Was Jesus Christ the Fulfillment of the Buddha’s Prophecy?

June 28, 2006 by Scott Noble (waterpark777@yahoo.com)

I. Introduction
This article examines the claim of whether or not Buddha made a prophecy about Jesus Christ. This claim rests mainly on a text found in northern Thailand (Chiang Mai). I first encountered this claim about a year and a half ago through a Thai pastor who used this in his evangelism. I did some research about it then and shared what I found with those concerned, but didn’t think much else of it. Then later, I ran across this claim two more times as it was being used by Thai Christians. At about the same time, Mike Oppenheimer contacted me to write an article about this, pointing out to me that Daniel Kikawa was planning to make a video about this prophetic claim. So, I did some more detailed research. Let’s take a look at some of the evidence …

The text that was found in northern Thailand is said to have come from the Phra Singh temple (Wat Phra Singh). It is claimed that this text was published in 1944. I’ve since spoken with three university professors who specialize in this type of literature and they had never heard of this text. Far from being a commonly accepted “prophecy”, this text is quite unknown apart from a few Christians who use this to evangelize. I showed the professors a photocopy of the Thai text which the pastor was using. They identified the idioms in the Thai as being distinct to the Lanna dialect (northern Thailand).

I also went to the Phra Singh temple, which is in the center of Chiang Mai city and asked a senior monk about this text. Although he had been there for about 25 years, he didn’t know how to get a copy of this text. I also asked at their library, and they likewise did not know where to find this text. Many people have asked about this text before, but somehow the text seems to have disappeared. How can we know whether this lost text was authentic? Wat Phra Singh temple does not go back to the time of the Buddha. In fact, it’s not even the oldest temple in Chiang Mai. The oldest temple in Chiang Mai is Wat Chiang Man, which was constructed in 1297, while Wat Phra Singh was constructed in 1345, about 48 years later. Both of these temples appeared on the scene more than a millennium after the time of the Buddha.

II. Who is “Metteyya”?
The text from Chiang Mai, prophesies about someone named Metteyya. This Metteyya is then identified with Jesus Christ because of the allusions to crucifixion wounds and also because of the teaching about salvation by grace. The only clear reference to Metteyya that is in the Pali Canon (the earliest source for the Buddha’s teachings) speaks of him as a Buddha (this Pali text is totally different from the old Thai quote, though it uses the same name- Metteyya). There is one other
mention of Metteyya in the Buddhavamsa (of the Pali Canon), but this is considered to be an interpolation added later. Even if it is canonical, it’s only one verse, which simply refers to Metteyya as a Buddha. Since the old Thai quote uses the same name (Metteyya in the Pali- Maitreya in the Sanskrit), referring to the Pali Canon, we see who Metteyya is supposed to be- a Buddha- and a Buddha is always supposed to follow a certain pattern- his mother dies when he is 7 days old, he is uncircumcised, he must be born in India, and other things which make him NOT Jesus Christ (e.g. he is supposed to appear when human life spans are back to 80,000 years). The English translation (found in John R. Davis' book, Poles Apart) of the quotation is as follows…

"Regardless how many laws you may have kept, or even if you pray five times a day, you shall not be saved. A sin is too great to be washed away; even though I become a hermit for more than eight 'A-song-kai’…The Brahmin asked what Metteyya’s character is. The Buddha replied that ‘in his hands and feet are wounds, his side has a wound which was pierced and his forehead is full of scars from wounds. He is the gold ship to carry you to heaven where you will find the Tri-pra (the crystal Triune god). Thus give up following the old way. A spirit from heaven will come and dwell in your heart by which you will overcome your enemies for both four and eight directions.’"

(http://www.agts.edu/syllabi/ce/summer2002/mthm639oleson_sum02_np_r1.pdf)

There are a couple of discrepancies between this English translation and the Thai version I have. This translation has removed the clear references to Buddhism, such as the omission of the word nirvana (nibbana in Pali) in the English version. In the Thai, instead of saying “heaven” it says “nirvana heaven.” Nirvana is by no means a synonym for heaven, and in fact it was the later Mahayanists who developed such a notion of nirvana. For a Theravadin Buddhist, parinirvana (dying after achieving nirvana) is absolute extinction, which bears no resemblance to the biblical meaning for heaven. Also, what was translated in English as "Tri-pra (the crystal Triune god)" in the Thai is just a reference to the triple gem, namely the Buddha, the Sangha, and the Dharma.

In the main text in the Pali canon referring Metteyya, the Buddha states…

"At that period, brethren, there will arise in the world an Exalted One named Metteyya, Arahant, Fully Awakened, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, an Exalted One, a Buddha, even as I am now." (Dialogues of the Buddha III, 73-74)

He is clearly supposed to be a Buddha, following the set pattern for Buddhas. In the commentary of the Pali Canon, being fixed in form around the 5th century AD, but going back as far as the 1st century AD (already after Christ, thus not a very impressive “prophecy” even if it were there), there still is no
mention such as the old Thai quote would suggest. In the commentaries, Metteyya is still spoken of as a Buddha. Here is one example...

“In this Bhadda-eon four Buddhas arose. Which four? Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa, our Buddha, and the Lord Metteyya will arise. Thus this eon, praised by the Lord, is called a Bhadda-eon on account of its being much beatified by the arisings of five Buddhas.” (Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning, 360).

III. Some of John Davis’ Arguments in Favor of Using this “Prophecy”

In Davis’ book, “Poles Apart”, (http://www.agts.edu/syllabi/ce/summer2002/mthm639leson_sum02_np_r1.pdf) he says that, “As early as 1897, Dr. W.C. Dodds made a number of visits to the “Tai” peoples of Southern China presenting the Gospel as the fulfillment of Buddhist prophecies.” No text is mentioned in reference to this incident, and the reaction of the people is that of a people familiar with the Pali Canon prophecy of a future Buddha, not the more specific “prophecy” from Chiang Mai. Clearly there is an expectation for a fifth Buddha, named Metteyya, in Buddhist lands, but this comes from the Pali Canon.

Referring to the text found at Wat Phra Sing, a Thai pastor said, “It was written before the present Thailand was established. Therefore it is impossible that the writer of this document was influenced by Christianity.” This is a big assumption, considering that modern Thailand was established less than 250 years ago. The history of Chiang Mai goes back about 710 years (although they were a colony of Burma for more than 200 of those years). Nestorian Christians were in China long before Chiang Mai was ever a city. Merchants and immigrants from China were around in northern Thailand even before the founding of Chiang Mai. Since the Wat Phra Singh text is written in the Lanna language, it had to have been written sometime after the founding of Chiang Mai (1296 AD), when the Lanna script came into use.

Looking at other texts written during this time, it was not unheard of to invent a prophecy and place it in the mouth of the Buddha. In Sarassawadee Ongsakul’s book, “History of Lanna,” speaking about chronicles written in Lanna about cities in northern Thailand, she says, “The Phrathat chronicles contain first sections similar to the already mentioned general Buddhist chronicles. They go on to explain how the Buddha came to help the people of the region, his prophecy for the area, the area’s acquisition of a Buddha relic, the founding of the local town...” (4). All of these chronicles were written sometime after the founding of Chiang Mai (1296 AD), so their claim to speak for the Buddha is not very believable. These “prophecies” were written 1700 years or more after the historic Buddha ceased to breathe.
Also, John Davis writes, “In those crisis days just before the fall of Phnom Phen, many thousands of Cambodians showed a great interest in the Gospel through the ministry of Stanley Mooneyham, then Director of World Vision International. The Pastor felt that Mooneyham must have done research into the history and prophecies concerning one Metteyya, who was to come and save Cambodian people. Mooneyham centred in on Christ as the fulfilment of these prophecies.” Again, no text is referred to, so it is uncertain whether the generic prophecy of the Pali Canon is in mind, or the more specific, but spurious text from Chiang Mai.

Davis assumes, “Yet it is highly unlikely that you would find the same prophecies in five separate countries, Cambodia, China, Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, if this had been a plant by missionaries in an obscure Temple in North Thailand and that relatively recently.” It is clear though from Davis’ lack of references to texts, and by not differentiating between the general Pali Canon prophecy of a future Buddha, and the more specific one found in Chiang Mai, that these five countries mentioned, do not necessarily all refer to the specific “prophecy.” For example, the Burmese prophecy which Davis quotes is not at all similar to the one from Thailand, and lines up more with the Tripitaka (Pali Canon), calling Metteyya a Buddha.

Davis gave no specific information on any “prophecy” from Sri Lanka, but Sri Lanka had contact with Christian ideas (although Catholic), as early as 1505, when Sri Lanka became a colony of Portugal. Ongsakul points out the influence Sri Lanka had on Thailand, “The synthesis of indigenous folk history with the new Buddhist writing influences from Sri Lanka resulted in something distinct and new…” (4) In 1511 some Catholic priests came to Thailand for a visit, accompanying the Portuguese ambassador. All five of the countries mentioned by Davis had interaction through trading, religious trips, and even wars. So, it’s not surprising that a concept such as that found in the Wat Phra Singh text, could make it’s way to all of these countries in a relatively short amount of time.

In the article, “Stages in the Bodhisattva Career of the Thatagata Maitreya,” Jaini lists many texts regarding Maitreya (Metteyya), but makes no reference at all to the Wat Phra Singh text. Jaini does however mention a sixteenth century text from Thailand (and even from Chiang Mai), that bears no resemblance to the Wat Phra Singh text (due to it’s emphasis on performing good works)…

“A similar story about the elder Malaya-Mahadeva’s encounter with the bodhisattva Maitreya appears in the Thai Phra Malai sutta, written in Chieng Mai in the sixteenth century….Maitreya advises the elder that recitation of the Vessantara-jataka will provide the necessary merit to yield a human birth that coincides with the auspicious occasion of the advent of the new Buddha!” (73).

This Phra Malai text is more widely known than the Wat Phra Singh text and yet it’s from the sixteenth century. If the Wat Phra Singh text were legitimate it should have been acknowledged by some
ancient historical person, but we only know of it from modern times. Even in the sixteenth century it seems to be unheard of.

The arguments given in Davis' books seem to emphasize that using this technique really attracts Buddhists to Christ. Unfortunately, this is justifying the means by the ends. It is using a "lie" for the sake of the truth, which is a contradiction in terms - an oxymoron. Davis does not convincingly establish that the specific prophecy (such as the one found in Thailand), is actually found in these five countries. All that he established is that people in these five countries are expecting a future Buddha, named Metteyya. That is nothing new, but the Pali Canon version of this prophecy clearly shows Metteyya to be a Buddha, not Jesus Christ.

Also, looking at the history of the Nestorian Christians in China, and the willingness of Nestorians and Buddhists to synchronize their messages, it would not be surprising if this is the actual source of this prophecy that made it's way to Thailand.

From the website, [http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1553&C=1363](http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1553&C=1363), a brief history is given of Christians in China. They state that, "the first effective Christian missions to China of which we have definite knowledge was that sent by the Patriarch Yeshuyab II in about the year AD 635." This is a lot earlier than the establishment of Chiang Mai. Also, "After Kao-tsung's death, one of his queens Wu-Hou (Wu Chao) seized power (690-705). She was pro-Buddhist and against the Christians. She officially declared Buddhism as state religion in AD 691. The Buddhists hailed her as an incarnation of Maitreya Buddha. She persecuted the Christians." From this quote we see that the Chinese Buddhists were expecting Metteyya (here in it's Sanskrit form of Maitreya), and in fact hailed their queen as the incarnation of this Buddha.

From the website, [http://www.metafilter.com/mefi/32951](http://www.metafilter.com/mefi/32951) we have more details about the Nestorians in China.

“One link with Buddhism is that the Nestorians coexisted reasonably well in China, even going so far as to develop some of their Christology in terms of the Chinese culture of the day, which led to some interesting theological developments and artwork. But eventually the Nestorians were undone because of their perceived similarity to Buddhism. …Christianity seemed like a weird offshoot of Buddhism so they suppressed the Nestorians as well. However, during its existence Nestorianism hybridized with Buddhism through the medium of a Shinto-funded emissary from Japan, Kukai, during the early 9th century to give birth to the syncretic Shingon Buddhism, still widely extant today, which posits a Messianic figure as a redeemer of sins, the Maitreya/Miroku.”
Throughout the years, many people have claimed to be the incarnation of Maitreya. This is not surprising, but these claimants have not found widespread approval from the Buddhist Sangha. Seeing the Nestorians’ willingness to “hybridize” with Buddhism, and also noting the fact that many people who are now Thai, migrated to Thailand from China, the Nestorian compromise seems like a likely source for this “prophecy” now found in Thailand.

IV. Some of Inta Chantavongsouk’s Arguments in Favor of Using this “Prophecy”

Inta Chantavongsouk is a Christian pastor from Laos. He has written a booklet called “Buddha’s Prophecy of the Messiah.” John Davis didn’t mention Laos as one of the countries affected by this “prophecy” so that makes a total of six countries, although Davis gave very questionable evidence for some of the countries, no evidence for other countries, and only one text for any of these - the one from Chiang Mai. All of these six countries except one espouse Theravada Buddhism (although Cambodia used to be predominantly Mahayana). China on the other hand espouses Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism has more of a tendency than Theravada Buddhism to adapt its beliefs to the beliefs it encounters in its host culture. Given this tendency, as well as the presence of the Nestorians in China, this still seems like a likely source for the Buddha’s “prophecy.” Although it may also have come from the Catholic influence from Sri Lanka, maybe this is less likely since the “prophecy” emphasizes grace rather than works, which Catholics generally don’t emphasize.

Chantavongsouk’s book has received an enthusiastic recommendation from the Far East Broadcasting Company’s chaplain, Dr. A. Dale Golding, but this booklet is just as lacking in careful research as Davis’ book. Generally speaking, Chantavongsouk presents the gospel message in this booklet, but the fact that this is mixed with the Buddha’s prophecy compromises his message severely. It’s like a man who wants to get married and is attracted to a particular woman, but who still wants to be attracted to other women as well. Just becoming interested in Jesus Christ is not enough. A person must also forsake their former religious alliances. Eventually Chantavongsouk points out to the reader that they must acknowledge “Buddha is not the way,” but before coming to that point, the Buddha is relied upon as a prophet, having a message from God.

Chantavongsouk gives a quotation from a traditional poem, that is an oral tradition in Laos...

“He will be born with the poor people in the countryside, but he will have great power. This man will appear in a body so wounded that we do not want to look at him. When he comes near, if anyone does not respect him, he will receive punishment, but the one who receives him will not fall into hell.”

Apart from this oral tradition, he also relies on the text found in Chiang Mai, to support the claim that the Buddha prophesied about Jesus Christ. Chantavongsouk also quotes some other non-canonical texts, claiming to be from the Buddha, which address the issues of merit making and idol worship.
From these texts he argues that the Buddha did not intend for people to rely on their own good deeds or to venerate him in idols. These texts are not from the Pali Canon though (the earliest source for Buddhist doctrine). In fact, a Buddhist Council was held in Chiang Mai in 1477 to revise the Pali Canon. If this text from Wat Phra Singh about the Buddha’s “prophecy” were considered to be so ancient it should have been included then, but wasn’t. Probably the text had not yet been written at that time.

Chantavongsouk claims that a monk from Wat Phra Singh gave him a copy of the text in question. Many of the non-canonical texts in Chantavongsouk’s book are also found in the Thai photocopies about the Wat Phra Singh text. Whether Chantavongsouk is the originator of this method of evangelism in it’s modern form, is not clear, because the Thai version is anonymous. But clearly, one came from the other or vise versa.

In the Thai version, the Wat Phra Singh text also contains the title, which is roughly translated, “Cambodian Buddhist Scripture Text.” It’s not clear from these photocopies whether this means that the text in question was found loosely inserted among other texts in a volume with the Cambodian title, or whether it is actually claimed that this text came from Cambodia. If we assume that the text came from Cambodia, it’s origin may still be from the Nestorians, because Cambodia had early contact with China...

“Then other kings with Indian names appear in the inscription. One, Kuandinya Jayavarman (478-514) cultivated Buddhism, and sent a Buddhist mission complete with Funanese images [carved in coral] to the Emperor of China…” [The Art of Southeast Asia, Philip Dawson, p21]
http://www.cambodianview.com/buddhist-history.htm

“According to Ma Touan-Lin, a 13th century Chinese chronicler, there were ten monasteries of Buddhist monks and nuns studying the sacred texts in the 4th and 5th centuries CE [in Funan/Chenla – Cambodia]. He stated that two monks from Funan traveled to China in this period at the request of the Chinese emperor, to translate the Sanskrit Tipitika into Chinese.”
http://www.cambodianview.com/buddhist-history.htm


And there was contact between Cambodia and Thailand. In the same year that Chiang Mai was founded, the central Thai kingdom invaded Cambodia...

“The Thais first attacked Angkor in 1296, taking slaves and pillaging the capital. Then in 1352-1430 the Kingdom of Ayutthaya attacked and looted Angkor four times, enslaving and imprisoning many Khmer.”
http://www.cambodianview.com/buddhist-history1.htm

If the Wat Phra Singh text was not influenced by the Nestorians, it may have been influenced by the Portuguese…

“In 1556 the Portuguese missionary Gaspar de Cruz spent about a year in Cambodia and visited the capital Lovek where King Cham reigned.”

http://www.cambodianview.com/buddhist-history1.htm

There are many possibilities concerning the origin of the Wat Phra Singh text: 1. It may have come directly to Chiang Mai from Chinese merchants/immigrants who had contact with Nestorians in China; 2. It may have come from Portuguese influence in Sri Lanka; 3. It may have come through Cambodia via Nestorian or Portuguese influence; 4. It may have been invented by a writer in Chiang Mai who was familiar with basic Christian concepts such as the cross and salvation by grace. In spite of it being in the old Lanna style it may have even been written fairly recently, just as an English speaking person could imitate the Shakespearean writing style. Once it was written in text format, or even before, this concept could easily spread among the surrounding countries. It would not take much time for that, as James wrote, “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” (James 3: 5).

Although using the Buddha’s prophecy seems like an effective way to reach people on the surface, actually it’s not a truthful method. Christians are not called to be marketing geniuses, but simply need to share the truth. From the evidence presented in this article, it is extremely unreasonable to think that this text or these oral traditions come from the Buddha himself. And, thus it is not an honest method to use. The earliest date this text can claim for itself is sometime after 1296 AD, because it is written in Lanna script and after that date is when the Lanna script came into use. Considering some of the other evidence, such as the fact that Metteyya is referred to as a Buddha (and no mention of any wounds) in the commentary of the Pali Canon (5th century AD), and the fact that the Buddhist Council of 1477 in Chiang Mai, did not include the Wat Phra Singh text in the Pali Canon, or the presence in Chiang Mai of a more well known text talking about Maitreya, from the 16th century, it’s quite likely that the Wat Phra Singh text is very modern. Aside from this evidence, this “prophecy” is not even widely known in Thailand and the original text seems to have disappeared. All of the evidence points away from it being authentic.

Even if this text could be proven to be from the Buddha, it is still not a wise approach to use, because if we call people to listen to the Buddha’s prophecy on one point, we must acknowledge the Buddha’s teachings on other points as well. It would be inconsistent to say that the Buddha’s prophecy was right, but his teachings on meditation and the goal in life were wrong. A prophet of God must have a message that is completely from God, otherwise he is not a prophet of God. The
Buddhist world is waiting for a future Buddha, but this is not at all related to Jesus Christ. In Bodh-Gaya, the place where the historical Buddha is said to have taken his last breath, a construction project is underway, anticipating the future Buddha…

“A bronze statue is being erected here that will be many times larger than any built before. It will rise five hundred feet into the sky, forty-five storeys high, and the space within will be as great as that of the largest cathedral in Europe. It will be a statue of Buddha Maitreya, the Buddha to come, seated on a stone throne…It will cost in excess of two hundred million dollars, and the project’s originators justify the expenditure on the grounds that the statue will inspire peace and the happiness of all sentient beings. The Maitreya will face north, towards the Land of Snows, as if to signal to Tibet’s present occupiers that his time will come.” (The Search for the Buddha by Charles Allen, 293)

The Buddhist understanding about who Maitreya is, should be a clear indicator to Christians that using this “evangelistic” method from Wat Phra Singh is far from biblical.

V. Both the form and the content betray this “prophecy”…

1. The “form” is that of the old Thai language. If we are to believe this prophecy really came from the Buddha, to be anywhere near ancient enough, it should be written in either Pali or Sanskrit, not old Thai. This situation is like someone coming up with another “gospel” of Jesus Christ written not in Greek, but in old English. How much credibility would that have?

2. The “content” of this “prophecy” with it’s emphasis on grace rather than works is also in contradiction to the Pali Canon, which itself was written down several hundred years after the Buddha, but still did not contain this teaching of salvation by “grace.” In fact, the well known Thai Buddhist scholar P.A. Payutto has said, "No matter where Buddhism spreads to, or how distorted the teaching becomes, this emphasis on human endeavor never varies. If this one principle is missing, we can confidently say that it is no longer Buddhism." (38). If the Buddha really did make such a prophecy and really was as a John the Baptist (pointing people to Jesus), why weren’t all of India and Asia (or at least a significant number) converted, at the first proclamation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? The Buddha’s actual teachings are not at all similar to what is written in this “prophecy” and so Buddhists do not look for or recognize Jesus Christ based on Buddhist teachings.

VI. Biblical Considerations

After seeing a man healed, the people of Lycaonia supposed that Paul was Hermes and Barnabas was Zeus. These two apostles had an opportunity to use the religious terminology of the local people to make themselves understood, but they refused to do so…

“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also
are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.” (Acts 14: 14- 18)

Far from being syncretistic, they said, “you should turn from these useless things to the living God.” Jesus Christ is unique. He cannot be synchronized into other religious systems. A choice must be made. Elijah told the people of Israel who were trying to serve Baal and God, “”How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him…” (I Kings 18: 21). Once Paul made mention of “the unknown God” (in Acts 17: 23) and then went on to explain to his audience who God is. This is not a good comparison with using the Buddhist “prophecy,” because this was just a confession of ignorance. It was not fitting Jesus Christ into another religious system. Jesus Christ has the marks of authenticity, having been prophesied hundreds and even thousands of years before He was revealed to us.

There are over three hundred prophecies about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (For examples of these, here are some websites... http://www.christianarsenal.com/Apologetics/MessProphecies.htm, http://www.present-truth.org/300prophecies.htm, http://www.messiahrevealed.org/). These are the prophecies we should be pointing people to, not the so called prophecy of the Buddha. Prophecy is not something taken lightly by God. His standard for a prophet is 100% accuracy. One false prophecy makes a false prophet, just like one murder makes a murderer. It only takes one false one to miss the mark. This standard is spelled out by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, with a further qualification...

"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' —which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”
(Deuteronomy 13: 1-3)

In the above passage the prophet actually prophesied correctly, but his teaching was off- he spoke to the people, saying, “Let us go after other gods.” The Buddha’s teachings also turn people away from God their Creator. Rahula, in What the Buddha Taught, wrote...

“Religions which believe in God and Soul make no secret of these two ideas; on the contrary, they proclaim them, constantly and repeatedly, in the most eloquent terms. If the Buddha had accepted these two ideas, so important in all religions, he certainly would have declared them publicly, as he had spoken about other things...” (56).
Payutto, a well known Thai monk, says…

“You may have read in the Buddha’s biography, how, when the Prince was born, he performed the symbolic gesture of walking seven steps and proclaiming, “I am the greatest in the world, I am the foremost in the world, I am the grandest in the world.”…this statement should be understood as the Buddha’s proclamation of human independence…it is no longer necessary for human beings to plead for help from external sources. Instead they can better themselves. A human being who becomes a Buddha is revered by even the celestial beings and gods.” (42).

The classic Buddhist analogy which is sometimes applied to the issue of our dependence on God, is the man who was shot with an arrow. That man does not worry about where the arrow came from, who shot it, what kind of bow it was shot from, etc., but instead focuses on getting the arrow out! So it is said that humans need to focus on solving the problem of our suffering, and not to worry about the beginning of the world or the destination of the Buddha and other “metaphysical questions.” But, unfortunately, by relegating God to the sidelines, the true source of (everlasting) relief is also missed. God is overlooked and rejected, like a wounded man telling a doctor to go away.

The words of Moses, who was a true prophet of God, tell us not to listen to a “prophet” who would have us go after “other gods.” That is the first test- is the teaching of the prophet God-honoring? The New Testament also speaks of the possibility of something “miraculous” happening, which is not from God. These are called “lying wonders,” and the people who received them did not love the truth… “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (II Thessalonians 2: 9-10) The next test is one that I already mentioned- the prophet must be 100% accurate as God’s representative…

“‘But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ —“when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” (Deuteronomy 18: 20-22).

We no longer live in a theocracy now, so the death penalty by stoning does not apply, but the seriousness of the offence is not at all lessened. God’s principle for His prophets is still 100% accuracy. Isaiah, Daniel, David, Moses, and others in the Bible, who prophesied about Jesus Christ did not have any false prophesies. Was the Buddha a prophet by God’s standard? In the Middle Length Sayings of the Tripitaka (III, p. 248-253), the Buddha spoke about physical results in future rebirths which resulted from present behaviors…
"This course is conducive to ugliness, brahman youth, that is to say being wrathful…and evincing…resentment."…"This course is conducive to poverty, brahman youth, that is to say not being a giver…of bed, lodging, light."… "This course is conducive to being in a lowly family, brahman youth, that is to say being one who…does not honour one who should be…honoured."

This is absolutely contrary to what the Bible teaches, and so the Christian must reject this prophecy about rebirths. That already disqualifies the Buddha as being God's prophet. One wrong prophecy is one too many. Here's one more... In the Vinaya Pitaka (Book of Discipline V) of the Tripitaka, a prediction is made by Sakyamuni, when addressing Ananda:

"If, Ananda, women had not obtained the going forth from home into homelessness in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, the Brahma-faring, Ananda, would have lasted long, true dhamma would have endured for a thousand years. But since, Ananda, women have gone forth...in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, now, Ananda, the Brahma-faring will not last long, true dhamma will endure only for five hundred years." (356)

Since women did "go forth" and five hundred years have already passed, what does this say about the Buddha's stature as a prophet? If we say it is a false prophecy, then the Pali Canon (Tripitaka) is undermined and the Buddha is a false prophet. If we say it is a true prophecy, then it is still false, since five hundred years have already passed, and thus "true dhamma" (including this prophecy if it were true) would no longer be around. The Buddha has failed both tests for a prophet of God.

Also, in the Pali Canon, when the Buddha did prophesy about the future Buddha Metteyya, he said he is supposed to appear when human life-spans are back to 80,000 years. And, in that passage (Dialogues of the Buddha III of the Pali Canon) at one time human life spans only reached up to ten years old and people had to marry at five (and reproduce before dying at age ten). These statements are quite incredible, not what we would expect from a prophet who follows God's prophetic standard of absolute reliability.

When Paul spoke with the Romans he didn't use a prophecy from Zeus or Hermes. When Elijah spoke with wayward Israel he didn't use a prophecy from Baal. When Phillip spoke with the Ethiopian eunuch he didn't appeal to any Ethiopian gods. When Jonah went to Nineveh he didn't use an Assyrian prophecy. When Jesus Christ appeared, he was heralded by John the Baptist, a true prophet of God, and Jesus reminded people of what other true prophets had foretold about Him.

The prophecies which predict Jesus' crucifixion and His mission to save humanity from their sins are found in the Bible. These prophecies can be shown to have been written long before Jesus’ incarnation, and even long before the time of the Buddha. Jesus is the messiah which God revealed
to us through His prophets. David prophesied about the crucifixion even before crucifixion as a method of execution was known in the ancient world…

“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” (Psalm 22: 15-18)

Referring to Jesus being the “lamb of God,” who sacrificed Himself for humanity’s sins, Isaiah wrote...

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearsers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” (Isaiah 53: 4-7).

Isaiah also prophesies about Jesus’ crucifixion with the “wicked” (the two thieves) and His burial with the “rich” (Joseph of Arimathea)...

“And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.” (Isaiah 53: 9)

VII. Conclusion

This “prophecy” from Chiang Mai in all likelihood is very modern, not coming from the Buddha at all. Since both the commentaries and the Pali Canon refer to Metteyya as a Buddha, and since both the commentaries and the Pali Canon define the characteristics of a Buddha (uncircumcised, born in India, etc.), it is absurd, and dishonest to use this “prophecy” for Jesus Christ. Christians are not called to find extra-biblical keys to unlock the culture, or to “build bridges” of understanding between “faith communities” when the most severe separation is between man and God, not man and man. And this separation was caused by sin (“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way”- Isaiah 53: 6), thus a suitable “bridge” will not be a Buddhist “prophecy” labeling Jesus Christ with the “other god” name of Metteyya, but a proper understanding of sin, and the understanding that no mere human can save us- but that Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate and who thus existed before the Buddha and has the power of the Creator, can save (He can recreate a sinful heart to be the heart of a forgiven child of God). Jesus Himself took the punishment for sin that people deserve, when He died on the cross and was raised to life on the third day. We deserve the punishment for our sins, but Jesus although He was innocent took the punishment, so that we could be forgiven. That is sacrificial love. We could never wash away our own sins, but Jesus made a way
for the separation between man and God to be bridged - Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker. This forgiveness is not automatic though. We need to renounce our independence (Isaiah 53: 6) and declare our dependence on Jesus Christ (and use the instruction manual He gave us - the Bible - a computer might be OK when used as a chair or a paperweight, but it's a lot more useful when used according to the instruction manual). The Bible (Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth) is unlike any other book. The prophecies in the Bible confirm to us that God is the Author.

Buddhists, when presented with the claims of Jesus Christ will sometimes refuse Him on the basis that they already have the Buddha. Theravada Buddhists will admit though that the Buddha was only a human. When it’s time to die and face our Creator, no mere human can help us on that day. We all need the cross of Jesus Christ to wash us from our sins. This must be a personal knowledge. A person who reads a biography about a famous person, knows ABOUT that person, but does not really KNOW them. But, when we read the Bible we should not just know ABOUT Jesus Christ, but put our faith in Him to really KNOW Him. Jesus Christ has been verified to humanity on the basis of over 300 fulfilled prophesies, as well as the record of His miraculous life confirmed in history. Jesus is not a “western god,” but is God, the Creator of every person in every nation and His redemption is available to all who will seek Him. The gap that separates people from God can be bridged through Jesus Christ. The gospel when preached and lived has the power through Jesus Christ, to transform lives, without the aid of “secret keys” which shift the focus away from God. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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