

Christianity & Islam

- Purposes: 1. To briefly survey the history & culture of Islam;
2. To compare Christian & Islamic beliefs

1. Brief survey of Islamic history & culture

In Arabic **Islam** means “**total submission**” to **Allah** (Arabic for “god”). A **Muslim** is “one who submits.” Islam is a way of life. **Muhammad** (570-632 A.D.), its founder had mystical experiences at age 40; he and his wife considered them to be from God. Through his family he claimed to be a descendant of Ishmael (Genesis 16, 21, 25). Seventh Century A.D. Saudi Arabia was a time of warring nomadic tribes, their worship of many gods (idolatry), sexual immorality and widespread alcoholism. Muhammad preached against these. By 622 he was driven out of Mecca and fled to Medina. While this was a very special event in Islamic history, Mecca remains the central focal point because it was there that Muhammad received direct revelation from Allah. He wrote these in Arabic in the **Koran** (or Qur’an, Arabic for “reading” or “recitation”). Islamic belief is that the Koran is the strictest, literal sense the very words of Allah. The Koran is not to be translated from Arabic, because that would change the exact quotation of Allah. Muhammad is the prophet of Islam, but is recognized as only a man through whom god is said to have spoken. The sum and substance of all **the Koran’s teaching** is its creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”

By 662 under Muhammad and his successors, Saudi Arabia was under their control through **military conquest**. Muhammad’s and the Koran’s demands for a life of strictest obedience to Allah through high ethics and personal piety or else death by the sword, including a “one God” and “one mankind” brought morality and unity to the Peninsula under the banner of Allah. Islamic military actions spread across northern **Africa**, as well as through the **Middle East** and into **Europe**. In 732 Charles Martel halted its northerly spread at Vienna. By 1,000 one Islamic sect had invaded **India**; today **Pakistan** stands separate and Muslim as a result (recall the term, “Mogul Empire” from your history classes.) 1,400’s: Spain & Iberian Peninsula peoples expel Islam. 1,500’s: Charles V, King of the Holy Roman Empire, pleads with the German Lutherans to unite with the Roman Catholics to defeat the “Turks” (Islamic), they were not halted until 1638 at the Danube River.

Muslim **unity** is a **misconception**. Schism began upon Muhammad’s death, 632. The two major groups are the **Sunnis** (SUN-nis) and **Shi’ites** (SHE-ites). The Sunni Muslims practice customs and traditions passed on verbally from the days of the Koran’s writing. Today, about 85% of the world’s Muslims are Sunnis (e.g., Saudi Arabia). The Shi’ites claim Muhammad’s son, Ali, as his only legitimate successor then Ali’s after him as the only successors to Muhammad; they are extremely loyal to their **Imams** (Arabic, “leader” or “teacher”). Today, about 12% of the world’s Muslims are Shi’ites (e.g., Iran, especially Ayatollah Khomeini prior to his death). The remaining 3% are scattered across 100’s of sects around the world.

Islam versus the West. Today, Muslims (*especially the Shi’ites*) generally equate all western cultures with Christianity. The source is Muhammad’s misunderstanding and denial of the

Bible's doctrine of the Triune (three-in-one) God and deity of Jesus. The Koran says Jesus is mere man and to worship Him as God is idolatry against Allah. Idolatry must be destroyed. Because Western cultures are presumed to be Christian, the West must be destroyed. The Shi'ites are very committed to this. Islam does respect Christianity and Judaism as spiritually weak predecessors to it. The Koran claims it supercedes all revelations and Islam all religions. In spite of what you hear/see/read, according to the Koran and the precepts of Islam it is *very* clear that: anyone who does not confess Allah and Muhammad are infidels and must be either converted or put to death.

The **role of women** in Islamic society creates tensions between Islam and the west; the Koran demands a male-dominated culture and specifies head coverings and veils as the outward signs of it. The Koran protects women's rights, including education opportunities, ownership of property.

Other aspects of Islamic life include: no eating of pork, limitations on drinking, absolutely no gambling, with circumcision of males as a custom, not law. Racism is strictly forbidden by the Koran.

2. Comparison of Some Christian & Islamic Beliefs

See charts below.

The Five (and the Shi'ites' Sixth) Pillars (beliefs) of Islam

1. The **creed**: the act of confessing, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet." This states belief, revelation, and announces their missionary thrust to turn Christians away from the "idolatry" of Jesus Christ.
2. The **ritual prayer**: Using set formulas of bowing down and prostrating himself the Muslim pray 5 times per day at set hours.
3. **Almsgiving**: The involuntary giving rate is 2 1/2% of total wealth plus voluntary giving.
4. **Fasting**: Muslims are required to not eat, drink or have sexual intercourse from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan, a month on their lunar calendar. It commemorates Allah's revelations to Muhammad in the form of the Koran.
5. A **pilgrimage to Mecca** (Arabic, hajj) including a visit to Muhammad's tomb in Medina is required once during the lifetime of every Muslim. This reminds the Muslim of the equality of all men, and the devotion that all owe to Allah.

The Shi'ite Muslims add this sixth pillar:

6. **Exertion** (Arabic, Jihad): Muslims must do all they can to disseminate the Koran and make it supreme in the world. Every blockade to this task must be removed by means of the tongue, pen or sword.

3. Approaching Muslims

Since the history of Christian-Muslim relations is one of nearly non-stop conflict, we should not naively approach a Muslim wildly waving a Bible. Muslims have been taught that theirs is the only true religion in the world, the Koran is absolutely without error in its Arabic form and the reward for conversion to another religion is death.

In developing an approach think in these terms: The parallels between Christianity and Islam are not between Jesus and Muhammad. Nor are they between the Bible and the Koran. The best parallel is between Jesus and the Koran. In Islam the will of God is revealed in the Koran, while in Jesus Christ we have the revelation of God Himself.

Brief Comparison of Beliefs of Islam & Christianity

Doctrine	Point	Koran & Islam	Bible & Christianity
God & Revelation	1	“There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet.”	Deut. 6:4 “Hear, O Israel, the Lord, Thy God is One.” God is a single Being.
	2	Revelation of God is completely dependent upon Muhammad’s writings.	Hebrews 1:1-3 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.” John 1:17 “For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” God’s true nature as a God Who must punish sin, but is gracious and merciful and forgiving is revealed through Jesus Christ. John 8:31-32 “If you continue in My Word, you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” God’s truth is made known through the Bible
	3	The Koran in Sura (chapter) 5:116 says that the Christian’s Triune God is “God, Jesus and Mary.” Since the Koran teaches this, the devout Muslim does not doubt it, and will refuse to hear what the Bible actually says.	Matt. 28:19 “...in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit....” Perhaps at Muhammad’s time there was much adoration of Mary and confusion remaining about Jesus’ 2 natures, but the Bible clearly states God’s Three Persons within His Oneness.
	4	Allah is completely “other-worldly,” that is he has no connection to us in space or time.	Gal. 4:4-5 “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law so that we could receive the adoption as sons.” John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us....”

Brief Comparison of Beliefs of Islam & Christianity

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<p style="text-align: center;">Person & Work of Jesus Christ</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1 Son of God, Deity</p>	<p>Sura (chapter) 19:29-34, “This was Jesus, the son of Mary, the Word of Truth, concerning whom they doubt. It is not meet [right, proper] for Allah, that he should have any son; Allah forbid!” Sura 43:59, “Jesus was no more than a mortal whom [Allah] favored and made an example to the Israelites.” For Muslims it is unthinkable that God would be human, much less father a God-man son.</p>	<p>John 1:1,14 “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, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He sent His Only-begotten Son...” 1 John 5:10-11, “He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to His Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">2 Cruci- fixion</p>	<p>(2) Sura 4:156-7, “[The Jews] have said, ‘Verily we have slain Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah; yet they slew (killed) him not, neither crucified him, but he was represented by one in his likeness...They did not really kill him; but Allah took him up into himself.’”</p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:23 “We preach Christ and Him Crucified.” 1 Cor. 15:3, “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” In Matt. 16:21 Jesus tells us that He would die and rise. Mark 10:45 describes Jesus’ death as a “ransom” for our souls.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">3 Atone- ment</p>	<p>Sura 23:104-105, “[In the day of judgment] they whose balances shall be heavy with good works shall be happy; but they whose balances shall be light, are those who shall lose their souls, and shall remain in hell forever.”</p>	<p>Eph. 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast.” Romans 3:21ff, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from Law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus... For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”</p>