

Do Pets Go To Heaven?

BY BARRY SHAFER

Quick Backdrop

It's one of those facts of life: If you have a pet, you eventually will have to deal with its death. It's a life milestone we all hit at some point.

If you've stumbled upon this devo, it's likely you or someone close to you has lost a pet. It's a real hurt and a deep grief. Pets are always there for us. Even a recalcitrant cat has his way of offering companionship. I know. I just buried one—a 16-year old gold and white named Puddin, or Pud, or Puddy, or Pudster. He answered to all of those, especially when I dropped a spoonful of Fancy Feast in his bowl.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

Losing our pets leads to the question, "Are pets in heaven?" It's not a question asked just by children. In fact, pose that question on Google and you'll get over 36 million results. That's nearly as many as the question "Is smoking a sin?" (37 million). Below are a few verses that speak of animals with a nod toward eternal things. As you read these verses, note the use of the phrase "breath of life" and also any connection between animals and the new heavens.

Genesis 1:30

³⁰ *And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.*

Genesis 2:7 (no animals, but a key "breath of life" verse)

⁷ *Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

Genesis 7:15

¹⁵ *Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark.*

Isaiah 65:17; 26

¹⁷ *"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth."*

²⁶ *"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.*

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

As with many questions regarding Scripture, we're not given a definitive "Yes" or "No" verse. But these verses give us good reason to believe that animals will be in the new heaven. At least we know that God holds them in high esteem, in that, they have the "breath of life" which is a phrase sometimes used to express the idea of "soul." Of course, Scripture gives no indication as to whether animals make choices with regard to their soul. So maybe it's as if animals never reach the age of accountability? Who knows, except God. Further, the Isaiah verses indicate that animals will be in heaven. So, why not our pets?

Use these verses to write out your "pet theology." If you've recently experienced the loss of a pet, this may bring comfort; or it might be something you can share with a friend who's recently lost a pet.

3 Putting Into Practice (God, Change)

Another question we might ask, "Does it matter if pets are in heaven?" This, too, is a legitimate question. It's likely that heaven will be so mind-blowing when we get there that it won't matter. I can see this happening: "Pud, you're here! Great! I'm off to see Jesus." But it's a comfort to think that they are there. And therein lies the point of this exercise: to think about heaven. And the breath of life. And the choices we make. Because what God most wants to see in heaven is you.

Fold or Cut