

Essentials of Christianity for Muslims

Muslims who are studying in the West, have moved here, or simply want good insight, should learn the basics of Christianity.

How is it similar to and different from Islam? Is Christianity really the way Islam describes it? Why are West & East so different?

Is immorality OK in Christianity? How does the Bible say we get to heaven/paradise?



By learning about Christianity and the Bible from the Christian perspective, rather than the Muslim or academic perspective, you will find answers to these and other important questions.

Similar Beliefs of Islam and Christianity

- One Creator God
- Prophets
- Day of Judgement
- Holy Books
- Angels & Demons
- Good & Bad exist

Important Differences Between Islam and Christianity

- Means of **Salvation** – blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sin was performed by all Biblical prophets.
(Leviticus 17:11 in Law of Moses)
- Purpose of **Good Deeds** – in Christianity they are done to please God in thanks for salvation. In Islam, like every other religion, they are required to earn salvation.
- **Lifestyle** – the place of rules and freedoms
- **Progressive Revelation** to prophets:
 - Both faiths agree that all prophets called for pure worship of One God. But increasing light and future prophecies were given to Biblical prophets over time as “progressive revelation.”
 - Specific **future prophecies** were given, for example of the destruction of corrupt nations. Those of the Messiah Jesus Christ were sent so that he would be recognized when he came.

The Gospel

“Gospel,” means “Good News!” It is the heart of the Christian faith. Briefly, it is:

*God made and loves us! But our sins separate us from him. Sin earns death as punishment. We cannot pay ourselves, because we are imperfect. So our Creator, although sinless, as a loving Father took responsibility for our sins. He entered human flesh as Jesus, and paid our punishment on the cross. Jesus was the prophesied final sacrifice, **the Lamb of God**. If we accept this gift in our place, our sins are washed away by his blood. We are “saved” by faith – and gain heaven!*

Muslims can understand this best through the **Path of the Prophets** booklet or video, because it explains the gospel using people and events they know from the Quran and Bible. Both are available free online:

Booklet in 13 languages: <https://www.christianfrommuslim.com/resources/>

English video: <https://www.christianfrommuslim.com/gospel-video-tract-for-muslims/>

The Teachings of Jesus

These are presented in the Bible’s four **Gospels**: *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. The Most famous is the “Sermon on the Mount,” in **Matthew** chapters 5-7. Its beauty often amazes Muslims.

Mark is the shortest gospel. **Luke** has the most *parables* – these are stories with deeper meaning.

John is the most symbolic of the gospels. It contains the famous “*I am*” statements of Jesus:

the Light of the world, Bread of life, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, the Resurrection, the Gate, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jesus' early teachings focus on living for the invisible kingdom of God. He does not start predicting his betrayal, death and resurrection until near the end of his ministry. **Don't be confused.** Some people would trick you by quoting only his early teachings. Consider both early and late teachings to understand.

Jesus' final commands were:

- To live in **Love** and
- To **Spread his teachings and gospel** around the world by talking about them, not with violence.
 - *Note: neither Jesus nor Moses taught to spread faith by force.*
 - Since Christians are commanded to spread Jesus' teachings with words, they get into trouble in places where:
 - Freedom of Speech is restricted
 - The Bible is outlawed
 - There is a state religion which represses Christianity

The Bible is composed of:

- **Old Testament:** 39 books written by prophets before Jesus.
- **New Testament:** 27 books written after Jesus. Muslims commonly call this the "Injeel," although there is not an exact relationship between the two. Besides the 4 gospels mentioned above, it includes the story of the early church, doctrine, and advice on living the Christian life.
- **Unchanged:** Isaiah 40:8 in the Old Testament says that "*The word of the Lord lasts forever.*"
Note: The Quran makes similar claims about God's word (Surah 6:115).
- Early Bibles, such as the *Codex Sinaiticus*, **still exist** since before the time of Mohammed. They have **the same message** as today's. This is why Christians accept the Bible over the Quran.
- The Quran does not speak against the Bible, but affirms and refers to it. (*Surah 10:94*)

St. Paul was a Jew who persecuted Christians. But after seeing a vision of Jesus, he became the most active missionary of the early church. Critics try to trick us by saying that Paul invented Christianity. Yet, the books of the Injeel that he did not write have the same message as those he did write – the gospel!

Christian History: The early church was severely **persecuted** by Rome. Rome burned Bibles and killed Christians. Nevertheless, an amazing 25,000 New Testament manuscripts survived! Plus, the Old Testament was preserved in the Dead Sea scrolls before Jesus' birth. All **confirm the current Bible.**

In the 4th century the church gained **political power**. But it kept the Roman system of government, simply dressing it in Christian ritual. So, the church did not fully follow the teachings of Jesus and his disciples. It emphasized power, ignored the Bible, and became intolerant and often corrupt. This had to change.

During the "Reformation," around 1520 A.D., Christians started **reading the Bible** again. Slowly, reforms began to bring churches and Christians closer to Jesus' teachings. "Protestants" are those who protested incorrect and/or corrupt church teachings. They **emphasized reading and education** so that everyone could read the Bible for themselves. **America began around then.** This explains its values, like: education, freedom, tolerance, and work ethic. The USA is the first nation to begin with the Bible as its basis.

Denominations: As with all religions, including Islam, Christianity has many branches, called "denominations." These share common creeds; but vary on details like: baptism methods, worship style, church authority, prayer to saints, and whether the communion service, also called eucharist, by which we remember the Lord's sacrifice for us, is symbolic or literally becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Final Note: *This only outlines some things we think would be helpful for you to understand. For more, see the videos and study guides directed to Muslim thinking on www.ChristianfromMuslim.com. They bring will deepen your understanding of these, and other important Christian/Muslim topics.*

By CP for AEM 2024

