

Sermon follow-up

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1 Cor. 15:35-49

Imaginations and Speculations: Resurrection Life in a Resurrection World

In the sermon, I basically laid out a pre-fall eschatology based on what Paul says about the two Adams: God had a plan to take the creation and humanity from one degree of glory to an even greater degree of glory. It was always God's plan to unite himself to humanity, even apart from sin (that is to say, there would have been some kind of incarnation and union with God even apart from the fall). It was always God's plan for humanity to advance from one level of office and maturity to a higher state through death and resurrection. This pattern is foreshadowed very clearly in the creation account, e.g., each day moves from darkness to light, the week as whole moves towards the creation of man and the Sabbath, and most importantly Adam is made into a husband and given a glorious bride through a death-like experience.

For more on this theme, including how it ties into the two trees in the Garden of Eden, see James Jordan's article "Merit or Maturity?" in the book *The Federal Vision*. See also his unpublished series, "Trees and Thorns."

For more on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, see Cornelius Vanderwaal's book *The Covenantal Gospel*.

For more on the new creation as a whole, see Randy Alcorn's book, *Heaven*, which deals with a wide variety of fascinating questions about the world to come. While I do not always agree with Alcorn, he has an excellent take on the biblical teaching on the new heavens and earth. Alcorn has also written a small booklet and children's version of his book, which are useful (and much shorter!) resources.

On animals in the new creation, Joni Eareckson Tada writes:

"If God brings our pets back to life, it wouldn't surprise me. It would be just like Him. It would be totally in keeping with His generous character...Exorbitant. Excessive. Extravagant in grace after grace. Of all the dazzling discoveries and ecstatic pleasures heaven will hold for us, the potential of seeing [my dog] Scrappy would be pure whimsy – utterly, joyfully, surprisingly superfluous...Heaven is going to be a place that will retract and reflect in as many ways as possible the goodness and joy of our great God, who delights in lavishing love on His children."

John Wesley from his sermon "The general deliverance" on the lower creation being redeemed through Christ:

If the Creator and Father of every living thing is rich in mercy towards all . . . how is it that misery of all kinds overspreads the face of the earth? . . . All the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, were with Adam in paradise. And there is no question but their state was suited to their place. It was paradisiacal; perfectly happy. . . .

Man was God's viceregent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world; and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator and the whole brute creation . . . so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. . .

How beautiful many of them [the animals] were, we may conjecture from that which still remains. . . . It is probable they sustained much loss . . . their vigour, strength, and swiftness. But undoubtedly they suffered far more in their understanding. . . . As man is deprived of his perfection, his loving obedience to God; so brutes are deprived of their perfection, their loving obedience to man. . . .

But will "the creature," will even the brute creation, always remain in this deplorable condition? God forbid that we should affirm this; yea, or even entertain such a thought! . . . The whole brute creation will then, undoubtedly be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in paradise, but to a degree of it as much higher than that. . . . Whatever affections they had in the garden of God, will be restored with vast increase; being exalted and refined in a manner which we ourselves are not now able to comprehend. . . .

And with their beauty their happiness will return. . . . In the new earth, as well as in the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but everything that the wisdom and goodness of God can create to give happiness. As a recompense for what they [animals] once suffered . . . they shall enjoy happiness suited to their state, without alloy, without interruption, and without end. . . .

What, if it should please the all-wise, all-gracious Creator to raise them higher in the scale of beings? What, if it should please him . . . to make them capable of knowing and loving and enjoying the Author of their being? . . .

Something better remains after death for these poor creatures . . . that these, likewise, shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings..

Here is the final scene from C. S. Lewis' *The Last Battle*, on what it was like for the creatures to discover the "new creation" Narnia:

"Those hills," said Lucy, "the nice woody ones and the blue ones behind - aren't they very like the Southern border of Narnia?"

"Like!" cried Edmund after a moment's silence. "Why, they're exactly like. Look, there's Mount Pire with his forked head, and there's the pass into Archenland and everything!"

"And yet they're not like," said Lucy. "They're different. They have more colours on them and they look further away than I remembered and they're more . . . more . . . oh, I don't know..."

"More like the real thing," said the Lord Digory softly.

Suddenly Farsight the Eagle spread his wings, soared thirty or forty feet up into the air, circled round and then alighted on the ground.

"Kings and Queens," he cried, "we have all been blind. We are only beginning to see where we are. From up there I have seen it all - Ettinsmuir, Beaversdam, the Great River, and Cair Paravel still shining on the edge of the Eastern Sea. Narnia is not dead. This is Narnia."

"But how can it be?" said Peter. "For Aslan told us older ones that we should never return to Narnia, and here we are."

"Yes," said Eustace. "And we saw it all destroyed and the sun put out."

"And it's all so different," said Lucy.

"The Eagle is right," said the Lord Digory. "Listen, Peter. When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream." His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools!" the older ones laughed. It was so exactly like the sort of thing they had heard him say long ago in that other world where his beard was grey instead of golden. He knew why they were laughing and joined in the laugh himself. But very quickly they all became grave again: for, as you know, there is a kind of happiness and wonder that makes you serious. It is too good to waste on jokes.

It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that

room opposite to the window there may have been a lookingglass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different - deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean.

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried:

"I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! Come further up, come further in!"

There are other episodes from the *Chronicles of Narnia* that point to the wonder of new creation.

Lewis uses the character of Reepicheep to show us how we should long for the new creation more than anything else. Indeed, such a hope makes us brave, like the courageous mouse. As *Dawn Treader* sails east, encountering one adventure after another, Reepicheep is in search of an even greater adventure. More than anything, he desires to reach Aslan's country. He says, "My own plans are made. While I can, I sail east in the *Dawn Treader*. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan's country, or shot over the edge of the world in some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise and Peepiceek will be head of the talking mice in Narnia."

Why is Reepicheep so eager to reach the distant land of Aslan? Reepicheep's "eschatological imagination" had been awakened by a poem he was taught in his youth:

Where sky and water meet,
Where the waves grow sweet,
Doubt not, Reepicheep,
To find all you seek,
There is the utter East.

Reepicheep does not know what the poem means but he says he has been under its spell his whole life.

When the ship has finally reaches the farthest waters, where no sailors have ever been, Reepicheep is thrown into the water. Surprisingly, he finds it to be sweet. He figures he must be close to Aslan's country, so close, he can "taste" it!

We should all be like Reepicheep, thinking often of the glories of the new creation and doing all we can to get there. Like Reepicheep, if we awaken our imaginations to the glorious future that awaits us, we may find ourselves becoming more sacrificial, more honorable, and bolder in service to our true King. Paul shows us in 1 Cor. 15:30-34 how a vision of the future resurrection can sustain sacrificial, missional living in the present.

All animals are God's pets so to speak, even the wild beasts that never interact with man (e.g., Ps. 104, Job 38ff). God cares even for the sparrow. The leviathan frolics at his pleasure. He promises to make the lion lie down with the lamb.

Obviously, the extreme animal rights movement is idolatrous because it outs humans on the same level as animals, whereas God gave us dominion over them. All throughout Scripture,

Not surprisingly, Lewis includes animals in his remade world. For a more theological discussion of "animal resurrection," see his *Problem of Pain*. While not every detail strikes me as correct, here is a part of the fascinating discussion:

The error we must avoid is that of considering them in themselves. Man is to be understood only in his relation to God. The beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man and, through man, to God.

Let us here guard against one of those untransmuted lumps of atheistical thought which often survive in the minds of modern believers. Atheists naturally regard the co-existence of man and the other animals as a mere contingent result of interacting biological facts; and the taming of an animal by a man as a purely arbitrary interference of one species with another. The "real" or "natural" animal to them is the wild one, and the tame animal is an artificial or unnatural thing.

But a Christian must not think so. Man was appointed by God to have dominion over the beasts, and everything a man does to an animal is either a lawful exercise, or a sacrilegious abuse, of an authority by divine right. The

tame animal is therefore, in the deepest sense, the only "natural" animal -- the only one we see occupying the place it was made to occupy, and it is on the tame animal that we must base all our doctrine of beasts.

Now it will be seen that, in so far as the tame animal has a real self or personality, it owes this almost entirely to its master. If a good sheepdog seems "almost human" that is because a good shepherd has made it so.

I have already noted the mysterious force of the word "in." I do not take all the senses of it in the New Testament to be identical, so that man is *in* Christ and Christ *in* God and the Holy Spirit *in* the Church and also *in* the individual believer in exactly the same sense. They may be senses that rhyme or correspond rather than a single sense. I am now going to suggest -- though with great readiness to be set right by real theologians -- that there may be a sense, corresponding, though not identical, with these, in which those beasts that attain a real self are *in* their masters. That is to say, you must not think of a beast by itself, and call that a personality and then inquire whether God will raise and bless *that*. You must take the whole context *in* which the beast acquires its selfhood -- namely "The-goodman-and-the-goodwife-ruling-their-children-and-their-beasts-in-the-good-homestead." That whole context may be regarded as a "body" in the Pauline (or a closely sub-Pauline) sense; and how much of that "body" may be raised along with the goodman and the goodwife, who can predict? So much, presumably, as is necessary not only for the glory of God and the beatitude of the human pair, but for that particular glory and that particular beatitude which is eternally coloured by that particular terrestrial experience.

And in this way it seems to me possible that certain animals may have an immortality, not in themselves, but in the immortality of their masters. And the difficulty about personal identity in a creature barely personal disappears when the creature is thus kept in its proper context. If you ask, concerning an animal thus raised as a member of the whole Body of the household, where its personal identity resides, I answer "Where its identity always did reside even in the earthly life -- in its relation to the Body and, specially, to the master who is the head of that Body." In other words, the man will know his dog: the dog will know its master and, in knowing him, will *be* itself...

But if any do, and if it is agreeable to the goodness

of God that they should live again, their immortality would also be related to man -- not, this time, to individual masters, but to humanity. That is to say, if in any instance the quasi-spiritual and emotional value which human tradition attributes to a beast (such as the "innocence" of the lamb or the heraldic royalty of the lion) has a real ground in the beast's nature, and is not merely arbitrary or accidental, then it is in *that* capacity, or principally in that, that the beast may be expected to attend on risen man and make part of his "train." Or if the traditional character is quite erroneous, then the beast's heavenly life [which Lewis, in a footnote says is "its participation in the heavenly life of men *in Christ to God*"] would be in virtue of the real, but unknown, effect it has actually had on man during his whole history: for if Christian cosmology is in *any* sense ... true, then all that exists on our planet is related to man....

I think the lion, when he has ceased to be dangerous, will still be awful: indeed, that we shall then first see that of which the present fangs and claws are a clumsy, and satanically perverted, imitation. There will still be something like the shaking of a golden mane: and often the good Duke will say, "Let him roar again."

See also this excerpt from Alcorn's *Heaven*, which helps explain why we love animals so much:

If we regard pets as God-created companions entrusted to our care, it's only right that we should experience grief at their loss. Who made these endearing qualities in animals? God. Who made us to be touched by them? God. ...We love animals because God created us – and them – to love each other. ..

We all know stories of pets who've risked their life and died for their owners, because the animals' instinct to love and loyalty outweigh their instinct for self-preservation. It is noble for a person to lay down his or her life for others, so animals who do the same must also be noble. We needn't be embarrassed to grieve their loss or want to see them again. If we believe God is creator, that he loves us and them, that he intends to restore his creatures from the bondage they experienced because of our sin, then we have biblical grounds for not only wanting but also expecting that we may be with them again on the New Earth.

Let's not "correct" our children and grandchildren when they pray that they'll be able to see their pets again. Then answer to that prayer is up to God. But

he loves to hear the prayers of His children, and there is scriptural reason to believe He may answer those prayers. Remember too that our children's instinctive grasp of Heaven —is sometimes better than ours. (Christoplatonism hasn't gripped them yet.)....

C.S. Lewis gives us a creative glimpse of what the Resurrected Earth might be like. In *The Magician's Nephew*, King Aslan declares the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve, now in Narnia on its first day, to be his kings and queens. The talking animals make crowns for the first king and queen and express their delight in being ruled by these humans. One of the animals who watches this scene is a horse named Strawberry, who drew a London carriage on Earth. He toiled and sometimes his master Frank, a cabbie and good man, whipped him to make him move faster. Strawberry, who Aslan renamed Fledge, marvels at the new King Frank in the New Narnia: "My old master's been changed nearly as much as I have! Why, he's a real master now."

Aslan later says to King Frank and Queen Helen, "Be just and merciful and brave. The blessing is upon you." All the people celebrate. All the animals rejoice. Aslan, Lord of All, is pleased.