

How Islam and Christianity are Different

(Unless otherwise noted by "NT," all Bible quotations are from the Hebrew Old Testament.)

Many people believe that Islam and Christianity are very similar "religions." Perhaps this is because Christians and Muslims both claim that their God is the God of Abraham and is the Creator of all things. While there may be some beliefs that Christians and Muslims have in common, they are in complete disagreement as to how a person gets to heaven. Most Muslims think that Christians believe that people get to heaven by trying to live righteous lives. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who are truly Christian believe what the Bible (Injil) teaches and it teaches that it is impossible for a person to get to heaven by trying to live a righteous life. This single teaching is what makes Christianity completely different and in complete contrast to all "religions" of the world. Except for Christianity, all "religions" teach that people can attain some right standing before God by trying to live a righteous life. To understand this very important difference between Christianity and Islam, consider what the Bible teaches about two contrasting truths, 1) the nature of all people and 2) the perfect righteousness of God. Once you understand these two truths, then you will see that Islam and Christianity are in complete disagreement as to how a person gets to heaven.

What does the Bible teach about all people?

There are many people, including many Muslims who sincerely try to live good lives. If their lives are compared to other people, they appear very honorable and kind-hearted. But while they may be "good" when compared to other people, how do they measure up to God's judgment? According to the Bible, God deserves and commands that we love Him with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, ALL OF THE TIME, CONTINUALLY and PERFECTLY. When we fail to obey Him even in the smallest sin, we betray Him. We rob Him of the love/obedience He deserves and commands. If a man looks at a woman (not his wife) with desire in his heart just one time in his life, he has failed to love/obey God with all his heart. He has committed tyranny against the Almighty!

Is it unreasonable for God to command and deserve perfect obedience from a heart of love every second of our life? The Bible teaches that God created us and provided everything we need to exist all the days of our lives. He gives us each breath we take. We assume that food, water and shelter are things we provide for ourselves. While this may be true in some respect, God insists that He is ultimately the one who is providing the opportunity for us to get what we need to live.

(Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food. (Genesis 1:29&30)". We take for granted the air we breathe but the Bible says that it is a gift from God. This is what God the LORD says--He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it (Is.42:5).

Since God created us and is the one who keeps us alive, and because He is God, He has the right to expect us to love Him with all of our being, perfectly, all of the time! The Bible teaches that if we fail to do so, we are wicked in God's sight no matter how we appear in comparison to other people.

The Bible teaches that all people, including those of us who bear the name "Christian," are born wicked. By nature, we want to rule over our own lives and turn away from God. It says that there is not a single person that is righteous in His sight. It says that no matter how religious a person might seem, they really do not seek Him. It teaches that all of us have turned away from Him rather than moving toward Him (see Psalm 14:1-3) and that our heart has a tendency towards violence and cursing (Psalm 10:7). It says that by nature, we do not know peace and that we have not feared Him as the righteous judge who has given us life and preserved it (*Psalm 36:1*). And no matter how many works of righteousness we attempt to do, they cannot make up for our uncleanness because the Bible teaches that all our righteous acts are like filthy rags in God's sight (*Is. 64:6*).

What has God said about Himself? (The perfect righteousness of God)

Most people think that God is a God of mercy. While He is a God of mercy, most people fail to fully realize that God is also the God of perfect righteousness. (*"The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and **there is no unrighteousness in him...**Psalm 92:15"*) This makes it impossible for sinful beings to dwell in His presence. (*"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong"...Habakkuk 1:13*) He cannot judge according to human standards, He cannot accept plea bargains. (*"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, **the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.**" Deuteronomy 10:17).*

In light of these 2 truths, how can there be hope?

Since Christians believe that all people fail to love God as He deserves because of their wicked nature and that it is impossible for such sinful beings to dwell in the presence of the perfect, holy God, how can they have any hope? If this thought has crossed your mind, then you are beginning to understand what true Christians really believe. You may be wondering, if God expects us to live in perfect obedience with a heart of love for Him every moment of our lives, how can there be any hope for us since none of us have lived that way? Realize that it is foolish to assume that God will excuse sin when the Bible says that He cannot do so because of His perfect righteousness. *It teaches that **the payment for sin is death...**Romans 6:23 NT.* The Bible teaches that you and I have fallen WAY SHORT of meeting His expectations. It teaches that you will never be able to live up to His expectations. It teaches that you deserve God's condemnation because you have refused to let God rule over your life even though He is LORD... (*because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, **you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*** God *"will give to each person according to what he has done"*...Romans 2:5-6 NT). The Bible teaches that no person will be able to escape God's wrath by trying to live a righteous life. ***Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire*** (Nahum 1:6)--*"It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."* ***It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*** (Hebrews 10:30&31 NT)----*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by trying to keep the law.* (Romans 3:19-20 NT)

If Christians believe this, how can they have any hope?

The Bible teaches that because God considers us sinful and wicked and no sin can dwell in His Holy presence, there is no hope that any person would ever be able to attain right standing with God by trying to live a righteous life! As sinful creatures, we have no power to attain right standing before the Almighty, Holy God. Even though God is merciful, His perfect righteousness will not allow Him to simply excuse sin. His perfect righteousness will not allow Him to simply "sweep your sins under the carpet." God's perfect righteousness demands that punishment must be applied for every single sin you ever committed. Since your chief sin has been the rejection of God's rule over your life (rebellion), the just and reasonable punishment is to be cast away from His presence forever in a place called hell. True Christians believe that all people deserve this punishment because we have all rebelled against God.

What we could never do, God did!!!

As Abraham walked with his son to the mountain where he was to sacrifice him, Abraham's son asked, "The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham replied, "God will provide Himself a lamb." Christians believe that this statement was prophetic and pointed to an event in which God would sacrifice a perfect lamb that would bring about reconciliation between sinful man and Himself. There are many prophecies recorded in the Old Testament that describe this event and what this "Lamb" would be like. Isaiah, a prophet that lived about 700 years before Jesus the Christ was born, alluded to this lamb as a special servant of God:

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him--his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him.

*For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; **he was led like a lamb to the slaughter**, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Isaiah 52.13-53-7)*

Isaiah also said of him, “The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).” (“Immanuel” means “God with us!”) He also prophesied concerning him, “To us a child is born, to us **a son** is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. **He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** (9:6)

When Jesus first appeared to the prophet John the Baptist, John said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Christians believe that Jesus was far more than just a prophet. We believe that he was The Anointed One chosen by God and described by the Old Testament prophets as the One who would die as our substitute. Christians believe that there is only One GOD! But as mysterious as it may seem, this One God miraculously came to earth to do something we could never do, make a WAY for us to be made right with Him.

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, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1:1-3 NT)

The Good News that Christians believe:

God loves you so much that He sent His own Son (Jesus) into the world to take your punishment for you! Two-thousand years ago, Jesus was whipped, beaten and then hung on a cross to die even though He had never sinned. While He willingly hung there, He took your sins upon Himself and bore the wrath of God as your substitute. This voluntary sacrifice He made for you satisfied the righteous demands of God. Now, if you place your trust in Jesus as your only way to God, you will receive forgiveness of sins once and for all. “*Of Him (Jesus) all the prophets bear witness that through His name, **everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins** (Acts 10:43 NT).*”

Jesus was not defeated. Through his death, he gained victory for God!

Within three days after He died, Jesus rose from the dead (not just His Spirit, but His body too). During the next forty days, He was seen by over five hundred people before God raised Him up to sit at His right hand as Lord and Judge over all. Before He left, Jesus promised He would come back to raise all the dead (bodily) and judge all people. He will re-create the heavens and the earth where His people will live with Him forever in bliss, and all who do not know Him will be cast into hell forever. If you believe these things, you must (and will) surrender the control of your life to Him and be joined together with Him as your loving King. This is an all or nothing proposition. You must let go of your life completely and let Him have complete control. This will require you to trust that God is good and that He knows what is best for you. This is part of what it means to believe in Him. There is no short cut as Jesus said, “*Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it (Luke 17:33 NT)*” If you don’t come to God through Jesus this way, you simply cannot come. I urge you today to begin following Jesus. You will not be disappointed.

God's loving invitation to you:

If you believe you are a sinner condemned by God and unable to save yourself, then God invites you to receive His gift of eternal life through Jesus His Son. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28-30 NT). To receive Jesus, you must stop relying on your own righteousness and begin following Jesus today. *If you wish to follow Jesus, you can prove your allegiance to him by being baptized.* Because of Jesus, you can begin enjoying a personal relationship with God, your creator. Your life will be changed forever! *"To all who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12 NT)."* In response to God's free offer of forgiveness in Christ, I urge you to surrender yourself to Him today! If you have decided to surrender your life to Jesus, start reading the Bible to learn about God and His promises to us. (Perhaps start with John, the fourth book of the New Testament.) To be strengthened in your faith, you should begin spending time each week with other believers.

If you persist in thinking you are righteous enough to gain God's acceptance and reject the viewpoint of God about you, then heed His warning:

"No sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29 NT)."