



Will we see our pets in heaven?

This is one of the most common questions I get from kids. (And is likely one of the most common questions that adults are afraid to ask.)

Way back in the 1600's when Martin Luther's daughter asked him that question, he answered by saying "If you want your pet to be in heaven with you - it will be." He based his answer on the idea that all of our wants will be supplied in God's eternal kingdom. But then he added, "The real question is, when you get to heaven, will you want your pet to be there." That question is not as easy to answer, because our desires in heaven will likely be different than they are now. (Just like the things an adult wants are different than the things he wanted when he was a child. As we "grow up" into full maturity in eternity, the things we want will be different than the things we want on earth.)

Since animals do not have immortal souls, it might be easy to think the answer is "No, your pets won't be in heaven." But not so fast... Several facts, however, make us hesitant to be satisfied with a simple "no."

Our eternal home is actually going to be a new earth (Isaiah 65:17ff, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). We won't be just floating around on clouds for eternity, but rather inhabiting a re-creation of Paradise. The Bible pictures the new heavens and new earth as a restoration or renewal of all things. Thus God is not likely to make a totally different earth but one like what he first created before it was marred with sin. And since animals, plants and work (yes, even work) were all a part of God's original earth - before sin messed things up - we can make an educated guess that those things will all be a part of the new earth - the one without any marks of sin.

And Isaiah 65:25 speaks of this new earth as a place in which the wolf and the lamb live together peacefully. This may be figurative language, (a way to picture the total lack of conflict - like the conflict that is natural between lions and lambs on this earth). But one other passage suggests animals might be in our eternal home. Romans 8:21 says that "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage." In this present, sin-cursed world, we inflict suffering on animals, and they inflict suffering on us. At Christ's second-coming, when this world is freed from the effects of sin, animals, too, will be freed from suffering.

In short, the answer is a cautious "maybe." I will not be at all surprised to see animals in eternity. Will some of them be the ones we had as pets? Maybe Martin Luther's answer still stands as the best one after all these years.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net