

Does the Bible Teach Reincarnation?

A recent poll found that approximately 33% of United States citizens believe in reincarnation. Many TV shows treat it as fact. Most people involved in yoga and new age spiritually embrace this concept. Because of this, we need to know how to respond. Basically, the concept of reincarnation involves the idea that the soul-life of every human being “evolves” from an inanimate state to plant life, then to animal life, then to numerous human forms on its journey toward perfection, ultimate enlightenment and godhood (called Samadhi in Hinduism).

Some reincarnationists teach that during this transmigration process, the “soul-life” can shuttle back and forth between a human, animal and even mineral state. Others believe in only a progressive evolution of the soul. If the proponents of this doctrine cannot agree on how it works, that makes the concept even more dubious and debatable.

Jesus, on the other hand, taught resurrection—of both the righteous and the wicked (see John 5:28-29). He also validated the doctrine of the resurrection by rising from the dead Himself. Many Far Eastern and New Age groups teach instead that the ultimate end of an advanced soul is a merging with the oversoul, becoming a formless part of the godhead, an infinite existence beyond all distinction and thought. In Buddhism, this final state of de-personalization is called nirvana (a word meaning “blowing out” like the blowing out of a candle).

Strangely, many New Agers and yogis try to prove to the doctrine of reincarnation by using biblical references. Some favorite passages are the angel Gabriel announcing that John the Baptist would come in the “spirit and power of Elijah” and

Jesus declaring that John actually was Elijah (Luke 1:17, Matt. 11:14). One way to explain those verses is to go back to 2 Kings 2:9 where Elisha asked to receive a double portion of Elijah's "spirit." He wasn't asking to become a reincarnation of Elijah; instead, he was prayerfully appealing to the prophet for an outpouring of a similar anointing (double strength at that). When you bring that into the equation, it is easy to see that is what Gabriel meant concerning John the Baptist, that he would have a similar anointing and a similar Elijah-like calling—taking the people of Israel back to their spiritual foundation and freeing them from tyranny of false religious ideas.

For more on how New Age ideas influence our perception of the Bible, listen to *Revealing the True Light* on the Charisma Podcast Network. {eo}

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