

IS REINCARNATION REAL?

As Eastern religions spread into the West, reincarnation has become very popular. Most Hindus and Buddhists, as well as many other Eastern religions believe in reincarnation – the rebirth of the soul into a new body after the previous body dies. In some of their teachings, the soul returns many times in different bodies – with renewed chances to get it right.

Most forms of reincarnation are based on karma, the moral law of cause and effect. It is believed that our soul carries our karma – our deeds and their consequences – from one life to another. “Good deeds elevate one’s position in the next life; bad deeds lower it. A very evil person might be reborn as a goat or a snail. We each go through this cycle of life and death thousands of times. Our goal is to accumulate enough good deeds to pay off our karmic debt and escape the cycle of rebirth.”

This type of teaching is very appealing to many in the West. Defenders of this position present the following arguments: First, the soul is immortal, so it cannot die or end. Therefore, when a body dies, that soul moves into a new body. Second, the law of karma is the best way to achieve justice. If you don’t get what you deserve in this life, you will in the next. Third, some people recall past lives during altered states of consciousness such as hypnosis.

However appealing this position may be, it is filled with fatal flaws. Supporters of reincarnation cannot adequately support their position.

For example: First, the soul may be immortal, but that doesn’t imply that it returns in a different body. A soul could live in a disembodied state, or in a resurrected body designed to live forever. Second, reincarnation doesn’t address issues of justice and evil. It only attempts to balance the scales so to speak – one life at a time, forever.

Third, reincarnation doesn’t address the issue of the origin of bad karma. Where did bad karma come from? Fourth, reincarnation doesn’t give a concept for a basis of right or wrong – guidance about what to do or not to do. Therefore, the teaching of reincarnation can’t even evaluate the deeds as good or bad. Finally, memories of past lives do not prove reincarnation (Remember, those who testify to this experience, their conscious state has been altered by hypnosis.). They offer nothing to verify that they are what they claim to be.

It has been said, “The practical consequence of believing in reincarnation and karma is increased suffering. We shouldn’t help the poor or crippled or homeless because they’re living out the result of their karma from a previous life. You might even add to your own karmic debt by helping them avoid theirs. The lack of improvement in societies that believe in reincarnation also argues against it. If we’ve each had thousands of lives to improve, why isn’t society getting better?”

The teachings of Scripture clearly teach against reincarnation. Genesis 1:27 clearly teaches that man was created, not reincarnated: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Jesus taught in John 9:3 that we don’t pay for prebirth sins: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” The writer of Hebrews said, “And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). According to this verse, we die once, and then, we face judgment.

God’s plan for mankind is based on forgiveness by grace, not perfection by the works of reincarnation?

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