

Bible and the Headlines: Animal Testing

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There is a creature on the verge of extinction that no one is trying to save. The creature is the “lab rat” (or any species used for scientific experiments) and the news is that many cage doors will soon be opened.

On April 10th, Reuters offered, “US FDA to Phase Out Animal Testing in Drug Development.” The article springs from the recent testimony of FDA Commissioner Martin Makary to Congress. The commissioner explained that testing on animals will be, “. . . ‘reduced, refined, or potentially replaced’ with so-called New Approach Methodologies, or NAMs data, which include the use of AI-based models to predict a drug's behavior as well as side effects.” The FDA will immediately phase in these techniques and offer the incentive of streamlined reviews to companies who implement these methods.

The pan-European media network, Euractiv.com, on April 10 featured, “Animals Still Suffer and Die in the Name of Beauty. Why?” The question arises from the number of lab rats harmed despite the European Union’s Directive 2003/15 which states, “It is essential that the aim of abolishing animal experiments be pursued and that the prohibition of such experiments becomes effective.” The goal is to make it law that if a new chemical cannot prove its safety without animal testing, the chemical will not be approved.

The Hong Kong based investing newsletter Bamboo Works in its April 14th edition contained, “Joinn Labs Undermined by AI as FDA Phases Out Animal Drug Testing.” The article examined the companies affected by the FDA Commissioner’s testimony to Congress. One such company, Joinn Laboratories (China), “. . . supplies lab mice, rabbits and monkeys and related drug testing services to clients mostly in China and the U.S. and is part of a larger group of drug outsourcing service providers.” If China also transitions to artificial intelligence instead of lab animals, Joinn Labs may soon find its services obsolete.

Animal testing to prevent human injury occurs very early in the Bible. After the Flood, Noah used animal testing to determine if it was safe to leave the Ark: “Noah sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. Later Noah sent out a dove to see if the water had receded, but the dove could find nowhere to perch, so it returned to Noah who reached out his hand and took the dove back into the ark” (Gen 8:7-9). Noah waited a week and conducted the experiment again, “When the dove returned to Noah that 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.” (Gen 8:11-12) It was time to leave the Ark.

God is not careless of His animals. Jesus told His disciples, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (Matt 6:26). In another place Jesus told them, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care” (Matt 10:29). Jesus knew the disease people really needed to be healed from (sin) could not be helped through animal testing. So Jesus allowed himself to be subjected to the disease, “Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us.” The healing we receive on Good Friday requires no animal testing.