

## Will There Be Animals in Heaven?

This is a very emotional question for many people who are strongly attached to their pets. In my family, we had quite a bond with one of our cats. “Chip” meant the world to my oldest son. When my son and I had to take Chip (age 19) to the vet to have him put to sleep, it was very difficult. Even the Bible recognizes how close people can be to animals, as seen in the story Nathan told David about a pet lamb that a poor man had which “was unto him as a daughter” (2 Samuel 12:3).

However, in determining the answer to this question, we must not go by feelings or emotions, but by what the Bible teaches. Here are some basic facts which we must keep in mind:

- 1) There will be animals in the millennial kingdom of Christ. We know there will be wolves, leopards, kids, calves, cows, bears, lions, ox and serpents (Isaiah 11:6-9). There will surely be animals in the millennial kingdom, but what about the eternal state?
- 2) In Revelation 21-22, chapters which describe the eternal state, there is no mention made of animals. We are told that there will be “no more sea,” thus apparently ruling out sea creatures.
- 3) Although it’s hard to build a doctrine on teaching from Ecclesiastes, some understand chapter 3, verse 21 to be suggesting a clear difference between the destiny of a beast and the destiny of a man: “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”
- 4) If your dead pet is going to be with you in heaven, then that animal would need to be resurrected. However, nothing is said in the Bible about an animal resurrection. And what if a vicious dog or lion or bear had killed someone? Would such an animal be resurrected? If animals will be in heaven, will some also be in hell?
- 5) We know one thing for sure: There will be no moths in heaven (Matt. 6:19).

**Conclusion:** I am reluctant to be dogmatic about animals in the eternal state, a realm and an existence concerning which I know very little, but I have not yet seen any Biblical evidence showing that there will be animals. A number of Bible teachers believe that there will be animals in the eternal state, but most of their arguments are based on speculation and not on Scripture.

It might be helpful to remember why God created animals and what purposes they serve in God’s all-wise plan. Consider the following:

## Why Were Animals Created?

- 1) For limited but inadequate companionship (Genesis 2:18-22 and see 2 Samuel 12:3). A dog may provide enjoyment and may walk at a man's side, but the dog was never intended to be "man's best friend." God intended a much better helper for man (Genesis 2:20-22). Indeed, man's greatest and best Companion is the Lord Himself.
- 2) For food (Genesis 9:2-3)
- 3) For clothing (Matthew 3:4)
- 4) For transportation (Genesis 22:3)
- 5) For sacrifice, in order to point to the one great Sacrifice and to illustrate that salvation is only possible by way of the shedding of blood (Gen. 4:4; Lev. 1:3)
- 6) For judgment of sinful men (Exodus chapter 8; 2 Kings 2:23-24)
- 7) To serve man in a multitude of ways (Gen. 8:7-8; and compare some amazing uses of animals today, such as "seeing eye dogs" for the blind, animals used in experimentation so as to develop new drugs and medical procedures, etc.)
- 8) To teach men spiritual lessons (Proverbs 6:6)
- 9) To teach men of God's care (Matthew 6:26)
- 10) To give enjoyment to children (Isaiah 11:6,8)
- 11) To carry out orders from their Creator (1 Kings 17:6; Matthew 17:27)
- 12) To illustrate that the Hand that made them is Divine (every animal species demonstrates that it was remarkably designed by the Creator and could never have evolved by chance). Every animal made by God is indisputable proof against the theory of evolution. Consider the spider web, the metamorphosis of a butterfly, the transformation of a tadpole to a frog, the sonar system of bats and dolphins, the division of labor in a honeybee hive and the dances that the bees perform to communicate the exact location of nectar, the migration of birds and butterflies, the ability of salmon to return to lay eggs in the very stream where they were hatched, the bomb-producing chemical process of a bombardier beetle, the camouflaging capabilities of certain lizards and other animals, etc.

***Notice that none of these reasons would pertain to heaven.***

## One Example of a Non-Biblical Answer Regarding Animals in Heaven

Mark Hitchcock wrote an excellent book entitled, *Visits to Heaven and Back*, in which he discusses many of the books and movies about near death experiences. I highly recommend the book, but I did not agree with his discussion of animals in heaven. Herer's what he wrote:

The best answer I've heard for this question came years ago at a prophecy conference I attended. Dr. John Walvoord was part of a panel answering questions from the audience. During the Q&A, a woman came to the microphone and said that her beloved Labrador had died recently, and she wanted to know if she would see him again in heaven. All the members of the panel on stage passed the microphone around and gave fairly detailed biblical, theological answers to the question. Dr. Walvoord was the final person to answer her question, and he asked her if it would make heaven happier for her if her dog was there. She nodded her head and said, "Oh, yes, it would make me so happy!" Then Dr. Walvoord replied, "If it will make you happier for him to be there, then he will be there." What a great answer. All that will increase our happiness will be in heaven. All that decreases it will be absent.

Some observations:

- 1) Notice that this answer is not based on any Biblical passage. It is based on pure sentimentality and perhaps not wanting to give this woman an answer that would upset her.
- 2) There is no question that our happiness will be increased in heaven: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). However, we need to remember that God knows better than we do what will make us happy. If there are not animals in heaven, there will be something better.
- 3) This answer assumes that the things which make us happy here in this life are the same things that will make us happy in the following life. Is that true?

4) If her dead but beloved Labrador were to be with her in heaven, then this would require some kind of resurrection from the dead. Certainly, God could do this, but there is no indication from Scripture that there will be a resurrection for animals.

I decided to write to Mark Hitchcock and ask him about this. My letter is copied as follows:

Brother Mark,

I want to thank you for your excellent book on VISITS TO HEAVEN. It was very well done and has really helped a woman in our assembly who is trying to help another person with this subject. I also have appreciated your other writings, in particular your excellent study on the late date of Revelation. I have shared this with many.

The only problem I had with the HEAVEN book was the section on whether animals will be in heaven. I hope you will take this criticism in the right way. It is meant to be constructive. You pointed to Dr. Walvoord (whom I greatly respect) as giving the "best answer to this question." His answer was, "If it will make you happier for your dog to be there, then he will be there."

Think of this same answer applied to other things that make people (even believers) happy. I'm an avid fisherman and I'm very happy when I pull in a 6 pound bass. Does this mean there will be fishing in heaven? If a Christian is happy if the Chiefs win the Superbowl, does this mean football will be in heaven? If a man's sexual relationship with his wife makes him very happy, does this mean that there will be sex in heaven? With due respect to Walvoord, I don't see this as a valid argument.

All through your book you rightly point out people who are making statements about heaven without any Biblical evidence, and yet you seem to be doing the same thing when it comes to this question about animals. Isn't it important not to go beyond what the Scripture says?

My answer would simply be that there will certainly be animals in the kingdom (Isaiah 11) and fishing too (Ezekiel 47), but in Rev. 21-22 there is no mention of animals in the eternal state. I'm not going to dogmatically state there will be no animals or that there will be animals. If there is no conclusive Biblical evidence one way or the other, it's best not to speak where God is silent. I don't see how there can be sea creatures in the eternal state since there will be no more sea (some people have dolphins for pets), and I know there will not be moths in heaven (Matt. 6). Beyond that, God knows.

We know that people are very attached to their pets, and it is comforting for them to think that their pet will be raised again to be with them in heaven, but where is the

Biblical evidence for this? And if Walvoord's argument is the best you have, I don't think you have built a strong case. Walvoord presented no Biblical support.

Please don't let these comments detract from my overall appreciation of your writings and your ministry.

Sincerely in Christ,

George Zeller  
Middletown (CT) Bible Church

**Note:** Mark Hitchcock never responded to this letter.

My disagreement with brother Hitchcock over this one issue does not dampen my overall enthusiasm for his book. It is the best book on near death experiences that I have read, and I highly recommend it.

George Zeller

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