

The sermon on the mount

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The ' Sermon on the Mount' is a consolidation of the teachings of Jesus Christ and is presented in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Buddha's sermon at Benares is similarly a consolidation of the middle-way and the eightfold path preached by Buddha. The ' Sermon on the Mount' contains the following parts - beatitudes, metaphors of salt and light, an exposition of the law, a discourse on ostentation, the Lord's Prayer, and discourses on judgementalism and holiness.

Buddha's sermon is presented in the form of a parable. Five mendicants who are waiting on the Buddha refuse to recognize Him as the awakened one and call Him instead by His name because they see that the Buddha is taking pleasure in the worldly activities of man. Buddha rebukes them by stating that no amount of reading and chanting the Vedas would serve any purpose as long as men did not overcome the veil of illusion.

He says, " self-indulgence which is unworthy, vain and fit only for the worldly-minded and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of self-mortification, which is painful, useless and unprofitable". He asks them to avoid extremes and take the middle-way. The four noble truths deal with the nature of suffering, the origin and destruction of suffering, and the destruction of sorrow. In the ' Sermon on the Mount' Jesus too denounces judgementalism by saying that those who judge would be judged in a similar manner.

He too propounds the law, in this case, of the Ten Commandments and reinterprets them. While He uses the metaphors of ' salt and light' to describe holy men, the Buddha uses the metaphor a wheel to describe the

quality of pure men - spokes represent pure conduct, uniformity of spokes represent justice, the tire represents wisdom, modesty and thoughtfulness are the hub in which truth, the axle if firmly fixed.

Both Buddha and Jesus denounce ostentation. They both say that donning the clothes of a mendicant, chanting prayers and the Vedas, fasting, giving alms, etc. when done only to get praise and approval are of no benefit to anyone. The essence of Jesus' teachings is present in one sentence - do unto others as you would have them do to you.