

Straight Talk #29 On Reincarnation

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One of the pivotal beliefs of most New Agers, Theosophists (See note 1), Neo-Pagans and Pagans is the concept of Reincarnation. Where this belief first became grafted onto witchcraft is probably impossible to determine. However, it now seems to be an integral part of the dogma of most Wiccan groups.

Reincarnation is best known for being part of the ancient, Pagan religion of Hinduism, and today, it is also believed by many outside of either formal witchcraft or Hinduism, such as "spiritualists," Theosophists and New Agers. However, in its purest form, it comes to us from the Hindu religion.

Most New Agers do not buy into the entire Hindu package, but only a Westernized version which does not allow for "retrograde" Reincarnation. This classic Hindu version is that if you do evil in your life, you could devolve into a lower form of life in your next incarnation. Thus, a particularly vile man could be "reborn" next time as a rat, or even a bug.

The other part of this idea is that we all began as animals and "worked our way" up through many lifetimes to become higher mammals, such as cows or cats. Then finally we become human. This is what the Hindus believe, but most western New Age believers do not carry it that far.

Thus, most Western believers in Reincarnation take a more positive view, and do not believe that a person can ever be sent back to an animal form, just into a less pleasant form of human life. This is called "Progressive" Reincarnation.

A man who abused his wife might be reborn as a wife married to an abusive husband with no chance of escape. A person who killed or robbed might very well be reborn as an ultimate victim of murder or theft. In this way, the eternal scales of **karma** are kept in balance. Of course the converse is also true. It is believed that a good, noble person will be reborn in a better station next time around.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAD?

The ultimate goal of this concept varies considerably from culture to culture. Some Eastern versions see the goal of this as a gradual move through lives toward perfection. When perfection is arrived at, the person moves off the "*wheel of karma*" altogether and escapes this treadmill-like existence and either merges with the divine (in some versions) or else just sort of melts into the universe as a whole and ceases to really exist at all. In other words, the soul's goal is annihilation.

With most New Agers, there are subtle variations on this theme, designed to better appeal to our culture. Most of these people believe that through your lifetimes you will gradually perfect and ultimately transcend the "earth plane." You will then become

some sort of super-human being or "Master." The term for this sort of being (taken from India) is **Bodhisattva**. Ultimately, many witches believe you can become a god (or goddess)!

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Even within this westernized framework of Reincarnation, there are different nuances. Some reincarnationists are unsatisfied with the rather open-ended quality of just going through an indeterminate number of lives down through the centuries. Thus, they try to systematize the concept by fusing it with another occult system, astrology.

These people believe that you must incarnate at least once in each sign of the zodiac—thus a minimum of twelve lifetimes. However, if you blow it in your "Virgo" lifetime, you'll have to come back and be a Virgo again, until you get the "lessons" of that sign mastered. This somehow seems more manageable to folks. After all, you're only talking a couple of millennia!

A further variation gets into gender. The believer often adds to this equation the idea that you must experience a lifetime in each zodiac sign for each sex!

Thus, you must go around once as a male "Aries" and then once as a female "Aries." This just doubled the requisite number of lifetimes to perfection.

Of course, we cannot be racist; so some politically correct devotees of this concept believe that you must also experience the major racial types as well. Thus you must be a Caucasian, an Asian, etc. Somehow this has gotten rather daunting! We are now talking about at least 24 dozen lifetimes!

Assuming that you go immediately from one death to your next life (*and there is by no means agreement on this!*) and figuring an average of 40 years per life, that means that you're talking over 11,000 years to make it! Even with the basic simple "plan" mentioned first, it would still take at least 1,440 years to perfect yourself. That would mean that someone who was near perfection now would have to have been at it at least since the sixth century AD!

CAN THIS BE DONE?

Before we look at what the Bible says about all this more closely, let us just look at this plan from a point of view of simple common sense. Are there any problems with this program at all? Basically, there are four red flags that go up almost at once:

- 1) The problem of getting rid of your negative karma
- 2) The problem of memory and discipline
- 3) The problem of fatalism

4) Empirical testing

Most people who believe in Reincarnation are so attracted to the romantic elements in it that they often do not bother to think some of these problems through in a rational way. I was this way myself for years while a witch.

I was told fairly early on in my occult career by a medium that I had been a medieval monk who had been walled up alive in his cell for practicing the esoteric arts (i.e. magick). I was so fond of this notion that I actually got an asthma-like panic attack while visiting a nearby monastery! Naturally this was attributed to "past-life memories" of suffocating within my cell!

Since most of these folks have a rather romanticized view of medieval or pre-Christian times, Reincarnation plays right into this world view! The fact that they feel somewhat "out of it" or alienated from their modern culture is explained by the fact that they are resonating to their past lives and are, in fact, quite "old souls." (See note 2) This is much more flattering than admitting that they might just be maladjusted or immature.

So let's step back and look at these issues objectively and see if the doctrine of Reincarnation will stand up to close scrutiny.

Negative Karma

This is probably the thorniest problem in the batch. Since New Agers or other Pagans do not like to deal with the problem of sin, they need to confront the issue of what is to be done with negative or "bad" karma. Basically, bad karma is just another word for sin, although the key difference is that in reincarnation, your own "higher self" judges your everyday self, rather than having some exterior being like a Creator judge you. Thus, bad karma is anything that is contrary to your "evolutionary path."

For most of these people, evil is not a concept they wish to accept. Thus, they come up with other euphemistic terms for people who are doing evil things. They may be "de-evolutionary" or "young souls" or full of "malicious animal magnetism." What they are doing, be it child abuse or genocide, is *never bad*, it is "contrary to evolution" or the ever-popular "inappropriate."

This is, of course, because the devil does not like to draw attention to himself. He would rather folks believe him to be a mythic figure. If there is truly EVIL out there, then perhaps Satan is real as well. This is why there is usually no place for Satan in this paradigm.

Since New Agers and Theosophists, etc. all believe that there is not really any objective standard of right or wrong, (remember, "*We all have our own truth!*") a key point is that only YOU can judge if you have done something wrong.

So what is the fallacy in how these people deal with their bad karma? Let us examine this

in detail. Granting that the general concept of progressive Reincarnation is valid for a moment, let's look at how bad karma is dealt with. Progressive Reincarnation assumes that you start in your first human life as rather a low-life—an “entry-level” human being. Let us follow our reincarnation poster boy and see how he does. Let us call him Festus.

Let's say Festus' first lifetime is as a bandit in some indeterminate land before the time of the Roman Empire. Festus is a “young soul,” and totally “un-evolved.” He is running around raping and pillaging—building up scads of negative karma. Festus finally gets killed at the ripe old age of 30 and dies (oops, *transitions* - no one ever really dies in reincarnation).

Let's say Festus is reborn a notch higher on the moral scale next time around. However, **he has all this negative karma** built up from before. Let's say that instead of being a bandit, he is the wife of a shepherd. To help work off her bad karma, Festus' (now Festina?) husband gets beaten to a pulp by bandits. He's totally paralyzed and Festina has to support him by working in the sheep meadows while trying to raise five screaming kids.

Being a typical karmic low-life—still a relatively “young soul”, Festina (Festus) responds by getting furious and spends the rest of her life a bitter woman; building up still more bad karma like a festering sore and kicking her kids and sheep and cursing the gods until her lips fall off. Now you've got *two lifetimes'* worth of bad karma! You see where this is going?

The Need for "Harmlessness"

Rather than carry this dreary little example any further, let us cut to the chase. The bottom line for karma is another Sanskrit term, *Ahimsa*. Ahimsa is the Reincarnationist's only hope! It translates freely as “karma-free” or as “harmlessness.” The key thing that you must practice harmlessness.

What exactly does this mean? It means getting through your entire life without harming *anyone or anything!* (Remember, many reincarnationists are pantheists, which means that plants and animals are just as deserving of respect as people) Can this be done? What does it entail?

Well, let us look at a Reincarnationist sect in India, the Jains. Jain monks try their level best to practice ahimsa. Wherever they walk, they carry a little broom and sweep the ground in front of them, lest they step on an ant. Of course, in sweeping the ant aside, they could terrify it or damage its legs, but this is the chance you have to take when you're dealing with karma.

These monks wear little white masks over their mouths like surgical masks, lest they breathe in a germ and injure it. They are (needless to say) the strictest of vegetarians, living only on nuts and fruits. This is because such food items are, they say, freely given by their trees and bushes and thus can be received freely. When they

bathe, which is as seldom as possible, they move very slowly and delicately in their bath water to avoid accidentally damaging one of the millions of microscopic organisms that live in water.

Since they will not kill insects, those who are wealthy enough pay a servant to spend an hour in their bed and draw all of the "bedbugs" to their own bodies so that the bed is relatively free of critters by the time they finally take over for the night.

Now obviously, this sort of life sounds utterly absurd to most of us; although we must grudgingly admire these folks' consistency. If anyone is going to make it in the karma game, they are! But you see, even with these monks, there can be no guarantees. These poor people spend their lives in terror of accidentally damaging something.

Even if they make it all the way to the end of their life without ever damaging anything (which is impossible, since the human body automatically attacks and kills germs and microbes by the millions every day with its immune system), that can only guarantee *that one lifetime*. There is still karma from earlier lifetimes to deal with. Remember, all of these monks were once like our poor friend, Festus. They were once young souls who spent many lifetimes killing and cursing and terrorizing people.

It would be like spending money on a credit card every month for years and being borrowed up to the maximum, and then finally getting to a month where you actually didn't spend a cent on credit! It would be good, except you'd still have the hundreds of months' past debt to pay off. *How would you ever do it?*

I can tell you, in all my years I never knew a New Ager or Witch who came close to living the kind of "harmless" life it would take to improve. Yet if those people don't live like the Jains, they are going to just keep digging themselves a deeper hole of bad karma from life to life.

Honestly, friends, can this be done? If you're thinking this through, you'll admit it cannot! No one has ever lived a perfect life (except Yah'shua - Yah'shua) much less the dozens of perfect lives it would take to get off the "wheel of karma."

The Problem of Memory and Discipline

This won't take nearly so long to deal with, although it also entails a logical absurdity. There is a central question that the Reincarnationist must answer: If we all lived before, why do we not remember our prior lives? There are various mystical answers to this, but they all boil down to the doctrine that in going through the death/re-birth process wipes out our memories of past lives. Some call this "The Veil of Forgetfulness."

It is only through occult mediumship or meditation (both demanding practices which can take years to achieve) that one can supposedly learn about one's past

lives—just like in my personal case, I had a prominent medium (or channeller) tell me a couple of my past lives, which she allegedly discerned through reading the *akashic* records. (See note 3)

However, it must be granted by even the most diligent students of Reincarnation that the vast majority of people live or die without knowing or caring whether they had previous lives. What is the result of this?

Most people stumble through life without having any idea what they are supposed to be learning or "paying back." *Is this sensible?* How can we learn *if we are never told our mistakes?* It would be like taking a test and never learning our grade, and yet being expected to do better next time around.

A more mundane example shows the fallacy here. Suppose you have a dog, and the dog makes a mess on the living room rug. Now suppose that you let good old Fido go his merry way for a couple of weeks, and then one day go up to him and smack him smartly on the nose with a rolled up newspaper and say "*BAD DOG!*"

Is Fido going to know the crime for which he is being punished? Of course not. He is going to be bewildered and hurt and utterly mystified as to why his master is chastising him. Even the simplest book on dog obedience makes it clear that you must punish immediately and confront the dog with his peccadillo clearly and firmly. Yet we are asked to believe *that the awesome universal force of karma doesn't have the good sense of a dog trainer.*

The human being "punished" by misfortune for a past life he doesn't remember is just as bewildered or mystified as Fido. Unless he happens to be one of the select few who are educated or wealthy enough to study up on karma and past life regression or go to a medium for a reading, he will go through his entire life in this moral stupor—utterly unable to make sense of the cruel blows life seems to be dealing him.

Often, Christians and other non-believers in Reincarnation are accused of being "de-evolutionary" because we foster ignorance of the doctrine. Many psychics have taught that ignorance of Reincarnation is de-evolutionary and is a hindrance to spiritual growth. But this raises another paradox.

If it is contrary to the cosmic laws of growth to be ignorant of Reincarnation, why does the cosmos (or whatever) make the person forget about Reincarnation when they are born? This makes no sense at all. It is as if the "gods" or whatever are playing cruel tricks on people. They are deliberately withholding from him the very knowledge he needs most to mature.

Such a person has no way of knowing what, if anything he needs to do to make the pain and punishment stop! Is this justice? Is this good disciplinary practice? Sadly, the answer is no. If a parent treated their child in this fashion, we would call them fiendish or at best, stupid. Yet this is what we are asked to believe is the way the all-wise universe works. It is nonsense!

The Problem of Fatalism

As cruel as the last dilemma would appear, this one is even more demanding. The logical end of karma would be the ultimate version of the *Que sera, sera!* attitude—whatever will be will be. There is a striking scene in leading Reincarnationist/New Age spokesperson Shirley MacLaine's book and miniseries, *Out on a Limb*. In the Andes Mountains, Shirley and her "guru" or mentor in New Age paganism encountered an accident in which a busload of school children have gone over a steep cliff and been smashed to bits on the rocks below.

Shirley, naturally, expresses dismay at this tragedy and her guru gently chides her for her un-evolved attitude. All of those children *wanted to die—needed to die*, he explains. They all had "higher selves" which knew best and which knew that it was good for their karma to be smashed to pieces at such a tender age. Besides, he smiles; there really is no death—only *transitions*.

Thus whatever happens to a person is intended to happen to them by either the blind machinery of karma or else on their own "higher self." This has led to some of ***the most wretched conditions in the world*** in the nation that has had the longest commitment to reincarnation, **India**.

If you see a beggar wallowing in the gutter in Calcutta, don't you *dare* help him! He is working out karma and if you take him in and give him a hot meal, new clothes and a good job; he will just have to come back in another lifetime and be a beggar all over again. It is better that he gets it over with!

This is why the idea of charity or kindness is so foreign to India, and why there were no hospitals, orphanages or charitable institutions there until the advent of Christianity and the coming of Christian missionaries.

Might this be why there are no witch hospitals or orphanages? Is this because at the heart of their Reincarnationist beliefs is the idea of fatalism? That whatever is, is—and there is not a blessed thing you can or should do about it!

This all sounds bad enough in the abstract, but let's apply this monstrous doctrine to our own lives. Suppose Mr. Witch comes home after a hard day at the occult bookstore and finds his dear wife, Mrs. Witch, being raped by a hoodlum. If he stops the attack, he is interfering with his wife's higher self.

She has decreed for herself that this day she will be humiliated and abused, and if her husband pulls the crook off her, she will just have to go through it again—plus she will have incurred the further negative karma of having injured the poor rapist, who was, after all only obeying both her higher self and his higher self—since higher selves always move in concord. The "universe" can never fight with itself.

The higher selves of all those Jews might have brought Hitler into being! Perhaps we

messed up the karma of Europe by interfering. Perhaps the thousands who died on 9/11 really were just working off some bad karma. They *wanted* to be blown to atoms by a jumbo jet or two!

The logical end of the doctrine of karma is that one should never interfere in anything—indeed, never do anything. In fact, in the eastern countries from which this doctrine springs, the holiest men are those who *literally do nothing*—the gurus and holy men who sit in “lotus” pose for weeks in their own filth and watch the weeds grow up around their legs! Is this really a sane belief? I think not!

Now by this time, perhaps our friends who are reading this and are sincere believers in Reincarnation are saying: “That might be true of India and their approach, but that is not what I believe!” That might be true, but does it change the reality.

Isn't this an essential part of the whole Reincarnationist process? Aren't the unmanageable mountains of bad karma and the fatalism all integral parts of the whole concept? *How can you honestly have Reincarnation without them?* You may not believe in this kind of severity and fatalism, but are you being internally consistent and honest with yourself if you deny these elements?

Aren't you just picking the parts of it that appeal to you and discarding the parts that offend you—or seem impossible to you? Can you do that and be true to both logic and history? Are you being a “shopping mall New Ager?” I tried, and I finally had to admit that the whole system is an organic whole. It would be like saying, “I want a human body, but leave off the armpits because I don't like them.”

You'd have a pretty silly body without armpits, and you'd have torn out the very warp and woof of Reincarnation by denying the doctrines of Ahimsa and fatalism. You're stuck with them, unless you want to try something better!

Empirical Testing

Finally, we have the problem of whether this belief has any concrete physical proof. If we are going to hold such a strange and illogical doctrine, we had better have some solid, empirical proof for it. This proof could come in two forms:

- 1) Actual testimonies of people who remember past lives and can validate those memories; OR
- 2) Anthropological evidence that the world is indeed "evolving."

Of course, there are books full of supposed testimonies of people who claim to have remembered past lives. The Bridey Murphy story is probably the earliest and best known in this country (the musical, ON A CLEAR DAY YOU CAN SEE FOREVER was based on Bridey Murphy).

Some of these accounts are quite extra-ordinary. Perhaps the classic work in this field,

TWENTY CASES SUGGESTIVE OF REINCARNATION (See note 4) has 20 such case studies of people who have apparent memories of existences in previous lifetimes in locales foreign to their current environment. These memories are often amazingly accurate and there does not seem to be any way in which the person could have acquired the information that they possess except by having actually lived the past life.

However, a true scientific and empirical experiment must eliminate all other variables except the control. Even the quite scholarly author of the above mentioned book, Dr. Ian Stevenson, admits that he has not been able to do this. There is one other place these persons could have acquired this information—from **demon spirits** who have existed for thousands of years. He admits that this is a viable alternative theory to explain these memories. (See note 5)

Now in true scientific method, if such a variable cannot be tested for, controlled or otherwise ruled out, *then the experimental data is totally invalid*. This is just common practice in any sort of science! Therefore, these memories, however impressive, cannot be considered solid, empirical proof of Reincarnation. Since the possibility of demonic input of memories cannot be eliminated conclusively, we shall have to look elsewhere for evidence.

As far as looking at the worldwide anthropological data, there is even *less* support for reincarnation as a viable hypothesis. There are a couple of serious problems here. First, there is the fact that the world population is continually growing at a geometric pace. If we are all being recycled, where are all the new babies coming from?

Say for example that there were around 100 million people in the world in the time of Christ; and today there are six billion! That is sixty times more people. How did the 60 people today emerge from the one corresponding soul of a couple of millennia ago?

Now there are two answers to this that the Reincarnationists give, but both do some violence to the system of belief. Some say that the “gods” or the cosmos or whatever is constantly creating new spirits. However, that does not set too well with the pantheistic world-view of witchcraft or Paganism. If there is no transcendent Deity “out there” apart from us, who is doing the creating of new souls? See, there is no Who, there is only a “what.”

In other words, pantheism is, by definition, a closed system. There can be no deity "outside" of it, or else it would be theism (See note 6) and take a giant step toward Biblical belief. Pantheism presupposes a cyclical birth-death-rebirth circle that cannot be broken into by an outside force.

The other theory to explain population growth moves into science fiction by proposing that **the rebirth “pool” is interplanetary or even interstellar!** Thus, as our planet grows in population, souls from Venus or Mars planet-hop over to us as those worlds die out and ours flourishes. This makes a certain strange kind of sense; if it weren't for the more serious anthropological argument against reincarnation we will now look at.

If Reincarnation were true, and we all evolving gradually through many lifetimes, then the logical thing to look for would be a demonstrable improvement in human nature over the centuries. Are we seeing this?

What a Wonderful Century!

Humanists were very hopeful about this around the turn of the twentieth century. Progress in science and technology was pressing forward and war seemed about to be eliminated. However, the past hundred years have been an ugly reminder of how nasty (dare I say sinful) human beings are.

We have had two world wars of unparalleled destruction; the genocides of Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot; the enslavement of billions of people under communism in a fashion that would put the Roman emperors to shame. A case could be made for the last century being one of the **worst** centuries in recorded history.

On top of that, dare I remind the reader that since 9/11 we have seen an even greater increase in barbarism all over the world. People are being horribly murdered (both for their faith in Christ and other reasons) by the hundreds of thousands every year. If we are so “evolved” why are we fighting wars with ever more dreadful weapons of destruction?

Actually, war in the Middle Ages in Europe was more civilized. There were certain days upon which you couldn't fight (like Sunday and holidays); and there were certain people who were considered protected (non-combatants like children and women). Today, with terrorism, babies and women and blown up wholesale. All we have done is become more indiscriminate and efficient in our war.

Can anyone say that our cities are more evolved today than they were fifty years ago? Of course not! The sad truth is that there is really no evidence that we are perfecting in anyway, except perhaps in the technological arena. Even there, SIN enters the arena.

We split the atom and promptly use it to blow up two Japanese cities. We create amazing computers and the Internet, and before long, viruses and worms are showing up in software maliciously destroying data and productivity. We have amazing medical breakthroughs, and more people are sick today than ever! We have immensely productive farms and yet people all over the world are starving by the millions.

If this is Reincarnation's salvation, it is a particularly lamentable jest.

A REALITY CHECK!

We have mentioned the country that is the cradle of Reincarnation, India. Surely, with all the gurus and holy men; and the hallowed traditions of thousands of years of effort to achieve *ahimsa*, India should be the most wonderful and evolved country on earth. Empirically, it should be a veritable textbook case of human progress and spirituality.

Um, no!

Anyone with even a passing acquaintance with India's history and current condition knows that such is the farthest thing from reality! India is probably one of the world's most woeful nations. Though it has almost as much fertile land as America, large portions of its people starve and live in utter poverty. Its caste system (rooted in reincarnation) has led to centuries of bloodshed and bigotry.

Recently, the prime minister of India was cut down in a religious war between two rival reincarnationist sects! India now has thermonuclear weapons and (as of this writing) narrowly avoided a genocidal and possibly nuclear war with its neighbor Pakistan. The Hindus are fighting the Muslims and the Sikhs are fighting the Hindus and on and on it goes. If India were any more "enlightened," it would be a seething mass of radioactive slag!

The streets of India's cities are awash with human and cattle waste products and lined with starving beggars! Cows and rats eat their fill while humans starve because the animals are considered sacred in Hindu theology! If India were an advertisement for Reincarnation, it wouldn't earn many converts.

So, we must ask, where is the empirical **proof** for Reincarnation? There appears to be precious little, either in the world at large, or in its most solid doctrinal citadel, India.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Having looked at Reincarnation from a secular, logical point of view and found it wanting; let us now look at what another important source of information has to say—the Holy Bible. In my pilgrimage through the various forms of paganism, I finally came to the conclusion that I needed something *solid* to trust in. Although I had been told by my teachers in the occult all sorts of things about the Bible (lots of them derogatory (See note 7)) —when I went and checked them out for myself I found that they were not telling the truth.

I found that the Bible has a much better track record than any of the occult or mystical authors in whom I had put my trust. A thorough defense of the Bible is beyond the scope of this book, but suffice it to say that in my personal case, after reading literally hundreds of books on magic and esoteric philosophy; I finally found that **only the Bible** had real, solid answers to my ultimate questions! Every other author's work seemed to dissolve into a kind of bland, metaphysical nonsense when compared with the Bible.

So what does this Bible offer as its opinion on Reincarnation? And what concept of the afterlife does it actually teach?

First of all, the Bible clearly teaches that we have but one life in which to live. **Hebrews 9:27** says *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* That sounds pretty straightforward to me.

Yah'shua the Messiah (*Jesus Christ in Hebrew, His native tongue*), Who is often mentioned by witches and New Agers as a man with many past lives in which He prepared Himself for His important work is actually said in Bible teaching to have incarnated only once (Hebrews 9:25-28). Not only that, but Yah'shua will never have to die again!

Knowing that Christ being raised front the dead dieth no more; death bath no more dominion over him.— Rom. 6:9

Also, the key concept behind Reincarnation—that we can somehow perfect ourselves through our own effort—is **vigorously** denied by the Bible. The Bible teaches that

For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." — Ephesians 2:8-9.

Elsewhere, the same inspired writer, Paul, says, "*By the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh [no person] justified...*" — **Romans 3:20**.

Deeds of the law or Torah are basically good deeds, works that would be considered "good karma" in the Reincarnationist view. Nor is this just the view of the New Testament. Even in the Tenakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, or Old Testament, we are taught by the prophet Isaiah that

...we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." —Isaiah 64:6.

Note another important factor here, though. The above passage from Ephesians also teaches that salvation is a "*gift of God.*" Do you have to pay for a gift? Of course not! This tells us that God's gift of eternal life is free of charge, we do not have to earn it. **Romans 6:23** says, "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Doesn't that sound a whole lot easier than spending dozens of lifetimes on the not-so-merry-go-round of karma, trying to keep from stepping on a bug? Ironically, the very principle of *ahimsa* that we have mentioned is quite similar to the Torah in that it presents an almost impossible system of rules to keep that basically ends up confronting the person with their own inability to make it themselves. However, in the Torah at least there was provision for mercy and cleansing before YHWH. There is no such provision in the merciless engine of karma.

Since the Almighty is perfectly willing to give this gift of eternal life to anyone who asks for it from Him in the name of His Son, Yah'shua, it pretty well shoots down in flames the whole complicated works-system of karma and reincarnation.

The Penitent Thief

There is another important passage where our Master would have had a chance to

explain reincarnation as a vital spiritual truth if it really was true. That was the situation on the cross when the “good thief” approached Yah’shua while both were on the cross.

And he [the thief] said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. —Luke 23:42

Now this is a pretty critical text in our study. He was a man who was, evidently, a real criminal. Whatever he had done, it was bad enough for the Romans to give him the ultimate form of capital punishment they used. He must have been quite a scoundrel. This would be just the sort of person who would benefit from reincarnation.

But when he called Yah’shua “Lord” and asked for mercy, Yah’shua did not say, “Fear not, my son. When you die, it is not the end. You will be born again and have a chance to pay back your karmic debt. The universe will give you an opportunity to perfect yourself and join me in enlightened bliss.”

No, Yah’shua just simply told the thief that **just because of his one simple act of faith, all of his karma (sins) was done away with and he would get to join the Lord in paradise that very day.** Surely, if reincarnation were true, this would have been a perfect opportunity for Yah’shua to proclaim it. Yet He said nothing about this possibility.

A Solution for the Rich Man?

Another Bible passage in the New Testament that seems to pretty well put the final nail in the coffin of the "Yah’shua taught reincarnation" argument is found in **Luke 16**. This is the famous story of the rich man and Lazarus. Note that Yah’shua does *not* say that this is a parable, and unlike all of the parables He shared elsewhere, this story **names the name** of one of the two characters.

This story is so familiar, it hardly bears repeating. However, the key point is that when the rich man dies, he goes to eternal torment. Yah’shua does not offer any hope that he might be released from where he was at any time by being reincarnated. Our Master ends the story with Mr. Moneybags stuck in hell. This is important also, because this whole account would be a classic conflict for reincarnation to resolve. As mentioned above, the rich man would have to come back in another lifetime as a beggar to work off his bad karma from abusing the unfortunate Lazarus in this life. But Yah’shua does not mention that option. Surely, if He believed in reincarnation, our Master would have said: “But do not worry, soon you will be back on earth in another life to amend this sin and work off your karmic debt.” It would be a nice solution of the rich man.

Even though this tale would have been the perfect opportunity for Him to give a discourse on reincarnation, Yah’shua makes it very clear that once you die, there are no second chances. How does the Reincarnationist answer that? There really is no answer.

“But the Bible Says...”

Some Reincarnationists will cite a handful of Bible verses that they claim either prove or at least hint at Reincarnation. The most obvious one is John 3, arguably the most famous passage in the New Testament. There Yah’shua says, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* (vs. 3) They claim the Master was alluding to the necessity of being born over and over (many times) in order to achieve the kingdom. At face value, this might be the case, although Yah’shua does *NOT* say you have to be born again and again, etc.

If you read carefully, in the context of the discussion Yah’shua is having, it does not seem a likely way to interpret the account. Nicodemus (the Pharisee Yah’shua is teaching here) interprets his remarks in a highly literal way...

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?— John 3:4

Now, reincarnation was known of in the days of Yah’shua in the Middle East. There had been Greeks who taught it and Greek civilization had had a profound influence on Jewish thinkers. Nicodemus, as a well-educated man, would doubtless have heard about the idea of reincarnation. If he had understood the Lord to have been talking about reincarnation, surely he would have asked for clarification. He did not do this. In response to this question, Yah’shua does elaborate:

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.— John 3:5

Most Bible scholars agree that the being "born of water" is a reference to physical birth and the "bag of waters" bursting before an infant emerges from its mother's womb. (See note 8) Obviously, if Yah’shua discerned that Nicodemus was missing the point, He could have been more clear and acknowledged that He was, in fact, talking about reincarnation.

Further on in the next verse appears which would seem to indicate that Yah’shua is NOT talking about being physically born a second time. He says:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. — John 3:6

Again, these are two radically different births. One is of the flesh in the usual manner. One is in the Spirit and takes place supernaturally. Reincarnation involves physical rebirth, not spiritual rebirth. This pretty well rules this out as a pro-reincarnation passage.

We need to also remember an important principle of Biblical hermeneutics which most of these Pagans and Theosophists do not understand. You should never interpret an obscure (i.e. hard to understand) passage in contradiction to a **clear** passage. In the light of the multiple plain passages cited above, it would be a grave mistake to assume that the "born again" references above mean something other

than was historic Christianity teaches that they mean.

The “John the Baptist” Argument

Another passage commonly cited as a proof-text for reincarnation is in **Matt. 11**. The idea here is that Yah’shua is teaching that John is a reincarnation of Elias (Elijah).

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. — Matt. 11:11-14

A similar idea is promoted from **Matthew 17**:

And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. — Matt. 17:10-12

Here again, it sounds like John the Baptist (the evident subject of this discourse) is actually Elijah reincarnated. At face value, it does seem as though the Reincarnationist people have a point with these verses.

But, the beauty of the Bible is that it is **a self-interpreting Book**, if you pay attention and let it "do its thing." Both the Old and New Testaments have an explanation for this problem, if you study it through. First, there is the angel's prophecy to John's father:

And he [John the Baptist] shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. —Luke 1:17

Note that this says that John will go before Yah’shua “in the spirit and power of Elias.” It does not say that he will BE Elijah. This is virtually a direct quote from the prophet Malachi at the end of the Tenakh:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. — Mal. 4:5-6

Then there is the tiny fact that John himself categorically denies being Elias (reincarnated or otherwise).

*And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, **I am not.** Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. — John 1:21*

Then, finally there is the fact that if Elijah reincarnated as John; **then how could Elijah (NOT John) have shown up with Yah'shua on the Mount of Transfiguration? John the Baptist had been executed by Herod at this time.** So why didn't he show up next to Yah'shua in his most "recent" body instead of Elijah?

This brings up the other question, *how* could Elijah reincarnate, when he never died (at least not yet (See note 9)) and was taken **bodily** to heaven in a fiery chariot? If he was bodily translated into heaven (a sort of rapture), then he could not assume a new body. He still had his "Elijah body." What did he do, leave it in a closet somewhere in a corner of heaven and come down to earth to be John the Baptist and then come back to heaven and pick it up later after he was beheaded? It is neither logical nor Biblical.

The Problem of the Man Born Blind

The other verse that is often cited as a proof-text for reincarnation is the man who was born blind in John's gospel. This is a long passage, but here is the salient point:

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. —John 9: 1- 3

Now again, at face value, this verse *does* seem to imply that the disciples thought it was a possibility that the man had somehow sinned before his birth and that is why he was stricken with blindness. This may well have been the case. Obviously, an infant in the womb cannot sin, so the only other possible meaning would have been that the fellow had sinned before he had been conceived, in a previous lifetime.

But notice that Yah'shua *does not in any way agree with their premises.* He just proposes an alternate reason for the man's affliction. Now, admittedly, this is an argument from silence. But Yah'shua never agrees with the disciples' premise in any way. He just proceeds past it to make his point. No reasonable person can take this as an example of Yah'shua teaching reincarnation. He does not address the issue. Surely, so important a spiritual concept would have been broached at this time, if Yah'shua felt it was true and necessary to be taught. Again, this passage proves nothing.

So if we look at the Bible "scorecard," here is how it shakes out. These are the passages that clearly teach that there is no reincarnation:

- 1.) **Hebrews 9:27** says we only die once.
- 2.) **Romans 6:23** says salvation is a free gift; therefore it cannot be earned through reincarnation or any other method.

3.) **Ephesians 2:8-9** also says salvation is a gift of God, and says that it is not "of works." Doing good deeds in one life to achieve a better life next time would definitely be works.

4.) **Romans 3:20** plainly says, "By the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh [no person] justified." Obviously, the works system of reincarnation is wrong according to Paul.

5.) Yah'shua adamantly does NOT teach reincarnation as a solution to the rich man's dilemma in **Luke 16**.

6.) In **Luke 23:42**, Yah'shua does not offer reincarnation as a chance for the good thief to escape his just desserts.

7.) **Isaiah 64:6** says that all the things we can possibly do that are good are as filthy rags (literally *menstruous* rags — a powerfully negative image for the Hebrew people) before God. Doesn't sound like those good works impress the Lord very much at all, so they probably wouldn't help you escape the wheel of karma.

In terms of allegedly "pro" reincarnation verses, there are not very many —and none are conclusive.

1.) The John the Baptist verses do not stand up to very careful scrutiny, when viewed in the overall context.

2.) The "born again" texts in **John 3** also are pretty soft, when read in context and understanding what a Pharisee like Nicodemus would have known when he asked Yah'shua the question. Also, there is Yah'shua's response in **John 3:6** about the difference between being born physically vs. being born spiritually. This argues against reincarnation.

3.) That only leaves the "man born blind" in **John 9**. Admittedly, it does suggest reincarnation as a possible answer, but even here it is not conclusive — especially when you stack up the 8 or more verses which teach clearly and contrary against reincarnation

Was the Bible Censored?

When confronted with overwhelming Biblical evidence of reincarnation being false, its defenders invariably protest: "But the Bible was censored by the church to remove reincarnation texts." They also sometimes trot out the old canard about the early church teaching reincarnation and then having the doctrine condemned and censored out of the Holy Scriptures.

Let us deal with the first objection. That might be true if the Bible were a human book, *but it is not. It is a divine book.* It is God's Book and He has His hands on it, protecting it. While

there is not time here for a thoroughgoing examination of the inerrancy of scripture, (See note 10) a couple of thoughts need to be considered.

First of all, history bears out that the Bible (both Testaments) is the best attested of all ancient manuscripts (abbreviated mss.). (See note 11) There are thousands of New Testament mss. that can be examined by anyone who cares to take the time and can read Greek. All of them are in perfect agreement. (See note 12) Nowhere in any of these texts is reincarnation taught. Nor is it taught in either the Massoretic Text (Old Testament Hebrew) or the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Yes, there are certain apocryphal writings (such as the Gospel of Thomas) that were never accepted as part of the Canon of Scripture by the Congregation of Yah at large. These turned up in the Nag Hammadi discoveries in Egypt. However, even these do not teach reincarnation in any clear sort of way.

Also, careful studies of the early church fathers (post-apostolic and before the council of Nicea) fail to turn up any evidence of *anyone* teaching reincarnation. Beyond this, there is the logical fallacy in having a Creator who would:

- 1.) Give humanity His revealed word
- 2.) Promise repeatedly that His word could not be changed or tampered with in any way;
- 3.) Then turn around and allow men to censor and edit out things from the books of the Bible as they wished.

What sort of an insane Deity would do such a series of actions? If YHWH is, by definition, all-powerful, and He promised to preserve His Word, then what human being could possibly mess with His Word? That would make those men more powerful than Him, a logical and Biblical impossibility.

The other objection is concerning the supposed condemnation of the doctrine of reincarnation at the Council of Carthage and the subsequent censoring of the Bible. This story is repeated *ad nauseam* throughout occult writings. The problem is, it is not true. I have searched the records of this church council, and have only found a condemnation of Origen's teachings on **pre-existence**.

Pre-existence is a considerably different doctrine than reincarnation. It teaches that we existed in heaven as spirits for an indeterminate amount of time before coming down here and taking human form. The most well known pseudo-Christian group that teaches this today is the Mormon (LDS) church. It is a cornerstone of their theology of salvation. However, as can be readily seen, it is not the same doctrine as reincarnation. The latter belief does not have us lounging around heaven for millennia waiting for the right baby to come along and incarnate in. As has already been explained, reincarnation teaching something quite different. Therefore the teaching that this church council condemned reincarnation is false.

Can it Really be True?

But the question will doubtless come up, "How can we determine if this is really the true answer? What makes Biblical salvation anymore believable than reincarnation?" Well, the answer is: the fact that Yah'shua the Messiah, the source of our salvation, rose from the dead to demonstrate His power to save us.

You see, you cannot believe in both the concepts of Resurrection and Reincarnation at the same time, although some New Age groups try. (See note 13) The Christian doctrine of the Resurrection teaches that because of Yah'shua's bodily Resurrection from the grave, all the dead will one day rise from the dead with "resurrection bodies." Those made righteous by Yah'shua's sacrifice on the cross will rise with *glorified* bodies of incredible beauty and power. Those who reject Yah'shua will have to wait about a thousand years and then will rise in resurrected bodies which will not be any picnic to live in—especially since those bodies will be confined to the lake of fire.

Now if after death you keep being reborn in different bodies, how are you going to shoehorn a resurrection in there? And if you did, which of the hundreds of bodies would you have as a resurrected being? Would you be male or female?

Now of course most witches and other Pagans have been led to believe that the Resurrection of Yah'shua is just a myth. This is what I was taught as a witch. Some witches say that Yah'shua did rise, but it was just another version of the ancient Pagan "slain and risen god" archetype, like Osiris or Attis.

The only problem with that concept is that Yah'shua is more than a myth, and His Resurrection is much more than a myth! It is testified to by at least four eyewitnesses directly in the New Testament; John, Matthew, Peter, and Paul—all of whom testified of seeing the Risen Lord! *On top of that, over 500 persons (1 Corinthians 15:6), including the other eight apostles, Mary Magdalene, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus saw Yah'shua after His Resurrection!*

Now that is quite a lot of witnesses! It is more than enough to convict someone of murder! If you had a trial and four eyewitnesses testified of seeing you murder someone, plus over 500 second hand accounts—you'd be on death row! Please understand that there is no such evidence to support the supposed resurrection of Osiris. These various "god" stories happened in a mythic setting. Yah'shua' life, death, and resurrection happened in a real place and time. His tomb is empty today! You can go see it!

As Josh McDowell (See note 14) and other writers have pointed out, the dramatic change in the disciples of Yah'shua before and after His resurrection is pretty solid proof that the Lord really rose from the dead. Peter and the others went from being cringing cowards into being bold as lions – overnight! It is hard to explain that sort of transformation if the resurrection was faked.

Few people will die for something they know is a fraud. Yet Peter, Paul and the others demonstrated an incredible courage in the face of both Jewish and Roman opposition. All but John were martyred, often horribly, for testifying of Yah'shua's resurrection. Within a century of the resurrection, Christianity had almost completely transformed the Roman Empire. How can that be explained in the light of fraud?

The tombs of the great exponents of Reincarnation are filled with rotteness and bones—Gautama or Bodhiharma—all are dust. But Yah'shua is still alive today! There is a tremendous body of evidence to prove the reality of His Resurrection, and it would be beyond the scope of this book to get further into that issue. (See note 15) The bottom line is that there is valid, physical evidence to believe in what Yah'shua has to offer you; whereas all these mystical systems *can* offer to you is metaphysical twaddle.

Besides, isn't the prospect of living in resurrected glory with Yah'shua more appealing than spending a few more hundred lifetimes running around the wheel of karma like a gerbil? He makes it so easy for you. All you have to do is lay aside your pride and your belief in all those Pagan gods and admit that they cannot save you. Ask Yah'shua to forgive your sins and save you from hell and to be the Lord of your life. **(Romans 10:9-13)** He is real, and will be delighted to meet you right where you are!

ENDNOTES

1.) Theosophy is one of the oldest "New Age" religions, started by Madame Helena Blavatsky in the late 19th century. It has had an enormous influence, especially in bringing Hindu beliefs to the West.

2.) In most of these belief systems, an "old soul" is one who has been through many, many lifetimes and has existed since back in the days of Atlantis or something similar. It is believed that these old souls are very evolved spiritually and are just a lifetime or two away from "transitioning" off the earth plane and becoming ascended masters, etc.

3.) Another term borrowed from Hinduism. *Akasha* is the phantom stuff of the astral plane, often called the "Fifth Element." It is the primordial energy web that holds the universe together. Thus, everything anyone does is imprinted upon the Akasha, rather like having your picture recorded on film. The cumulative record of one's lives are thus recorded somewhere on the Akasha and this is called the Akashic record. Supposedly, sensitives like psychics or mediums can "read" this record and tell you things about your past lives. Of course, there is never any way of telling if they are right. This makes Akashic readings one of the most popular functions of psychics since they can say just about anything—the *more outlandish the better*—and never be caught in a false prophecy.

4.) By Dr. Ian Stevenson.

5.) *ibid.*, p.377.

6.) Theism is a belief in a god, but not necessarily ONE god, and not necessarily the Creator of

the Bible.

7.) Typically, witches and New Age teachers will tell you that either the Bible has been mistranslated or censored (and the information about reincarnation edited out). They may even disregard the Bible entirely and throw it out in the trash.

8.) Some, both Protestants and Catholics, teach that being "*born of water*" refers to water baptism, an interpretation that does not make a lot of sense in the light of Nicodemus' question. Whether you think it refers to physical birth or to water baptism does not matter in terms of the reincarnation discussion.

9.) Most Bible scholars believe that Elijah will come back to earth as one of the two witnesses in the Book of Revelation. At that time, he will be killed and then resurrected by the power of God.

10.) See our booklet, "*Straight Talk on Bible Manuscripts*" available from this ministry and also the tract, "*The Case of the Demented Daddy*," which deal with these issues in more depth than we have space for here.

11.) See Josh McDowell's EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT (*Here's Life Publishers, 1991 [34th printing], PO Box 1576, San Bernardino, CA 92402*) for a thorough and inspiring discussion of this whole issue.

12.) There are three notable exceptions, the sinister three: Codex Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus. These were evidently forgeries of the scripture created by the Alexandrian cult. For more on this, see several resources in our catalog, including THE ANSWER BOOK by Dr. Samuel Gipp and FINAL AUTHORITY by Dr. Bill Grady.

13.) The best known being Elizabeth Clare Prophet's Church Universal and Triumphant (or Summit Lighthouse) which tries to blend Hinduism, Catholicism, Right-wing politics and New Age philosophy into an unholy stew more dangerous than the sum of its individual parts.

14.) EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT, op.cit., pp. 227-28.

15.) John Snyder, REINCARNATION VS. RESURRECTION, Moody Press, 1984; also Caryl Matrisiciana GODS OF THE NEW AGE, Harvest House, 1985, and F. LaGard Smith, OUT ON A BROKEN LIMB, Harvest House, 1986.

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