

What Does the Bible Teach About the Spirits of Animals?

“Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?” (Ecc. 3:21).

Do Animals Have Souls?

- Job 12:7-10 (ASV) - “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; And the birds of the heavens, and they shall tell thee: 8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. 9 Who knoweth not in all these, That the hand of Jehovah hath wrought this, 10 In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?”

Do Animals Have Souls?

- Prov. 12:10 (MKJV) - “A righteous one understands the soul of his animal; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”
- Nephesh (Hebrew) - “properly, a breathing creature, a living animal with vitality; used very widely in literal, accommodative or figurative senses (bodily or mental); appetite, desire, beast, body, breath, creature, discontented spirit, ghost, greed, hearty, having life or lust, man, mind, person, pleasure, soul, thing, a will” (Strong's).

Do Animals Have Souls?

- “But it has to mean ‘eternal soul’”!
- Why? Because you want it to be so?
Subjective response
- The context of the passage will determine its meaning. Objective answer

Do Animals Have Souls?

- Soul (English) - “1. the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life; 2. the spiritual principle embodied in human beings, all rational and spiritual beings, or the universe; 3. a person's total self; 4. an active or essential part of a movement, cause, principle, or paradigm; 5. a moving spirit, leader; 6. the moral and emotional nature of human beings; 7. the quality that arouses emotion and sentiment ; 8. spiritual or moral force, fervor; 8. person (not a soul in sight) 9. personification (the soul of integrity); 10. a strong positive feeling, intense sensitivity and emotional fervor; 11. African-American cultural influences; 12. defining essence (Merriam-Webster)

Do Animals Have Souls?

- Which meaning?
- The context will determine the connotation
- Our desire to have it mean one or the other has no bearing on the truth.

Similarities Between Human Beings And Animals

- We all are living, breathing, animated creatures made by God
 - Gen. 1:20, 24 - “Then God said, ‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens...’ 24 Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so.”

Similarities Between Human Beings And Animals

- We all depend on similar things to sustain our lives.
 - We all were given instincts for procreation, social interaction, contentment, and especially survival
 - We all were given the capacity to adapt to different environments and circumstances and a means of facilitating those characteristics
 - We all to some extent learn and imitate behaviors that facilitate those characteristics

Similarities Between Human Beings And Animals

- Similarities in our common condition as living, breathing creatures should move us to have respect for our common condition of life
 - But only to the extent that God teaches us in His word
 - Prov. 12:10 - “A righteous man regards the life of his animal...”
 - Deut. 25:4 - “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

Similarities Between Human Beings And Animals

- Cruelty to living creatures is an indicator of a sinful heart, regardless of professions of faith and piety
- However, God gets to define cruelty; our opinions about what is cruel and what is kind are irrelevant
- Here the similarities end; let the word of God explain the differences

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Ecc. 3:17-22 - “I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, For there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. 18 I said in my heart, Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals. 19 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. 21 Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth? 22 So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?”

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Ecc. 12:6-7 - “Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well. 7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- There is no mention of animals living on beyond death in the Bible.
- The word “soul” is used in the Old Testament to describe the physical form of life that both men and animals possess and that ceases to exist at death. It is life in this world, not the world to come.

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Gen. 1:28 - “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
- Man was commanded to exercise dominion over the earth.
 - The Hebrew word for “subdue” (kabash) is “to bring under subjection” (Strong’s).
 - “When God gave Adam dominion over the creative order, He was describing a pre-emptive authority which man would wield over the creation” (Walker, 5, 2:25).

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- To be used for food
 - Gen. 9:3-6 - “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Used in Old Testament sacrifices
 - Gen. 4:3-5 - “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.”

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Gen. 1:26-28 - “Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Humankind alone was created in the image and likeness of God; something that cannot be said with any Biblical authority of animals.
- Humankind's capacity to understand spiritual values, his recognition of morals, his Divinely given capacity to choose, and his responsibility and accountability before God for his own behavior, all set him far apart from the animal world.
- Adam is called the son of God in Luke 3:38, obviously by creation. What animal is called the son of God or offspring of God?
- Nowhere does God's Word imply that animals were created in God's image.

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Philip Hughes commented: “Only of man is it said that God created him in His image. It is in this charter of his constitution that man’s uniqueness is specifically affirmed as a creature radically distinguished from all other creatures. In this respect a line is defined which links man directly and responsibly to God in a way that is unknown to any other creature. Nothing is more basic than the recognition that being constituted in the image of God is of the very essence of and absolutely central to the humanness of man. It is the key that unlocks the meaning of his authentic humanity” (1989, p. 30).

Differences Between Human Beings And Animals

- Dr. Bert Thompson observed: “But do animals have souls? Animals may be said to have souls—if the word ‘soul’ is used as the Bible employs it in discussing members of the animal kingdom (i.e., to describe only the physical life force found within all living creatures). But if the word ‘soul’ is used to refer to an immortal soul that one day will inhabit heaven or hell, then no, animals may not be said to possess a soul. This is the only conclusion that can be drawn, respecting the instruction on the subject found within the Word of God.”

“Who Knows... the Spirit of the Animal?”

- This does not diminish the love we have for our animal companions, nor the joy we take from their company.
- It does not void the responsibility we have to treat them well as God’s word instructs us.
- As honest Christians professing reverence for God and His word, we must lay aside what we wish to believe and accept what God has said.