

Zarah & Pharez

Part Twelve

Questions & Answers

**** Does sonship allow the teachings of reincarnation into its message?***

The short answer to that question would be No, it does not. The somewhat longer answer would No, including reasons *why* it does not. But before we get into the reasons, perhaps we should explain a little about the teaching itself, as well as some of its variations.

As most of you who are reading this already know, reincarnation is the belief that the spirits (or souls) which presently incarnate our bodies have been involved in a "recycling process" of sorts. It suggests that they have indwelt other bodies before, and, upon their departure, will probably occupy other dwellings in the future. While there are as many as ten different versions of the theory throughout the world, all of them are built around the same basic principle, namely, that the conditions and circumstances experienced in this life are the results of actions performed in a previous one (or more). This principle is commonly known as the Law of Karma, or the cosmic law of sowing and reaping.

According to those who believe in Karma (a Sanskrit word, meaning "action, or deed"), we all live in a cause-and-effect universe. Therefore, the fact that we presently reside in earthly bodies is all the evidence they need that we have lived here before. Furthermore, the fact that we all experience suffering to one degree or another shows that we have outstanding sins from former lives for which we must now pay. For the reincarnationist, suffering is viewed as the effect; so sin is naturally viewed as the cause. Hence, all life in the flesh is considered by them to be a form of punishment, and our bodies are regarded as being the prison houses wherein our sentences are carried out. Therefore, it could be said that the way in which reincarnationists explain the presence of suffering in this world is through the teaching of Karma, and the way in which they offer a solution to the problem of suffering itself is through the doctrine of rebirths.

Reincarnation can be found in many of the ancient cultures of the world. And, as one might expect, the beliefs of one culture do differ slightly from those of a neighboring culture. For instance, the traditional beliefs of the Egyptians regarding reincarnation would naturally differ somewhat from the those of the Greeks, simply because they hold different opinions concerning the origin, nature and/or composition of the soul.. The

same would be true of the Africans, Indians, Celts, and others. We would expect each culture to have its own adaptation of the story, which would vary slightly from that of its neighbors. But where did the story actually originate, and in what form did it first appear?

Most historians agree on the birthplace of the doctrine as being "Mother India," but some disagreement exists regarding the precise time of its appearance. Some claim to have found evidence of the doctrine among the Indo-Aryans of Punjab and Sind, India, about 1800 B.C. Others place it no earlier than 800 or 600 B.C. At any rate, the Hindus are credited as being its source. How did they originally present it? Well, the basic idea was that the spirit (or soul) originally existed in an indistinguishable form within Brahman (someone has defined Brahman as "*Everything* in general, but *Nothing* in particular"). As such, it had no individual identity of its own. All was One, and that One was Brahman. Then a problem occurred in the system. How it happened is anyone's guess, but somehow or another, the spirit *forgot* about this state of union in which it existed, and began to view itself as being separate and distinct from the Absolute. It believed that it possessed personal identity *apart from* the impersonal nature of Brahman, that it constituted something *other than* the All. As a result, the physical realm materialized, the human form took shape, and the spirit was subsequently trapped in a prison house of its own making. This mistaken identity became known as the "fall." From that point on, the self-segregated spirit (referred to as "atman") has been forced to be incarnated again and again upon the cyclic wheel of "Samsara," until two things happen; 1) that it pays the Karmic debt which it has accrued during the course of its revolutions, and 2) that it finally awakens to the realization that everything in creation, including itself, is merely an illusion ("maya"), having no existence other than the one it has imagined itself to have. You see, according to Hindu philosophy, there is really only one true Reality, and that reality is Brahman. All else is but *the appearance* of reality, though lacking in true substance. This explains the Hindu saying that "atman IS Brahman" (meaning, the individual soul is the World Soul, without division). If atman seems to be something other than Brahman, it is only because it *thinks* that it is. But until atman comes around to this knowledge, and until it has been thoroughly purified from the sins of the past, it cannot be absorbed back into that original state of non-existence which it experienced from the beginning ("moksha" to the Hindu; "nirvana" to the Buddhist).

If we really want to get technical about it, the correct term for Hindu and Buddhist beliefs is transmigration, or the transmigration of souls (the term for the Platonic version, or any of the Greek philosophical beliefs derived from the Orphic mystery religions, is metempsychosis). Therefore, when we use the term reincarnation, we are actually referring to the eclectic Western version of the theory. The primary difference between reincarnation and transmigration is that, while transmigration involves the spirit's residence in all types of bodies (animal, vegetable and mineral), reincarnation is simply limited to human bodies alone.

During the latter part of the 19th century, the theory of reincarnation was basically introduced to the Western world by Madame Helena Blavatsky and members of her Theosophical Society, as well as through the numerous gurus who began to make their way across the Atlantic shortly thereafter. The reason why they came up with this

watered-down version in the first place is because they believed that it would have been more difficult to sell the idea of transmigration in its pure form to the Christian community. Therefore, in order to get Westerners to buy into the idea of recycled life, its promoters modified the doctrine to suit their audience. As history can now attest, their strategy succeeded in helping them reach their goals, and perhaps even exceeded their greatest expectations.

During the twentieth century, no one was more successful in popularizing reincarnation than was the renowned psychic Edgar Cayce. Part of Cayce's success as an ideological "salesman" stemmed from the fact that he claimed to be a Christian. Borrowing ideas for the foundation of his teachings from both Greek and Hindu traditions (and building, of course, on the foundation Blavatsky had already laid), he claimed that he was able to reach beyond the veil of forgetfulness through which all souls pass, and to psychically retrieve information regarding past lives from what is known in metaphysical circles as "the Akashic Records" (as we have explained in previous writings, the Akashic Records are supposed to be ethereal records in the spirit world wherein all thoughts and experiences are said to be imprinted). Mr. Cayce gave thousands of readings from this so-called "Hall of Records," from which he offered details of encounters which allegedly occurred during the course of his own innumerable past lives, as well as those occurring for many of the individuals who came to him for guidance. The collective content of those readings, and the esoteric information they provided, served as "a bible" of sorts for those who were seeking to know more about the subject. Although the doctrine would continue to be "tweaked" as time went on, practically anything anyone wanted to learn about it could be found in those logs.

During the sixties, and into the early part of the seventies, the belief was promoted by other well-known psychics, such as Jeanne Dixon and Ruth Montgomery (author of *A World Beyond*.) There were also a number of books which carried the theme. Author Richard Bach made his literary contribution through his book, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross made hers with *On Death and Dying*, and Raymond Moody joined the chorus with *Life After Life*. Nevertheless, reincarnation received one of its biggest boosts in popularity through a book written by actress Shirley MacLaine, entitled, *Out on a Limb* (which was also turned into a made-for-TV movie). We could go on listing sources from then until now, but they've become too numerous to mention. Suffice it to say that the doctrine is undoubtedly one of the primary unifying beliefs in New Age circles.

While the expression "Christian Reincarnation" has successfully made its way into modern vernacular, it serves as a gross contradiction of terms! There really is no such thing, nor could there ever be....and this will become clearer by the time that we conclude our response. Nevertheless, how have reincarnationists presented their teachings to make them appear to be coming from a Christian point of view?

Well, those who promote this ideological mixture usually start by saying that transmigration was a common concept in the early Church, and was frequently found throughout the writings of the New Testament until it was removed by church leaders.

The account most often parroted is that it was erased from the canon of scripture by the Nicene Council in 325 A.D. Others, such as Shirley MacLaine, suggest that it was struck from the Bible during the Fifth Ecumenical Council meeting in Constantinople in the year 553. Where they got these ideas, no one seems to know. But the fact of the matter is that the subjects addressed during each of the church councils are a matter of public record, and not once can it be shown that the issue of transmigration was ever even raised, much less that it was extricated from the body of New Testament writings. We would challenge anyone to prove otherwise. So while reincarnationists will generally state this with great conviction and in confident tones, there is not a shred of evidence to support their claim.

We do not hesitate to admit that those in Jesus' day were familiar with the teachings of transmigration. This is a historically verifiable fact. It had found its way into Rabbinical circles during the Babylonian captivity, and the Platonic version of it had been introduced to the Jewish community by Hellenized Jews. But it would be difficult to ascertain just how far the teaching had spread, or how much it had found acceptance among them. There is one thing that we can say with certainty, however, and that is that it was not, nor has it ever been a part of Jewish orthodoxy.

What about the claim that it was a common concept in the early Church? Naturally, we would expect anyone who would make such a claim to be able to back up what they say. That it can be found in certain documents that claimed to be Christian (but were, in fact, of Gnostic origin) proves nothing. Such letters were never accepted as being representative of church doctrine; and those bearing the names of the apostles have long been identified as forgeries. However, what we do find is that, among those documents formally recognized by the church, the first time that transmigration was mentioned was in A.D. 155 by Justin Martyr, at which time he denounced the doctrine as being heretical. Not long thereafter, the subject was again addressed in the writings of Origen (A.D. 185-254), who, despite the oddness of his position on other questionable issues, devoted two lengthy essays to the refutation of this one.

Not ones to be deterred by the facts, many reincarnationists persist with their presentation. They go on to say that, despite the best efforts of the church to purge this doctrine from Scripture, there is still enough evidence therein to establish its presence, and to prove its legitimacy. One of the first ways in which they attempt to show this is by saying that the Bible implicitly teaches the doctrine of Karma. After all, doesn't the latter part of Galatians 6:7 read, "*...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*"? Indeed it does. But the biblical understanding of the law principle of sowing and reaping is as distant from the Law of Karma as the east is from the west.

A great deal of time could be devoted to this topic alone. But we'll limit our comments to the most obvious distinctions. We'll begin by taking a closer look at the doctrine of Karma.

According to the ancient traditions, Karma is an inflexible law that governs the entire cosmos. It's the primary law of that all-inclusive, impersonal Force transmigratonists

refer to as God. Karma is fixed and immutable, insisting that for every cause there must be a corresponding effect. There are no exceptions to this rule, and nothing that bypasses the process. This point is rigorously defended.

On issues of morality, Karma serves as the Supreme Justice System, demanding full payment for every sin committed. Not only that, but it requires that every individual bear his or her own Karmic debt. Each person must work out their own salvation, and is forbidden from having anyone else work it out for them. Everyone must discover the method of salvation that works best for them, and no one can interfere with the Karma of another. It's thought that in this way, the chance to achieve perfection is offered to all people unilaterally, and everyone is given the same opportunity to earn freedom through the course of suffering. Consider, for example, these words by Alice Bailey.

*"The immortality of the human soul, and the innate ability of the spiritual, inner man to work out his own salvation under the Law of Rebirth, in response to the Law of Cause and Effect, are the underlying factors governing all human aspiration. **These two laws no man can evade.** They condition him at all times until he has achieved the desired and the designed perfection and can manifest on earth as a rightly functioning son of God." ---"The Reappearance of the Christ," pg. 147.*

According to Ms. Bailey, no one can get around the laws known as Rebirth and Karma. The two go hand in hand. And everyone must experience them, until they have completely accomplished their objective. Since (to hear her tell it) they serve as the means through which all men shall attain unto a state of perfection and of manifested sonship, the acceptance of the one would naturally require the embrace of the other. For those who hold out hope to that end (but who don't necessarily see Jesus as being the Pattern Son), this might seem to be as good an answer as any. They see no reason to oppose it. But what the combination of these two laws actually amount to is a meritorious, works-based system which allows man to become his own savior. This is reaffirmed by Ms. Bailey's spiritual mentor, Madame Blavatsky. *"It is owing to this law of spiritual development that mankind will become freed from its false gods and find itself finally SELF REDEEMED."* ---Helena Blavatsky, Secret Doctrines.

Needless to say, this was definitely NOT what Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Galatian church. The Pauline version of sonship is built on an entirely different set of premises, which leads to an entirely different conclusion.

As is shown through the apostle's words to the Galatians, we, too, acknowledge a universal law of cause and effect. This law serves as one of the underlying principles of divine understanding, being evidenced both in practical theory and in the course of nature. However, its operation in the world cannot be rightly understood apart from its proper context (which we happen to believe is the one that's revealed in Scripture. And nothing within that context leads us to conclude that the reaping from the deeds of one life occurs in subsequent incarnations! (Rom. 6:23 says that the wages of sin is *death*---period. It says nothing about Karmic rebirths!)

It is true that, as a man sows, so shall he reap. That's one law upon which most will agree. But, presiding over that law is the Law Giver, who has reserved the right to intervene in the lives of men according to His own will and discretion. The thing of interest is that He can do this, without ever committing a violation against the laws which He has previously given. This is the prerogative of the personal God by whom we were created; and this is a point to which the reincarnationist absolutely refuses to yield.

The God Who originally set in motion the law of sowing and reaping also made a provision through which the wayward soul might be reconciled to Himself. In fact, this provision was established in the mind of God before the first event ever transpired on this planet---Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). He was foreordained to become both the Sin Offering, to be offered up in the material world at a particular point in history, as well as the Sin-bearer, who would bear in His own body the entire weight of mankind's sins. Armed with that knowledge, it could rightly be said that the One who would reap (that is, Jesus) overtook the one who would sow (that would be Adam), and the Sin-offering actually preceded the act of sin itself. This attests to the omniscience and the omnipotence of our God. Not only did He know of the Fall in advance; He maintained complete governance over the entire ordeal, so that all things would ultimately work after the counsel of His own will. At no time was He ever out of control, or caught by surprise by Adam's grave blunder. He causes all things to work after the counsel of His own will, to the praise of His glory!

It bears acknowledgment that the entire Old Testament sacrificial system, which was first introduced to erring man in Eden, gives us grounds for the belief in vicarious atonement. And it was upon these grounds that Jesus suffered and died for us! *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (I Peter 3:18). His sinless life was offered in our stead, in order that our sin-debt might be completely and entirely removed from our record. *"And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."* (Col. 2:13-14, NAS). The beauty of this is, even if there had been such a thing as "Karmic debt", it would have been rendered null and void at Calvary. For every one who trusts in Christ, the debt is marked "paid in full"!

Not only was Jesus the consummate Sacrifice for the sins of the world, but He also serves as our Great High Priest, who is perfectly qualified to represent every man before God. Having walked out His earthly sojourn as the Son of Man, having been tempted in all points like as we are (yet without sin, Heb. 4:15), and having gained an understanding of mankind's struggles by way of personal experience, He can now have compassion on the ignorant, and those who are out of the way (Heb. 5:2). When we couple this with the fact that all judgment has been committed unto the Son (Jn. 5:22), we can now come boldly before the Throne of Grace with full confidence in His Word (Heb. 4:16). As I Jn. 2:1-2 says, *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the*

propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Ah, the One who became our Sin-offering is also our Judge, who also serves as our Legal Defense! Praise God! No greater Advocate could have possibly taken up our case! No wonder Paul said, *"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom. 8:31-32). Knowing that God favors us, and that He holds nothing against us, we can be entirely optimistic about our future.

This difference alone makes the doctrine of reincarnation totally incompatible with the message of the Gospel. There can be no harmony on this point, no mixing of beliefs. But this is not just our conclusion...consider these words of "inclusivist" Madame Blavatsky: *"Christians believe in the pardon and the remission of all sins. They are promised that if they only believe in the blood of Christ (an innocent victim!), in the blood offered by Him for the expiation of the sins of the whole of mankind, it will atone for every mortal sin. And we believe neither in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any god, not even by a "personal Absolute" or "Infinite," if such a thing could have any existence. What we believe in, is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a Power which cannot fail, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects."*---end quote. Given the facts that the doctrine of vicarious atonement is so undeniably present in Scripture, and that folks like Blavatsky are so unwilling to tolerate it, even for a moment, isn't it strange that they would even *want* to use the Bible in support of their theory? It does raise questions about their motives, that's for sure!

It always needs to be remembered that, despite their insistence that all truth is relative, and that nothing is absolute, the enjoined doctrines of Karma and Rebirths are absolutely non-negotiable to the follower of the Eastern way of thinking. If he is truly devoted to his philosophy, he will refuse to budge on this. To even attempt to view one of these doctrines independently of the other would be an unconscionable act for him, and would constitute a breakdown of his belief system. However, the same is true for the follower of Christ (albeit, without the ideological conflict). It would be impossible for the Christian to even consider the law of sowing and reaping apart from the sacrificial work of the Christ, for we believe that this is the single most important revelation ever given by God to man. Our precious Lord Jesus did for us what we could never have done for ourselves, in order that we might obtain a standing in Him. *"But God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement"* (Rom. 5:8-11). If we really accept the truth of this biblical statement, there can be absolutely no compromise on our part.

There are just so many verses that could be cited here, but Paul's words to Titus summarize our position well. *"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish,*

disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior..." (Titus 3:5). You see, in Christ, justice is perfectly satisfied, and the demands for equity are fully met. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God (Rom.5:1). In fact, when once we've experienced the *biblical* definition of rebirth, we are then transformed into entirely new creatures, wherein old things are past away, and behold, all things are become new (II Cor. 5:17). The wonderful thing about this is, the effects of this transformation immediately begin to appear in our lives. We don't have to wait until some future life (or lives) before we see results. However, in a strict cause-and-effect universe, such as the one described by Blavatsky and others, there would be no room for such things as mercy, grace or forgiveness. Such concepts are virtually unknown. The ideas of a Mercyseat, or of Jesus as being our Advocate with the Father, are completely lost in that world. That's the price one pays for believing that God is just an impersonal Force which insensitively renders Its verdicts on mankind. What a cold, cruel, and *lonely* world that would be!

In light of these things, it shouldn't be difficult for anyone to see that irreconcilable differences exist between these two schools of thought. And we're perfectly willing to leave it at that. But this is just not the case with the reincarnationist. He insists that if we have a problem reading soul migration into the Christian context, it's only because we've misunderstood the Christian message!

Such a charge really doesn't deserve a response. After all, if someone feels that one firmly established doctrine such as vicarious atonement should be extracted from scripture, in order to insert one which has no basis whatsoever, what can we do to stop them? Folks are free to believe what they want (and to suffer the consequences that accompany those beliefs, as well). But just because someone chooses to believe a thing doesn't make it right.

For the sake of the argument, we'll consider three biblical examples which are commonly raised as proof that the theory of reincarnation has its roots in Scripture. Let's begin with John 9:1-3. "*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.'*"

It's often said that, in order for the disciples to have even questioned whether or not this man's blindness could have been the result of his own doing, they had to have believed that he at least *could* have sinned in a former existence. Since we've already acknowledged that the Jews were acquainted with this doctrine, and that some of them did embrace it, we'll allow for that possibility. Perhaps the disciples were of that persuasion. However, reincarnation was only one of several opinions that was under consideration at that time. For instance, there were some who believed that the human

spirit preexisted in a conscious state of being prior to its incarnation, and that the consequences of its sinful actions while in that former state would be brought to bear upon it afterward. There was also the belief that birth defects were a sign that the sins of previous generations were being visited upon the offspring. There was even a belief that a child was capable of committing sin while it was being formed in the womb! These ideas, and others, were circulating throughout the Jewish community. Some of them had a measure of validity to them, while others were nothing more than religious folklore and foolish superstitions. But this just goes to show how convoluted the Jewish mind was at the time of Christ. It's no secret that they were pretty messed up in their thinking. And some were much too proud to ever admit that they could be wrong. But to as many as had "ears to hear," Jesus came to clear up their mental muddle, and to speak truth to their hearts.

This brings up another point made by the reincarnationists. If Jesus *didn't* allow for the doctrine of reincarnation, then why didn't He address the matter while He had the opportunity? It's our opinion that He did. His response that this man's blindness was not from any fault of his own clearly contradicts the concept of Karmic retribution. Remember, the doctrine of Karma was originally intended to explain the presence of suffering in the world. It states that every circumstance in which a man is found is the direct result of his own actions in a previous life. No man can get around this, and no one can be exempted from the process. EVERY MAN MUST SUFFER AS A RESULT OF HIS KARMA. THERE ARE NO IFS, ANDS OR BUTS ABOUT IT. However, the purpose of *this* man's circumstance, according to Jesus, was for no other reason but that the power of God might be manifest in him. If this was so (and we'll take Jesus' word for it), then Karma could have had nothing to do with it. It just didn't factor into the equation.

Let's move on to another passage that has been quoted along this line, Matt. 16:13-14. *"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?' And they said, 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.'"*

Again, we're told that transmigration definitely had to have been in the minds of those who said these things, otherwise they would not have expressed themselves as they did. Why else would men say that Jesus could have been John, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, if they had not believed that it was possible for Him to have been reincarnated? Again, we'll repeat, the idea of reincarnation was something that was entertained in the minds of some in that day. However, it's highly unlikely that this was the case here, at least where John the Baptist is concerned. One reason we would say this is because most who knew of Jesus also knew that He and the Baptist were both alive during the same time period. It was common knowledge that their lives overlapped for more than thirty years prior to the beheading of John. In fact, many had actually even seen the two of them together at the Jordan River when Jesus was baptized by John. Since this is so, how could anyone have seriously thought that Jesus was John the Baptist reincarnated?

There may be more, but we can only think of two other ways in which their words might have been taken. One, that one of the prophets had been raised from the dead, and had simply taken on the pseudonym of Jesus. The other way would be that Jesus was operating in the spirit and power (the anointing) of one of the prophets. Perhaps some folks viewed it one way, and other folks held to the latter view. But its unlikely that anyone had reincarnation in mind when they said these things.

Finally, there's Matt. 11:10, 13-14 and 17:11-13. It's said that in these passages, reincarnation is mentioned, not just as an opinion of the people, but as a direct teaching of Jesus Himself. *"For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee...For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." "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' ...then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist."*

Was Jesus teaching in these places that John the Baptist was actually Elijah reincarnated? There are those who would like for us to believe that He was. However, such a notion might have been more plausible, were it not for two stubborn little details. Detail number one, according to Lk. 1:17, John was called to go before the Lord *"in the spirit and power of Elias."* This phraseology defines the way in which Malachi's prophecy regarding Elijah's reappearance was to be understood (ref. Mal. 4:5, 6. It would be no different than someone today, saying, "the present Pope is moving in the spirit of Pope John Paul," or "Walmart is still operating in the spirit of Sam Walton," etc. We would immediately know what was meant). Detail number two, when John was specifically asked about it, he categorically denied being Elijah (John 1:21). Based on this information, we can conclude that Jesus must have had something else in mind.

All things being considered, we would resolve on these points. While the belief *of* reincarnation may be found in the Bible, that does not mean that it supports the belief *in* reincarnation. It may very well find a presence in Scripture, since we know that there were some in biblical times who had accepted it as truth. But that doesn't mean that it finds an endorsement from Scripture. There is a great deal of difference. We could say the same thing about many topics, such as idol worship, witchcraft, and others. We find mention of these beliefs in Scripture, even among some who were called of God. But that in no wise means that they are sanctioned as truth.

Of course, there's one passage of scripture that the messengers of soul migration generally prefer to ignore, and that's Hebrews 9:27. It states, *"As it is appointed to man once to die, and after that the judgment..."* The Greek word for once is *hapax* (Strong's #530), and means *"one (or a single) time (numerically or conclusively): once."* Since it has posed such an obstacle for reincarnationists, and they have made attempts to explain it, we'll give serious consideration to their defense.

The argument has been made that the appointment with death referred to here has nothing to do with physical death at all, but one with the spiritual state of being in which all men existed in Adam. [ref. "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all men be made alive*" ---I Cor. 15:22]. Their argument has been that while all men had a one-time appointment with spiritual death, in that they were once dead in Adam, that appointment has now been met, is finished, and all judgment has ended with Christ. Thus, Hebrews 9:27 is totally irrelevant regarding the number of times a person might die physically, and be reincarnated. How would we respond to that?

Well, we would certainly agree that death is more than just the expiration of the body. Our understanding is that it speaks of a process into which we are born, but one which also includes (and *concludes* with) physical death. Therefore, while we may refer to them as being two different deaths (a spiritual one and a physical one), the two are really combined to make up one, which is protracted over a period of time (it's really only the aspect that differs). If we may take a moment to do so here, we'll explain why we say that.

Going back to the time when the appointment with death was originally made (namely, Genesis 2:17), God's warning to Adam was, "*...in the day that thou eatest thereof, **thou shalt surely die.***" The words "*surely die*" are interesting, for in the Hebrew text this phrase is what's known grammatically as an *infinitive absolute*. The infinitive of a word is usually made up of the word *to* plus the present form of a verb (called the stem of the infinitive). In our case, it would suggest, "*to be dying.*" When we look up this word *die* in the Septuagint Version, we find that the mood is indicative (meaning, it is a declarative statement), and used in its plural form. "*Deaths.*" What we can gather from all of this is that Gen. 2:17 should actually read, "***to die shall you be dying***" (this is exactly the way the Concordant Version of Genesis renders it). We realize that Adam didn't physically die within that twenty-four hour time period during which he and Eve partook of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He died spiritually, having allowed sin to separate him from his God. However, there should be no doubt that some nine hundred and thirty years later, Adam most certainly died in the physical sense, and his body returned to the dust from whence it came. For this cause, we would view death as having a broader definition than most would assign to it, involving both the spirit's separation from God, as well as its eventual separation from the body. Now, with that being said, we'll get back to our response.

The reason we would reject the idea that Heb. 9:27 has only to do with the spiritual aspect of death, and nothing at all with the physical one, is twofold. The first part of that reason has to do with the word "appointed." It's translated from the Greek word "*apokimai*," which means, "*to be reserved; figuratively, to await; Bbe appointed, (be) laid up.*" Apokimai comes from two words, "*apo*," meaning, "*off, i.e. away (from something near)*," and "*kimai*," meaning "*to lie outstretched.*" In other words, this one-time apokimai, or appointment with death, speaks of something that is off from us, that lies outstretched before us. This would not seem to describe the spiritual state in which all men are conceived (ref. Psa. 51:5), but rather, something which awaits them at a future point in time, i.e. the death of the body. (Obviously, the time of this appointment is nearer

for some than it is for others). Another thing we should note is the tense in which the writer of Hebrews used this word. According to the grammatical structure of this verse in the Greek text, *apokimai* is used in Heb. 9:27 as *a singular verb in the present tense*. Simply put, the appointment that man has with death and with judgment is not an event that lies in the past, but one that is still pending. Thus, it is correctly translated in the KJV, "*As IT IS APPOINTED unto men once to die, and after that the judgment...*" Had he intended for it to be viewed as a historical event, he would have spoken of it in the past tense, as he did of Christ's one-time sacrifice in the very next verse (verse 28), "*...so Christ WAS once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation.*"

The second part of our reason is this: if that to which man was appointed once singly or numerically was spiritual death [to the exclusion of physical death], and that appointment has been met once and for all, then how would we explain Jude 12? Jude described those in his day who were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness as being "*twice dead...*". Can you see the conflict that would be created here? If they were *twice* dead, spiritually speaking, then how could it be said that it was appointed unto them *once* to die, in the numerical sense? When we take this into account, we're forced to broaden our concept to include physical death. Spiritual death alone cannot possibly suffice in explaining Heb. 9:27.)

The simple fact of the matter is that Biblical sources do not at any point or in any way support the idea of multiple incarnations. There is not one single example of such a thing happening in Scripture, nor is it explicitly or even implicitly taught therein. The Christian belief is that, should the earthly house of this present tabernacle be dissolved, it is not to be replaced with future tabernacles of similar construction. Nay, we have *A BUILDING* (singular) *OF GOD*, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Since this is what the Scriptures teach, our hope lies in the resurrection, not in reincarnation.

Just for the record, whenever those of us who teach sonship speak of resurrection, we're not just referring to a future event. Just as death is not a single event, but is a process into which we are physically born, resurrection is a process which begins the moment an individual is born from above. At that instant in time (and, yes, it does occur within the realm of time), we, who were previously dead in trespasses and sins, are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:1-6). This "catching up," or translation, has to do with our spirits, wherein they are raised from a state of spiritual separation, and thus brought into a place of vital union with Christ. Since "to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6), the next thing that is needed is the resurrection of our souls (intellect, emotions and will), by which means our minds are renewed (Rom. 12:1-2). This is the phase of resurrection that we're presently experiencing. Ultimately, in God's appointed time, resurrection will complete its work, completely fashioning and transfiguring these vile bodies of ours into the likeness of His glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21). So, from beginning to end, our extraction out from among the dead takes place as a result of the power of His resurrection, the power that's currently at work within us. Therefore, we're not simply waiting for the resurrection to occur sometime in the future...we're experiencing it now!

As we draw near the end of this writing, we have just enough room to address two of the many strange theories that have circulated involving Jesus and reincarnation. The first is that, because Jesus referred to Himself in Revelation 1:8 as "*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending*," and again in verse 17 as "*the First and the Last*" (also 2:8 & 22:13), He was claiming to be the reincarnation of the first man, Adam. Edgar Cayce was perhaps the first to teach this, and it's been repeated in various groups over the course of time (unfortunately, even among some who claim to teach sonship). According to Cayce, Jesus had been reincarnated as many as thirty different times prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and has been reincarnated multiple times since. Although he believed that Jesus was raised from the dead, he also believed that He continues to be reincarnated following His ascension.

Let it be understood that we disavow any association with such logic. Our primary objection comes over the attachment of the word "*Adam*" to the adjectives "*the First and the Last*." There's absolutely nothing in the text that would suggest a connection of this sort. Why, then, would anyone want to put words in the Lord's mouth?

(To us, the proper application is not hard to discover. In fact, it's found in verse 8 of the same chapter---"*I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, THE ALMIGHTY.*" Plainly, all three phrases, "*Alpha and Omega*," "*the Beginning and the Ending*" and "*the First and the Last*" have nothing to do with Adam, but with the timelessness of the Almighty, and the fullness of His Being. He always has been, and always will be. Who can possibly compare with Him? The accuracy of this interpretation can also be confirmed through the exegetical law of first occurrence. What this law means is that a word or phrase is best defined by virtue of the way in which it's first used in scripture. In this case, the first occurrence where the words "*the First and the Last*" are used in conjunction is found in Isa. 44:6. "*Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I AM THE FIRST, AND I AM THE LAST; beside Me there is no God.*" Again, the object is the Almighty, and the adjectives "*First*" and "*Last*" are used to declare that He stands alone, and is completely beyond compare. Verse 8 goes on to say, "*Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.*" Need we say more?)

In the event that some would still find it acceptable to connect the words "*First and Last*" to the word "*Adam*", we'll come at it from a different angle. While I Corinthians 15:45 refers to Jesus as "*the last Adam*," and in verse 47 of the same chapter as "*the second Man*," a clear distinction is made between the first Adam and the Last. They are not one and the same, and Paul went to great lengths to show this. One was of the earth, earthy, while the other was the Lord from heaven. One was classified as a living soul (that is, a soul which had been given life), while the other was made a quickening, or life-giving Spirit. And one was responsible for marring the whole of mankind in the mire of sin, while the other was responsible for redeeming them out of it. Think about it for a moment. Had Jesus been the reincarnation of Adam, He would have also been the embodiment of Adam's sin. And if He had been the embodiment of Adam's sin, then He could never have been the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). Why? Because, in Old Testament times, the lamb offered for sin had to be free of spots,

blemishes or deformities of any sort. Had it been defected in any way, it could not have served as an acceptable sacrifice in the eyes of God. Likewise, had Jesus been tainted with sin, He would have been disqualified as the Savior of the world. It's as simple as that.

Another strange notion is that those who have the indwelling Spirit of Christ are actually multiple incarnations of Jesus. Without getting too involved in the details, we ought to acknowledge that there is a fundamental difference between the spirit of Jesus and the Spirit of Christ. When we speak of the spirit of Jesus, we're speaking of the human spirit which helped comprise the person of Jesus. But when we speak of the Spirit of Christ, we're speaking of the Divine Spirit which inhabits the Body of Christ, of which Jesus is the Head. Understandably, therefore, when we are born of the Spirit, it is not the personal spirit of Jesus that comes to dwell in us, but the Spirit of Christ. The man Jesus retains His individuality and personal identity, and we retain ours. And yet, we share in the one and selfsame Spirit.

We might also point out that when God looks at the Body of Christ, He doesn't see a lot of individual bodies, into which the Spirit of the Lord is divided. He sees One Body consisting of many members (including the Head), which houses One undivided Spirit. "*There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling...*" (Eph. 4:4). In what sense, then, could it be considered a reincarnation?

Well, the significance of this subject forces us to extend our comments over into a following article. Therefore, we'll take up where we left off in the next installment of this series.

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