

Animals—Do they have a soul and spirit?

Soul and Spirit . . . What is the difference between them?

It is very difficult to explain the difference between the soul and the spirit because both are invisible and nonmaterial.

In general, the word “soul” carries the idea of a breathing creature. A dead dog has only a body, but a living dog has life or breath in its body. Thus we say that a living animal has a body and a soul. The soul here simply means animal life. The soul distinguishes a living being from a dead one.

In Revelation 16:3, we read that “every living soul died in the sea.” It refers of course, to fishes and sea mammals.

Usually, the word “soul” is translated “creature” when referring to animals. Thus, the same word translated “soul” in Genesis 2:7 when speaking of man is translated “creature” in the following passages when referring to animals; Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 15, 16; Leviticus 11:46.

Now the Bible teaches that man has not only a body and a soul but a spirit as well (1 Thes 5:23). We all readily recognize what the body is because we can see and feel the body. It is that part of us by which we are conscious of the world around us. It is more difficult to define the difference between the spirit and the soul. We know that the body is distinct from the soul and spirit because at physical death these are separated from the body (2 Cor 5:1-8).

Hebrews 4:12 teaches us that there is a difference between soul and spirit, but it is only in the Word of God that we find this division between soul and spirit. The soul and spirit are never viewed as separated one from the other. Thus we find it hard to note where the distinction lies. Generally speaking, the soul is that part of our being which has to do with our emotions and feelings, and through the soul we are able to know about ourselves. The spirit is the part of us which enables us to worship and to have communion with God.

Angels are spoken of as ministering spirits (Heb 1:14). They are spiritual and superhuman beings. The lesson notes state that they do not have human bodies or souls. This does not mean that they only have a spirit; it simply means that they do not have a body and soul like ours.

Sometimes the words “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably in the Bible, but at other times, as in the references given above, they are distinguished.

Do animals have a spirit? The Hebrew word for soul (*nepesh*, like the Greek word *psuche*) implies, self-conscious life, as distinguished from vegetables which have unconscious life. In this sense the beasts have “soul.” However, “soul” is not identical with “spirit.” Man has “spirit” (2 Cor 2:11), but the beast does not, I infer from 2 Peter 2:12. The Scripture reports spirit in man, but is silent of such in beast. The beast was created by the Word of God’s power (Gen 1:20-22). But in creation of man is more involved (Gen 1:26, 27; 2:7), for he is “in the image, after the likeness of his creator.”

From lack of comment in the Scripture and from 2 Peter 2:12, I infer there will not be animals in

Heaven, but rather they will have been annihilated.

Although the words “soul” and “Spirit” are sometimes used interchangeably in Scripture when referring to man (Job 7:11; 1 Cor 5:5; Heb 10:39), a distinction is observed in some passages. They are declared to be divisible (Heb 4:22) and are distinguished when used in reference to the burial and resurrection of the human body.

The body is buried a natural body (Greek – *soma psuchikon* – “soul body”) but raised a spiritual body (Greek – *soma pneumatikon*) (1 Cor 15:44). The difference between the two terms seems to be that the spirit is that which “knows” (1 Cor 2:11), and is capable of God-consciousness and communication with God (Job 32:8; Pro 20:27; cp. Ps 18:28). The soul is the seat of the affections, desires, emotions and will of man (Mt 11:29; 26:38; Jn 12:27). The N.T. word for soul (Greek *psucme*) corresponds to the O.T. “soul” (Heb. *nephesh*; e.g. Deut 6:5; 14:26; 1 Sam 18:1; 20:4,17; Job 14: 22; Ps 12:6; 84:2), The N.T. word for spirit (Greek *-preuma*) is the same meaning as the O.T. word for spirit (Heb. *ruach*; e.g. Gen 41:8; 1 Cor 5:5). See Genesis 1:26.

The following summary might be helpful:

Man—because he is “spirit” is capable of God-consciousness and communication with God.

Man—because he has “soul” has self-consciousness.

Man—because he is “body” he has, through his senses, world-consciousness.

A stone has body but it does not have a soul or spirit. A dog has body and soul but no spirit. Man has spirit, soul, and body. Let us illustrate: Picture a stone, a dog, and a man on the topmost ledge of the tallest building in the world. Push the stone over. It falls to the ground without any feeling or emotion. Nothing but a body falls. But if you tried to push the dog over, you would meet with stiff resistance, because the dog has consciousness and fear of danger. It has a soul in addition to a body. If the man accidentally fell, he could do something that neither the stone nor the dog could do—he could send up an urgent prayer, committing himself to God. He has a spirit as well as a soul and body.

Bible References are from the KJV