



Do Animals Go to Heaven?

Lesson Overview

1. Compare

Compare people and animals.

2. Read

Animals and people have fundamental differences. There are animals in the afterlife.

3. Watch a Video

Watch **parts of** *Are There Animals in the Afterlife* at bit.ly/AnimalsAfterlife (1hr 10min 9sec).

New Church Concept Animals and Humans

Those who judge *from the appearance to the bodily senses* conclude that animals have will and understanding as well as human beings, and so that the only difference is that a human being can speak. *Inter-course between the Soul and Body* 15

The difference between humans and animals is like that between wakefulness and dreaming, or between light and shade. People are spiritual and natural, while animals are not spiritual but natural. People have a will and understanding; animals do not possess a will and an understanding, but in place of will have affection, and in place of an understanding have knowledge. See *Apocalypse Explained* 202.2

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How are Animals and People Different?

1. How are animals and people similar—physically, in their behavior, etc?
2. In what ways are animals and people different?
3. Do animals live for ever after they die, like people, or not? (We'll come back to this later.)

Animals and People on Earth

The New Church teaches that the Lord's life flows into animals and people, but there are important differences in the way this life is received.

Animals and people have similar bodies and physical needs. Like people, animals communicate and interact with other animals (and people). Many kinds of animals nurture their young to independence. Dogs and cats, like young children, have personalities that are playful, naughty, obedient, shy, stand-offish, or friendly. They can be trained to do (or not to do) many things. People develop close relationships with domestic animals, and many pets become important members of the family. Animals can be so highly trained, e.g. guide dogs, and sniffer dogs—that a person may even put his or her life in a dog's "hands."

The most fundamental difference between animals and people is how their minds work. A baby is born *knowing nothing*. As a baby grows, he or she is taught to speak, to act, to read, to wear clothes, etc. by parents and caregivers. People from different parts of the world learn different languages, develop different talents, and take on different global perspectives. But what makes a person human, and different from an animal, is the capacity to *think in one way and act in another*. Most importantly, a person can learn to *think spiritually*, and to *develop a relationship with the Lord*.

Animals, on the other hand, are born knowing everything needed to care for themselves and their offspring. They are *incapable of thinking one way, and acting in another*, acting from instinct. Their minds are natural, not spiritual. Animals are only concerned with the natural world—with what they see, smell, taste and touch. An animal's mind *cannot raised up spiritually*; animals are *incapable of developing a relationship with the Lord*.

Animals in the Afterlife

Emanuel Swedenborg saw many animals in the afterlife. Animals there have not lived on earth, but are manifestations of what people there love. People who love what is good are surrounded by gentle animals; those who love what is evil may

Animals and Humans

People can think what they do not will, and conversely. But with animals affection and knowledge make one and cannot be separated; for animals know what they love and are affected by what they know. See *Apocalypse Explained* 1202.3

Because knowledge and affection cannot be separated with animals, they cannot destroy the order of their lives. Animals are born into all knowledge belonging to their affection. People are different. The human will and understanding can be separated, so people can destroy the order of their lives by thinking what they do not will and willing what they do not think, destroying their lives. For this reason people are born knowing nothing and may be led into order through knowledges by means of understanding. AE See *Apocalypse Explained* 1202.3

People have a spiritual mind above the natural mind, and can think about heaven, morals and laws. Things that are about what is true and good are called spiritual, moral and civil. People can also think falsely and love evil. They can also think analytically and draw conclusions, and receive influx from the Lord, becoming intelligent and wise. Animals cannot do this. See *Apocalypse Explained* 1202.4

After death people live for ever because, unlike animals, they can have the interiors of their minds and characters raised by the Lord to Himself. So they can believe in Him, feel love for Him, and receive intelligence and wisdom and speak rationally. See *Last Judgment* 25

see animals that are destructive and dangerous. If a person stops thinking the thoughts that brought the animals, they vanish.

Watch two Video Segments

Watch *Are There Animals in the Afterlife* (1hr 10min 09sec). **Start around 8:30 and end at 11:00; start again at 22:13 and end at 27:49. Total watch time 8min.**

Online at bit.ly/AnimalsAfterlife. The first segment is about animals in the afterlife (*True Christianity* 78). The second is about pets. (Enter link in the web browser search bar at the top of your screen.)

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. Can a person act instinctively? Or can only animals do this?
2. Why does thinking *spiritually*, and not only naturally, make a person human?
3. What is the most significant difference between people and animals?
4. We sometimes use words like “brute” or “beast” to describe people. Why? What are we trying to say about a person’s character when we do this?
5. Can animals make natural choices? How about moral or spiritual choices?
6. What kind of relationships do animals have with the Lord? Compare this with relationships between people and the Lord.
7. Will you see your pet in heaven?

Live Like a Dog

Adapted from a speech by Dr. Gregory Rose

Our dog died a few days ago. He was a Black Lab who followed my wife everywhere. We adopted him when his owner, a Marine, realized he was deploying too much to take care of him. Pappy was middle-aged and had separation anxiety – probably due to those deployments. So he never liked my wife out of his sight. But his sight started to fail, which made him stick even closer to her. And he could not resist eating things that were bad for him (whole sticks of butter– his record was three, garbage, and worse), which made him unpleasant to be around for hours afterward.

So why would I tell you to live like an anxious, gaseous, short-sighted dog? Because even Pappy woke up every morning thrilled for no reason other than it was yet another day. All too often, we wake up in good health, with friends and family, only to complain about something. But to a dog each day is an absolute adventure to be enjoyed. Every walk along what looks to us like the same old route is an exploration of a new frontier with fascinating smells and exciting encounters. Just the appearance of their guardian is enough to elicit an unbridled joy that’s the human equivalent of winning the lottery – we often had to protect ourselves from the ferocious wagging of Pappy’s tail when my wife reappeared after an unbearable absence of a few minutes. I liked to watch Pappy’s morning patrol of the yard to see the moment he remembered that after the patrol it was time to eat. If you have never seen an aging black lab skip for joy, I can only tell you that it is a sight to behold. You could just hear him thinking “Food time! What’s in the bowl today? Can it be? It is! Dry dog food! Can life get any better?!”

Dogs live, work, and play with total dedication and concentration. There is nothing half-hearted or lackadaisical about them – they live in the moment and embrace each second whether it involves eating, chasing squirrels, eating, guarding the house, eating, or taking an important nap in the sun.

With loyalty, love, and forgiveness, without prejudice or bias, dogs epitomize some of the best aspects of human nature. So, go ahead and live like a dog.