

How Islam and Christianity are different

Many people believe that Islam and Christianity are similar “religions.” Perhaps this is because Christians and Muslims both claim that their God is the God of Abraham and Creator of all things. While there may be some beliefs that Christians and Muslims have in common, they have different views about God, man and “the way to heaven.”

A different view of God

Most, if not all, Muslims will say that God is perfectly righteous. Yet, the Muslim understanding of the description “perfectly righteous” does not line up with what the Bible teaches about God’s absolute righteousness. Most, if not all, **Muslims believe that if a man asks God for forgiveness and stops his sinning, God can forgive him.** Most Muslims, and in fact most people, do not realize that according to the Bible, God cannot forgive this way. I understand my statement may seem shocking so please let me explain what I mean.

According to the Bible, because God is absolutely perfect in His righteousness, each and every sin must be punished because He is 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. *“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness”* (Habakkuk 1:13). He cannot judge according to human standards, He cannot accept plea bargains. *“For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe”* (Deuteronomy 10:17).

Every human being has broken God’s laws. We are all guilty of breaking God’s laws. The Bible says that though God desires to be merciful, He cannot violate His own perfect righteousness by excusing those who are guilty. *“The LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished”* (Nahum 1:3). He cannot overlook our sin. It has to be punished. This is not only true for what some people call “big sins,” it is true for sins that everyone has committed at some time or another. For example, Jesus said that if we call someone a fool, we are guilty enough to go to hell. *“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ‘But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell”* (Matthew 5:21-22).

I have heard many Muslims say something like, “God is all merciful and because He is God, He can do anything He wants to do, including forgive sins.” In contrast, the Bible teaches that in order to forgive, God made a way to do so while still punishing the sin.

This different view of God is the foundational difference between Islam and the teaching of the Bible. The Muslim’s view enables the belief that as long as a person’s good outweighs his bad, God can forgive their “mistakes” and accept him into His presence. This understanding of “the way to heaven” is completely different and in fact, opposite of the biblical teaching on the subject.

A different view of man

If I ask a Muslim if he is a sinner, he will normally answer something like, “Of course I am sinner. Nobody is perfect.” Muslims refer to sins as “mistakes.” Having been taught to think this way, they have difficulty perceiving the detestable nature of sin before the Holy God. The fact that everyone “makes mistakes” serves as an excuse.

In contrast, the Bible teaches that God deserves and commands that we love and obey 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.

God deserves and has the right to command perfect obedience from a heart of love every second of our life. The Bible teaches that God created us and has provided everything we need to exist all the days of our lives. *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). He gives us each breath we take. 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! This is why the Law says, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”* (Deuteronomy 6:5). 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.

Under this absolute demand for obedience, if a man commits just one sin in all his life, he has failed to love God with all his heart and is considered unacceptable and unclean before the Holy God. For example, if just once, he looks at a woman (not his wife) with desire in his heart, he has failed to love/obey God with all his heart and is considered to be an adulterer in God’s sight. He has committed tyranny against the Almighty! If he lies just once in his life, he has disrespected the Mighty God and made himself unclean and unacceptable before Him.

The Bible says that there is not even one person that is righteous in His sight. It says that no matter how religious a person might seem, he really does not seek Him. It teaches that all of us have turned away from Him rather than moving toward Him. It also teaches that no matter how many works of righteousness we attempt to do, we cannot make up for our uncleanness because the Bible teaches that all righteous acts that are done in order to gain acceptance by God are like filthy rags in His sight.

It is foolish to believe that God will excuse sin when the Bible says that He cannot do so because of His perfect righteousness. The Bible teaches that you and I have fallen WAY SHORT of meeting His requirements. It teaches that you deserve God’s condemnation because you have refused to let God rule over your life. *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). 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). *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).

Since you have rejected 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.

How can there be any hope?

Most Muslim’s I meet find this teaching unbelievable. Based upon this teaching by itself, God must and will cast all people that are stained with sin into hell. After all, since all people fail to love/obey God as He deserves and since it is impossible for such sinful beings to dwell in the presence of the perfect, holy God, how can they have any hope? 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? Before a person can begin to comprehend the “way to heaven”

described in the Bible, it is essential that he first understand what has been said so far. Only after he understands these things is he then able to properly comprehend the good news of Jesus Christ.

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** (Isaiah 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)

The Good News that Christians believe:

To provide a way to forgive, God 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). This is more than just belief with your mind. It is a believing from the heart that affects your life completely.

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.

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). To receive Jesus, you must stop relying on your own righteousness and begin following Jesus today.

This is not a religion. It is something supernatural that God does to make people alive to Him. He makes them into new people that serve Him with hearts of love for Him. They don't have to serve Him as the means to get accepted by God into heaven. Jesus already paid the price for them.

All true followers of Jesus have been born again supernaturally. When that occurred, they lost the life they once held dear. It now belongs to Jesus. There is no short cut. Jesus said, "*Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it*" (Luke 17:33). If you don't come to God through Jesus this way, you simply cannot come. When a person believes these things from the heart, they spontaneously surrender the control of their lives to Him and gladly serve Him as their loving King.

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). 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).

This gospel message is provided by Dearborn Bible Fellowship. To learn more go to www.DearbornBible.org. If you have questions or comments, please email Tom at DearbornBible@aol.com or call him at 313-565-2792.