

“What is the Difference Between Islam and Christianity?”

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Many people in our culture don't realize that the Qur'an has a lot to say about many people that appear for the first time in the Bible. The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) was finished being written around 400 BC and gives accounts of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Mary, Jesus and other notable figures. The Qur'an was finished being written around 632 AD and is divided into 114 different “Surahs” (or chapters). It also speaks of these same people albeit in ways that can be very different than the Bible. There are many minor differences between Islam and Christianity, but two of the greatest differences focus around the person of Jesus and also salvation.

I have a study edition of the Qur'an which highlights the differences between the Muslim view of Jesus and the Christian view. The Qur'an teaches that Jesus was a created person (3:59), a prophet (19:30), is the Messiah (3:45), did miracles (3:49), is not the Son of God (19:35, 90-92; 23:91), did not die on a cross (4:157), but naturally (5:75) and is honored by Muslims as only a good prophet (43:59). The New Testament teaches something different than this. The question that arises is if Islam declares Jesus to be a prophet then why don't they accept the prophecies that Jesus spoke about His own death, resurrection, and eternal life being found only in Him. The typical response is that the teachings of Jesus as found in the New Testament are corrupted. This position cannot be defended very well when evaluating over 13,000 Greek, Coptic, Syriac, and Arabic texts of the New Testament going all the way back to the 1st century. Jesus declared that it is only through Him that one can attain Salvation (John 14:6) and that unless one believes that He is the great I AM, people will die in their sins (John 8:24).

As it relates to salvation, the Qur'an teaches that salvation is given by belief in Allah and in doing good deeds ((19:60; 40:40). Additionally, it denies any sort of substitutionary sacrifice for others (17:15; 19:87) and makes no room for any intercession (53:38). The starkest difference between this and the Bible is that Jesus died on a cross as our substitute (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 3:18) and is standing at the right hand of God making intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). It is also common in Islam not to have any confidence and absolute certainty whether they will enter paradise. For Christians, Jesus has lived the perfect life for us and we receive His perfection at the judgment while Jesus received our sin on the cross. The beauty of Christianity is that we can never do enough good deeds to deserve heaven (Isaiah 64:6), but if we put our faith and trust in Jesus and what He has accomplished on the cross, we know with absolute certainty we are going to enter paradise (John 5:24; 1 John 5:13). Christians are called to love Muslims even though we disagree on various religious points and it is through this and the sharing of the truth (Eph 4:15) that all are invited to see that Jesus is the savior of the whole world (1 John 4:14). Have a blessed week!

Printed in June 3, 2010 New Lenox Patriot newspaper.