

IMMORTALITY: CAN A DEAD MAN VISIT HIS HOUSE?

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There are many schools of thought or sects within Buddhism and Hinduism, holding conflicting views. There is also a wide diversity of conflicting sects or denominations within what is known as Christianity. Often it is difficult to make sense of the confusion. But there is one teaching that is a common denominator in practically every sect of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and in many Christian churches, at least it is held by the overwhelming majority: *the natural immortality of the human soul*.

This substratum foundational idea in Buddhism and Hinduism supports the superstructure of *Karma* and the transmigration of the soul through successive rebirths and deaths in varied existences. The *atman* is all the time essentially a divine essence which for the naive person is imprisoned in a *maya* or illusionary existence; salvation is a *moksa* release from this illusion of physical existence. The problem is that there can never really be an end to the totality of human suffering attendant on *maya*. The “wheel of life” continues to revolve through endless ages in successive cycles, and good and evil remain forever balanced in a precarious co-existence that can in the end spell only continued sorrow and pain for many.

Who could enjoy a sumptuous banquet in a restaurant while hungry, starving people are

peering through the windows, unfed? Who could enjoy a Heaven of bliss knowing that the wheel of misery continues to roll forever on earth? After all, heaven and earth are too close together for any possibility of one being insulated from the other. Even all parts of our formerly isolated continents on earth are linked instantly by telephone and satellite. Is it possible that a God who is “love” as He says He is could be happy in His Heaven while myriads of anguished people on earth continue on and on in misery? Or, to ask the question even more pointedly: how could any of us be happy in a Heaven, knowing that here on earth the suffering goes on and on eternally?

The serpent’s seduction of Eve in the Garden of Eden was based on the lie, “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). You are inherently immortal. You are “god” with a little “g.” You can improve on your status of knowing “good” by eating the forbidden fruit and knowing the opposite pole which is “evil” (Genesis 3:5).

Ever since, pagans as well as Christians have believed themselves to be immortal. This original lie invented by Satan (serpent) has subtly undermined the true gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the foundational truth of spiritualism since it is the devil’s doctrine. Everything from pantheism to predestination have been justified on its premise. Sin gets a pass because of it. The whole purpose of the death of Christ on the cross is rendered superfluous. And the resurrection of the dead and the second coming of Christ become meaningless.

In one fell swoop Satan completely undermined Eve's belief system about God. Written upon her nature was the truth "The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4). "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Now her mind was opened to the possibilities of not only her being a goddess, but of an ever-expanding pantheon of gods potentially inclusive of every living and non-living entity, and all of them possessing immortality.

Pantheism is the belief that everything is god. God is a rock. God is a monkey. God is you and god is me. God is good. God is bad. Everything is eternal and so is sin. Since sin and immortality is eternal, let lawlessness reign! There is no law. You are god. And so you declare what is good for you and what is evil for you.

The Bible teaches that God "only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Timothy 6:16). This is a standing rebuke to anyone claiming to have immortality. Yet, no one is shut off from obtaining immortality. Paul tells us it is for "them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (Romans 2:7). If "immortality" is something that we seek for, then we do not possess it yet.

The apostle says that Christ has "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). From these three texts we are forced to the following conclusions: No sinner can have eternal life, for "the wages of sin is *death*" (Romans 6:23). No one can have eternal life unless he *seeks for* it, and the proper way to seek for it is by patient continuance in well-doing.

Since it is only through the gospel that immortality is brought to light, and eternal life comes only through Christ, it is evident that no one who rejects Christ and the gospel can have immortality.

It may be argued by some that, while it is true that immortality comes from God alone, and He alone has life in Himself, He has implanted it in all human beings. But this will not harmonize with the Bible. If men were *by nature* immortal, then it would not be true that immortality, comes through Christ and the gospel. If we accept the Bible as authority, then immortality cannot be bestowed until it is seen who have accepted Christ, and have persevered in well-doing. And this cannot be seen in this life, for there is always a possibility of the best man's falling from his steadfastness.

If it be true that all men have in them an immortal principle, then there can be no such thing as sin. For immortality means exemption from death. Whoever is immortal cannot die. But "the wages of sin is death;" that is, whoever sins will die; and no one will die except those who sin.

So, if the claim is that all men are immortal, and that none can die, the logical conclusion is that none are sinners. In other words, wages will be given where due; and if death, the wages of sin, is given to no man, then it follows that no man is deserving of it. Thus immortal-soulism is pure universalism.

The fact of the matter is we are presently mortals, subject to death, as Christ was when He came in our flesh. "Our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:11) is what Christ took. He "became obedient unto death, even

the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7, 8). As God, Jesus could not have died for sinners, because God is immortal and cannot die. But Christ became the Son of man, and “was made in the likeness of men” so that He could choose to lay down His life for us.

When shall we obtain our change from mortality to immortality? “This mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53) when “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” “we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52). When Jesus comes to raise the dead and call the living to Himself, His second coming is the moment that the gift of immortality is bestowed.

The false teaching of the immortality of the soul says that God created all souls in Adam. Therefore, since every individual’s soul was incorporate in Adam when he sinned, when an infant is born, he bears the guilt of Adam’s sin. Should he die in infancy, his soul would go to purgatory. So it is necessary for the baby to undergo the sacrament of baptism by the sprinkling of holy water. Thus his immortal soul will be cleansed of the guilt from Adam’s original sin.

The whole idea of original sin is without foundation in the Bible. The term is nowhere found in Inspiration. To connect original sin with the immortal soul of a baby derived from Adam is erroneous.

But the most harmful and damaging effect of the immortal soul teaching is the undermining of the importance of Jesus’ death for sinners. If the soul of sinners is immortal, then they have no need of eternal life. They already have it by nature from their Creator. Immortal-soulism completely sweeps

away the necessity for the atoning sacrifice of our Saviour for sinners.

By definition one who is immortal is not subject to death. Death results from sin. Therefore, one who by nature has an immortal soul has no sin. Hence, there is no necessity for the death of Jesus on the cross.

Even more astounding is the fact that if Jesus did not truly die on the cross because He had an immortal soul, then we are faced with a cruel hoax perpetrated by Christ Himself upon us. To the contrary, Jesus said, “I am the way, the *truth*, and the life” (John 14:6). There was no lie in Him. He said, “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15). Isaiah the prophet said: “He hath poured out His soul unto death” (Isaiah 53:12).

Everything about this slimy doctrine of the immortality of the soul has the fingerprints of the devil on it. His purpose is to destroy the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation from sin. For example, there is no necessity for the alienated hearts of sinners to be reconciled to God so far as appreciating what it cost the dear Saviour to sacrifice His life. By a mystical “act of faith” one can put his sins on Jesus once and for all. Since the soul is naturally immortal he is all set for death to be the door to heaven.

The truth about death is that it is separation from God. Jesus told His followers: “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: . . . Whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 13:33). Death is separation from God; the withdrawal of His life; but although we should all die, and become “as

water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again,” “yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him.” 2 Sam. 14:14.

What are the means that He has devised? Jesus has told us, in the words of comfort which He spoke to the disciples, who were sorrowing because He had told them that He was going away from them and that they could not go with Him. “Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14:1-3. These words show that the departing and being with Christ is only at His coming. So it was for the coming of the Lord that the Apostle Paul longed.

In the comfort which the Apostle Paul gives to the sorrowing ones, he tells them not to sorrow as those that have no hope, because God will bring the sleeping ones from the grave. But when he comes to the grand climax, after stating that when the Lord descends the dead shall rise first, and then we shall be “caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air,” it is not said, “and so shall we ever be together;” but, “so shall we ever be *with the Lord*.” That is the “blessed hope” above all others. It is the being with Him that makes it possible for friends to be united; for apart from Him there is nothing. There is no real friendship or relationship even in this world, except in Christ; there can be no perfect union except in Him.

So how shall we be with our friends reunited “to meet the Lord in the air”? “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). “So,” that is by the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living, at the coming of Christ, will the Saviour’s promise be fulfilled, to take His people to Himself, to be with Him.

From this we see that the immortal-soul teaching displaces “the blessed hope” and the resurrection from the dead. If death is the door to heaven, then there is no necessity for intensely awaiting the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. The dead are already in heaven. Death becomes a friend rather than an enemy and separation from God. Death means union with God. This is all twisted and backwards and flips the truth of God on its head.

We are plainly told that “the last *enemy* that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). Just how this last enemy is destroyed we are not left in doubt. “We shall not all *sleep*, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . . Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

Where are the dead now? Do they know what happens on the earth after they have died? Can they return to the earth to their homes as “spirits” to work miracles, and to frighten people? Some people believe that the dead are still alive, and can visit us in various ways.

Early into my ministry in the Detroit area I became acquainted with a Pentecostal lady who was interested in the Bible. My visits to her home soon revealed that she believed her dead husband came to her home and she could feel his presence.

Strange to say, such teaching is never found in the Book of God. The Scripture says, “The dead know not anything” (Ecclesiastes 9:5). That is so clear that no one, not even a child, can doubt it.

This teaching is the same throughout the Bible. Jesus Christ said of Lazarus, a friend who had died, “Lazarus sleepeth. . . . Lazarus is dead” (John 11:11-14). In the book of Job we read, “Man dieth. . . , and where is he? Man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep” (Job 14:10-12). If death is a sleep, and if the dead know not anything, then it is certain that a dead man cannot return to his friends to frighten them, nor visit his house again. Job said, “He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more” (Job 7:9, 10).

Some of the famous Masai elders are experts in what they think is talking with the dead. The Masai have not heard the true Bible teaching that the dead are in their graves and cannot return to men.

Therefore, when their witch doctors (*laibon*) think that they are bringing back the spirits of the dead, they are in reality calling evil angels who fell from heaven. These evil angels can take the form of human beings in their meetings. What a pity these good people do not know the truth!

The Bible draws back the curtain that separates the unknown vista beyond death, and reveals its mystery to us. Whatever death may be, it is something that cannot separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. The apostle cries out in joyous triumph: “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

As a tired child trustfully falls asleep in his father’s arms, so the one who believes in Jesus falls asleep in the Father’s care. When Jesus’ close friend Lazarus died, He said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit, Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead” (John 11:11-14).

Jesus then proceeded to raise Lazarus from the dead, even though the man had been dead for some time, and the family protested, “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days” (verse 39). Everybody present could smell the evidence when the stone was rolled away from the

tomb. Then Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. . . . And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go" (verses 41-44).

What did Lazarus know about what had happened during those "four days"? Was he conscious as a spirit or as a mysterious soul hovering nearby? Had his soul or spirit entered some other person or creature? No, it was Lazarus himself who was resurrected. The Bible says that in the sleep of death we are unconscious:

"The dead know not anything. . . . Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished." "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; Psalm 146:3, 4).

Lazarus had nothing to say about those four days. It was a deeper unconsciousness than even being in a coma. To the one who sleeps in death, a thousand years may pass by as a mere moment. When Lazarus died, the next thing he knew was hearing that voice of Jesus calling him to awaken. It's just like when you go to sleep at night. If you sleep soundly, you know nothing until the birds sing the next morning. Seven or eight hours of sleep pass as a moment. What happens at death? The Bible truth is clear and simple, easily understood. Death is the simple reverse of creation. When God created man, He "formed him of the dust of the

ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). The union of the body (formed of constituents of the earth), and the gift of the spirit of life (received from God, the Source of life), formed the man himself "a living soul."

When a person dies, this process is simply reversed. Ecclesiastes says, "Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life [the spirit, KJV] will go back to God, who gave it to us" (12:7). If you take pieces of wood and put them together with nails, you construct a box. The box did not exist until you put it together. Now if you take it apart and again separate it into pieces of wood and nails, what happens to the box? It simply returns to what it was before. The box has ceased to exist.

But note: the spirit or breath of life returns *to God who gave it*. It is safe in His hands, the hands of our loving heavenly Father. Our personality is in His care as a child sleeping in the arms of its father; and He will recreate us as individual personalities in the resurrection day, just as the loving father will greet his child when it awakens in the morning. In fact, the father who loves his child can hardly wait until he awakens again. And so does our heavenly Father eagerly await the resurrection day, to have us united with Him again, for He loves us. The resurrection is *His* idea! Like an artist who has painted a beautiful picture and wants to see it again, "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands," Job says of God (14:15).

Lord Lindsay, in his travels through the Near East,

discovered a mummy whose inscription proved it to be some two thousand years old. Upon carefully unwrapping it, he found buried in the hand of this mummified man a bulb of vegetable life.

Wondering just how long vegetable life could last, sealed as this was, he took it carefully out and planted it in rich, sunny soil. To his surprise, within a short time the bulb grew and a beautiful flower appeared.

What would you give for a hope like that? That hope, for a sleeping one, is about to be fulfilled. Take courage, on the resurrection morning, thy dead too shall live!