

B U D D H A & C H R I S T

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JUST A WORD TO OUR BUDDHIST NEIGHBORS

Regardless of what you may have been told, or what many Christians think they know, we—Buddhists and Christians—have a lot in common. Almost unique among the religions of the world are the thoughts and philosophies of true Christianity and true Buddhism. Those who have a clear understanding of the words and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), know he had far more than a casual knowledge of the person and work of the One Who was prophesied to appear on the Earth to deal with humanity's problem of sin. If any two religions have a basis of uniting on the revelation of Jesus Christ, true Christianity and true Buddhism are those religions.

It is an exceedingly unfortunate thing that what we hold in common has, through the centuries, been lost, not only in ignorance of what Siddhartha Gautama actually wrote and taught, but also in the corruption of genuine Christianity and the decimation of its profound message of unity for all people of all ages, in all places and of all languages and cultures. We invite you to consider some things that even many Christians do not realize about an amazing man who has come to be known as "*The Enlightened One*" and the One of Whom he spoke so freely, Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Many thousands of years ago, after the flood, Noah made predictions concerning the descendants of his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth. "...Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers.' He also said, 'Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant'"(Genesis 8:25-27).

The fulfillment of the prophecy about Canaan is seen in the eventual destruction of the Canaanites and the enslavement of the Africans, as Ham's descendants populated that continent. Canaan was the son of Ham. The descendants of Shem populated southern Asia, the Middle East (including Israel) and the Arab nations. Shem's name is the basis of the "anti-Semitic" phrase, which refers to a bias against Jews, as they are included in Shem's descendants. Thus it was Shem's offspring that wrote the majority of the Bible. Japheth's descendants were the Europeans and Mongolians.

PROPHECIES ABOUT CHRIST

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible between about 1500 and 1461 B.C. Among the prophecies made through him is the one recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15: "*Jehovah your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.*" The New Testament writers clearly identified this coming prophet as Jesus Christ. "*Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"* (John 1:45). After Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple, Peter spoke to the crowd that had gathered, and applied the prophecy of Moses to Christ: "*Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me. To him shall you hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you*" (Acts 3:22).

There are multitudes of Old Testament prophecies about Christ. Among the prophecies of David are these words in the 22nd Psalm: "*For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.*" (vv. 16-18). Another familiar prophecy is in Psalm 16:10: "*For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*" These are clear prophecies concerning Christ's crucifixion and resurrection from the dead three days later.

Isaiah's prophecies are also well known and often quoted. His work was from about 740 to 712 B.C. He gives several descriptive titles concerning Christ in 9:6: "*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*" A few other prophecies include: he would be born of a virgin (7:14); he would be put to death for our sins as he was led to the slaughter like a lamb (53:7, 12); "*And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it*" (2:2).

DANIEL AND BUDDHA

When Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar's army, Daniel was carried into Babylonian captivity about 606 B.C. Students of the Bible are familiar with Daniel's rise to prominence, and his interpretation of the king's dream about future kingdoms. In a dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a large figure with a head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, and the legs and feet made of iron mixed with clay.

None of the king's wise men could interpret the dream, and he was about to have all of them put to death, but Daniel was given an audience with the king, and gave the interpretation God had revealed to him.

“You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever” (Daniel 2:31-44).

History shows the fulfillment of this, as Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was overthrown by the Medes and Persians during the reign of his grandson, Belshazzar (538 B.C.). In time Alexander's army overthrew the Medes and Persians (334-332 B.C.), which spread the Greek culture and language. And finally the last world kingdom, the Roman Empire, came to rule. It was during this empire that *“the God of heaven...set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed...”* (Daniel 2:44).

It was during the Medo-Persian empire that a Jewish scribe named Nehemiah was able to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. He had been commissioned to do so by Cyrus, the Persian king, in 444 B.C. Daniel had prophesied that the great Messiah would come at a certain time. That time was calculated from the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be

cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined” (Daniel. 9:24-26).

Without going into the details here, those “sixty-two weeks” (a day for a year) bring us to 26 A.D. (allowing for the corrected calendar), at which time we have recorded the “*triumphal entry*” of Christ into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:5), which is a fulfillment of a prophecy made in Zechariah 9:9. Daniel’s prophecy foretold the death of the Messiah (he would be “*cut off*”), and then a prince would come and destroy the city. The Roman general Titus did just that in 70 A.D., further fulfilling the prophecies that were made.

Now back to Buddha. He was born on the edge of the Persian Empire, in northwest India in 563 B.C. (Daniel would have been in his mid to late 50s at this time). This was near the area from which the Magi came following the birth of Christ. The gospel writer Matthew records their visit and their worship of this one they recognized as the great promised one. “*After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh*” (Matthew 2:11).

In 534 B.C., at the age of 29, Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) left his father’s castle in Nepal to explore the world in a quest for truth. This would have been during Daniel’s later years (probably mid 80s), and in fact would have been just a few years after the time that Daniel had escaped harm after being thrown into the lion’s den. Upon witnessing Daniel’s miraculous escape, King Darius was so impressed that he issued a decree. “*Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: May your peace abound! I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever*” (Daniel 6:25-26). “*All the peoples, nations and men...*” would have included the area in which Buddha lived, so it is quite likely that Buddha had some knowledge of these events.

Around this time, Siddhartha was being educated by Alarak Kalamaganta and Uttakak Ramabotra. The chief administrator for this region would have been none other than Daniel, also known as Belteshazzar. It is he who had prophesied and written about the Savior who was to come some 500 years later.

BUDDHA AND CHRIST

Buddhists believe one must do “merit” in order to improve one’s life. But they know that people sin, and none can ever do enough merit to cover their sins. So sin continues since no one is able to have enough merit to cover sin for himself and others. That is, unless someone could be so perfect that he could cover for himself and others.

In 531 B.C., records show that Buddha began his special ministry. He always claimed he was but a mere man, and recognized the problem of sin for himself and all mankind. It is worthy of note that the Buddhist Scriptures of Cambodia contain a prophecy regarding a “*Holy One*” to come, who would lead people away from the old way and introduce a new way.

“When Buddha was traveling and living in this world, there was an old Brahman priest who wore white robes who asked the Buddha, ‘How will all men and all Brahman continue in

their merit-making so as to escape the results of sin?” Buddha went on to explain that even the most extreme number of prayers and acts of benevolence would not suffice. “The old Brahman priest asked further, ‘What are we all to do to be saved?’” Buddha went on to explain there was no way this could be done. He said, “I have given up my high position and entered the priesthood. I considered that even though I am good, I would have only a very small amount of merit at the end of the year. If I was given the same amount of merit for 100,000 epochs and live 10 more lifetimes, I would not be saved from sin’s results even once.”

“The Old Brahman priest asked further, ‘So what should we all do?’ The Buddha answered, ‘Keep on making merit and look for another Holy One who will come and help the world and all of you in the future.’ Then the old Brahman priest asked, ‘What will the characteristics of the Holy One be like?’ The Buddha answered him, ‘The Holy One who will keep the world in the future will be like this: in the palm of his hands and in the flat of his feet will be the design of a disk, in his side will be a stab wound; and his forehead will have many marks like scars.’”

(Permission was given to copy these Buddhist Scriptures from Wat Phra Sing Chiang Mai Province by Phra Srimisutthiwong in Bangkok, Thailand. “It is guaranteed that this copy is accurate according to the original, that there is no error in transmission, which is in the book of the district headman, the religious encyclopedia volume 23, book #29. This inquiry was made on October 13, 1954 A.D. [Buddhist era 2497]”

Buddha’s description of the wounds on the Holy One clearly coincides with the wounds Christ suffered, with his hands and feet pierced with nails (John 20:25), his brow suffering a crown of thorns (John 20:2), and a spear thrust into his side (John 20:34)

Thus we see that Buddha’s teachings contained the concept of a coming savior, “Sira-Adia-Meetrey.” That name is a combination of titles meaning the Almighty or Head God of the Universe, and the Lord of Mercies. W. G. Singleton, who has spent much time in Cambodia among the Buddhists, believes the coming of this Great God was originally conceived to come in about 500 years, which coincides with Daniel’s prophetic timetable. At first, Buddha’s teachings were orally transmitted, but during the Maurya Dynasty or Empire, a later disciple, Raja Asoka (274-232 B.C.), commissioned an evangelistic mission to Tibet, China and Southeast Asia. Buddha’s teachings were committed to manuscripts and sent by ship from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, the ship sank, and it was some time before the manuscripts were salvaged.

By the time the manuscripts were recovered, some of the ink was smudged and in some places difficult to read. Instead of reading “500 years,” the rewritten manuscripts now read “5,000 years.” Despite this, current manuscripts still maintain that the religion of Buddha would have lasted only 500 years, that is, until the coming of the Great Savior.

Note and compare the teachings of Buddha with what is said about Christ.

(1) Buddha taught that Sira-Adia-Meetrey (shortened to Si-A-Meetrey) is the “Prince of Peace.”

This is one of the titles of Jesus (Isaiah 9:6).

(2) Buddha claimed the coming one would be “the way” and “the truth.”

Jesus claimed this for himself in John 14:6: *"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*

- (3) Buddha taught that Si-A-Meetrey would be represented by a lion.

The apostle John refers to Christ in similar words in Revelation 5:5: *"the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David..."*

- (4) Buddha taught that the one coming was the only one who could forgive sins.

We know this is true about Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed for sin. *"and the blood of Jesus (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (I John 1:9).

- (5) Buddha taught that the one coming would be "the first and the last."

This is exactly what Jesus claimed for himself. *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end"* (Rev. 22:13)

- (6) Buddha taught his disciples to seek and obey "Dhamma," referring to the "word" and the "way."

The apostle John identifies Christ by these exact words. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:1, 14).

And in #2 (above), we have already noted that Christ said he was "the way."

- (7) Buddha claimed that "Dhamma" is "light."

"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12).

- (8) Buddha instructed his disciples to keep the law until Si-A-Meetrey would come in some 500 years. It was in that time period after Buddha that Jesus came.

- (9) Buddha taught that Si-A-Meetrey's conquering armies would come from the "west" (that would be from Israel going east into Buddha's territory), with weapons of love, peace, kindness and mercy.

The disciples in the early years carried the gospel throughout the world, and even in the first generation of the church, the apostle Paul claimed it had been *"preached in all creation under heaven"* (Colossians. 1:23).

BUDDHA'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF A NEED FOR A SAVIOR

Near the time of Buddha's death in 483 B.C., The Enlightened One told his followers, *"Regardless of how many laws you have kept, or even if you pray five times a day, you cannot be free from your sins. Even though you burn yourself, even though I become a hermit or am reborn another ten times, I shall also not be saved"* (Manuscript, Praising Temple, Chiangmai, Thailand). Buddha stated that he was not a god, but just a man, a truth seeker. At his death, he taught there would be a future Messiah, *"Lord of Mercies,"* who would free men from their sins.

Buddha stated, *“He is the Lord of Mercies. His name shall be called King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. He is all knowing, all wise. He knows all that is in the human heart. He is Lord of all the angels and of all humans. No one is greater than He”* (Sutrapridot 3:107). He further stated concerning the Lord of Mercies that *“...His side has a wound where he was pierced, and his forehead has many scars. He will carry you to heaven where you will find the triune God. Thus give up following the old ways. A spirit from heaven will come and dwell in your heart”* (Manuscript, Praising Temple, Chiangmai, Thailand).

It is obvious to anyone acquainted with the Bible that all these things are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul refers to Christ as *“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”* (I Timothy 6:15). The writer of Hebrews declares his ascendancy over angels: *“having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?”* (Hebrews 1:4-5).

We know that at the crucifixion of Christ a crown of thorns was placed on his brow, which would have produced scarring (Matthew 2:29), and that a soldier pierced his side with a spear (John 19:34). As we read through the book of Acts, we find repeated references to the Christians being filled with the Spirit, as in 13:52: *“And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”*

Truly, Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World, and we are enjoined to submit to his authority in obedience to his word, commonly called *“The New Testament.”*

ACCEPTING CHRIST

The primary commands concerning accepting Christ are clearly revealed and easy to comprehend.

- (1) Christ said we must believe that he is the one promised from ages past—the Son of God and the Savior of the world. *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”* (John 8:24).
- (2) Repentance from sin, turning from sinful ways to serve Christ is also required. *“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3).
- (3) We must not be ashamed to confess our belief, but be willing to let others know who and what we are. *“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32-33).
- (4) The final step that places us in a relationship with Christ and removes our sins is baptism or immersion in water. *“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:16); *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name”* (Acts 22:16).
- (5) Following our baptism, we then are called upon to live a faithful life in hope of our final reward in heaven. *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10).

NOTE: The facts about Buddha and some references to his teachings quoted herein were edited for accuracy by Setha Viryak Banditor (former Chief Priest of Buddhist Monks) and Pro-Akrato (former Buddhist Priest). The citations concerning Buddha’s conversation with the Brahman priest were referred to earlier.)

“If you truly believed Buddha, you would believe Jesus; for he wrote about Jesus” (Setha Viryak Banditor (former Chief Priest of Buddhist Monks))

“Jesus calls us to come to Him. Buddha told us when we find Jesus to give up the old way and follow the Lord. If you are truly Buddhist, you will listen to Buddha’s last words on his death bed.” (Pro-Akrato, former Buddhist Priest)

“If you fully understand the Buddhist faith, you will become a Christian” (Beng Heng, former Buddhist Monk)

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(This article has been adapted from and based upon material provided by W. G. Singleton, who has spent much time in Cambodia teaching among the Buddhists. He can be contacted at godsfriend77@hotmail.com or 505-356-8258. Material from other sources has also proved useful in compiling this information. —jdt) (rev. 9/9/09)

A Final Word for Our Buddhist Neighbors by Royce Bell

We do not labor under any false conceptions that this excellent study of what Siddhartha Gautama learned and taught (and which has been corrupted through the years, due to unfortunate circumstance¹ or sometimes deliberate obfuscation) will be the immediate basis of bringing even a single Buddhist to belief in Christ.

However, we do hope—and sincerely pray—that some will take another look at what is clearly known and widely available, both in Buddhist temple records and in literally thousands of places on the Internet, concerning what Siddhartha Gautama, “The Enlightened One,” knew and believed, and taught, about the coming Savior of the World.

If you are interested in studying these matters in greater detail, we invite you to let us know of your interest. You are welcome to attend any or all of our assemblies of devotion and worship, and to attend and participate in our Bible studies. If you want to wear traditional Buddhist garments, you will not be ridiculed or treated with disrespect. Indeed, we invite you to an open dialogue on matters we hold in common.

Please contact us via our website, www.faithlight.org or at 909.885.4136.

¹¹ See an excellent dissertation on *karma*, as determinant of circumstance, found at <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/karma1.htm> (located 27 April 2010).