

Judaism, christianity and islam essay sample

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



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Many thousands of years ago Abraham and his family left Mesopotamia in search of wherever the one true God would take him. Genesis 12 v 1 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you'. He and his wife Sarah were childless, but God promised Abraham many descendents – see Genesis 15 v 5 where we read 'Look at the heavens and count the stars..... so shall your descendents be.' In old age Abraham had two sons. One became the ancestor of the Jews and the other the ancestor of the Arab peoples. Christianity of course started among Jewish people. So all three religion share a common heritage.

Judaism is much concerned with the law as laid down in their scriptures. There are also lots of commentaries and other writings such as the Talmud and Mishnah to explain the scriptures and how the laws should be interpreted. It is a monotheistic religion and is non-prostylizing. In almost every case one is born a Jew, descent being counted on the maternal side. It is the religion of a race so even if a Jew is an atheist or becomes a member of another religion he remains a Jew. The family is the basic unit of Jewish life, though the synagogue is important. At one time temple worship was of huge importance, but there came a time when most Jews lived outside Israel and then the temple was destroyed in C. E. 70 and has never been rebuilt. Judaism, like many other religions has over the years developed into several different groups. The main differences being in the way they interpret ancient laws. Rosemary Goring in 'Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions' (page 270) describes them as expressing belief through ritual rather than through doctrines.

Christianity, which has its origins in the first century C. E., takes its name from a title that the followers of Christ were given in Antioch. It comes from a word meaning 'anointed' and refers back to its founder Jesus whom his followers believe was the Christ or Messiah long promised to the Jews. Christians claim that Jesus was both God and man. They no longer follow the laws of Israel, though they do follow a moral code. It is a monotheistic religion, yet at the same time claims that God is three in one; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although one can be born into a Christian family faith is individual and something that each person must come to for himself. Faith in Jesus as Savior is necessary for salvation. According to Goring (page 99) this brings forgiveness of sin. It is an evangelistic religion. In fact before he returned to heaven Jesus gave his followers what is known as the great commission; Matthew 28 v 19. 'Go and make disciples of all nations.'

Islam is the newest of the three, having originated in 7th century Arabia. The name means 'submission' i. e. submission to the will of God and this idea of obedience to the will of God controls much of Islamic life. Islam reveres Jesus as a prophet, but denies that he is God. They give God many titles but are totally monotheistic. There are 5 pillars on which Islam is founded, described by Goring as essential duties (page 247). These are the profession of faith, formal prayer 5 times a day, alms giving, fasting during Ramadan and a duty to visit Mecca in Saudi Arabia if at all possible. It is no longer just a religion of the Arab people but attracts converts from many backgrounds.

Jerusalem, which was visited by the prophet Mohammed, was where Jesus died and was resurrected, and which was the site of the Jewish temple is a holy city to all three religions.

All three religions value their scriptures. In the case of Christianity they revere and study the Jewish scriptures as well as newer ones of their own. The Koran, the holy book of Islam, includes some stories familiar to Jews and Christians. Jews read their scriptures in Hebrew, Muslims in Arabic. Only Christians regularly read the scriptures in the vernacular.

So we see that all three have links that set them apart from other religions and philosophies.

Bibliography

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