

Is it the Same God?

There is a movement called 'Interfaith Dialogue' that promotes worldwide unity amongst all religions through greater co-operation, and this is being pushed forward particularly under the umbrella of Abrahamic faiths – these being Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The common link is that all three believe in one God (i.e. 'monotheistic') and can trace their origins back to Abraham in the Bible. They share common beliefs and values such as the importance of faith, and obedience to divine commandments. Therefore, interfaith dialogue focuses on the commonality with a view to removing reasons for disagreement and tension. For example, how Christians and Muslims can live in harmony, side by side.

But, are we *really* sure the God of the Bible – Yahweh – is the same as the God of the Qur'an – Allah? That is what is often proclaimed, both by Muslims, who believe Islam is the natural conclusion of all faiths through what they say is the last and final revelation of God through the prophet Mohammed. But also, by many Christians through their desire to be loving and inclusive and not cause offence. However, rather than look at the commonalities, we should really look at the differences to see if we can confirm we are talking about the same God. Because if God is eternal and unchanging, surely there shouldn't be ANY differences in how God is portrayed in the Bible and Qur'an?

The Nature of God

In Islam, there is the concept of 'oneness'. Allah is one (Tawhid) and this is the most fundamental concept in Islam. God is one, indivisible and unique. *"Say: He is Allah, One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent."*

— **Surah Al-Ikhlās (112:1–4)**

Allah also doesn't interact with his creation and is therefore 'distant'. He can't interact because how can he be on earth at the same time as running the universe?

In Christianity, God reveals Himself in the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in unity. He is so great, loving and merciful that He stepped into His creation to resolve the problems we humans were unable to solve and rebuild a relationship that was broken at the Garden of Eden. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life* **John 3:16**

God was able to interact with His creation through Jesus Christ, who was both fully human and fully God.

God's View of Humanity

In Islam, the relationship is one of master and slave. Muslims must *submit* to Allah and bow down and worship him. Islam itself means 'submission to the will of Allah'. Allah does not have children.

In Christianity, the relationship is one of a Heavenly Father loving His children. The Lord's prayer begins, "Our Father, who is in Heaven..." Every human being is precious in the sight of God, and therefore has equal worth. A relationship is in place here on earth and there will be a relationship, face to face, in heaven.

God's View of Sin

In Islam, sin is seen as a mistake. Life is a test. No relationship has been broken because there is no concept of a loving relationship in the first place.

In Christianity, the whole of the Bible is about how sin separated humans from the very presence of God, and then shows the only way we can get back into relationship with Him. Jesus said, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to the Father except by Me"* **John 14:6** Sin is what caused division and needs to be remedied.

God's View of Salvation

In Islam, Muslims believe in salvation from hellfire and the consequences of sin, and disobedience to Allah. This is through submission to Allah, faith, righteous deeds (good works), repentance and Allah's mercy. There is no need for a 'saviour' as such. Salvation is works-based and is all about what Muslim believers can do, then hope for mercy from Allah.

In Christianity, Everyone is born with a sinful nature, and God will not tolerate sin in His presence. If He allowed sin to be in Heaven, then He would no longer be perfect. ALL sin, however small, is an abomination to God. So, a saviour is needed to do what we humans can't. God came on a rescue mission. Jesus was the substitutional blood sacrifice that atoned for the sins of ALL as a free gift.

In conclusion, there are many more examples, but the differences highlighted above are too fundamental to believe Yahweh and Allah are one and the same.

Now, if we accept that they are different, one may be true, the other false. But both cannot be true. Which means we are left with a choice of what to do and how do we deal with our sins when judged by a perfect and Holy God. Either we trust in ourselves, our 'good works' and hope for mercy from Allah. Or we trust in the saving work of Jesus, God incarnate, who died for all and was resurrected to give everlasting life.

This choice has eternal consequences and needs to be made after proper consideration of all the information.