

Buddha and Christ

While Buddhism stands alone, irrespective of comparisons with other traditions, any reader familiar with the story of Jesus Christ, founder of Christianity, will have noticed the parallels between the legend of the life of the Buddha and the legend of Jesus Christ.

Both left their homes seeking the truth that exists beyond average human existence. Both were led into the wilderness, where they were tested by the devil with three temptations. Both gathered a group of disciples, one of whom became a betrayer. Both returned from their wilderness experience to preach a sermon summing up their teaching: Buddha delivered the Deer Park Discourse, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Both died at the hands of other men, forgiving them before the end. Even their final wisdom is similar:

The Buddha

Be ye lamps unto yourselves.
All compounds are transitory.
Work out your own salvation with diligence.

The Christ

Ye are the light of the world.
Ye are not of this world even as I am not.
(Through the apostle Paul) Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Such comparisons do not suggest that one religion is an imitation or copy of the other. It is obvious that the two rose independently of each other and stand as separate entities. There are many points of contrast between the two, especially in their teachings concerning the nature of God (many Buddhists do not believe in a personal deity), time (linear versus circular), and afterlife (heaven versus Nirvana).

But similarities also exist, pointing to a common human experience. Perhaps these similarities were best summed up in *Questions of Faith II: Who Is Jesus?* by Roy Sano, who was born into a Buddhist family but became a Methodist bishop: "When I converted to Christianity I wondered how I could still be a Buddhist. As time goes by I now wonder how I can be a Christian and not be a Buddhist!"

Sources:

Hagen, Steve. *Buddhism Plain and Simple*. Boston: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1997.
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The Religion Book

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