

¹Is Islam in conflict with Christianity & Judaism?

Is there a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition?

Important doctrinal differences exist between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Even so, each of the three faiths proceed from a monotheistic worldview interconnected with that of the other two. The three world religions share belief in successive prophets and revealed scriptures — in fact, the three faiths trace their religious history back to the patriarch Abraham, and earlier to the first human, Adam (considered a prophet in Islam), demonstrating a common history and outlook. Thus, for Muslims Islam culminates what can be described as the *Judeo-Christian-Islamic* tradition of monotheism.

What is Islam's view of Jesus?

Muslims believe that Jesus was a very important prophet of God, and that he was indeed the Messiah awaited by the Jews of ancient Palestine. Like Christians, Muslims believe Jesus' mission was to reestablish justice among people and rectify deviations that had developed in the religion of the One God. Muslims share with Christians belief in Jesus' unique birth and various miracles performed by him (by God's leave).

"Lo! The angels said: 'O Mary! Behold, God sends thee the glad tiding, through a word from Him, of a son who shall become known as the Christ Jesus, son of Mary, of great honour in this world and in the life to come, and of those who are drawn near to God.'" (Qur'an, 3: 45)

However, Muslims do not believe in Jesus' divinity, and do not consider Jesus the "Son of God," since to do so would contradict the *Qur'anic* concept of God's Unity (Oneness). Furthermore, since the concept of "Original Sin" does not exist in Islam, Jesus (nor any other prophet or person) does not play a redemptive role in human salvation. In other words, there is no concept of "vicarious atonement" in Islam. Moreover, Muslims do not share the Christian belief in Jesus' crucifixion. According to the *Qur'an*, Jesus was assumed (taken up) to the realm of God to spare him such a fate.

In the *Qur'an*, God's creation of Jesus, who had no father, is likened to His creation of Adam, who had neither father nor mother. Both, fashioned out of earth's elemental components, are viewed as direct manifestations of God's Divine Command "Be!"

¹ Council on Islamic Education. *Teaching About Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom*. Compiled by Munir A. Shaikh. February 1998. Handbook for teaching about Islam and Muslims, California, Fountain Valley.

How do Muslims view people of other faiths?

Because Muslims accept that Jesus and the Biblical prophets were indeed true Prophets of God, Muslims identify a great deal with teachings found in Christianity and Judaism. Most scholars of religion agree that Judaism, Christianity and Islam share a common monotheistic heritage and world view. The similarities between the three faiths are in many ways greater than the differences. In recognition of this, some scholars call the three religions the “Abrahamic” faiths, since all three trace their history back to the patriarch Abraham.

While cherishing the similarities, Islam holds that by the time of Prophet Muhammad, Rabbinic Judaism and the Christian Church had forgotten, misinterpreted and modified the original teachings of the ancient prophets, including Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. Muslims believe that within Judaism monotheism had been compromised with the raising of the opinions and interpretations of rabbis to the same level of authority as God’s word. In addition the concept of a chosen race or group of people is seen as a misapplication of God’s ancient covenant with Abraham, since God promised to bless all of his progeny. For Muslims, righteousness is the only criterion for a special relationship to God. Within the Christian Church, monotheism was compromised by raising Jesus to the level of God and making him part of the Trinity. Consequently, God selected another prophet to complete the prophetic teachings and reestablish the purity of the primordial monotheistic faith centered solely around worship of the One God.

Despite these criticisms of Judaism and Christianity, Islam advocates positive relations and designates Christians and Jews as *Ahl al-Kitab*, or “People of the Book,” recognizing the divinely revealed origin of the two faith traditions. Historically, Muslims accepted Jews and Christians as *dhimmis*, or protected communities within the Islamic state, allowing them complete freedom to practice their religion and enforce their own religious laws. Moreover, the *Shari’ah* states that injuring non-Muslims, damaging their religious sites or otherwise violating their rights as citizens of the state are strictly forbidden. This protected status was conferred on Hindus, Buddhists and Zoroastrians as well in the course of history. Today, principles of *Shari’ah* remain in effect regarding harmonious and constructive relations between Muslims and people of other faiths.

The Quran

Muslims believe the *Quran* is God’s word as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. Statements by Muhammad himself are collected in the *Hadith*, not the *Quran*. Recounting many Judaic and Christian traditions such as those about Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, the *Quran* also states that Christians and Jews are “People of the book” (*Ahl al-Kttab*) who, as believers, hold juridical rights under Islamic law to live as protected people.