

Class Objective: To refine our faith and understanding by dismantling misconceptions regarding God, the Bible and the Christian life.

Notes

VI. Twelve misconceptions considered in light of biblical truth

C. Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

5. Muslims and Christians

a) **Common beliefs** held by Islam and Christianity include that there is one God who is creator, ruler and judge, that Jesus was (at least) a miraculous prophet and that God inspired holy books.

(1) While the Quran has many allusions to biblical stories and characters (the two most frequently named figures are Moses, 136 times and Abraham, 69 times, and Jesus is named six times as frequently as Mohammed), it both misconstrues the historic occurrence of these people and events and “repurposes them to serve a radically different theological agenda.” *Mark Durie*

b) **Divergent beliefs** in Islam accept the authority of the Koran as God’s revelation to Mohammed but believe the Bible is not reliable because its text has been corrupted. Islam **denies** the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the doctrine of the incarnation, the death of Jesus on the cross (and thus its redemptive power) and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

(1) “The differences between Christianity and Islam are wide and deep. We disagree about the Bible, the Koran, the place of Mohammed, the person and work of Jesus Christ, what happened on the cross, what happens when you die, and how you get to heaven, to name only a few major differences. Christians worship a Triune God, one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20). In the Christian understanding, God is only truly known and truly worshiped when he is known and worshiped as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 14:6-7; 9-11). The Christian God is the invisible God we behold as visible in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4-6; Col. 1:15). On this side of the incarnation, all other conceptions of God are not merely incomplete, but idolatrous (John 8:39-59).” *Kevin DeYoung*

(2) “Muslims believe that ‘God is one.’ Allah has no partners and assigning partners to him is **shirk**, the highest blasphemy. Christians believe ‘God is one in three persons.’ Each person in the Trinity is fully and eternally God. Yet there is one God. Our Muslim neighbors believe Christians are guilty of the greatest sin—making partners with God.” *Thabiti Anyabwile*

c) The glory of the nature of God is seen in Christ alone.

(1) ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:5, 6

- d) God receives only worship that comes through the mediation of Jesus Christ.
- (1) ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:23-26
- (2) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6
- e) Old Testament Jewish history begins with Abraham about 2000 B.C. Christianity dates from Jesus' birth at 6-4 B.C. and Islam begins about 600 A.D. Regardless of this historic progression and the close relationship between Jewish and Christian history, it cannot be said that Islam evolved from either Old Testament Jewish roots or Christianity.
- f) "Islam's relationship to Christianity is not like that of a church which has been transformed into a mosque, like the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Rather it is more like a church has been demolished, and its materials have been repurposed for the construction of a mosque." *Mark Durie*
- g) What does this mean for our relationship with followers of Islam? (K. DeYoung)
- (1) Muslims are made in the image of God and deserve to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.
- (a) "We can assure them that we do not hold them responsible for the radical Muslims who terrorize the world." *Irwin Lutzer*
- (b) This does not mean that Muslims are our brothers and sisters.
- (2) Christians should look for opportunities to show love and compassion to our Muslim neighbors.
- (a) Studies in the 21st century suggest that, in terms of percentage and worldwide spread, Islam is the fastest-growing major religion in the world. There are presently more than 2 billion Muslims in the world.
- (b) "We can be good and helpful neighbors without sacrificing the very truths that bring sinners into the presence of God. Jesus affirmed "Love your neighbor," but He did not say that we had to agree with them doctrinally in order to do so." *Irwin Lutzer*
- (c) This does not mean the church has the responsibility to provide for all Muslims everywhere.
- (d) Christians should do good to all people as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). The church's priority is the church, and the mission of the church is to make disciples and plant healthy churches (Acts 14:21-23; Rom. 15:19).

D. Jesus is more loving and compassionate than the God of the Old Testament.

1. “Old Testament scholar Peter Enns asks how to reconcile the New Testament portrayal of Jesus with the God he finds [in the Old Testament]. The Old Testament God told Israel to enter the promised land and exterminate the nations that were living there. They must ‘make no treaty with them and show them no mercy’ (Deut. 7:2). Conversely, Jesus commands his followers to love all their neighbors, including their enemies. Enns concludes, ‘Jesus teaching is a reversal of the Old Testament’s dominant tone of exclusivism. You do not hate your enemies; you love them. You do not kill them; you evangelize them.’ Jesus is far more loving and compassionate than the petulant Jehovah who drowns the world in a flood, slays Egyptian first born sons in their sleep, opens the ground to swallow Korah’s family and incinerates stubborn folks with fire from heaven.” *Wittmer*

a) Other contemporary voices of this view include Brian McLaren, a former pastor and author, who argued that “a god who mandates an intentional supernatural disaster leading to unparalleled genocide is hardly worthy of belief, much less worship. How can you ask your children—or non-church colleagues and neighbors—to honor a deity so uncreative, overreactive, and utterly capricious regarding life?” Professor Eric Seibert argues the Old Testament stories of violence indicate “not everything in the ‘good book’ is either good or good for us. . . . At times the Bible endorses values we should reject, praises acts we must condemn, and portrays God in ways we cannot accept.”

b) Such disparagement of the Old Testament God dates at least as far back as the second century when the heretic theologian, Marcion, denied that Jesus and the Old Testament God were the same deity. This prompted him to eliminate the entire Old Testament from his Bible along with any references to it in the New Testament. As a result he accepted only the Gospel of Luke and some of Paul’s epistles, howbeit with every Old Testament allusion removed.

2. Notwithstanding assurance that God executes righteous acts of judgment, the Old Testament reveals that he does so from a posture of grace, mercy, compassion and forbearance.

a) ⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” Exodus 34:6, 7

b) For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. Psalm 33:4, 5

c) But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children’s children,
to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments. Psalm 103:17, 18

d) “The flood was a sign of God’s patience, who put up with human wickedness” while the ark was being prepared” (1 Peter 3:20). The long-suffering God did not destroy the heathen living in Canaan until their sin had “reached it full measure” (Genesis 15:16). He tolerated years of child sacrifice, even among his own people (2 Kings 16:3; Jeremiah 19:4, 5) [before executing judgment].” *Wittmer*

3. God’s ultimate prosecution of justice is inherently an act of love. No deity who disregards justice could merit our adoration or praise.

4. As regards the New Testament it should be noted that the descriptions of divine judgment administered by Jesus are even more severe than that seen in the Old Testament.

a) ²⁷ And he [God] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. John 5:28, 29

b) ⁶. . . God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the **Lord Jesus** is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

c) ¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. . . . ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. . . . ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. Revelation 19:11, 14, 15, 19-21

d) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:15