

Reincarnation: Is It Compatible with Christianity?



From the philosophical concept of Yin and Yang comes the belief in reincarnation. This belief is common to almost all Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism) as well as Martial Arts.

If a life ends, it must have a new beginning, it is claimed, because we exist in some form forever, until we reach nirvana, or heaven, or some type of eternal bliss where we achieve the goal of reaching immortality as gods. Although there are variations on this theme, virtually all Eastern religions claim this fundamental belief. There are two main streams of this belief. Buddhists believe that after death souls rejoin the "Universal Consciousness" or "World Soul," in much the same way as a drop of rain water falls into the ocean. George Lucas's "Star Wars" films portrayed this belief well. "The Force" is claimed to be available to the "initiated" who may use these mystical powers for good or evil. This is saying that God is an impersonal force and the source of both good and evil.

The Hindus have taught individual reincarnation for millennia. They believe that a person's soul moves from body to body in a birth-death-rebirth cycle. According to the Law of KARMA if you live a good life you will move into a higher life form, while a bad life is punished by going down the scale - so you could come back as a cow or dog or even an insect etc. This is a major reason why Hindus won't eat meat - it might be their grandmother! Karma is a Hindu method of spiritual accounting.

This reasoning says that if you see a person suffering you shouldn't help them as they are paying for sins committed in a previous lifetime. Abortion is perfectly acceptable to reincarnationists because they believe the aborted foetus is simply having his or her entry into personhood rescheduled.

An illustration may help. A husband who beats his wife in this life must return in a subsequent life as a wife who is beaten by her husband. The person who commits a crime must become the victim of the same crime. This requires that someone else must commit this crime, who in the future must also become a victim, and so it goes on and on forever. You can see the Law of Karma actually perpetuates evil, and cannot overcome it. Consider the implications of this belief. If Karma is true, what evil must we face as future reincarnations of butchers such as Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Idi Amin and others return to pay for their crimes in like manner!

Never-ending Cycle

Hindus speak of the "Wheel of Reincarnation." This means that each lifetime is spent working off the Karma of previous lives. Mahatma Gandhi called this "*a burden too great to bear*". Yoga was developed as a means of escaping this endless cycle of death and rebirth. It is claimed that if you reach high enough up this scale you will become God, or a god, or one with the universe, or enter the godhead. This belief is shared by Hindus, New Agers and other groups such as the Mormons and Theosophists.

According to Hindu tradition, at the beginning of the Path of Karma, the three Gunas or "Qualities of Godhead" were in perfect balance in the void - the nothingness from which everything comes and to which it all returns. Apparently something happened to cause an imbalance in this godhead, and the prakriti or manifestation began which brought about the illusion which we experience as the universe today. Confusing, isn't it!

What they are actually teaching is that bad karma actually began with an imbalance of their godhead itself, and so it is built into the very fabric of their universe. This means there is no escape - with or without Yoga - so Karma is a belief of hopelessness.

In more recent times this teaching has come to us in the West in a more subtle form through a number of people. Of particular note are actress Shirley MacLaine, astrologer Jeanne Dixon, mystic Edgar Cayce, songwriter Richard Bach in his hit '*Jonathon Livingston Seagull*,' writers Ruth Montgomery and more recently Elisabeth Kubler-Ross.

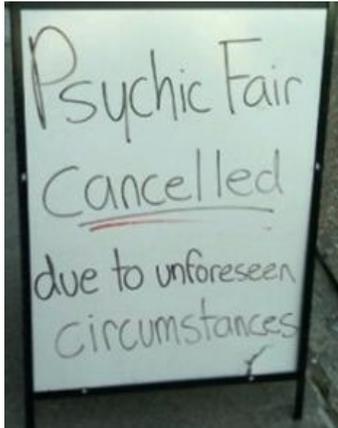
All these people reject the Bible's statements about judgement for sin by God. Aren't they in for a surprise!

These theories have an obvious appeal for many Westerners, for it gives the promise that life goes on and we get as many chances to get it right as we need. If reincarnation did actually happen then man has no compelling reason in this life to make peace with a righteous God, or even to treat his fellow man with any love or respect. Rabi Maharaj, the male members of who's family have been 'gurus' for many generations, says that those supporting reincarnation in the West have got it all wrong - he said reincarnation is a punishment according to Hindu beliefs, not a benefit.

In one group I was speaking with about this subject, a young man asked me an interesting question: "What karma did I work out during my first life, if I have had several?" His question clearly shows the fallacy of the theory of reincarnation, because he wouldn't have a karma to pay off.

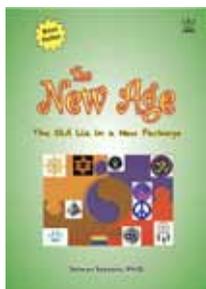
Do we really have Past Lives?

If reincarnation is true, why don't most of us have recollections of those past lives? Very few people even claim to. Those who do were previously involved in some form of psychic activity. If we can't remember mistakes made and lessons learned then I wonder what is the point of living over and over again?

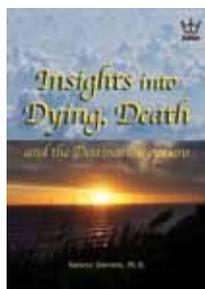


Some have argued that we have subconscious memories of these events which can be revealed through hypnotherapy and which benefit us at an unconscious level. If this were true then human beings both individually and collectively should be living better lives and there should be less evil in the world. Every news report proves that is not true.

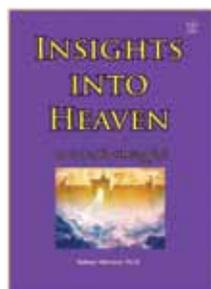
There are even people who try to quote the Bible to support their belief in reincarnation. One of their main references is John 3:3, where Jesus told Nicodemus that to see the Kingdom of God one must first be born again. Jesus was not teaching that a series of rebirths were necessary to achieve perfection. Nicodemus expressed puzzlement and spoke of a second physical rebirth similar to reincarnation, but Jesus promptly corrected him. Jesus did not expound the Law of Karma, He refuted it. Jesus clearly spoke of a spiritual plane and not a physical one.



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"Have nothing to do with the things of darkness, but rather expose them." (Ephesians 5:11)

There are other Scriptures which clearly refute reincarnation. **"It is appointed once for a man to die and after this comes the judgement"**. (Hebrews 9:27) James, the brother of Jesus, wrote **"You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapour which appears for a little while, and then vanishes away"**. (James 4:14)

The Bible clearly teach that life in human form is a temporary state. Theories of preexisting eternally are not supported by the Bible. Reincarnation is a poor and false substitute for the hope of resurrection which all believers in Jesus Christ have. Even if reincarnation were true, the Atonement by Jesus at Calvary makes unnecessary any repeated cycle of rebirth. Jesus also said **"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"**. (John 6:40)

The issue of sin - evil - was dealt with at Calvary. Jesus has already shown the way. This world is full of the tombstones of those who imagined they were important. Buddha, and all the other so-called gods and prophets are still in their graves, but Jesus rose from the dead!

For those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, when they die that part of them which is eternal will go to be with Him. Those who haven't accepted Jesus go to a place of eternal torment. From the point of death no changes are possible.

Reincarnation is a false belief without hope. We will never become gods nor be equal with God. We will not merge with Him. God's promise is that we shall see Him face to face. The distinction between me - a creature - and God my creator will always remain.

"It is appointed once for a man to die and after this comes the judgement".

(Hebrews 9:27)



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