

Could Buddhism Be True?

An Examination of the Buddhist Worldview

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Three Questions

Every worldview has to answer three important questions. First, “How did we get here”? This question is obviously foundational to how it is we see the world around us and how it is we understand our role within that world. Secondly, we have to ask, “How did things get so messed up?” All of us know that there is something broken about the world in which we live and our worldview helps us to understand WHAT has been broken! Finally, we must answer the question, “How can we fix it?” This final question is the culmination and conclusion of our worldview. We begin with an idea related to how we got here, but ultimately find ourselves answering the most important questions of life. Buddhism offers answers to these three worldview questions. Let’s examine these answers and see if they are cohesive and relate to the world as we know it...



A Short History of Buddhism

It’s sometimes difficult to ascertain a concise and accurate history of Buddhism due to the large number of diverse writings that exist on the topic and the lack of reliable “fundamental” historic documents that surround the faith system, but a few facts can be reasonably understood. Buddhism was founded by a Hindu prince named Siddhārtha Gautama, also referred to as Sakyamuni (sage of Sakya clan). He was born in northern India (southern Nepal) around 500 B.C., and according to Buddhist traditions, he led a lavish and sheltered life until at some point he witnessed the sufferings of the outside world. He was very troubled by the sufferings he observed, and at the age of 29 he gave up his life of indulgence (left his wife, kids, and palace) to seek out the meaning of (and solution for) human suffering.

He tried a number of different techniques in this effort, including severe asceticism (severe bodily deprivation) and meditation. He ultimately rejected asceticism, and one day at the age of 35 (and after many days of meditation and seeking under a Bodhi tree that has come to be known as “figus religious”) he achieved a spiritual breakthrough. He realized certain truths about life, death, reincarnation, karma, and suffering, and his breakthrough included the realization that he had rid himself of the spiritual defilements of cravings (including hunger and thirst), desire, hate, and delusion. This aspect of the breakthrough was his awakening or “enlightenment”, and this is why he took the title of Buddha which means “the enlightened one”. He described this freedom from desire as a state of “nothingness” referred to as “nirvana”; the point at which a being is freed from the cycle of life, suffering, death, and reincarnation.

Buddhism flourished as a monastic movement, then faded from India (pushed out by Hinduism and Islam) but spread to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and throughout Asia. The Buddha’s supposed teachings were not written down until centuries after his death; different councils came together in an attempt to “canonize” Buddhist writings, but even the historicity of various councils is uncertain, so we really don’t have a commonly accepted body of teachings. There are many “sacred writings” claiming to be the teachings of The Buddha or “consistent” with his teachings. Most well known are the Tripitaka (philosophy, rules,

sermons), various Suttras (teachings), and the Tibetan “Book of the Dead” (written by a early Tibetan monk). Various branches and forms of Buddhism have justified their “orthodoxy” based on their own accounts of the councils or their own “inspired” writings. Over time, two major schools (Theravada and Mahayana) emerged as these councils were either accepted or rejected by followers:

Theravada

A branch of Buddhism predominant in Southeast Asia: Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Laos. Historically, the level of personal commitment and sacrifice required to achieve ‘nirvana’ (or ‘nibbana’) is very high in this branch of Buddhism. Therefore, the emphasis is on orders of monks and nuns who are the primary practitioners of Buddhism. Monasteries with large monk populations are more common in this branch of Buddhism. Burma (Myanmar), for example, has 500,000 monks.

Mahayana

A branch of Buddhism predominant in Sri Lanka, Japan, Taiwan, China, Korea, Vietnam and Tibet. In this form of Buddhism, the practice of the faith and achievement of ‘nirvana’ is available to everyone, including the common person. Tibetan Buddhism (led by the Dalai Lama) is sometimes considered a separate school but often included under Mahayana Buddhism. Other well known Mahayana sects include Zen and Nichiren Buddhism (Japan). Nichiren is distinctly “evangelical” seeking to put down other beliefs and win converts.

Buddhism claims 300 to 400 million followers worldwide (although many are merely “cultural” Buddhists). Though it is generally thought of as a religion, it is more a spiritual philosophy. In fact, Buddhist sects range from atheistic to polytheistic, and some forms could more accurately be described as pantheistic (claiming that the “divine” is in all things). Buddhism is extremely diverse and continues to “adapt” perhaps because of the lack of definitive teachings from the Gautama Buddha. In addition to this, the nature of the basic teaching allows for wide range of interpretations and modifications.



How Buddhism Answers the Question:

“How Did We Get Here?” (What’s the Nature of the Creator and Creation?)

Because Buddhism is this diverse, it’s difficult to get a direct answer to this first worldview question. In fact, most Buddhist schools do not directly answer the question, “How did we get here?” at all. That’s because the idea of an absolute Creator God is absent in most forms of Buddhism. Many Buddhists do venerate and worship Gautama Buddha (and other Buddhas – religious leaders – as well), and this veneration and worship does play a major role in both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. But while gods, devas, demons, and spirits are common in many early Buddhist stories, they are described in a cynical, sarcastic and mocking way. They are always described as inferior to The Buddha or unnecessary to achieve enlightenment. And while monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam clearly delineate and separate the nature of God and man, Buddhism makes no clear distinction.

Among the many diverse definitions of the Divine offered by Buddhists, this definition given by Soyen Shaku (a Rinzai Zen Buddhist roshi), provides at least one Buddhist notion about the nature of God:

“At the outset, let me state that Buddhism is not atheistic as the term is ordinarily understood. It has certainly a God, the highest reality and truth, through which and in which this universe exists. However, the followers of Buddhism usually avoid the term God, for it savors so much of Christianity, whose spirit is not always exactly in accord with the Buddhist interpretation of religious experience ... To define more exactly the Buddhist notion of the highest being, it may be convenient to borrow the term very happily coined by a modern German scholar, 'panentheism', according to which God is ... all and one and more than the totality of existence As I mentioned before, Buddhists do not make use of the term God, which characteristically belongs to Christian terminology. An equivalent most commonly used is Dharmakaya ... When the Dharmakaya is most concretely conceived it becomes the Buddha, or Tathagata ... (Truth Body, or Absolute Reality)”

Buddhism does not directly address the issue of our origin, but it does make several claims about our existence, even if it can't account for the manner in which we came to exist! Buddhism teaches that the material world is not permanent. In fact, we are simply travelers passing through an illusion or misperception of reality. We are caught in a cycle of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth. This cycle is endless for each of us unless we can break out of the cycle by attaining “nirvana”. Buddhism also teaches that as humans we don't have “souls”; in fact, the Buddhist concept of reincarnation denies the existence of the 'self' altogether. The self is merely an illusion; we wrongly identify perception, consciousness, mind and body as 'self' when there is actually no such thing. The concept of an abiding entity or 'self' is impossible in Buddhism because states of perception, consciousness, and mind are in a constant state of change. According to Buddhism, when the mortal body dies, consciousness and all mental activities cease.



How Buddhism Answers the Question:

“How Did It Get So Messed Up?” (What Separates Man from God?)

When Siddhārtha Gautama achieved his spiritual breakthrough beneath the Bodhi tree, he came to an important realization concerning the plight of the world and our physical existence within that world. He realized particular truths about the world, now known as the Four Noble Truths:

There is suffering in life (or life IS suffering)

Suffering is the result of cravings and desires (or attachment)

Freeing oneself or extinguishing these cravings will end suffering.

The way of achieving freedom (“nirvana”) is by the Eight Fold Path.

The first two truths encapsulate all that is wrong with the world: life is filled with suffering and this suffering is the result of cravings and desires. Buddhism teaches that our desires lead us to become ‘attached’ to the very things that eventually cause us to suffer. In this regard, ‘attachment’ is at the root of the problem. As we learn to let go of the things to which we are attached (including such base cravings as thirst, hunger and sexual desire), we will be free of the suffering that we experience in this life.

Some Mahayana Buddhist variations on this idea related to what's wrong with the world include the idea that denying (or not realizing) the true nature of Buddha, buddha beings, or

Buddhist truths can bring about suffering in this life as well. In addition to this, many Buddhists also blame “karma” for any bad luck or difficult situation they may experience in their lives. As an example, a Buddhist might believe that he or she is short as the result of making fun of short people in a prior existence.



How Buddhism Answers the Question:

“How Do We Fix It?” (How Can We Be Restored to the Divine?)

So, how does a Buddhist address the suffering that exists in the world? The answers and solutions are to be found in the second two statements of the Four Noble Truths; we can end suffering and experience a spiritual restoration if we can simply free ourselves from our cravings by employing the “Eight Fold Path”:

“Now this ... is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.” (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta [Samyutta Nikaya 56.11], trans. Bodhi (2000), pp. 1843-47)

The Buddhist must rely on his or her own self effort in order to practice the Eight Fold Path. Most contemporary Buddhists understand the Path as a series of correct understandings and behaviors:

Related to “Wisdom” (Prajñā or Paññā)

These first two elements of the Eight Fold Path provide the rational foundation for understanding reality from a Buddhist perspective:

1 Right View

Buddhists understand this as ‘perspective’, ‘vision’ or ‘understanding’; it is the ability to understand the real way the world works; the ability to understand reality from a Buddhist perspective, including the reality of Karma and suffering.

2 Right Intention

This aspect of the Path is concerned with the ‘resolve’, ‘aspirations’ or ‘will’ of the believer. It describes the need for the believer to rid him or herself of any desire to do anything harmful or immoral.

Related to “Ethics” (Śīla or Sīla)

Buddhists don’t want their outward actions to defile their minds and their ability to concentrate. For this reason, certain ethical efforts are part of the Path:

3 Right Speech

Buddhism calls it believers to be careful about the words they use. This aspect of the Eight Fold Path prohibits lying, speaking abusively, or using harsh language.

4 Right Action

This aspect of the Path encourages the Buddhist to train oneself so that he or she is able to act in a morally upright manner that will not corrupt or harm others.



Right Livelihood

The Eight Fold Path also calls Buddhists to seek employment in a trade or occupation that will not harm other living beings, either directly or indirectly.

Related to “Concentration” (Samādhi)

Finally, Buddhism teaches that believers must train their higher consciousness in order to create a framework of calm collectedness from which reality can be truly experienced and understood. For this reason, the remaining aspects of the Path are focused on areas of ‘concentration’:



Right Effort

The Path calls Buddhists to make a continuing effort to rid oneself of all thought words or actions that might be harmful to either themselves or others in their world. Buddhists are called to make a continuing positive moral effort.



Right Mindfulness

In addition, Buddhists are called to stay alert mentally; remaining constantly on guard to those influences in their world that are affecting their body and mind. This aspect of the Path calls the believer to be ever mindful and deliberate about saying and doing what is morally right.



Right Concentration

Finally, the Path calls the Buddhist to engage in the practice of proper concentration, accomplished through meditation, in order to enter into what is known as ‘jhana’ (a state of consciousness that allows the believer to develop wisdom and insight into the true nature of the world around them).

The goal of the Eight Fold Path is to understand the nature of life, better comprehend the Four Noble Truths, and to eventually extinguish our ‘self’ and our cravings (good or bad) so we can ultimately achieve ‘nirvana’ (the state of nothingness, non-consciousness or ‘bliss’). The Eightfold Path is sometimes called the ‘Middle Way’ since it is neither extreme asceticism nor a life of indulgence. But in all of these elements of the Eight Fold Path, it is clear that the individual believer is charged with responsibility for his or her own spiritual growth or development. Buddhists find the answer within their own effort, and this self-effort is valued in Buddhism. Unlike other faith systems that might call upon God for assistance, this idea of trusting something or someone other than yourself is foreign to Buddhism.

Buddhism teaches that some of us may, in fact, achieve ‘nirvana’. Buddhism proposes that our world does contain individuals who have attained enlightenment (buddhas and bodhisattvas) but have chosen to remain with us in the conscious illusion to assist us in our own spiritual progression.



The Hard Questions Buddhism Has to Answer

While Buddhism provides answers for the three most important worldview questions, the Buddhist answers raise important questions in and of themselves. There are several important questions that one should ask when talking to a Buddhist to examine the internal and external coherence of the worldview. Let’s

take a look at a few questions one might ask from both a philosophical and Biblical perspective:

Philosophical Questions

Let's begin with some questions that spring from basic philosophical concerns:

1 *If Buddhists themselves cannot agree on which scriptural writings or traditions for practice are actually true statements from Buddha, how can Buddhism as a system claim ANY truth?*

Even within Buddhism, there are contradictory claims related to the validity of a variety of late appearing religious texts, all of which claim to accurately represent the words of Buddha. None of these texts stands unchallenged as having come from the time in which Buddha lived. Many have very questionable origins. How are we to know which authoritative? Many scholars actually say that it is impossible to say with confidence, "This is what Gautama Buddha said." How can anyone make a claim for the truth without first establishing the foundation for that truth?

2 *If life is just suffering, as Buddhism claims, why is it that some of us don't see it this way? Why do some of us see life as wonderful rather than filled with suffering?*

Buddha's observations about the world seem to come from his direct experience of that world and the entire religious system is built on the notion that life is filled with suffering that has no positive value on the individual. But what if the individual doesn't see the world in this way? What if the individual, even though he or she experiences hardship, understands the value of this experience and does not see it as suffering?

3 *If our present suffering is the result of bad karma from a prior life, what is the real PRESENT remedy for suffering in this life?*

Can all suffering be alleviated in this life, even through our efforts in the Eight Fold Path? Why engage in any effort related to the Eight Fold Path, if the only true benefits are to be realized in the next life?

4 *Who is the Karma Judge?*

If, as Buddhism teaches, there is no personal God that interacts with His creation, who determines whether or not a person has done something to merit either 'good' or 'bad' Karma? If this decision is made at the end of one's life, who is actually making the decision? How can an impersonal force 'decide' anything? Who is the final judge of Karma, and mustn't this judge by necessity be a personal being (capable of making a decision)?

5 *If achieving 'nirvana' means that we will be liberated from the illusion of consciousness, how then will we know (be conscious of) our achieving this 'nirvana'? How can we be 'conscious' of this, if 'consciousness' will no longer exist?*

Our existence outside the material, physical world, presumes a conscious existence in which we can 'realize' or enlightened condition. How can we be conscious of this if consciousness will no longer exist?

6 *If there is no transcendent 'self' or 'soul', how do we transcend this life in order for reincarnation to be possible?*

If reincarnation is true, it makes sense that something of our true identity would move from one life to the next. What is this 'something' if not a soul? Who (or what) moves on from this life to the next?

7 *What real evidence do we have that reincarnation is true?*

Why is there not consistent evidence for the notion of reincarnation? On what evidence is this idea based, aside from the writings of Buddha? While we have good philosophical reasons to believe in the existence of the soul, what philosophical reasoning brings us to the conclusion that reincarnation is true?

8 *If all of us are re-incarnations of prior human beings, how do we account for the growing population? Where do 'new' humans come from?*

Reincarnation implies that all of us were here before, in a prior life. But if humans can only be reincarnated from prior humans, how is it that the global population is growing? If humans can be reincarnated from other animals, does this mean that the total animal population on earth has always been constant?

9 *If 'buddhas' and 'boddhisatvas' exist to help others in achieving 'nirvana' what is the true value of 'self-effort'?*

If, as a Buddhist, I rely on the help of a 'buddha' or 'boddhisatva' how can my assisted work be accredited to me as Karma or even as true obedience to the Eight Fold Path. Doesn't assistance negate the self-effort required to establish Karma in the first place?

10 *If 'buddha-hood' is actually achievable in this life, how are we to know that we are talking to a true 'buddha' or 'boddhisatva'?*

If there are those in our midst who have actually achieved this level of enlightenment, how are we to identify them. Why should we trust their own proclamations of 'buddha-hood'? How will we recognize them or even distinguish them from non-Buddhist people who display all the attributes that are consistent with 'buddha-hood'?

11 *If a person's present suffering is the result of bad karma from a prior life, why should we try to do anything to change their present condition? Aren't they simply getting what they deserve?*

Why help those who are simply paying the price for an evil prior life? Passivity and apathy seem to be a common problem within Buddhism, largely in response to a concept known as 'samsara'. Take a look at this recent article from an online Burmese magazine:

"This passivity is largely due to the promotion of samsara. Taken from the Pali word sam (succession) sara (going, wandering), it refers to the cycle of human existence, or the cycle of life and death. Samsara poses that people are mere guests in this life, and life is just a transit point. Samsara is the flux of mind and body, of mental and physical

phenomena. Humans are travelers in the realm of samsara, where nothing holds permanent. Moments of sadness and misfortune, as well as glory and happiness, are accepted as part of the natural ups and downs of life. Burma's political and religious elite has affirmed samsara as the only indisputable Buddhist doctrine, and the public has meekly signed on. Because so many Burmese Buddhists tend to see themselves against the backdrop of samsara, it has wide reach over existing social structures, even though Burma is not religiously homogenous. Every experience, even a bad one, is seen as part of life and the impermanent nature of the world. Rather than being angered or aggrieved by unfortunate experiences, Burmese Buddhism preaches that it is best to let them go."(by Min Zin, Engaging Buddhism for Social Change, March, 2003 Irrawaddy.org)

12 *If our present existence is the result of something we could not control (from a prior life), what HOPE can we have related to our present situation in this life?*

How do we hold on to hope for THIS life if our situation was predetermined for us and our present behaviors have more impact on the next life than on the present one? Doesn't this view of our present life lead to an inevitable hopelessness? As it turns out, heavily Buddhist countries like Japan, Korea, and Sri Lanka have some of the highest suicide rates (from young to old). The top twenty most suicidal countries are almost all countries with strong Buddhist or Communist (atheist) histories.

Biblical Questions

Now let's examine some questions related to topics that are directly addressed in the Bible. Buddhism makes a number of claims about the way in which the world operates. Let's compare these ideas directly to the claims of Christianity:

1 *You don't believe in the existence of a personal God. As a Christian I do believe that God exists, and I believe Him to be a personal creator:*



Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.



Romans 1:19-20

because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.



Psalms 14:1

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"

2 *You don't seem to have an answer for the origin of the universe or for us as human beings. As a Christian, I believe that the universe and all of us were created by God and that we are therefore real:*



Acts 17:24-31

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."



Isaiah 45:18

For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), "I am the LORD, and there is none else."

3 *You seem to deny the reality of our material existence and you also deny the existence of the soul and spirit. As a Christian, I believe that humans are real in body, soul and spirit:*



Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.



1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Zechariah 12:1

The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him

4 *You seem to devalue our present life as fleeting and illusionary. As a Christian, I believe that this physical life may be temporary, but it is valuable and worth living:*



Isaiah 40:6

A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.



Isaiah 40:21

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?



1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For,

"ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER"

And this is the word which was preached to you.



You believe that the goal of good living is all about the personal reward of enlightenment. As a Christian, I believe the goal of good living is to honor God and demonstrate His worth so others would desire to know Him:



Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.



1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.



Colossians 1:9-10

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God



You believe that suffering is the result of desire (and attachment) and may even be the result of 'bad Karma'. As a Christian, I believe that suffering is the result of sin, our intentional rebellion against God. I

believe that sin is not an abstract notion or a relative concept. It is clearly defined:



2 Chronicles 6:36

"When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near



Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God



Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned



Psalms 51:3

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.



John 8:34

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin."



Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.



Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death



Isaiah 3:11

Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him.



Proverbs 21:4

Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin.

7 **You believe that suffering is something that we should want to eliminate. As a Christian, I see the positive value in suffering; it can teach, it can discipline, it can provide a contrast to joy. As a Christian, I know that we can even find joy in the midst of suffering:**



Romans 5:3

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance



James 1:2-4

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.



Hebrews 12:11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.



Psalms 30:5

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.



2 Corinthians 8:2

that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.



1 Peter 4:13

but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.



1 Thessalonians 3:7-9

for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account



You believe that we cease to exist after death. As a Christian, I believe that we do not cease to exist after our physical death, but will instead live on to be judged for our actions:



Revelation 20:12-13

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.



John 5:28-29

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are

in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.



Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

9 *You believe that humans can achieve perfection and reach 'nirvana'. As a Christian, I believe that we can never achieve perfection, freedom from suffering, or any permanent more noble existence by self effort:*



John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."



Romans 3:10-12

as it is written,

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."



Galatians 2:16

nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.



Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit

10 *You believe that we can escape the suffering of this world and the limits of our material existence by observing and practicing a set of practices. As a Christian, I know that the way of "escape" is only through faith in Jesus Christ as we are spiritually reborn with God's life through the Holy Spirit:*



John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."



Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but

Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.



Ephesians 2:1-9

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.



Philippians 3:9

and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith



2 Peter 1:2-4

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.



So, Could This Be True?

Every worldview has to be both internally consistent (measure up against itself) and externally consistent (measure up against the world it proposes to describe). The challenge for Buddhism is to account for a system of judgment and reward (Karma) that lacks a personal judge that has the ability to DECIDE whether an individual has achieved something noble or committed something despicable. The very judge that is required by a Karma system is, in fact, lacking from Buddhism altogether. There are many philosophical questions that must be answered by Buddhists who cannot reasonably answer the first question of all worldviews ('how did we get here?') In addition to philosophical difficulties, the Christian must recognize that Buddhism is incompatible with the Christian worldview (for all the reasons we've already discussed). As our culture embraces pluralism and tries to find similarities between every view of the world, we must be clear about the differences that define us and ask the tough questions that expose the failings of the Buddhist worldview.