

Understanding Islam

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With all that is going on today, can you help me gain a basic understanding of Islam? How does it differ from biblical Christianity?

Islam is actually a word that means “surrender” or “submission.” Islam claims to be fully surrendered to the will of Allah. And the will of Allah, Muslims believe, was revealed through his prophet Mohammed. The revelation is written down in the Muslim holy book, the Koran.

There are six basic articles of faith in Islam and five duties. A simple Islamic doctrinal statement would look something like this:

Muslims believe that Allah alone is the one true deity. He has neither mother nor father; similarly, he has no sons or daughters. He is not a Trinity; he is not the God of the Old Testament; and he is not the God of Christianity. Allah, according to Islam, is the god of all humanity.

Muslims believe in all the “Messengers and Prophets of Allah.” According to Islamic literature, Allah sent thousands of prophets (Jesus being one), but Mohammed is the greatest of them all.

Muslims believe in “the Revelations and the Koran.” They believe the Koran is the most holy book. Islam also recognizes other sacred writings, including the original manuscripts of the Bible. But Muslims claim that all other holy writings have been corrupted and tainted by translation and copyist errors. Only the Koran is pure, and every word of the Koran is the word of Allah, as given directly to Mohammed.

Muslims believe in the angels of Allah. They believe angels are created beings that have no material or physical needs. Angels require neither food nor drink. The angels are inferior to Allah but superior to humans, and they may be either good or evil.

Muslims believe in a day of judgment. Muslims believe all the dead will be raised to stand trial before Allah, and they will be judged according to their works. It is hoped by most Muslims that if a person follows Islam and does enough good deeds to outweigh the bad, Allah may allow such a person to enter paradise rather than sending that person to hell. But there are no guarantees of this. One’s ultimate destiny is subject solely to the will of Allah. In Islam, there is no atonement for sin or promise of forgiveness, and no assurance of any kind — except for those who die in jihad. Those

people, martyrs, are guaranteed eternal life in paradise.

Muslims believe in “Qadaa and Qadar.” These Arabic words signify Allah’s timeless knowledge and power to execute his plans. Islamic determinism goes far beyond the biblical doctrine that God is ultimately sovereign over all, working all things together for good. Instead, Islamic predestinarianism amounts to a kind of fatalistic determinism, where everything that occurs — both good and evil — is thought to come directly from the hand of Allah.

Muslims also have five duties, known as the pillars of Islam. Islam itself is said to be built on these five “pillars”:

1. The first duty is the recitation of the Islamic declaration of faith, known as the Shahadah.
2. The second duty is prayer five times a day.
3. A third duty is charity (known as Zakat).
4. A fourth duty is the annual fast — actually a month of fasting — called Ramadan.
5. A fifth duty, required of every Muslim at least once in his life (unless it is utterly impossible by some restraint), is a pilgrimage to Mecca, called the hajj.

Islam is fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed to biblical Christianity. Islam teaches that Jesus Christ was a mere man—a prophet, and not God incarnate. Islam also denies that Jesus died on a cross. Obviously, if Christ did not die on the cross, He did not have to rise from the dead; so Islam denies the resurrection, too.

Islam further teaches that no one can have salvation but a Muslim. Even though a Muslim can never know whether he has salvation, only Muslims can have it in the end.

Much more could be said, but clearly, Islam and Christianity are mutually exclusive. Both claim to be the only true way to God. Both cannot be right.

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