

Article: JAW020

WHAT SETS CHRISTIANITY APART FROM AN EASTERN WORLDVIEW?¹

This article first appeared in the Ask Hank column of the *Christian Research Journal*, volume 28, number 2 (2005). For further information or to subscribe to the *Christian Research Journal* go to: <http://www.equip.org>

While it has become increasingly popular to merge Eastern spirituality with biblical Christianity, the chasm that separates these worldviews is an unbridgeable gulf. First, in an Eastern worldview God is an impersonal force or principle. In sharp distinction, the God of Christianity is a personal being who manifests such communicable attributes as spirituality, rationality, and morality (John 4:24; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24).

Furthermore, in an Eastern worldview humanity's goal is to become one with nature because nature is God. In this sense, the Eastern worldview is pantheistic—in other words, “God is all and all is God.” Conversely, Christianity teaches that man is created in the image and likeness of his Creator and as such is distinct from both nature and God (Gen. 1:26–27).

Finally, in an Eastern worldview truth is realized through intuition rather than through the cognitive thinking process. In contrast, Christianity teaches that truth is realized through revelation (Heb. 1:1–2), which is apprehended by the intellect (Luke 1:1–4), and then embraced by the heart (Mark 12:29–31).²

Can Reincarnation and Resurrection Be Reconciled?

An ever-growing number of people in both the church and the culture have come to believe that reincarnation and resurrection can be reconciled. In fact, multitudes have embraced the odd predilection that Scripture actually promotes reincarnation. In reality, however, the Bible makes it crystal clear that reincarnation and resurrection are mutually exclusive.

To begin with, the resurrectionist view of *one death* per person is mutually exclusive from the reincarnationist view of an ongoing cycle of death and rebirth. The writer of Hebrews emphatically states that human beings are “destined to die *once*, and after that to face judgment” (Heb. 9:27 NIV, emphasis added). In sharp contrast to a worldview in which humanity perfects itself through an endless cycle of birth and rebirth, the Christian worldview maintains that we are vicariously perfected by the righteousness of Christ (Phil. 3:9).

Furthermore, the biblical teaching of *one body* per person demonstrates that the gulf between reincarnation and resurrection can never be bridged. Rather than the *transmigration* of our souls into different bodies, the apostle Paul explains that Christ “will *transform* our lowly bodies” (Phil. 3:21 NIV, emphasis added). He explicitly says that the body that dies is the very body that rises (1 Cor. 15:42–44).

Finally, the Christian belief that there is only *one way* to God categorically demonstrates that resurrection and reincarnation can never be reconciled. As Christ Himself put it, “I am *the way* and *the truth* and *the life*. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6 NIV, emphasis added). If Christ is truly God, His claim to be the only way has to be taken seriously. If, on the other hand, He is merely one more person in a pantheon of pretenders, His proclamations can be pushed aside easily. That is precisely why the resurrection is axiomatic to Christianity. Through His resurrection Christ demonstrated that He does not stand in a line of peers with Buddha, Baha'u'llah, Krishna, or any other founder of a world religion. They died and are *still* dead, but Christ is risen.

Ultimately, resurrection and reincarnation can never be reconciled because the former is a historical fact while the latter is but a Hindu fantasy.³

— Hank Hanegraaff

NOTES

1. Adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, *The Bible Answer Book* (Nashville: J. Countryman, 2004).
2. For further study, see James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Charles Strohmer, *The Gospel and the New Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).
3. For further study, see Hank Hanegraaff, *Resurrection* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), chap. 14.