

“Heaven”

XI. “What About Animals?”

Recap important points:

-There are two stages of heaven: Intermediate and Eternal Heaven (New Heaven and New Earth)

-When mankind fell, creation fell. Both are under the curse of death.

Therefore, both were redeemed through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

-Jesus’ physical resurrection is the model for our physical resurrection.

-This present Earth will not be annihilated, rather restored, resurrected, redeemed, transformed from this *prototype* to the final New Earth.

-We will rule with Jesus, under His authority, on the New Earth.

-God’s original plan had no “oops” in it. Redemption was part of His original plan, and God’s original plan will be realized (Revelation 21:1).

-When we (the Church, the Bride of Christ) are presented to him, we will be wearing our acts of service, ministry and righteousness, as our Fine Linen (Revelation 19:8).

-We will rule with Christ on the New Earth. God’s Kingdom continues to expand, and we will be given dominion over it.

-The Capital City of the New Earth, is the New Jerusalem. It is a real city, with real dimensions and features.

-We will maintain our uniqueness in heaven. We will be human, and a perfect (not infinite, but perfect) version of ourselves now.

-We will enjoy relationships both ones from the past and new ones, for an eternity!

THIS WEEK, we focus on answering, “What About Animals?” by addressing 2 main questions:

1. Will animals inhabit the New Earth?

2. Will animals, including our pets, live again?

Tonight is set aside to discuss **animals** for several reasons: (1) we love animals and cherish their place in creation, (2) we domesticate animals and keep them as pets, (3) we use animals to serve us, and therefore they play an important role in human life.

While at first glance it may seem silly to spend any amount of time, at all, on animals in a study of Heaven, we must remember that animals are created by God, and have the “breath of life” in them (**Genesis 1:30; 2:7; 6:17; 7:15, 22**). The Hebrew word for “living being” or “soul” is *nephesh*. God made the animals and gave them the “breath of life.”

Remarkably, the same Hebrew word, *nephesh*, is used for animals and for people. Am I suggesting animals have souls? They certainly do NOT have human souls. Animals are NOT created in God's image and they aren't equal to humans in any sense. However, to do Scripture justice, we need to recognize that people and animals share something unique: they are living beings and have *nephesh*, the breath of life. Because God has a future for both mankind and Earth, we can assume that He has a future plan for animals as well.

So let's dive in!

Will Animals Inhabit the New Earth?

In short, yes.

An amazing picture of God's redemptive work in the OT happens in **Genesis 6**, and it involves animals!! When God saved humanity from the destruction of the Flood, He included animals. **Genesis 6:19-20** records God's instruction to Noah to bring two of every kind of animal into the Ark. After the Flood, God made a covenant with Noah (humanity) and that new covenant *included animals!* **Genesis 9:9-17** records the new covenant God makes with Noah and the phrase "every/all living creature(s) or life" appears 6 times.

If God's plan for a renewed Earth after the Flood involved animals, wouldn't His redemptive plan for the New Earth involve animals as well? If the rescue of humans in the Ark is a picture of redemption, doesn't the rescue of animals in the ark also anticipate their restoration as part of God's redemptive plan for the New Earth?

Romans 8 states that humans, *animals*, and all creation are linked together in the curse and judgment but also the blessing of redemption. **Romans 8:20-21** states, "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

Animals are an important part of God's creation. In Scripture we are shown where they helped fulfill God's purposes: the ravens fed Elijah (**I Kings 17:4,6**), a fish swallowed Jonah (**Jonah 1:17**), a fish with a coin in its mouth provided an object lesson for Jesus' disciples (**Matthew 17:27**), Balaam's donkey refused to walk, thus, saving Balaam's life, and then talked (**Numbers 22**). In **Exodus 20:9-10** (NLT), God's command to mankind to *rest* included not only humans, but animals: "...On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you."

Understanding the importance of animals in God's creation, and understanding that God created them with *nephesh*, the breath of life, we can then understand the

significance in the animal sacrificial system: they were the highest representative role imaginable, symbolizing God's messianic Redeemer.

It's also interesting to note that God recognized, after He created Adam, that it "is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (**Genesis 2:18**). In the very next verse we're told that God created animals, forming them out of the ground, and then brought them to Adam. Only afterward did God create woman to be a more suitable helper. God put animals under our dominion, our care (**Genesis 1:28**). He created us to be stewards (managers) of animals. He holds us accountable for how we treat them. **Proverbs 12:10** states, "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal..." We are caretakers of ALL of God's creation. We don't own it, God does. **Psalms 50:10-11** states, "for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine." Therefore, we should treat everything accordingly.

God instructed Adam to name the animals (**Genesis 2:19-20**). A name is an identity. To name something is to establish a relationship. Note: Adam was not instructed to name plants, only his wife and animals.

Eden was perfect, and Eden had animals. Without animals, Eden wouldn't have been Eden. We could expect that the New Earth would be just as void without animals. I believe ALL of God's creation will be represented on the New Earth.

In **Revelation 4:8-9**, we're told that "living creatures" with six wings and covered with eyes, praise God with their voice. They verbalize glory, honor, and thanks to God. The KJV uses the word "beasts". The NIV and other translations use "living creatures." In the Greek, the word is *zoon*, and it literally means "animal". The same word, *zoon* is used in various other passages of Scripture to indicate "animals" (**Hebrews 13:11; 2 Peter 2:12; Jude 1:10, Genesis 1:21; Ezekiel 47:9**). When we grasp that the living creatures in heaven who are crying out "Holy, holy, holy" are animals – living, breathing, intelligent, and articulate *animals* who dwell in God's presence and worship and praise Him, we can start to grasp that animals, indeed, are important to God's overall plan for a redeemed Earth. If animals praise God in heaven, how much more will we?!?! *And if the thought of animals praising God in heaven is too far of a reach for you, then remember the words of Jesus in **Luke 19:40**, in response to people praising Him, "I tell you...if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."* If a stone can cry out praises to God, we shouldn't expect that an animal can't!

*Alcorn writes, "Adam, Noah, and Jesus are the three heads of the three Earths. When Adam was created, God surrounded him with animals. When Noah was delivered from the Flood, God surrounded him with animals. When Jesus was born, God surrounded him with animals. When Jesus establishes the renewed Earth, with renewed men and women, don't you think he'll surround himself with renewed animals?"

Will Animals, Including Our Pets, Live Again?

Humans are created *in the image of God and in His likeness* (**Genesis 1:26**). I've stated before that we are God's crowning creation. We are distinct in that we are created in God's image, fashioned from the dust of the earth and then life breathed into us. However, this does not discount the importance of animals in God's creation, nor does it discount that animals can't be *resurrected* on the New Earth. If we believe **Romans 8:21-23** is true, that ALL of creation awaits resurrection and restoration, then aren't *animals* part of that creation?

Why do we find joy, peace, and solace in our pets? Could it be that God initiated that? After all, didn't God create everything for our enjoyment and benefit? Our affections toward our pet are certainly not a result of the Curse.

God is the *giver* of all good things, not the *taker* of them. If it would please us to have a pet restored to the New Earth, it may be sufficient reason for God to do just that. Consider a parent who has acquired a pet because of a child's request. God is better than we are at giving good gifts to our children (**Matthew 7:9-11**).

Does the Bible state that our pets will be resurrected? No. At least not in those terms. But the Bible says much about animals and their place in the New World. Steve Wolberg, in his book, *Will My Pet Go to Heaven?* suggests, "It seems God could do one of three things on the New Earth: (1) create entirely new animals; (2) bring back to life animals that have suffered in our present world, giving them immortal bodies (this could be re-creating, not necessarily resurrecting); (3) create some animals brand-new, 'from scratch,' *and* bring back to life some old ones."

Regardless of what you believe about your pet being on the New Earth, we must accept that God gave us animals for our enjoyment and pleasure, and it is not wrong to grieve their death. Our pet's death is a result of OUR sin. Animals suffer death because of our choice to sin and usher in the Curse. So it should not be beyond our thinking that if God saw fit to restore our animals to us, freeing them, along with us, from the Curse of sin, He certainly could do that.

Just for fun...

Have you ever imagined that in Heaven, animals could talk? Would it surprise you to learn that in Eden, animals may have communicated with verbal language, speaking where humans could understand? If this is almost *ridiculous* to you, consider **Genesis 3:1**, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman..." Notice:

-the serpent heard God, understood, reasoned, exercised logic, manipulated, and tempted Eve.

-the snake was *more* crafty than the other wild animals, suggesting other wild animals had speaking and reasoning skills, as well as a free will.

-Eve did not react to fact that the snake talked!

Some would say, “Well, Satan just possessed the snake and spoke through it.” But still, if it was unusual for an animal to talk in Eden, why didn’t Eve react strongly, almost in disbelief, as we would if a snake talked to us today?! Even today, evil spirits can use human vocal cords to speak, because humans speak. If Satan used the snake, is it unreasonable the snake had vocal cords that could be used?

Another interesting story happens in **Numbers 22**. We read where Balaam beat his donkey for refusing to move forward (an angel of the Lord was blocking her – though Balaam couldn’t see the angel the donkey could). The donkey then *questioned* Balaam as to why he was beating her. Again, notice: he did not react to the donkey talking! He simply engaged her in conversation.

If you are a fan of C.S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, you certainly have enjoyed the fact that the animals talk. Could it be that C.S. Lewis is more accurate in his depiction of animals having a will, logic, and being able to speak, than we even imagined?

In **Revelation 8:13**, John says, “I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice.” **Revelation 5:13** says that “every creature” in the universe will sing and give praise to the Lamb. The word for “creature” in Greek is *ktisma*, which is the same word used for the marine animals in **Revelation 8:9**. Some would say that just because Revelation is an apocalyptic writing, we can’t take it literally. I believe this study has proven that though Revelation certainly has much symbolism, it is full of real, concrete images, and should be taken literally. In addition, **Genesis** (talking snake) and **Numbers** (talking donkey) are not apocalyptic, but rather an historical narrative.

Hopefully, this lesson has added even more grandeur to your vision of what awaits us in Heaven. Imagine all that we will see, hear, taste, feel and experience. Imagine enjoying God’s creation in the “pre-Curse” state, and fully appreciating the beauty of not only the Earth, but the animal kingdom as well!!