

The Spirit Of The Beast

Everyone knows that animals don't have souls. This is common knowledge throughout Christendom; it almost goes without saying. That is why this particular passage is so surprising:

Ecclesiastes 3:18: "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.

19 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.

20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21 Who knoweth the **spirit of man that goeth upward**, and **the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?**"

As Christians we know that when a person dies there is a part of him that lives on after death. Although we usually refer to it as the person's soul, Ecclesiastes calls it the "spirit of a man". However, Ecclesiastes goes on to say that *animals also have a spirit*. The spirit of a man lives on after death – and the spirit of the beast does as well. That is the whole point of verse 21: after death, something happens to both the spirit of the man and the spirit of the beast.

Now before you get too excited, there are a lot of things that this passage does *not* say. We know exactly what happens to the *human* spirit after death: it either goes to Heaven to be with

the Lord, or it goes to Hell to be tormented. We also know that when Jesus returns He will resurrect our corpses and put our spirit back into our body – but that promise was given to men, not to animals.

But what about this “spirit of the beast” – what happens to it? All the verse says is that it goes “downward to the earth”. The spirit doesn’t seem to go to Heaven or to Hell. The verse doesn't say if this spirit endures forever, or if one day the creature’s body will be resurrected and its spirit will be restored. While we know that there are animals in Heaven and in the Millennial Kingdom, the Bible doesn't even hint that there might be a resurrection of animals. It is entirely possible that the animal’s spirit somehow dissipates after death, but to be honest I don’t know. I have not found any other verses that talk about this and I don’t want to read too much into this one verse.

But it’s an intriguing verse, all the same. There may be more to animals than we realize. The fact that animals are more than just biological machines was hinted at in the story of Balaam. The donkey that Balaam was riding was able to see the angel of the Lord, even though Balaam could not:

Numbers 22:23: “And **the ass saw the angel of the Lord** standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.”

The passage does not say that God somehow opened the donkey's eyes so that he could see the angel. Instead, the donkey simply saw what Balaam could not see and acted quickly to save his master. That was an act of *spiritual discernment*. The donkey saw the angel, understood the situation, and acted accordingly. There may be more to animals than we know.

Do animals have souls? It certainly seems possible – but there are a lot of unanswered questions about them. It is also possible that animals can see angels, even when we cannot. There

have been many times when I have seen dogs rush to the window and bark at what appeared to be nothing in particular. Perhaps there really was nothing there – or perhaps, in some rare cases, there was something out there that was not visible to human eyes. Our animals may have better eyesight than we do. It would not be the first time that they saw something that was hidden to us.

