

THE
MUSLIM FAITH

Credible? Tolerant? True?



A factual comparison with Christianity

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Muslim denominations

There are two basic denominations in the Muslim faith;

- Sunnis
- Shiites

In both groups (but mainly in Sunnis), there are also 'Sufi' believers, a more charismatic wing of Islam.

Islam has over 1 billion followers worldwide (1/5 of the world population). It is considered one of the Abrahamic, monotheistic faiths, along with Judaism and Christianity. Although usually associated with the Arabs of the Middle East, less than 10% of Muslims are in fact Arab. Muslims are found all over the world, of every nation, colour and race.

In many ways, Islam is not a religion. It is a political system that uses religious ideology. It is important to note that the word 'Islam' literally means 'surrender' or 'submission': it does not mean 'peace'.

Muslim texts

All share use of the Qur'an (more accurately 'Al-Qur'an') – in English 'the Recital' – the word of God known to Muslims as 'Allah' and recited to Mohammad by the Angel Gabriel.

To this, Muslims add the Sunnah. This is a record of Muhammad's life, actions, and deeds and is second in authority only to the Qur'an.

A saying in the Hadith is called a sunnah. These sunnah were transmitted by word of mouth down through the centuries having been memorised first by Mohammad's companions and then later by subsequent Muslims. Therefore, the Hadith is the written record of the oral traditions, passed down from Muslim to Muslim, of what Mohammad was supposed to have said and done.

Where the Muslim faith came from

The man who would become the prophet Mohammad came from the Quraysh tribe in Mecca. This tribe worshipped many gods, which disgusted Mohammad. He decided that Christians were right to only worship one god.

At the age of 40, Mohammad retired to a cave for meditation and received a series of visions which he said were from the Angel Gabriel. Interestingly, he thought they were demonic. His wife however, convinced him that they were divine.

What exactly is the Qur'an?

The Angel Gabriel's recitals to Mohammad were said to have taken place over a period of approximately 23 years, beginning on 22 December 609 CE, when Mohammad was 40, and concluding in 632, the year of his death.

These 'recitals' were written down and later compiled into what would become the Qur'an. Look at this book closely though and you can see that most of its elements are actually drawn from a whole range of sources that Mohammad would have already been familiar with;

- Arabian fables
- Jewish stories
- Hindu stories
- Stories from the Gnostic Gospels – [these are ancient texts and stories about Jesus that were rejected by those who originally compiled the Christian Bible]

The source the Qur'an draws most heavily from though, is the Bible itself, already in existence in Mohammad's time.

Over 64% of the Qur'an is devoted to how to subjugate what it calls 'Kuffars' – 'non-believers'.

The Qur'an and the Bible

The 'correction of the Bible' element is illustrated by the frequency in which borrowed Biblical stories are featured in changed form in the Qur'an. For example;

- In the Bible, Abraham has 8 sons: in the Qur'an, he has 2
- In the Bible, all of Noah's sons were saved from The Flood; in the Qur'an, one was drowned (Qur'an ref: 11:42-43)
- In the Qur'an, Jesus' mother Mary and Moses' brother Aaron were contemporaries (Qur'an ref: 19:27-28), the Tower of Babel was built in Pharaoh's day (Qur'an ref: 40:36-37), Mary mother of Jesus gave birth under a palm tree (Qur'an ref: 19:23) and Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's wife (Qur'an ref: 28:9).

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The Biblical influence is also obvious in the six prophets that Muslims recognise;

Adam (the 'Chosen' of God), Noah (the 'Preacher' of God), Abraham (the 'friend' of God), Moses (the 'Speaker' of God), Jesus (the 'Word' of God) and Mohammad (the 'Apostle & Prophet' of God).

The Qur'an also underlines many things Christians believe. For example that;

- Jesus was born of a virgin
- That Jesus lived a sinless life
- That Jesus raised the dead
- That Jesus performed miracles (Qur'an ref: 3:45-49)
- That Jesus ascended to heaven
- That Jesus is coming back to earth to judge us.

All this is in the Qur'an. Which means two things;

1. that a Muslim who fully believes his Qur'an is accepting more truth about Jesus Christ than many Christians might expect.
2. that – usually without realising it – in attributing these things to Jesus, Muslims are attributing far more power to Christ than to Mohammad

The key difference between Muslims and Christians lies in the fact that Muslims refuse to accept the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – and they cannot accept that Jesus was God’s begotten son. These are of course the two fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Interestingly, particularly in its early Surahs, the Qur’an actually commends Muslims to study the Bible:

Qur’an Surah 3:3

‘He has revealed to you the Book with the truth, confirming the scriptures which preceded it; for He has already revealed the Torah and the Gospel’

Qur’an Surah 5:46

‘And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him in the Torah, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah - a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil)’

In later writings, the tone changes however.

In the Hadith, there is also at least one passage suggesting that Muslims ought to study the text of another religion. It was reported that a leading Imam in Saudi Arabia recently discovered it and sent hundreds of Bibles to Imams all around the country and to the Saudi Royal Family.

Problems in reading the Qur’an

The text now in the Qur’an was recited by Mohammad at different times and with different objectives. The early parts were compiled at a time when he was trying to join with Jewish and Christian believers of the time. After this had failed, later parts were far more militant. This therefore, leads to a large number of passages contradicting each other.

Muslims explain this with what they call ‘the law of abrogation’ which says that a later revelation from the prophet supersedes an earlier one. Unfortunately however, the Qur’an is not written in chronological order, so it’s very difficult for even a scholar to know which are early and which are later ‘revelations’.

How to understand Islam

We need to understand it in three ways:

1. *An imperialistic religion*

Islam is an imperialistic religion in that the goal of every Muslim is a world fully submitted to Allah.

Islam can only be seen in its complete form - and therefore properly understood - in countries where it is the dominant religion. This is because Islam is a 'Holistic Religion' – a religion about life, indistinguishable from life. Other religions, including Christianity, have their laws but exist in countries which maintain a separate system of public law.

When Islam is practiced in its full form - as in countries where it is the dominant faith - there is no distinction between Religious Law and Public law. Therefore, for example, to leave Islam in such a country becomes a crime not only against Islam but also against the state.





2. *A territorial religion*

Muslims seek to take territory for Allah and if territory is lost, their faith commits them to retrieving it. Any treaties made when Muslims are not in a position of strength in any given country are made under the kind of truce provided for such circumstances in the Qur'an – that of 'Hudna'. Essentially, this is a peace treaty that you enter into when you are not in a position to fight and win, but one that can be later ignored as soon as you are in a position to win militarily.

This strategy has been successful throughout history.

Muslims are currently the majority in 51 world countries.

The three most holy places in Islam are Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. As Mohammad's hometown and the location where the Qur'an was first sent down to him, Mecca is the birthplace of the faith.

Jerusalem is important because in the Hadith, Mohammad had a dream that he ascended to heaven on a white horse and returned the same night.

3. A militant religion

A fundamental part of the Islamic life is its 'Jihad' – which literally means 'struggle'. With Satan and the world. And with the enemies of Islam.

The question is whether this is a military, physical struggle. Or an inward struggle of life. Different Muslims see this differently.

In countries where Muslims are in the minority, they will tell you that the 'Jihad' is the inward struggle of every believer for purity and morality. In countries where Muslims are in the majority, the approach is often very different.

What we do know is that the Qur'an talks of four kinds of 'Jihad' or 'struggle';

- The Jihad of the tongue – the struggle to share one's faith
- The Jihad of the hand – the struggle to do good deeds
- The Jihad of the heart – the struggle against temptation
- The Jihad of the sword – the willingness to fight and die for your faith

Finally, it's interesting to note that the highest position a human being can reach in the Islamic faith is to be a slave of Allah. He can never be a son.

Islam in the UK

The ultimate aim of Islam in the UK is the same as the ultimate aim of Islam in any world country; namely to ultimately enable all Muslims in the land concerned to live under Shariah Law – the Law of Islam. For that, the UK would have to be a fully Islamic country and the public law would have to either be fully replaced by or itself fully embrace Shariah Law.

How will this be achieved? One leading Islamic cleric recently described it like this;

'We will do it here by waging psychological warfare while exhibiting an Islamic approach to life'

The strategy in this regard comes in two main forms;



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1. Education

There are around 1,800 mosques in the UK and the number is growing. These are not only places of worship but also places of education in Islam. Add to these the establishment of nearly 5,000 Islamic schools in the UK. And the establishment of Middle East-funded centres of Islamic study at most main UK Universities.

2. Politics

Muslims are increasingly being encouraged to enter and influence every sphere of British politics. As well as the evidence of this in the public sphere (London's Muslim Mayor for example), there is also a Muslim Political Party, a Muslim Parliament and a Muslim 'Council of Britain' which represents around 250 Islamic organisations.

It is important to note that a mosque actually functions as a seat of regional Islamic government: it shouldn't be seen as being like a church or a synagogue. It's a meeting place certainly, but it can also be a command centre and even a storehouse of arms.

Is Islam a religion of peace?

Most Muslims will tell you this.

A crucial distinction made in Islamic theology is that between dar al-harb and dar al-islam. To put it simply, dar al-harb (a territory of war or chaos) is the name for the regions where Islam does not dominate, where divine will is not observed, and therefore where continuing strife is the norm. By contrast, dar al-islam (a territory of peace) is the name for those territories where Islam does dominate, where submission to Allah is observed, and where therefore, peace and tranquillity reign.

Unfortunately for Muslims, the facts of the present day do not support this theology. Out of 22 current world conflicts, 21 are Muslim-related.

Nor does history. Mohammad was not a man of peace. He conquered Mecca by force and was engaged in 66 military conflicts in his life, through these battles gaining the Arabian Peninsular for Islam. He eventually died after being poisoned by the wife of a man he had killed.



The three most holy places in Islam are Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem



Is Islam a religion of tolerance?

There's not too much evidence of this either – especially for Christians or Jews.

Muslim leaders describe Israel as the 'little Satan'.

They describe the USA as 'the big Satan' because it supports Israel.

In their rhetoric and in Muslim writings, there is a clear difference in attitude to other religions (which, it is expected, will ultimately just fade away and die) and to Jews and Christians.

So, how tolerant is the Qur'an of other faiths?

People of other religions are offered two choices in the Qur'an;

- Become a Muslim and submit to Allah
- Or die

Christians though, are offered three choices in the Qur'an;

- Become a Muslim and submit to Allah
- Or die
- Or live and become a 'dhimmi' – somebody who is a second class citizen in a Muslim state and has to pay a poll tax



To be treated as a 'dhimmi' is in most cases the best that a Christian can expect in a state that is predominantly Muslim. In many Muslim countries though, it can cost you your life to be a Christian.

More Christians have been martyred in the 20th and 21st centuries than during the previous 19 combined. Currently, it's estimated that over a quarter of a million Christians are martyred every year – one every two minutes; 700 every day; 3,000 every four days. In other words, the death toll from 9/11 which outraged the world is duplicated in Christian martyrdom every three days.

What does this have to do with Islam? Well, the fact is that in 25 states where Christians are persecuted in the world, 21 are Muslim. Some of the worst areas are Eastern Indonesia, Western Pakistan, Southern Sudan and Northern Nigeria.

Some Muslim persecutors justify their actions from Qur'an Surah 9.5 where it says;

'Kill the unbelievers wherever you find them'

and Qur'an Surah 9.29;

'Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.'

Moderate Muslims say that these verses are quoted out of context.

The Christian perspective on Islam

We've seen how Islam views Christianity. How does Christianity view Islam? Well, very differently.

Christians believe that they are not fighting Muslims or Islam but that they are fighting a deception of Satan and that therefore, the battle concerned is a spiritual one. One in which Christians should have compassion for Muslims as they would have compassion on any who had been deceived.

But isn't Christianity also a violent religion?

Some would say that if you look at the Old Testament, it could be argued that Christianity and Judaism have also historically been pretty violent religions. Let's address that argument.

Christians as a force did not fight for hundreds of years until after Jesus. Jesus Himself, when He was being arrested unjustly, told His men to put away their swords because "He who lives by the sword will die by the sword." At no point do we see Jesus carrying a sword in the Gospels, and at no point does He command violence.

So it's really hard to say something like "Christianity is violent" unless you assume that the actions of crusaders or people who claim to be Christian reflect on the religion, which they obviously don't.

When it comes to Islam, it's not a case of saying "Look how violent the terrorists are, therefore Islam is violent." That would be poor reasoning. What is true though, is that the foundations of Islam— the Qur'an and the life of Mohammad—are very violent. Islam can be formulated in non-violent ways, but to do so, you have to depart from its foundations, as many Muslims do.

When it comes to Christianity, it's a completely different picture. Yes, there are some parts in the Old Testament where God does command some violence but it's not as much as people think. Most of the violence in the Old Testament was not commanded but simply recorded. Where battles were commanded - Deuteronomy 9 and 11 for example - the command was part of just judgement on a small group of people for specific, repeated evil over a long period. It was always applied to either an individual or a small group, always for a specific time, and always after the person or people concerned had been given a long time to repent - in the case of the Deuteronomy example, over 400 years.

This is very different from what we see with Islam. With Islam, there's no limitation to who can come under Jihad. It's not a judgement for sins, it's an establishment of the superiority of Islam, as we see in chapter 9:33 of the Qur'an. So it's very different.



Questions for discussion with Muslims

1. *If Mohammad wasn't sure he was going to heaven, how can you be sure?*

Mohammad did not know what Allah (his God) would do to him on the Judgement Day – see Bakhari volume 5 No. 266 where the Prophet says 'even though I am an apostle of Allah, yet I do not know what he will do to me'.

So if Mohammad didn't know if he was going to Heaven, how can you be sure you're going to Heaven?

It's true that there are some fundamentalist Muslims who teach that the assurance of salvation is in being Jihadi – which is why in the past some have raised their children to be suicide bombers for example. Some Muslims don't believe this, some do. But all Muslims must agree with the Hadith or they wouldn't be Muslims, a book in which Mohammad clearly said he didn't know what would happen to him when he met his maker.

In contrast, the Bible's New Testament teaches we can ALL have the assurance of salvation if we put our faith in Jesus. That although all have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God, we can sing 'bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ my own'. The apostle Paul said 'I have run the good race, I have fought the good fight hence I know there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'

Christianity says you can have the assurance of salvation. Mohammad said he didn't.

2. *Mohammad's statement that 'Hell is populated mainly by women'*

See Bakhari Volume 1. Number 28 where the Prophet said:

'I was shown Hell Fire and the majority of the dwellers were mainly by Women who were ungrateful'

Also in Bakhari Volume 1 No. 301 where Allah's Apostles say: 'Oh women, give alms as I have seen that the majority of those in Hell Fire were you women. I've not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence in religion than you.'

Also in Bakhari Volume 2 No.161 where the Prophet says 'I also saw hell fire and I had never seen such a horrible sight, I saw that most of the inhabitants were women.'

All these statements seem to suggest that, according to the Hadith, Heaven is mainly populated by Men.

In contrast, the Christian Faith teaches that all have sinned and all fall short of the Glory of God. None is righteous. No not one. That is why we believe that Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for our sin. It doesn't matter if you're a woman or a man, if you have not accepted Jesus atonement for your sin you are going to Hell. Being Asian or a Jew, being an Arab or a black African has nothing to do with it. All fall short of the glory of God.

3. If Islam is a religion of 'Peace and Tolerance', why are there no Islamic countries of Democracy in today's world, except where it is imposed by the West?

If this is a Religion of 'Peace and Tolerance', you would expect to find at least one Islamic country offering all faiths complete religious freedom and democracy. You would expect to find an Islamic country giving the rights to Christians and Jews that all Muslims have in countries like Australia, Britain, USA, Europe and even Israel. But there isn't.

It's also fair to ask why are there 2.3million Christians dead in Sudan. Or 300,000 Christians massacred by Muslims in East Timor? Or 65,000 dead in Southern Philippines. Or 60,000 dead in Northern Nigeria.

Let's shift the focus to Europe. Why was Theo Van Gogh murdered for making a film on Human Rights in the Muslim World in Amsterdam? Or take Denmark where 4% of the population is Muslim but 40% of unemployed are Muslims. A country in which the overwhelming majority of convicted rapists are Muslims and the victims are Danish.

Where does this religion of Peace and Tolerance exist today?

4. Why does Islam still practice slavery?

Slavery is the ultimate Social Evil. Christian nations abolished it under the leadership of Christian men like Martin Luther King and William Wilberforce. Yet it still exists in today's world.

The last countries to abolish Slavery are Muslim – except that they haven't abolished it yet. Just look up Anti Slavery International websites and see where slavery is very much still in place: Chad, Mauritania, Sudan, Niger – all rich Muslim countries where Slavery is practiced today (one man in Chad has 7 thousand Slaves).

Why does Islam still have it? Why has Islam not abolished it yet?

