



SOULS, SPIRITS, AND GHOSTS IN SCRIPTURE



Introduction: How Scripture speaks about the soul, the spirit, and the term “ghost” shapes our understanding of human nature, salvation, worship, spiritual warfare, and our hope beyond death. This page briefing works from the King James Version (KJV) Bible and applies the *Seven Golden Rules of Bible Interpretation* so that evidence, not speculation, guides the conclusions. It surveys every KJV occurrence (498 of “soul,” 499 of “spirit,” and 108 of “ghost”), along with related passages across the Bible.



Baseline Definitions and Anchor Texts

- **Soul:** (a) the living person/self and life, subject to salvation or condemnation and conscious beyond death ([Gen 2:7](#); [Lev 17:11](#); [Rom 13:1](#); [Ps 103:1](#); [Matt 10:28](#); [Rev 6:9](#)).
- **Spirit (of man):** (a) the life-imparted, inward, God-facing principle formed by God that knows and is known; it survives death and returns to God ([Gen 2:7](#), implicit; [Zech 12:1](#); [Prov 20:27](#); [1 Cor 2:11](#); [Eccl 12:7](#); cf. [Luke 24:37–39](#); [Acts 23:8](#)).
- **Ghost:** (a) a human death idiom (“gave/yielded up the ghost”: [Gen 25:8](#); [Matt 27:50](#); [John 19:30](#); cf. [Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23](#)); (b) the divine title Holy Ghost, the Spirit who inspires, teaches, regenerates, indwells, empowers, and distributes gifts ([Luke 11:13](#); [John 14:26](#); [16:13](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [5:3–4](#); [1 Cor 12:4–11](#); [2 Pet 1:21](#); [Titus 3:5](#)).



Humanity: Composition, Faculties, Death, and Resurrection

- **Composition and distinction without fragmentation:** Scripture names “spirit and soul and body” ([1 Thes 5:23](#)) and can divide asunder soul and spirit ([Heb 4:12](#)), indicating real distinction within a unified person. Mary’s parallel, “my soul doth magnify... my spirit hath rejoiced” ([Luke 1:46–47](#)), shows overlapping usage rather than separate locations.
- **Soul (person/self; life):** The soul denotes the person ([Rom 13:1](#); [Gen 2:7](#); [Num 35:11](#); [1 Sam 22:22](#); [Ezek 18:4](#)), bears affections and choices ([Ps 103:1](#); [Matt 16:26](#); [10:28](#)), is conscious beyond death ([Rev 6:9](#); [Acts 2:27](#)), and can be relationally “knit” to another ([1 Sam 18:1](#); [Acts 4:32](#)).
- **Spirit (God-facing life-principle):** Formed by God and oriented toward God ([Zech 12:1](#); [Prov 20:27](#)), the spirit is the seat of communion, renewal, and witness ([John 4:24](#); [Eph 4:23](#); [Rom 8:16](#)), and its health affects the person ([Prov 18:14](#)). As the inward faculty that knows and is known ([1 Cor 2:11](#)), it stands at the interface of divine testimony.
- **Death and the intermediate state:** Biblical descriptions are complementary: the body without the spirit is dead ([James 2:26](#)); the soul’s departure marks death ([Gen 35:18](#)); and the spirit returns to God who gave it ([Eccl 12:7](#); cf. [Eccl 8:8](#); [Luke 23:46](#); [Acts 7:59](#)). The person remains conscious: the righteous are seen in heaven (“under the altar the souls,” [Rev 6:9](#)), while the wicked are in torment ([Luke 16:22–24](#); [Ps 9:17](#)). Restorations of life depict the spirit returning to the body ([Luke 8:55](#)). The final hope is bodily resurrection and incorruption ([1 Cor 15:42–57](#)), implying reunion of the person’s inner life with a raised body.
- **Evidence-based speculation (“the silver cord”):** [Eccl 12:6–7](#) pictures the life-link whose breaking yields the return of the spirit to God (“silver cord...golden bowl...pitcher...wheel broken”); Scripture does not define the metaphor technically.
- **Clarifications and boundaries:** Scripture does not teach spatial separation of one person’s soul and spirit in different places; it speaks of one unified person with a distinguishable inner life ([Heb 4:12](#); cf. [Luke 1:46–47](#)). In human usage, *ghost* is a death idiom, whereas *spirit* denotes the life-principle or inner-man ([Gen 25:8](#); [Matt 27:50](#); [John 19:30](#); [Eccl 12:7](#); [Luke 24:37–39](#); [Acts 23:8](#)). Attempts to define a *soul* as electrical and a *spirit* as merely intangible lacks biblical support; Scripture instead links *soul/life* with “blood” ([Lev 17:11](#)) and *spirit/life* with “breath/wind” and God’s inbreathed life ([1 Kgs 19:11](#); [John 3:8](#); [20:22](#); [Eccl 12:7](#); [Acts 2:2](#)).

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!



God and The Holy Ghost

- **God:** The God of the Bible is a Spirit ([John 4:24](#)). The Holy Ghost is fully divine ([Acts 5:3–4](#)), the agent of inspiration and new birth ([2 Tim 3:16](#); [2 Pet 1:21](#); [John 3:5–7](#); [Titus 3:5](#)), and the giver of gifts ([1 Cor 12:4–11](#)). He indwells, leads, and bears witness with our spirit ([Rom 8:9, 14, 16](#); [Gal 4:6](#)). In KJV usage, Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit refer to the same divine Person (cf. [Luke 11:13](#) with [Acts 1:8](#); [5:3–4](#)). God also employs the language of “my soul” ([Lev 26:11](#); [Isa 42:1](#); [Jer 32:41](#)), showing Scripture’s use of *soul* with respect to God.



Angels, Unclean Spirits, Spirits in Prison, and Heavenly Animals

- **Holy angels:** Scripture calls them spirits and “ministering spirits” ([Heb 1:7, 14](#)), incorporeal as such (cf. [Luke 24:39](#)), yet able by God’s appointment to act in the physical world: slaying enemies ([2 Kgs 19:35](#)), striking men with blindness ([Gen 19:11](#)), rolling back a stone ([Matt 28:2–4](#)), delivering Peter ([Acts 12:7–10](#)), smiting Herod ([Acts 12:23](#)), executing destroying judgment ([1 Chron 21:15–16](#); cf. [Exod 12:23](#)), shutting lions’ mouths ([Dan 6:22](#)), and strengthening Daniel ([Dan 10:16, 18](#)). Their personhood is evident ([1 Pet 1:12](#); [Luke 15:10](#)).
- **Unclean spirits (devils):** They oppose God, afflict and may possess people, and can indwell human and animal bodies ([Mark 1:23–27](#); [5:1–13](#); [Matt 12:43–45](#)). Their destiny is judgment ([Matt 25:41](#); [2 Pet 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#)). Idolatry is energized by such spirits: sacrifices to idols are sacrifices to devils ([Deut 32:17](#); [Ps 106:37](#); [1 Cor 10:20–21](#)), though “to us there is but one God” ([1 Cor 8:4–6](#)).
- **Spirits in prison:** They are acknowledged in [1 Peter 3:19](#); other passages speak of angels that sinned and are kept for judgment ([2 Pet 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#)).
- **Evidence-based speculation:** The “spirits in prison” ([1 Pet 3:19](#)) most plausibly correspond to those fallen angels “reserved” for judgment ([2 Pet 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#)).
- **Heavenly horses and similar scenes:** The vision of Zechariah identifies horse-and-chariot figures as “the four spirits of the heavens” with horses of red, black, white, grisled and bay ([Zech 6:1–5](#)). Related scenes include horses/chariots of fire ([2 Kgs 2:11](#); [6:17](#)), the white horse ([Rev 19:11](#)), and patrol horses which are red, speckled, and white ([Zech 1:8–10](#)). These appear as spiritual/angelic agents or vehicles, not necessarily as ordinary beasts.



“Ghost” Language and Occult Prohibitions

- **Ghost:** In human contexts *ghost* denotes the event of death (“gave/yielded up the ghost”: [Gen 25:8](#); [Matt 27:50](#); [John 19:30](#); [Acts 5:5, 10](#); [12:23](#)) and is not Scripture’s term for roaming human dead. Instead, the Bible speaks of familiar spirits in occult traffic and strictly forbids consulting them ([Lev 19:31](#); [20:6, 27](#); [Isa 8:19](#)).
- **Evidence-based speculation (Endor):** Familiar-spirit phenomena are best understood as demonic impersonation, with [1 Samuel 28](#) (Saul at Endor) an exceptional God-overruled scene rather than a pattern.



Animals and Creaturely Life

- **Animals:** All animals are called “living creatures” ([Gen 1:20–24](#)). Their breath and life are from God and end by His hand ([Ps 104:29–30](#); cf. [Ps 150:6](#)). Scripture applies *soul* to animals ([Job 12:10](#); [Num 31:28](#); [Ps 74:19](#); [Rev 16:3](#)) and also speaks of their *spirit/breath* ([Gen 6:17](#); [7:15, 22](#); [Job 34:14–15](#); [Ps 104:29–30](#); [Eccl 3:19–21](#); cf. [Num 16:22](#); [27:16](#)). Ecclesiastes contrasts destinies: man’s spirit goes upward; beast’s goes downward ([Eccl 3:21](#)).

Faith without works is dead and works without faith is dead.
([James 2:17](#); [20](#); [26](#); [Matt 7:21–23](#); [15:8–9](#); [Eph 2:8–9](#), etc)

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!

© 2025 Peter D. Arvo | [\(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0\)](#) | Last updated: 11/18/2025 | [TheTorchbearerSeries.com](#)