

What About... Animals Going to Heaven

By Dave DeWitt



Thesis

Logically and biblically, there is no evidence, statement, or example that animals of any kind go to heaven when they die. When I looked this subject up on the internet, I was amazed how many Christian sites were in favor of the idea that animals, focusing primarily on pets, go to heaven. But this seems to be based on wishful thinking or a desire to please the audience, rather than actual evidence. For example, myfaithradio.com while discussing Randy Alcorn's book "Heaven" said, "We do know that animals will be on the new earth, which is a redeemed and renewed old earth in which animals had a prominent role." Rather, I would agree with John MacArthur who concluded, "...they are creatures for earthly comfort that will play no role in the perfect comfort of heaven." [John MacArthur, YouTube, August 16, 2022]

Logically

1. There is a categorical difference between plants, animals and humans. To expand on that a bit, of all living things on earth:

Plants only have a living body, a structure which can grow and reproduce itself.

Animals have a body and a personality, an intellect, emotion, and will.

Humans have a body, a personality, and a spirituality, a sense of morality which thinks in terms of right/wrong and justice, a sense of purpose/destiny, and a capacity for creativity.

That means:

- Animals do not have a morality. The more intelligent ones can learn our morality, but animals do not have their own morals. For example, before the Flood, Moses said of the antediluvian people, every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:5, 8). The people were evil, and Noah found grace. But no animals were ever considered to be evil, nor therefore did they find grace. Animals reaped the consequences of man's sin (Genesis 6:7; Romans 8:20-21), but animals themselves are not capable of being evil or finding grace in eyes of the Lord. Animals are never judged. Horses are flesh and not spirit (Isaiah 31:3).

- Animals do not have a sense of purpose or destiny. Animals never think, "Why am I here?" "What am I for?" or "Where am I going?" But all humans have those thoughts.

- No animal is creative. No intelligent dolphin or ape ever wrote a song, composed poetry, or painted a picture. Birds do not sing. No animal displayed a philosophy, created a religion, or worshiped anything. But all humans do.

2. If animals go to heaven, is that some animals or all animals? If your cat kills a mouse, does the mouse go to heaven? If just your cat goes to heaven, where is the break off point of which animals go to heaven and which ones do not? What about the thousands of chickens, fish and cattle that are killed every day for food? What about reptiles, worms, and spiders? My grandson has a pet tarantula in a glass cage. Is his tarantula going to heaven? What about insects, like mosquitoes and wasps?

3. Many (preachers) say that your pet will go to heaven if that is what it takes for you to be happy in heaven. But what if your pet keeps me from being happy in heaven? What if a dog lover hates cats or a cat lover hates dogs? What if I do not want my grandson's tarantula in heaven, but he does. Going to heaven is not about our pleasure but God's pleasure (Isaiah 46:10; 53:10; Philippians 2:13; Colossians 1:19). *For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus* (Philippians 2:21).

Biblically

Animals are important to God (Jonah 4:11). The Bible says that God created both humans (Genesis 2:7) and animals (Genesis 2:19) as

living beings [literally creatures with (nefesh), living things that could breathe], having the “breath of life” (Genesis 1:30; 6:17; 7:15, 22). And both are part of God’s *very good* creation (Genesis 1:31).

But the huge difference between human beings and animals is that humans are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), and animals are not. God made that distinction to Noah when he got off the ark.

Genesis 9:3, 6, *Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant ...Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.*

Here are some Bible references mistakenly used to prove animals go to heaven.

Isaiah 11:6-7, *...the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

This passage, and others like it, are about the future Millennial Kingdom on earth, and the animals in that 1000-year period are on earth. They die but do not die with a resurrection from the dead. There is nothing in Isaiah’s thinking about animals on earth dying and going to heaven.

Revelation 19:14, *And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.*

The white horses are part of John’s vision of the Second Coming. Even if they are actual white horses, they are pictured as horses from heaven, not horses that died and went to heaven. If that indicates the possibility of other animals in heaven, it does not say any animals from earth died and went to heaven.

Ezekiel 1:10 & 14, *As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle.... And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.*

Revelation 4:8, *And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within.*

These are the four living creatures around the throne of God. This does not sound like earthly animals who died and went to heaven. In Isaiah 6:1-3, they sound like they are more like angels than animals. In some way, all creation honors God before the upcoming tribulation period (Revelation 5:13). But this in no way indicates that animals on earth die and go to heaven.

Psalm 150:6, *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.*

There are several verses that say something like “all of creation praises God” (Job 12:7-10; Psalm 69:34; Isaiah 42:10). But those verses are talking about the magnificence of God’s creation, not that plants and animals have a spiritual capacity to praise God, with the implication that they go to heaven.

Concluding Comments

If any animals from the earth went to heaven when they died, one would expect to find some biblical reference to it, and there is none. In the Bible, animals are usually mentioned in a negative way. Sheep are rather stupid. Lions are killers. Ostriches and jackals are irresponsible. Dogs are mentioned 25 times in the Bible and every reference is negative. Philippians 3:2, *Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision* (Psalm 22:16, 20; Isaiah 56:10, 11; Revelation 22:15).