

# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #46: REINCARNATION

By John Temples

My subject is reincarnation. You know, I have this eerie feeling I've written this article before.....

I'm speaking, of course, of the belief that human beings have multiple lives--we are reborn into successive bodies. This doctrine is also called "transmigration of souls." (And by some, "the ultimate recycling program.")

You might be thinking, "Why a lesson on reincarnation? It is only a weird belief held by some Oriental people." How many people believe in reincarnation?

- All Hindus (1.1 billion--15% of the world's population)
- All Buddhists (500 million)
- All Sikhs (25 million)
- Adherents of various Chinese folk religions (225 million)
- Total of all these: 1.85 billion people

Yes, you say, but those are all people who live far away. But wait, there's more:

- Many modern Orthodox Jews believe in reincarnation (850,000 people). They teach that if someone converts to Judaism, it's because they were Jews in a former life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> And read what this Jewish writer had to say: "A better metaphor [for reincarnation] would be a mobile data rollover plan. The phone company gives you 5 GB of data per month. Anything unused at the end of one month rolls over to the following month. So if you used only 4 GB in November, the remaining 1 GB is applied to your December allowance, giving you 6 GB for that month. Your soul has multiple gigabytes of spiritual energy and Divine potential. This is the power G-d has invested in you to fulfill your mission in life. You use that potential by doing mitzvahs. Every mitzvah activates another gigabyte of your soul energy. You have been given an allotted number of days in this world to utilize your gigabytes. At the end of the billing cycle, when your time comes to leave this life, the activated parts of your soul go to a higher place, because that part of you has completed its mission on earth. But if you have unused soul potential, if you didn't activate all of the energy invested in you, then that unused part of your soul comes back again in another body to finish the job. So when someone passes away, we pray that their soul find rest in heaven, because that's where the already-used part of the soul is found. As for the unused part of the soul, it will come back down for another go-round."

([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/4216494/jewish/Do-Jews-Believe-in-Heaven-or-Reincarnation-or-Bo  
th.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4216494/jewish/Do-Jews-Believe-in-Heaven-or-Reincarnation-or-Both.htm))

- 25% of American adults believe in reincarnation, according to a 2009 poll. That's 81 million people!
- Even more Europeans believe the doctrine--33% of adults, or 280 million.
- Various New Age groups, including the "Church of Scientology," hold this idea to be true.

And of course, many Hollywood celebrities:

- Shirley MacLaine (she wrote a book on reincarnation, "Out on a Limb").
- Sylvester Stallone.
- Tina Turner.
- John Lennon was a strong believer in reincarnation. He said, "I'm not afraid of death because I don't believe in it. It's just getting out of one car and into another."
- Steven Seagal claims to have been a 17th century Tibetan monk.
- Tom Cruise.

When you add all these numbers up, you arrive at almost 2.5 billion people who believe in reincarnation. There are 2.2 billion people in the world who call themselves Christians. So, *there are more people who believe in reincarnation than believe in Christianity*. And statistically, every fourth person you meet believes in reincarnation.

#### FAMOUS PEOPLE IN HISTORY WHO BELIEVED IN REINCARNATION:

**Benjamin Franklin.** He wrote his own epitaph at age 22. He said that, like an old book, he would "appear once more in a new and more elegant edition...revised and corrected by the author."

**Mark Twain.** He said, "I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it."

**Edgar Cayce**, the so-called psychic, who interestingly was a member of the Disciples of Christ church in Kentucky, believed that he once was a resident of Atlantis.

**General George Patton** was obsessed with the idea of rebirth. He believed that he had always been a warrior in one form or another.

**Napoleon Bonaparte, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Albert Schweitzer, and others.**

PEOPLE IN JESUS'S DAY BELIEVED IN REINCARNATION, INCLUDING HIS OWN DISCIPLES

Matthew 16:13 says, "When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'" The reply implies a belief in reincarnation.

John 9:1-2 says, "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" If this man was being punished for his own sin (one of the possibilities suggested by the disciples), and he was born blind, then his sin must have been in a previous life.

I think all this is reason enough to consider the subject of reincarnation. A LOT of people (including people you know) believe in it. It is a rage among Hollywood celebrities, who are worshipped by impressionable young people. And it leads people away from Christ and the Bible.

WHY IS REINCARNATION SO POPULAR?

The short answer is, it's a handy way to deny the finality of death and judgment. It leads people to believe that they have a second chance (or multiple chances). Shirley MacLaine said, "Reincarnation is like show business. You just keep doing it until you get it right." Henry Ford said, "The discovery of reincarnation put my

mind at ease.” That is the great danger: people think, I don’t have to obey God or be concerned about a judgment--I will have multiple chances to “get it right.”

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT REINCARNATION?

The Scriptures never mention reincarnation specifically, but they consistently teach by implication that the idea cannot be true. Reincarnation is in the same class as witchcraft, sorcery, and supposed communication with the dead, all of which are condemned in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, Galatians 5:20).

## SOME BIBLE PASSAGES THAT IMPLY THAT WE ARE UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BORN ONLY ONCE AND DIE ONLY ONCE:

**Genesis 5:5**--“So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.” (If his soul lived in multiple other bodies, then nobody knows “all the days” of Adam.)

**Job 10:20-21**--“Are not my days few? Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a little comfort, before I go to the place from which I shall not return....”

**PSALMS 90:12** says, “Teach us to number our days.” (How could we number our days if our days are indefinite and numberless?)

**ECCLESIASTES 3:1-2**--“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time [not times] to be born, and a time [not times] to die.”

**ECCLESIASTES 7:1**--“A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day [not days] of death than the day [not days] of one’s birth.”

**ECCLESIASTES 9:6** says of those who die, “Never more will they have a share in anything done under the sun.”

**JAMES 4:14**--“For what is your life?” (Not, “What are your lives?”)

**LUKE 16:19-31**, the account of the rich man and Lazarus, teaches us that it is not possible to change one's destiny after death or to return to this life. The rich man, in torment in Hades, pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to him with water. Abraham said, "Those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." The rich man then pleaded for Lazarus to be sent back to earth to warn his brothers. Again, he was denied.

**HEBREWS 9:27** is the definitive Biblical statement on the subject: "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." There were some miraculous exceptions to this rule--there were people raised from the dead (Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, Dorcas, Eutychus, etc.). However, none of these returned to inhabit another person's body, but their own. Samuel, Moses, and Elijah all returned momentarily to earth after death, but they returned as themselves, not as somebody else.

FINALLY, WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO BE REINCARNATED?

It's interesting that reincarnationists claim that one purpose of reincarnation is to rid humanity of its selfishness and evil--each time you are reincarnated, you are supposed to be "new and improved." What we see in the real world, though, is the exact opposite: each generation seems to get worse and worse. (And this is what the Bible said would happen.)

Paul said in Philippians 1:23 that, if he had the choice, he would rather depart and be with Christ, which would be "far better." He did not say, "I'd like to come back to earth and try again."

And let me ask those of you who are old: Would you want to live through old age multiple times, or is once enough?

Do not be misled by reincarnation, or take it lightly, or treat it as a joke. You and I are on a one-way trip--we only have one chance to get it right. Realize the urgency of preparation for eternity. And when a friend or loved one makes light of or affirms reincarnation, please correct him. His eternal destiny depends on it! --John

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