

One Life to Live

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

9:1 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him.

2 It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

4 But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

A pampered prince

- His father, the king, sheltered him from anything troubling.
- Three palaces were built to keep the prince in perpetual pleasure.
- At 16 he was given a beautiful bride. They had a son.
- He lived in luxury until age 29, but pleasures could not satisfy him.



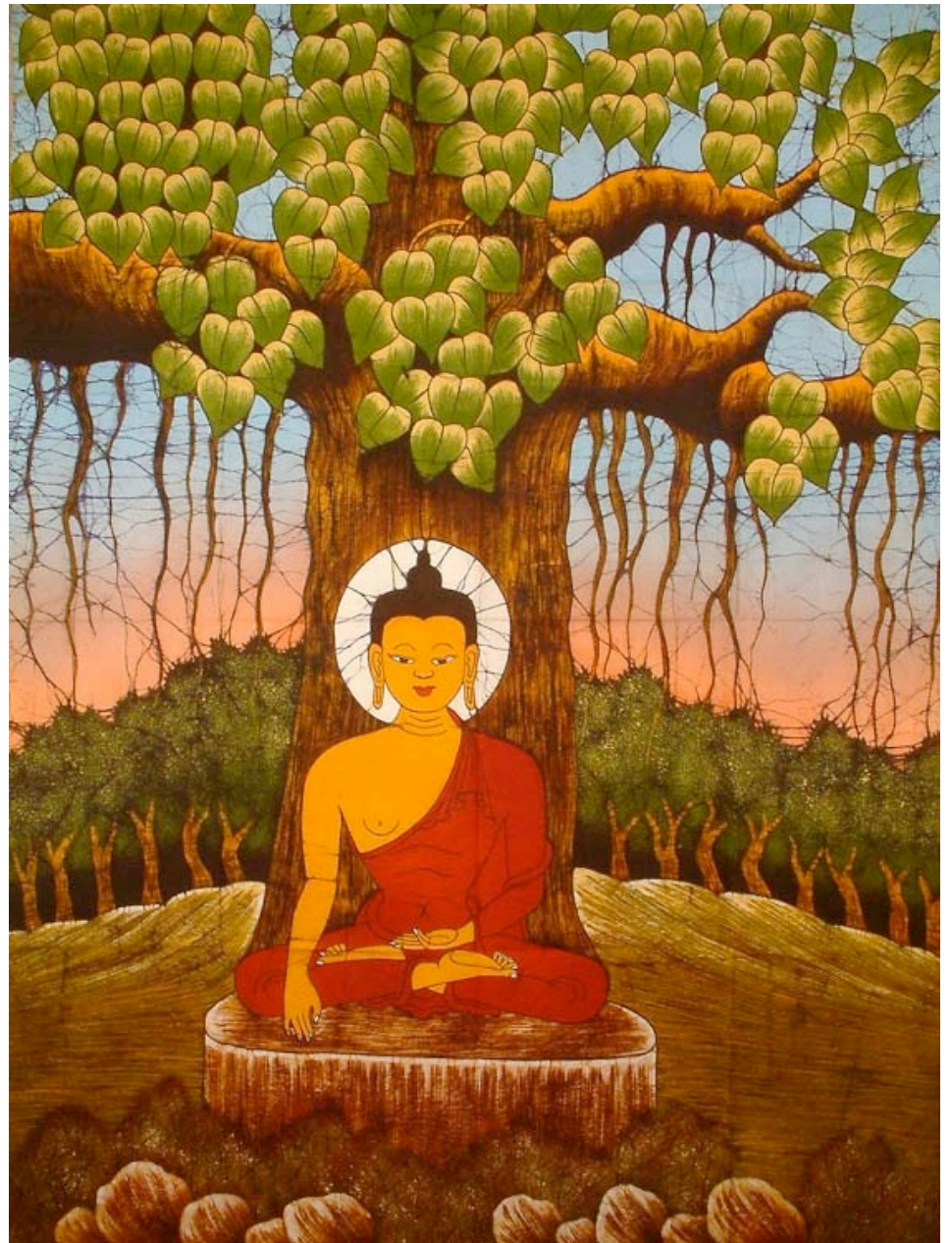
The four sights

1. An old man in failing health
2. A person with a serious disease
3. A dead body
4. A hermit seeking enlightenment



Upset by these sights, Prince Siddhartha Gautama left behind his royal robes, his royal family, and his royal palaces, and he became a hermit on a quest to learn what it all meant.

Sitting under a tree one day, he declared that he experienced enlightenment. The former prince led others on his path to enlightenment and became known as the Buddha.



Karma

“Buddhists understand karma as a natural law. There is no judgment, no divine intervention, and no gods that steer man's destiny, but only the law of karma itself, which works on a global time frame. Deeds yield consequences either in the next second, in the next hour, day, month, year, decade, or even in the next lifetime, or in another distant lifetime.”

Reincarnation

“Rebirth, or reincarnation, has always been an important tenet in Buddhism; and it is often referred to as walking the wheel of life (samsara). It is the process of being born over and over again in different times and different situations, possibly for many thousand times.”

Enlightenment: no self

In the Buddhist analogy, the universe is in motion due to karmic forces. A ripple, a wave, or a billow may seem as an individual entity for a moment, creating the illusion that it has a self, but it is gone in the next moment. The truth is that all individuals are one. A ripple is a temporary phenomenon; it is just water in motion... it would be ridiculous to say that a single ripple or wave has a self.



Gary Zukav: "The Universe does not burden you with a destiny. It provides you with potential. How much of that potential you realize depends upon the choices that you make."

Karma

Gary Zukav: "The Universe does not judge. It compassionately provides for us the consequences that we create with our choices, whatever those consequences are. That is how karma works. The power to create your experience is fully in your hands. That is the lesson of karma."

Reincarnation

Gary Zukav: “You do not suffer for eternity because you do the wrong thing once, or twice, or even time after time. It is not possible to do a wrong thing. You do what you do, and you experience the consequences of it. It’s that simple. If you don’t experience those consequences before you die, your soul creates another life so that you can. That is reincarnation.”

Life is one and I am
one with all life.
Enlightenment is
simply your natural
state of felt oneness
with Being.

(Eckhart Tolle, author of
#1 bestsellers *The Power
of Now* and *A New Earth*;
featured on *The Oprah
Winfrey Show*)



Photo: George Burns / Harpo Productions Inc.

Divine life essence?

Humans can sense the divine life essence, the one indwelling consciousness or spirit in every creature, every life form, recognize it as one with their essence, and so love it as themselves. (Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth*, p. 4)



Reincarnation

“When you think, feel, perceive, and experience, consciousness is born into form. It is reincarnating—into a thought, a feeling, a sense perception, an experience. The cycle of rebirths that Buddhists hope to get out of eventually is happening continuously, and it is only at this moment—through the power of Now—that you can get out of it.”

(Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth*, p. 252)

Your innermost I Am?

“Yes, you *are* the Truth. If you look for it elsewhere, you will be deceived every time. The very Being that you are is Truth. Jesus tried to convey that when he said, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’” Jesus speaks of the innermost I Am, the essence identity of every man and woman, every life-form, in fact. He speaks of the life that you are. Buddhists call it your Buddha nature; for Hindus, it is Atman, the indwelling God.” (Tolle, *A New Earth*, p. 70-71).

The god within

G.K. Chesterton: “Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the god within... That Jones shall worship the god within him turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in his street, but not the god within.”

“Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain. The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognised an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners.” (G.K. Chesterton)

Bible vs. Buddhism

- One life
- Revelation
- Personal God
- Desire is a fleeting pointer to God and greater pleasures
- Providence can't be predicted or controlled
- Resurrection to eternal joy or punishment
- Many lives
- Meditation
- Impersonal force
- Desire is the source of all suffering; desire is to be snuffed out
- Cause-and-effect karma determines all
- Nirvana: escaping body and thought

Providence, not predictability

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The same event strikes all

2 It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.

Life can be wasted

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

How can we escape madness? Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven, and his sanity was restored. Prodigal “came to himself” and went to his father.

When it' s over, it' s over

4 But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

One life to live

1. Enjoy what you have.
2. Do what you can.
3. Accept that you can't control everything.
4. Be ready to meet your Maker.

Enjoy what you have

7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

Enjoy everyday gifts

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1).

"For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim 4:4-5).

Do what you can

9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

(Colossians 4:23-24)

Accept that you can't control everything

11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

Be ready to meet your Maker

12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:27-28)

Not in vain

32 What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor 15:32,57-58)