

So What's the Difference?

Comparing Evangelical Christianity to Other Faiths



#10 – Judaism

A. Brief Background of Israel's History

- Covenant with Abraham, passed through Isaac, Jacob
- Moses and the Exodus, the Law, the Promised Land
- Judges and Kings, Divided Kingdom (Israel and Judah)
- Captivity and Exile
- Roman rule. Christ crucified. Temple destroyed AD70
- Christianity under Constantine
- 14 million Jews in the world today
- Different branches of Judaism
 - 1st Cn–Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots
 - Today: Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Messianic

B. Statement of Jewish Belief

(written by Moses Maimonides, 12th century)

- God exists
- God is one and unique
- God is incorporeal
- God is eternal
- Prayer is to God only
- The prophets spoke truth
- Moses was the greatest of the prophets
- The written and oral Torah were given to Moses

- **Rom 3:20-30** ²⁰ For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. ²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. ²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus. ²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law. ²⁹ After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. ³⁰ There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles."
- **Heb 10:1-7** ¹ The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. ² If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. ³ But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. ⁴ For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, "You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer. ⁶ You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin. ⁷ Then I said, 'Look, I have come to do your will, O God— as is written about me in the Scriptures.'"

- There will be no other Torah
- God knows the thoughts and deeds of men
- God will reward the good and punish the wicked
- The Messiah will come
- The dead will be resurrected

C. So What's the Difference?

The Authority of the Scriptures

- Judaism - The Tanakh - The Old Testament, with emphasis on the Torah (first 5 books), plus the oral Torah, and the collection of rabbinical teachings (Talmud) to explain and apply the law. The New Testament is not considered authoritative.
- Christian: The Old Testament is the written revelation of God. The New Testament is the written revelation of God and a continuation of the OT, together forming the Holy Scriptures.

The Identity of the Messiah

- In Judaism, Jesus is not the Messiah, not the Son of God, and He did not rise from the dead. The Messiah is still to come, and when He does, He will restore the Jewish kingdom on earth.
- Jesus did not fulfill rabbinical expectations of the Messiah –
 - rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Eze 37:26-28)
 - gather Jewish people to the land of Israel (Is 43:5-6)
 - bring universal peace (Is 2:4)
 - spread worldwide knowledge of God (Zech 14:9)
- Jesus didn't act the way they expected the Messiah would
 - He didn't affirm the rabbi's authority
 - He didn't keep the Law (e.g. Sabbath)
 - He suffered and died rather than reigning as a powerful king ending the oppression of the Romans
- **John 1:10-11** ¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him."
- In Christianity, Jesus Christ is indeed the promised Messiah as shown by the many fulfilled OT prophecies, His sinless life, His many miracles, His resurrection, His post resurrection appearances, and the changed lives of the disciples.

- **John 5:39-40** ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life."
- **Luke 24:25-27** ²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."
- **Mat 5:17-20** ¹⁷ "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. ²⁰ But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"

How People are Saved

- Judaism has no concept of original sin. Sin means not keeping the law. Salvation is possible through the obedience to biblical and rabbinical law. Atonement is accomplished through obedience to the Law, not faith in the Messiah.
- In Christianity, every person has sinned, resulting in a broken relationship with God. We cannot save ourselves, no matter how many good works we do. We are incapable of keeping the Law. God promised in the Old Testament that a Messiah would come to save us from our sins. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ shows that Jesus is our Saviour.
- **Rom 5:12, 18-19** ¹² When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. ... ¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous."