

REINCARNATION... OR RESURRECTION?

– A Message to Hindus –

Many, many centuries ago, it is recorded, a man named Job asked this question: “If a man die, shall he live again?” It has been asked by men throughout the ages. Is death the end of our existence?

Hindus answer that it is not; for they believe in reincarnation: that a soul goes through a cycle of birth and rebirth. And according to what is called the “law of *karma*,” it is believed that one’s present circumstances in life are the result of the good or evil done in one’s past lives. Reincarnation and *karma* thus go together in Hindu teaching.

But is all this true? And how may we know?

It is in the book called the *Bible* that there is the record of the man, Job, who asked that question long ago: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). Throughout the ages, men have desired, and sought for, the answer to this! But Job *knew* the answer to his own question. He immediately went on to say, “all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come”; but the change that he was referring to was *not* that he would be reincarnated! For he did not believe in this. He said, “*I know that my Redeemer liveth*” (Job 19:25). His faith was in a living Redeemer! And because this was so, he was able to say also, with great assurance, “in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:26) - that is to say, in the very same body he had right then - not in another body! Job believed in the *resurrection* of his body to newness of life, not in being *reincarnated* into another physical body altogether. And when he spoke of waiting till his “change” came, he meant that he would wait for the time of his death, when he knew he would exchange his life on earth for one in heaven for eternity.

And the Redeemer whom he firmly believed in was Jesus Christ, whom the Bible declares to be the Son of God, and who said, “*I am* the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, *yet shall he live*: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25,26); and by these wonderful words He meant that the one who believes in Him shall never die *spiritually* or *eternally*; and even though his body dies *physically* for a time, he shall be raised from the dead in the selfsame body, and shall live in heaven with Christ for ever.

Jesus also said, “the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His [Jesus’] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28,29).

Thus, on the one hand, there is the teaching of Hinduism concerning reincarnation; and on the other hand, the teaching of the Bible concerning resurrection.

But which one is the *truth*? And how may we *know*?

It is only reasonable to ask: where is the *evidence* that reincarnation is true? And an honest enquirer will have to admit that there is simply no evidence whatsoever. It is something which is believed - but the Hindu must ask: why exactly do I believe in it? The plain fact is that there is no evidence for it at all.

Now at this point the Hindu has every right to ask, “But where is the evidence that what the Bible says about the *resurrection* is true?”

There *is* proof: most certainly there is! And if space permitted, we could examine this abundant evidence: e.g. the fact that the Bible, written over many centuries, by many different men, contains no contradictions or errors whatsoever; the fact that it is full of astounding prophecies which have been fulfilled down to the smallest detail; etc. This is just a small portion of the evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore, when it tells us about the resurrection, it tells us the truth. But here we will examine, as solid evidence for the resurrection, *the resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself from the dead!*

After Jesus died, He was not reincarnated - He was *resurrected!* The *very same body* He had when He died, was raised to life again!

The resurrection of Christ is an historical fact, proved by ample evidence. The apostles were men who were *eyewitnesses* of Christ after His resurrection (Acts 1:22). One of them, Peter, said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we *all are witnesses*" (Acts 2:32; also Acts 3:15). And a disciple named Luke wrote that to the apostles Christ showed Himself alive after He had died "by *many infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days" (Acts 1:3); and then He ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:50,51).

But did these men really witness Christ's resurrection? They certainly did! They suffered much persecution, because they preached that Christ had died and risen again (1 Corinthians 4:9-13). It stands to reason that they were either good men, or bad men. If they were good men, they would not have lied about Christ's resurrection! And if they were bad men and had lied, would they have willingly suffered so much for the sake of a tale they themselves invented? Certainly not! Despite their sufferings and even martyrdoms, they continued to preach the resurrection of Christ - for they knew it was true! They were good and godly men, called by God to bear witness to the truth of Christ's resurrection. And the many mighty miracles which they performed in the Name of the risen Christ *confirmed* that what they were saying about Him was the truth! - or God would never have authenticated their message in such a wonderful way (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3,4).

And furthermore, there were hundreds of other witnesses of the resurrected Christ! Paul the apostle wrote of Christ, "And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve [apostles]: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.... After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also" (1 Corinthians 15:4-8). Over five hundred people saw Jesus after His resurrection! In a court of law, a case would be considered amply proved, beyond all shadow of doubt, if there were five hundred witnesses!

Yes, Jesus rose from the dead, and in the *same body* which He had when He died. When He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, He said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). He was *resurrected* - not reincarnated!

Therefore, to return to the question, "Where is the proof, the evidence, that what the Bible says about the resurrection of the dead is true?" The evidence is in the amply-attested fact that God the Father raised Jesus Christ His Son from the dead! And so we can be *certain* that when Christ taught that all men will be resurrected, either to eternal life or eternal damnation (e.g. in John 5:28,29), *He was telling the truth!* The Bible says most solemnly, "it is appointed unto men *once to die*, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). There is no reincarnation after death, but there *is* divine judgment! At death, the body returns to dust until the resurrection, but the soul goes either to heaven or to hell, for all eternity.

Who *is* Jesus? The Bible reveals that there is only one true and living God (Deuteronomy 6:4), who eternally exists in three divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7). Jesus Christ is God the Son. Being God, He existed from all eternity; but He came into the world as a man to redeem (i.e. to purchase the spiritual freedom of) His chosen people from all nations; He was miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin; and thus was God manifest in the flesh (Galatians 4:4,5; Luke 1:26-35; 1 Timothy 3:16). And His purpose in coming into the world was *to save sinners* (1 Timothy 1:15), by living a life of perfect sinlessness and obedience to God the Father, and dying on a cross *in the place of* sinful men and women, suffering the penalty that they should have suffered for their sins, as their great and perfect *Substitute*, their sins being laid upon Him by God the Father (2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Isaiah 53:4-7; 1 Peter 3:18). Then He rose from the dead, conquering death for all those He came to save, and ascended back to heaven, from where He will come again to gather His redeemed people to Himself, taking them to be with Him in heaven for ever (Romans 6:9,10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26,51-57; John 14:1-6).

Returning, then, to Job's all-important question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" If saved from his sins by faith in Christ, he will live forever in heaven with the Lord; but if *not* saved from his sins, he

will spend eternity suffering the torments of hell.

What is sin? Sin is the transgression of the holy law of God (1 John 3:4). And all men and women on earth have transgressed it! All are guilty, and deserve damnation because of their sins. Sin proceeds from within the heart of man. Sin is every wicked thought, word, or deed; every act of rebellion against God (Mark 7:20-22; Romans 1:28-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21). Sin also includes the worship of idols of all kinds (Romans 1:21-23). And Hinduism is *full* of idolatry!

It is absolutely essential, then, to know the answer to another all-important question: "How may I be saved from my sins?"

Hinduism teaches a form of salvation by one's own works, or efforts. The belief that present actions affect future happiness or sorrow, is what motivates the Hindu to do various good deeds. Thus the *motive* for doing good deeds is not, first and foremost, for the benefit of others, but for one's own benefit! This is the notion of salvation by one's own works; and it is an impossibility!

The Bible says, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, *not* by works of righteousness which *we* have done, but according to His *mercy* He saved us" (Titus 3:4,5). And, "For by *grace* are ye saved through *faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Grace is God's undeserved favour. Faith is the gift of God, and those to whom it is given believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; and thus, by God's grace, they are saved from their sins through faith in Christ. Salvation, we are emphatically told, is *not of works!*

The answer, then, to the all-important question, "How may I be saved?" is *faith in Jesus Christ alone*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31)! Believe, with all your heart, in He who is the Son of the living God; the only Saviour of sinners; the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When He hung on the cross, the sins of all His chosen people were laid upon Him; and He died for them. He suffered the penalty that they should have suffered for their own sins - *He* suffered in their place! Of Christ it is written in God's Word, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5,6). "For He [God the Father] hath made Him [God the Son, Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Lord Jesus died in the place of sinners. And *whosoever* truly believes in Him will not perish eternally, but have everlasting life (John 3:15,16).

The one who is brought to see his own sinfulness in the sight of God who is holy, must *repent* of his sins, and believe in Christ! To repent is to turn from sin; to forsake it. If you have been pricked in your heart, and are crying out, "What shall I do?" the answer is, "*Repent*" (Acts 2:37,38), and "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31)! "For there is *none other name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved", than the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

And good works? Salvation is not by works; but the Bible says that true believers are "created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). This means that although no man is saved by his works, but only by God's grace through faith in Christ, yet *once* he is truly saved, he will *demonstrate* this fact by the good works that he does. Good works are the *evidence* of salvation, not the *cause* of salvation.

Dear Hindu reader: do not be deceived! "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Hinduism is, truly, "a way which *seemeth* right"; but it is not. It is deceptive, and leads to hell, as all false religion does. Jesus said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13). Hinduism is just such a broad way to eternal destruction. Jesus also said, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (v.14). This "narrow way to life" is Christ Himself, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Enter into eternal life by turning from your sins and from false religion, and by believing in the only One who can save your soul - the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour!

Shaun Willcock

If you have repented of your sins and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, or if you would like to know more about Him, His Gospel, and the true Christian life, please contact us.

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