

"Buddha and Christ" by Jefferson David Tant (6/20/2023)

Source: J.D. Tant's email newsletter

<https://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/cms/the-archives>

Buddha was born in 563 B.C. in an area now known now as the nation of Nepal. He was born into royalty, but as he became an adult, he wanted to see the real world. He renounced his royalty and lived a simple life. His wisdom and humility is seen in many of his writings. There is no evidence that he intended to found a religion, but it seems his followers in later years did bring this about.

Nepal was a part of the great Persian Empire at that time, which had defeated the Babylonian empire in October 539 BC, under the leadership of the Persian king Cyrus. Living in Babylon at that time was an older man named Daniel. Daniel had been taken captive as a young boy when Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon, had destroyed Jerusalem in 605 B.C. The center of the Babylonian Empire would be in the nation now known as Iraq.

Through a series of interesting events, Daniel had risen to position of prominence in the Babylonian kingdom, while maintaining his faith in the true God rather than the idol gods of Babylon. Some of the Babylonian authorities were jealous of the Jewish Daniel, and conspired to trap him. They went to the king and asked that a law be passed, that if anyone made a petition or prayer to anyone besides the king, he should be cast into a den of lions. Knowing Daniel, they knew he would continue to pray to God.

Upon seeing Daniel praying, as his habit was, they reported this to the king. He realized he had been tricked, but had to carry out his decree, so he had Daniel cast into a den of lions. The next morning he went to see what had happened during the night, and was amazed to see Daniel walking around unharmed. Evidently the lions decided they were not hungry that night. The king rightly assumed that Daniel's God that had protected him from the Lions was the true and living God, and sent messengers throughout his kingdom that people should worship the God of Daniel.

This would have been around the year 538 B.C. when Buddha would have been about 25 and Daniel in his late 70s by then. That message would have gone to the region where Buddha lived as that was a part of the empire, and he would have been aware of the king's decree.

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 Sriwisutthiwong 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” (Revelation 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, 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 --Jefferson David Tant,

(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. = Material from other sources has also proved useful in compiling this information. -jdt)