

The Six Articles of Faith (Iman — Beliefs)

Every Muslim is expected to believe in these six foundational doctrines:

1. **Belief in One God (Allah) — *Tawhid***
God is absolutely one, unique, and without partners. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Judge of all things. Worship is due to God alone.
2. **Belief in Angels**
Angels are created beings who serve God's commands, such as Gabriel (Jibril), who delivered revelation to the prophets.
3. **Belief in the Revealed Books**
God revealed guidance to humanity through scriptures, including:
 - Torah (to Moses)
 - Psalms (to David)
 - Gospel (to Jesus)
 - **Qur'an** (to Muhammad — final and preserved revelation)
4. **Belief in the Prophets and Messengers**
God sent prophets to guide humanity, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and **Muhammad**, who is believed to be the final prophet.
5. **Belief in the Day of Judgment**
All people will be resurrected and judged by God for their deeds, with accountability leading to Paradise or Hell.
6. **Belief in Divine Decree (Qadr)**
God has full knowledge and control over all things. While humans have responsibility for their choices, everything ultimately occurs within God's will and wisdom.

The Five Pillars of Islam (Islam — Practices)

These are the core religious duties that express Islamic faith in daily life:

1. **Shahada (Declaration of Faith)**

"There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."
2. **Salah (Prayer)**
Five daily prayers at set times, facing Mecca.
3. **Zakat (Charity)**
Obligatory giving (usually 2.5% of qualifying wealth) to help the poor and support the community.
4. **Sawm (Fasting during Ramadan)**
Abstaining from food, drink, and marital relations from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan.
5. **Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca)**
A pilgrimage once in a lifetime, if physically and financially able.

1. God (Trinity vs. Absolute Unity)

Christianity:

- God is **one Being in three Persons**:
 - Father
 - Son
 - Holy Spirit
- Trinity is central, though mysterious
- God is called **Father**
- Believers are adopted as children of God
- Personal, relational emphasis

Islam:

- God is **strictly one**
- The Trinity is rejected as compromising God's oneness
- Associating partners with God is the greatest sin
- God is not called Father
- Emphasis on God as:
 - Lord
 - King
 - Judge
 - Merciful
- Relationship is more servant-to-Lord than Father-to-child

Why this matters (especially in apologetics)

From a Christian theological perspective, the differences are not just interpretive—they concern: **Who God is? Who Jesus is? How sinners are reconciled to God?**

So while Islam and Christianity share ethical teachings and historical roots, they present **fundamentally different gospels and views of God.**

The Identity of Jesus

Christianity:

- Jesus is:
 - The **Son of God**
 - Fully God and fully man
 - The second Person of the Trinity
 - Savior and Lord

Islam:

- Jesus (*Isa*) is:
 - A great prophet
 - Born of the virgin Mary
 - A miracle worker
 - **Not God**
 - **Not the Son of God**

3. The Crucifixion and Resurrection

Christianity:

- Jesus was crucified
- His death is **atonement for sin**
- He physically rose from the dead
- Central to salvation

Islam:

- The Qur'an teaches that Jesus was **not actually crucified**
 - It appeared so, but God raised him up
- Therefore:
 - No atoning death
 - No resurrection as in Christian teaching

Salvation: Grace vs. Balance of Deeds

Christianity:

- Salvation is by **grace through faith**
- Jesus' sacrifice pays for sin
- Good works flow from salvation, not cause it (Ephesians 2:8–9)

Islam:

- Salvation involves:
 - Faith
 - Obedience
 - Good deeds weighed against bad
- God's mercy is essential, but there is **no substitute atonement**

Salvation in Islam

Core Beliefs

- Salvation depends on **faith (*īmān*) and righteous deeds (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*)**.
- Key practices (the *Five Pillars*) reinforce faith and obedience:
 1. Declaration of faith (*shahada*)
 2. Prayer (*salat*)
 3. Charity (*zakah*)
 4. Fasting (*sawm*, especially Ramadan)
 5. Pilgrimage (*hajj*, if able)
- God is **merciful**, and repentance can wipe away sins.

Summary: Salvation is earned through a combination of sincere faith, obedience, and God's mercy. No one achieves salvation through lineage or ritual alone.

The Final Revelation

Christianity:

- Jesus is the final and fullest revelation of God
- The Bible is God's inspired Word

Islam:

- Muhammad is the final prophet
- The Qur'an is God's final, perfect revelation
- The Bible is seen as originally from God but corrupted over time

1. What Islam Thinks About the Bible

Islam teaches that God truly revealed:

- **Torah** — to Moses
- **Psalms** — to David
- **Gospel** — to Jesus

Islamic theology teaches that these earlier scriptures were later corrupted or distorted.

The Early View - The text itself was mostly preserved, But Jews and Christians **misinterpreted or twisted the meaning**

The Common Today View - The actual text of the Bible was **changed, added to, or lost**. Therefore, today's Bible is **not identical** to what God originally revealed

How Muslims View Today's Christian Bible

- The Bible **may contain some truth**
- But it is **not fully trustworthy**
- It is **not authoritative over the Qur'an**
- The Qur'an is the **final, perfect, and preserved revelation**

The Bible is treated as a historical religious book, not as the preserved Word of God.

The Qur'an as the Final Authority. The Qur'an corrects errors in earlier scriptures. The Qur'an alone is perfectly preserved. So when the Bible and Qur'an disagree: Islam teaches the Bible is wrong and The Qur'an is always right

This creates a well-known theological tension: The Qur'an:

- Affirms the Torah and Gospel as revelation
- Tells Jews and Christians to judge by their books
- Says God's Word cannot be changed (6:115)

Yet later Islamic theology says: Those same books are corrupted.

From a Christian apologetics perspective This difference is crucial because Christianity teaches:

- The Bible is **preserved and authoritative**
- Jesus is **God incarnate**
- The Gospel message has **not been lost**

Whereas Islam teaches:

- The Gospel Jesus taught is **no longer fully available**
- The Bible is **subordinate to the Qur'an**

Quran – Muhammed dictated revelations received from 610 AD until his death in 632 AD. Some not all of these were written down at the time, they were later written down after his death and the final version came around 650 AD. Muhammed claimed to receive these revelations from an angel, specifically Gabriel.

Islamic tradition teaches that in a night's journey he traveled to Jerusalem and ascended to heaven to be strengthened.

Authority in Islam

Core Beliefs

- **Ultimate authority lies with God and His revelation:**
 - Qur'an = divine word
 - Sunnah = Prophet Muhammad's example
- Human leaders (imams, scholars, caliphs) **interpret but do not supersede revelation.**

Sunni vs Shia distinction

- **Sunni Islam:** Authority is decentralized; scholars interpret law, no human is infallible.
- **Shia Islam:** Certain Imams (from Ali's lineage) are considered **divinely guided interpreters**, but even they do not replace God's word.

Summary: Islamic authority is **scriptural first, interpretive second**, with scholars or imams serving guidance roles, not as ultimate arbiters.

Priesthood

General Principle: No Priesthood

Common Types of Islamic Religious Leaders

1. Imam (Prayer Leader / Community Leader)

Sunni Islam:

- An **imam** is primarily:
 - The leader of congregational prayer
 - A teacher or preacher
 - A community guide
- Not a sacramental priest
- Authority comes from:
 - Knowledge
 - Respect of the community
 - Training in Islamic sciences

In many mosques, the imam functions somewhat like a pastor, but **without priestly mediation.**

Ulama (Scholars)

- Interpret Islamic law
- Issue legal opinions (*fatwas*)
- Teach and preserve doctrine

Mufti (Legal Authority)

- They help Muslims apply Islamic law to new situations

Qadi (Judge)

- Rules in Islamic courts
- Applies Sharia in legal disputes

Ayatollahs & Marja (Shia Islam — More Hierarchical)

Shia Islam has a more developed clerical structure:

- **Ayatollahs** are high-ranking scholars
- **Grand Ayatollahs (Marja' al-taqlid)** are top authorities
- Ordinary Shia Muslims often:
 - Follow a specific marja for legal and religious guidance

So in Shia Islam, clerical authority is **more centralized and hierarchical** than in Sunni Islam.

Tolerance: How tolerant Islam is depends heavily on interpretation, culture, and government. In some places, it looks genuinely tolerant; in others, it is not.

Qur'an 5:32:

"Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land — it is as if he had slain all mankind."

Infidel – (kafir) broadly describes anyone who is not a Muslim.

Heaven in Islam

Core Beliefs

- Heaven is described as a **paradise of eternal reward**.
- Rewards are both **spiritual and physical**, though descriptions are often metaphorical.
- Includes:
 - Peace, joy, and satisfaction
 - Rivers, gardens, and abundant provision
 - Companions of purity (*hūr al-'ayn*)

Summary: Heaven is both metaphorical and literal — a state of eternal fulfillment, peace, and closeness to God. The exact nature is beyond human comprehension.

The concept of “virgins in heaven” in Islam

In Islamic scripture, the Qur’an describes a class of heavenly companions often called **ḥūr al-‘ayn** (حور العين). In English, they are sometimes loosely translated as “virgins,” but that translation is **oversimplified and culturally loaded**.

What the Qur’an actually emphasizes

The Qur’an’s descriptions of Paradise are largely **symbolic, poetic, and reward-oriented**, using language that would resonate with the 7th-century Arabian audience. It describes:

- Companions who are:
 - Pure
 - Beautiful
 - Free from jealousy, pain, or conflict
- A state of perfect peace, joy, and satisfaction
- Complete fulfillment without suffering, aging, or corruption

The core emphasis is **not sexual conquest**, but **honor, joy, peace, and relational harmony** in Paradise.

How extremists and pop culture distort this

Some extremists and critics alike have:

- Reduced Paradise to a sexual fantasy
- Used the imagery to recruit or mock
- Ignored the broader Qur’anic emphasis on righteousness, peace, and God’s pleasure

In Shi’a Islam the Imam interprets the hidden meaning of the qu’ran. Descendants of Muhammed and appointed by God.

The Truths About Islam

Unequal status in classical Islamic law

Classical Islamic legal systems typically gave non-Muslims (even “People of the Book”):

- Inferior legal status
- Special taxes (jizya)
- Restrictions on public religious expression
- Fewer political rights

This is not modern religious equality.

2. Apostasy treated severely in traditional law

In most classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence:

- Leaving Islam (apostasy) was treated as a serious crime
- Often associated with severe penalties

This is one of the strongest tensions between traditional Islamic law and modern concepts of religious freedom.

3. Blurred lines between religion and state

Unlike modern Western Christianity, Islam historically developed as:

- A religious system
- A legal system
- A political system

This means religious disagreement could become a **legal or political issue**, not just a private spiritual matter.

4. Real-world enforcement today

In some modern Muslim-majority countries:

- Conversion away from Islam is punished
- Blasphemy laws are enforced harshly
- Religious minorities face legal or social discrimination

These are not just “extremist fringe” cases — they are state policies in some places.

Modern Islamic Scenarios Globally

1. Iran — Clerical rule (Shia theocracy)

Model: Religious rule over the state

Top authority: Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei)

- Iran is the clearest example of **clerics holding ultimate political power**.
- The Supreme Leader outranks the president, parliament, and courts.
- Religious legitimacy is tied directly to state power.
- Iran leads a Shia-aligned regional bloc (“Axis of Resistance”) including:

- Hezbollah (Lebanon)
- Shia militias in Iraq
- Houthis in Yemen
- This system blends theology, security forces, and geopolitics.

Scenario: Aging leadership, succession uncertainty, internal unrest, and pressure from sanctions and regional conflicts. Iran's model is influential but also under strain.

2. Saudi Arabia — State-controlled Sunni religious authority

Model: Monarchy + officially sanctioned clerics

Top religious figure: Grand Mufti (Sheikh Saleh al-Fawzan, appointed 2025)

- Religious leadership is **subordinate to the royal family**.
- Clerics legitimize the state; the state appoints clerics.
- Saudi Arabia promotes a conservative Sunni (Salafi/Wahhabi) framework.
- At the same time, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is:
 - Reducing independent religious power
 - Centralizing authority under the state
 - Pushing social reforms while keeping political control tight

Scenario: Religion is being reshaped to serve state priorities. Conservative theology still exists, but it is now more tightly managed by the monarchy.

3. Turkey — Islamist-leaning nationalism (non-clerical rule)

Model: Strongman presidency + state Islam

Key figure: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

- Turkey is officially secular, but:
 - The state controls mosques and imams through Diyanet (state religious authority)
 - Erdoğan uses Sunni Islamic identity for political legitimacy
- Clerics do not rule — **politicians do**, using religion as a tool.

Scenario: Islam is used to reinforce nationalism and presidential power, not clerical supremacy.

4. Egypt & Jordan — Suppression of Islamist movements

Model: Military/monarchical rule + controlled religion

- Governments tightly regulate religious institutions.
- Groups like the **Muslim Brotherhood are banned or crushed**.
- Official Islam supports state stability, not opposition movements.

Scenario: Religion is allowed only insofar as it supports the regime. Independent Islamist leadership is treated as a security threat.

5. Syria — Post-war Islamist-influenced authoritarianism

Model: Transitional Islamist-linked leadership + authoritarian control

- After Assad's fall, Syria is now led by Ahmed al-Sharaa (former Islamist rebel leader).
- He presents as more moderate but rules in a centralized, authoritarian way.
- Religious identity matters, but power is still personal and military.

Scenario: A hybrid system — Islamist roots + pragmatic authoritarian governance.

6. Fragmented states — Militias + religious identity

Countries: Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Gaza

- Power is split among:
 - Sectarian parties
 - Militias
 - Clerics
 - Weak central governments
- Religious leadership overlaps with armed groups.

Scenario: No unified Islamic authority — religious identity fuels factional power struggles.

The Islamic world in the Middle East is not led by Islam as a single religious authority. It is led by **states that use Islam in different ways:**

- Iran = clerics dominate the state
- Saudi Arabia = state dominates clerics
- Turkey = politicians instrumentalize Islam
- Egypt/Jordan = Islam tightly controlled for regime stability
- Conflict zones = militias + sectarian identity

The result is **fragmentation, competition, and politicization of Islam**, not unified religious leadership.

In practice, **power drives theology more than theology drives power** in most of today's Middle East.