

MOUNT SINAI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

THE CORE BELIEFS OF OTHER RELIGIONS

ISLAM

Islamic doctrine is built on strict monotheism —the belief in one, unique God (Allah)—and voluntary submission to His will. Based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah (teachings of Prophet Muhammad), it emphasizes six core articles of faith: belief in God, angels, holy books, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and predestination.

Core Articles of Faith (Aqidah)

- **Belief in One God (Tawhid):** God is unique, without partners, and the sole creator and sustainer of the universe.
- **Belief in Angels:** Agents of divine will, such as Gabriel.
- **Belief in Holy Books:** The Qur'an is the final, perfect word of God, following previous revelations like the Torah and Gospel
- **Belief in Prophets:** God sent messengers throughout history, with Muhammad being the final prophet.
- **Belief in the Day of Judgment (Akhirah):** Everyone will be resurrected for judgment, leading to paradise or hell.
- **Belief in Predestination:** God has preordained all events, yet humans possess free will and are responsible for their actions.

The Five Pillars (Core Practices)

The faith is put into practice through five mandatory acts of worship:

1. **Shahada:** Declaration of faith ("There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah").
2. **Salah:** Performing five daily prayers facing Mecca.

3. **Zakat:** Giving a fixed percentage of income to charity.
4. **Sawm:** Fasting from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan.
5. **Hajj:** Making the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once, if possible.

Note: Mecca (Makkah), located in Saudi Arabia, is the holiest city in Islam and the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad. As the destination for the annual Hajj pilgrimage and the direction of daily prayers (qibla) for over a billion Muslims, it serves as the spiritual heart of Islam, centered on the Kaaba within the Masjid al-Haram

Key Principles

- **Divine Law (Sharia):** Governs daily life, emphasizing justice, mercy, and ethical conduct.
- **Human Accountability:** Every person is responsible for their choices and will face judgment.
- **Innocence at Birth:** Muslims believe humans are born innocent and responsible for their own actions upon reaching maturity.

NATION OF ISLAM (Black Muslims)

The Nation of Islam (NOI) is a prominent American religious movement founded in 1930 that blends Islamic terminology with Black nationalism, focusing on self-reliance, racial unity, and separation. While distinct from orthodox Islam, it has heavily influenced African American culture and identity, with prominent members like Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali.

Core Beliefs and History of the Nation of Islam

- **Origin:** Founded in Detroit, Michigan, by Wallace Fard Muhammad in 1930, it aimed to provide knowledge of self and God to African Americans.
- **Leadership:** After Fard's disappearance, Elijah Muhammad led the group for decades, followed by, most notably, Louis Farrakhan.

- **Teachings:** The NOI teaches Black nationalist ideas, economic self-sufficiency, and strict personal discipline. It originally preached that Black people are the original humans, while the white race was created by a scientist named Yakub.
- **Separation:** The movement has traditionally advocated for a separate nation for Black Americans, rather than integration.

Key Historical Shifts and Movements

- **Moorish Science Temple (1913):** Founded by Noble Drew Ali, this earlier group connected Islamic teachings with Black nationalist identity.
- **Malcolm X:** A major spokesperson whose charisma brought national attention to the movement before he left over disagreements regarding NOI leadership and later converted to orthodox Islam.
- **Splintering (1970s):** After Elijah Muhammad's death, many members moved toward Sunni Islam under Warith Deen Mohammed (the American Society of Muslims), while Louis Farrakhan revived the original Nation of Islam.

The NOI vs. Mainstream Islam

- **Unorthodox Nature:** Scholars often classify the NOI as a new religious movement rather than traditional Islam because its beliefs differ significantly from the Quran.
- **Global Connection:** While the NOI has a distinct identity, most African American Muslims in the U.S. today, which represent roughly 20% of American Muslims, practice mainstream Sunni Islam.
- **Current State:** The current NOI led by Louis Farrakhan is far smaller than its 1960s peak, with an estimated 35,000 members, but it remains a influential, frequently criticized voice.

Legacy and Influence

The NOI has profoundly influenced African American political, social, and cultural thought by promoting racial pride and challenging white supremacy. It is often

remembered for its role in the Civil Rights era and its efforts to rehabilitate incarcerated African Americans.

Yes, Muslims believe in and revere Jesus (known as *Isa* in Arabic) as a major prophet and messenger of God, as well as the Messiah. While the Quran confirms his virgin birth and miracles, Muslims do not believe Jesus is the Son of God, nor that he was crucified, but rather that he was raised to heaven.

Key aspects of Jesus in Islam include:

- **Highly Regarded:** Jesus is a revered figure in Islam, mentioned 25 times in the Quran and recognized as a messenger to the Israelites.
- **Prophet, Not Divine:** Muslims consider Jesus a human prophet rather than a divine being or part of a Trinity.
- **Virgin Birth:** The Quran confirms Mary (Maryam) was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus.
- **Miracles:** Muslims believe Jesus performed miracles by God's permission, including healing the blind, curing lepers, and bringing the dead back to life.
- **No Crucifixion:** Mainstream Islamic tradition holds that Jesus was not crucified or killed, but rather that God raised him up alive to heaven.
- **Second Coming:** Muslims believe Jesus will return to Earth before the end of time to restore justice.

Generally, Muslims do not celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday because it commemorates the birth of Jesus as the Son of God, which conflicts with Islamic theology. However, many Muslims respect Jesus (*Isa*) as a major prophet and may participate in the cultural, social, or secular aspects of the season, such as exchanging gifts or enjoying festive lights, particularly in Western countries.

Christian apologetics is the reasoned defense and justification of the Christian faith, derived from the Greek *apologia* (a defense, 1 Peter 3:15). It serves to provide evidence for Christian truths (offensive) and answer objections (defensive), aiming to show that Christianity is rational, coherent, and worthy of belief.

Core Types of Christian Apologetics

- **Classical Apologetics:** Focuses on proving the existence of God through natural theology and philosophical arguments before presenting evidence for Jesus Christ.
- **Presuppositional Apologetics:** Argues that without the presupposition of the Christian God, knowledge and morality are impossible. It directly challenges the foundational worldview of the unbeliever
- **Evidential Apologetics:** Focuses on historical, legal, and archaeological evidence, such as the resurrection of Jesus, to prove Christianity true.
- **Experiential/Cumulative Case:** Emphasizes personal experience and a cumulative set of arguments (moral, historical, experiential) to show that Christianity is the best explanation for reality.

Common Apologetic Techniques

- **The Kalam Cosmological Argument:** Argues that because the universe had a beginning, it must have had a cause, which is God.
- **The Resurrection Evidence:** Defends the historical reliability of the Gospels and the physical resurrection of Jesus.
- **The Problem of Evil:** Addresses why a good God allows suffering.
- **The Moral Argument:** Argues that objective moral values exist, which necessitate a moral lawgiver.
- **Pre-Evangelism:** Using arguments to clear the path, removing intellectual roadblocks for people to consider the Gospel, as discussed on Cross Examined.

Approaches and Limitations

- **Gentleness and Respect:** 1 Peter 3:15 advises that defenses should be made with humility, not arrogance.

- **Limitations:** While useful for showing plausibility, arguments rarely produce saving faith on their own; it is often viewed as "pre-evangelism" that pairs with the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Historical Roots:** Apologetics originated in the New Testament (Paul at Mars Hill) and grew in the early church to combat accusations and heresies.

Key apologists throughout history include Justin Martyr, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, C.S. Lewis, and modern proponents like William Lane Craig and Timothy Keller.