

THE SWORD & THE SPIRIT

COMPARING ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The religion of Islam has the world's attention. So what's it all about? How does it differ from Christianity?

A lot of Muslims don't even know. About 1.2 billion people around the world claim to be Muslims, but many of them don't understand what's written in their holy book or the basics of the religion they believe. (Don't think we're being biased. Plenty of people claim to be Christians but don't truly understand what that means either.)

Because what a person believes determines his or her actions, it's important for Christians to understand the beliefs that hold the minds of millions of people.

THE ROOTS OF ISLAM

Islam traces its roots back to Abraham, who was the father of Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac became the father of the Jews, and Ishmael became the father of the Arabs. Six hundred years after Jesus' death, a man named Muhammad (sometimes spelled Mohammed, Muhammad, Muhammed, or Mahomet) wanted to unite the Arab people under one religion.

Muhammad claimed that while spending some time alone in a cave, the angel Gabriel came and gave him a new and final revelation from God. Muhammad could not read or write, so he memo-

rized the angel's words, and they were later recorded (along with other visions) in Islam's holy book, the Koran.

Muhammad then set out to convert his hometown of Mecca, but failed. So he moved to Medina, where he was more successful. The Muslims acknowledge Muhammad's pilgrimage from Mecca to Medina as the start of their calendar year because it's when Muhammad first claimed to be a prophet of Allah (the name of the god the Muslims worship). That's how Islam got started.

A PEACEFUL RELIGION?

There are peaceful Muslims, but Islam itself is not a religion of peace. Don Richardson, author of *The Secret of the Koran* (Regal), puts it this way: "Anyone who is not a Muslim is assumed to be rejecting Islam. Rejecting Islam equates to attacking Islam, Mohammed, and even [Allah]. Attacking Islam makes one its enemy."

The Koran itself says: "Believers, make war on the infidels that dwell among you" (Koran 9:123).

If Muslims truly lived by the Koran, violence in the name of Allah would be much more prevalent. Muslims who aren't violent probably don't realize that's what their holy book says.

ISLAM

CHRISTIANITY

SUPREME BEING

Allah* isn't a personal god and can't be known by men. Allah asks his people to fight against those who don't worship him as god (he calls them "the infidels" in the Koran) and convert them by force.
*By definition, Muslims and Christians are not worshipping the same God.

The Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). God is a personal God who sent His Son so people could know Him. He asks His people to love Him, to love one another, and to love people into His kingdom.

BASIC BELIEF

"There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet."

There is only one God, and anyone can have a relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

SACRED BOOK(S)

The Koran. It's believed to be the only holy book without error. Muslims also acknowledge the Torah of Moses (the first five books of the Bible), the Psalms, and a distorted view of the Gospels.

The Bible

SACRAMENTS

Pray five times a day (facing Mecca), fast during the month of Ramadan, give to the poor, and, if possible, take one trip to Mecca in a person's lifetime.

The Lord's Supper and baptism

SALVATION

Salvation is earned. A Muslim must say the confession of faith (see basic belief). On Judgment Day, if a Muslim's bad works outweigh his or her good works, that person goes to hell. Salvation can only be guaranteed by dying while fighting for Allah.

Salvation isn't earned. It's guaranteed through a person's individual acceptance of God's Son, Jesus Christ's death on the cross for his or her sins.

AFTERLIFE

Good people go to paradise; bad people go to hell.

Forgiven people go to heaven through the blood of Jesus Christ. People who haven't accepted Christ's payment for their sins go to hell, where they spend eternity separated from God.

PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Is the son of Mary and a prophet, but not God.

Is the Son of God, born to a virgin named Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus didn't die on the cross. Right before He was to be killed, Allah took Jesus to heaven and someone else took His place (probably Judas Iscariot). Since Jesus never died, He didn't rise again.

Jesus died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world and rose three days later.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Christ will come but will confirm that Islam is the true religion for mankind.

Christ will return to rule the earth along with those who have put their trust in Him.