

ARE ALLAH AND THE GOD OF THE BIBLE THE SAME?

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In light of the recent attacks on America, many questions have arisen about the religion of Islam. One area of confusion surrounds Allah. We have received several emails asking, "Are Allah and the God of the Bible the same?" Islam teaches that the true God is a being called Allah, and that all other views of God are false. The Koran emphasizes of Allah: "There is no God but he, the Living, the everlasting." 1But who is Allah? Is he anything like the God of Christian faith? No. Allah lacks such attributes as holiness, grace and love. If we compare the Muslim God with the biblical God, we can see that Islam and Christianity have entirely different views of God. First, Allah is a distant God with whom no one can have a personal relationship in the manner described biblically. But the God of the Bible desires men and women to have a personal relationship with Him (John 1:1, 11-14; 15:9-15; 16:27; 17:20-26). Second, the Muslim God has a different nature and character from the biblical God. For example, Allah is not ultimately a God of love, but the Bible teaches "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:16). Throughout the Koran it is stressed that Allah only "loves" (is merciful to) those who do good, but that he is not merciful to those who are bad. Allah repeatedly emphasizes that he does not love the sinner. 2 Thus the "love" of Allah is not the love of the God of the Bible. The biblical God does love the sinner; in fact, He loves all sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:1-10). Third, Allah is considered the author of evil. But the biblical God is not the author of evil. Rather He is infinitely holy and righteous (1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 77:13; 99:9; Revelation 15:4). His "eyes are too pure to look on evil" (Habakkuk 1:13). Fourth, Muslims deny the triune nature of God as revealed in the Bible. The Koran emphasizes that Christians are unbelievers and infidels because they believe in the historic Christian doctrine of the trinity. 3 (The Koran distorts the orthodox view of the Trinity as tritheism—three gods.) But the Bible tells us that God has revealed Himself as a triune Being, as one God eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (John 1:1, 14; Acts 5:3, 4). 4 What does all this mean? It means that the Muslim God and the biblical God constitute two distinct and opposing concepts of God. Because Muslims teach that Allah alone is the one true God, they claim that Christians worship a false god, a pagan idol. But perhaps Muslims have forgotten that it was "Allah" who was originally the pagan god. Scholars agree that before Muhammad, "Allah" was only one of the pagan deities of the pre-Islamic Arabic pantheon (collection of gods)—and not even the

central deity. It was thus Muhammad who transformed and elevated this pagan deity into the supreme God of Islam.

Notes: 1. A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: MacMillan, 1976), p. 65. 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 90, 142, 178, 204. 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40. 4. For a good study, see E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1984), and Edward Bickersteth, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Kregel). 5. G. D. Newby in *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*, p. 23.3