



Can We Find It In Scripture?

KARMA

WHEN JON RAHM, the immensely talented Spaniard, won the 2021 US Open at Torrey Pines, the microphones found him on the range, where he was keeping loose in case of a playoff. As usual, the interviewer wanted to know what this win meant to the winner. The first words out of Rahm's mouth were, "I'm a big believer in karma."



Two weeks earlier, Rahm had been forced to withdraw from the Memorial tournament after 54 holes with a six-shot lead. He looked certain to go on to win. But Rahm had tested positive for COVID-19, requiring him to enter immediate quarantine.

Now in this moment after winning his first major championship, Rahm seemed to be saying, in referring to karma, that the good he deserved had come around to him after all.

Karma has become a word so widely used today, that its meaning falls into question each time it is spoken. Indeed, one had to wonder whether Rahm himself knew what he was saying when he called himself a "big believer" in karma, because when karma's definition is left to those who use it most seriously, it is firmly tied to the Hindu and Buddhist

ideas of reincarnation. Rahm was raised and remains connected to the Roman Catholic church, which rejects reincarnation.

What is karma?

As a word, karma comes from Sanskrit and means, roughly, "act" or "action." As a doctrinal idea, it asserts that what one does matters, not only in the moment but in the future. In this way, we might use the word karma to mean that when one does good, she can expect rewards, and when one does wrong, she can expect consequences. This is the way many use the word, and the way Jon Rahm seemed to be using it: He had been doing something good (playing well in the Memorial), but since that win was taken from him, the US Open win seemed to be a suitable, even better, replacement.

On the whole, however, the doctrine of karma has to do with one's

can anticipate an improved existence next time around, and vice versa.

Finally, it should be noted that karma is often tangled up with yin and yang. Whereas karma establishes that we get what we deserve, yin-yang advances the idea of cosmic balance, where good and bad cancel out one another, in essence. It is possible that Rahm was taking this tack, suggesting that because COVID (a bad thing) had cost him the Memorial, his US Open victory was a fitting good result in balance.

Can we find karma in Scripture?

As students of God's word in Scripture, we are often placed in a position to assess what we hear "on the street" in light of what we find on the pages of our Bibles. So what about karma? Can we find it in Scripture?

Without a doubt, God's word speaks of rewards and consequences for one's actions. Many times over in

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recurring existences on earth via reincarnation (or transmigration). We receive reward or punishment for the sum of our actions. If our present lives reflect goodness and morality (not only in action but in motivation), we

the Old Testament, God prophesies then brings judgment to those who reject him in favor of idols or who ignore the commands of his law.


Later, in his Parable of the Sheep and Goats, Jesus delineated between

reward and punishment for those who served him by serving others and those who did not (Matthew 25:31-46). In another of Jesus' parables, that of the talents, we see that those who act with purpose are rewarded and those who sit by inactively are rejected (Matthew 25:14-28).

6:7-8, ESV). Meanwhile, John wrote: "Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward" (2 John 1:8, ESV).

Cause and effect, we might say, is alive and well in Scripture. However, we also see the strong presence of

believe and are saved (Romans 6:23).

Here we find the greatest difference between the salvation stories of karma and Christ. With karma—in its full definition as the catalyst for "the next life"—the nature of our ongoing existence is determined by the relative goodness of our heart and the actions it inspires. We are, then, our own savior. Add to this the difference that transmigration keeps going, one life to another, in a nearly endless cycle. In contrast, with Christ, our next life is purchased by his good actions—namely, his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection. *He* is our Savior. His redeeming work buys us eternal life "once and for all" (Hebrews 9:26-28). Salvation and eternal life come not by trusting in one's own good name or efforts but in the one perfect Savior, Jesus Christ (John 3:36, Acts 16:31). 

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The apostles, too, addressed this principle. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians

God's mercy, where people do not get what they deserve. The guilty thief on the cross next to Jesus expressed a desire for eternal life, and Christ replied, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). More than this, we see grace, where people get what they do not deserve. Eternal judgment is suspended for those who

