

ANIMALS IN HEAVEN

- A. Introduction: We are talking about heaven to try to clear up misconceptions many of us have which make it difficult to obey God's instructions to keep our minds focused on heaven. Col 1:4,5; 3:1,2
1. Heaven is a real place with real people who do real things -- many of the same things we currently do on earth. Even though heaven is invisible to us on earth, heaven has physical properties to it.
 - a. People often speak of life after this life as the after-life. That is a mistake. This life is the pre-life. The greater and better part of life will be in heaven. There is no loss in heaven -- only gain.
 - b. The present heaven, where all who have died in the Lord now abide, is temporary. In connection with the Second Coming of Jesus, heaven will come to earth.
 - c. All the people in the present heaven will be reunited with their physical bodies at the resurrection of the dead to live with the Lord forever on earth, a perfect world -- heaven on earth.
 2. Accurate knowledge of what is ahead for us is a tremendous source of strength and joy for us now.
 - a. Hebrews was written to Christians facing severe persecution to encourage them to stay faithful to Christ. One theme of the epistle is that the end result makes the difficult journey worth it.
 - b. The writer used Jesus Himself as an example. Jesus endured the Cross because He knew the end result. Heb 12:2--Who, in order to reach his own appointed joy...endured. (Moffatt)
 1. Hebrew Christians, familiar with the writings of the prophets, knew what joy was ahead for them -- joy in the kingdom of God on this earth forever.
 2. Isa 35 makes reference to both the first and second coming of Jesus and speaks of the joy of entering the Messiah's kingdom on earth. v8-10
 3. In this lesson we want to continue our discussion of what is ahead by talking about animals in heaven.
 - a. The apostle John saw animals in the present heaven. Revelation mentions "beasts" (living creatures--NIV) who continually praise God (Rev 4:6-9; etc.). "Beasts" is the word ZOON, most often translated "animals" in the New Testament (Heb 13:11; II Pet 2:12; Jude 1:10).
 1. These living creatures look like a lion, ox, man, and an eagle. They are intelligent, articulate animals who dwell in the presence of God. Perhaps they are prototypes of animals on earth.
 2. John also saw every creature (the word is used elsewhere for both men and animals) in heaven and on earth praising God (Rev 5:13; Ps 150:6). And, he saw Jesus and the armies of heaven come out of heaven riding horses (Rev 19:11-14).
 - b. The Old Testament prophets wrote about animals living in harmony with each other and with man on the new earth, in the Messiah's kingdom, when heaven comes to earth. Isa 11:6-9; Isa 65:25
 4. Even if you are not an animal lover, this involves you. Our futures (men and animals) are linked. Greater understanding of what is ahead for them will give you more insight into what is ahead for you.
- B. Let's begin by considering the place of animals in God's creation. Animals were in Eden. Animals predate sin. God said the animals He created pleased Him. Gen 1:20,21,24,25
1. God told Adam to name the animals (Gen 2:19,20). Giving something a personal name establishes relationship. Adam also named Eve (Gen 2:23). Note, God didn't tell Adam to name the plants.
 2. When the great flood came on the earth in the time of Noah, God made a way for Noah to take pairs of various species of animals onto the ark with him so that they would survive the flood. Gen 6,7
 - a. After the flood God made a covenant with Noah and his descendants that the earth would never again be destroyed by water. But, God also made a covenant with the animals. Gen 9:8-17
 - b. Noah and the ark picture God's redemptive work. II Pet 3:5-7 connects what happened at the flood with what will happen at the final transformation of the earth when heaven comes to earth.
 3. Prov 12:10 says that a characteristic of righteousness is care for animals. God is righteous. He cares for His creation -- both men and animals. Ps 145:15,16
 - a. God commanded Israel to give their animals rest and to feed them properly. Ex 20:9,10; Deut 25:4
 - b. When God spared the city of Nineveh from destruction He did it out of compassion for the people

and the animals. Jonah 4:11

- c. Sometimes people say that, because God instituted animal sacrifices for sin, He does not care for animals. Exactly the opposite is true. Their value shows the horrible consequence of sin (which is death) and the enormous price necessary to loose men from bondage to sin (the sacrifice of Christ).

- 4. Animals are the second most important inhabitants of the earth, behind man. Ps 36:6 says God preserves man and beast. Preservest means to save, to help, to deliver, to defend. The underlying idea is bringing to a place of safety or broad pasture. "You are concerned for men and animals." (Taylor)
 - a. In Matt 6:25-34 Jesus said His followers don't have to worry about where the necessities of life will come from because they have a heavenly Father who cares for them. To emphasize His point, Jesus referred His listeners to His Father's care of the birds and the flowers.
 - b. In Matt 10:29-31 Jesus, in expressing the value men have to God, says animals have value to God.
 - 1. Men are of more value, but not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge.
 - 2. Why is that a comforting thought? Because, through the Cross, the death of sparrows (animals), like our death, is a temporary condition.

C. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ, and He made the earth as a home for His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18

- 1. Genesis 1 gives an account of creation. As God created, He pronounced the things He made "good" (v4,10,12,18,21,25). In Gen 1:31 He called everything He had made "...very good -- suitable, pleasant -- and he approved it completely". (Amp)
 - a. When God made Adam He gave him one command, telling him that the consequence or penalty of disobedience would be death. Gen 2:17
 - 1. Rom 5:12--When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die. (Living Bible)
 - 2. Not only was the human race affected by Adam's sin, the entire material creation was infused with death. Creation is not now as God made it. Creation is under the curse of death
 - b. Some mistakenly think that God cursed the earth (Gen 3:14-19). He did not. That is clear from the verb tense used in the passage.
 - 1. The verb tense is simple imperfect which is translated as a future tense meaning: This will happen, this is a consequence of your sin. If God were pronouncing a curse on them it would be in the imperative verb form: The earth must bring forth thorns and thistles, etc.
 - 2. Gen 3:17--And now, through thy act, the ground is under a curse. (Knox); The ground is under a curse because of you (Amp); Cursed is the ground on thine account. (Young's Literal).
 - 3. The curse or consequence of sin is death. God did not make anyone or anything to die. The Bible calls death an enemy, the last enemy to be destroyed. I Cor 15:26
 - c. As we study scripture we see that the earth is affected by the behavior of the inhabitants of the earth. These are not "save the planet" verses. They are statements of spiritual law: When men break God's law, the earth itself is affected.
 - 1. Isa 24:5,6--And the earth itself is desecrated by the feet of those who live in it (NEB). Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt (RSV).
 - 2. Rom 8:20--For the creation was made subject to decay, not by its own will (Conybeare), but owing to him who made it submit (20th Cent).
- 2. Rom 8:20,21 goes on to say: Yet not without the hope that some day Nature itself, also, will be freed from its enslavement to corruption (20th Cent); rescued from (Phillips) its slavery to death Conybeare).
 - a. When Adam sinned God came looking for him with the promise of a Redeemer who would undo the damage done to the human race and to the earth itself because of Adam's sin. Gen 3:15
 - 1. Just as, because of Adam's sin, the earth, the material creation (including animals), was

subjected to bondage to corruption and death, because of the redemption provided by Jesus, creation (and animals) will one day be delivered from bondage to the effects of sin (death).

2. The Cross is the remedy for sin. Redemption is big enough to redeem or loose God's entire material creation -- including the animals -- from bondage to corruption and death.
- b. We are not saying that animals are equal with men. They are not. Men are made in the image of God. Animals are not. Men are in need of a Savior because of their sin. Animals don't sin.
 1. However, there is a sense in which Jesus died for animals indirectly because His death provided redemption (a loosing) for what has been damaged by sin -- earth and the animals.
 2. God is not going to destroy or abandon the earth. He is going to fulfill His original plan by redeeming and restoring both mankind and the earth -- the entire creation, including animals.
 3. Jesus went to the Cross to destroy the works of the devil in men and in the world God created. The creatures of earth belong to God (Ps 50:10,11). He will not lose them to the devil.
- c. Col 1:18-20--He was supreme in the beginning and -- leading to the resurrection parade -- he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe -- people and things, animals and atoms -- get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross. (Message Bible)
3. Rom 8:19-23 links the transformation of creation with the resurrection of the dead at Jesus' return.
 - a. v19-22--For all creation is waiting patiently and hopefully for that future day when God will resurrect his children. For on that day thorns and thistles, sin, death, and decay -- the things that overcame the world against its will ... will all disappear, and the world around us will share in the glorious freedom from sin which God's children enjoy. For we know that even the things of nature, like animals and plants, suffer in sickness and death even as they await this great event. (Living Bible)
 - b. v23--And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for the day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us -- bodies that will never be sick again and will never die. (Living Bible)
4. In his vision in Rev 21, John saw heaven come to earth and heard God say: I make all things new (v5).
 - a. God is not going to make all new people for either the present heaven or heaven on earth. He makes all who come to Him through Christ new -- first their spirit through the new birth, then their body through the resurrection of the dead.
 - b. The language in Romans 8 clearly indicates that what happens to men will happen to animals.
 1. Animals are in bondage because of man's sin. Notice the animals that groan to be delivered from bondage to death will be delivered. v21,22
 2. The implication is clear: God won't make new animals, He will make those He already created new by delivering them from bondage to corruption and death.
5. Ps 104 praises God's provision for His creation. v25-30 refer to sea animals. Note the description of their death. When they die they return to dust. But when God sends His Spirit they are created and the face of the earth is renewed. "They" refers to animals that have died and returned to dust.
 - a. God made animals out of the dust of the earth. When they die, their bodies, like ours, return to dust. This psalm talks about God recreating animals who have died to renew the face of the earth.
 1. The word renew means to be new, to rebuild (as opposed to making something that never existed before). It is translated renew and repair.
 2. The earth will be renewed at the return of Jesus to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Matt 19:28--When the world is born anew (Rieu); in the new age -- the Messianic rebirth of the world (Amp).
 - b. At the return of Jesus God will renew, recreate, or resurrect animals who have died as part of the

renewal of the earth. Present and extinct animals will be recreated, renewed, resurrected.

- c. God will restore, renew, resurrect, His original creation -- earth, men, and animals -- in spectacular demonstration of His complete victory over sin and death (the last enemy). I Cor 15:26

D. You may be thinking: I don't really care if cows live again. What about my beloved pets? Will I see them again? And, if so, do I have to wait until the resurrection of the dead? Is my pet in heaven now?

1. Jesus said that God is a Father to His people and He is better than the best earthly father. Matt 7:9-11
 - a. Why would God make animals (pets) for His children, why would He create little creatures, give us these companions for us, and then allow us only a brief moment of time to enjoy them?
 - b. It makes no sense when you consider the character of God. No good father would be that cruel. Death and the separation it brings is part of life now, but it will not always be so.
2. The idea that animals have souls (an immaterial part) was believed throughout church history until the 1600s and the Age of Enlightenment.
 - a. Anyone who has lived in close contact with a beloved pet such as a cat or a dog knows that they are more than just brute beasts who respond solely by instinct. Experience shows us that animals have intelligence, compassion, emotion, and personality.
 - b. Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:21-35 showed bravery, intelligence, compassion, and loyalty, challenging an angel to save her master's life. When God opened her mouth (as opposed to put words in her mouth) she verbalized thoughts and feelings.
3. God made men and animals out of the dust of the earth. Gen 2:7 says God put the "breath of life" (CHAY) in Adam. Scripture says God also put the "breath of life" in animals. Gen 1:30; 6:17; 7:15,22
 - a. Gen 2:7 says that "breath of life" made Adam a living soul (NEPHESH). That word (NEPHESH) is used for both men and animals. Gen 1:20,21,24,28; 2:19; 9:4,5,6; 10:12,15,16
 1. Gen 1:30 (CHAY)--Wherein there is a living soul. (Jewish Publication Society)
 2. Gen 2:19 (NEPHESH)--And whatsoever the man should call it -- any living soul. (Rotherham)
 3. Gen 6:17 (CHAY)--In which is a living spirit; Gen 7:15 (CHAY)--a living spirit; Gen 7:22 (CHAY)--In whose nostrils is breath of a living spirit (Young's Literal Translation).
 - b. The word NEPHESH is translated PSUCHE or soul in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament). PSUCHE is used in the New Testament for the seat of life itself, for that which transcends earthly existence. Matt 16:25,26; etc.
4. Animals are not created in the image of God, are not equal with humans, and do not have human souls. But, the evidence from scripture is clear that they have an immaterial part to their makeup.
 - a. There is no one verse that says our pets go to heaven when they die. But, when we put all of these verses together, it is clear that our pets do not cease to exist when they die.
 - b. Their bodies return to dust as do ours. But they go to the present heaven to await their reunion with their physical bodies and their reunion with us when we die or Christ returns -- which ever comes first.

E. Conclusion: There is more to say about heaven but hopefully you're as excited as I am about what is ahead.