

WILL ANIMALS BE IN HEAVEN?

There is no doubt that animals will be in Heaven. The Bible is clear: *“Now I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse...”* Revelation 19:11. The Bible describes the angels around God’s throne as having features and characteristics like that of a lion, a bull and an eagle (Ezekiel 1). God Himself is likened in Scripture to a lion, a leopard, a bear (Hosea 13:7-8) and to an eagle (Deuteronomy 32:11). God made a good and perfect earth, populated by many animals. God directed Adam to name the animals – indicating relationship.

Creation Worships the Creator

The largest book in the Bible, the middle book of the Bible, the Hymn and Prayer book of the Bible, the Psalms, reveal that all of God’s Creation have contact with God (Psalm 93). All God’s Creatures praise Him. *“Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures... beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; ...let them praise the Name of the Lord for His Name alone is exalted. His Glory is above earth and heaven.”* Psalm 148:7-13. ***“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”*** Psalm 150:6

The living creatures around God’s throne who are singing *Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His Glory!* are animals (Isaiah 6:3).

Every Creature

The last book of the Bible presents the final climax of the ages when all Creation faces the Creator. First the four living creatures (the animal-like angels around God’s throne, as described in Ezekiel 1) praise God, then the twenty four elders, then the Redeemed people of God, then the angels (Revelation 4:6; 5:12). Finally the great scene is described when all living beings present their worship to Almighty God. ***“And every creature which is in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the Throne and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”*** Revelation 5:13

Consider the Sparrows

God created all the animals (Psalm 104). All animals belong to God (Psalm 50:10). God cares for the animals. *“Jesus said: ‘are not the five sparrows sold for two copper coins and not one of them is forgotten before God.’”* Luke 12:6. It is that Scripture which inspired the first act of the Union of South Africa, the minting of the half cent coin and later the one cent coin with two sparrows on it – reminding us that God cares for the very least.

Animals Matter to God

There are those who say that animals do not matter, but the Lord Jesus taught that His people are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 6:28). If a sparrow is worthless, then of what value are you? A hundred times zero equals zero. A million times zero still equals zero. For you to be of great value, the birds of the air must be of some value. Obviously animals matter to God because the presence of animals in Nineveh is recorded as one of the reasons for God’s mercy in not destroying that sinful city (Jonah 4:11).

The Ark of Noah

Noah’s Ark is the premier Biblical picture of Salvation. God provided a way of salvation from the judgment of the Flood, for Noah, his family and for multitudes of animals. In his commentary on Genesis, John Calvin wrote: *“It was a kind of restoration of the former state of things when God brought to Noah those animals, which He intended should be preserved through Noah’s labour*

and service. ...Moses explains the manner in which the animals were gathered together into the Ark and says that they came of their own accord. ...it shows that the blessing of God rested on the obedience of Noah, that in a moment such an assemblage of all animals should take place.”
“Then God remembered Noah and every living thing and all the animals that were with him in the Ark...” Genesis 8:1.

The Ark Included Animals

The most revealing Old Testament picture of God's Redemptive work is Noah's Ark. God took great care to save the animals from the Flood. In God's instructions to Noah we see many details and repeated emphasis on animals (Genesis 6). The Redemption of mankind from the Judgment of the Flood is a picture of Salvation. The rescue of the animals in the Ark is also a picture of how animals share in the benefits of Christ's Redemption. Just as with the animals in Noah's Ark, we see that the Salvation provided by Christ includes animals. *“That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth – in Him.”* Ephesians 1:10

God's Covenant with All Animals

Following the Flood, *“God made a Covenant with Noah and with every living creature... for perpetual generations... The rainbow shall be in the cloud... to remember the everlasting Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”* Genesis 9:12,16

Reversing the Curse

In the words of Isaac Watts immortal Hymn: Joy to the World: *“He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found!”* Just as the rebellion of Adam and Eve brought death to every creature, so in the second Adam – Jesus Christ – the effects of the curse are reversed. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”* 1 Corinthians 15:22. The blessings of the second Adam, Christ, are greater than the curse of the first Adam. **“And all flesh will see the Salvation of God.”** Luke 3:6 (The Greek word *sarx* translated *flesh* is equally used to refer to all mankind and all breathing creatures, all animals and all Creation).

“Because the Creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Romans 8:21

Heaven

In the light of these and many other Scriptures, I firmly believe that our Loving Almighty Creator intends all His creatures to enjoy Heaven with Him forever. The only part of creation that will be missing from Heaven, according to the Bible, are those sinful human beings who reject the great Salvation that God has revealed in the Bible and provided through Christ.

Stewardship over Creation

In the first chapter of the Bible, God made mankind responsible for His animals (Genesis 1:28). All animals are God's animals (Psalm 50:10). We are answerable to God for our treatment, care and protection of them. *“For we must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* 2 Corinthians 5:10

How Are We to Treat Animals?

“A good man is kind to his animals, but the wicked are cruel to theirs.” Proverbs 12:10

Matthew Henry's commentary on Proverbs 12:10: *“He regards even the life of his beast, not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to providence, which preserves man and beast (Psalm 36:6). The beasts that are under our care must be*

provided for, must have convenient food and rest, and must in no case be abused or tyrannised over. Balaam was checked for beating his donkey. The Lord took care of oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men that are not just to the brute creatures; those who are furious and barbarous to them evidence and confirm in themselves a habit of barbarity, and make the creation groan."

King David's View of Affection for Pets

The prophet Nathan spoke to King David of a poor man in his kingdom who had a little lamb who shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like one of his own children (2 Samuel 12:3). There was no suggestion that this man's affection for his pet was inappropriate. Indeed when King David heard that a man had taken this precious pet and had killed it, we read: "*So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man and he said to Nathan: As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!*" 2 Samuel 12:5

Animals on Special Assignment

Throughout the Bible we read of various animals to whom God spoke and gave assignments. A raven was assigned to bring food to Elijah (1 Kings 17:4-6). The donkey through whom God spoke, (Numbers 22:21-41). The lion whom God sent to kill the prophet who disobeyed God (1 Kings 13:24-30). The big fish that swallowed Jonah and transported him to the shore (Jonah 1:17). The lions whom God commanded not to harm Daniel (Daniel 6:22). All the animals that God commanded to present themselves to Adam to be named (Genesis 2:19), and the animals whom God guided to assemble in Noah's Ark (Genesis 6 and 7).

Do Animals have Souls?

The Hebrew word *nephesh* is translated *soul* more than 130 times in the Old Testament (KJV). The same Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is translated *soul* whenever it refers to man, is translated as *beast, living creature* or *life* when referring to animals. In Genesis 1:21, when referring to God's creating of the whales and every living creature which moves and the birds in the air, the same word *nephesh* is used. When God made a Covenant with Noah and every living creature, the word *nephesh* is used again to refer to the animals (Genesis 9:9-10). Proverbs 12:10 which speaks about a good man being kind to his animals, the word again is translated from the Hebrew *nephesh*. On occasion the KJV translates *nephesh* as *soul* when referring to animals, including Psalm 74:19, and Job 12:7-10. Leviticus 17:10-12 also states that "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood...*" and the soul is in the blood (Deuteronomy 12:23). The Hebrew word *nephesh* is translated *psyche* in the Greek Septuagint. Throughout the history of the church, the classic understanding was that animals have souls. It was only from the time of the humanist enlightenment that the existence of animal souls was even questioned (J.P. Moreland, *Beyond Death*).

Do Animals Have Spirits?

Ecclesiastes 3:21 speaks of the spirit (*ruwach*) of the animal. There is no doubt that "*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" John 4:24. To worship God one must have a spirit. Yet the Psalms and Revelation repeatedly speak of animals worshipping God. Yes, animals are not created in the image of God – but neither are angels and they will be in Heaven.

Character, Memory and Affection

Anyone who has adopted pets, or seen a litter of kittens or puppies born and raised them is well aware that every puppy and kitten has its own individual character and personality. They plainly have memory, preferences and can express affection, sensitivity and compassion. All of that is what we normally mean by our soul. Those who have been privileged to have lions, leopards and cheetahs as friends also appreciate the depth of character and deep affection that they are capable of.

Will our Pets be in Heaven?

Throughout the years my family has rescued and adopted many cats and also some rabbits and ducks. When I was growing up, I had the joy of having a lioness, Vivian and a leopard, Malcolm, as my dearest friends. When any of our pets have died, we have grieved and wept and buried them with Scripture reading, Hymn singing and prayer, thanking God for all the happy memories and committing our beloved pet into the hands of our Creator. When my children have asked if we will see and recognize our pets in Heaven, I could answer with an emphatic, Yes!

Together Forever

“The wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” Isaiah 11:6

“Search from the Book of the Lord, and read; not one of these shall fail; not one shall lack her mate; for My mouth has commanded it, and His spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them and His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.” Isaiah 34:16-17

The Source of Love

God is the source of all love. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (1 John 4:16). It is impossible that we could love our pets more than God does. If God has put such deep love in our hearts for these beloved furry family members, then we may be sure that he loves them far more than we do (James 1:17). As the animals in the Ark shared the salvation of Noah and his family, so we can have every confidence that our beloved pets who have been adopted into our families will also share in the blessings in Redemption. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found. In Christ the curse of the Fall is reversed. Christ proclaims: *“Behold, I am making all things new.”* Revelation 21:5

Will Extinct Animals be in Heaven?

When speaking to Job, God pointed to the great land and sea creatures, including dinosaurs, who reflect something of the glory and greatness of our Creator (Job 40:41). We can expect to see extinct creatures, such as dinosaurs, in Heaven.

The Creator and His Creation

“For since the Creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and Divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.”

Romans 1:20. In lions we see something of the power, the courage, the boldness and royalty of the Creator. In lambs we see gentleness and meekness. In otters and dogs we see God's playfulness. In horses we see some of the strength, stamina and perseverance of the Creator.

Pets in Paradise

Cambridge professor C. S. Lewis wrote that he believed that animals may enjoy immortality along with their masters. In *The Great Divorce* Lewis portrayed Sarah Smith, a woman very ordinary on earth, as great in Heaven. In Heaven she is surrounded by the very animals she cared for on earth. In her book on Heaven, Joni Eareckson wrote that she expected God to bring our pets back to life in eternity. Theologians John Piper and Dr. R. C. Sproul have also expressed their expectation of seeing beloved pets in Heaven. Animals were part of God's original paradise before the Fall. The state of paradise before the Fall is the clearest picture of what we can expect in Heaven. *“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”* Romans 8:19

Will we be able to Communicate with the Animals in Heaven?

God spoke through Balaam's donkey. Baalam's donkey was unable to express his own thoughts and feelings in the language understood by Baalam. Whales and dolphins communicate in highly complex ways. The Apostle John in the Revelation "*Heard an eagle that was flying in mid-air calling out in a loud voice*" (Revelation 8:13). In the Garden the serpent spoke to Eve. Revelation 5:13 declares that every creature in the universe will be declaring God's praises audibly. Clearly animals had greater capabilities before the Fall. Christ's Redemption will reverse all the effects of the curse. "*And there shall be no more curse...*" Revelation 22:3. No wonder "*the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.*" Romans 8:22

God's People and Creatures

When Adam was created, God surrounded him with animals.

When Noah was protected from the Flood and when God made a Covenant with him, he was surrounded by animals.

When Abraham was led to the Promised Land, he was accompanied by many animals.

When God led Moses and the Children of Israel through the Red Sea, provided for them in the wilderness and made a Covenant with them, they were accompanied by many animals.

When our Lord Jesus was born, He was surrounded by animals in the stable.

When our Lord returns to establish the new Heavens and the new earth, we can have every expectation that He will again be surrounded by the animals He has created.

Duty and Delight

In the light of the clear teaching of Scripture concerning Creation and mankind's responsibility for it, we should treat animals with the love and concern of those who must give an account of our conduct to God. We must recognise that the welfare and protection of animals is an essential part of our Christian responsibility. We must do all that we can to secure the well-being of all animals who, with ourselves, inhabit the earth and so fulfil the creative joy and purposes of Almighty God.

Dr. Peter Hammond

Livingstone Fellowship

P.O. Box 74 Newlands 7725

Cape Town South Africa

Tel: 021-689-4480

Fax: 021-685-5884

Email: mission@frontline.org.za

Website: www.livingstonefellowship.org.za