

Reincarnation

by Sebastian R Fama

Depending on the denomination, between 24% and 29% of Christians living in the US believe in reincarnation (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009 survey). I find that odd as the idea that someone can come back and live another life is incompatible with anything found in Scripture or Christian thought. It is a foundational teaching of Christianity that we are born, we die, and then we are judged. After judgment, it's off to our eternal destination.

In Hebrews 9:27 we read: "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." In Luke 23:39-43, one of the criminals crucified with Jesus admits that he was guilty of a crime and deserving of his punishment. And yet Jesus says to him: "Today you will be with me in paradise." No mention of him needing to work out his karma. You need to get it right the first time, or it's game over.

The Bible is very explicit as to what happens to those who make the wrong choices in life:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Different versions of reincarnation are taught depending on who you follow. Some believe reincarnation takes place immediately upon death. Others say it takes hundreds of years. In an interview with a South African reporter, Swami Bhaktivedanta of India explained some of his teaching on reincarnation. He said that: "Each individual gets another body at the moment of death, but that the body may not be a human one." The swami further explained:

There are 8,400,000 different forms of life, and an individual can enter any one of them according to his or her mental condition at death. "If we cultivate the mode of goodness, then we are promoted to the higher planetary system, where there is a better standard of life. If we cultivate the mode of passion, then we will remain at the present stage. But if out of ignorance we commit sinful activities and violate nature's laws, then we will be degraded to animal or plant life. Then again, we must evolve to the human form, a process that may take millions of years (*Back to Godhead* II, 2, pg. 5).

In the U.S., you can get a sanitized version of reincarnation. And we are told; we can benefit from the knowledge gained in our other incarnations for a fee. A special practitioner can help us retrieve this information. Brandi Fleck, a life coach from Tennessee, highly recommends past life regressions. She said in part:

Some argue that a past life is really a parallel life because the true nature of time isn't real or linear. I tend to agree. The nature of a soul incarnating is such that you could incarnate in this modern-day life first before incarnating to an ancient civilization (even on a different planet or in a different galaxy), and in each current life you experience, you can call on the knowledge from any of the others because they're all connected by your soul.

Apparently, Americans can only reincarnate as people or space aliens. That makes sense. Who wants to pay a hefty fee only to find you were a cabbage or a dung beetle in a past life. Not very impressive, and probably not too good for business either.

So, what is the purpose of reincarnation? One view contends the goal is for the soul to reach full self-realization. Your karma is then obliterated. Once fully aware you can choose the next stage of your spiritual evolution. And that could include entering the birth and rebirth cycle to help others. Another view holds that your passions will be extinguished, and you will be liberated from all suffering. You will no longer experience the birth and rebirth cycle.

How does karma work? We are told it is a fundamental law of the universe. A law implies a lawgiver. Who or what enforces this universal law? Who or what is keeping track of millions of life forms and determining their next move? If reincarnation is a natural process, how is it that it is happening now? Karma, we are told, is an evolutionary

journey. It takes a certain amount of time to complete the process. The amount of time may vary from one person to the next. But it is always a finite process. And that presents us with a problem.

Time is infinite. That means it has no beginning or end. All finite processes need a day one. There is no day one. Therefore, no matter how far back in time you went, any natural finite process would be in the past. Thus, it can never exist in the present. But you might say, we are finite beings and we exist in the present. That is true. And it is possible because an all-powerful eternal being put us here. We call Him God. He is the supreme lawgiver. And He enforces the laws that He creates. For God there is evidence, for reincarnation there is not.

But many claim there is evidence. They will point to the above-mentioned past life regression sessions. The process reveals information that the person could not have known on their own. Intimate details and experiences of people who died long before they were born. There is also the claim that ancient yogis were able to achieve high states of consciousness where they could actually perceive many of the processes that happen after death. They wrote about these revelations and passed them on.

Isn't that proof? No, it is not. It is called divination. The information comes from demons. And we know that because, divination, in all its forms, is a major cause of demonic oppression, demonic obsession, and demonic possession. When such individuals submit to an exorcism, the demons have to reveal themselves. Once revealed, they have no choice but to acquiesce to the demands of the exorcist. And that is because: At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:10-11).

To be clear, believing in reincarnation is not divination. Seeking confirmation through occult practices is. The main tool used for discovering past lives is a form of hypnotherapy. Submitting to any type of hypnosis is dangerous as it opens up spiritual doors. Doors that demons can access. In the Old Testament, practicing divination is called sin (1 Samuel 15:23). In the New Testament, divination is described as an interaction with demons (Acts 16:16-18). God warned the Israelites not to indulge in such practices:

When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, **anyone who practices divination**, a soothsayer, or an auger, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, **or a medium**, or a wizard, **or a necromancer**. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

In India, karma is used to justify the caste system. Members of the lower castes have no hope of bettering themselves. The upper castes see no need to help the unfortunate members of the lower castes. To do so would interfere with their karma. So, watching members of a lower caste starve is seen as acceptable. But Jesus teaches us that we must feed the poor and clothe the naked or face judgment (Matthew 25:31-46). Belief in karma also creates a false sense of security. Why be virtuous now when I can take care of it in the next life?

Taken to its logical conclusion, this belief in karma gets even more disturbing. Should we stop prosecuting rapists? Are rape victims just working out their karma? Should we be thinking: "Better she gets it over with now. This way here she won't have to deal with it in the next life." Is the rapist committing an evil act, or is he performing a service for karma?

In John 9:1-12 we read of an occasion where Jesus and His disciples came upon a man who was born blind. "And His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him."

Some have speculated that belief in reincarnation is the result of man's feeling that there must be more to our existence than the short time we spend between birth and death. I believe that is a reasonable assumption. However, reincarnation is not the answer. Jesus Christ is the answer. As St. Augustine said: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Confessions* [A.D. 397-400]). Therefore: Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).