

THE REINCARNATION FAD

By

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Until modern times the belief in reincarnation was foreign to Western thought and generally considered to be a superstition common to Eastern mysticism. But television has brought the East and all its pagan religion right into our living rooms, and now the doctrine of reincarnation is perhaps the dominant idea presented on TV with regard to human destiny

Last year there was an announcement in *The Jewish Journal* that Rabbi Shlomo Schwartz would deliver a series of lectures on the Kabbala, Jewish mysticism. According to *The Journal*, Rabbi Schwartz says that many people are surprised that Judaism believes in reincarnation and that the Kabbala teaches that most people have been reincarnated and around today for the second time.

This is no surprise to those who have taken note of the many references to reincarnation in novels and TV programs. What is surprising is that many who claim to believe Christ find it easy to accept reincarnation and see no conflict between this doctrine of Hinduism and the doctrine of Christ.

Reincarnation holds that man has an immortal soul that takes up a different bodily form after death. It is based on the belief that man's "self" is without beginning and without end, having neither birth nor death and that man himself can never die but will ultimately reach a state of "oneness" with God, with no sense of his own existence! It is not uncommon to hear people make glib remarks about what they hope to be when they come back in the next life! While this often may be done in jest, the seed of the idea may not only produce irreparable damage to the naïve but is a direct denial of the Gospel and, in fact, the entire purpose of God as revealed in the Bible.

From Genesis to Revelation the theme of the Bible is redemption, that man may be salvaged from his mortal condition in order to have life that is immortal in the image of God.

By rebelling and alienating himself from the Creator, man was subjected to the power of death, the dissolution of the living being (soul) which was produced in creation (Gen. 2:7). The purpose of Christ's entrance into the world was to suffer the penalty of sin and die for man, to redeem him from this condition and from the ultimate and final death.

Reincarnation contradicts the biblical theme at every point. Reincarnation depends upon one dying over and over, each time reappearing in the flesh in a different body. Death is seen as a door through which one enters each time into another realm or form of life! The Scripture teaches that "it is appointed unto man once to die and after this comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Death is seen by Christ and the apostles as the nemesis of the human race, as an enemy, and that the human race all its lifetime is subject to its bondage (Heb. 2:15).

According to Jesus one will either perish or have eternal life (John 3:16). No room here for a perpetual series of deaths and reincarnations. His antidote to death is resurrection. "...I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). He said that one who believes in Him, "though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and

believes in me shall never die” (John 11:26). The original language here is “in no wise shall die forever.” Although he dies, it will not be forever for he shall be resurrected.

God sent Christ into the world to overcome death not only for Himself but for every believer. Those who reject Christ and the solution to death he offers will face judgment and die the second and final death. This is “the wages of sin” and is described as “everlasting punishment.” It is not a continuous or perpetual repetition of actions but a final and inexorable death from which there is no return.

Reincarnation is built upon the philosophy that man has an “immortal soul,” a separable entity which cannot die. One may search the Bible carefully, but he will never find in its pages anything to confirm this doctrine. Man came into being only after God’s work of fusing a body and spirit together to form a “sol” as described in Genesis 2:7. Death is the dissolution of these two, the rendering apart of spirit and body. Man does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul, but not immortal. Immortality is a quality possessed only by the Lord Jesus Christ, “who only has immortality...” (I Tim. 6:13–16). It is to be sought through faith in Christ and to be received at the time of the resurrection and only by the redeemed.

Paul explained, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this corruptible has put on incorruption and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:53–57).

Only the redeemed are promised immortality, and it is yet to be “put on” so that they will never experience death again. This is demonstrated by Christ “who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,” that is, through His death and resurrection (I Tim. 1:10).

In the system of reincarnation it is believed that successive stages of existence are provided that man may improve his moral life to the point of gaining the final goal of a kind of *godhood*. It is the offer of a false hope to be gained by man’s own works, exclusive of the grace of God offered through the redeeming death of Jesus. By contrast, scripture declares that eternal life is not earned by our own works but is given to us by the grace of God on the basis of Christ’s death and our faith. “But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His love towards man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:4–5). Good works are the necessary by-product of redemption but do not in any sense justify us in God’s sight.

There are two striking examples on record to nail down the case against reincarnation. One is the case of Lazarus. He had been dead for four days. When Jesus came upon the scene, Martha confessed her faith in the resurrection “n the last day.” This Jesus did not deny, but reminded her that He is the resurrection and the life. At the tomb He spoke directly to the corpse and called Lazarus back from death. Apparently there had been no reincarnation where Lazarus was concerned, and there is a deafening silence on his part with regard to any kind of life during the four days he was in the grave.

The other example is that of Jesus Himself. He promised that He would rise again after death. Not only did He rise from the grave, but He invited the disciples to handle Him and assure themselves that He was flesh and bones, the same Jesus who had died

(Luke 24:39). They witnessed Him as He bodily ascended to heaven from whence He promised to return in the last day to call all from the tombs. The only hope of “life after death” given by Jesus and in all scripture is life by a resurrection which will not occur until the last day.

Reincarnation is a Vedic superstition inspired by Satan to deceive man and hinder the truth of Christ. God has given us only **ONE** hope, in harmony with His purpose, the hope of resurrection to immortality in His image.

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