

Do Pets Go to Heaven?

By Anand Peter

Yesterday, at two o'clock in the morning, our Doberman, Buffy, passed into glory. She is the seventh pet the family has lost, if I include two pups that were only a couple of months old, and a beautiful cat. They say pet lovers should be mentally prepared to see several generations of pets in a lifetime. So be it. I was keen to get just a glimpse of what God's will could be for animals in general, and pets in particular. I know that Jesus loved animals, and animals were around Him many a time. This is especially true in the case of lambs. One can argue that this was symbolic. I do not agree, because Jesus is not a pretender. He is genuine, and His love for animals also has to be genuine. He used animals in His parables to teach human beings.

Buffy was a pleasant-tempered Doberman. I wish I could practise humility the way she did. Was she kind? Yes, she took immense pleasure in watching us feed stray dogs that came to the gate. Come to think of it, she had her own pet dogs! She distributed her unconditional love to all members of the family. I cannot remember her being aggressive or biting anyone. It was amazing to watch her give an amused glance and simply walk past when other pets in the neighbourhood would bark at her as we took her out for a walk. She was a linguist in her own right, understanding English, Malayalam, and Hindi, besides the body language of people. She had her own unique personality and feelings, and could think and reason.

I like to argue that whatever it is that makes each pet unique — a soul — is whatever it is that makes each human being unique. I am convinced that Buffy, and the other pets we had before her, and yours too, if you are a pet lover, will go to Heaven. With this conviction, I gave Buffy a Christian burial, the best way I could. I used oil and Jordan water that I had brought back home from my Jerusalem trips. I know that die-hard theologians and pastors would look down on me with disapproval, and I also know that most of them do not believe that animals have a place in Heaven. Let me argue further. Can you possibly imagine Heaven, the New Creation, of indescribable beauty, without flowers, trees, and animals? Let me now also give you some pointers from the Bible.

1. Animals, just like human beings, are formed from the ground (Genesis 2:7, 19), and bodily functions and internal organs are quite similar in animals and human beings.
2. God's covenant with Noah included both people and animals (Genesis 9:9-11).
3. Deuteronomy 5:12-15 tells us of Sabbath rest for animals as well as people.
4. God takes care of both men and animals (see Matthew 6:26 and Psalm 104, verses 14 and 27-30 in particular).
5. In the Eternity Future, in His New Creation, Jesus Christ will bring about a time of peace in which all animals and mankind will be in harmony (Isaiah 11:1-9).

There are many pointers in the Bible in favour of animals going to Heaven, but the most striking is what Solomon — a man credited with unparalleled wisdom — wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:18-22:

"I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"

"God, in His ardent love and wisdom, has created Heaven to be a place of perfect happiness. I am sure that if you need your dear pet to complete your happiness, you will find it there."