
Jataka 316

Scaling the Buddhist Barrier of Sacrifice

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There have been tremendous evangelistic breakthroughs among animistic Tribals, Chinese, Catholics, Hindus, Postmoderns, and now even Muslims, but very few breakthroughs among the 350 million Buddhists and 11 million Jews of the world. Surely the Buddhists and the Jews are the two remaining giants in global evangelization.

The leaders of the Buddhist Background Believers' Movement (BBBM) have pointed out to me that Buddhists completely misunderstand the Christian term for Sacrifice, Judson translated Sacrifice as Yet buu zaw. Yet buu Zaw is the Burmese word used for offering blood to a hungry ghost. Buddhists are proud of Buddha's command, "Do not kill." The concept of sacrifice is one of the greatest barriers to scale when communicating the Good News to Buddhists. Buddhist often quietly ask each other, "Do the Christians worship a blood thirsty god?" To a Buddhist worldview Christ's death on the cross was for sins in His previous life. For centuries Christians across the Buddhist world have been using very low terms to communicate a very high concept to Buddhist hearts and minds. For further clarification on barriers see my [8 Barriers of Buddhists](#).

The BBB leaders explain how they overcome this barrier by reminding their Buddhist Persons of Peace the story of Buddha's Life Offering in his previous life as a rabbit taken from the Buddhist Sasa-Jataka Tale number 316. The Jataka are a collection of stories of the pre-incarnate Buddha developed in India. These are the stories that tell about the previous lives of the Buddha, in both human and animal form.

Over 50,000 former Buddhists are currently using this story to proclaim Christ in 3 separate Church Planting Movements multiplying across Myanmar. The Apostle Paul used Pagan religion of the Athenians to proclaim Christ in Acts 17:23, " For as I passed along and carefully observed your objects of worship, I came also upon an altar with this

inscription, To the unknown god. Now what you are already worshiping as unknown, this I set forth to you." I have personally seen the "ah ha moment" expressed when I have explained Christ's Crucifixion in light of the Rabbit in the Moon Bridge story.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
John 3:16 KJV

The Rabbit in the Moon Jataka story is one of the most well known stories in the Buddhist world.



<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/j3017.htm>



A Story of the Pre-incarnate Buddha's Jivita dana (Life Offering). In one of his previous births the Bodhisattva (Buddha to be) was born as a Rabbit in Varanasi, India. Three forest friends, Monkey, Jackal, and Otter lived together with Rabbit as great friends. They swore to be friends forever, and they also swore never to kill any living thing.

One day Sakka in Pali (Sakra in Sanskrit), the Buddhist Archangel (Thagyamin in Burmese, Phra In in Thai) decided he would test the animals' faith. He wished to understand the true nature of all the creatures in the universe. So he disguised himself in the form of a Brahmin (a Priest/ Monk). He dressed himself in rags, and hobbling upon a cane, he wandered into the forest.

Together the friends resolved to practice charity on the next day, the Sabbath day. In the tradition it was believed that one who stood fast in moral practice and alms-giving on that day would earn a great merit. The next day, the otter brought seven red fishes abandoned on the bank of the Ganges river. The jackal wrongfully pilfered a lizard and a pot of milk-curd from someone's house. The monkey brought mangoes. All these three were willing to offer their gifts to a beggar as act of charity. The Rabbit felt that the grass would not be a good item for alms-giving. He, therefore, decided to offer his entire body as a Jivita Dana Life Offering.

The Rabbit's resolve disturbed Sakka (Indra), the king of the devas. To examine the hare's virtue he came down on the earth in the guise of an ascetic and requested the Rabbit for food. The Rabbit was delighted, because this provided him an opportunity to exemplify his highest act of sacrifice, which a mortal could ever perform. So, he asked the ascetic to pile the logs of wood and kindle the fire, where he would jump to offer his roasted meat to the latter. When Sakka caused the heap of burning coals to appear, the hare shook himself three times lest there were any insect in his fur. Thus, offering his whole body he fell on the heap of the burning twigs.

The fire, however, did not burn him. Impressed with the act, Sakka revealed his identity and applauded the Rabbit's compassion. He said "O wise Rabbit! Be thy virtue known through out this whole aeon!" We thus see the mark of the Rabbit still visible on the moon to tell the saga of the Sacrifice Jivita dana. Zeewet dana Burmese Chitwit tana Thai.

As a reward for passing the test of faith the Buddhist archangel placed an image of the Rabbit in the Moon for all the world to see as an timeless memorial to the selfless act of offering.

The Rabbit in the Moon Story illustrated in Tibetan art.



Left: The Rabbit King image from Sri Lanka.



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Why compare Christ to Buddha ?

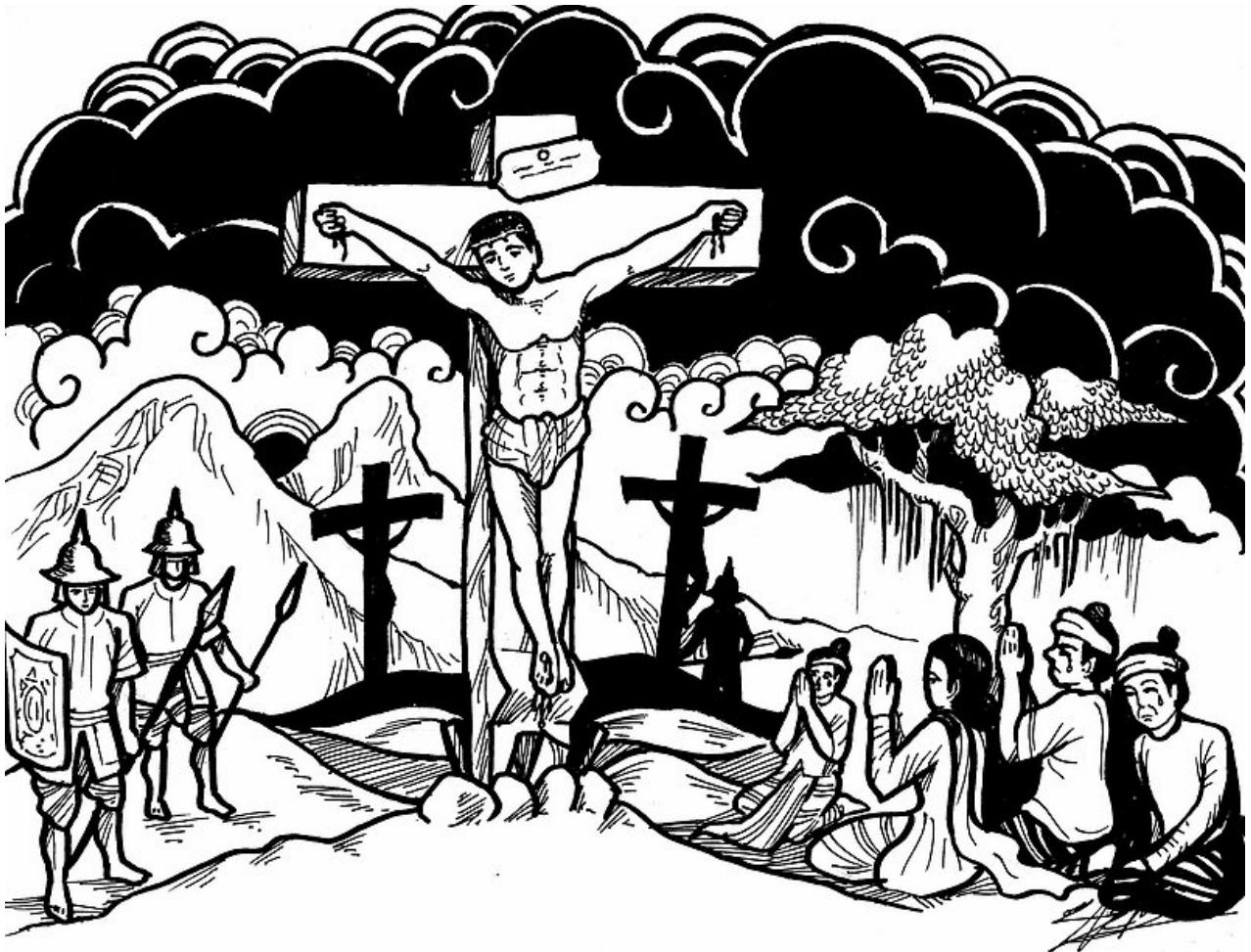
When I moved to Myanmar 12 years ago I would get highly irritated with Buddhist who often commented that Jesus and Buddha were "The Same."

After my earnest attempts to present the gospel Buddhists would smile and make this annoying statement. At this point I felt defeated and a failure. I wanted to scream that in no way shape or form are Buddha and Jesus the same. (Screaming, shouting or directly disagreeing are culturally offensive in Southeast Asia). Over time I began to understand that I was often succeeding in presenting truth.

Buddhists often have negative views of Christ. On the [Engels Scale](#) I was actually progressing their understanding of Christ which often started at -8. If you can get a sincere Buddhist to state, "Jesus and Buddha are the same!" Don't give up you probably are being used by the Holy Spirit to reveal Truth to their hearts and minds. Keep sharing with responsive Persons of Peace.

Burmese Christ taken from the Buddhist Background Believers' Picture Bible. Inspired by by the late Dr. Mickey Sampson of Cambodia. Images drawn by Saya Sithu

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Without comparing Christ's Sacrifice to their understand of selfless giving, Buddhist ask, "Your God wants you to eat flesh and drink blood?"



"We like Jesus but that Old Testament God seems cruel and mean." This is the reason why you may need to present Christ life before moving to the Old Testament. Our teams have found that Unchronological is a better approach.

