

ISLAM EXPLAINED

Understanding Islam Through a Christian Lens

A Quick Guide Comparing Islamic Teachings with the Claims of Jesus Christ



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Introduction

Why Study Islam?

Islam is one of the largest religions in the world, with more than a billion followers across many nations, cultures, and languages. Many Christians have Muslim neighbors, coworkers, classmates, family members, or friends. Yet many people know very little about what Muslims actually believe.

This guide is not written to mock Muslims, attack Muslims, or misrepresent Islam. It is not meant to create fear or hostility. It is also not written as a debate book.

The purpose of this guide is to help readers understand Islam more clearly, compare its major teachings with Christianity, and consider why Christians believe Jesus Christ is the center of truth, salvation, and eternal life.

This guide uses the Quran when explaining Islamic beliefs and the Bible when explaining Christian beliefs. The goal is fairness, clarity, and truth. Christians should never be afraid to learn what others believe. If our faith is true, honest questions do not threaten it. They help us understand more deeply.

The purpose is not to win an argument. The purpose is to understand, compare, and ultimately ask the most important question: Who is Jesus?

What Is Islam?

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning it teaches belief in one God. The word Islam means submission or surrender, referring to submission to the will of Allah. A follower of Islam is called a Muslim, meaning one who submits.

Muslims believe Allah is the one true God, the Creator of all things, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, merciful, and just. Islam strongly emphasizes the absolute oneness of God.

God in Islam

The Quran says:

"Say, He is Allah, One." (Quran 112:1)

Christians also believe there is only one God. The Bible says:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4, ESV)

However, Christianity and Islam understand God's nature differently. Islam rejects the Trinity and rejects the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. Christianity teaches that there is one God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus said:

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9, ESV)

That difference becomes one of the most important dividing lines between Islam and Christianity.

Muhammad and the Beginning of Islam

Islam began in the seventh century in the Arabian Peninsula through Muhammad, whom Muslims believe was the final prophet sent by God. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad began receiving revelations around AD 610 through the angel Gabriel. These revelations were later compiled into the Quran, Islam's holy book.

Muslims believe Muhammad did not create Islam but restored the true religion of submission to God that had been taught by earlier prophets, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

This is why Islam speaks about many people also found in the Bible. Muslims honor Abraham, Moses, Mary, and Jesus. But Islam interprets their roles differently than Christianity does.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Muslims practice their faith through what are commonly called the Five Pillars of Islam. These practices shape Muslim identity and devotion.

The first pillar is the Shahada, the declaration of faith: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." This statement expresses the heart of Islamic belief: one God and Muhammad as His final prophet.

The second pillar is Salat, prayer. Muslims are expected to pray five times a day while facing Mecca. Prayer is a major part of Islamic devotion and daily life.

The third pillar is Zakat, charitable giving. Muslims are expected to give a portion of their wealth to help those in need. This reflects the importance of generosity, community responsibility, and obedience to God.

The fourth pillar is Sawm, fasting during Ramadan. During this month, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset. Fasting is meant to encourage discipline, humility, spiritual focus, and dependence on God.

The fifth pillar is Hajj, pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims who are physically and financially able are expected to make this pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime.

Sunni and Shia

Most Muslims belong to one of two major branches: Sunni or Shia. This division began after Muhammad's death over who should lead the Muslim community. While there are differences between them, both groups affirm the Quran, Muhammad, and the core teachings of Islam.

For Christians, it is important to understand Islam accurately before responding to it. Muslims are not all the same. They come from many nations, cultures, and levels of religious practice.

But at the center of Islam are several major beliefs: one God, Muhammad as prophet, the Quran as revelation, judgment after death, and the importance of submission to God. The biggest differences between Islam and Christianity appear when we begin talking about Jesus, salvation, Scripture, and the cross.

Jesus in Islam

Many Christians are surprised to learn that Islam speaks highly of Jesus. In Islam, Jesus is known as Isa. Muslims believe Jesus was born of a virgin, performed miracles, healed the sick, raised the dead by God's permission, and was the Messiah. Muslims also believe Jesus will return before the Day of Judgment.

The Quran speaks of Jesus as an important messenger of God. It also honors Mary, the mother of Jesus. Because of this, Christians and Muslims may appear at first to believe very similar things about Jesus.

But the differences are much deeper than the similarities.

Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet, but not God. The Quran says:

"The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger." (Quran 5:75)

Christianity teaches that Jesus is more than a prophet. The Bible teaches that Jesus is God the Son who entered human history. John writes:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1, ESV)

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14, ESV)

This difference changes everything. If Jesus is only a prophet, then His role is to deliver a message from God. If Jesus is God in the flesh, then His role is much greater. He came not only to teach but to save.

Jesus made claims no ordinary prophet could rightly make. He forgave sins. He accepted worship. He claimed unity with the Father. Jesus said:

"I and the Father are one." (John 10:30, ESV)

Christians believe these claims reveal who Jesus truly is. Islam and Christianity also disagree about the crucifixion. Islam teaches that Jesus was not crucified. Christianity teaches that Jesus died on the cross and rose again.

That difference is not small. It stands at the heart of the Christian gospel. The same Jesus cannot both be crucified and not crucified in the same way.

This means the central question is not simply whether we respect Jesus. The question is: Who is Jesus? Was He only a prophet? Or is He the Son of God, the Savior of the world?

Salvation

One of the biggest differences between Islam and Christianity is how a person is made right with God.

In Islam, salvation involves faith, obedience, repentance, righteous deeds, and Allah's mercy. Muslims believe every person will stand before God on the Day of Judgment and give an account for their life.

The Quran often speaks about judgment, deeds, reward, and punishment. It describes people whose scales are heavy with good deeds as successful.

"And the weighing [of deeds] that Day will be the truth. So those whose scales are heavy - it is they who will be the successful." (Quran 7:8)

Because of this, many Muslims live with hope in Allah's mercy but without the same kind of assurance Christians claim in Christ.

Christianity teaches something different. The Bible teaches that all people have sinned and fall short of God's glory.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23, ESV)

The problem is not that people need to become slightly more religious or morally improved. The problem is that sin separates humanity from a holy God.

Christianity teaches that no amount of good works can erase sin. Good works matter, but they cannot purchase forgiveness or remove guilt before God. That is why salvation in Christianity is not earned. It is received as a gift.

Paul writes:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8, ESV)

Christianity teaches that Jesus did what sinners could not do for themselves. He lived the sinless life humanity failed to live and died the death sinners deserved. This is why Christians speak so much about grace.

Grace means God gives what we do not deserve. Islam asks whether a person has submitted, obeyed, repented, and lived righteously before God. Christianity points to Jesus and asks: Has Christ done enough?

The Christian answer is yes. Jesus said:

"It is finished." (John 19:30, ESV)

For Christians, assurance is not based on personal perfection. It is based on the finished work of Christ. John writes:

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13, ESV)

That is one of the deepest differences between Islam and Christianity. Islam emphasizes submission and judgment. Christianity emphasizes grace through Jesus Christ.

Why the Cross Matters

One of the most important differences between Islam and Christianity concerns the death of Jesus. The Quran teaches:

"They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him." (Quran 4:157)

For Muslims, Jesus was a prophet of God who was rescued from His enemies and taken up to God. Christianity teaches something very different.

The Bible repeatedly states that Jesus was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Paul wrote:

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, ESV)

Why does this matter so much? Because Christianity teaches that humanity has a problem that cannot be solved by good intentions, religious effort, or moral improvement. The problem is sin.

A holy God cannot simply ignore evil. Yet God is also loving and merciful. The cross is where God's justice and mercy meet.

Christians believe Jesus willingly took upon Himself the punishment humanity deserved. Peter writes:

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24, ESV)

Instead of sinners paying the penalty for their own sin, Jesus paid that penalty on their behalf.

The resurrection is equally important. If Jesus remained in the grave, then death won. But Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead, proving His victory over sin and death.

This is why the cross is not merely a symbol in Christianity. It is the center of the Christian message. Without the cross, there is no atonement. Without the resurrection, there is no victory over death. Without both, there is no gospel.

That is why the question of whether Jesus was crucified is not a minor disagreement between Islam and Christianity. It changes everything.

Was Jesus merely a prophet who escaped death? Or was He the Savior who died for the sins of the world and rose again? How a person answers that question shapes everything else they believe about God, salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life.

Scripture

Muslims believe the Quran is the final and perfect revelation from God, delivered to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. The Quran is considered the highest authority in Islam.

Muslims also rely on the Hadith. The Hadith are collections of Muhammad's sayings, actions, and approvals that were passed down and later compiled by Islamic scholars.

Many Christians have heard of the Quran but not the Hadith. This is important because many details of Islamic practice are explained through the Hadith. For example, the Quran commands prayer, but many details about how Muslims pray come from the Hadith.

Sunni Muslims especially rely on major Hadith collections such as Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Islamic scholars classify Hadith according to reliability. Together, the Quran and Hadith shape much of Islamic belief and practice.

Christianity approaches authority differently. Christians believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the final authority for faith and practice. Paul writes:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)

Christians may value pastors, teachers, church history, and theological writings, but none of those sources stand above Scripture.

This creates an important difference. Islam relies on the Quran and Hadith. Christianity relies on the Bible as the final written authority.

What About the Torah and Gospel?

One of the common claims in Islam is that the original Torah and Gospel were given by God but were later corrupted. However, the Quran speaks positively about earlier revelations.

The Quran says:

"Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light." (Quran 5:44)

"We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light." (Quran 5:46)

The Quran also tells the People of the Gospel to judge by what Allah revealed in it. Quran 5:47 refers to the People of the Gospel judging by what was revealed there. Quran 10:94 tells Muhammad, if in doubt, to ask those who had been reading Scripture before him.

These passages raise an important question. If the Torah and Gospel were already corrupted before Muhammad, why would the Quran speak of them as guidance and light and direct people to consult them?

Christians believe the message of the Bible has been faithfully preserved. The New Testament manuscripts we possess today predate Islam by centuries and consistently proclaim the death, burial, resurrection, and divine identity of Jesus Christ.

The Bible and the Quran do not merely differ on small details. They differ on the central question of Jesus.

The Quran says Jesus was not crucified. The Bible says Jesus died for our sins and rose again. The Quran says Jesus was a messenger. The Bible says Jesus is the Word made flesh.

The question is not simply whether the Bible and Quran are different. The question is why they are different. Did the Bible change? Or does the Quran present a different message about Jesus?

For Christians, the answer centers on the historical and biblical witness to Christ. The message of Jesus' death and resurrection existed centuries before Muhammad. That is why Christians believe the Bible and Quran cannot both be correct on every major claim about Jesus.

This discussion leads us back to the central question: Who is Jesus?

Conversations With Muslims

One of the greatest mistakes Christians can make when speaking with Muslims is assuming they already know what Muslims believe. Many Christians have never read the Quran. Likewise, many Muslims have never read the Bible for themselves.

Meaningful conversations begin with listening. Before discussing differences, take time to understand the person's background, beliefs, and experiences. Not every Muslim practices Islam in the same way, and not every Muslim has the same understanding of faith.

The goal should not be to win an argument. The goal should be to share truth with love. Peter wrote:

"Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15, ESV)

Notice that Peter does not tell Christians to be harsh, arrogant, or argumentative. He tells them to be prepared, gentle, and respectful.

Good conversations often begin with sincere questions. You might ask: What do you believe about Jesus? Why do you trust the Quran? How can a person know they are forgiven? What does salvation mean to you? Why do you believe Muhammad was a prophet? What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"?

Questions encourage people to think rather than immediately become defensive. Christians should also be willing to listen carefully to the answers.

A Muslim is not an enemy. A Muslim is a person created in the image of God and loved by God.

Jesus did not command His followers to win debates. He commanded them to make disciples. This means our conversations should reflect both truth and grace.

It is possible to disagree deeply while still showing kindness, respect, and genuine care. Many Muslims have never met a Christian who can clearly explain the gospel without becoming hostile. Likewise, many Christians have never taken the time to understand what Muslims actually believe.

Healthy conversations build bridges. Those bridges often create opportunities to share the hope found in Jesus Christ.

Christ

Throughout this guide, we have explored the beliefs of Islam and compared them with the teachings of Christianity. We have looked at Muhammad, the Quran, the Hadith, salvation, Scripture, and the differences between what Muslims and Christians believe about Jesus.

All of these subjects ultimately lead to one question: Who is Jesus? This is the most important question any person will ever answer.

Both Islam and Christianity honor Jesus, but they do not present the same Jesus. Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet sent by God. The Quran calls Him the Messiah, born of a virgin, and a worker of miracles.

Muslims believe He was one of God's greatest messengers and that He will return before the Day of Judgment.

Christians agree that Jesus was born of a virgin and performed miracles. Christians also believe He was the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament. However, Christianity goes much further.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is not merely a prophet. He is the Son of God. John writes:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1, ESV)

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14, ESV)

Jesus made extraordinary claims about Himself. He claimed authority to forgive sins.

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." (Mark 2:10, ESV)

He accepted worship.

"And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'" (Matthew 14:33, ESV)

He declared:

"I and the Father are one." (John 10:30, ESV)

Jesus did not merely come to teach people how to live. He came to save them. The Bible teaches that all people have sinned and fall short of God's perfect standard.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23, ESV)

Because God is holy and just, sin must be dealt with. Yet because God is loving and merciful, He provided a way for sinners to be reconciled to Him. That way is Jesus Christ.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16, ESV)

Christians believe Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world and rose again on the third day. Paul wrote:

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17, ESV)

The resurrection is central to Christianity because it demonstrates Christ's victory over sin and death. This is why Christians place their hope not in their own goodness, religious performance, or personal efforts, but in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is not earned. It is received.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8, ESV)

As you finish this guide, examine the evidence, read the Scriptures for yourself, and consider the claims of Jesus carefully.

The most important question is not: What religion was I born into? The most important question is: Who is Jesus? Jesus Himself said:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, ESV)

If those words are true, then they deserve the attention of every person in the world.

The purpose of this guide has not been to attack Muslims or win arguments. It has been to help readers understand the differences between Islam and Christianity and to point them toward the person at the center of the Christian faith: Jesus Christ.

Moving Forward

Islam and Christianity are not simply different paths saying the same thing in different ways. Both faiths speak about God. Both honor many of the same historical figures. Both encourage prayer, devotion, morality, and reverence.

But when it comes to the identity of Jesus Christ, they arrive at very different conclusions.

Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet. Christianity teaches that Jesus is the Son of God. Islam teaches that Jesus was not crucified. Christianity teaches that His death and resurrection are the foundation of salvation.

Because of these differences, the most important thing a person can do is examine the evidence honestly. Read the Gospels. Read the words of Jesus. Ask questions. Seek truth.

The Bible commends those who examine spiritual claims carefully:

"They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11, ESV)

Truth does not need fear. Truth can be examined.

Our hope is that this guide has helped you better understand both Islam and Christianity and has encouraged you to look more closely at Jesus Christ.

The question at the center of everything remains: Who is Jesus?

An Invitation

If you have made it this far, thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Whether you are a Christian, a Muslim, someone exploring faith, or simply a curious reader, our hope is that this guide has encouraged you to think more deeply about Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this guide has never been to attack anyone's beliefs or win an argument. Our goal is to help people understand what Christianity teaches and why millions of believers throughout history have placed their trust in Jesus.

If Jesus truly is who He claimed to be, then His invitation is for everyone. Jesus said:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28, ESV)

The Christian message is not that we save ourselves through our own goodness, effort, or religious performance. The message of Christianity is that God loved us enough to provide a Savior.

If you would like to learn more about Jesus, explore what the Bible says about salvation, or begin a relationship with Him, we invite you to visit the Salvation section of our website:

AcceptedInc.org

There you will find additional information about the gospel, salvation through Jesus Christ, and resources to help you continue your journey.

No matter where you are in life, remember: You do not have to be perfect to come to Christ. You simply have to come.

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Sources Used

This guide references Islamic beliefs using the Quran and general Islamic teaching regarding the Hadith. Quran references are included by chapter and verse so readers can examine the passages for themselves.

This guide references Christian beliefs using the Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).

Readers are encouraged to examine the original sources for themselves and continue studying with humility, prayer, and care.