

# Yoga and Christianity: Are They Compatible? – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

*Michael Gleghorn takes a hard look at yoga to determine if the practice is compatible with Christian living. After examining the spiritual underpinnings of yoga and the relationship of the physical aspects to the spiritual teaching, he concludes that Christians seeking physical exercise would be wise to consider techniques other than yoga.*



*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

## What is Yoga?

What is yoga? For many in the West, yoga is simply a system of physical exercise, a means of strengthening the body, improving flexibility, and even healing or preventing a variety of bodily ailments. But if we inquire into the history and philosophy of yoga we discover that “much more than a system of physical exercise for health, Yoga is . . . [an] ancient path to spiritual growth.” It is a path enshrined in much of the sacred literature of India.<sup>{1}</sup> Thus, if we truly want a better understanding of yoga, we must dig beneath the surface and examine the historical roots of the subject.

Before we begin digging, however, we must first understand what the term “yoga” actually means. “According to tradition, ‘yoga’ means ‘union,’ the union...of the finite ‘jiva’ (transitory self) with the infinite’...Brahman’ (eternal Self).”<sup>{2}</sup> “Brahman” is a term often used for the Hindu concept of “God,” or Ultimate Reality. It is an impersonal, divine substance that “pervades, envelops, and underlies everything.”<sup>{3}</sup> With this in mind, let’s briefly look at three key texts that will help us chart the origin and development

of yoga within India.

It appears that one can trace both the practice and goal of yoga all the way back to the *Upanishads*, probably written between 1000-500 B.C.{4} One *Upanishad* tells us: “Unite the light within you with the light of Brahman.”{5} Clearly, then, the goal of yoga (i.e. union with Brahman) is at least as old as the *Upanishads*.

In addition, the word “yoga” often appears in the *Bhagavad Gita*, a classic Hindu text possibly written as early as the fifth century B.C.{6} In chapter 6, Krishna declares: “Thus joy supreme comes to the Yogi . . . who is one with Brahman, with God.”{7}

Finally, in about A.D. 150, the yogi Patanjali systematized yoga into eight distinct “limbs” in his *Yoga Sutras*. These eight limbs are like a staircase, supposedly leading the yogi from ignorance to enlightenment. In order, the eight limbs are: *yama* (self-control), *niyama* (religious observances), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *pratyahara* (sense control), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (deep contemplation), and *samadhi* (enlightenment){8} It’s interesting to note that postures and breathing exercises, often considered to be the whole of yoga in the West, are steps three and four along Patanjali’s “royal” road to union with Brahman.

We see that yoga is an ancient spiritual discipline deeply rooted in the religion of Hinduism. This being so, we may honestly wonder whether it’s really wise for a Christian to be involved in yoga practice. Next, we’ll continue our discussion by examining some of the important doctrinal differences between yoga and Christianity.

## **Yoga and Christianity: What are the**

# Differences?

Many people today (including some Christians) are taking up yoga practice. We'll later consider whether yoga philosophy can truly be separated from yoga practice, but we must first establish that there are crucial doctrinal differences between yoga and Christianity. Let's briefly look at just a few of these.

First, yoga and Christianity have very different concepts of God. As previously stated, the goal of yoga is to experience union with "God." But what do yogis mean when they speak of "God," or Brahman? Exactly what are we being encouraged to "unite" with? Most yogis conceive of "God" as an impersonal, spiritual substance, coextensive with all of reality. This doctrine is called pantheism, the view that everything is "God." It differs markedly from the theism of biblical Christianity. In the Bible, God reveals Himself as the personal Creator of the universe. God is the Creator; the universe, His creation. The Bible maintains a careful distinction between the two.[{9}](#)

A second difference between yoga and Christianity concerns their views of man. Since yoga philosophy teaches that everything is "God," it necessarily follows that man, too, is "God." Christianity, however, makes a clear distinction between God and man. God is the Creator; man is one of His creatures. Of course man is certainly unique, for unlike the animals he was created in the image of God.[{10}](#) Nevertheless, Christianity clearly differs from yoga in its unqualified insistence that God and man are distinct.

Finally, let's briefly consider how yoga and Christianity differently conceive man's fundamental problem, as well as its solution. Yoga conceives man's problem primarily in terms of ignorance; man simply doesn't realize that he is "God." The solution is enlightenment, an experience of union with "God." This solution (which is the goal of yoga) can only be reached

through much personal striving and effort. Christianity, however, sees man's primary problem as sin, a failure to conform to both the character and standards of a morally perfect God. Man is thus alienated from God and in need of reconciliation. The solution is Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."[\[11\]](#) Through Jesus' death on the cross, God reconciled the world to Himself.[\[12\]](#) He now calls men to freely receive all the benefits of His salvation through faith in Christ alone. Unlike yoga, Christianity views salvation as a free gift. It can only be received; it can never be earned.

Clearly, Christianity and yoga are mutually exclusive viewpoints. But is every kind of yoga the same? Isn't there at least one that's exclusively concerned with physical health and exercise? Next, we'll take a closer look at hatha yoga, the one most often believed to be purely physical in nature.

## What Is Hatha Yoga?

Here we've learned that yoga is an ancient spiritual discipline rooted in a belief system that is utterly incompatible with Christianity. But is this true of *all* yoga? Isn't *hatha* yoga simply concerned with physical development and good health?

Hatha yoga is primarily concerned with two things: *asana* (physical postures) and *pranayama* (breathing exercises). But it's important to realize that both *asana* and *pranayama* also play a significant role in Patanjali's *raja* (or "royal") yoga. In the traditional eight "limbs" of Patanjali's system, *asana* and *pranayama* are limbs three and four. What then is the relationship of hatha to raja yoga?

Former yoga practitioner Dave Fetcho states that yoga postures "evolved as an integral part of Raja . . . Yoga."[\[13\]](#) He points out that the author of the famous handbook, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, "presents Hatha . . . solely and exclusively

for the attainment of Raja Yoga.”{14} He also cites a French yoga scholar who claims, “the sole purpose of . . . Hatha Yoga is to suppress physical obstacles on the . . . Royal path of Raja Yoga and Hatha Yoga is therefore called ‘the ladder to Raja Yoga.’”{15} Fetcho concurs, noting that the physical postures are “specifically designed to manipulate consciousness...into Raja Yoga’s consummate experience of *samadhi*: undifferentiated union with the primal essence of consciousness.”{16} These statements should make it quite clear that hatha, or physical, yoga has historically been viewed simply as a means of aiding the yogi in attaining enlightenment, the final limb of raja yoga.

This is further confirmed by looking at Iyengar yoga, possibly the most popular form of hatha yoga in the U.S. The Web site for the Iyengar Yoga Institute of San Francisco states: “BKS Iyengar studies and teaches yoga as unfolded in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali [sic] and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika among other classical texts. Thus Asana, or postures, are taught as one of the eight limbs . . . of yoga defined by Patanjali.”{17} In fact, the ultimate goal of Iyengar hatha yoga is precisely the same as that of Patanjali’s raja yoga.{18} Both aim to experience union with “God,” Brahman, or universal consciousness.

If all these things are so, it seems increasingly apparent that hatha yoga may ultimately involve its practitioners in much more than physical exercise. Although it may not be obvious at first, the ultimate goal of hatha is the same as every other form of yoga: union of the self with an impersonal, universal consciousness. We must remember that the Bible never exhorts Christians to seek such an experience. If anything, it warns us of the potential dangers in doing so. Next, we’ll consider whether yoga practice might, in fact, be dangerous—and why.

## Can Yoga be Harmful?

Despite its touted health benefits, there are numerous warnings in authoritative yoga literature which caution that yoga can be physically, mentally, and spiritually harmful if not practiced correctly.

For instance, Swami Prabhavananda warns of the potentially dangerous physical effects that might result from yoga breathing exercises: “Unless properly done, there is a good chance of injuring the brain. And those who practice such breathing without proper supervision can suffer a disease which no known science or doctor can cure.”[\[19\]](#)

In addition, many yogis warn that yoga practice can endanger one’s sanity. In describing the awakening of “kundalini” (coiled serpent power) Gopi Krishna records his own experience as follows: “It was variable for many years, painful, obsessive...I have passed through almost all the stages of...mediumistic, psychotic, and other types of mind; for some time I was hovering between sanity and insanity.”[\[20\]](#)

Finally, however, from a Christian perspective it seems that yoga could also be spiritually harmful. To understand why, let’s return to the experience of “kundalini.” Yoga scholar Hans Rieker declares, “Kundalini [is] the mainstay of all yoga practices.”[\[21\]](#) But what exactly is kundalini and why is it so central to yoga practice?

Swami Vivekananda summarizes the kundalini experience as follows: “When awakened through the practice of spiritual disciplines, it rises through the spinal column, passes through the various centres, and at last reaches the brain, whereupon the yogi experiences samadhi, or total absorption in the Godhead.”[\[22\]](#) And researcher John White takes the importance of this experience even further declaring: “Although the word kundalini comes from the yogic tradition, nearly all the world’s major religions, spiritual paths, and

genuine occult traditions see something akin to the kundalini experience as having significance in “divinizing” a person. The word itself may not appear...but the concept is there...as a key to attaining godlike stature.”{23}

Reading such descriptions of the kundalini, or coiled serpent power, the Christian can almost hear the hiss of that “serpent of old...who deceives the whole world.”{24} In Eden, he flattered our first parents by telling them: “You will be like God.”{25} And though Christianity and yoga have very different conceptions of God, isn’t this essentially what yoga promises?

Swami Ajaya once said, “The main teaching of Yoga is that man’s true nature is divine.”{26} Obviously this is not the Christian view of man. But if the goal of yoga is to realize one’s essential divinity through union with “God,” then shouldn’t the Christian view the practice that leads to this realization as potentially spiritually harmful? Next, we’ll conclude our discussion by asking whether it’s really possible to separate yoga philosophy from yoga practice.

## **Can Philosophy and Practice be Separated?**

We’ve seen that yoga is an ancient spiritual discipline whose central doctrines are utterly incompatible with those of Christianity. Even hatha yoga, often considered to be exclusively concerned with physical development, is best understood as merely a means of helping the yogi reach the goal of samadhi, or union with “God.” Furthermore, we’ve seen that all yoga, including hatha, has the potential to be physically, mentally, and spiritually harmful.

In light of such evidence, it may appear that this question—“Can yoga philosophy be separated from yoga practice?”—has already been answered in the negative. And this is certainly the view of many yoga scholars. Dave Fetcho, formerly of the Ananda Marga Yoga Society, has written, “Physical yoga, according to its classical definitions, is

inheritably and functionally incapable of being separated from Eastern religious metaphysics.”{27} What’s more, yoga authorities Feuerstein and Miller, in discussing yoga postures (asana) and breathing exercises (pranayama), indicate that such practices are more than just another form of physical exercise; indeed, they “are *psychosomatic* exercises.”{28} Does this mean that separating theory from practice is simply impossible with yoga?

If one carefully looks through an introductory text on hatha yoga,{29} one will see many different postures illustrated. A number of these may be similar, if not identical, to exercises and stretches one is already doing. Indeed, if one is engaged in a regular stretching program, this is quite probable. This raises an important question: Suppose that such beginning level yoga postures are done in a context completely free of yogic philosophy. In such a case as this, doesn’t honesty compel us to acknowledge at least the *possibility* of separating theory from practice?

While I hate to disagree with scholars who know far more about the subject than I do, this distinction does seem valid to me. However, let me quickly add that I see this distinction as legitimate *only* at the very beginning of such practices, and *only* with regard to the postures. The breathing exercises, for various reasons, remain problematic.{30} But this distinction raises yet another question, for how many people begin an exercise program intending never to move beyond the most basic level? And since by the very nature of yoga practice, such a distinction could *only* be valid at the very earliest of stages, why would a Christian ever want to begin this process? It seems to me that if someone wants an exercise program with physical benefits similar to yoga, but without all the negative spiritual baggage, they should consider low-impact or water aerobics, water ballet, or simple stretching.{31} These programs can be just as beneficial for the body, without potentially endangering the soul. In my opinion, then,

Christians would be better off to never begin yoga practice.

[Note from the webmistress: Also see [Why a Christian Alternative to Yoga?](#) on the PraiseMoves.com website for an excellent treatment of this subject from a former yoga instructor who explains why the two are incompatible.]

## Notes

1. Raphael, *Essence and Purpose of Yoga: The Initiatory Pathways to the Transcendent* (Massachusetts: Element Books, Inc., 1996), back cover.
2. Brad Scott, "Exercise or Religious Practice? Yoga: What the Teacher Never Taught You in That Hatha Yoga Class" in *The Watchman Expositor* (Vol. 18, No. 2, 2001): 5.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 6.
5. Ibid., cited in Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, *The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal* (New York: New American Library, 1957), 120ff.
6. *Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Juan Mascaro (New York: Penguin Books, 1962), back cover.
7. Ibid., 71.
8. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 601.
9. See Romans 1:18-25.
10. See Genesis 1:26.
11. John 1:29.
12. See 2 Corinthians 5:19.
13. Dave Fetcho, "Yoga," (Berkeley, CA: Spiritual Counterfeits Project, 1978), cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 602.
14. Ibid., 603.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 602.
17. See "Source and Context: Patanjali and Ashtanga Yoga" at <http://www.iyisf.org/>. This quotation was obtained from the site on March 1, 2002.

18. Ibid.
19. Swami Prabhavananda, *Yoga and Mysticism* (Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1972), 18, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 604.
20. Gopi Krishna, *The Awakening of Kundalini* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1975), 124, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 608.
21. Hans Ulrich Rieker, *The Yoga of Light: Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), 101, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 606.
22. Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1970), 16, cited in Scott, "Exercise or Religious Practice? Yoga: What the Teacher Never Taught You in That Hatha Yoga Class," 5.
23. John White, ed., *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1979), 17, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 606.
24. See Revelation 12:9.
25. See Genesis 3:5.
26. Swami Rama, *Lectures on Yoga: Practical Lessons on Yoga* (Glenview, IL: Himalayan International Institute of Yoga, Science and Philosophy, 1976, rev.), vi, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 596.
27. Dave Fetcho, "Yoga," 2, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 600.
28. George Feuerstein and Jeanine Miller, *Yoga and Beyond: Essays in Indian Philosophy* (New York: Schocken, 1972), 27-28, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 600.
29. For example, Richard Hittleman, *Introduction to Yoga* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969)
30. For instance, the breathing exercises can be physically dangerous. Sri Chinmoy wrote, "To practice pranayama without real guidance is very dangerous. I know of three persons who have died from it..." See *Great Masters and the Cosmic Gods* (Jamaica, NY: Agni Press, 1977), 8, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 604. In addition,

however, from a Christian perspective such exercises may also be mentally and spiritually dangerous (at least potentially) because they can induce altered states of consciousness that may make one more vulnerable to demonic deception. Indeed, psychologist Ernest L. Rossi has written of pranayama: "The manual manipulation of the nasal cycle during meditation (dhyana) is the most thoroughly documented of techniques for altering consciousness." See Benjamin B. Wolman and Montague Ullman, eds., *Handbook of States of Consciousness* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), 113, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 595.

31. Of course such programs will need to be tailored to each individual's needs and goals. It's always a good idea to talk to your doctor before beginning any new exercise program.

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# **The Worldview of Edgar Cayce – An Evaluation of His Teachings from a Biblical Perspective**

## **The Edgar Cayce Readings**

By all accounts Edgar Cayce was truly a remarkable man. Beginning in 1901 and continuing until his death in 1945 he gave thousands of psychic readings. Broadly speaking, these readings were of two types: health readings and life readings. The health readings consisted of a psychic diagnosis of a patient's physical ailments and a prescription for how these

ailments should be treated. The life readings consisted of answers to all sorts of personal, religious, and philosophical questions. One rather interesting aspect of these readings is the manner in which they were given: Cayce would lie down on the couch and put himself into a trance state resembling sleep. It was this manner of giving readings that led one of his biographers, Jess Stearn, to refer to Cayce as "The Sleeping Prophet."[{1}](#)

Just how accurate were these readings? Although it is impossible to verify everything Cayce said, some contend that his accuracy rate was over ninety percent![{2}](#) But "with all his vaunted powers," writes Stearn, "Cayce was a humble man, religious, God-fearing, who read the Bible every day of his life."[{3}](#) Indeed, Cayce read through the entire Bible every year and regularly taught Sunday school throughout his life. It is probably for reasons such as these that many people believe that the worldview of the readings is generally consistent with biblical Christianity. But is this really so? How well does the worldview of the Edgar Cayce readings compare with that of the Bible?

Herbert Puryear writes, "The content of . . . the Edgar Cayce readings is . . . always Christ-centered, supporting the ultimate importance of the unique work of Jesus of Nazareth."[{4}](#) But as I hope to demonstrate in this article, such a claim can only be true by redefining the person and work of Jesus Christ to mean something quite different from what the Bible teaches.

For instance Thomas Sugrue, Cayce's earliest biographer and long-time friend, begins his chapter on the philosophy of the readings by stating, "The system of metaphysical thought which emerges from the readings of Edgar Cayce is a Christianized version of the mystery religions of ancient Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, India, and Greece."[{5}](#) The worldview of the readings actually has much more in common with New Age metaphysics and occult philosophy than it does with biblical Christianity.

Although I have little doubt that, as a person, Cayce was kind and humble and motivated by a sincere desire to help his fellow man, it obviously does not follow that the worldview revealed in the readings is therefore true. And while I certainly acknowledge that Cayce regularly read and taught the Bible, it by no means follows that the philosophy of the readings is therefore biblical.

## The Nature of God

According to Dr. Herbert Puryear, “More consequences for thought and action follow from the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other fundamental question.”[\[6\]](#) It’s difficult to overestimate the importance of this observation. Equally important, however, for those affirming the existence of God, is the kind of God they affirm to exist.

There can be no doubt that God is of primary importance in the Edgar Cayce readings. The readings certainly affirm the existence of God, an affirmation that they obviously share with biblical Christianity. This being said, however, there is a marked difference in what each source affirms about the nature of God.

Dr. Puryear writes, “The clearly articulated philosophy of the Edgar Cayce readings is a thoroughgoing monism.”[\[7\]](#) The doctrine of monism claims that all reality is of the same essence. In other words, “All is one.” Indeed, in the introduction to his book Dr. Puryear claims that “the oneness of all force” is the “first premise of the Edgar Cayce readings.”

What effect does this first premise have on the view of God presented in the readings? Dr. Puryear writes, “With the premise of the oneness of all force we affirm that *God is*, that He is *all that is*, and *all that is*, is God.”[\[8\]](#) This view is known as pantheism. It comes from two Greek words: *pan*, meaning “all” or “every,” and *theos*, meaning “God.” In other

words pantheism, like the Edgar Cayce readings, teaches that everything is God – a view substantially at odds with the biblical doctrine of God. Let's look, then, at what the Bible *does* say about God.

Let's first acknowledge that the Bible, like the Edgar Cayce readings, does indeed affirm that God is one. Moses wrote, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" (Deut. 6:4) But the biblical affirmation means something very different from the doctrine of pantheism espoused in the Cayce readings. The Bible is affirming that there is only one Lord God. It is not teaching that "All is One," nor that the name we should give to this all-inclusive Oneness is "God." The biblical view that the Lord is one is sometimes referred to as monotheism. It holds that there is only one God – *not many*, as Israel's polytheistic neighbors believed. It also holds that God, as the Creator of all that exists (other than Himself), is not to be identified with any created thing.[{9}](#) This view contrasts with the doctrine of pantheism, which clearly blurs the distinction between Creator and creation.

Since the view of God presented in the Edgar Cayce readings is basically pantheistic,[{10}](#) it is also, by virtue of this fact, clearly unbiblical. Next we'll see how this effects the readings' presentations of both Christ and men.

## Christ and Men

How did the view of a pantheistic God influence Cayce's doctrines of Christ and men?

Thomas Sugrue, in summarizing the philosophy of the readings, says that in the beginning God "projected from Himself the cosmos and souls."[{11}](#) Thus, according to this view, everything that exists (including man) is somehow part of God. Or as Cayce put it in one of his readings: "Each person is a corpuscle in the body of that force called God."[{12}](#)

But if the readings affirm the divinity of man, what becomes of the Christian belief in the uniqueness of Jesus? Dr. Puryear declares, "In Jesus we are told that God became incarnate. If we could only see clearly that Jesus' claim for divinity is a claim for the divinity of us all, we would understand that His relationship to God is a pattern which all of us may and one day must attain."[{13}](#) Thus, contrary to the Bible, the readings do not understand Jesus' uniqueness in terms of His being God's one and only Son.[{14}](#) In fact, the readings actually deny that there is any essential difference between Jesus and the rest of humanity. All souls – yours, mine, and Christ's – were projected from God, and all share the same divine essence. The Christ soul was simply the first to complete its earthly experiences and return to God.[{15}](#) But concerned with the plight of its brother souls, the Christ soul decided to return and help us. According to Sugrue, the Christ soul incarnated as Enoch, Melchizedek, Joseph, Joshua, Jeshua, and finally – Jesus![{16}](#) As Jesus, He triumphed over death and the body and once again returned to God, becoming "the pattern we are to follow."[{17}](#)

How do such teachings square with the Bible? Not very well, I'm afraid. The Bible maintains a careful distinction between God and man. God is the Creator; man is His creature. God created man in His image (Gen. 1:27); He did not project him from His essence. The Bible also maintains a clear distinction between Jesus and other men. Jesus is the completely unique God-man; no other man is like Him. He was both fully divine and fully human (John 1:1, 14). We are merely human. He was sinless (Heb. 4:15); we are sinful (Rom. 3:23). He claimed to have come not merely to be our example, but "to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11) and "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). We, of course, are the lost sinners He came to ransom and to save (Rom. 5:6-11). Thus it's clear, even from this brief summary, that the readings' doctrines of Christ and men differ substantially from those of the Bible.

# Problems and Solutions

The Bible identifies man's primary problem as sin, a state of moral corruption that has infected our very nature. It is our sinful nature (and the sinful acts arising from it) that is the source of so many of our problems. The Bible warns us that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23). Death is understood primarily as separation. Physical death is the spirit's separation from the body (Jas. 2:26); spiritual death is a person's separation from God (Eph. 2:1-7). All men are conceived in a state of spiritual death, alienated from their Creator and in need of reconciliation with Him (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12; 2 Cor. 5:20).

The Bible presents Jesus as the solution to our problem. It tells us that He died for our sins and, as Divine confirmation of this fact, that He was raised for our justification.[{18}](#) It assures us that *whoever* believes in Jesus will receive God's forgiveness and the free gift of eternal life![{19}](#)

The Edgar Cayce readings offer a very different perspective on man's fundamental problem and how it should be solved. Before exploring this perspective, however, it's helpful to remember that the doctrine of God presented in the readings is essentially pantheistic: God is *everything* and *everything* is God.[{20}](#) We've already shown that this view is substantially different from that of the Bible. And as Douglas Groothuis observes: "Differing descriptions of ultimate reality lead to differing descriptions of the human problem and to differing prescriptions for its solution."[{21}](#) Let's now see how the different descriptions of God in both the Bible and the readings contribute to their different perspectives on man's problem and its solution.

Having declared that God "projected from Himself the cosmos and souls,"[{22}](#) Thomas Sugrue goes on to observe: "At first there was little difference between the consciousness of the new individual and its consciousness of identity with

God.”{23} Over time, however, there was a “gradual weakening of the link between the two states of consciousness.”{24} Eventually, “The individual became more concerned with . . . his own creations than God’s. This was the fall in spirit . . .”{25}

According to Dr. Puryear, these unfortunate souls “were cutoff from an awareness of their oneness with the whole.”{26} And while the full explanation is more involved, the readings seem to ultimately identify this ignorance of our oneness with God as our fundamental problem.{27} Of course, if this is so, the solution is rather obvious: we must remember and reaffirm this inherent oneness. Dr. Puryear claims that it is “God’s quest” to bring us back into a remembrance of our divine heritage “and into full accord with Him.”{28}

Our summary reveals that while the readings’ perspective on man’s problem and its solution is unique, it more strongly resembles the viewpoint of non-dualistic Hinduism than biblical Christianity. It is important that Christians be aware of these differences.

## **Death and Beyond**

One of the greatest human mysteries concerns the experience of death and what (if anything) happens afterward. The book of Hebrews declares, “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Most biblical scholars agree that this verse leaves no room for the doctrine of reincarnation – a doctrine explicitly affirmed in the Edgar Cayce readings. But if this is so, then how did Cayce conclude “that an acceptance of reincarnation in no way went against Holy Writ”?{29}

When Cayce gave his first “life reading” for Arthur Lammers, he spoke of reincarnation as a fact.{30} On waking from his trance and being told what he had said, Cayce was shocked. He even considered that the Devil might be trying to trick

him.{31} But after thinking the matter over, Cayce eventually concluded that even Jesus had taught about reincarnation!{32}

In Matthew's Gospel, immediately after the appearance of Moses and Elijah to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, His disciples ask, "Why . . . do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus answers: "Elijah has come already, and they did not know him." But notice how the passage concludes: "Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:10-13). Reflecting on this passage, Cayce wondered how the disciples could draw such a conclusion. Had they understood John to be the reincarnation of Elijah?{33} And why did they draw this inference so quickly? Had Jesus already taught them "the laws of reincarnation?"{34}

There are several difficulties with this position. First, the theological context of first century Judaism was decidedly *theistic* – not *pantheistic*.{35} We should thus be very careful before concluding that Jesus taught His disciples about reincarnation. His statement probably meant no more than that John had come "in the spirit and power of Elijah" – just as the angel Gabriel had said He would.{36} Second, Jesus made His remarks *after* Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration. But "since John had already . . . died by then, and since Elijah still had the same name and self-consciousness, Elijah had obviously not been reincarnated as John . . ."{37} If he had, then we should have read about Moses and *John* appearing to Jesus – not Moses and *Elijah*! "Third, Elijah does not fit the reincarnation model, for he did not die."{38} The Bible tells us that he was taken up into heaven while still alive!{39} And finally, such an interpretation would clearly contradict the passage in Hebrews cited earlier. Thus, I think we can safely conclude that Jesus did *not* teach the doctrine of reincarnation.

We've seen that while Edgar Cayce was a kind and humble man, the worldview of his readings is "world's apart" from that of the Bible. Christians must carefully avoid being taken captive

by this philosophy.[{40}](#)

## Notes

1. Jess Stearn, *Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping Prophet* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).
2. Thomas Sugrue, *There is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce*, rev. ed. (Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1994), back cover.
3. Stearn, *Edgar Cayce*, 8.
4. Herbert B. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 197.
5. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 305.
6. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 229.
7. Ibid., 209.
8. Ibid., 209.
9. See, for example, Exodus 20:1-6 and Romans 1:18-25.
10. A rather unique feature of the particular version of pantheism presented in the Cayce readings is that "God" is viewed as, in some sense, personal. Dr. Puryear, in a discussion on meditation, writes, "The godhead we seek is a personal one . . ." (*The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 146). This certainly distinguishes the pantheism of the readings from that of most New Age literature (which tends to conceive of "God" as impersonal, rather than personal). Nevertheless, the view of God presented in the Edgar Cayce readings is still pantheistic and, therefore, unbiblical.
11. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 307.
12. Cited in Sugrue, *There is a River*, 320.
13. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 221.
14. This, according to New Testament scholar D.A. Carson, is the real meaning of John 3:16. See Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), 161.
15. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 314.
16. Ibid., 315-16.
17. Ibid., 316.
18. See 1 Corinthians 15:3 and Romans 1:4; 4:25.
19. See John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Colossians 1:14.
20. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 209.
21. Douglas Groothuis, *Are All Religions One?* (Downers Grove, Illinois:

InterVarsity Press, 1996), 24.

22. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 307.

23. *Ibid.*, 309.

24. *Ibid.*, 310.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 213.

27. This seems evident from the fact that, before we can take the next step (i.e. living the Great Commandment) we must first recognize and reaffirm our oneness with the whole. In other words, before we can tackle our other problems, we must first overcome our primary problem: ignorance of our oneness with God. The following remarks from Dr. Puryear help make this clear:

*If we get the sense of such a Reality and affirm God, the oneness of all force, then we may take the next step and address that which the readings evaluate as the ultimate agenda for mankind: the living of the great commandment. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. This Edgar Cayce represented as the ideal for all mankind and the answer to all the problems of mankind . . . A major hindrance and barrier to loving God and others lies in the inadequate understanding we have of ourselves, of our basic spiritual nature, of the spiritual nature of others . . . We must come to understand fully that we are spiritual beings and that all of us are children of God (Ibid., 229-30).*

Notice that it's only after we affirm this pantheistic notion of God that we may take the next step of living the Great Commandment (the solution to all our other problems). Thus, if we can first remember and reaffirm our oneness with God, we can then begin to recognize that, "As children of God, love is . . . the very nature of our being" (*Ibid.*, 231). Armed with this knowledge, we can begin fulfilling the Great Commandment – and watch our problems disappear!

Of course, any Christian would certainly agree that fulfilling the Great Commandment is a worthy ideal for the human race. But there remains a serious problem. In the readings, both God and my neighbor have been redefined. They are supposed to be understood from within a pantheistic worldview. And, as I've already noted previously, this is quite different from a biblical worldview. Thus, what a Christian theist (on the one hand) and a pantheist (on the other) understand by fulfilling the Great Commandment is something very different indeed!

28. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 213

29. Noel Langley, *Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation*, ed. Hugh Lynn Cayce (New York: Paperback Library, 1971), 176.

30. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 202.

31. Ibid., 210.

32. Ibid., 220.

33. Ibid., 222.

34. Langley, *Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation*, 173.

35. Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 106

36. Ibid. See also Luke 1:17.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. See 2 Kings 2:11. See Colossians 2:8.

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**See Also:**

- [Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping \(False\) Prophet](#) *Probe Answers Our E-Mail:*
  - [You're a Christian Fundamentalist Narrow Thinker](#)
  - [How Dare You Judge Edgar Cayce!](#)
- [You Can't Say Edgar Cayce was a Failure as a Prophet!](#)
- [Family Members are into Freemasonry and Edgar Cayce!](#)

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# **“Is Hypnosis OK or a Problem?”**

**I was told by a man who is a new Christian that he quit smoking this past fall through hypnosis. I know that hypnosis is not a good thing, but could you tell me a little more about it so that I can know how to answer in the future?**

Although hypnosis may be useful in some situations, there are a number of potential dangers as well. In what follows, I have simply cut and pasted from a teaching outline on hypnosis. The outline comes from a chapter on “Hypnosis and Hypnotic Regression” in John Weldon and John Ankerberg’s book *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*. It’s important to realize that Weldon and Ankerberg are looking at hypnosis primarily as it relates to the occult and New Age Movement. It MAY be possible for a Christian therapist to make some beneficial use of hypnosis in treating patients. However, I am honestly not knowledgeable enough in this area to know for sure. At any rate, one must certainly be careful, for as Weldon and Ankerberg point out, there are many potentially negative effects arising from the use and/or abuse of hypnosis. Here are a few sections from my outline:

## **Hypnosis and Hypnotic Regression**

### **I. So what is hypnosis anyway?**

*A. It is a deliberately induced condition of deep mental relaxation, or trance (i.e. an ASC), in which a person becomes highly suggestible and potentially capable of being*

*dramatically manipulated.*

*B. When the ASC has been achieved, “various therapeutic maneuvers in the form of suggestions or other psychological interventions are performed and are called the practice of ‘hypnotherapy.’” (310) C. Its New Age and occult applications include: psychic development, spirit contact, automatic writing, astral travel, etc. For instance, Harpers Encyclopedia of Mystical and Paranormal Experience declares, “Self-hypnosis is used...by mediums and channelers to communicate with spirits.” (311)*

## **II. What about hypnotic regression? What is that all about?**

*A. This usually involves using hypnosis to take a person back in their past to uncover buried memories and resolve hidden conflicts.*

*B. In New Age and occult applications, such regression may go back into a person’s alleged “past lives.”*

## **III. How does hypnosis claim to work?**

*A. No one really knows for sure! There is still no generally accepted scientific theory about it.*

*B. “Daniel Goleman, who has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Harvard University, observes, ‘After 200 years of use, we still cannot say with certainty what hypnosis is nor exactly how it works. But somehow it does.’” (310)*

## **IV. Does the Bible have anything at all to say about the practice of hypnosis?**

*A. “Hypnosis may be related to the biblically forbidden practice of ‘charming’ or ‘enchanted’; to the extent this relationship holds true, the practice should be rejected.” (310)*

*B. Christians are to be “filled” and controlled by the Holy Spirit. To the extent that the hypnotic trance opens one up to the influence of other spirits, it has the potential to be quite harmful.*

**V. What is the susceptibility to hypnosis in the general population?**

*A. About 10-20% of people cannot be hypnotized.*

*B. About 10-20% can be easily hypnotized.*

*C. The remainder fall somewhere in between.*

**VII. Granting that hypnosis MAY be helpful and useful under some circumstances, we might still ask whether it is a necessary part of the psychotherapeutic process?**

*A. One psychiatry textbook states, “Everything done in psychotherapy with hypnosis can also be done without hypnosis.” (314).*

*B. But if this is really so, we may ask whether the potential risks are worth the potential benefits?*

**X. What are some of the documented potential dangers of hypnosis?**

*A. Perverse motivations to satisfy ulterior needs on the part of the therapist or patient.*

*B. It may increase a patients overdependence on the therapist.*

*C. Traumatic insight when repressed memories are uncovered.*

*D. Precipitation of a psychosis.*

*E. Sudden panic reactions occasioned by the experience of*

*hypnosis.*

*F. Complications from miscommunication.*

*G. Unscrupulous use of hypnosis.*

*H. Difficulty in waking subject and unfortunate effects of incomplete waking.*

**XI. However, it must be admitted that in the Jan. 1987 *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, it was concluded that “other than in a few rare and isolated instances, hypnosis has proven to be one of the safest tools in the armamentarium of the healing professions.” (317). The dangers of hypnosis are usually attributed more to the therapist than to hypnosis itself.**

**XII. W & A suggest five variables to be considered when evaluating the risks of hypnosis:**

*A. The religious, ethical, and philosophical orientation of the therapist.*

*B. The emotional history and condition of the client.*

*C. The degree of technical expertise and past experience of the therapist.*

*D. The motive and purpose for engaging in hypnosis.*

*E. The hypnotic state itself.*

**XIII. Dr. Shafica Karagulla, M.D., a neuropsychiatrist and member of the prestigious Royal College of Physicians. . . warns against possession from hypnosis in her *Breakthrough to Creativity*. . . She warns that hypnosis can open ‘. . .the door to your mind which can be influenced by other intelligences, some greater than your own. In such a passive state, an entity can get in and obtain control over you.’**

(328).

**XV. Christian scholars are divided over whether the use of hypnosis is permissible for Christians.** “One of the leading Christian authorities on the occult, the late Dr. Walter Martin, accepted the medical practice of hypnosis, while warning against its occult use. Noted psychiatrist Paul Tournier, on the other hand, is opposed to any use of hypnosis” (332).

**XIX. Can you think of any biblical prohibitions against hypnosis?**

*A. It may be generally prohibited in a passage like Deut. 18:10-12 (e.g. divination, witchcraft, sorcery, casting spells, mediums, spiritists, etc.). But of course this is not entirely clear.*

I hope this information helps you in your understanding of hypnosis. While it's not a clear-cut issue, Christians should probably be very careful (and prayerful) before either recommending or receiving hypnosis.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

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## **“Help Me Understand Eating Clean and Unclean Meats”**

I am a freshman college student. A New Testament class professor said that Paul, James and Peter disagreed with the

eating of clean and unclean meats. Now I know of the vision with Peter, which he says some scholars say is only for the fact that they should preach to Gentiles as well as Greeks. Now, is there anywhere else that says they may have not been disagreeing or that one case won out over the other or if one had more information from God? Should we be wary of this subject as Christians? Because that would mean we were eating "wrong" all this time (for those of us who do eat pork and other things like that). Does this have any relevance to our spirituality as Christians? Am I just thinking too hard?

Thanks for writing. The dietary laws set forth in passages such as Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21 were temporary laws given by God only to Israel. These laws are not applicable to Christians today under the terms of the New Covenant. This is not only made clear in Peter's vision, recorded in Acts 10:9-16, but it is stated explicitly by Christ Himself in Mark 7:14-23. Notice in particular what Jesus says in vv. 18-19. In part, this text reads, "Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" Then notice the parenthetical statement which concludes this verse: "Thus He declared all foods clean." In other words, the dietary restrictions given by God to Israel have been nullified. Christians today are not bound by such laws. Today, the Old Covenant under which Israel operated is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

Hope this helps!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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# **“Why Doesn’t the New Testament Violate the Command Not to Add to Scripture?”**

Revelations 22:18 states that, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book.”

I have heard this verse used to explain why the Book of Mormon is not to be considered a later divinely inspired revelation. However, in Deuteronomy 4:2 and Proverbs 30:6, these same warnings about adding to God’s word are stated, so why wouldn’t the New Testament fall into the same category of unacceptable additions to the Bible? Why is it an acceptable addition and revelation when the Book of Mormon—or, for that matter, the Koran—is not?

I personally believe that Revelation 22:18 should be interpreted more narrowly as referring only to the content of the book of Revelation. In other words, I don’t believe John is necessarily forbidding (or excluding) the possibility of later revelations from God; he is rather simply warning against adding or subtracting anything from the book which he has just written. I think the wording of verses 18-19 supports this view. Notice how often John specifies “this” book (i.e. the book of Revelation), and the book of “this” prophecy, as the content of what should not be added to or subtracted from. Thus, I don’t think John’s warning necessarily forbids additional revelation from God in OTHER books; he is simply warning against tampering with what is written in his own. What he has written is the word of God and it should be kept pure and undefiled. Of course I realize that not everyone will share this view, but this is what I think John intended the verse to communicate.

I would basically take Deut. 4:2 the same way. Moses is writing the word of God, and God does not want His message polluted with the additions and subtractions of sinful human beings. He wants His word kept just as He gave it and not altered to suit human fancies or inclinations. What this forbids is purely HUMAN additions or subtractions; it does not mean that God cannot give additional revelation in the future. Indeed, if that were so, not only would the NT be called into question, but the remainder of the OT would as well (for Deuteronomy is the last book of Moses)!

Finally, I think Proverbs 30:5-6 also fits this interpretation. Verse 5 begins, "Every word of God is tested." In v. 6 we are forbidden to add to HIS words. God may reveal additional truth to man at some later time, but man is not to take it upon himself to add to, or subtract from, what God has already revealed.

So what about the Book of Mormon, or the Koran? Why not accept these books as additional revelation from God? My answer to this is simple: whatever the source of these books, it is NOT the God of the Bible. How do we know this? Because both books teach beliefs and practices which are CONTRARY to the Bible. The "God" of Mormonism and the "God" of Islam are NOT the same God as the God of the Bible. In addition, not only do Mormonism and Islam teach a different doctrine of God than that revealed in the Bible, they also teach a different doctrine of man, sin, the afterlife, salvation, etc. If we apply the law of non-contradiction to these different "revelations" we see that while they can all be false, they cannot all be true. Furthermore, if one of these IS true, the others must be false (because they contradict each other on essential beliefs and practices). See the point? If the Bible is truly the word of God, neither the Book of Mormon nor the Koran can qualify as His word.

It is for this reason that I think the Book of Mormon and the Koran should be rejected as later "revelations" from God; not

because of Revelation 22:18.

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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# **“What Is the Job Description of a Deacon?”**

Greetings! I would like to receive some godly insight as to the job description of a deacon.

I have heard from the pulpit of my church that a deacon has the duties of counseling others within the church, as well as teaching. Is this biblical? Please give scriptures. The preacher stated the deacon is ordained but the Bible says that a deacon is appointed. The preacher stated that a deacon can counsel people, making reference to Jethro appointing men to help with counsel to free up Moses... These men, were't they elders and not deacons?

Thanks for your question! The term “deacon” comes from the Greek term *diakonos*, and simply means “minister” or “servant”. It is used often in the New Testament in the general sense of one who serves. However, in a few passages it is used to refer to those occupying a particular position of service in the early church (see Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

The qualifications for serving as a deacon in the church are spelled out in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. Neither counseling nor teaching are specifically mentioned as duties of deacons, nor is the ability to do so stated as a requirement for becoming a deacon. While an elder must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2),

this requirement is not specified of deacons. Nevertheless, since deacons were to hold "to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience", it seems that a certain amount of biblical and theological knowledge may have been required to serve as a deacon. This may indicate that, if necessary, a deacon should be both intellectually and spiritually prepared to minister in such a capacity. However, this is not explicitly stated.

Some believe that the office of deacon originated in Jerusalem by order of the Apostles (Acts 6). Although the Greek term *diakonos* is not used of the Seven in this passage, they do seem to have performed at least some of the duties typically associated with the office of a deacon (e.g. the distribution of food in vv. 1-3). If the office of deacon originated in Acts 6, there may be some basis for official ordination to this office in v. 6. The dictionary on my desk defines ordain, at least in part, in this manner: "officially appoint or consecrate as a minister in a Christian church". Thus, depending on how one defines the terms "ordain" and "appoint", they could be used somewhat interchangeably.

Also worth noting, if Acts 6 does refer to the appointment of the first deacons, there were two who had ministries which were much more extensive than may have been required of deacons. Stephen was quite a teacher, preacher and debater (Acts 6:9-10 and Acts 7), while Philip was quite an evangelist (Acts 8:4-5, etc.). While such gifts may not have been required to serve as a deacon, it seems clear that one who possessed gifts of teaching, evangelism, counseling, etc. could serve as a deacon. Since the requirements to serve as a deacon were primarily moral in nature, anyone meeting these requirements could serve as a deacon, whatever their spiritual gifts might have been.

As for the account of Jethro counseling Moses in Exodus 18, my own view would be as follows: First, while Jethro did counsel Moses (v. 19) to appoint judges to assist him in handling disputes between the people (vv. 21-26), he is actually

described as a “priest” (v. 1) and not a deacon. Second, in my opinion, the Church (including its offices of elder and deacon) did not formally begin until the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2. While the men appointed by Moses to help judge the Israelites may have had moral qualifications similar to those required of both elders and deacons in the New Testament, nevertheless, strictly speaking I do not think that they should be understood as such in the context of Exodus 18. It makes sense that there should be similar moral qualifications required of those who would lead God’s people, but I do not think we should view the “judges” in Exodus 18 as “elders” or “deacons” in the New Testament sense. The former were leaders of Israel; the latter are leaders of the Church. There are certainly similarities between the two, but there are differences as well.

In summary, let me briefly answer your questions this way: First, while a deacon may be competent both to counsel and to teach, neither are specifically required of deacons in the New Testament. Second, there could be evidence for the ordination (or appointment) of deacons to their official task in Acts 6:6. Finally, while the example of Jethro, Moses, and the appointment of judges in Exodus 18 certainly offers some important principles for understanding the necessity of appointing spiritually and morally qualified leaders to assist in the effective ministry of the Church, nevertheless, I personally do not think we should equate the ministry of these “judges” of Israel with that of elders and deacons in the local church. Strictly speaking, if the church began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, I think we should primarily glean our understanding of the qualifications and requirements for serving as elders and deacons in the local church from those New Testament passages which specifically address this issue (e.g. 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9; Acts 6; etc.).

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn

# **“Where Are the Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus’ Resurrection?”**

I was reading [Cruci-fiction and Resuscitation: The Greatest Hoax in the History of Humanity?](#) to learn more about the resurrection of Jesus. When I went to the two Old Testament references he gave (Psalm 34:20, “He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken,” and Zechariah 12:10, “...they will look on Me whom they have pierced...”) as evidence of the prophecy of resurrection, I discovered that these were not prophetic at all but simply words and phrases that were taken out of context. Can you provide me with any Old Testament writing that does speak directly of the resurrection of the messiah?

John 19:36-37

“For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.” And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED.”

may cite both of these OT passages. However, the one in v. 36 may actually be citing Exodus 12:46—

“It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.”

or Numbers 9:12—

“They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone

of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.”

Thus, it is not clear whether John viewed Psalm 34:20 as having Messianic implications. And certainly it does not refer to Jesus’ resurrection. (But then, we would note, the author never indicated these verses refer to the resurrection. The article is about the crucifixion as well, which these verses do prophesy.)

The passage in Zechariah 12:10 is Messianic and would at least be consistent with the resurrection of Christ (as it probably refers to His Second Coming). Isaiah 53:10-12 would also seem to be consistent with Jesus’ resurrection:

But the LORD was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.  
As a result of the anguish of His soul,  
He will see it and be satisfied;  
By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify  
the many,  
As He will bear their iniquities.  
Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,  
And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
Because He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors.

However, in neither of these passages is Jesus’ resurrection specifically predicted.

The only OT texts which specifically teach the doctrine of resurrection are Isaiah 26:19-21;

Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise.

You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.  
Come, my people, enter into your rooms  
And close your doors behind you;  
Hide for a little while  
Until indignation runs its course.  
For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place  
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;  
And the earth will reveal her bloodshed  
And will no longer cover her slain.

Ezekiel 37:12-14;

"Therefore prophesy and say to them,  
'Thus says the Lord GOD,  
"Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up  
out of your graves, My people;  
and I will bring you into the land of Israel.  
Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened  
your graves and  
caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.  
I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life,  
and I will place you on your own land.  
Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done  
it," declares the LORD.'"

and Daniel 12:1-3:

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard  
over the sons of your people, will arise.  
And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred  
since there was a nation until that time;  
and at that time your people, everyone who is found written  
in the book, will be rescued.  
Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will  
awake, these to everlasting life,  
but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven,  
and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Job 19:25-27 is another possibility:

“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,  
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.  
Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;  
Whom I myself shall behold,  
And whom my eyes will see and not another.  
My heart faints within me!

None of these texts are specifically Messianic. I do not think there are any specific predictions of Jesus’ resurrection in the OT. This, I think, is partly why Jesus’ disciples had such a difficult time understanding His own predictions of His resurrection. They did not have a category for a dying and rising Messiah (i.e. raised to glory, never to die again) within world history. They only knew of a general resurrection at the end of time.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

*Addendum: April 7, 2021 by Sue Bohlin*

I would respectfully suggest that we can also turn to the powerful words of Peter in Acts 2:24-32, where He unfolds the realization that David had prophesied about the Lord’s resurrection in Psalm 16—

“But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. For David says about him,

'I saw the Lord always in front of me,  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced;  
my body also will live in hope,

because you will not leave my soul in Hades,  
nor permit your Holy One to experience decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will make me full of joy with your presence.'

"Brothers, I can speak confidently to you about our forefather David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. So then, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, David by foreseeing this spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his body experience decay. This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it."

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# Astrology: Do the Heavens Declare the Destiny of Man?

*Dr. Michael Gleghorn critically examines the claim of astrology that the heavenly bodies somehow influence, or even determine, events on earth.*



*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

## A Brief Historical Introduction

Astrology is based on the notion that the heavenly bodies somehow influence, or even determine, events on earth. It is

believed that an accurate understanding of these heavenly influences, especially at the time of one's birth, can give us insight into a person's character and destiny. Although belief in astrology is very ancient, it continues to have many adherents even in our own day. One writer estimates that as many as one quarter of the world's population "believe in and follow astrology to some extent."[\[1\]](#) Unfortunately, Christians are not exempt from such beliefs. Estimates indicate that anywhere from ten to thirty percent of those claiming to be "born again" Christians entertain some belief that astrology is true.[\[2\]](#)

Although there is some scholarly disagreement over when the western system of astrology originated, astrologer Robert Parry observes, "Conventional scholarship leans toward the view that astrology began in the old Mesopotamian civilizations of the Middle-East sometime around the second millennium B.C."[\[3\]](#) At this time there was no distinction between astrology and astronomy. However, "because centers of learning were also . . . centers of religion, natural astrology soon became corrupted by pagan myths, deities, and magic. As a result, two forms of astrology began to coexist: natural astrology ([or] astronomy) and religious astrology."[\[4\]](#) It was "the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy . . . [who] refined astrology to its present form in the second century A.D."[\[5\]](#) It is this brand of astrology that has most influenced the West. But it is by no means the only form in existence.

Ancient astrological systems differing from our western variety were developed both in China and India—as well as elsewhere. But not only do these systems differ from ours, they also differ from each other. Furthermore, within each of these three major systems, we also find many contradictory subsystems.[\[6\]](#) For example, "Not all western astrologers agree that there are 12 zodiacal signs. Steven Schmidt in his book *Astrology 14* claims . . . a total of 14 signs. But some argue

for only 8, others for 10, and a few for 24.”{7} It was doubtless these many differences that led astrologer Richard Nolle to admit that there are nearly as many astrological systems as there are astrologers!{8}

But don't all these differences affect astrology's reliability? After all, won't different systems give different results? Indeed they will. For instance, one astrologer may predict that you'll have a wonderful marriage; another that you'll never marry—you might easily receive contradictory readings from different astrologers! And the law of non-contradiction says they can't both be right (though they could both be wrong). It is for reasons such as these that we should be hesitant about placing our faith in astrology.

## Difficulties in Chart Interpretation

“The basis of all astrological work is the Birth Chart. This is an accurate map of the sky for the exact date, time and place of birth. . . . [T]his can be the birth of a person . . . a nation . . . or even of an idea or question.”{9} Once the astrologer has such information, he is ready to begin interpreting the chart. But what sort of information is most relevant to chart interpretation?

Although we cannot cover all the details, the astrologer is primarily concerned with examining the planets, houses, and signs—and how these are related to one another. Thus, astrologer Robert Parry writes, “[E]ach planet has a distinct and definite character which is modified by the sign and house in which it is placed. Mars, for example, is the planet of aggression, extraversion, self-confidence and sexuality.”{10} The “signs” are the twelve signs of the zodiac. “Everyone is . . . born under one of these . . . signs (Pisces the fish, and so on).”{11} Finally, “the *houses* are the 12 divisions of the zodiac that are said to correspond symbolically to every area of life . . . the planets are said to travel through the houses, influencing each area of life as they do.”{12}

But the astrologer must not only pay attention to the planets, houses and signs, he must also note their relationships to one another. For instance, "Angular relationships between planets are . . . very important. These relationships are called 'aspects' . . . a Square (90-degree) aspect between two planets indicates tension or disagreement . . . whereas a Trine (120-degree) aspect indicates sympathy and cooperation." [{13}](#)

Interpreting a birth chart is thus a very complex affair. Indeed, one astrologer "calculated the least possible number of different combinations resulting from the most basic . . . chart . . . [as] roughly equivalent to the estimated number of atoms in the known universe!" [{14}](#) And such complexity is just one of many difficulties.

Another is that not all astrologers agree on the number of signs that need to be considered in interpreting a chart. While most acknowledge twelve, some think there are *less* and others *more* than this. There are also differences regarding where the various houses should be placed on a chart. And clearly such differences will lead to conflicting interpretations.

Finally, there is the problem of *authority*. [{15}](#) What factual basis do astrologers have for asserting that the Square aspect indicates disagreement, while a Trine indicates cooperation? Why do some astrologers consider Saturn a "bad" planet and Jupiter a "good" planet? How does the astrologer know "that the first house represents personality, the second . . . money [and] . . . the eighth . . . death?" [{16}](#) Since such assertions appear to be arbitrary, it follows that results will be arbitrary as well. One should, therefore, be wary about accepting the advice of astrologers—at least when they're speaking *as astrologers*!

# The Problem of Twins

In his book, *In Defense of Astrology*, Robert Parry attempts to defend astrology against the twelve most common objections that are usually raised against it. Let's consider just one of these: the problem of twins.

Some twins are born within minutes of each other, yet they may lead very different lives. But if one's character and destiny are largely determined by the positions of the heavenly bodies at the time of birth, we would expect twins to be remarkably similar in these respects. Clearly, however, this is not always the case. Even Parry admits that one twin may die quite young while "the other lives on to a ripe old age."[{17}](#) As an astrologer, how does he deal with this difficulty?

He begins by observing, "Even a few minutes can make a lot of difference to a birth chart."[{18}](#) He then argues that even when one twin dies while the other lives, "the same event, namely death, has entered both lives at the same time. One twin dies . . . the other is touched radically by the sorrow . . . of . . . death."[{19}](#) He concludes, "Surely this is an argument for, rather than against astrology."[{20}](#) But how convincing is this argument, really?

While it may be true that a few minutes can occasionally make a big difference to a birth chart, this is clearly not always the case. Indeed, some scholars state that even "a birth interval of several minutes would make no real difference."[{21}](#) Second, there is surely a very big difference indeed between someone actually dying on the one hand, and someone losing a loved one to death on the other. It seems undeniable that the destinies of two such people are radically different. Surely this constitutes a legitimate objection to the ability of astrology to predict a person's destiny.

Additionally, for those of us who accept the authority of the Bible, it's instructive to contemplate the lives of Jacob and

Esau, twins born so close to one another in time that Jacob came out of the womb “with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel.”{22} Astrology would expect these two men to have very similar personalities and destinies. But did they?

The Bible records, “When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a peaceful man living in tents.”{23} In addition to being quite different in personality and temperament, they were different physically as well. Esau was a hairy man, but Jacob a smooth man.{24} But most importantly, the destinies of both men, as well as their descendents, were drastically different. God bestowed His special favor on Jacob, but rejected Esau declaring, “I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau.”{25} Surely if astrology were true, one would not expect twins born at virtually the same time to be so thoroughly different in both their character and destiny.

## Astrology and Science

Numerous studies have attempted to test the claims of astrology. The scientist most often cited by astrologers as having furnished “proof” for some of its ideas is the late French psychologist Michel Gauquelin. Astrologer Robert Parry writes:

Gauquelin’s results are remarkable. For instance, the traditionally energetic and aggressive planet Mars is shown quite conclusively to be more frequently strong in the charts of sportsmen than chance would normally allow. . . . These professional attributes tend, moreover, to be in line with traditional astrological law, which has always associated Mars with competitive spirit.{26}

Gauquelin’s results are known as the “Mars effect.” He claimed to have found evidence for this effect in “a study that attempted to test whether or not the birth dates of 2088 sports champions were ‘statistically significant’ according to

the position of Mars.”{27} Ironically, although some slight evidence for this effect was indeed noted, Gauquelin “did not consider it an astrological effect.”{28} Moreover, although frequently cited as lending validity to the subject, he “never claimed to validate traditional astrology in any sense.”{29}

Still, he did claim to find some evidence for the “Mars effect.” Doesn’t this lend some credibility to astrology? Not necessarily. “The problem for astrologers is that the ‘Mars effect’ has never been confirmed in 30 years of subsequent studies.”{30} One of the most damaging studies in this regard was published in 1995 by a team of French scientists. After an exhaustive twelve-year study, the team’s “attempt to independently replicate Gauquelin’s findings failed; it offered ‘no evidence for the Mars effect.’”{31} Since this “effect” is generally considered strong confirmation for the truth of astrology, it seems that scientific support for the subject is quite hard to come by.

But aren’t there other tests for the validity of astrology? For instance, don’t all the predictions made by astrologers offer a means of testing the subject’s accuracy? Indeed they do, but the results are usually quite unconvincing. While successful predictions may sometimes occur, as a general rule, “published predictions . . . seem to have a worse record than client self-disclosures.”{32}

In a study conducted between 1974-79, over 3,000 predictions by such alleged astrologers as Jeane Dixon and Carroll Righter were examined. The number of failures was 2673—almost 90 percent! Moreover, “the astrologers . . . were given the benefit of the doubt for any prediction that could have been attributed to shrewd guessing, vague wording, or inside information.”{33} Without such benefits, the failure rate would have been almost 100 percent! The authors of the study concluded, “The results . . . paint a dismal picture . . . for the . . . claim that ‘astrology works’.”{34}

# Astrology and the Bible

What does the Bible say about astrology? According to one astrologer, "The Bible is full of the philosophy of astrology."[{35}](#) But when one carefully examines the passages thought to speak favorably of astrology, one is bound to conclude with Drs. Bjornstad and Johnson: "Absolutely NO scriptural passage supports astrology . . . not a single reference even indicates tolerance of this art."[{36}](#)

The Bible condemns faith in astrology as futile and misplaced. In Jeremiah 10, God issues this warning: "Do not learn the way of the nations, and do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens although the nations are terrified by them; for the customs of the peoples are vanity."[{37}](#) God is both the Creator and sovereign Ruler of the heavens; people are therefore to trust and fear Him—not what He has made.

Unlike God, astrology is powerless to deliver those who trust in it. In Isaiah 47, "God condemns Babylon and tells of its impending judgment."[{38}](#) In verse 13 He says, "Let now the astrologers, those who prophesy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you." But that their efforts would be in vain is clearly seen in the concluding words of the chapter, "There is none to save you."[{39}](#) Whatever predictive power astrology has, it is utterly eclipsed by the power of the sovereign Lord who created and rules all things!

Finally, in Deuteronomy 18:10-12, astrology comes under the same condemnation as all other forms of divination. There are likely many reasons for this, but let me mention just one. If the ideas of astrology are largely discredited, what accounts for its sometimes-remarkable predictive power? The Bible, as well as the frank admissions of some astrologers, indicates supernatural, or spiritual, involvement. But if God condemns astrology, what sort of spirits are we talking about? Though it may be unpopular to say so, the Bible suggests they are

demons.{40} And it's eerie how many astrologers actually attribute their predictive powers to the wisdom of their spirit guides. One professional astrologer of twelve years confessed: "I never met a really successful astrologer . . . who did not admit . . . that spiritism was the power behind the craft." {41} Could it be that astrology works (when it works) not because of its discredited and contradictory ideas, but because of the unseen power of the spirit world? If so, God's condemnation of astrology may be partially motivated by a concern to protect people from the influence of such evil spirits.

In conclusion, the heavens do not declare the destiny of man, but the glory of the God who made them. {42} It is God, not the heavens, "who works all things after the counsel of His will." {43}

## Notes

1. Lawrence E. Jerome, *Astrology Disproved* (Prometheus Books: Buffalo, NY, 1977), 1, cited in John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, Oregon, 1996), 54.
2. For instance, Ankerberg and Weldon mention a Gallup poll cited by the National and International Religion Report for July 4, 1988, which "estimated that ten percent of evangelical Christians believe in astrology" (Ibid., 54). Additionally, Chuck Colson cites a figure from Wade Clark Roof's book, *Spiritual Marketplace*, indicating that a third of "born again" Christians believe in astrology ("The Feng Shui Way: The Paganization of Our Culture," *Jubilee Extra* [October 2001]: 7).
3. Robert Parry, *In Defense of Astrology: Astrology's Answers to its Critics* (Llewellyn Publications: St. Paul, Minnesota, 1991), 37.
4. Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions and the Occult* (Victor Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 1990), 152.
5. Ibid., 154.

6. Ankerberg and Weldon, 58.
7. Boa, 158.
8. Richard Nolle, *Critical Astrology: Investigating the Cosmic Connection* (American Federation of Astrologers: Tempe, AZ, 1980), 22, referenced in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 58.
9. Parry, 24.
10. Ibid., 31.
11. Ankerberg and Weldon, 55.
12. Ibid.
13. Parry, 31-32.
14. Ankerberg and Weldon, 57.
15. Boa, 158.
16. Ankerberg and Weldon, 56.
17. Parry, 88.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Boa, 160.
22. Genesis 25:26.
23. Genesis 25:27.
24. Genesis 27:11.
25. Malachi 1:2-3; see also Romans 9:10-13.
26. Parry, 188.
27. Ankerberg and Weldon, 60.
28. Patrick Grim, ed., *Philosophy of Science and the Occult* (State University of New York Press: Albany, NY, 1982), 33-46; cf. pp. 55-60, referenced in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 60.
29. Ankerberg and Weldon, 60.
30. Ibid.
31. "French Committee Announces Results of Test of So-Called Mars Effect," *Skeptical Inquirer* (January-February, 1995), 62, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 60.
32. Ankerberg and Weldon, 63.
33. Ibid.

34. R.B. Culver and P.A. Ianna, *The Gemini Syndrome: A Scientific Evaluation of Astrology* (Prometheus Books: Buffalo, NY, 1984 Rev.), 169-70, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 63.
35. Joseph F. Goodavage, *Astrology: The Space Age Science* (Signet: New York, 1967), XI, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 64.
36. James Bjornstad and Shildes Johnson, *Stars, Signs and Salvation in the Age of Aquarius* (Bethany House: Minneapolis, MN, 1976), 43, cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 67.
37. Jeremiah 10:2-3a.
38. Boa, 161.
39. Isaiah 47:15
40. See in particular Acts 16:16-18.
41. Personal correspondence from Karen Winterburn to John Ankerberg and John Weldon, cited in *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 71.
42. See Psalms 19:1 and 8:3, as well as Genesis 1:16.
43. Ephesians 1:11.

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## **“What “Does Eating Christ’s Flesh and Drinking His Blood Mean?”**

In John Ch. 6, Jesus says, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you,” and that He has eternal life. Can you either give me a good explanation of what this means or point me toward some good resources to learn from?

Thanks for writing. Commentators from different denominations and traditions differ on what this passage means. Some believe that Jesus is here referring to participation in Holy Communion or the Eucharist. But I don't believe that this is His intended meaning, for it would clearly imply that eternal life is received purely through a ritualistic act – and this is quite at odds with the entire testimony of the NT. Indeed, in this very passage Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of faith (John 6:35, 40, 47).

I agree with one commentator who wrote, “Flesh and blood here point to Christ as the crucified one and the source of life. Jesus speaks of faith's appropriation of himself as God's appointed sacrifice...”. In other words, through faith in Christ we participate in all the benefits of His substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. And through such saving faith we receive the free gift of eternal life.

If you haven't yet visited Bible.org at <http://www.bible.org>, I would highly recommend this site. They have loads of information about the Bible from a conservative perspective.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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## **“Why Can't God Just Destroy Those Who Reject Him Instead**

# of Sending Them to Hell?"

Why can't God just destroy people who reject him, cause them to cease to exist instead of sending them to hell where they are tortured for eternity? I know they cannot be a part of God or heaven since God is perfect in all ways, but why not end their existence entirely or just keep them separated for eternity instead of sending them to hell for eternal torment?

Thanks for your question. It's a good one. The Bible indicates that those who reject the sacrifice of Christ for their sins must pay for their sins themselves. This certainly seems fair and just. The problem comes when we ask why a person who has committed a finite number of sins should be punished forever and ever. This, I will admit, sounds unfair. But the Bible tells us that God is perfectly fair and just. So how can we reconcile this apparent discrepancy?

Some say that any sin committed against the infinitely holy God is worthy of eternal punishment. In other words, it's not so much the number of sins committed that determine the duration of the punishment, it's rather the fact that they have sinned against their Creator, the infinitely good and holy God. To sin against such a One as God deserves eternal punishment, these people would say.

This may be true, but my own view is a bit different. Think about it this way. Through Adam, all human beings are born with a nature that is inclined toward sin, rebellion and disobedience against God. When someone trusts Christ for salvation, they are "born again" as a child of God. They receive the Holy Spirit and will one day be completely freed from the presence and power of sin. The one who rejects Christ, however, will never be free from the presence and power of sin. Thus, the one who rejects Christ will never cease sinning. Even in hell I imagine that men and women will curse and blaspheme God. If this is so, then eternal

punishment is just because such people never quit sinning against God. Indeed, the longer they are punished, the more their debt increases.

This, at any rate, is my own opinion about the justice of eternal punishment. I hope it helps a little bit.

The Lord bless and keep you,

Michael Gleghorn

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