

**Peter Thein Nyunt** i-our international speaker who spoke about communicating the Gospel to Buddhists, discipling Buddhist background believers and planting churches

He is a native of Myanmar and was converted after living as a Buddhist monk for some years. He is an ordained minister in Myanmar and he holds a PhD in Missiology from South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), India. . He is the Founder and Director of Rakhine Missions Band for Christ (RMBC) which reaches out to the Rakhine buddhists with contextual and approaches and planting indigenous churches. They have about 2000 secret followers.

Rakhine people live in the northwest of Mynmar near the Roghinga and many are in Bangladesh too.

His main theme was that communicating the gospel requires a contextual and receptor focussed approach based on 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23

*Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

He outlined some of the basic Buddhist beliefs and explained that for them there is no concept of sin and therefore the need for salvation. **Buddhism** focuses on personal spiritual development. **Buddhists** strive for a deep insight into the true nature of life and do not worship gods or deities ,

The Core Beliefs in Buddhism in practice are:

- The Four Noble Truths, such as Unsatisfactoriness and suffering exist and are universally experienced. OR  
Desire and attachment are the causes of unsatisfactoriness and suffering
- the Noble Eightfold Path which includes things like right living, right speech, right conduct
- and The Five Precepts..
  1. I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
  2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
  3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
  4. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
  5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicatants.

The concept of **Samsara** in **Buddhism** teaches that human beings have the ultimate control over themselves and this is the process of reincarnation i- , a **continuous** cycle in which the soul is reborn over and over again according to the law of action and reaction.

They are stuck in the Samsara- the endless cycle of birth death and rebirth. The type of birth one has in this life is determined by actions or *karma* from the previous lives; and the circumstances of the future rebirth are determined by the actions in the current and previous lives.

There is good and bad Karma or actions of 3 types and if you perform even one of the bad actions you are doomed.

- physical like murder, stealing
- vocal like lies and slander
- mental like envy

So for a B to escape this Samsara he needs something form outside to break the cycle – to break away from the belief that you cannot escape your sin . And that is where Jesus can come in! It is impossible not to break one of the rules and there is no forgiveness if you do. So Peter made the point over and over that he encourages B to be better B and they find it impossible and then can see the need for Jesus. There are the 5 main precepts but 100s of minor ones as well to keep. They have lots of avtions they are to practice every day eg 227 for monks, 311 for nuns! But Jesus will forgive if you repent of your bad Karma.

He explained that converting a B requires showing the J is the liberator of a B from Samsara. They want to break away for the endless cycle but there is no way to do this in B teaching. J can save these sinners. And this was prophesised by Buddha himself!

Near his death (483 B.C.) Buddha told his followers, "Regardless of how many laws you have kept, or even if you pray 5 times a day, you cannot be free from your sin. Even though you burn yourself, even though I become a hermit, or am reborn another 10 times, I also shall not be saved." (Manuscript, Praising Temple, Chiangmai Thailand).

Buddha taught that he was not a "god", but only a man, a truth seeker. But on his death bed Buddha taught that there would be a future Messiah, "Lord of Mercies", who would be able to free men of their sins. Buddha said, "...He is the Lord of Mercies, His name shall be called the 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).

Buddha continued to teach of 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 way. A spirit from heaven will come and dwell in your heart." (Manuscript, Praising Temple, Chiangmai, Thailand).

How amazing is that!!

So the big question for a B is do you chooses endless reincarnation or do you choose liberation from this cycle? Being born as a human is seen by **Buddhists** as a rare opportunity to work towards escaping this **cycle** of samsara. The escape from samsara is called Nirvana or enlightenment. But it is impossible as noone can keep all the rules.

So there is the step in point for Jesus- he is the liberator to save us from our sins and offer us eternal life with him.

As Peter T N disciples the new believers he replaces the B precepts with 5 Christian ones which they follow:

To be a follower of JC you must:

1. repent (of your bad Karma)
2. confess Jesus is Lord
3. obey Jesus' commands
4. be courageous in the Lord
5. be witnesses of Christ

Peter also told us about his church planting and using some familiar traditions to help believers . Eg a new monk changes his clothes and wears a uniform- so do the believers being regarded as a novice for Jesus. He uses chants which are bible verses, he uses gongs to call to worship, and traditional music.