

**ANDREAS MAURER**

# **CAN WE KNOW THE TRUTH?**

**Christianity and Islam compared**

Similarities, differences and  
the Christian way of salvation

# CAN WE KNOW THE TRUTH?

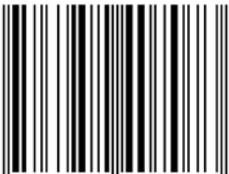
## Christianity and Islam compared

Similarities, differences and  
the Christian way of salvation

By Andreas Maurer  
[www.aymf.net](http://www.aymf.net)

Copyright © 2020 by Andreas Maurer, Author  
First edition 2021

ISBN 978-3-9524070-7-3



9 783952 407073 >

**Published by:**  
AVC Schweiz  
Industriestrasse 21  
2553 Safnern bei Biel  
Switzerland

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the copyright holder.

Page design: Eagle Publishing, [eagle\\_2001@abv.bg](mailto:eagle_2001@abv.bg)  
Artwork and cover design: 720 Grad GmbH, [www.720.ch](http://www.720.ch)

For further information and resources, please contact  
the following websites:  
[www.avc-ch.org](http://www.avc-ch.org); [www.aymf.net](http://www.aymf.net)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is in many ways a summary and is also based on my former book “ASK YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND”. It includes recent developments in Islam and new insights from personal interaction with Muslims. Andreas Rossel from AVC Switzerland initially proposed the writing of this new book. In addition, I would like to thank the whole AVC team for their support and motivation in many different ways. Further, I would like to give special thanks to the following people who have contributed substantially to this publication: Sarruddin Mustapha, Hanspeter Obrist and Valentino Facchin.

I also like to pay tribute to my precious partners for their contribution and encouragement that have helped in the writing of this book: Artur in Armenia, Clement in Burundi, Hamir Ibrahim in Philippines, Hilki in Kosovo, Paul in Indonesia, Markus in Malaysia, Nikolay in Bulgaria, Rehan in South Africa and Oscar in India.

Many thanks go to John Gilchrist who gave me permission to use the full text of his booklet “Knowing God Personally – The Christian Message to the Muslim World” (please see sections 3.1 in this book). Special thanks go to Wendy Gerster who did a wonderful job with editing. I would also like to thank Nikolay Markov and his team in Silistra, Bulgaria who did the final proofreading and page design.

Readers are encouraged to communicate their own experiences and also any helpful criticism in order to improve future editions of this book.

Dr Andreas Maurer  
October 2021

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
PRELIMINARY REMARKS .....	6
PREFACE.....	7
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.1 Guidelines for respectful conversation .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.2 Similarities and differences .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2. Christianity and Islam compared .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Customary practical beliefs .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1.1 Profession of faith .....	12
2.1.2 Prayer .....	13
2.1.3 Almsgiving .....	15
2.1.4 Fasting .....	16
2.1.5 Pilgrimage .....	18
<b>2.2 Doctrinal issues.....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.2.1 Revelation in Christianity and Islam .....	19
2.2.2 The Bible compared to the Qur`an .....	22
2.2.3 God in Christianity and Allah in Islam .....	24
2.2.4 The concept of “original/inherited sin”.....	25
2.2.5 The life of Jesus compared to Muhammad .	26
2.2.6 Crucifixion of Jesus.....	28
<b>2.3 Selected people issues.....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.3.1 Women in Christianity and Islam .....	31
2.3.2 People are sinners .....	35
2.3.3 Love between God/Allah and mankind .....	37
2.3.4 Food laws .....	40
2.3.5 The Church compared to the Ummah .....	42

<b>2.4 End time issues .....</b>	<b>44</b>
2.4.1 Sanctification/spiritual struggle compared to jihad .....	44
2.4.2 Way to heaven/paradise .....	47
2.4.3 Day of judgment .....	48
2.4.4 Eternity .....	49
<b>3. Choosing and following the truth .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.1 Knowing God personally – <i>John Gilchrist</i>.....</b>	<b>51</b>
3.1.1 Introduction: true faith or formal monotheism? .	51
3.1.2 Cain and Abel: the only acceptable sacrifice ..	54
3.1.3 Abraham: the father of the faithful .....	58
3.1.4 Moses: the man who knew God face-to-face .	65
3.1.5 David: a man after God`s own heart .....	72
3.1.6 Jeremiah and Ezekiel: the promise of a new covenant .....	78
3.1.7 Jesus Christ: Son of David, Son of Abraham..	86
3.1.8 The Holy Spirit: God`s indwelling presence .	95
<b>3.2 The “Good News” in the Bible .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>3.3 Steps to accept God`s way of salvation.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>3.4 Consequences of the new life.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>4. Appendices .....</b>	<b>109</b>
4.1 Bibliography and recommended reading .....	109
4.2 Resources .....	110
4.3 Abbreviations .....	112

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- Biblical texts are quoted from the New International Version, unless otherwise identified. The Biblical references are abbreviated according to standardized guidelines (see Appendix section 4.3).
- Quotations from the Qur'an, as well as the verse numbering system, are taken from the translation of A. Yusuf Ali (edition 1946, printed 4/1993). Verse numbers vary slightly between various translations of the Qur'an.
- Arabic names and terms are given in their common English spellings.
- For reasons of simplicity, female forms such as *Muslima* are omitted in this publication. Instead, the word Muslim is used as generic term.
- References in the footnotes are abbreviated. More bibliographic information is provided in Appendix section 4.1 (Bibliography and recommended reading).
- Since the concept of "God" is perceived differently in the Qur'an and the Bible, I use the term "Allah" when it appears in a Muslim context.

## PREFACE

I have been in contact with Christians and Muslims for many years. What has surprised me most is how many Christian and Muslim believers seem to have wrong information both about their own and also about the other faith!

Many think these two religions are more or less the same, that there are no major differences and even that Jesus and Muhammad are very similar. This leads some communities to hold joint celebrations focusing only on the apparent common points.

However, although there are undoubtedly certain similarities between these two faiths, they should not lead us to ignore the differences. In order to discern the truth, we need to know the facts. I believe that every person on earth has the right to know the truth. This is the will of God our Creator, who wants to reveal himself to his creation and wants all people to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:4):

*"God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth".*

The purpose of this book is to state clearly the main facts about the two religions and to present as objectively as possible the differences as well as the similarities. God Almighty has given human beings a free will to choose. The responsibility to seek, understand and decide for the truth lies with each one of us.

Although I myself am a Christian, in the first part of this booklet I try to give a neutral, objective overview of the

main similarities and differences between these two world faiths. The reader must, of course, make up his own mind whether there is a need to choose between them and - if so - which is the more convincing. It is the hope of the author that the text of this booklet will be of help in such considerations. This booklet also contains the text of the booklet by John Gilchrist with the title: "Knowing God Personally – The Christian Message to the Muslim World". Since I, as the author, am a convinced Christian, the way of salvation according to the Bible is presented in some detail at the end of this booklet.



We have created a companion website to this book. There you will find a series of over 30 online video lectures which expand and deepen each chapter of this book with additional insights, illustrations, and practical examples. Please visit <https://www.btm-int.org/can-we-know-the-truth/>

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Guidelines for respectful conversation

In my many years of meeting with Muslims I have experienced various kinds of encounters and discussions between Christians and Muslims. Most of the conversations were friendly. However, there were times when there were heated arguments – even to the point where people left in anger. In the following I have listed ten practical guidelines which can serve as a base for good relations between Christians and Muslims:

- 1) View the other person as a precious individual created by God.
- 2) Overcome your fear of, or reservations about meeting people – be open and do your utmost to build strong bridges of friendships!
- 3) Be prepared to take the initiative in meeting people from other faiths – don't wait for them!
- 4) View other people as individuals – avoid stereotypes.
- 5) Learn to understand the possible inner tensions of the other person (insecurity, social pressure, etc).
- 6) Recognise the cultural differences – be sensitive.
- 7) The encounter should be loving and respectful – do not criticise the other faith!
- 8) Listen carefully and ask questions to make sure you really understand what the other person means. Explain to each other the terminology you use in order to avoid misunderstandings.
- 9) Talk naturally and openly – also share your own experience of how you accepted your particular faith and what you understand the truth to be. To substantiate this, share relevant quotes from the Bible or the Qur'an.
- 10) Share your life with your new friend: invite them to your home and church or mosque. If possible, do various secular or family activities together.

## 1.2 Similarities and differences

When comparing various topics in the light of the teachings of Christianity and Islam, it is important to acknowledge that there are not just similarities but also differences. The following table lists some examples:

Topic	Similarities	Differences in Christianity and Islam
God is one	The belief that there is only one God.	The Bible and the Qur'an portray "God" differently.
God as ruler	God lives eternally and rules the world.	The way God rules the world differs.
Revelation	God has revealed his word to humans.	Different views on the method of revelation and which books actually contain God's word.
Sin	Humans commit sin.	The definition of sin is fundamentally different.
Forgiveness	God can forgive human sins.	The way God forgives is different.
People mentioned	The Qur'an and the Bible talk of the same characters e.g. Abraham, Moses, Noah, Mary, Jesus <sup>1</sup> , etc.	The characteristics of the people and the aim of their missions are different in Christianity and Islam.
Judgement Day	The fact that there will be a Judgment Day.	What exactly will happen on this day differs.
Eternity	Existence of heaven (paradise) and hell.	The whole concept differs.

A closer investigation of the above will show that there are, in fact, more differences than similarities. These will be outlined and clarified in the following sections. The teaching and practice of both faiths are given as generally

understood. However, since there are many minor groups within Christianity and Islam, some small differences in teaching and practice can occur.

## 2. Christianity and Islam compared

### 2.1 Customary practical beliefs

The following five sections consist of practical duties and spiritual beliefs which are most commonly known to Muslims. These are the so called “five duties” or the “five pillars of Islam”. They are the practical ritual duties a Muslim must obey, a kind of identity card. The tables in these sections show some similarities but also many differences between the Christian and Muslim faith.

#### 2.1.1 Profession of faith

The following table explains the difference between the professions of faith of Christianity and Islam:

Christianity	Islam
<p>During the Old Testament times there were many ancient religions with many different gods. However, the Israelites proclaimed their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the God of the whole earth, the only true God, by the following profession of faith (Dt 6:4f): “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”.</p> <p>There are many variations of creeds among Christian believers today based on Bible verses such as: Ro 10:9; 1Co 12:3; 15:3-10; 1Ti 2:5f; Php 2:5-11. One example of a Christian creed is the Apostolic Creed (abbreviated), which expresses what Christians believe:</p>	<p>The profession of faith, or creed (<i>Shahada</i>, also called <i>kalima</i>) is repeated many times during the five daily ritual prayers. Its repetitive proclamation is the most important rite in Islam.</p> <p>Basically, to become a Muslim a person has to recite the following sentence, which is the Islamic creed, in the presence of two Muslim witnesses:</p>

Christianity	Islam
<p>“I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.”</p>	<p>“I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger.”</p>

#### 2.1.2 Prayer

Muslims are proud to say that they pray more than Christians, but it is important to mention that David prayed at least seven times a day (Ps 119:164). In addition, Jesus commanded people to pray without ceasing (Lk 18:1,7; 1Th 5:17). The following table explains the difference in understanding about prayer between Christianity and Islam:

Christianity	Islam
<p>Throughout history, believers in the God of the Bible established personal prayer habits, such as we find in Da 6:10: “...he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”</p>	<p>The Islamic prayer (<i>salat</i>) is basically a rigidly prescribed ritual of actions and words. It is a duty to pray, and by performing it Muslims hope to accumulate blessings from Allah.</p>

Christianity	Islam
<p>The Christian way of prayer is described in the Bible, where Jesus serves as a model (Lk 11:1–4; Mt 6:5-13). Various examples of wording or formulation and postures can be observed, but there is no ritual order to be rigidly observed. Jesus left us a model prayer, the so-called “Lord’s Prayer”, which reflects basic components:</p> <p><i>“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen”</i></p> <p>Prayer is seen as the greatest spiritual weapon and is made through faith in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:18). Christians practice personal as well as communal prayer. Various denominations have different emphasis in practice. The following types of prayers are distinguished. Essentially, all prayers have at least some of these components: Worship and adoration; Thanksgiving; Confession; Submission; Intercession; Petition; Repentance.</p>	<p>Guidelines for prayer are to be found in the Qur’an as well as in the <i>hadith</i> (records of the traditions; sayings of Muhammad). The Qur’an speaks on prayer, but it is not specifically written that Muslims need to pray five times (Sunni tradition) or three times (Shia tradition) a day. See Suras 2:43; 11:114; 17:78f; 20:130; 30:17f. The basic words of the daily prayers are as follows (said in Arabic only):</p> <p><i>“Allah is very great (“Allahu Akbar”); (then the first Sura of the Qur’an is recited); Glory be to my Lord Almighty; Allah hears those who call upon Him; Our Lord, praise be to You; Glory be to my Lord, the Most High; Peace be upon you and Allah’s blessings”.</i></p> <p>There are small differences in the ritual among the different Islamic groups. The following points may be highlighted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Call to Prayer (<i>adhan</i>) is always said in the same format by the <i>mu`adhdhin</i>.</li> <li>2) Muslims have to ritually wash themselves in order to be fit (be “clean”) to stand before Allah.</li> <li>3) The three or five daily prayers include the following prescribed points:</li> </ol>

Christianity	Islam
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Lord’s Prayer” is the best commonly known prayer.</li> <li>• Christians are free to choose their posture of prayer and the particular words.</li> <li>• Christians are free to pray as many times as they like – but Jesus encouraged them to pray as often as possible.</li> <li>• Christians are free to pray any time, at any place and in any language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslims may perform the prayer alone, but it is recommended that it is done within the community.</li> <li>• The <i>imam</i> is at the front and leads the collective prayers.</li> <li>• The whole community (men and women pray separately) simply follows the directions of the <i>imam</i>. The prayers are recited audibly.</li> <li>• The words of prayer are equally prescribed and are to be spoken only in the Arabic language.</li> <li>• The relevant postures are prescribed.</li> <li>• Prayer has to be directed towards Mecca, otherwise it is invalid.</li> <li>• Prayer times are set each day and are adjusted to the sunrise and sunset.</li> </ul>

### 2.1.3 Almsgiving

The following table outlines the differences of almsgiving as understood and practised in Christianity and Islam:

Christianity	Islam
<p>The concept of GIVING is first mentioned in the Bible, when Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek, the priest: “Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (Ge 14:20). It was given to the priest who represented the gathered people of God.</p>	<p><b>Religious tax</b> (Almsgiving, <i>zakat</i>, Sura 2:177): The religious tax of Muslims has been partly transformed into a “tax for the poor”.</p>

Christianity	Islam
<p>The Bible encourages giving that is done voluntarily and with the right motive. When it is done voluntarily it is beneficial: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give," says the Bible, "not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Co 9:7).</p> <p>Such giving benefits not only the recipient but also the giver (Pr 11:25; Lk 6:38). Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Ac 20:35).</p> <p>However, giving is wrong when there are ulterior motives, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To impress people (Mt 6:2).</li> <li>• To receive something in return (Lk 14:12-14).</li> <li>• To try to buy salvation (Ps 49:6f; Ac 8:18ff).</li> </ul>	<p>The Qur'an emphasizes "giving" (see Suras 2:271ff; 92:5-11), but makes no detailed statements regarding the amount. That depends on the wealth and annual income of the male head of the family.</p> <p>There are provisions for peasants and farmers to give animals. 2,5 % (e.g. for items of trade) is a general guideline, but it can be up to 20% of net profit in particularly successful situations (if, for example, someone finds a treasure, he has to pay 20% zakat).</p>

### 2.1.4 Fasting

The following table explains the difference in understanding and practice of fasting between Christianity and Islam:

Christianity	Islam
<p>Fasting generally means going without any food and drink for a period (e.g. Est 4:16), not merely refraining from certain foods. However, the following differences can be seen in practice:</p> <p>1) No drinking or eating (Est 4:16; Ac 9:9), longest period three days and nights, except Ex 34:28.</p>	<p>There are several Muslim fasts. The most important one is during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. It is obligatory for any Muslim (Sura 2:183-185). Verse 185 declares that the Qur'an was revealed in the month of Ramadan.</p>

Christianity	Islam
<p>2) Usually only not eating; drinking is essential to survive (2Sa 12:16f; Mt 4:2).</p> <p>3) Eating and drinking at a reduced level (Da 10:3). Sometimes inner attitude was manifested by outward signs (Ne 9:1).</p> <p><b>1. Purpose of fasting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expression of grief (1Sa 31:13; Est 4:3; Ps 35:13f).</li> <li>• Penitence (1 Sa 7:6; Da 9:3-14)</li> <li>• A way by which men might humble themselves (Ezr 8:21).</li> <li>• Often directed towards securing the guidance of God (Ac 13:1-3).</li> <li>• On behalf of others (Ezr 10:6).</li> <li>• In connection with intercession (Mk 9:29).</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To come closer and to get to know God our Father better.</li> <li>• To make the right decision in life.</li> <li>• To repent and experience reconciliation with God.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fasting is generally done in secret, a matter between man and God only.</li> <li>• There are no strict laws or regulations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Regulations for Ramadan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It commences at dawn until sunset. During this period, not even one's own spittle should be swallowed.</li> <li>• The fast lasts for 30 days, the length of a Muslim month.</li> <li>• During the nighttime, a Muslim can eat and drink as much as he likes and indulge in any lawful pleasure.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Benefits</b> (according to general Muslim belief):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fasting enables one to become humble and fearful of Allah's punishment.</li> <li>• It is supposed to break one's lust and cravings.</li> <li>• It ensures sympathy, compassion and mercy, enabling one to enjoy giving alms to the poor.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fasting is done in public; believers watch one another's observance of it.</li> <li>• Every Muslim has to keep the fast and strictly obey the regulations (exceptions: sick people, travellers, pregnant women, etc.).</li> </ul>

### 2.1.5 Pilgrimage

The following table explains the difference in understanding and practice of pilgrimage between Christianity and Islam:

Christianity	Islam
<p>Christians believe pilgrimages can help them develop spiritually and bring them closer to God. There are pilgrimages to certain places mentioned in the Bible at certain times of history. Even today different places are used in Christian traditions as places of pilgrimage. But these pilgrimages are not obligatory and there is no law or prescribed ritual which needs to be obeyed for all times.</p> <p>The theme of pilgrimage is woven into many passages of the Bible. It is a multi-faceted concept which includes ideas of journey, experiencing exile, living as a pilgrim or sojourner, and the quest for a homeland.</p> <p>In Bethlehem for instance, Christians can pray and focus their attention on the birth of Jesus Christ. The experience of being in the place where the incarnation (belief that Jesus is God made flesh) is believed to have happened can have spiritual importance for Christians.</p>	<p>Pilgrimage (<i>hajj</i>, Sura 2:196f): All Muslims with sufficient financial means have to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, including Muhammad's birthplace, at least once in their lifetime.</p> <p>This <b>pilgrimage</b> is part of a Muslim's religious duty and is seen as a way to try to earn a place in paradise. The <i>Ka'ba</i>, a cubical structure at the centre of the mosque in Mecca is seen as the centre of the Islamic world. The pilgrimage takes place in the twelfth month (<i>Dhu l-Hijja</i>) of the Islamic lunar calendar. During the stay in Mecca, strictly prescribed rituals have to be performed. The most important is standing on the Arafat plain, where Muslims spend time in meditation and offer invocations to Allah.</p> <p>Another highlight of the <i>hajj</i> is the seven-fold walk around the <i>Ka'ba</i>, which is dressed in precious coverings. It is assumed to have first been built as a sanctuary by Adam, then reconstructed by Abraham and his son Ishmael.</p>

Christianity	Islam
<p>Christians believe that Jesus visited Jerusalem at Passover time and spent the week leading up to his death there (Lk 2:41f). Some Christian pilgrims therefore visit Jerusalem to remember key events in Jesus' final week, known as Holy Week.</p> <p>The Bible also emphasises spiritual pilgrimages of the heart towards God as for instance in Psalm 84:5: "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage".</p>	<p>If possible, the pilgrims should kiss the black stone built into one corner of the <i>Ka'ba</i>. Further obligations are the symbolic stoning of the devil with seven pebbles and the slaughter of a sacrificial animal in remembrance of Abraham's sacrifice.</p> <p>Muslims can also perform the <i>'umra</i>, the small pilgrimage. It can be undertaken at any time of the year but is restricted to the <i>Ka'ba</i> and its direct surroundings.</p>

## 2.2 Doctrinal issues

### 2.2.1 Revelation in Christianity and Islam

It is important to understand the differences about the doctrine of revelation:

Christianity	Islam
<p>God reveals himself through his creation, in history, and especially through a chosen people, Israel. God reveals his nature and his name (Ex 20). In Jesus, God comes into the world to bring reconciliation and draw people to himself. Jesus is the final and essential word of God (Jn 1:1-14; Heb 1). God reveals himself in Jesus (Mt 1:23, where Jesus is called Immanuel "God with us").</p>	<p>Regarding the concept of revelation, we read references in the Qur'an such as: Suras 5:4; 16:89; 42:51f; 46:2; 98:2.</p> <p>Allah does not reveal himself, but only his will. He sends prophets to various nations at different times.</p>

Christianity	Islam
<p>Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired evidence of God's self-revelation. God selected authors who, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote down the words of Scripture (2Ti 3:16; 2Pe 1:16–21). These people wrote Scripture in their own style.</p> <p>Therefore the Bible states about itself that it has a dual authorship: God through the power of his Spirit and some specially chosen people. Thus, although humans wrote the Bible, God was in control through the power of his Spirit and ensured that the truth is revealed!</p>	<p>Besides a few Arabs, some important Biblical characters are mentioned by name in the Qur'an: Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Zechariah, Jonah, Jesus. Muslims claim that Muhammad is the last prophet and that he was given the Qur'an piece by piece through the archangel Gabriel (<i>Jibril</i>).</p> <p>The original Qur'an, in Arabic, is said to be kept in the seventh heaven and is the "mother of the book". It contains Allah's orders for all the actions of mankind. According to tradition, Muhammad is said to have passed on the revealed text directly and without changes. This is understood to mean that no human elements are present in the Qur'an and so it is claimed to be the pure word of Allah.</p>

Since the Qur'an contradicts many biblical statements, Muslims assume that the Bible has been falsified. They declare this without a thorough critical investigation of the Qur'an. Their position actually contradicts Qur'anic statements about the Bible.<sup>2</sup> This means that not everything Muslims say is in agreement with the Qur'an. The following table illustrates this:

<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an never mentions the word "Bible". Instead, it refers to sections of the Bible like the books of the Law "*Taurat*" and the Gospel "*Injil*".

	Christian belief	Muslim belief	Qur'anic teaching
<b>Regarding the origin of the Bible</b>	People chosen by God wrote the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2Pe 1:21; 2Ti 3:16).	The Biblical writings were originally revealed by Allah to humankind via prophets.	The Biblical writings come from Allah (Sura 5:47).
<b>Regarding the authority of the Bible</b>	The Bible is the written word of God, which shows us the way of salvation (Jn 20:31).	The Bible is no longer the word of Allah because Jews and Christians falsified it.	In the Bible is guidance and light from Allah (Suras 5:46; 10:94; 32:23).

### What is the perfect revelation from God and Allah to mankind?

Christians believe that God's word became human in Jesus Christ,<sup>3</sup> the Son of God who is perfect in the divine sense. Therefore, Muslims have a *book* as their ultimate revelation, whereas Christians were given a *person* as divine revelation. The question is then: which is the more valuable revelation from God, a book or a person?

Subject	Christianity	Islam
Perfect, final Revelation from the Creator	Jesus = a living person	Qur'an = a book, written by Allah
Written guidance to mankind	Bible = written by men, inspired word of God	Qur'an = word of Allah Hadith = traditions of Muhammad written by men

<sup>3</sup> See Jn 1:14. That Jesus himself should have been a revelation of God, that the word of God has thus come to humans in a human shape, does not fit in the Islamic idea of how Allah reveals himself.

## 2.2.2 The Bible compared to the Qur`an

The following table compares some of the characteristics of the Bible and the Qur`an:

Characteristic	Christianity: Bible	Islam: Qur`an
Sources	Eyewitness reports	Arabian-pagan tradition; Talmud and OT; Gospels; apocryphal writing of the NT; eastern sources.
Origin and transmission	Christians believe that people chosen and inspired by God wrote what they have seen and heard.	Muslims believe that Muhammad received these revelations from Allah and that they were transmitted in fragments by the angel <i>Jibril</i> , over a period of 22 years (AD 610-632).
Author	Dual authorship: selected chosen people who wrote the scripture under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT of God. The Bible was written over a period of 1400 to 1800 years by more than 40 different authors.	Muslims believe that Allah is the only author! The Qur`an as a book was compiled during the time of the 3rd caliph Uthman, about 23 years after Muhammad`s death.
Parts and chapters	The Bible is a compilation of 66 books, divided into two main parts: the Old Testament (containing 39 books) and the New Testament (containing 27 books). Most churches recognise the 66 books, but some denominations add books to the OT and a few do not recognise the book of Revelation in the NT.	The Qur`an has 114 chapters according to Sunni Muslims. Today, not all existing versions of the Qur`an have the same amount of chapters. The volume of the Qur`an is about 21% of that of the Bible.

Characteristic	Christianity: Bible	Islam: Qur`an
Language and translation	Most of the OT was written in the Hebrew language (some chapters in Aramaic) and the NT was written in Greek. The Bible can be translated into any language and its message clearly understood!	Written in the Arabic language. Fundamental Muslims forbid translations into other languages for fear its meaning may be lost.
Reading, understanding, practice.	The Bible is written for all people so that they can know God and his way of salvation. With this knowledge, Christians can follow the way of Jesus practically in their everyday lives.	Priority is given to memorising the Arabic text as much as possible; understanding is desirable but not necessary. Muslims believe that simply reciting the text by memory will result in Allah`s blessing.
Time line of the stories	Yes	No
Evidence for trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfilled prophecy</li> <li>• Eyewitness reports</li> <li>• Archeology</li> <li>• Historical writings</li> </ul>	No obvious evidence: Muslims believe that the Qur`an was revealed to Muhammad, who transmitted it orally to his followers.
Content and important topics	OT: Tells of creation, followed by the history of the nation of Israel, the lives of the prophets up to the coming of Jesus. NT: Tells the life story of Jesus, his miracles, teachings, death on the cross and resurrection. Then the life and writings of the Apostles are recorded.	About Allah and the prophets; jihad, prayer, good works, dealing with enemies, judgment, paradise, hell ...and many other topics.

Characteristic	Christianity: Bible	Islam: Qur'an
Message	One clear way of salvation through Jesus alone. God grants eternal life (paradise) to all who believe in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.	No clear message. A person can choose and try through different ways to get to paradise.

### 2.2.3 God in Christianity and Allah in Islam

Has the one God, who revealed himself in the Biblical history of salvation also revealed himself in the Qur'an? Do the Biblical and the Qur'anic testimonies about God agree? The answer is absolutely no! The following tables explain the differences:

God in Christianity	Allah in Islam
<b>God is only ONE</b> (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:32)	<b>Allah is only ONE</b> <i>Tawhid</i> (Sura 112)
God shows himself in three ways, as three "personalities" or "manifestations":  1) God as Father (creator) 2) God the Son in human form as "Jesus" 3) God the Holy Spirit	Allah is been described with 99 beautiful names, also called 99 attributes.  Some Muslims believe that there are 100 names of Allah, but that Allah has revealed the 100th name only to the camel or to some special spiritual leaders.

Characteristics	God in the Bible	Allah in the Qur'an
Relationship to man	Father to child (loving relationship).	Master to slave (employer-employee relationship).
Revelation	Reveals his will and himself.	Reveals only his will.

Characteristics	God in the Bible	Allah in the Qur'an
Salvation	Through Jesus only.	By accumulating merit before Allah in the form of good works.
Guarantee	Yes (see Jn 5:24)	No
Covenant	Covenant with guarantee that God will keep it; many promises.	No covenant, few promises, Allah is depicted as being capricious.
Peace	Upon accepting his gift of eternal life through Christ (inner spiritual peace).	When Islam is established on the whole Earth (territorial religion, political peace).
Nature	Unity of Father, Son, Holy Spirit.	Allah is one, without children or partner.

### 2.2.4 The concept of "original/inherited sin"

What do Christians and Muslims understand by "original sin"? The following table shows that there is a fundamental difference in their understanding of this doctrine:

Christianity	Islam
The existence of sin in the world is traced back to the first sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Adam was the first person to sin, and thereby sin entered the world (Ge 3).	The Qur'an does not teach the doctrine of "original sin", but says that every human is born unburdened, pure and free (cf Sura 30:29).
Since all mankind is descended from Adam, all are affected by the consequences of his sin and have inherited an inclination to sin (cf Ro 3:23; 5). This is called "original sin". Every child at birth is sinless (has not committed any sin yet) but has inherited a nature which is inclined to sin.	Man is thus not in a state of separation from Allah. Some Muslims believe that every person is born a Muslim and is only separated from Allah when he rejects Islam.

Christianity	Islam
<p>Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ignored his instructions. Human beings wanted to decide for themselves what is good for them. This broke their fellowship with God. The consequence is that all descendants of Adam and Eve, in other words all mankind, are “spiritually dead” by nature and thus separated from God.</p> <p>God’s love for us is of eternal constancy; he has therefore prepared a way for sins to be forgiven so that mankind can be reconciled to him (Jn 3:16; 14:6). God calls all men and women everywhere to repent (return to him), accept his offer of pardon and enter into a new relationship with him that includes purification from sins (Heb 8).</p>	<p>Yet the Qur’an also contains a narrative of the fall. However, contrary to the Bible, Adam and his wife did not try to hide their sin. Instead, they immediately asked Allah for forgiveness: “They said: Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls ...” (Sura 7:23). Thus, Adam and his wife did not sin primarily against Allah, but against themselves. Their transgression of Allah’s command changed neither their relationship to Allah nor to each other. They were banished from paradise by Allah, but he forgave their transgression, and therefore their sin had no further consequence for mankind.</p> <p>Islam teaches that humans are morally neutral creatures that can freely choose between good and bad. Although the Qur’an regrets the inclination to evil (cf Sura 100:6–8), human failure is not considered to be a serious misdeed.</p>

### 2.2.5 The life of Jesus compared to Muhammad

The following list compares some topics based on the lives of Jesus and Muhammad. The list includes only a selection of topics chosen by the author.

Topic	Life of Jesus	Life of Muhammad
Marriage	God’s concept of marriage is described in the creation narrative (Ge 1:27; 2:21-25). Jesus confirms this law that marriage is between one man and one woman (Mk 10:2–12). Jesus himself was celibate.	Muhammad, as a model to all Muslims, had many wives. The Qur’an (Sura 4:3) allows every Muslim man to have up to four wives.

Topic	Life of Jesus	Life of Muhammad
Authority to forgive sins	Jesus has the power and authority to forgive people’s sins (Mt 9:1-8; Mk 2:1–12).	There is no claim in the Qur’an that Muhammad ever forgave people’s sins in the name of Allah.
Future kingdom	Jesus proclaimed a spiritual kingdom based on truth, love, peace with God, joy, self denial and a life devoted to God (Mt 26:26–29; 1Pe 2:9f, Rev 1:5f).	The treaty which Muhammad made with the leaders of Medina (622 AD) was the foundation of his future political life and the basis for the military expansion of his empire.
Peace	Jesus defined “peace” as a spiritual matter: those who follow him have peace in their hearts with God (Mt 11:28-30; Jn 14:27; 16:33; Rom 14:17-19).	Muhammad was an army leader and conquered new land for his people. Today, it is the aim of radical Muslims to conquer and possess the whole world and enforce Islamic law in order to establish “Islamic peace” in every country.
Self-interest and power	Jesus was aware of his mission and was obedient to his Father in heaven. Though Jesus knew that he would die on the cross in Jerusalem, he did not flee out of self-interest, but went willingly to Jerusalem to die as a sacrifice for all who believe in Him (Mt 20:17-19).	Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD. He was persecuted by his own people in Mecca and he chose to go where his personal security was granted. In Medina he established an army and grew rapidly in power and wealth.

Topic	Life of Jesus	Life of Muhammad
Forgiveness	Jesus ordered his followers to forgive others willingly and unconditionally, even their enemies (Mt 6:14f; Lk 6:27; 11:4).	Muhammad practiced the law of "blood revenge" i.e. "eye for eye, tooth for tooth". There is no unconditional forgiveness in Islam.
Successor	Jesus announced that, after his death the Holy Spirit would come and guide all his disciples (Jn 14–16). Jesus appointed the Holy Spirit as his successor!	Since Muhammad did not appoint a successor, after he died his followers quarrelled over who would be the future leader: Sunnis believe in Abu Bakr and Shiites in Ali as being the first Calif. Since then and up to this day Sunnis and Shiites are at war with each other.
Death	Jesus died on the cross around the age of 34.	Muhammad died around the age of 62. The cause of his death is not clear.

### 2.2.6 Crucifixion of Jesus

The Qur'an denies three fundamental doctrines about Jesus Christ, namely his divinity, his role as Saviour and his crucifixion. In this, Islam differs in its innermost core from Christianity. A "harmonizing" of both religions, as demanded by liberal theologians, is impossible without renouncing the fundamentals of the Christian faith or the central tenets of Islam. Jesus' death on the cross occupies an obscure position in the Qur'an. The statements are unclear and do not present a clear picture. The Qur'an mentions the actual crucifixion only in one place, where it is denied, namely in Sura 4:157f.

In the Christian view, Jesus' crucifixion is the centre and pinnacle of the entire biblical message. The crucifixion was not a mistake but part of Jesus' mission. God dem-

onstrated the greatness of his power when he resurrected Jesus as a living man from the grave. The crucifixion is an accepted fact in the Bible and there are other historical witnesses on the subject. The evidence includes:

- The death of Jesus the Messiah was predicted by the Old Testament prophets (Is 53; Ps 22:1–18).
- Jesus' sacrificial death is the logical consequence and fulfilment of Old Testament teaching (Lk 24:26; 24:44).
- Jesus' one-time sacrificial death in the New Testament replaces the Old Testament sacrifices which had to be offered repeatedly (Heb 10:1–18).
- About a third of the Gospel is concerned with Jesus' last week on earth, his death and resurrection.
- Jesus predicted his own death (Lk 9:22; 22:37).
- There are several eyewitnesses' testimonies (2Pe 1:16–18; 1Jn 1:1–4; 1Co 15:3–8).
- Historians reported Jesus' death (e.g. Josephus and Cornelius Tacitus, first-century historians).

In the following table the differences between Christianity and Islam concerning the crucifixion are explained:

Topic	Christianity	Islam
Was there a crucifixion?	Yes	Yes
Who was on the cross?	Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God.	Someone died on the cross - but their identity is not clear. However, it was not Jesus.
Why was there a crucifixion?	Jesus died on the cross in accordance with the will of God, as prophesied in the Bible as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (1Jn 2:2).	No clear explanation for this event.

Topic	Christianity	Islam
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many eyewitnesses report seeing Jesus on the cross.</li> <li>• Prophets who prophesied about this event.</li> <li>• Historical writings.</li> <li>• The Bible says a lot about the crucifixion.</li> </ul>	No evidence for the Islamic version.
Significance	Jesus' mission was to die on the cross as the "final, perfect" sacrifice, so that all those who believe in him can receive forgiveness of sins and have eternal life (Jn 3:16; 5:24; 14:6; 20:31).	The crucifixion is mentioned in the Qur'an, but it has no meaning in Islam.

In the Bible (Mt 16:15) it is recorded that Jesus asked his disciples the following question: "Who do you say I am?". Peter Simon answered: "You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God". But what do people say today?

The following table compares Christian and Muslim teaching. For the sake of interest, the view of Judaism is also included:

Christianity	Judaism	Islam (according to the Qur'an)
Jesus <b>is</b> the Messiah, and he <b>did</b> die on the cross (Luk 23; Mat 27; Mk 15; Joh 19).	Jesus was <b>not</b> the Messiah, but he <b>did</b> die on the cross.	Jesus <b>was</b> the Messiah, but he did <b>not</b> die on the cross (Suras 3:45; 4:157).

## 2.3 Selected people issues

### 2.3.1 Women in Christianity and Islam

Throughout history the position of women has changed within different cultures and different countries. The following table explains the position of women as outlined in the Bible and the Qur'an:

	Bible	Qur'an
<b>The view of God/Allah concerning women</b>	<p>Men and women are created differently and their role in society is often different. But the Bible makes it clear, right from the beginning, that God sees men and women as spiritually equal.</p> <p>Both are made in His image (Ge 1:27): "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them".</p> <p>Both, man as well as women, are separated from Him by sin and need a Saviour (Ro 3:23), both must be redeemed through Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, who makes them heirs of God (Gal 3:27-29).</p>	<p>A central verse is Sura 4:34, in which man's superiority over women is proclaimed by Allah. This verse also allows men to beat their wives:</p> <p>"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in absence what Allah would have them guard.</p> <p>As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them, refuse to share their beds, beat them; but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means: for Allah is most high, great."</p>

	Bible	Qur`an
<b>Mary, the mother of Jesus</b>	<p><b>The New Testament mentions six different women with the name <i>Mary</i>.</b> The Hebrew form of the name is <i>Miriam</i> (or <i>Miryam</i>), e.g. the sister of Moses.</p> <p>The best-known Mary in the Bible is Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. The angel Gabriel announced to her that, although she was a virgin, she would bear God`s Son, the Saviour of the world (Lk 1:26-38).</p> <p>She married Joseph, a carpenter, but remained a virgin until after Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Mt 1:25).</p> <p>Scripture reveals Mary as a humble, godly, and blessed woman. Mary was also present at Jesus` crucifixion. After Jesus` death, she was cared for by the apostle John (Jn 19:25-27).</p>	<p><b>There is only one woman mentioned in the Qur`an by name: <i>Mary</i> (Arabic <i>Maryam</i>),</b> the mother of Isa (Jesus).</p> <p>She holds a singularly exalted place in Islam, which refers to her 70 times and explicitly identifies her as the greatest of all women (not, as might be expected, the mother of Muhammad!).</p> <p>In the Quran, the story of Mary is related in seven chapters: (3, 4, 5, 19, 21, 23, 66).</p> <p>Some of the stories agree partially with the Bible but others are in contradiction. The 19th chapter of the Qur`an, titled “Mary” (<i>Surah Maryam</i>), is named after her.</p>

	Bible	Qur`an
<b>Further references</b>	<p>Besides Mary, the mother of Jesus, there are many more women mentioned in the Bible. The following list the names of some important women and their roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eve</b> was the first woman on earth, the first wife and the first mother. She is known as the “Mother of All the Living” (Ge 3:20).</li> <li>• <b>Ruth</b> was a widow from an enemy nation with no prospects. Yet God made her an ancestor of the Messiah. Her story still encourages many today (Book Ruth in OT).</li> <li>• <b>Esther</b> is an inspiring story about a remarkable woman who was willing to risk her life to save her people. She was an outstanding example of serving others even under the most stressful circumstances (Book Esther in OT).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Some more verses from the Qur`an which explain the position of women in Islam:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A woman inherits only half of what a man inherits (Sura 4:176).</li> <li>• The evidence of two women counts as much as the evidence of one man (Sura 2:282). Legally, a woman is “worth only half” as much as a man.</li> <li>• Certain verses in the Qur`an appear to describe women as unclean (Sura 4:43, 5:6).</li> <li>• Women are to stay quietly in their homes, be modest in appearance and, if they go out of the home, are to wear a veil (<i>hijab</i>) (Sura 33:33).</li> <li>• Women are not to look at men and are not to display any parts of their bodies to anyone except close family members (Sura 24:31).</li> <li>• Adultery is forbidden but captive women are the exception to this rule (Sura 4:24).</li> <li>• Men have more rights and advantages in terms of divorce (Sura 2:224–230).</li> </ul>

	Bible	Qur'an
<b>Further references</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rachel's</b> marriage was a story of love triumphing over lies (Ge 29f). Rachel stood by her husband during her father's deceptions. Rachel gave birth to Joseph, who saved the nation of Israel during famine (Ge 37f).</li> <li>• <b>Hagar</b> means "stranger". She was a slave girl from Egypt. When Hagar became pregnant by Abraham, his first wife, Sarah, grew jealous and threw her out of their home. An angel found her in the desert and promised a blessing on her child, naming him Ishmael, which means "God hears", (Ge 16). Ishmael sired a great nation as God had promised.</li> <li>• <b>Elizabeth</b> was barren – a disgrace in her day. But her faith in God was rewarded with a son who grew up to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah (Lk 1:13-15).</li> <li>• <b>Mary Magdalene</b> traveled with Jesus as one of his early and closest followers and was a witness to his crucifixion and burial. She was the first to witness the resurrection of Jesus (Mk 16:1).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A man may marry up to four wives (Sura 4:3).</li> <li>• The impossibility of treating multiple wives all equally (Sura 4:129).</li> <li>• Any indecent woman should be locked away until her death (Sura 4:15).</li> <li>• How men should approach women: "<i>Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will ...</i>" (Sura 2:223). This is generally understood by Muslim men that they can use their wives to have sex whenever they want.</li> </ul>

### 2.3.2 People are sinners

Christians and Muslims speak about human sin – but a closer look reveals there is a vast difference of understanding as to what this means. The following table briefly explains these differences:

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Source of sin</b>	Satan brought sin to the human race in the Garden of Eden, when he tempted Adam and Eve with the enticement, "you shall be like God." Genesis 3 describes Adam and Eve's rebellion against God and against His command. Romans 5:12 tells us that through Adam sin entered the world, and so death was passed on to all men because "the wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23).	Islam teaches that a person becomes sinful when he or she commits a sin.  As children grow up, they learn from adults how to sin and thus copy these sins and by these actions become sinners.
<b>Definition of sin</b>	Sin is described in the Bible as transgression of the law of God (1 Jn 3:4) and rebellion against God (Dt 9:7; Jos 1:18). Literally through our sins the goal for which we were created is missed.	Islam defines sin as an act which goes against the teachings of Allah.  All human beings sin and no one is perfect.

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Are there different degrees of sin?</b>	<p>Jesus taught that there are degrees of sin (Jn 19:11; Lk 7:41-43). However, according to the Bible, sin is sin, and all sin separates people from God (Is 59:2).</p> <p>Anyone who breaks one of God's laws, no matter how small, is guilty of breaking the whole law (Jas 2:10).</p> <p>The Bible says, the wages of sin is death (Ge 2:17; Ro 6:23).</p>	<p>Islam refers to grave and lesser sins and the Quran states that some sins are worthy of greater punishment than others.</p> <p>A distinction is made between major and minor sins (Sura 53:31-32), indicating that if an individual stays away from the major sins, then he/she will be forgiven for the minor ones. Most scholars maintain that the two most serious sins (equating or associating another god to Allah and leaving Islam) will not be forgiven. However, scholars differ as to how many major sins there are.</p>
<b>Are all people sinners?</b>	<p>All people who ever lived on earth are sinners except one person: Jesus Christ who was without sin (1Jn 3:5; 1Pe 2:22; Heb 4:15).</p>	<p>All people who ever lived on earth are sinners.</p> <p>According to the Qur'an even Muhammad was told to ask for forgiveness (Sura 47:19; 48:1-2). Some scholars believe, that some prophets were sinless.</p>
<b>Resolution of sins while living on earth</b>	<p>Christians should want to turn away from sin and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>Muslims try to make up for sins committed through good works.</p>

### 2.3.3 Love between God/Allah and mankind

What is accepted as commonplace in Christianity, namely that "God is love", is a dim reflection in the Qur'an. While "Allah is great" [*Allahu akbar*] is a statement of faith, in Islam, the affirmation and expression "Allah is love" [*Allahu muhibba*] is absent from the attributes of Allah. This is a profound difference between the two religions. The following table gives more information on the differences between the two faiths on this subject (some of this information is taken from the website *answering-islam.org*).

	Love in the Bible	Love in the Qur'an
<b>Different forms of love</b>	<p>Four unique forms of love are found in the Bible and are communicated through four different Greek words:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>Agape</i>, God's divine love</li> <li>2) <i>Storge</i>, family love</li> <li>3) <i>Phileo</i>, friendship love</li> <li>4) <i>Eros</i>, romantic love</li> </ol>	<p>The word love, <i>hubb</i> in its various grammatical forms, is used 69 times in the Qur'an. It can be divided into five categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Man's love of things.</li> <li>2) Human love.</li> <li>3) Man's love for Allah.</li> <li>4) Allah's love in the negative sense, i.e. "Allah loveth not ..."</li> <li>5) Allah's love for man.</li> </ol>
<b>Closer look with references</b>	<p>1) <b>Agape Love</b> is the type of love that comes from God. <i>Agape</i> is divine love and perfect, pure, and self-sacrificing. When the Bible says that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8),</p>	<p>By having a closer look at the 5th category (Allah's love for man) we find 10 sub-categories of individuals who are recipients of Allah's love because of their deeds. In these statements we do not find a revelation of the personal and infinite love of Allah to mankind, but rather we find mainly statements of conditional love based on human activity:</p>

	Love in the Bible	Love in the Qur'an
	<p>it's referring to <i>Agape</i> Love an unconditional love expressed in many verses in the Bible, such as Jn 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."</p> <p>2) <b>Storge Love</b> is best understood as family love, describing the kind of easy bond that naturally forms between parents and their children. This kind of love is steady and sure and endures for a lifetime. It is expressed in verses such as Lk 15:20: "...the father run to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."</p> <p>3) <b>Phileo Love</b> describes an emotional connection that goes beyond mere acquaintances or casual friendships. When we experience <i>phileo</i>, we experience a deeper level of connection.</p>	<p>1) Allah loves those who do good.</p> <p>2) Allah loves the pure and clean.</p> <p>3) Allah loves those who are righteous.</p> <p>4) Allah loves those who are just and judge rightly.</p> <p>5) Allah loves those who trust Him.</p> <p>6) Allah loves the persevering or patient.</p> <p>7) Allah loves those who love Him and follow the Prophet.</p> <p>8) Allah Himself will produce a people He will love.</p> <p>9) Allah loved Moses.</p> <p>10) Allah loves those who fight in His cause: Sura 61:4 "Truly Allah loves [<i>hubb</i>] those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure."</p> <p><b>Some more references from the Qur'an:</b> 2:205: "When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loveth [<i>hubb</i>] not mischief [<i>al-fasad</i>]".</p> <p>16:23: "Undoubtedly Allah doth know what they conceal, and what they reveal: Verily He loveth [<i>hubb</i>] not the arrogant. [<i>al-mustakibereen</i>]".</p>

	Love in the Bible	Love in the Qur'an
	<p>This connection is not as deep as the love within a family, nor does it carry the intensity of romantic passion or erotic love. Yet <i>phileo</i> is a powerful bond that forms a community and offers multiple benefits to those who share it.</p> <p>The friendship between David and Jonathan is one of the Bible's best examples of <i>phileo</i> love: "... Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself (1Sa 18:3)"</p> <p>4) <b>Eros Love</b> is the Greek term that describes romantic or sexual love. The term also portrays the idea of passion and intensity of feeling. An example is 1Co 7:8-9: "Now to the unmarried and to widows I say: It is good for them if they stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."</p>	<p>60:7: "It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) [<i>mawadda</i>] between you and those whom ye hold as enemies. For Allah has power; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."</p> <p>76:8: "And they feed, for the love of Allah, [<i>'ala hubbahu</i>] the indigent, the orphan, and the captive".</p> <p>100:8: "And violent is he in his love [<i>hubb</i>] of wealth".</p>

	Love in the Bible	Love in the Qur'an
<b>Key aspects</b>	<p><b>God's love is unconditional.</b></p> <p>God loves all people including his enemies. One of the most compact, penetrating discourses on love is found in 1Jn 4:7-21.</p> <p>The word <i>love</i> is used 27 times in these verses. The central reason for men to love one another is rooted in the nature of God Himself: "God is love."</p> <p>A further highlight is in 1Co 13:4-5: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."</p>	<p><b>Allah's love is conditional.</b></p> <p>The expression, <i>Allahu Muhibba</i> or "Allah is love" is not found among the 99 names of Allah given in Islam.</p> <p>There is however, the name <i>Al-Wadud</i> or "the Loving One," which is found in Sura 11:90 as well as Sura 85:14. "But ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn unto Him: for my Lord is indeed full of mercy and loving-kindness."</p>

### 2.3.4 Food laws

In this section we will learn about the difference in dietary laws between Christianity and Islam:

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Introduction</b>	The law that God gave the Israelites goes into great detail regarding what foods they were and were not allowed to eat. In the OT, Lev 11 bans eating animals listed in the next section:	Islam has catalogued nearly everything, food and drink included, into two categories: <i>halal</i> (permitted), and <i>haram</i> (forbidden).
<b>General categories</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those that chew cud or have a split hoof but not both (like camels, rabbits, pigs).</li> <li>• Sea creatures that do not have fins and scales (like crustaceans).</li> <li>• Birds that eat flesh or carrion (like crows, raptors, sea gulls).</li> <li>• Most winged insects except those that swarm and jump (e.g. grasshoppers were allowed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Halal:</b> Ritually clean and therefore permitted for Muslims.</li> <li>• <b>Haram:</b> Taboo; ritually unclean and therefore forbidden.</li> </ul>
<b>More explanation</b>	<p>Food dedicated to idols is banned, in order to show clearly to those around that Christians do not worship any god but the true God only.</p> <p>Paul, adding grace and a touch of reality to the ban, explained in 1Co 10:27-28 that dedicated meat should only be banned if the believer knew it was dedicated.</p>	<p>Strict obedience to dietary laws is indispensable for a practicing Muslim and an important part of their religious identity (see Sura 5:5). It is generally valid that the consumption of all good things that are medically and morally harmless is allowed. Forbidden food falls into three categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Intoxicating substances that disturb consciousness (wine and other alcoholic beverages in particular, but also drugs).</li> </ol>

	Christianity	Islam
	As for drinking the blood of animals, since there is no clear guidance, it is a matter of personal conviction and prayer (see also Ac 15:19-20).	2) Blood, or meat of animals that did not bleed completely. The consumption of pork is equally forbidden. All meat slaughtered without the formula <i>basmala</i> (translated with “in the Name of Allah”) is unclean (i. e. <i>haram</i> ). 3) Noxious and spoiled food.
<b>Conclusion</b>	In general, Christians are not bound by Jewish dietary restrictions. The New Testament emphasises that Christians should be known for their love (Jn 13:35), not their meals.	These rules serve to bond followers together as part of a cohesive group and, according to some scholars, they also serve to establish a unique Islamic identity.

### 2.3.5 The Church compared to the Ummah

Christians and Muslims have different concepts in mind when they speak about their respective communities. In the following table the differences are outlined:

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Definition</b>	When people speak about “Church” it can mean one of the following: 1) A building for Christian worship. 2) A gathering for the purpose of Christian worship.	In Islam, “Ummah” means a community that, like a people or a nation, extends beyond the scope of a tribe or clan. It includes all the Muslim people as one community worldwide.

	Christianity	Islam
	3) The whole body of Christian believers: Christendom. 4) A certain Christian denomination. 5) The group of Christians to which they belong.	In the narrower sense, the term is used for the religiously based community of Muslims.
<b>References</b>	The word Church in the Bible comes from the Greek word <i>ecclesia</i> , which means an assembly. Wherever it is used in the Bible it refers to people, not buildings or meetings. Church is used in three ways: 1) Body of Christ, local assembly or group of believers (1Co 1:2; Gal 1:1-2). 2) Body of individual living believers (1Co 15:9; Gal 1:13). 3) Universal group of all Christians through the ages (Mt 16:18; Eph 5:23-27).	The phrase <i>Ummah Wāhidah</i> in the Quran “One Nation/People” refers to all the Islamic world as it existed at the time of Muhammad.  The Quran says: “Ye [Muslims] are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah...” (Sura 3:110). See also Sura 23:52: “And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood...”.
<b>Purpose</b>	A basic purpose is found in Acts 2:42. In summary, the following purposes can be listed: • To worship God and pray together. • To study the Bible and apply it in everyday life. • To love one another, grow spiritually and become more “Christ-like”. • To observe the Lord’s Supper.	The Ummah has the following purposes: • To worship Allah together. • To follow the teachings of the Qur’an and the traditions of Muhammad. • To advance the cause of Islam worldwide ( <i>da’wa</i> : Islamic mission). • To engage in Jihad and conquer all territory for Islam.

	Christianity	Islam
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be a base for evangelism.</li> <li>• For teaching and discipleship.</li> <li>• To minister to those in need.</li> <li>• To care for those who are persecuted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish the Shari-ah (Islamic Law) worldwide.</li> </ul>

## 2.4 End time issues

### 2.4.1 Sanctification/spiritual struggle compared to jihad

Christians and Muslims are aware that life on earth is like a test. Christians call this spiritual struggle “sanctification”, whilst Muslims express it as “jihad”. The following table outlines the difference between these two concepts:

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Definition</b>	<p>Sanctification can be described as an inward spiritual process whereby God brings about holiness and change in the life of a Christian by means of the Holy Spirit and the individual’s obedience.</p> <p>Sanctification is God’s will for Christians who want to follow the truth (1Th 4:3).</p>	<p>The Arabic term <i>Jihad</i> means “effort in Allah’s way” or “striving in faith”. It is understood by Muslims as the struggle to become better Muslims during their lives on earth and to earn a place in paradise (Suras 9:41; 49:15; 66:9).</p> <p>Most Muslims make the following two distinctions:</p>

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Explanations</b>	<p>Throughout the Bible, sanctification is mentioned frequently as a common reminder of how to align oneself with God’s commands (Jn 15:1-4; 1Co 7:19; 1Th 5:23; 2Th 2:13; Heb 12:10, 14).</p> <p>Whilst knowing perfection is not possible in this life, Christians nevertheless strive towards it, relying on the help of God’s holy Spirit and using the armour he has provided for the spiritual battle they are in (Eph 6:10-18).</p>	<p><b>1) Greater Jihad:</b> Inner striving for personal perfection as required by the Qur’an and the hadith. This means basically to practise the “Five Duties of Islam” and to believe in the “Six Articles of Faith” (Suras 2:177; 2:183f; 17:78f).</p> <p><b>2) Lesser Jihad:</b> Effort to propagate Islam worldwide and introduce the Islamic Law (Shari’a) in every country. It includes the territorial spread of Islam. Muslims are also allowed to use physical violence to achieve the goal (Suras 2:193; 4:74; 8:39; 9:5; 16:125).</p>
<b>Model to be followed</b>	<p><b>Jesus:</b> In Mt 9:9 Jesus said to Matthew: “... <i>Follow me</i>”. Christians are called to count the cost of discipleship, to deny themselves and to follow Jesus. Christians follow Jesus because he commands it and they want to be with him, learn from him and serve him (Mt 16:24-26; 1Pe 2:21).</p>	<p><b>Muhammad:</b> Muslims endeavour to imitate the lifestyle of Muhammad as closely as possible.</p> <p>By doing this, they hope to increase their chance of entering paradise.</p>

	<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Islam</b>
<b>Emphasis</b>	<p><b>Love:</b> Jesus summarizes God's commands in one word: love (Mt 22:35-40). Love for God and for others (even one's enemies!), expressed through practical care, is the proof that a Christian is following Jesus.</p>	<p><b>Works:</b> The emphasis is on outward behaviour and works, such as being dressed like Muhammad; cleaning one's teeth with the same wood; treating women and children as he did, etc.</p>
<b>Ultimate aim</b>	<p><b>God's kingdom of heaven:</b> God has prepared for His glory a spiritual kingdom for all who love and follow Jesus. Following Jesus requires a radical change of lifestyle where Christians seek first the kingdom of God above all things (Mt 4:17; 6:33).  To follow Jesus is not always easy, it is often painful and difficult, it is a spiritual struggle, but the inheritance to come is beyond comprehension. In Matthew 4:10 Jesus says: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".</p>	<p><b>Allah's kingdom on earth:</b> Islam is not primarily concerned with leading people to a trust and faith in Allah. The Muslim concept of Allah's kingdom on earth is that he must rule the world. Allah wants submission, which can happen only when people live under the rule of the Shari'a. That can only happen in a state governed by Muslims.  It is therefore of crucial importance that Muslims gain control over each country on earth, as the Qur'an teaches: "And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere ..." (Sura 8:39).</p>

#### 2.4.2 Way to heaven/paradise

Muslims reject Jesus' substitutional, sacrificial death on the cross. They have their own perception of how their sins can be forgiven. The following table explains the differences between Christianity and Islam regarding salvation and the way to paradise:

	<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Islam</b>
<b>Provision</b>	God provided Jesus to be the saviour for all who seek forgiveness and pardon through him as their sacrifice for sin. Only one way of salvation is offered! Jesus says in John 14:6: <i>"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."</i>	Allah offers a place in paradise to those who strive to do good deeds and to obey the <i>Shari'a</i> . People may choose from a variety of different ways of getting to paradise, e.g.: by doing good works; through Muhammad's intervention; by dying during the pilgrimage; by going to hell for a limited time; by reciting the Qur'an; by fighting in jihad (Sura 9:20).
<b>Manner</b>	God offers eternal life (heaven) as a gift. Everyone who accepts this gift will have their sins forgiven (Jn 3:16).	Most of these ways depend on an individual's own efforts. In the end, though, no one can know for sure whether or not their sins are forgiven and whether they have done enough good works to earn a place in paradise.
<b>Guarantee</b>	God guarantees that whoever accepts his way of salvation by faith will have eternal life and will enter heaven (1Jn 5:11-13; Jn 5:24).	Although most Muslims believe that martyrs are guaranteed a place in paradise, Allah offers no guarantee to anyone.

### 2.4.3 Day of judgment

Both Christians and Muslims believe that this present life on earth is only a test, a preparation for the life to come after death. On the day of judgment, this universe will end and all people will appear for judgment before God. This day will be the beginning of a new life that will never end: either in heaven/paradise or in hell.

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Important references</b>	<p><b>The Bible says:</b>  <i>"God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice..."</i> (Ac 17:31).  <i>"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, ..."</i> (2Co 5:10).</p> <p><b>Further references from the Bible:</b> Jn 3:16-18; Ac 16:31; Ro 8:1; 2Ti 4:1).</p>	<p><b>The Qur'an says:</b>  <i>"But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the garden (paradise), therein shall they abide."</i> (Sura 2:82).  <i>"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost."</i> (Sura 3:85; 3:91).</p>
<b>Who will be judged?</b>	<p>All people will be judged but those who have accepted the gift of God, namely the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ – will be saved and will not be condemned.            Jesus says in Jn 5:24: <i>"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, he has crossed over from death to life."</i></p>	<p>Every person has to appear before Allah, and he will judge each one. Some other tests will be conducted on the day of judgment and Allah will finally decide who will enter paradise and who will not!            In Sura 99:6-8 we read: <i>"On that day will men proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown the deeds that they (had done). Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it."</i></p>

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p><b>Important:</b> Christians also do good works on earth – not to earn heaven but rather out of gratitude to God for the wonderful gift of eternal life they have already received!</p>	<p><b>Muslims believe:</b> Doing good works such as helping your neighbour, cleaning the mosque, brushing your teeth with the same wood as Muhammad used, giving zakat, fighting in jihad, helps a person get to paradise.</p>

### 2.4.4 Eternity

There are only two possible destinies for everyone: heaven or hell! Both Islam and Christianity believe in an eternal punishment of sinners in hell and reward of the righteous in heaven/paradise.

When Christians speak about "salvation", they mean being safe on the day of judgment, because all their sins have been completely forgiven. They do not fear death, because this day of judgment is but a door into heaven where they will enjoy life for ever in the presence of God.

The following concluding section will explain the difference between how Christianity and Islam understand the after-life in eternity:

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Hell</b>	<p>People who have of their own free will rejected God's way of salvation will go to hell, according to the Bible.            Hell is described in terms of eternal fire (Mt 25:41, 46) and punishment (2Pe 2:4-9), sorrow (Mt 13:42, 50), suffering (Rev 14:9-11) and everlasting darkness (Mt 25:30).</p>	<p>Muslims believe in the eternal punishment of sinners in hell (Sura 2:24; 4:56).            Some liberal Muslims believe hell is temporary – although the Qur'anic references describe hell for people for ever (Sura 2:167; 5:36, 40).</p>

	Christianity	Islam
<b>Hell</b>	People in hell are shut out from the presence of God and from His glory (2Th 1:9). So it can be said that the Bible describes hell as punitive and definitely eternal (Mt 18:8; 2Th 1:9; Jude 7).	In folk Islam people believe that hell burns with unquenchable fire, is terribly hot and dry. Hell is depicted vividly, especially the type of torture (boiling water, chains, hooks, etc.) The people in hell want to escape this toment, but they cannot (Sura 14:16; 22:19-22).
<b>Heaven/ Paradise</b>	<p>People who have accepted God's way of salvation in faith will go to heaven (Jn 3:16; 5:24). In heaven, believers are in the presence of God. In Psalm 103:19 we read that God's throne is in heaven.</p> <p>Heaven is also described as the new Jerusalem, paradise, being with Christ or being at Abraham's side. It is a place of great joy and comfort (Lk 16:22; 23:43; Rev 21).</p> <p>Believers from every nation will praise God together. They will be with the Lord forever and share the glory of Jesus Christ (Ro 8:17; 1 Th 4:17; Rev 7:9).</p>	<p>Muslims believe in an eternal reward for the righteous in paradise (Sura 4:124). Only those who have succeeded in the struggle to do good deeds will be able to enter paradise (Sura 39:34-35).</p> <p>In Islam, paradise is a place of sensual pleasure with wonderful gardens and enjoyment with beautiful virgins and the best food and drink (Sura 4:57; 22:23; 52:20; 78:31-34).</p> <p>The inhabitants of paradise will wear the finest clothing and live in the best of surroundings (Sura 88:8-16). The presence of Allah is uncertain. Certain scholars believe that the face of Allah will be seen there.</p>

### 3. Choosing and following the truth

#### 3.1 Knowing God personally – John Gilchrist

In the following sections 3.1.1 – 3.1.8, the Christian Message to the Muslim World is described. It is the same text which my dear friend John Gilchrist wrote in his famous booklet "Knowing God Personally". The text is given here unchanged by kind permission of the author. The main question which the reader will be confronted by is:

*Is true faith the keeping of religious rituals or a heart devoted to God?*

#### Note:

- Biblical texts are quoted from RSV (Revised Standard Version), Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids USA, 1976. See abbreviations of biblical books in section 4.3.
- Qur'anic texts are translated from the Arabic Qur'an (Q = sura (chapter), verse). The numbering system used in this section 3.1 is unknown. Please read the similar verses in the Arabic/English version of Yusuf Ali, 1946 (you may find a specific text over some five verses backwards or forwards).

#### 3.1.1 Introduction: true faith or formal monotheism?

Christians and Muslims have many things in common. They believe in one God, worship in holy sanctuaries (churches and mosques), have similar annual religious calendars (Christmas, Good Friday and Easter for Christians; Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Adha, Laylatu'l Mir'aj and Laylatu'l Qadr for Muslims), and set aside one day a week for a major community worship service (Sunday and Friday

*Outwardly both religions can look very similar.*

respectively). Outwardly both religions can look very similar. Their worship services can be very formal and repetitive. The Muslim *salat*, in particular, follows the same

pattern day after day, year after year, decade after decade without variation. The *adhan*, the call to prayer, never changes. The *hajj* pilgrimage perpetuates an exact sequence of religious practices which have been observed unaltered for fourteen centuries. Many Christian churches are no different. Catholic and Orthodox priests chant out the same prescribed Christian prayers week after week just as Muslim imams do their Islamic prayers.

Some years ago, a Muslim woman said to me “Whenever I go to the cemetery, I look at all the Muslim graves on the one side and the Christian graves on the other, and I say to myself, ‘What’s the difference?’” Well, if you’re looking for the living among the dead, you’re not likely to find much. Judaism is not very different. All three monotheisms have institutionalised their religious systems, going round in circles as they return annually to the same routines, ceremonies and holy days, all based on outward conformity and formal worship. A Muslim shopkeeper in Jerusalem once said “There are only three big businesses in Jerusalem. One collects money on Fridays, the second on Saturdays, and the third on Sundays.” (The quote is from the Discovery video *Jerusalem: City of Heaven*).

Formal monotheism. Is this really what God wants? A slavish commitment to repetitive ceremonies for as long as we live? A verse from the Bible shows how monotonous and ultimately meaningless this can be. I will accentuate the key words to emphasise the point: “And every priest

stands *daily* at his service, offering *repeatedly* the *same* sacrifices, which can *never* take away sins” (Heb 10:11). The irony is obvious when you compare the repetitions with their inability to achieve anything: every – daily – repeatedly – the same – yet *never* availing!

Islam places a tremendous emphasis on formal, repetitive worship. There is no room for spontaneous prayer or praise while performing each *raka’ah*. A true Muslim will not only wear a beard but will trim it to a prescribed length to follow the *sunnah* of Muhammad. A skullcap must be worn while praying in a mosque. Shoes must be removed. The same motions of washing beforehand (*wudhu*) must always be followed in obedience to the Qur’anic injunction: “Wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles” (Q 5:6). Each *ruku* (bowing down) and *sajdah* (prostration) must be performed in unison with the other worshippers present, in the same way, at the same times, every day. During the *qa’dah* (the sitting position) the same *taslim* must be recited as each worshipper passes the greeting to his left and right. No variation of this ceremony is allowed at any time.

Islam claims to simply restate the original religion of submission to God that all the previous prophets followed and imposed. The Qur’an says that it came only as a *tasdiq*, a “confirmation” of what was before it (Q 10:37) and not as a new form of religion. If so, the true religion of God must always have focused on formal, repetitive submission, the homage of a servant to a divine Master who can neither be personally known nor loved for who he really is.

The Bible paints a very different picture. It does not see God’s religion as always the same, simply a conformity to

exact patterns of worship that have never changed and never will. As it covers the history of God's relationship with his people, it shows a progression and expansion as God draws ever nearer to his own, and it finishes with a glorious climax when he takes the initiative to redeem his people and invites them to a living, personal relationship with him. Not as servants bound to do his bidding, mind you, but as children born of his Holy Spirit, forgiven of

*Join me on a journey  
as we discover the  
Christian message to  
the Muslim world.*

their sins, and booked for eternal glory. Join me on a journey as we discover the Christian message to the Muslim world.

### **3.1.2 Cain and Abel: the only acceptable sacrifice**

We have many religions on earth. They include Judaism founded by Moses, Christianity by Jesus, Islam by Muhammad, Buddhism by Gautama Buddha, and many others like Hinduism without any known originators. Heaven, however, sees only three. The first is *Antitheism*. It is the worship of anything other than God, the creature rather than the Creator. Whether it is the veneration of pagan idols, ancestral spirits or other beings, it makes no difference. It's all the same to the angels of heaven – the worship of anything and everything but the true God. The Bible describes antitheists perfectly: "for although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" (Ro 1:21-23). The definition concludes: "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen" (Ro 1:25).

The only other two religions on earth, as heaven sees them, are the oldest that have ever existed. They were founded on the same day by two brothers and, outwardly, they can look very similar. The brothers were Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve. On the day that the first religious ceremonies were ever performed on earth, Cain and Abel each brought an offering to God. Cain had become a farmer, a tiller of the ground. So he brought a portion of the fruits of his labour and offered it to God. Abel, however, had become a shepherd, so he brought a different present, a sacrifice of his young lambs and their fat portions. There seemed to be no real difference between the two offerings, but the Bible says, "the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard" (Ge 4:4-5). What followed is well-known: Cain was angry and rose up against his brother Abel, killing him in a field.

The Qur'an confirms the story: "And relate to them the story of the two sons of Adam with truth, when they offered a sacrifice which was accepted from one of them but not accepted from the other. He said: I will certainly kill you" (Q 5:27). Neither book states why Cain's sacrifice was rejected, but the Bible goes on to show why Abel found favour with God. It says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking" (Heb 11:4). The key words are the first two: *by faith* Abel won God's favour.

*The key words  
are the first two:  
by faith Abel won  
God's favour.*

Abel's sacrifice tells you what that faith was. He presented the shed blood of his lambs. Abel loved the Lord, but he was painfully aware that he could, at times, be as cold to him as his brother Cain was. He knew he was implicated in his parents' sin in the Garden of Eden and that he could offer nothing to God from the fruit of his own labours to redeem himself. He also knew, however, that God had warned the serpent in the garden: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Ge 3:15). This clear statement that God would one day raise a Saviour from Eve's descendants who would suffer severely to achieve human salvation, but would fatally injure the serpent at the same time and deliver her offspring from its power, was Abel's hope. His sacrifice sent its own message: "I know my sinfulness and that I can by no religious means commend myself to you, but I am offering back to you something that is your own, slain with its shed blood, because I sense my redemption will come at considerable cost to you." Abel was the

*This is the second religion heaven sees, and it is the only true one. It is the **Faith of Abel.***

first man to offer *true faith* to God. This is the second religion heaven sees, and it is the only true one. It is the *Faith of Abel.*

Cain, however, had no true love for God. He did not believe he was implicated in his parents' sin. He also told God that he did not believe he was his brother's keeper either (Ge 4:9). He killed Abel in cold blood. Yet Cain was prepared to acknowledge God as his Creator and so he also brought a present, but his was only a gesture, a token offering from the abundance of his labours. He would have been willing to worship God oc-

asionally, but regarded his life as his own and believed he was free to exploit the earth for his benefit alone. He would come around every now and again to salute God, perhaps once a week or for a harvest ceremony once a year, but no more. Cain was the founder of *formal monotheism*, worshipping God without truly loving him. This is the Religion of Cain, the third religion heaven sees, and it regards it as entirely false. It is the largest religion on earth today and embraces every expression of formal monotheism, whether Judaic, Christian or Islamic. God himself summed it up in these words: "This people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote" (Is 29:13).

*Cain was the founder of formal monotheism, worshipping God without truly loving him.*

Cain's anger showed the difference between him and his brother. He might well have retorted: "I would have been willing to come round many times to salute you, once a week if need be. Why did you reject my first offering so completely?" God's answer to him would have been: "Abel made only a single offering, but it was an all-embracing commitment of his whole life to me, trusting me for his salvation. I will one day, by a single offering of my own, perfect for all time those who are sanctified" (Heb 10:14). The Faith of Abel is the only true religion the world has known or ever will know. It is a vibrant, living faith as opposed to dry, outward conformity. It offers God nothing of its own, it trusts God entirely for its salvation. It does not look on the outward appearance and say *what am I?* A Muslim, Jew or Christian identified by my dress, beard,

head-covering, robes, weekly worship attendance, etc, signifying my allegiance to a particular religion? No, it asks the acid question *who am I?* How deeply within my own soul do I love God and how willing am I to pursue his perfect honesty, purity, love and righteousness? After my religious dress is removed, my beard shaved off, my priest's robes put away, what is left? What do I have within myself to commend me to God? There is only one true religion on earth – it is human *faith* responding to God's *faithfulness*, a theme we will explore more fully as we press on.

### 3.1.3 Abraham: the father of the faithful

All Muslims honour Ibrahim *alayhis-salam*. He is regarded as one of the greatest messengers of God. Christians likewise look to him as a prototype of a true believer and the father of the faithful. He followed the true faith, the Faith of Abel, and true Christians are said to be “those who share the faith of Abraham for he is the father of us all” (Ro 4:16). The Qur'an likewise speaks of the *millata abikum Ibrahim*, the “faith of our father Abraham” (Q 22:78). But why is Abraham marked out for his faith and not for his religious submission to God?

*But why is Abraham marked out for his faith and not for his religious submission to God?*

The Qur'an sees the *millah* of Abraham as no more than unquestioning submission to the will of Allah. It says that he was one of the *musliman*, a “submitter” (Q 3:67) and states that “when his Lord said to him Submit!, he said I submit to the Lord of the worlds” (Q 2:131). The command for “submit” in the text is *Aslim!* and his response is *aslamtu*, “I have submitted.” All three words come from

the same root letters as *islam* and *muslim*. This is not true faith, however. It is no more than an uncomprehending resignation to God's will. It does not tax the prophet's faith in God's faithfulness.

The Bible shows that God called Abraham to a much deeper relationship with him than mere submission to his will. It begins with a simple promise which God made to him when he complained that he had no heir to his estate: “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them ... so shall your descendants be” (Ge 15:5). What follows is equally simply stated: “And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Ge 15:6). It seems too easy – Abraham just took the promise at face value and, because he believed God, he was declared righteous in his sight. He did not have to pray a number of times a day, fast for many months, go on pilgrimages or donate large sums to the poor to obtain God's approval. He just believed the promise and was immediately placed on an even footing with God.

*It seems too easy – Abraham just took the promise at face value and, because he believed God, he was declared righteous in his sight.*

His faith was to be tested again and again, however. Many years passed without anything happening. His wife Sarah, who had never been able to bear children and was growing older every year, told him to procreate offspring through her maid Hagar (Ge 16:2). When Ishmael was born, Abraham was convinced that he must be the heir who was promised but, just thirteen years later when Abraham was 99 years old and his wife Sarah already

*At first Abraham laughed at the prospect, but then it dawned on him that Ishmael was obviously not the child of the promise.*

90 and still barren, God said to him: “I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her” (Ge 17:16). At first Abraham laughed at the prospect, but then it dawned on

him that Ishmael was obviously not the child of the promise. So he cried out to God “O that Ishmael might live in your sight!” but God answered: “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him” (Ge 17:18-19).

When Isaac was finally born, Sarah demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away. The patriarch was sore-pressed, but God confirmed her wish, advising Abraham at the same time that he would nevertheless make a great nation out of him. Still, Abraham was severely tested as he realised Ishmael had been rejected by God. At fourteen years of age he was sent away into the wilderness.

Whenever Abraham looked on the new youngster he at least knew for certain that he was the child who had been promised. He looked forward to the day when Isaac would rise up as the fulfilment of God’s promise that he would become the father of many nations. But, when Isaac had reached a similar age as Ishmael’s when he was sent away, God finally spoke to the patriarch again. “Abraham!” he suddenly called out (Ge 22:1). Abraham

responded willingly, expecting to hear God define how his son was now to become a blessing to the generations to come. Instead God said to him: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Ge 22:2). (The Qur’an records the incident but does not name or otherwise identify the son who was to be sacrificed – Q 37:102. It does, however, confirm that the line of *nubuwwah* – prophethood, and *kitab* – scripture, would follow through Isaac’s line – Q 29:27.)

This was a far greater test for the patriarch. When Ishmael started turning into a young man, God told Abraham to reject him, but now, as Isaac

reached the same budding moment in his life, God told Abraham to slaughter him! It was the supreme test of a man’s love for God – to offer his son to him. If he would

not spare his son, surely he would give him all he had (cf. Romans 8:32). It was the best any man could offer to God.

*It was the supreme test of a man’s love for God – to offer his son to him.*

But Abraham was facing a far sterner test. God had promised him he would have descendants like the stars of the sky through his son Isaac. How could this promise possibly be fulfilled if he was to offer him up as a burnt offering? Abraham must have pictured the scene – his son cremated to ashes after being sacrificed and, as the wind came down and blew the ashes away, he would have imagined himself despairing “there goes the promise of God to the wind.”

By this time, however, Abraham had gone far beyond just submitting to God’s will without asking further questions.

When God, on another occasion not long before this, had threatened to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness, the patriarch objected: "Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Ge 18:23-25).

How could a prophet argue with God's decrees? This was not humble submission. But God honoured it, eventually

*How could a prophet argue with God's decrees? This was not humble submission.*

promising not to destroy the cities if just ten righteous people could be found in them. (They weren't, and only Lot and his two daughters were eventually saved from their destruction.)

There's more to this than meets the eye. Abraham was calling on God to be true to himself. Believing that God is faithful, he placed all his faith in God's faithfulness. That is why he reacted when he heard something that seemed to deny that faithfulness. "Every word of God proves true" the scripture declares (Pr 30:5). Abraham faced a dilemma when God commanded him to sacrifice his son. How could God's promise be fulfilled if he was to sacrifice Isaac? He could have said to himself "I don't know but it doesn't matter. God has commanded me to destroy him, so I will. I'll just unquestioningly submit to his will. The unfulfilled promise will be his problem, not mine."

But Abraham didn't. He knew that his faith, which had

earned him a declaration that he was righteous in God's sight, was merely a reflection of God's faithfulness. The sun generates light, blazing light. The moon can do no more than feebly reflect it but, as it faces the sun head on, it reflects that light to the full. Take away the moon and the sun's sparkling light will be totally unaffected, but take away the sun and the moon will not shine at all. So God generates faithfulness as the sun generates light, but Abraham's faith was like the moon's light – no more than a reflection of God's glorious faithfulness.

*Abraham's faith was like the moon's light – no more than a reflection of God's glorious faithfulness.*

Yet Abraham held to that faith. Like Abel, he continued to follow the only true religion in the world: true faith, and like Abel he was commended for it: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son of whom it was said "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." (Heb 11:17-19).

God honoured Abraham and restored his son to him. He had passed the supreme test. He had been willing to give the greatest blessing in his life back to God, his only true son, and in this he perfected his faith, believing God would yet fulfil his promise to him by raising his son back to life. For this Abraham received a very special title. He was called the *friend* of God. Jehoshaphat, a righteous king of Judah many centuries later, prayed to God: "Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land

*For this Abraham received a very special title. He was called the friend of God.*

before your people Israel, and give it for ever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?" (2Ch 20:7) God himself once spoke of the nation of Israel as "the offspring

of Abraham, my friend" (Is 41:8). James, an early disciple of Jesus and his blood-brother, also wrote of Abraham's faith and added "he was called the friend of God" (Jas 2:23).

The Qur'an confirms the title: "For God did take Abraham for a friend" (Q 4:125). The Arabic word here is *khalilan*, "a friend", and Abraham has consequently always been known in Islam as *khalilullah*, the Friend of God. The Qur'an gives no explanation for the title, however.

In the Biblical record, however, we can see more and more what true faith really is. God wants to have a living relationship with his people. He desires this far more than strict obedience to religious routines, observance of ceremonies and a repetitive adherence to prescribed prayers, prayer-times, etc. This will become ever more apparent as we proceed. At present, however, let us mark the symbol of Abraham's recognition – *true faith*. God did not forcefully project his righteousness at him, expecting him to respond in perfect righteousness and obedience to his every demand. No matter how religious, pious or devoted any man may be, he cannot match God's perfect righteousness. His sin will pull him down again and again.

God elected to project his *faithfulness* to Abraham and was delighted when the prophet responded consistently to it *by faith*, eventually perfecting it when being com-

manded to offer his son as a sacrifice. We will have more to say about it when we come to the climax we spoke about earlier. We will see how Abraham's sacrificial faith was only a shadow of God's sacrificial love yet to be revealed. For the moment, however, let us press on to the next great patriarch in Israel's history, Moses, and see how God's plans and purposes for his people continued to expand and grow.

*In the Biblical record, however, we can see more and more what true faith really is. God wants to have a living relationship with his people.*

### **3.1.4 Moses: the man who knew God face-to-face**

More than four hundred years passed before God moved again to communicate directly with his people. After forty years of prosperity as a prince in Egypt, and a further forty years in the Sinai wilderness as a fugitive from justice, Moses suddenly found himself face-to-face with the God of Israel. God called him to deliver the nation from Pharaoh's rule and, after a series of plagues which finally broke the back of Egyptian resistance, Moses led the people into the same wilderness on their way to the promised land, Canaan.

The final scene in this famous story needs to be retold here. Pharaoh only relented when an angel from God slew the first-born of every family in Egypt in just one night. Only the Israelites who had obeyed God's word to sacrifice a passover lamb were exempted. They had been instructed to "touch the lintel and the two doorposts" of their homes "with the blood which is in the basin" (Ex 12:22) and were further told to "observe this rite as an ordinance for you and

for your sons for ever” (Ex 12:24). The angel of death would then *pass over* the home and thus not kill the first born of the Israelites. A clear trend was developing as God’s relationship with his people progressed. Abel had offered the blood of his lambs as an atoning sacrifice, shadowing a far greater sacrifice to come. Abraham was willing to offer his son Isaac as a similar token of a greater offering to follow. Now the people of Israel were commanded to place the shed blood of their sacrificial lambs across their doorposts.

*The hope of all God’s true people, trusting solely in his grace and not their religiousness, was increasingly being focused on the shed blood of the true Lamb of God to follow.*

True faith was beginning to define itself. The hope of all God’s true people, trusting solely in his grace and not their religiousness, was increasingly being focused on the shed blood of the true Lamb of God to follow. True believers discerned this and placed their faith in God’s redemptive grace yet to be fully revealed.

Not long after their exodus from Egypt, God instructed

Moses: “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments, and be ready by the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people” (Ex 19:10-11). On the third day the people trembled as God’s presence was manifested on the mountain. There God spoke directly to the nation, giving it the ten commandments that were to become the backbone of Jewish moral law thereafter. It was a unique occasion, one for which God had been preparing for centuries.

Moses was not visited by an angel as a mediator from heaven. God himself drew near to the prophet and the nation, expressing his desire to relate directly to the people of Israel thereafter. To reveal his presence among them, God told Moses to build an ark with a mercy seat above it and said: “There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel” (Ex 25:22).

*Moses was not visited by an angel as a mediator from heaven. God himself drew near to the prophet and the nation, expressing his desire to relate directly to the people of Israel thereafter.*

The nation had visible proof that God himself was present among them. Whenever Moses entered the holy tent he had constructed as a tabernacle where the ark was placed, a “pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses” (Ex 33:9). When the people saw the cloud, they would rise up and worship. The story concludes: “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33:11). Moses was overwhelmed that God was willing to relate so directly to him and the people as to manifest his presence among them. He said to God: “Is it not in your going with us that we are distinct, I and your people, from all other people that are upon the face of the earth?” (Ex 33:16).

Very boldly Moses prayed “I pray you, show me your glory.” God responded: “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, “the Lord”; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex 33:18-19).

*With respect, even at this stage God’s revealed presence and favour go far beyond anything comparable in Islam.*

With respect, even at this stage God’s revealed presence and favour go far beyond anything comparable in Islam. Far greater intimacy, fellowship, grace and favour between God and his own were to follow,

but even at this stage the relationship between God and his people had far exceeded the highest of Muslim expectations. God himself was visibly present among them. The cloud, which was a special manifestation of his presence, hovered over the mercy seat by day and shone at night. When it moved, the nation knew it had to follow and stay close to God as he dwelt among his people.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with two tablets containing the ten commandments, inscribed by God himself, “Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God” (Ex 34:29). Whenever he came out from speaking to the Lord, “the people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone” (Ex 34:35). The Qur’an confirms the unique, direct relationship between God and Moses: “And to Moses Allah spoke directly” (Q 4:164). It says nothing further but confirms the special relationship between them. The story of Moses in the Bible concludes with these

words: “And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Dt 34:10).

Abraham was called the friend of God. Moses spoke to God face to face as a man speaks to his friend. We see here the growing supreme purpose of God steadily being revealed. God’s presence was so closely manifested that Moses’ face shone when he spoke to him. God was going far beyond religious observances. His ultimate desire that his people should relate personally to him and know him directly was being increasingly revealed as time went on.

Unfortunately, God’s immediate presence brought constant tensions and conflict between him and the people of Israel. Time and again they distrusted and rebelled against him. Right from the start, when God called the nation to hear his word and receive his ten commandments, the people said to Moses “You speak to us and we will hear, but let not God speak to us, lest we die” (Ex 20:19).

*Unfortunately, God’s immediate presence brought constant tensions and conflict between him and the people of Israel.*

When Moses went up the mountain to converse with God over forty days, the people rose up and tried to shake off his presence and power over them. They made a golden calf and worshiped it, promptly proceeding to break every commandment they could to tell him precisely what they thought of him.

God’s anger grew deep within him. Time and again he threatened to destroy them. “I have seen this people, and

*A benevolent but righteous God among an unholy and malevolent people – conflict was inevitable.*

behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them”, God declared (Ex 32:9-10). A benevolent but righteous God among an unholy and malevolent people – conflict was inevitable. The nation did not want to draw near to God. For their unbelief he kept them wandering with minimal food and water for forty years in the wilderness. Despite all his favours towards them, the people just would not draw near to him. Living so closely among them, their sinfulness and hard-heartedness inevitably ground sharply against his righteousness and holiness.

“And now, Israel,” Moses declared, “what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord which I command you this day for your good?” (Dt 10:12-13). In this Moses revealed God’s ultimate aim – a deep mutual relationship based on reciprocated love and obedience towards him. Even though he regulated various forms of religious ceremonies and observances to constantly draw out at least a formal worship towards him, the Israelites turned against him. From the depths of their hearts they did not want to draw near to him in purity, honesty, faithfulness and love. Quite simply, they would have preferred to turn back to their former slavery in Egypt than live by faith in his faithfulness and allow his Spirit to examine the depths of their hearts and souls.

At one point, after tiring of the manna God sent them from above every day to eat, some of the “rabble that was among them had a strong craving; and the people of Israel also wept again and said: “O that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic, but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at” (Nu 11:4-6). Later generations honoured the manna with religious devotion as bread from heaven itself, but the Israelites at the time simply complained to Moses “we loathe this worthless food” (Nu 21:5).

Once they had entered the land of Canaan, the visible cloud above the mercy-seat faded away. The manna sent to feed them daily ceased. God could see that they could not match or reflect his righteousness and could only be exposed to wrath and judgment if he continued to manifest his presence so obviously to them. So, he let go of the nation, still living among his people, but withdrawing his visible presence to avoid further face-to-face conflict. Patiently God watched and waited as the following generations came and went. Some centuries later God again began to make his presence felt among the people of Israel. Another man arose with a burning love for God, a strong man who could unite the nation, and God moved to relate to him as it appeared his hopes for the nation might yet begin to materialise.

*Patiently God watched and waited as the following generations came and went.*

70

### 3.1.5 David: a man after God's own heart

*God was not talking of David's religiousness, outward adornment, or reverence for holy days, he was speaking of his inner being – his upright spirit, love for God, refined character, personal sincerity and deep faith.*

When David became king of Israel, God said: "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my own heart, who will do all my will" (Ac 13:22). God was not talking of David's religiousness, outward adornment, or reverence for holy days, he was speaking of his inner being – his upright spirit, love for God, refined character, personal sincerity and deep faith. David expressed his devotion to God in his many

psalms. He was a man of great weaknesses and failings, yet in spite of these he longed for God and turned his heart constantly towards him. He prayed: "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:1-2).

In another of his praise songs David declared: "I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies" (Ps 18:1-3). He was not reciting from a prayer-book, he was expressing the depth of his belief in God. David knew that true faith came from the core of a soul turned towards God. He did not project an outward appearance of uprightness to the world around him while remaining unregenerate within

himself. He longed to be pure in all his thoughts, words and deeds. He cried out: "Search me, O God, and try my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Ps 139:23-24).

*David knew that true faith came from the core of a soul turned towards God.*

When he did fail he examined his heart and prayed: "Behold, you desire truth in the inward being, therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart" (Ps 51:6), going on to plead: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit" (Ps 51:10-12). True humility before God also comes out as his prayer continues: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:17). David was chosen to lead Israel because his heart was true to God. He understood true faith. He knew it was a willingness to pursue inner renewal, a response to God's perfect faithfulness. When God commanded Samuel to anoint David king of Israel, he said to him: "the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1Sa 16:7). David knew and understood this.

Throughout his life David strived to unite the nation of Israel in the worship of the one true God. When he was able to rest after subduing all his enemies, David said to the prophet Nathan "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar,

but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” Nathan replied “Go, do all that is in your heart; for the Lord is with you” (2 Sa 7:2-3). David proposed to build a great temple for God, to bring the people of Israel constantly together to worship God where his glory dwelt. But God told Nathan to speak to David and say: “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sa 7:12-14). God told him that his son would build the temple he proposed and concluded by promising: “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sa 7:16).

*Significantly God had said to David that the greater son to come would be his **own** Son.*

As God had promised Abraham a son, so now he promised one to David as well. Solomon was the son promised and after his father’s death he set about building the first Jewish Temple. In the generations to

follow the people of Israel sensed that, while Solomon was the immediate son promised, the prophecy also spoke of a *greater* son to follow. God had assured David that the promised son would rule over his kingdom for ever. When Solomon died the people soon realised the prophecy would only be completely fulfilled when the *greater* Son of David arrived and they looked forward to his day. Significantly God had said to David that the greater son to come would be his *own* Son. God had added unambiguously “I will be his Father, and he shall be *my* Son.”

The prophecy is found in the Old Testament. Like Muslims, the Jews also have never believed that God has a Son. However, in one of their own books (2 Sa) revered as the Word of God by all Jews throughout the generations since it was written, God’s promise that his own Son would come into the world to establish his eternal kingdom was plainly foretold. The promise is confirmed in another passage: “He shall cry to me, “You are my father, my God and the Rock of my salvation.” And I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him for ever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his line for ever and his throne as the days of the heavens” (Ps 89:26-29). This quote is also from another of the core books of Jewish Scripture, written a thousand years before Christianity began.

Both promises of a son to come, made to Abraham and David, came suddenly without any precedents or anticipation. As you read through the Jewish Scriptures you cannot but be amazed at how striking both prophecies are as there is nothing in the build-up before them to give the slightest hint of what was coming. God simply chose an appropriate moment to speak of things to come as his purposes for mankind and plans for its redemption unfolded.

*God simply chose an appropriate moment to speak of things to come as his purposes for mankind and plans for its redemption unfolded.*

When Solomon had completed the Temple and the priests came out of it after placing the ark of the covenant in the

holiest place: “A cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord” (1Ki 8:10-11). Once again God visibly manifested his presence to the nation as he had done when Moses completed the tabernacle in the wilderness. Islam has never had anything comparable to this.

During those forty years when the Israelites had wandered around the desert regions because of their unbelief, the nation was stripped of its fertile surroundings and given nothing but manna to eat and water to drink. The people suffered under the pressure as God tested them severely to see whether they would be true to him or not. He projected his righteousness strongly at them and, whenever they disobeyed him, he reacted immediately, sending plagues and fires through their camps.

Now, however, God gave the nation forty years of unparalleled peace and prosperity. This time he let go of it, happy that the covenant he had made with Moses finally appeared to be working. His hopes for the nation had peaked and he allowed it to rejoice in its splendour. Even Israel’s enemies were at peace with her. It was a golden age, a symbol of heavenly peace and glory to come. “The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah” (1Ki 10:27).

*Solomon failed to focus his faith in God and turned to material extravagance.*

Unfortunately the good time did not last long. Solomon failed to focus his faith in God and turned to material extravagance. He married foreign wives

who introduced pagan customs to the nation. Solomon “clung to these in love” (1Ki 11:2). When he grew old his foreign wives “turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father” (1Ki 11:4). After Solomon’s death the nation soon divided in two as the people of Judah followed Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, as their king while the northern tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam who placed two golden calves at Dan and Bethel to distract the people away from worshipping the Lord at Jerusalem (1Ki 12:28-29).

God said to Jeroboam: “You have done evil above all that were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and molten images, provoking me to anger, and have cast me behind your back” (1Ki 14:8-9). A succession of evil kings led the tribes of Israel into every form of idolatry and wickedness. Judah’s history was more chequered – some of its kings like Ahaz were as bad as the kings of Israel while others like Jehoshaphat kept the people true to God, but it was only a matter of time before Judah too fell away and angered God intensely.

God’s hopes for the nation had been shattered. His wrath became white-hot against it. He could have summarily called Israel and all the other nations of the world, who had long abandoned the worship of God, to a final day of judgment. But he didn’t. The God of all faithfulness, whose love for his people had also reached a peak, a white-hot intensity of its own, weighed up the possibility of yet bringing his people into a deep personal relationship with him. God sought an alternative to judg-

*God sought an alternative to judgment.*

ment. What was he to do – judge or redeem? His burning love made him choose the latter, but not after considering very deeply what price he himself would have to pay to accomplish his purpose.

### 3.1.6 Jeremiah and Ezekiel: the promise of a new covenant

*Some quotes from these books, however, show just how deep God's anger against his people was for consistently rejecting him at the time.*

No less than 17 of the 39 books of the Jewish Scripture (Old Testament), come from the time of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They lived about three centuries after Solomon and David. The writings of this time are, with the exception of the Book

of Jonah, all prophetic works. They are full of prophecies about the future and focus on God's expanding revelation and the climax towards which it was heading. Some quotes from these books, however, show just how deep God's anger against his people was for consistently rejecting him at the time.

"My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders," God declared (Zec 10:3). Again he cried out: "Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me. I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me" (Hos 7:13). Yet again he exclaimed: "I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins," adding "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies" (Am 5:12, 21).

Yet it was not just hot anger that moved God to speak so forcibly, it was also a deep grief that the nation he had chosen and loved from the depth of his being had so coldly chosen to brush him aside as we see in this passage: "Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to Baal, and became detestable like the thing they loved" (Hos 9:10). Therefore God proclaimed: "Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more, all their princes are rebels" (Hos 9:15).

But between these quotes, which are only a selection of a number of condemnatory exclamations, come an abundance of similar texts where God declares his burning love for his people and his desire for their redemption. "I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them" (Zec 10:6). Again he declared: "My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy" (Hos 11:8-9). Many others show how God's emotions at the depth of his heart had intensified within him. He loved his people and his compassion for them had reached a defining stage,

*He loved his people and his compassion for them had reached a defining stage, but his wrath and anger against their coldness of heart had also reached their zenith.*

but his wrath and anger against their coldness of heart had also reached their zenith.

It was not just a simple matter of tossing a coin and choosing which would prevail. Throughout the Bible one finds that God's attitude to sin is absolute. He does not regard the sins that men commit as nothing more than acts of wrongdoing, oversights, mistakes or errors of judgment that can easily be forgiven. They confront and offend his holiness. From the time Adam and Eve first rebelled against him God has treated human sinfulness as a *rebellious condition*. It shows that humans do not truly love him, that their hearts are cold towards him, and that they do not care to enter into a close relationship with him where his Spirit is free to search their innermost beings and

*Pious observance of fixed prayer-times, regulated fasting, formal recognition of outward rituals and ceremonies do not and cannot compensate for a heart that is cold towards him.*

cleanse their souls. Pious observance of fixed prayer-times, regulated fasting, formal recognition of outward rituals and ceremonies do not and cannot compensate for a heart that is cold towards him. Nor are these observances proof of an obedience that comes from the heart.

The 17 books written at this crucial juncture of Israel's history show just how God feels about human sinfulness. Here is God's basic assessment of the human condition from one of them: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every

man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer 17:9-10). Two other quotes from books written at this time define God's perfect holiness and show why sin angers him and is not easily forgiven: "the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness" (Is 5:16) and "your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on wrongdoing" (Hab 1:13).

The Bible shows that although God has many attributes (such as those mentioned in the 99 names of Allah in Islam), two are paramount. By nature he is *righteous*, it is the basic facet of his being. Sinful acts and attitudes confront that righteousness and, as numerous records in the early days of God's relationship with man show, awful judgments can follow. Satan and his fallen angels were cast into pits of gloom never to be forgiven or delivered (2Pe 2:4), every first-born son in Egypt was slain in a single night because of the nation's resistance to God (Ex 12:29), while numerous Israelites perished in the wilderness whenever they opposed Moses and defied the Lord (Nu 11:33, 16:35).

The second great virtue in God's character is his love which is so deeply ingrained at the depth of his being that the Bible simply declares "God is love" (1Jn 4:8). But whereas his righteousness is at the forefront of his being and was quickly thrust in the face of those who defied him in those earlier times, his love was a deepening desire for their

*The second great virtue in God's character is his love which is so deeply ingrained at the depth of his being that the Bible simply declares "God is love".*

best welfare in spite of their hostility towards him. It was a strengthening love for a world that was consistently proving to be decidedly *unlovable*. By the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel it had reached its zenith and, although God could justifiably have called all mankind to judgment because of its sinfulness, he chose rather to express the fullness of his love towards it, making one decisive and definitive statement which was to shape his attitude to the human race for the rest of its days: “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you” (Jer 31:3). God decided to press on and almost immediately declared how he planned to change the God-man relationship completely and bring the two together in a wonderful new way, uniting them in perfect fellowship, goodwill, personal knowledge and mutual companionship.

*God declared: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant”.*

God declared: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with

their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law *within* them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying “Know the Lord”, for they shall *all know* me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will *forgive*

their iniquity, and I will remember their sin *no more*” (Jer 31:31-34 – emphasis added).

This promise was unprecedented – God giving his people a divine motivation and power from within to keep his holy laws, opening the door for all his people to know him personally, and guaranteeing to forgive all their sins right here and now. And this wasn’t all. Through the prophet Ezekiel God went on: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Eze 36:26-27), adding: “I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Eze 37:23). Unlike the first covenant, where God had commanded his people consistently “You shall” and “You shall not”, placing the obligation on them to obey him unreservedly, he now consistently declared “I will, I will, I will”, thereby placing on himself the obligation to ensure that his people would respond faithfully to him. True faith had reached its peak. God’s faithfulness was going as far as it possibly could – guaranteeing the faith of those who were willing to walk through his open door into a deep personal relationship with him.

*This promise was unprecedented – God giving his people a divine motivation and power from within to keep his holy laws, opening the door for all his people to know him personally, and guaranteeing to forgive all their sins right here and now.*

The angels of heaven must have wondered, however, how he proposed to reconcile this open invitation with his perfect righteousness which would instinctively keep sinners at bay. How could absolute righteousness finally give way to perfect grace and mercy? How could God possibly introduce a new golden age in which his people, sinners to the core, could nevertheless be so forgiven that they could live in a perfectly holy relationship with him right now and know him from the depth of their beings? In short, how could God's Holy Spirit live comfortably in unholy human hearts? God gave them the answer: "Behold I will bring my servant the Branch ... I will remove the guilt of this land in a *single day*" (Zec 3:8-9 – emphasis added).

*God knew that the only way he could ever bridge the gap between his all-holy character and unholy human sinfulness would be for him to pay the price we should pay to satisfy his wrath and vindicate his righteousness.*

For centuries he had longed for his people to respond to him, to draw close to him and to obey his commandments from the depths of their hearts. But as their resistance increased, so his love grew until it went far beyond just wanting a more intimate communion with them than a master-to-servant relationship. God knew that the only way he could ever bridge the gap between his all-holy character and unholy

human sinfulness would be for him to pay the price we should pay to satisfy his wrath and vindicate his righteousness. He promised to send a deliverer, whom he called

the Branch, who would bring redemption for the human race in less than a day. But it was obvious this deliverer would have to come *from his own being* if he was to fully pay the supreme price required to secure the forgiveness of God's people and to do it in only a few hours.

God fell back on his promise to David that he would give him a son who would rule over his kingdom for ever. Remember that God said, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sa 7:14). Also remember what was pointed out earlier – this does not come from an original Christian text; it is found in the Jewish Scriptures written many centuries before the Christian era. The important thing here is that God was willing to give his own Son to achieve his supreme goal – the complete acquittal of all who would believe in him for the forgiveness of their sins and, with it, the free gift of eternal life. What we see here is God's ultimate purpose – to engage man in the closest possible relationship – and what he was prepared to do to achieve this. In short, God was willing to send his own Son for the salvation of the world so that we might no longer be unworthy servants but become the redeemed children of God and heirs to his everlasting kingdom. God was willing to enter the darkest recesses of the human world so that we might behold his glorious light.

*God was willing to send his own Son for the salvation of the world so that we might no longer be unworthy servants but become the redeemed children of God and heirs to his everlasting kingdom.*

*He went on to affirm the complete forgiveness of all their sins so that they might know him personally and live with great joy to his praise and glory.*

After going through what must have been an extremely painful experience when deciding to tear his heart apart to redeem us, God allowed himself a brief moment to savour its eventual outcome. With great joy and tangible relief he declared: “And they *shall* be my people, and I *will* be their God. I will give

them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, *with all my heart and all my soul*” (Jer 32:38-41 – emphasis added). He went on to affirm the complete forgiveness of all their sins so that they might know him personally and live with great joy to his praise and glory: “I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me” (Jer 33:8). We move on to the glorious new covenant age God had promised.

### **3.1.7 Jesus Christ: Son of David, Son of Abraham**

Christianity has the most pessimistic view of what human beings are by nature – bound in sin and slaves to it to such an extent that they cannot acquit themselves – but it also has the most optimistic view of what men and women can become – sons and daughters of God, born of his Holy Spirit, transformed into his personal image,

and generating his glory for all eternity. Yet, when God’s supreme deliverer came to achieve this, he was missed by his own people and his mission is still overlooked and rejected by countless millions down to the present day.

The 17 prophetic works written at the time when God promised the new covenant climaxed the revelations of God to the Jewish people. The promise of a coming Messiah, a deliverer, was to be their final and supreme hope as God’s purposes for the human race would be concluded. After these books no new ones followed. All went quiet for about four hundred years. By the time Jesus was born the nation of Israel had feverish Messianic expectations. A similar period of silence, also just over four hundred years, had followed God’s promises to Abraham before the first covenant had been introduced through Moses. The time for the new covenant to be enacted had surely come. Israel waited anxiously and – correctly, as it turned out – expected the Messiah to appear at that time. Yet, when he came, only a relatively few recognised him while the nation as a whole overlooked him and, worse still, opposed and rejected him.

God had promised David a son who would rule over his kingdom for ever. When Jesus one day asked the Jews: “What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?” they replied “the Son of David” (Mt 22:42). Solomon, David’s immediate son, had been Israel’s most prosperous and powerful king. In his day Israel ruled its surrounding world. Peace prevailed. The nation now longed for a new king who would introduce a similar reign and one which would never pass away. They expected

*“What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?”*

their Messiah-king to make the Jewish nation the most powerful and affluent on earth. But they had missed one crucial point – and they had no excuses for their oversight. God had promised *another* patriarch a son long before the time of David and Solomon who was also to prefigure a greater Son to come, and they should have paid most of their attention to him, for he was to appear first.

You don't have to look far into the Christian Scriptures (the New Testament) to find out who it was. Just read the first verse of its first book, the Gospel of Matthew. The opening text of the whole of the Christian Scriptures reads: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1). It was the *Son of Abraham* whom they should have first anticipated. We looked at some length at the son God promised to Abraham, namely Isaac, the son of his wife Sarah. When Abraham took him up to Mount Moriah to sacrifice him, Isaac said to him "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Ge 22:7) Abraham replied "God will provide *himself* the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (Ge 22:8). The original Hebrew is more emphatic – it effectively says, "God will give *from himself* the lamb for a burnt offering."

*Abraham was, in reality, saying to Isaac "my son, you are the offering, but take heart. You are only a type of another yet to come. God will one day give of himself the true lamb as an offering."*

Abraham was, in reality, saying to Isaac "my son, you are the offering, but take heart. You are only a type of another yet to come. God will one day give of himself the true lamb as an offering."

John the Baptist (*Yahya* in Islam), looking at Jesus as he walked one day, proclaimed "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29), identifying the lamb of whom Abraham spoke. On another day Jesus himself said to the Jews who were arguing with him: "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad" (Jn 8:56). He clearly had the moment in mind when Abraham had said "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."

Abraham foresaw the whole Christian Gospel. Isaac was born of the Spirit in unique circumstances, so Abraham knew God's Son would be born uniquely too

*Abraham foresaw the whole Christian Gospel.*

(Jesus was born of a virgin woman). Abraham planned to sacrifice Isaac, knowing the Son of God would be sacrificed as well. Abraham believed Isaac would rise from the dead. In so doing he foresaw the resurrection of the Son of God. No wonder we find it stated that the scripture "preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal 3:8).

Whenever the following question is asked "what is the greatest gift God has ever given you to show his love for you?", some might say "my health", others "my children" or yet others "he answered my prayers and helped me when I was in terrible trouble." All these are good answers, they show the kindness of God in providing for us and caring for us. But none of them cost him anything, they are not evidences of any depth of love in his heart for us. But if he should give his Son to die for us so that we could receive eternal life as a gift, be forgiven of all our sins, and be able to know God personally, it would be the greatest gift he could give because it would come at the greatest

possible cost to him. And this is exactly what happened when Jesus came into the world! As one of his most famous disciples, the apostle Paul, put it: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (Ro 8:32).

This was the supreme price God was prepared to pay to gain the highest treasure he sought – a cleansed, forgiven people in whom his own Holy Spirit could always comfortably dwell. When Jesus died on the cross, God’s wrath against the sins of all those who would fully believe in him was exhausted. The sin-holiness problem, which had caused such trauma during Moses’ time and in the generations to come, had been solved. The door was open for all those wonderful things God had promised through Jeremiah and Ezekiel to be fulfilled.

True Christian believers don’t just believe in God, they would have no special message for their fellow monotheist Muslims if they did. But they do have a very special message for all who dwell on earth including Muslims. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fulfilled the hopes of all true believers when he laid down his life for their redemption. Abel sacrificed the blood of his lambs to symbolise his hope in God’s salvation to come. Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son and share his blood as a shadow and token of God’s great love in being willing to do the same one day in return for him. Moses ordered every Israelite family to spread the shed blood of a lamb on their doorposts and lintels,

*Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fulfilled the hopes of all true believers when he laid down his life for their redemption.*

When the Son of God took human form, God and man became united forever. We will soon see how, in eternity, the followers of Jesus too will generate the same glory from within themselves.

symbolising the crucifixion of the Son of God to come for their *eternal* deliverance.

The Christian message to Muslims and all the world in consequence is this – in Jesus we have received the *salvation* of God, we have been given the full *forgiveness* of our sins, we have become the *children* of God, we have received the *Spirit* of God, we are heirs of the *kingdom* of God and, most importantly, we have come to *know* God as his saved, redeemed people.

When God spoke to Moses his face shone, reflecting the immediate presence of God before him and among his people. The glory of God was manifested in the first Jewish temple when Solomon dedicated it to God, again proving that God was *present* among his people in a very special way. But when Jesus, God’s Son, stood among his people, the manifestation reached a new dimension. He took three of his disciples up a mountain apart and was suddenly transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light (Mt 17:2). This time the glory far exceeded its manifestations at the time of Moses and Solomon, but it went still further. Jesus *himself* was transfigured. The glory shone through him. He did not reflect it or behold it, he generated it from within himself in awesome splendour. When the Son of God took human form, God and man became united forever. We will soon see how, in eternity, the followers of Jesus too will generate the same glory from within themselves.

*When the Son of God took human form, God and man became united forever.*

In all other monotheistic religions God’s image is

much the same: he revealed his laws, summoned obedience from his servants, and folded his arms, watching and waiting to see what would follow. This is the Religion of Cain and it breeds formal monotheism. But, in fulfilling the hopes of Abel, Abraham and Moses whom he was willing to call his friends, God stepped off his throne, unfolded his arms and stretched them out over all the earth. Then God humbled himself and visited our world, paying the supreme price to show his eternal, perfect love for us and give us the assurance of a glorious place in his heavenly kingdom.

The Jews missed the Son of Abraham. They could not see that the Messiah had to come as his son first, in complete humility, to be sacrificed for our redemption. Paul puts it in these words: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Php 2:5-8).

Prophecies to the sacrificial death of the Messiah abound in the Jewish Scriptures. Most were made through David and Isaiah centuries before Jesus came. Many predicted the circumstances of his death in fine detail (Ps 22:1-21; 69:1-29) while others declared the purpose of his sacrifice –

*Prophecies to the sacrificial death of the Messiah abound in the Jewish Scriptures.*

to redeem the world from its sinfulness – in explicit, unmistakable language (Is 53:1-12). The prophets did not know precisely what they were predicting but knew it was for gen-

erations to come. As the apostle Peter put it: "The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look" (1Pe 1:10-12).

Many predictions of his reign in glory as the Son of David yet to come also fill the pages of the same scriptures. Sometimes predictions of the coming Messiah as the suffering son of Abraham were couched between others predicting his heavenly glory, so the Jews had no excuse. Here is a typical example: "Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high (glorious son of David). As many were astonished at him – his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men (suffering son of Abraham) – so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him (glorious son of David); for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand" (Is 52:13-15). Having first shown how the greater son of Abraham, Jesus Christ, not only humbled himself but was even prepared to be humiliated through his death on a

*Having first shown how the greater son of Abraham, Jesus Christ, not only humbled himself but was even prepared to be humiliated through his death on a cross.*

cross, Paul then concludes: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord* to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:9-11 – emphasis added).

Jesus gave the Jewish leaders of his time every indication of who he really was and that his coming had been clearly foretold. Moses wrote of him (Jn 5:46). Abraham rejoiced that he was to see his day (Jn 8:56). David, inspired by the Spirit, had called him his Lord (Mt 22:43). The Jews really should have known and recognised Jesus.

To his own disciples, however, on the night before his crucifixion Jesus said: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You

*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13-15). God’s cycle was complete. He had called Abraham his friend. He had spoken face to face to Moses

as a man speaks to his friend. So now Jesus was able to speak to all his disciples present as the true friends of God. His impending death and resurrection were to open

the door, at last, for all God’s people to know him personally, to be forgiven of their sins, to love him with all their hearts, and to eventually be glorified at his own level. It was what God had most deeply desired and for which he had endured so much.

### **3.1.8 The Holy Spirit: God’s indwelling presence**

After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples on various occasions. On the fortieth day he ascended to heaven after first telling them “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49). He identified that power very clearly: “Before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit” (Ac 1:5). Ten days after his ascension, as the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem, “... a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind” and suddenly “... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ac 2:2-4).

God’s deepest desire, to enter into the closest possible relationship with his people, was fulfilled as his own Spirit came down on Jesus’ disciples. It was the beginning of the golden new covenant age.

God and man united to each other – for all eternity! The climax of his supreme goal had been reached. While Jesus, the Son of God, had walked in human form among the Israelites, God was present with his people in a personal way far more intense and intimate than it had ever been at the time of Moses. But

*God’s deepest desire, to enter into the closest possible relationship with his people, was fulfilled as his own Spirit came down on Jesus’ disciples.*

now, as the Holy Spirit came to live in the hearts of God's people and to remain there until Jesus returns, God became present in his people, resident within the deepest recesses of their hearts.

True Christian believers, born of God's Spirit, *know God personally*. They allow his Spirit to search the depths of their hearts, to root out all dishonesty, arrogance, pride,

*True Christian believers, born of God's Spirit, know God personally.*

lust, religious self-sufficiency and malice. They have an absolute assurance of eternal life. They know all their sins have already been forgiven. They love the Lord with all their hearts. They know that

God is worthy of their deepest affections, having paid the supreme price to redeem them. As they behold that love, perfected in the sacrifice of *his* Son, they are free to love him with all their hearts, souls and minds. Nothing stands between them and the kingdom of heaven.

The apostle Paul addressed the first true Christian believers as follows: "but now that you have come to know God, or *rather to be known of God ...*" (Gal 4:9 – emphasis added). This clearly shows that it was God's good pleasure to open the door for him to be known and not some religious effort on any man's part that brought him into this position. You too can know God personally – if you are willing to commit yourself to Jesus Christ and receive the fullness of his salvation.

Abraham's faith, perfected in his willingness to sacrifice his son, was a wonderful reflection of God's own faithfulness. But God's gift of his Son as a sacrifice for our

redemption, is the perfect proof of his intense love for us. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation of our sins" (1Jn 4:9-10).

*You too can know God personally – if you are willing to commit yourself to Jesus Christ and receive the fullness of his salvation.*

Jesus said, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3). That includes you. To be born of God's Spirit is the only way for any man, at any time, in any age, to be freed from his sins and become a citizen of heaven. True faith, the Faith of Abel, is the world's only true religion, if it can remotely be called a religion. True faith is in reality a *living* faith, a response to God's faithfulness finally and fully revealed in his salvation through Jesus Christ. Referring to God's declaration that Abraham was righteous in his sight purely because he had believed in his faithfulness, Paul says: "But the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Ro 4:23-25).

So Paul continues: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2Co 5:17). God's true people are those who have believed in Jesus, the Son of God, and have received his ultimate promise, the Spirit of God.

Christians who read the Qur'an are often struck by the striking statements in the book that actually confirm this. The Qur'an comes tantalisingly close to acknowledging this revelation. Firstly, it says that an angel appeared to Jesus' mother and said to her: "O Mary, surely Allah gives you good news of a word from him whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary" (Q 3:44). In the original Arabic the key words are *kalimatim-minhu* "a word from him." Note the words *minhu* – 'from him' – meaning that Jesus came *from God himself* and was not just another ordinary human being.

In another passage the Qur'an says of true believers "These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and strengthened them with a Spirit from himself" (Q 58:22). The key words here are very similar: "a Spirit from him" – *ruhim-minhu*. It is uncanny to find the Qur'an confirming the core of the Christian Gospel. Jesus was the Word who came from God (*minhu* – "from him"), and the Holy Spirit who followed is the Spirit who also came

from God (*minhu* – "from him"). The Qur'an emphatically states that these two persons came from God himself. It does not use this expression (*minhu*) for any other personality in a similar context.

The door is open for you to believe in God's Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and to enter into a personal relationship with him by receiving the Holy Spirit. All it requires is one supreme

*The door is open for you to believe in God's Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and to enter into a personal relationship with him by receiving the Holy Spirit. All it requires is one supreme act of committed faith – believing in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.*

act of committed faith – believing in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

I have, in recent years, often asked Muslims three sets of crucial questions:

- 1) *Do you know God personally?* Have you come into the greatest of all relationships – a living, personal relationship with him?
- 2) *Are your sins forgiven for his sake?* Have you been cleansed not only from the guilt of all your sins but also their power?
- 3) *Do you love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength?* Do you have real evidence that God is truly to be loved, that he has done something outstanding to prove his love for you, and asks only that you respond to him in heartfelt love in return?

I have received a variety of answers to these questions, but a young Muslim woman recently gave me three answers that, in my view, correctly reflect the only real answers a Muslim can give according to Islamic theology:

- 1) She said: "According to Islam it is impossible to know God personally. You can believe in Allah, pray to him, worship him, but never know him."
- 2) She went on: "... it is also impossible to know you are forgiven of all your sins. You can pray for forgiveness, try to keep the laws of Allah, and hope in his mercy, but you can never know for sure in this life that you are forgiven."
- 3) Lastly she said: "... do I love God with all my heart? I've never really thought about that. I believe in him, I'm willing to serve him – but love him? That has never crossed my mind."

The good news is that all three are open to you. The true God broke down the barriers between him and sinful men and women when Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. The door was opened for all true believers to

*The true God broke down the barriers between him and sinful men and women when Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world.*

receive his Holy Spirit and live solely by faith in him (the Faith of Abel), rather than to try vainly to commend themselves to him by slavish adherence to fixed religious routines and rituals (the Religion of Cain). You can know

God personally, you can be forgiven of all your sins, and you can love him with all your heart, soul and mind. These are the keys to eternal life.

Abraham's faith reflected God's faithfulness. It shone like the moon in response to the sun's light. But true believers can do far more than this. They can *generate* the love of God back to him in return. They will shine like little suns in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, "Then the righteous will shine *like the sun* in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13:43 – emphasis added). Angels will continue to reflect the glory of God when that day comes, but true Christian believers will *generate* it back to him. Angels are God's heavenly servants, but God's redeemed people on earth are his *sons* and *daughters*. They will manifest the very presence of the Holy Spirit within them. Their light will shine from within in pure, transparent splendour. No wonder Paul spoke of: "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1Co 2:9).

By faith in Jesus, and by that faith alone, you can become a true child of God, know him personally, be forgiven of all your sins, and become an heir of eternal life. Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). All true Christian believers are assured: "Without having seen him, you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls" (1Pe 1:8-9).

*By faith in Jesus, and by that faith alone, you can become a true child of God, know him personally, be forgiven of all your sins, and become an heir of eternal life. Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."*

The door is open for all human beings on earth, no matter what their backgrounds may be, in spite of all their sins and no matter how grievous they may be, to receive God's perfect mercy in this age of grace and become the heirs of his eternal kingdom.

As Jesus put it: "I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jn 10:9). That door will remain open until he returns. It remains open to you.

### 3.2 The “Good News” in the Bible

The Bible tells us that we have all sinned, and are therefore separated from God (Ecc 7:20; Ro 3:23). The void you feel in your heart is God missing from your life. We were all created to have a relationship with God. Because of our sin, we are separated from that relationship. The reason you feel spiritually hungry, the reason you seem to be lost in darkness, the reason you cannot find meaning in life, is that you are separated from God. Even worse, our sins will cause us to be separated from God for all of eternity, in this life and the next (Ro 6:23; Jn 3:36).

Do you wonder what happens after this life? Are you tired of living your life for things that only rot or rust? Do you sometimes doubt whether life has any meaning? Do you want to live after you die?

Is there a way out of this dilemma? Yes – and this is the wonderful “Good News”! In the Bible we read that God has provided one way out of this dilemma: God has provided a unique way of salvation! Since God has given free will to people, each person can either accept or reject this offer of God – his way of salvation!

In summary, the “**Good News**” in the Bible can be described as follow:

- 1) The fact is: we have all sinned and are therefore separated from God!
- 2) God in his mercy provided a way out of this dilemma – God provided a way of salvation! Each person can freely choose to accept or reject this way of salvation.
- 3) God send Jesus to be the way of salvation. The mis-

sion of Jesus was to come, to teach, and to serve as a sacrifice and to die on the cross!

- 4) Jesus, being the only person without sin, was worthy to serve as “God`s lamb” to die as a substitute for each one of us! Salvation is free, a gift from God offered to each person!
- 5) In this way, God provided a way out of the dilemma and established a way of restoration of our relationship with God!
- 6) This way of salvation is a gift from God to everyone: it can only be accepted by faith. It cannot be obtained by payment or good works or some religious activity!
- 7) This way of salvation is given by God because of his love to each one of us! He does not want us to perish, but to have peace in our heart and to live in paradise in God`s presence after we die.

#### **Some important references from the Bible which highlight this:**

- The Bible explains that by the sinful deed by one man Adam all humans are affected and are thrown out of paradise. However, God in his mercy sent one man, Jesus, by whom the way to paradise is again open to all people who accept God`s way of salvation (Rom 5).
- Jesus is the way of salvation! Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn 11:25-26).
- What is the way? What is the truth? What is the life? Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6).
- The hunger and thirst that you feel is a spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst, which can only be satisfied

by Jesus. Jesus said: "...whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn 4:14).

- Jesus is the only one who can lift the darkness. Jesus is the door to a satisfying life. Jesus is the friend and shepherd that you have been looking for. Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11).
- Jesus is the life—in this world and the next. Jesus is the way of salvation! "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).
- God gives a guarantee through Jesus that whoever believes in him will be saved and will enter paradise. Jesus said (Jn 5:24), "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life".

### 3.3 Steps to accept God`s way of salvation

The title of this book is: "Can we know the truth?". As the author of this book, I believe firmly that yes, we can know the truth because our God is a loving God and does not want us to be ignorant. God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah and says: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). This means that every person on earth who is seeking God with an honest heart will find God and his truth!

**The final question is now:**

*Are you prepared  
to accept the truth,  
believe in the true  
God and accept his  
way of salvation?*

- This is a matter of eternal death or life!
- I would like to ask you to seriously consider and pray about this most important matter.

If you would like to accept God`s way of Salvation, the following steps are recommended:

- 1) Before you take this step of faith, it is important to have a basic understanding of the Christian message. If you have not done so far yet and if at all possible, acquire a Bible in your language and study the Word of God. Please read your Bible and pray to God for understanding. If possible, speak with Christians and visit a suitable church.
- 2) If you have further questions and need to clarify certain aspects, it is advisable to get in contact with an experienced Christian believer, minister or counsellor. There are basic courses available which will give you an introduction to the Christian faith.
- 3) You can speak to God on your own by faith about your life and your decision to accept Jesus` way of salvation. But if you know a good Christian friend whom you trust, you could take this step of faith in his/her presence so that he or she can witness this important decision.

- 4) Whether you pray alone or with a Christian friend, tell God what is on your heart and that you would like to accept his way of salvation. You may pray freely according to what is in your heart, or you might like to use words such as these:

Lord Jesus Christ, I come to you now,  
just as I am with all my weaknesses, mistakes and  
sins. I am sorry that in the past I have chosen the  
wrong way.  
I'm only just realised now that you, Jesus,  
are the truth and the life. I thank you for your love  
and now I want to ask you,  
Lord Jesus, to come into my life. I need you.  
Make me pure with your blood which  
cleanses me spiritually. I open the door of my heart  
to you and receive you, Jesus,  
as my Redeemer, Lord and Saviour.  
I believe that you died on the cross for my sins  
and that you paid the price for me with your blood.  
I hand over the control of my life to you.  
Please fill me with the Holy Spirit and lead me.  
I believe you have heard this prayer and I thank you  
for your salvation and  
to become now a part of the family of God  
in your kingdom.  
Thank you for giving me the gift of eternal life  
in paradise. Please help me in my new spiritual life,  
that I can grow according to your will and become a  
mature Christian.  
Amen!

- 5) It is important that you fully understand what it means to accept the "Good News", which is the way of salvation of God, also called the Gospel. The following points are important:
- a. You need to transfer your trust from Muhammad to Jesus (Jn 14:6).
  - b. Knowing the risen and living Jesus Christ as personal saviour and redeemer (Jn 1:12; Rev 3:20).
  - c. You need to recognise Jesus as the Lord of your life who is to be obeyed, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God (Jn 14:23-26).
  - d. All sins must be confessed (Ac 2:38; 1Jn 1:9). This includes renouncing any connections with dark powers and occult practices. Should problems arise in this area, I would strongly advise you to consult an experienced Christian counsellor.
- 6) In addition, it is advisable, if at all possible, to join a Christian fellowship where you can pray, worship God and study the Bible with fellow Christian believers.
- 7) At a later stage you may share your step of faith with other Christians and people of other faiths.

### 3.4 Consequences of the new life

How should Christians behave? Someone rightly said, "Christians are not perfect, they are forgiven". Christians no longer live just for themselves, but for God (2Co 5:14-15). Christians devote their lives to God out of a thankful heart. They are not saved by doing good works but do good works because they are saved and grateful to God for giving them the gift of eternal life (Eph 2:8-10).

A Christian obeys God out of love (Jn 14:21, 23). Love grows through personal encounter. You cannot love a person you do not know. Only when you get to know Jesus can you love Him for who and what He is. To love God means to love Jesus – to love Jesus means to love God (1Jn 2:22-23) and to love people, especially fellow believers. As Jesus said (Jn 13:34-35):

*“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another ... all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”.*

A Christian’s love for God is shown by the way he loves other people, including his enemies (1Jn 4:7-12). This love is shown by caring for others in practical ways. When Jesus becomes the Lord of your life, every aspect of your life comes under His control. However, since we are still human, total perfection will not be attained in this life, although Christians strive towards this goal. Wonderfully, God has opened a way for daily forgiveness to remove our daily shortcomings and sins (1Jn 1:5-10; Pr 28:13).

It is important to know that, as Christians we have assurance of eternal life in heaven (Jn 5:24)! This confidence does not depend on our character or quality of life but on God’s promises, which we receive by faith. Our faith rests alone in Jesus Christ who said (Jn 10:28):

*“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”*

In humble gratitude towards such a great and loving God we may say: “We know that we are children of God” (1 Jn 5:19).

## 4. Appendices

### 4.1 Bibliography and recommended reading

- Ali, A Yusuf (ed). 1946 (Printed: 4/1993). *The Holy Qur’an*. WIPE International
- Campbell, W 1986. *The Qur’an and the Bible* in the light of history and science. Upper Darby: AWM.
- Caner, E and Caner, EF 2002. *Unveiling Islam*. Grand Rapids: Spectrum Books Lim.
- Gaudeul, JM 1999. *Called from Islam to Christ—why Muslims become Christians*. London: Monarch.
- Gilchrist, J 1989. *Jam`Al-Qur`an—The Codification of the Qur`an Text*. Johannesburg: MERCSA.
- Gilchrist, J 1994. *Muhammad—the Prophet of Islam*. Johannesburg: MERCSA.
- Gilchrist, J 1995. *The Qur’an—the Scripture of Islam*. Johannesburg: MERCSA.
- Gilchrist, J 1999. *Facing the Muslim Challenge—a Handbook of Christian-Muslim Apologetics*. Johannesburg: MERCSA
- Gilchrist, J 2003. *Sharing the Gospel with Muslims—a Handbook for Bible-based Muslim Evangelism*. Cape Town: Life Challenge Africa.
- Gilchrist, J 2008. *Designed for a Purpose. Benoni: Christian Resource Ministries*.
- Glasser, I & N 1998. *Partners or Prisoners? Christian Thinking about Women and Islam*.
- Goldsmith, M 2004. *Islam and Christian Witness*. OM Publishing.
- Hughes, TP 1982. *Dictionary of Islam*. New Delhi: COSMO.
- Kateregga BD & Shenk DW 1980. *Islam and Christianity—a Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Maurer, A 1999. *In Search of a New Life: Conversion Motives of Christians and Muslims*. Pretoria: UNISA.

Maurer, A 2008. *Ask your Muslim Friend*. South Africa: AcadSA Publishing.

Maurer, A 2014. *Illustrations, Parables, Stories*. Switzerland: AVC

Musk, B 1989. *The Unseen Face of Islam—sharing the Gospel with ordinary Muslims*. London: MARC.

Nehls, G 1985. Al-Kitab “*The Book*”—*a Bible correspondence course for Muslims*. Wellington: Biblecor.

Nehls, G & Eric, W 2006. *Reach Out: What every Christian needs to know about Islam and Muslims*. Nairobi: Life Challenge Africa.

Parshall, P 1994. *Inside the Community—Understanding Muslims through their Traditions*. Grand Rapids: Baker House.

Shorosh Dr. Anis A. 1988. *Islam Revealed—A Christian Arab’s View of Islam*. Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Swartley, KE 2014. *Encountering the World of Islam*. Littleton USA: BottomLine Media.

Watt, WM 1980. *Islamic Political Thought*. Edinburgh: University Press.

Zebiri, K 1997. *Muslims and Christians Face to Face*. Oxford: One World.

Zenjibari, MA 2002. *Islam and Christianity—a comparative Study*. Qum/Iran: Ansariyan.

#### 4.2 Resources

For further help and advanced teaching you are invited to contact the following website: [www.aymf.net](http://www.aymf.net) ([www.ask-your-muslim-friend.net](http://www.ask-your-muslim-friend.net)).

AVC Switzerland also provides online tutorial lectures. You may contact AVC in the following ways: Email or internet: [mail@avc-ch.org](mailto:mail@avc-ch.org), [www.avc-int.org](http://www.avc-int.org)  
Postal address: AVC, Industriestrasse 21, 2553 Safnern bei Biel, Switzerland.

**In addition to the above, there are many other websites which give extensive information, such as:<sup>4</sup>**

#### **Christian websites on Christianity and Islam:**

<http://answeringislam.net>

<http://encounteringislam.org>

<http://iers.grial.eu/modules/introduction/islami/islamindex.html>

<https://carm.org/islam-examined>

<https://answeringislamblog.wordpress.com>

<https://i2ministries.org>

<http://www.answeringmuslims.com>

<https://thewadi.org/>

<https://www.jihadwatch.org>

<https://www.unchangingword.com/>

#### **Islamic websites for the study of Islam and the Qur`an:**

<https://info.qurangateway.org>

<http://www.quranexplorer.com>

[https://guides.library.georgetown.edu/islam/quran\\_hadith](https://guides.library.georgetown.edu/islam/quran_hadith)

#### **Christian discipleship courses:**

<https://answering-islam.org/Nehls/Alkitab/index.html>

<https://come-follow-me.org>

<https://www.bmbtraining.org>

**YouTube:** there are a lot of conversations taking place on this channel from different speakers. As an example, the following is worth listening: <https://www.youtube.com/c/CIRAInternational>

---

<sup>4</sup> Please note that the author is not in agreement with all the information and every point of view given on these websites. The reader is challenged to listen and read with a critical mind and come to their own conclusions.

### 4.3 Abbreviations

AD = Anno Domini (years after Christ)

AH = After Hijra (The Islamic calendar starts with the year when Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina, 622 AD)

AVC = Action on behalf of persecuted Christians and people in need

BC = Before Christ

ch = chapter

cf = cross reference

f = see also the following verse

ff = see also the following verses

p = page

pp = pages

v = verse

UNISA = University of South Africa

Q = Qur'an: Surah (chapter) and verse

Vol = Volume

### Books of the Bible:

#### Old Testament (OT)

Am	Amos	Hos	Hosea	Mic	Micah
Ch	Chronicles	Is	Isaiah	Na	Nahum
Da	Daniel	Jer	Jeremiah	Ne	Nehemiah
Dt	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Nu	Numbers
Ecc	Ecclesiastes	Joel	Joel	Ob	Obadiah
Est	Esther	Jnh	Jonah	Ps	Psalms
Ex	Exodus	Jos	Joshua	Pr	Proverbs
Eze	Ezekiel	Jdg	Judges	Ru	Ruth
Ezr	Ezra	Ki	Kings	Sa	Samuel
Ge	Genesis	La	Lamentations	SS	Song of Songs
Hab	Habakkuk	Lev	Leviticus	Zec	Zechariah
Hag	Haggai	Mal	Malachi	Zep	Zephaniah

#### New Testament (NT)

Ac	Acts	Jn	John	Php	Philippians
Col	Colossians	Jude	Jude	Rev	Revelation
Co	Corinthians	Lk	Luke	Ro	Romans
Eph	Ephesians	Mk	Mark	Th	Thessalonians
Gal	Galatians	Mt	Matthew	Ti	Timothy
Heb	Hebrews	Pe	Peter	Tit	Titus
Jas	James	Phm	Philemon		