of man (Gen. 11)). Therefore, there would be a greater need after the flood for differential elimination of unfit organisms which would otherwise survive, reproduce and lower genetic standards further. Such a rigorous differential elimination (natural selection) would be achieved by the introduction of carnivores at all levels of the biological hierarchy.

It is clear that there is insufficient Biblical data to establish a uniquely vegetarian pre-flood world directly and unequivocally. However, given the assumption that the bulk of the fossil record is post-flood, the Biblical data is at the very least consistent with this idea and it hence merits serious consideration.

References

1. Whitcomb, J. C., and H. M. Morris. 1961. *The Genesis Flood*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia.
2. Morton, G. R. 1982. Fossil succession. *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 19(2):103-111, & 90.

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