

DO PETS HAVE SOULS AND GO TO HEAVEN?

By Pastor Greg Hooker

If you are a pet owner like me, this is a question I have often pondered. Many times I have made the statement, 'pets are given by God as angels in disguise'. While this is a metaphorical statement, nonetheless, our pets give us an enormous amount of comfort and encouragement. They infuse our lives with joy and lift our spirits when we are downcast like nothing else can. I have also stated that if human beings were half as good as our 'furry creatures', our world would be a wonderful place to live!

Having said that, unfortunately to my dismay and undoubtedly to all pet lovers, there are no Scripture references that teach definitively whether or not animals/pets go to Heaven when they die. Please, don't crucify me yet! If someone can prove 'scripturally' from the Bible that I'm wrong, I would be first to shout for joy! Take heart however; there are certain passages in the Bible that give us some encouraging insight about animals and pets in God's plan for eternity.

In Genesis 2:7, man is said to be given the "breath of life" by God and in Genesis 1:30; 6:17; 7:15, 22 we are told that animals also are given this breath. All that means is that both humans and animals are living beings drawing oxygen from the same atmosphere God created to sustain them. However, there is a major difference between the two; human beings were created in the 'image' and 'likeness' of God (Genesis 1:26, 27); whereas animals were not. Man was created a spiritual being with a soul, mental and emotional capabilities. Animals/pets on the other hand are not provided a soul and according to Ecclesiastes 3:21, their spirit ceases to exist at death, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward [to God at death], and the spirit of the beast [animals] that goeth downward to the earth?"

While there is little doubt that animals do not go to Heaven as humans do when they die; does this mean they will not be in Heaven at all? We are told that God created the animals in Genesis 1:25 and pronounced His creation good. We also know for certain there will be animals during the millennial kingdom (Isaiah 11:6; 65:25) when Christ rules from His throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe animals will not also exist during the New Heaven and New Earth foretold in Revelation 21:1.

Based upon Scripture, I believe all of creation will be restored one day as it was during Adam and Eve's life in the Garden of Eden. Just because Satan introduced death and destruction into God's perfect order doesn't mean the Lord will allow it to remain that way, under the curse. Christ came to lift the curse, redeem man and all of creation back to Him, and will restore both to their original glory in the future. Satan will not have victory over that which God "made good"!

In conclusion, while I would certainly like to see my pets in Heaven, there are no definitive answers from the Bible they will be. So while you and I would like to think otherwise, we will just have to trust the wisdom of a loving God. There are so many things that will surprise us when we get there – the half has never been told! One thing is for sure, however; the Lord will provide a perfect environment where we

will be completely satisfied with eternal joy and contentment forever. As the old saying goes, 'you just wait and see!'