

Chapter 14

NDE's, Reincarnation, and Christian Theology

I debated with myself and my family about whether or not to include this chapter in my book. Especially in evangelical Christian circles, this topic is very controversial, and believers in NDE's and reincarnation are regarded by many as unbalanced and victims of demonic deception. I decided to include the chapter, anyway, because, in my view, the scientific, and testimonial case for the validity of these experiences is very strong. At the same time, I don't believe there is any conflict between these teachings and the Gospel of Christ as I have presented it in this book. I believe it will be helpful for you to be exposed to this material, regardless of whether or not you believe it. Belief in these concepts has actually served to strengthen, and not diminish, my faith in Christ.

It is beyond the scope of this book to provide evidence for the validity of near death experiences (NDE's) and past-life and between-lives hypnotic regressions. Many books have been written about the subject, which I would encourage you to read for yourself. Literally millions of people have reported NDE experiences, and tens of thousands have experienced past-life hypnotic regressions in a clinical setting. If you are not comfortable reading about this topic, you may just skip this chapter of my book. Nothing in this chapter conflicts with any of the theological views expressed in the rest of this book. What we learn from NDE's and past-life regressions is in complete harmony with the Scriptures as I understand them. I believe that NDE's and past-life regressions are the most reliable forms of communications from Heaven and the afterlife, mainly because they are "eye witness accounts." Other forms of communication from the "other side" mostly take the form of second-hand accounts that are "channeled" by a third party such as a medium or clairvoyant. In my view, the second and third-hand accounts are less reliable because they are more subject to fraud and deception.

I am sure we are all puzzled by the differences in the NDE experience from one individual to the next. There are also many similarities. I believe the experience is real, and not based on thoughts that occur in the physical brain, because most of the subjects are "brain dead" during the NDE experience. I do believe that our human consciousness exists separately from our physical brain, and all sensory experiences of our lives are stored not only in the brain but in our spiritual consciousness as well. I believe that what is going on during the NDE is a kind of shaping of our own individual realities. Apparently, in the Heavenly realms we are to a great degree able to create our own realities. This also occurs during our earthly plane of existence, but to a much lesser degree. Quantum theory ties in very nicely with this. *"As a man thinks, so is he."* After death, some people can remain trapped for a while by their negative thoughts which are holdovers from their earthly existence, while others are liberated. So in the NDE's we do see a variety of both Heavenly and sometimes "hellish" experiences and settings. Those experiences,

though varied, are still real. After death, each of us experiences a different reality because we come from different places in our thinking and all have different issues to work out.

What we see in the NDE experience is a picture of what happens immediately after death. We don't ever see is what comes later, because people who experience NDE's always return to their physical bodies. For information about what happens afterwards we must rely on past-life and between-lives hypnotic regressions. Psychiatrists discovered the art of past-life regression quite by accident. While regressing their patients backwards in time during hypnosis to discover childhood events that might be impacting a patient's current well-being, occasionally one of those patients would accidentally regress to a previous life. Sometimes an individual would regress to a place between lives in Heaven or the spirit world. Over the years, many therapists have made past-life regression their main practice. Some therapists have regressed literally thousands of patients to their past-life and between-lives states. Often these sessions are tape recorded and meticulously documented. Information coming from these sessions has been verified over and over again as accurate and which could not be known by the subjects from any other information sources. For example, sometimes the subjects speak in languages they knew from a previous life but cannot speak in their present life. Sometimes they exhibit a knowledge of historical and cultural details about times and places that they have never been exposed to in their current life.

It is interesting to me that what happens between lives in Heaven is remarkably consistent from one patient to another, much more so than with the NDE experience. Amazingly, thousands of patients from all backgrounds and religions, even atheists, report pretty much the same things. Apparently, once we get past the initial stages of entering the Heavenly realms and make a cleaner separation from our life on earth we all tend to end up in similar circumstances.

Based on most near death experiences (NDE's), it appears that God's judgments in the afterlife, or Heaven, initially take the form of a life review. During the life review we observe every detail of the life we have just lived from our own perspective and also from the perspective of those whose lives we have touched. We are able to see and feel how our actions are affected others. We feel their joy if we did something good to them, and we also feel their pain and anger if we caused them physical or emotional harm. Here's where the cross of Calvary comes in. Almost all NDE accounts of the life review describe the experience as totally non-judgmental in nature. And almost all report an overwhelming experience of unconditional love and acceptance by God. During the life review the individual feels as though he or she is judging or evaluating him or herself. God is not the judge. Instead, God is the one who is viewed as dispensing unconditional love. The message of Calvary is that Christ made atonement for everyone's sins. Most who encounter God in the NDE experience are pleasantly surprised at God's non-judgmental attitude towards them and how much God loves them, despite their sins and shortcomings.

I do not believe that we enter the Heavenly realms with fully reformed characters. I believe that more learning and character development will take place after we die, either in the Heavenly realms or in future incarnations on Earth. In between our earthly incarnations much learning takes place, including the life review and a needs assessment. In addition, some very interesting group learning sessions take place as well as very high tech forms of "book learning." Lots of time is also allotted for various forms of recreation and enjoyment. After much time goes by, we

then decide with the help of our friends and guides in Heaven when and where to reincarnate. The particular time, place and body that we choose for our next life on earth depends on what lessons we want to learn. Spiritual growth occurs much more rapidly during an earthly incarnation than in Heaven for obvious reasons. In heaven there are no pain, sorrow, or problems of any sort. Learning and growth takes place much more rapidly in the difficult and challenging environment here on Earth where we are exposed to real life and death situations. It is on earth where the “rubber meets the road,” so to speak. The lessons we learn in the "crucible" of our earthly life can be viewed as a purification, refinement, and self-improvement process. No one achieves perfection in one lifetime. As I have said many times in this book, I believe that growing into the likeness of Christ is an “ages-long” process.

Much of the eschatology (doctrine of the last things) of the Bible suggests that rewards and punishments will occur during physical ages to come on planet Earth. Some, called Preterists, believe that the Kingdom Age actually began two thousand years ago, and that Christ is growing and perfecting His Kingdom right now on Earth. I personally am sympathetic with the Preterist view. I also believe that the descriptions of God’s Kingdom ages in the Book of Revelation are mostly symbolic and allegorical in nature. Reincarnationists would say that rewards and chastisements of God are carried out during our current and future lives here on Earth and between lives in Heaven.

Some of you might be wondering, when do we meet Jesus in Heaven? This is a difficult question for me to answer because most people who experience NDE’s make no mention of Jesus. Some Christians identify a “being of light” as Jesus, while some non-Christians identify this being as a religious figure from their own religious tradition. Most don’t recognize this being by name or as any particular religious figure. After progressing further into the heavenly realms, this “being of light” is often recognized as a “spirit guide” who was assigned as one’s teacher during the time spent in between lives. A spirit guide, and other entities as well, act as “guardian angels” during our incarnations here on earth.

The name Jesus was given to Christ during his earthly existence, but He would not necessarily be called by that name in the afterlife. The “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith” are indeed one and the same, but the name Jesus belongs for the most part to the earthly life of the Christ, who in a larger sense is the divine “*Logos*,” the co-creator of the universe. When the Bible speaks about every knee bowing at the “*name*” of Jesus, those worshippers were not technically bowing to a name, but instead to the person who bore that name during His earthly sojourn. It is not the name Jesus that we worship. Instead, we worship Christ Himself.

The descriptions of God the Father in most NDE’s and between-lives regressions are very impersonal. God is mostly referred to as the “source,” or “creator,” or the “energy” from which everything is made and holds together. The Creator is always described as incredibly loving. Love is the chief attribute by which God is described. God is further described as the greater whole of which we are all a part. There is a strong sense of connectedness in Heaven. We are all connected with God and with each other. I believe that Christ is the only begotten Son of God, the first-born of all creation, and the entity through whom everything else was created. But in Heaven this “person” of the Godhead is not called Jesus. I would guess that most of what Christ does in Heaven is done behind the scenes, similar to the way He works on Earth. There are many

levels of exaltation or "*dwelling places*" in Heaven. Not all of these levels are accessible to most of us. It takes untold ages to progress to the highest levels where Christ may perhaps be known in a different way. In the meantime, we all remain indwelt by the Spirit of Christ by whom we are all connected with each other. In Heaven, as on Earth, we would still be regarded as Christ's body, His hands and feet as it were, through whom He accomplishes His master plan of transforming all of His created beings into His own likeness. Of course, Christ is not really a "he" or a "she." In Heaven, these anthropomorphisms no longer apply.