

Series: Cat & Dog Theology	Reference: Various Scriptures	Title: Outside the Box	Date: 05.16.2021
<p style="text-align: center;">Website Writeup:</p> <p>Dogs say, "You pet, feed, shelter & love me," and conclude, "You must be God!" Cats say, "You pet, feed, shelter & love me," and conclude, "I must be God!" These characterize Christian theology. Today we explore primarily why Jesus came, if you have Cat Theology, the answer may surprise.</p>			

(This material is largely derived from UnveilinGLORY's YouTeach series.)

We've finished two related 4 week miniseries, the Story of the Bible & the Missing Half. Today we start the 3rd, Cat & Dog Theology. We're going to learn to think outside the box by focusing on the theme of the two different pets, cats & dogs, to learn to think outside our normal thought patterns. It's hard to think outside the box.

For instance if I asked you, with a single line, to turn this Roman numeral Nine 'IX' into a 6, could you do it? We get stuck thinking certain ways & can't see things fresh. It's actually very easy, just add an S in front! Cat & Dog Theology challenges us to think differently concerning our Christianity. Which is challenging because it dares us to believe the church to be theologically cancerous, and unchecked, this cancer destroys spiritual vitality. That cancer is called Cat Theology.

Let's illustrate it by reading Genesis 1...*In the beginning God created the heavens & the earth. ² Now the earth was formless & empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning - the first day.*

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the vault & separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning - the second day. ⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants & trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds & trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning - the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days & years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights - the greater light to govern the day & the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day & the night, and to separate light from darkness. And

God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning - the fourth day. ²⁰And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky."

Etcetera...etcetera...etcetera...At some point you're thinking, "Why would PJ bore us by reading the entire chapter!?" Honestly, most Christians are bored with Genesis 1. We may feel we've heard it before, or too familiar with it, or some aren't really sure if it's completely true. But none of these would be the *real* answer to our boredom. The real reason is that we're not mentioned! We only slide in at the end like a footnote, but for the majority of it, not a mention! And if it ain't about us, it's boring....In fact, most don't get interested until Genesis 3, at least then we have something going on - sort of a rescue operation! But Genesis 1 & 2...boring. Fish, birds, light & dark, etc...who cares, let's get to me! Subconsciously, we communicate the Bible's all about us!

But we should ask, who's the main character? And there are two possible answers. If God's the main character, then when we pick up the Bible & ask, "What's God get out of this? What's He get out of saving me? Or when a miracle takes place?" But if People are the main character, then we ask, "What do I get out of this? What do I get out of salvation? What's in it for me...?"

I want to make two bold statements.

#1: God is the main character of the Bible & lives to radiate His glory.

#2: The average Christian says God's the main character, but lives & acts as if humanity's the main character. As a result, humanity often replaces God on the throne.

This realization takes us outside the box. For us to see the truth of these statements & how strong the cancer is, let's go over two examples of this kind of theology. Our first example's found in the answer to the question, "Why did Jesus come to earth?" Our usual answer is to die on the cross for our sins. Which is a man-centered, as opposed to a God-centered perspective. Every time we think about something theologically, it goes through an instant filter. Like water through coffee grounds, our thinking, outlook, or conclusions get colored a certain way. Our filter comes in the form of the question, 'What do I get out of this?' No matter what comes our way in life, friends, God's glory, music, authority, creation, or feelings, we're only concerned with how it affects us?

But, if we asked a different question, "What did God get out of Jesus' death?" We may answer, "Us!" Which reveals again our filter. In truth...God got glory, honor, praise, worship, obedience & more. Things we don't think about because we're focused on what we get out of it & have a hard time thinking differently.

Second example...what's our primary reason for not wanting people to go to hell? We answer, 'So they won't suffer', revealing again our man-centered filter & perspective.

We see King David's take on physical death in Ps 30:9..."*What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim*

your faithfulness?” In other words, “God, if I die, who’s gonna give you the praise you deserve?” He’s far more concerned about God not being praised than about dying.

What’s the apostle Paul have to say? Paul tells us why Christ came in Romans 15:8-9...*“For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that...”* “So that’ are key words. He’s telling us there’s a reason why Christ came. A purpose statement follows. To fully understand it, let’s see what Paul doesn’t say...*so that...the Gentiles might not go to hell!* That’d be a perfect place to say it, but it doesn’t. It would fit well with a human-centered filter! It’s because our not going to hell isn’t what Christianity’s all about. **So, why did Christ come...***“So that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy!”* We’re saved to glorify God! Living so focused on Him, when people look at us, they see God. That’s why we’ve been saved.

What about Jesus? Did Jesus focus *primarily* on us, or *primarily* on the Father when He went to the cross? At that moment, was He man-centered, or God-centered? The key word here is ‘primarily’, and in order to feel the full impact of what it says, we need to consider what Jesus doesn’t say! In John 12:27-28, Jesus is walking back with His disciples, His time’s imminent, death was coming. **So He opens His heart to the disciples by saying...***“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No. It was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father...”*

When He says ‘Father’, first we know, that in what He says next, He’s done addressing the disciples. Second, it means He’s about to talk to His heavenly Father about what’s soon to happen. As we all know, death by crucifixion is one of the worst things to endure. An extremely difficult struggle, not merely due to the nails in the wrists & feet, but in trying to breathe. Hanging on a cross, you run out of breath & have to lift yourself up pushing against the nail in your feet to exhale & inhale. Then after you get your breath of air, your weight falls back on the nails in your hands & use all that oxygen up & repeat the process over & over. It’s death by slow painful suffocation.

But that doesn’t even compare to the wrath He’d experience from the Father by taking on the sin of mankind! We can’t even imagine what the infinite wrath of a holy God is like against the sin of mankind. This is what Jesus underwent. In light of this agonizing death & experience, Jesus would definitely talk to His heavenly Father about the *primary* reason as to why He was dying, not the secondary reason. So what doesn’t He say? He doesn’t say, “Father, save these kind, wonderful, worthy people from hell, they don’t deserve it!” The truth is, He doesn’t mention us! That’s humbling.

He says, *“Father, glorify your name!”* The true driving force which put Christ on the cross was to bring His Father glory! It wasn’t about us. Now this is hard to accept because it forces us to think differently which isn’t easy. Remember, we’re asking the question, “What’s the **primary** reason for Christ’s death?” Did He die for our sins? Absolutely! We’re not saying He didn’t. That would be incorrect if we did. He did die for our sin, but that sentiment’s incomplete. What’s missing is, He primarily did it to bring the Father glory. What’s left out in our thinking is the primary reason! Some love the

chorus of this worship lyric, “Like a rose, trampled on the ground, you took the fall, and *thought of me, above all...*” But, He didn’t think about us above all. He thought of His Father’s glory above all. That lyric is theologically incorrect & we’re affected by this cancerous thinking in the Church.

So, we have a three-fold witness in the Old Testament as David points to God’s glory, in the New Testament where Paul said it was about God’s glory & Jesus himself indicates it’s primarily about God’s glory. We don’t deny Christ died for our sins, it’s just secondary to the Father’s glory. It’s not primarily about us!

This may make us uncomfortable. Remember, His love for us is as high as the heavens are above the earth! But we must ask the question, “Why does God love?” He loves because He’s a glorious being! One aspect of God’s glory is that He’s loving. It gets back to His glory. We can’t forget Romans 11:36...“*For from him & through him & to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*” All things, even Christ’s death on the cross. This too is from God, through God & to God. It’s all primarily about Him, not us.

Depending upon who the main character of the Bible is, you have two totally different types of theology, which we’re calling...Cat & Dog Theology. You may be thinking you love you Dog or Cat. And, we’re going to highlight their God-given traits & parallel them to certain theological attitudes held by many Christians.

Cats & dogs are different. The average dog wags his tail, licks you, jumps up & down & is excited when you walk into a room! A cat hardly acknowledges you, they may not even wake up! Dogs say, “You pet, feed, shelter & love me,” and conclude, “You must be God!” Cats say, “You pet, feed, shelter & love me,” and conclude, “I must be God!” Which characterizes Christian theology around the world today. There are those who say, “You must be God. Everything revolves around You. Everything is from You, through You & to You!” But there are those who say, “God did everything for me! The earth, stars, sun, galaxies & blessings are all intended for me! I must be God!”

Theological Cats, of course, would never say that last part out loud, “I must be God.” But they do say...“God did everything for us. Jesus left the Father’s glory, came to earth, suffered, died & went back to heaven to build mansions for us. It must be all about us! He not only died for us. He must live for us! It’s fantastic!,” says the Cat.

Two different theologies, two different mindsets. Cats say, “God wants to bless me.” Dogs say, “I want to bless God.” We see the difference, yet they’re so similar. Both sound so Christian & so right. But one’s man-centered, the other’s God-centered. There’s a huge difference between the two. Let’s look at another difference.

Cats think, “God serves me.” In their thinking, all they have to do is pray adding the phrase ‘in the name of Jesus’ to the end, and presto, like some cosmic vending machine the expect God to give them what they want. Dogs say, “I serve God. I’ll do what He wants, how He wants it, when He wants it.” Cats think, “God wants to advance my kingdom.” So they go boldly before the Lord asking Him to give them a promotion,

raise, or help them get a loan for whatever they desire. Dogs say, "I advance God's kingdom."

Cats are heavily influenced by culture, striving for the all elusive 'self-image'. They believe "God thinks the world of me!" Dogs say, "I think the world of God." Cats think, "God lives to make me famous." And as a result, they do everything to draw attention to themselves - in a Christian context of course. They want to be 'noticed' in the church. They want the role of authority, or power in church life. They want God to bless them so others will notice how special they are. Dogs say, "I live to make God famous." They want to get lost in the background, putting the focus on God.

Cats cry out "God bless America!" Because to them, America comes first, God's kingdom's second. Dogs say, "Everything's from God & through God & to God. We need to be saying 'America Bless God!'" To Cats, "God's a means to an end." They really don't want God, as much as they want His blessings. Dogs say, "God's the end. He's what our souls hunger & thirst for. I'd rather have God far more than His blessings." Cats constantly ask, "What do I get out of this?" Dogs ask, "What's God get out of this?"

A Dog even thinks "What does God get" when reading the Bible. Let's look at one verse from the Bible, reading it as a Dog would. Genesis 1:20, the verse where I stopped earlier.... *"Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures."* A Dog keeps asking, "What did God get out of this?"

So they imagine God taking the first steps into His newly formed ocean, waves crashing at His feet. Grabbing some clay, He begins to mold the first fish, patting it down flat, fashioning fins & painting it with a yellow base. Maybe He added white stripes with a little black & blue around the white. When finished He may've said it was good, as He breathed life into it & put it in the water to swim away, God found joy in making it. *Maybe He made a second, a bit rounder, starting with black, then a white pattern along the bottom, adding yellow around the lips & a yellow stripe under the eye.* Maybe He made the prisoner fish to remind us that he would release us from the prison of sin? His creativity wasn't limited to color, size or shape.

Think about the Gharial Crocodile. Imagine the angel Michael coming to the Father saying, "Father, love this Gharial Crocodile thing, but it doesn't work, it goes belly-up in the water. It's not buoyant. Amazing, but doesn't work." And God replied with a smile, "Michael, inside the DNA of this crocodile I created him to go around & eat rocks in order to remain upright!" So literally, today in India, there are crocodiles which go around eating rocks so they can remain buoyant in the water. Now if you think God was bored on that day of creation, you're missing the whole point. God must have been beside Himself with joy!

The angels must have given God a symphony of praise as they saw His glory put on display throughout creation. And in the excitement, maybe God said, "Write this all down so our joy can be shared with others!" Genesis chapter 1 was created.

But...us cats...we're bored....why? Because, we're not concerned about what God gets out of this. We've been trained to think only about what we get. Although it's not incorrect, it's incomplete. That focus on God's blessing us, by itself, becomes a cancer which slowly eats away at our spiritual maturity!

We need to start asking, "What's God get?" Then we can notice & radiate His glory in everything. Life isn't about us. That's the box we have to get out of. We have to learn life is primarily about God!

Cat vs Dog Theology. Cat Theology, man-centered. Dog theology, God-centered. I hope we're learning how we've been boxed in with our Christianity which may be correct at some level, but is often incomplete. Over the coming three weeks we're going to continue to encourage each other to get out of the box & live for the glory of God in a new & fresh way!