

Title: Prospects, Pets and Purgatory
Text: 1 Corinthians 3:12-15
Date: 7/26/2026
Series: You Ask It!

INTRODUCTION

1. I am not sure how many years we have been sharing the summer series: “You Ask It.” The series allows leadership to hear your questions and respond in ways that strengthen your faith. Over several years, you have provided challenging, thought-provoking questions. This year is no exception.
2. I open the series with three questions. It is unusual for me to attempt three questions, but it seemed best to handle three in one setting.
3. The first question: “Did God create life outside of Earth on other planets?”
4. The second question: “Does the Bible talk about where our beloved pets go when they pass? Will we see them again one day?”
5. The third question: “Is there a Purgatory after death before heaven and hell?”

THE BIBLE AND OTHER FORMS OF LIFE

1. This is a good question to remind ourselves that the Bible provides our sources to understand God, life, and eternal life. It is our final authority in faith and practice. God has designed us as curious creatures. With the coming of AI, our inquisitiveness into the unknown will only increase. However, if we do not ground ourselves in truth (John 17:17), we run a high risk of becoming lost in confusion and despair.
2. With the Bible as our complete source of truth, I know of no biblical teaching regarding intelligent life beyond Earth.
 - 2.1. Neither does the Bible restrict God from additional life forms: “Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.” (Psalm 135:6) If God desires additional life forms, His word says He may create such life, but He has not informed us regarding such a decision.
 - 2.2. I suspect embedded in the question are the many “sightings” reported in various media forms. The Bible does provide support for “strange” interactions on Earth. It describes a spiritual dimension along with our physical one. Spiritual beings (good and evil) with significant power and capabilities evidence themselves to our natural sight, which often is strange to us. I confess my lack of understanding in the field of Astrobiology or SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). Nevertheless, I am convinced there is constant interaction between the two dimensions in unexplainable ways.

THE BIBLE AND ANIMALS IN HEAVEN

1. I believe animals will be in heaven for the following reasons.
 - 1.1. Isaiah 11:6-9 seems to speak to the afterlife when it says: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the

weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." Animals are part of the life beyond this one.

- 1.2. Romans 8:19-22 speaks to the restoration of the creation from the curse. Since animals are part of God's creation (Genesis 1:20-24), it follows that the restoration includes animals.
- 1.3. Finally, I understand heaven to be the perfection of what God intended in Genesis 1 and 2, where God, humankind, and animals lived in perfect harmony.
2. The question, however, of specific pets is not biblically clear, unlike it is for people.
 - 2.1.1. First, the Bible makes a categorical distinction between human and animal life. Unlike animals, humans have moral, relational, and rulership capacities. Humans are accountable for their use of these capacities; animals are not. When a stingray killed Steve Irwin(2006) (aka "The Crocodile Hunter"), the media termed it an accident, not murder.
 - 2.1.1.1. Humans alone have the "image of God," and dominion over all animals. (Genesis 1:24-28)
 - 2.1.2. Second, following from point one, the Bible stresses salvation for humans, with the culmination being eternal life with Jesus; it says nothing about animals needing salvation or the result of salvation (heaven). God does not tell us what happens to animals when they die.
 - 2.1.3. However, the Bible is not silent on God's care for animals.
 - 2.1.3.1. Exodus 23:12 requires Sabbath rest for humans and animals.
 - 2.1.3.2. Psalm 104 speaks about God's care for animals.
 - 2.1.3.3. Jonah 4:11, God has concern for both the people and the cattle.
 - 2.1.3.4. Luke 12:6, even sparrows receive attention from God.
 - 2.1.4. Whatever the end result for animals, God's goodness, which created them in life, will care for them in death.
 - 2.1.5. Randy Alcorn, in his book *Heaven* © 2004, attempts to make the case for individual pets in heaven based on God's goodness (Matthew 7:9-11) and the restoration of creation (Romans 8:21), yet I believe he falls short. If God plans specific pets in heaven, He does not reveal it to His creation.
 - 2.1.6. Lastly, we should always remember that heaven is a place of perfection and completeness. In heaven, God completely satisfies every human desire.

PURGATORY: ITS ORIGINS

1. The history of Purgatory begins with an account recorded in 2 Macabees 12:37-45: "So Judas [Macabees] gathered his host, and came into the city of Odollam. And when the seventh day came, they purified themselves, as the custom was, and kept the sabbath in the same place. And upon the day following, as the

use had been, Judas and his company came to take up the bodies of them that were slain, and to bury them with their kinsmen in their fathers' graves."

Besides, that noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forsomuch as they saw before their eyes the things that came to pass for the sins of those that were slain. And when he had made a gathering throughout the company to the sum of two thousand drachms of silver, he sent it to Jerusalem to offer a sin offering, doing therein very well and honestly, in that he was mindful of the resurrection: for if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And also in that he perceived that there was great favour laid up for those that died godly, it was an holy and good thought. Whereupon he made a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin." (W. Fairweather, ed., *The First & Second Books of the Maccabees*, *The Temple Bible* (London; Philadelphia: J. M. Dent & Company; J. B. Lippincott Company, 1903), 2 Mac 12:37–45.)

The above account describes, in Jewish history, Judas Maccabee sending a money offering, along with prayers for the dead, to Jerusalem on behalf of his soldiers. Some in church history surmise this incident indicates those living can affect the dead. Catholic theologians, using the account in 2 Maccabees, later developed the doctrine of Purgatory from both church history and the Bible, especially 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

2. For those unfamiliar with 2 Maccabees, I provide here a brief introduction.

2.1. Purpose and Character

- 2.1.1. 2 Maccabees is not a continuation of 1 Maccabees but an independent account of many of the same events. It is an abridgment of a larger work by Jason of Cyrene and was originally written in Greek. Rather than focusing on political history, it emphasizes theological interpretation and the spiritual meaning of the Jewish struggle.

2.2. Main Contents

- 2.2.1. The persecution under Antiochus IV.
- 2.2.2. Stories of faithful martyrs such as Eleazar and the mother with seven sons.
- 2.2.3. Judas Maccabeus' victories.
- 2.2.4. The purification and rededication of the Temple.
- 2.2.5. The defeat of Nicanor in 161 BC.

2.3. Major Themes

- 2.3.1. God's justice and sovereignty.
- 2.3.2. The resurrection of the dead.
- 2.3.3. The value of martyrdom.

2.3.4. Prayer for the dead.

2.3.5. Divine intervention in history.

2.3.6. Hope in final vindication for the righteous.

PURGATORY DEFINED AND EXPLAINED

3. “The term ‘purgatory’ derives from the Latin *purgare*, meaning ‘to cleanse’ or ‘to purify.’” (Devin Rose, [The Protestant’s Dilemma: How the Reformation’s Shocking Consequences Point to the Truth of Catholicism](#) (San Diego: Catholic Answers Press, 2014), [70–71](#).)
4. “[Purgatory] arose from the Christian practice of praying for the dead and offering the Eucharist on their behalf. This custom naturally prompted a theological question: if the dead are already in heaven (and thus need no prayers) or in hell (beyond prayer’s reach), why pray for them? This puzzle led to the idea of an intermediate state between heaven and hell—a temporary condition that eventually became known as Purgatory. (John P. Beal, [“Purgatory,”](#) in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 2005), 454.)
5. There is no direct support for Purgatory in the Bible. However, some conjecture the doctrine from the above Maccabees account and different Bible passages, primarily 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Although the Bible never mentions Purgatory, it is nevertheless conjectured from “2 Maccabees 12:41–46 in the Apocrypha, as well as the biblical passages Luke 16:19–26, 1 Corinthians 3:11–15, and Hebrews 12:29, in support of the belief. No modern Protestant and few Catholic biblical scholars would interpret these passages as references to Purgatory.” (Jack Kilcrease, [“Purgatory,”](#) in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

PURGATORY: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-15

1. Paul’s primary point occurs in 3:9, “For we are God’s fellow workers.”
 - 1.1. Then, in verses 10-16, Paul illustrates his primary point.
 - 1.2. One illustration is the picture of a structure with a foundation and the structure built on it. Of course, Paul is not interested in a physical building but a spiritual understanding.
 - 1.3. Paul wants his audience to know how they invest their lives has eternal consequences. Everyone’s “work” will be inspected and result in reward or loss. This occurs on “the Day.” (v. 13)
 - 1.4. How one understands “the Day” determines the meaning of the passage and consequently the support or lack thereof for Purgatory.
 - 1.4.1. The Greek word translated “Day” is *ἡμέρα* used in the absolute sense. As Gerhard Delling explains, “The absolute use of *ἡμέρα* (without genitival attribute) is used for the day of judgment at 1 Th. 5:5; 1 C. 3:13 and Hb. 10:25. This is to be explained in terms of OT terminology (cf. Mal. 3:19: הַיּוֹם).” (Gerhard Delling, “*ἡμέρα*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 952.

1.5. I contend that “the Day” in 1 Corinthians 3:13 does not support an intermediate time between death and the final state; it refers to the end of the current life and the return of Jesus.

PURGATORY: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. I know of no place biblically where someone can affect the sins of another. In 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Paul explains “each one” is responsible for herself or himself (3:8, 10, 13). (See also, Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18; Matthew 12:36-37; James 1:14-15).
2. The Bible teaches that to die is immediate presence with Jesus: “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8)
3. The Bible teaches the justification (at salvation) of Jesus is fully satisfactory for all sin: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. The Bible does not describe an intermediate state for judgment: “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27)