

## Christianity and Islam

Christianity and Islam are the two largest religions in the world and they have many points of contact. Both inherited from Judaism a belief in one God (monotheism) who created the world and cares about the behavior and beliefs of human beings.

Although Islam and Christianity seem to have certain points of doctrine in common, there is an enormous difference between them, not only in beliefs about salvation and Christ but in many other areas affecting daily life, human behavior and attitudes.

The Prophet Muhammad knew Christians in his lifetime and respected them along with Jews as “People of the Book.” Because of their monotheism and roots in the revealed Jewish Bible, Muhammad and his successors extended conquered Christians (and Jews) more freedoms than conquered pagans.

In the approximately 1,300 years of history since the life of Muhammad, the relationship between Christianity and Islam has rarely been harmonious. As it spread, the Muslim Empire quickly conquered much of the Judeo-Christian Holy Land and the Christian Byzantine Empire. The Christian Crusades from 1096 to 1291, waged in response to Islam jihad, further widened the divide between the two faiths. Constantinople, the “New Rome” and the center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, fell to the Turks in 1453 and has been under Islamic rule ever since.

In recent centuries, mutual distrust between Christians and Muslims has continued to grow. Some people believe that the conflict has more to do with political tensions and divergent cultural worldviews than with religion, and efforts have been made by both Christians and Muslims to find common ground and engage in respectful dialogue.

To illustrate the similarities and differences between the two largest religions of the world, the following chart compares the origins, beliefs and practices of Christianity and Islam. Please note that numbers are estimates and descriptions of beliefs and practices are simplified for brevity’s sake.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Islam</b>
Date Founded	Approx. 30 AD (CE)	622 AD (CE)
Founders, Leaders	Jesus, Peter, Paul	Muhammad
Where Founded	Palestine (Israel)	Arabian Peninsula
Major Branches	Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant	Sunni, Shiite
Bible	The inspired and inerrant word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16). Consists of Hebrew scriptures of Judaism (Old Testament); and later writings recording the lives and teachings of Jesus and his followers (New Testament).	Respected word of the prophets but the Bible has been corrupted through the centuries and is only correct in so far as it agrees with the Koran. (3:78)
Koran (Qur’an)	The work of Muhammad. It is not inspired, nor is it scripture. There is no verification for its accurate transmission from the originals.	The final revelation of God to all of mankind given through the archangel Gabriel to Muhammad over a 23 year period. It is without error and guarded from error by Allah. Accepts the Christian Bible (2:136, 4:163, 10:94)

Basic Doctrine	Creed (Apostle's or Nicene – One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). We are sinners, but God loves us, Jesus died for us; believe in him and you are saved. (John 3:16)	Six Articles of Faith (No God but Allah, angels, sacred books (Torah, Psalms, New Testament, Koran), prophets, day of judgement, Allah's predestination)
Major Sacred Rituals or Practices	Baptism, Communion (Eucharist)	Five Pillars: prayer, pilgrimage to Mecca, fasting, confession of faith, almsgiving and charity (to Muslims only)
Religious Law or Commands	Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17), Greatest commandment (love God, love others – Mark 12:29-31), Great commission (make disciples of all nations, baptize them, teach them. – Matt 28:19-20)	Sharia (Islamic Law) regulates every aspect of a Muslim's devotional and personal life as well as the governing of Islamic nations. Also specifies harsh punishments for crimes.
Leaving the faith	Discouraged	Punishment is death
God	God is a trinity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not three gods in one god, nor is it one person who took three forms. Trinitarianism is strictly monotheistic. There is no other God in existence. The Lord God and Allah are <i>not</i> the same.	God is known as Allah. Allah is one person, a strict unity. There is no other God in existence. He is the creator of the universe (3:191), sovereign over all (6:61-62).
Trinity	One God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	Christian Trinity is denied. (4:171, 5:116) Islam trinity sometimes considered to be The Father, Jesus, and Mary.
Jesus	Second person of the Trinity. He is the word who became flesh (John 1:1, 14). He is both God and man (Col. 2:9).	A very great prophet, second only to Muhammad. Jesus is not the son of God (9:30), not divine (5:17, 75) and was not crucified (4:157). Some say he will come back to earth as a Muslim, marry and have children, die, and be buried near Muhammad (19:33-34).
Son of God	Term used to designate that Jesus is divine. He is the spiritual son of God not a literal physical son (John 5:18).	A literal son of God. Therefore, Jesus cannot be the son of Allah.
The Word	"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God...and the word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:1, 14).	Allah's command of existence which resulted in Jesus being formed in the womb of Mary.
Death of Jesus	By crucifixion	Did not die, but ascended bodily into heaven. A disciple died in his place.
Crucifixion	The way in which Jesus atoned for the sins of the world. It is only through this sacrifice that anyone can be saved from the wrath of God (1 Pet. 2:24).	Jesus did not die on the cross. Instead, God allowed Judas to look like Jesus and he was crucified instead. (4:156-158)

<b>Term</b>	<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Islam</b>
Atonement	The sacrifice of Christ on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24) whereby His blood becomes the sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God from the sinner when he believes and receives by faith the work of Christ on the cross. (1 John 2:2, John 1:12, Rom. 5:1)	There is no atonement work in Islam other than a sincere confession of sin and repentance by the sinner.
Resurrection of Jesus	Affirmed. Central part of faith.	Denied, since he did not die
Holy Spirit	Third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is fully God in nature.	The arch-angel Gabriel who delivered the words of the Koran to Muhammad.
Muhammad	A non-inspired (by God) man born in 570 in Mecca who started the Islamic religion.	The last and greatest of all prophets of Allah whose Qur'an is the greatest of all inspired books.
Angels	Created beings, non-human. They are very powerful; they represent God and carry out his will. Angels have free will and some fell into sin and became evil.	Created beings without free will that serve God. Angels were created from light.
Devil (Satan)	A fallen angel who opposes God in all ways. He also seeks to destroy humanity (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:13-15).	Iblis, a fallen jinn. Jinn are not angels nor men, but created beings with free wills. Jinn were created from fire, (2:268, 7:11-18, 114:1-6).
Heaven (Paradise)	The place where God dwells. Heaven is the eventual and eternal home of the Christians who are saved by God's grace. (Ps. 73:25, Is. 33:17, 60:19-20, 1 Cor 2:9-10, Rev. 21:3-4, 21:10-22:5)	Paradise to Muslims, a place of unimaginable bliss (32:17), a garden with trees and food (13:35,15:45-48) and virgins where all the desires of faithful Muslims are met, (3:133, 9:38, 39:34, 43:71, 53:13-15, 56:8-38, 88:8-16).
Hell	A place of torment in fire out of the presence of God. There is no escape from Hell (Ps. 63:9, Is. 30:33, Matt. 13:49-50, 25:46, 2 Thess 1:9, Rev. 20:10).	Hell is a place of eternal punishment and torment (14:17; 25:65; 39:26), in fire (104:6-7) for those who are not Muslims (3:131) as well as those Muslims whose works and faith were not sufficient (50:24-26, 78:21-30).
Judgment Day	Occurs on the day of resurrection (John 12:48) when God will judge all people. Christians go to heaven. All others to hell. Two judgements: entry to heaven based on faith; position in heaven based on deeds. (Matt. 25:46, Rom. 2:5-11, Heb 4:13).	Occurs on the day of resurrection when God will judge all people. Muslims go to paradise. All others to hell (3:142, 183-85, 196-98). Judgment is based on deeds (5:9; 42:26; 8:29). Judgement is bypassed if one dies on a Friday, dies of stomach ache, or dies as a martyr.

Afterlife	Christians will be with the Lord in heaven (Phil. 1:21-24), in resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:50-58). Non-Christians will be cast into hell forever (Matt. 25:46). Catholics believe in an intermediate state, purgatory.	There is an afterlife (75:12) experienced as either an ideal life of Paradise (29:64), for faithful Muslims or Hell for those who are not. Until Judgement, the dead are in an intermediate state, <i>barzakh</i> .
Resurrection	Bodily resurrection of all people: Christians to eternal life in heaven, non-Christians to hell (1 Cor. 15:50-58).	Bodily resurrection, faithful Muslims to heaven, others to hell (3:77, 15:25, 75:36-40, 22:6).
Man	Made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). This does not mean that God has a body, but that man is made like God in abilities (reason, faith, love, etc.).	Not made in the image of God (42:11). Man is made out of the dust of the earth (23:12) and Allah breathed life into man (32:9; 15:29).
Original Sin	The term used to describe the effect of Adam's sin on his descendants, i.e., all humans (Rom. 5:12-23). The sinful nature that originated with Adam is passed down from parent to child. All humans are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).	There is no original sin. All people are sinless until they rebel against God. They do not have sinful natures. People have an equal ability to do good or evil.
Salvation	A free gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9) to the person who trusts in Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. He is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). No works are sufficient in any way to merit salvation (Isaiah 64:6).	Forgiveness of sins is obtained by Allah's grace without a mediator. The Muslim must believe Allah exists, believe in the fundamental doctrines of Islam, believe that Muhammad is his prophet, and follow the commands of Allah given in the Koran.
Forgiveness	Central to Christian faith. More than 50 verses about it. God forgives any and all when asked, but humans must also forgive.	Allah does not forgive except infrequently as an arbitrary act. (4:48, 35:7)
Crusades (Christian) Jihad (Muslim)	The Crusades (1096-1291) were a reaction to Islamic jihad and an attempt (unsuccessful) to reopen the Holy Land to Christian pilgrims and worshipers.	Muslims are required to go to war with non-Muslims to conquer them and add their territory to the "House of Islam." (2:191, 9:5, 9:29)
Main Locations	Europe, North & South America	Middle East, Southeast Asia
Adherents Today	2 billion worldwide 180 million USA & Canada	1.3 billion worldwide 1.6 million USA & Canada
Place of Worship	Church, chapel, cathedral, basilica, meeting hall, store front, etc.	Mosque only
View of the other religion	Islam is respected as a fellow monotheistic religion, but with major differences about the Trinity, Jesus, salvation, & forgiveness. Muhammad is not seen as a true prophet.	Christians are respected as "People of the Book," but they have mistaken beliefs and only partial revelation. Islam is the only religion acceptable to God. (3:85)