

ST. PETE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH CELESTIAL DOGS

By J B Leftwich

St. Paul doesn't address the subject, and the four gospels have admonitions more pertinent and more vital than this topic. If Revelation reveals any relevant information, I probably wouldn't recognize it anyway.

But, as they say in law enforcement circles, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

What I'm writing about here is the question: Are there dogs in heaven?

In view of the wide range of silence in the gospels and in the letters of St. Paul, admittedly we have little to go on as we exercise our right to speculation.

David Hunter, a columnist for the Knoxville News Sentinel, recently addressed this subject after reading an obituary, written by the deceased who expected to find Old Rover in the heavenly environs. She and the columnist made a reasonable case for celestial canines.

I like the premise. I am not making a case for German shepherd or Scottie souls. My argument favors the souls of owners of German Shepherds and Collies and Scotties and dogs of mixed breeds that have made earth a happier planet for their masters.

Since Heaven is portrayed as an province of ultimate happiness, it seems reasonable to assume dogs trot the paths of Paradise, along side their former earthly owners – albeit winged dogs do conjure a peculiar picture.

Neither Luke nor St. Paul reveal the age one will be if one merits an idyllic afterlife, so I can imagine at age eight greeting St. Peter. That was before major transgressions were entered in my ledger. I relish the thoughts of hiking heavenly haunts with Ole Prodge, my first dog.

Prodge rode in a cage on a two-day train trip from Arkansas to Middle Tennessee, cared for by the conductors but neither eating nor drinking during that span. I remember our reunion and I can imagine a reunion of our spirits in a world of spirits. Maybe we could test our wings and fly over Arkansas to refresh razorback memories.

Just as I worry about making the cut for St. Peter's team, I worry about Suzy, a less than honest sneak of a dog that both amused and annoyed us.

Suzy was banned from nestling in the rocking chair located upstairs where the babies were rocked and where Suzy was not supposed to migrate.

Many the times when we returned home, Suzy would be coming down the stair steps with an “I was just checking on things” look that plainly implied “I wasn’t in the rocking chair.” But the chair would still be in motion when we made it upstairs.

If Suzy and I become heavenly rejects, count on us to pal around together in a warmer climate.

In the limited number of words allowed for a newspaper column, there is not space for the resume of every dog in my life, but I can’t omit Skippy, actually our son’s dog but a member of our household.

Skippy had two lives, we like to think. One day on my job, I was called and told Skippy had been killed and his body was in a ditch beside our street. I rushed home, observed Skippy’s body, and drove on to get an old blanket for a wrapper.

When I drove into our driveway, Skippy came trotting out to meet me. The dead dog was a look-alike.

Little was required to stimulate Skippy’s romantic interest. One January night with the temperature registering well below zero, Skippy had a date. We anticipated the worst, but Skip showed up next day battered and bloody, mangled and muddy, but a jubilant survivor. He thought he was a knight who had just jousting and won the hand of a princess. He headed for his bed and slept for 24 hours.

Then there were Brother and Omar and Thunder, et al, all of which could create a problem in a blissful afterlife if heavenly ordinances forbid more than one dog per angel.

I can imagine St. Peter showing up at our cottage and saying: “Son, we don’t mind a pet or two, but your brood looks like a canine carnival.”

But not to worry. That problem more likely will be my wife’s concern. If St. Peter is a stickler for regulations, the probability is instead of living in heavenly quarters, I’ll be sweating it out with Suzy.

(J.B. Leftwich is a veteran journalist and a columnist for The Lebanon Democrat.
Email: leftwichjb@charter.net)

<http://www.ajlambert.com>