

Christianity vs Islam – Lesson 1

Can the God of Islam Be the Same as the God of Christianity?

Brief overview of Christianity and Islam:

Christianity and Islam are the two largest religions in the world, both being **monotheistic** (belief in one god) **Abrahamic faiths** that originated in the Middle East.

- **Christianity** emerged in the **1st century AD**, founded on the life and teachings of **Jesus Christ**.
- **Islam** developed in the **7th century AD**, based on the teachings of the **Prophet Muhammad**.
- Christianity and Islam share some beliefs about Jesus, such as His virgin birth and His role as a significant figure, however, they differ fundamentally in their views on the nature of God, the Trinity, and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Key Similarities:

Aspect	<u>Christianity</u>	<u>Islam</u>
Belief in God	One God in Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)	One god (Allah)
Jesus' Role	Jesus is the Son of God and Savior	Jesus is a prophet and messenger
Virgin Birth	Belief in the virgin birth of Jesus	Belief in the virgin birth of Jesus
Scriptures	The Bible (Old and New Testaments)	The Quran and Hadith

Key Differences:

Aspect	<u>Christianity</u>	<u>Islam</u>
Nature of God	Trinity (three persons in one God)	Strict monotheism (Tawhid)
Crucifixion	Jesus was crucified and resurrected	Jesus was not crucified; someone else was crucified in His place
Salvation	Achieved through faith in Jesus Christ	Achieved through submission to Allah's will

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Christianity</u>	<u>Islam</u>
View of Scriptures	Bible is the complete Word of God	Quran is the final revelation; previous scriptures are seen as altered

Conclusion

While Christianity and Islam share some foundational beliefs, such as the importance of Jesus and the concept of one God, they diverge significantly in their understanding of God's nature, the role of Jesus, and the path to salvation. These differences are critical to the identity and practices of each faith.

What are the key differences between Christian and Islamic beliefs about God?

Christianity believes in the Trinity, which is one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Islam emphasizes strict monotheism, viewing god (Allah) as a singular entity with no partners or children (no son).

How do Christianity and Islam view the role of Jesus differently?

Christianity and Islam have fundamentally different views on Jesus.

Christians believe Jesus is the **Son of God and the Savior of the world.**

Muslims regard Him as a revered prophet and the Messiah, but not divine.

What historical events influenced the development of Christianity and Islam in the Middle East?

Christianity began in the Middle East and spread rapidly from Jerusalem to various regions. Islam emerged in the 7th century AD with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, influenced by the existing Christian and Jewish traditions. The early Muslim conquests and the subsequent interactions between these two faiths shaped their development in the region.

While some similarities exist between Islam and Christianity (they are both monotheistic religions, for example), their differences are clear-cut, significant, and irreconcilable.

We will see that Islam differs from Christianity in four key areas:

1. The founders of the two religions
2. The contrasting views of God
3. The sacred literature
4. The means of salvation

1. Islam and Christianity: Founders of the Religions

Islam was founded by an Arab merchant named Muhammad around AD 622. Muhammad claimed to have received a revelation from an angel of God - Gabriel, and although he initially feared his revelation had come from Satan, Muhammed later claimed to be the last and greatest of all of God's prophets. Muhammed had fifteen wives (although he limited other men to four wives apiece) and he sanctioned the beating of wives (Sura 4:34). Muhammed was well known for spreading his new religion by force. He commanded, "Fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them" (Sura 9:5), and he specified the proper way to execute an unbeliever was to cut his throat (Sura 47:4). He led raids against caravans to plunder their goods, broke oaths, ordered the murder of those who mocked him, and wiped out the last Jewish tribe in Medina—he killed all the men and enslaved the women and children. Interestingly, Muhammed acknowledged his own need to seek God's forgiveness on occasion (Sura 40:55).

In stark contrast to the moral depravity of Muhammed, Jesus Christ was above reproach in every way (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus never married, He defended and honored women (John 8:1–11), and His law was "love one another" (John 13:34). Accordingly, Jesus never assassinated anyone, never beat a woman, never enslaved a child, never broke a promise, and never plundered a caravan. On the cross, when Jesus was mocked by those nearby, His response was, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

2. Islam and Christianity: Views of God

Islam teaches that Allah, or their god, is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of all that is. Muslims emphasize god's absolute unity (which will admit of no division) and god's will.

The will of god is more basic to who he is than his love or mercy. God can choose not to be merciful, and he can choose not to love; thus, Allah's mercy and love are not intrinsic to his nature but are choices he makes. More important than loving god—or even knowing him—is submitting to his will. The word **Islam** means "submission." According to Islam, god cannot be considered a "father" and he has no son. Allah does not love sinners (Surah 3:140).

Similar to Islam, Christianity teaches that the one true God is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of all that is—but that is about where the similarity ends. Christians believe

in one God who exists in three eternal, co-equal Persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) who share the same indivisible essence.

According to Christianity, God loves because His very nature is love (1 John 4:8)—not just because He happens to choose to love. God’s essence includes the attribute of mercy, so divine displays of mercy are more than choices God makes; they are extensions of His character. God is knowable and desires a relationship with us based on love (Mark 12:30). Obeying God is important, but obedience without a relationship based on love is worthless (1 Corinthians 13:3). According to Christianity, God the Father has an eternal relationship with God the Son. God loves sinners (Romans 5:8).

3. Islam and Christianity: Sacred Literature

Islam holds that the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament), the Psalms, and the Gospels were given by God—with this caveat: They believe Jews and Christians have corrupted God’s Word and therefore Bibles cannot be fully trusted.

Muslims believe that the Qur’an is god’s final word, miraculously given to Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years. The Qur’an, which they consider perfect and holy, is divided into 114 chapters called *suras*.

In addition to the Qur’an, the Muslims have the Hadith, a collection of Muhammad’s sayings, opinions, and actions as reported by those close to him.

Biblical Christianity holds that the Old and New Testaments of the Bible are God’s inspired Word and they are the only authoritative rule of faith and practice. The Bible warns against adding to God’s Word (Revelation 22:18). Christians reject the Qur’an as an attempted addition to God’s Word and as a document that contradicts the Bible in many ways.

4. Islam and Christianity: Means of Salvation

Islam teaches a works-based salvation and in this way is similar to other man-made religions. A Muslim must keep the **five pillars of Islam**:

1. He must confess the *shahadah* (“there is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet”)
2. He must kneel in prayer toward Mecca five times a day
3. He must fast during the daylight hours one month of the year (Ramadan)
4. He must give money to the poor
5. He must make a pilgrimage to Mecca sometime in his lifetime

Islam teaches that the day of judgment will involve a person's good and bad deeds being weighed in a balance—so the standard for judgment is one's own actions (Surah 7:8-9; 21:47). The Qur'an forbids anyone from bearing another's burden of sin (Surah 17:15; 35:18) and pointedly denies the death of Jesus (or Isa) on the cross (Surah 3:55; 4:157–158). If you will be saved, you must save yourself.

Christianity teaches a grace-based salvation. A person is saved by the grace (undeserved blessing) of God, through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - Ephesians 2:8–9 – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.* Romans 10:9-10 – *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

The standard for judgment is absolute perfection—the righteousness of Christ.

No one can measure up to perfection: Romans 3:23 – *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* But God in His grace and mercy has given His Son as the substitute for our sin: Colossians 2:13-14 – *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

We cannot save ourselves, so we turn to Christ, our sinless Savior and the author and finisher of our faith: Hebrews 12:2 – *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Islam and Christianity, having different beliefs on essential doctrines such as God, Jesus, Scripture, and salvation, are irreconcilable. Both religions cannot be true.

We believe that Jesus Christ, as presented in the Christian Bible, is the true Son of God and Savior of mankind. “*Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” John 1:17b.