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Islam - Christianity - What's the Difference?


John 8:32: (NASB) *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*

These are troubling and difficult days. The world around us seems to be on fire with trouble and it seems as though there are few answers to the mounting problems that surround us. As simple as it may sound, one of our greatest challenges is simply understanding one another. It is no secret that there are growing tensions between the Muslim world and the Judeo-Christian world. So, what are the differences? Are there similarities? Do we all worship the same God? Stay with us as we open up a discussion regarding Islam and Christianity - what's the difference?

What is Islam?

There are over one billion Muslims in the world.

(Source: various Muslim websites, a Muslim perspective) What is the religious concept of Islam? Islam is the crowning of the teachings of all the Prophets of God. In other words, **Islam is the culmination or ultimate level in the evolution of religious teachings for mankind.** The Religion of God (Islam) became perfected and completed - "perfected" because of the human errors, interpolation, and mythology that had crept into the records of the previous Revelations, and "completed" because mankind was ready in maturity and facility to receive a comprehensive guidance for both this world and the next - through Prophet Muhammad.

 **What is Islam - Definition, Dr Zakir Naik** (*Dr. Naik is the founder and president of the Islamic Research Foundation*)

- *Islam comes from an Arabic word that means peace acquired by submitting your will to Almighty God.*

Briefly, what is Islam all about? Islam is an active realization of the existence of the One God and the willing submission to Him. It is meant to be conveyed and understood: It is not meant to be mystical, full of mystery and beyond the comprehension of the common and ordinary mind. What does Islam teach? Islam offers mankind a perfect code of laws; methodically teaching people to strive to practice moral culture, to be kind to all, not to waste, to be magnanimous and tolerant and to live in peace with others in order to attain universal brotherhood. It teaches man to discover the Creator of the worlds and to analyze all things by practicing the teachings of the Qur'an and by following the advice and conduct of the Prophet. To believe in Islam is to achieve a happy life by standing firm on the earth under the heavens. Islam attaches equal importance to life in this world and in the next. It is not merely a religion, but a perfect code of life to be observed by man.

 **What is Islam - Definition, Dr Zakir Naik**

- *Islam was there from the beginning of time, since man set foot on the earth.*
- *Mohammed was not the founder, but the last and final messenger of Almighty God.*
(Note: This contradicts what we found from other Muslim sources.)
- *Previous revelations (The Bible) before the Quran were sent only for a certain people and for certain times. (It had limited use.)*
- *The last and final revelation of the Quran was revealed not just for the Muslim or the Arab but for all of humankind.*

Who was Muhammad and is Islam tied to the Bible?

Who Was Muhammad? Muhammad of Arabia, founder of Islam, was born about A.D. 570 and died in 632. After organizing a community of disciples in Medina, he later chose Mecca as his holy city. By the time of his death, virtually all of Arabia was Islamic. Under the caliphs, militant faith in Allah, and in Muhammad as his prophet, spread quickly into Asia, Africa and even Europe. The Qur'an honors Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus, but traces Islam through Ishmael (2:127, 136; 19:54-55). Muhammad claims to be a messenger of Allah who has clearly revealed all things (7:158). Orphaned as a baby (93:6), Muhammad was deeply influenced by the loving care of his poor uncle Abu Talib who raised him most of his childhood. Muhammad became a caravan driver and financial manager, and at age twenty-five married his forty-year-old employer, a wealthy widow. This marriage allowed Muhammad a little more luxury and leisure time to devote to contemplation.



A young Muslim woman explains Islam, YouTube

- The First Pillar is the Shahada, witnessing - You can enter or leave Islam "by the tongue." (Or, by what you say, you make a profession of your faith.)
- The words to accept (paraphrased) "There is no deity worth of any type of worship except Allah and that Mohammed is his prophet and messenger." No one can force you to say this.
- No one can force you to say this. In the Quran - "There is no compulsion in religion." (This is one of the most quoted parts of the Quran.)

Who was the "promised seed" of Abraham? Ishmael? Genesis 16:4-12

Muslim Demographics, YouTube

*These statistics are not correct and are discussed in "Islam-Christianity - What's the Difference, Part 2."

- If the fertility rate in any nation goes below 2.11 per family, that nation cannot sustain its population through future generations.
- European fertility is 1.38 and yet the population of Europe is not declining. Why? Islamic immigration, ~~90% of the immigration since 1990 being Muslim.~~
- France: 1.8 children per family. ~~Muslims: 8.1.~~ In southern France, traditionally one of the most church-populated regions in the world, there are now more mosques than churches.

We can see that the prophecy...I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude has literally come true. It was also prophesied that his hand will be against every man.

What was Isaac promised? Genesis 17:15-21: Ishmael will be blessed by a multiplied seed, but the promise to Isaac was God's covenant promise. Islam traces the promises of God to Ishmael; Christianity and Judaism trace the promises to Isaac.

What are the similarities between Islam and Christianity?

Jihad - A way towards peace, Tariq Ramadan Professor of Continuing Muslim Studies, YouTube

- Jihad is the inner struggle towards peace.
- Jihad is a way towards peace. For humans, the natural state is tension and potential conflicts - attracted towards selfishness, ego, etc. It must be mastered with generosity, solidarity, etc. This is the Jihad.

The Ten Commandments in the Quran: Islam (Submission to the will of God) is the same and only religion ever given to the human race. It is the religion of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, Muhammad and all the other messengers mentioned or not mentioned in the scriptures. The Ten Commandments as we see them here are not any more than the same message given to the prophet Muhammad.

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)

Confirmation in the Quran

1. Thou shall not take any God except one God. 1. There is no other god beside GOD, (47:19)
2. Thou shall make no image of God. 2. There is nothing that equals (like) Him. (42:11) My Lord, make this a peaceful land, and protect me and my children from worshiping idols. (14:35)
3. Thou shall not use God's name in vain. 3. Do not subject GOD's name to your casual swearing, that you may appear righteous, pious, or to attain credibility among the people. (2:224)
4. Thou shall honor thy mother and father. 4. ...and your parents shall be honored. As long as one or both of them live, you shall never say to them, "Uff" (the slightest gesture of annoyance), nor shall you shout at them; you shall treat them amicably. (17:23)
5. Thou shall not steal. 5. The thief, male or female, you shall mark their hands as a punishment for their crime, and to serve as an example from GOD. GOD is Almighty, Most Wise. (5:38 - 39)
6. Thou shall not lie or give false testimony. 6. ...incur GOD's condemnation upon him, if he was lying. (24:7) Do not withhold any testimony by concealing what you had witnessed. Anyone who withholds a testimony is sinful at heart. (2:283)
7. Thou shall not kill. 7. ...anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes, it shall be as if he murdered all the people. (5:32)



8. Thou shall not commit adultery. 8. *You shall not commit adultery; it is a gross sin, and an evil behavior. (17:32)*
9. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's wife or possessions. 9. *You shall regard the parents, the relatives, the orphans, the poor, the related neighbor, the unrelated neighbor, the close associate, the traveling alien, and your servants. (4:36)*
10. Thou shall keep the Sabbath holy. (The Sabbath was relinquished with the revelation of the Quran. We are told in the Quran that the Sabbath was only decreed for the Jews.) 10. *O you who believe, when the Congregational Prayer (Salat Al-Jumu'ah) is announced on Friday, you shall hasten to the commemoration of GOD, and drop all business. (62:9)*

 Jihad - A way towards peace, Tariq Ramadan Professor of Continuing Muslim Studies - YouTube

- *Christian Love is the same in Islam.*
- *Love in the Christian tradition is not passive; it is an active committed attitude towards the other. Islam also teaches this sense of commitment.*

John 15:12-17: Matthew 5:43-45: Similarities? Sure there are some, and we are glad for that. The primary areas of similarity seem to be along the lines of character teachings. Once we get to the doctrines, we will find that they are based on two entirely different foundations - so what will that mean?

Where do Islam and Christianity differ?

What about the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Muslims believe in the books of the previous prophets including the "Torah" which was sent to Moses, the "Zaboor" (Psalms) which were given to David, the "Injeel" (Gospel) which was given to Jesus, and the Qur'an which was given to Muhammad. However, Muslims are told that the previous scriptures were tampered with by mankind and the Bible should only be accepted in as far as it is confirmed by the Qur'an. It is to be treated with respect, however; any statements which clearly oppose those of the Qur'an are to be rejected as the work of mankind.

What about Jesus? John 3:16-18 Jesus is a very elect and highly esteemed messenger of God. No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe this. **Jesus is not God's son.**

A danger of getting emotional about our differences is that we lose our sense of reason and direction.

 Islamophobia, Need for Religious Humility, First Community Church of Columbus OH, Reverend Deborah Lindsay

- *We need a healthy dose of religious humility.*
- *There are too many people getting too much face time on television who claim exalted status for Christianity and who are demeaning other faith religions, particularly that of Islam.*

What about Jesus' message? 1 Timothy 2:5-6 That he was sent by God as a messenger to the Jews in order to return them to the pure and true religion of Moses, and to relieve them of some of the regulations which had been placed upon them in ancient times. He taught them to have faith as well as works. Neither one can stand alone. This minimizes the work of Jesus as the ransom and his role for the rest of mankind.

What about Jesus' crucifixion? Philippians 2:7-8 Jesus was not forsaken to the Jews to be abused and killed, however, it was "made to appear so to them." God saved Jesus by raising him up unto Himself. Jesus was not crucified. This takes away the payment of the ransom price.

What about differences in Islam itself?

(Source: holidays.net, a Muslim site) Sunni and Shiite Muslims - What Is the Difference? There are two branches within Islam: Sunni and Shiite. Like the Catholic/Protestant split, the difference between Sunni and Shiite Muslims is theological in nature, although both branches uphold the same basic tenets of faith. The primary difference between the two branches is their divergent belief in religious succession. The Sunni branch believes that legitimate religious leaders are those appointed by consensus. They believe that the heirs of those leaders are connected to Muhammad's first four successors, his caliphs.



The Sunni perspective, *Interview with Sherman Jackson*

- *Ultimate authority belongs to the unanimous agreement among the scholars of Islamic Law, and that is what creates consensus and is binding upon every Muslim.*

About 90 percent of all Muslims are Sunni.

Shiites, on the other hand, believe that religious leaders must descend directly from Muhammad's bloodline. His fourth caliph was Ali, the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Shiite Muslims believe that Ali is the true source of Islam and all religious leaders should descend from him. The Shiite minority is concentrated in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

The Shiite perspective, *Interview with Sherman Jackson*

- *Following the death of the prophet, you need an individual with an impeccable understanding of revelation in order not to go astray.*
- *That individual is the Imam.*

(Source: About.com) Religious Leadership: Shia Muslims believe that the Imam is sinless by nature, and that his authority is infallible as it comes directly from God. Therefore, Shia Muslims often venerate the Imams as saints and perform pilgrimages to their tombs and shrines in the hopes of divine intercession. Sunni Muslims counter that there is no basis in Islam for a hereditary privileged class of spiritual leaders, and certainly no basis for the veneration or intercession of saints. Sunni Muslims contend that leadership of the community is not a birthright, but a trust that is earned and which may be given or taken away by the people themselves.

Radical Islam has come from both sides. Approximately seven percent are considered the "radical" sort, which translates to about 90 million individuals. **Within Christianity the same experiences have occurred: Acts 20:27-30:** It was prophesied that Christianity would undergo difficulties. **By God's grace, we were given instruction for qualifying our leaders - do we follow it? 1 Timothy 3:1-7:** Did you know that there are never any prophecies given in the Quran? The Bible is full of prophecy that has come true.

What about Jihad?

What Does Jihad Mean? *President Islamic Center of Long Island*

- *Jihad means in English "a struggle." When you want to help by doing something for the betterment of humanity; the struggle within oneself to do good - that is Jihad.*

We all know the radical side of Jihad. We all know the death and destruction that it has brought and can continue to bring to our world. We all know that there are many millions who are radical, yet the VAST MAJORITY of Muslims are not that way. So, what do we do with this? For this week, we will only scratch the surface on this issue.

Luke 6:27-31

Osama is not a Muslim to me, *Inside the Revolution, Documentary by Tyndale and Joel Rosenberg*

- *Terrorism is something crazy! Islam comes from peace. Osama Bin Laden is not a Muslim for me - they are creatures of chaos. We have nothing in common as Muslims!*

Romans 12:18-21 2 Timothy 1:7-9

As we deal with a very real, large scale problem of radical Islam, how do we apply this spirit of power and love and a sound mind? Next week we will look long and hard at Jihad, honor killings and Sharia Law and do our best to put them in perspective as Christians. This will be an important program and I urge you to tell your friends, tell those with whom you go to church, tell your neighbors to listen in so we can all talk together about events that will surely shape our lives and how we as Christians ought to react.

*So, Islam - Christianity - What's the difference?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*