

THE GOSPEL VS. WORLD RELIGIONS

What is the difference between Christianity and other world religions? For all their differences, all world religions follow a basic pattern. The gospel is different.

World Religions

1. Judgment is coming.
2. You better get ready.
3. Here's how...

Gospel

1. Judgment is coming.
2. There's nothing you can do.
3. God has done something for you.

All world religions offer the same basic message: 1) judgment is coming; 2) you better ready; 3) here's how... Thus, all world religions offer good advice on what you should do to avoid the judgment that is coming, in whatever form judgment takes in that particular religion, which makes following the advice wise and worthwhile.

Christianity offers a fundamentally different kind of message. The first point is the same, but the second and third points are radically different: 1) judgment is coming; 2) there is nothing you can do to avoid it; 3) God has done something for you: He sent His Son to receive judgment in the place of all who will put their trust in Him. Thus, Christianity offers good news. Christ has died on the cross, taking God's just judgment for sin in the place of all who will put their trust in Christ. God offers His Son to all people. There is nothing we need to do to be saved by Christ, except to receive Christ as Savior with a grateful heart. We receive Christ by repenting (we stop trusting ourselves to do what God requires to avoid judgment) and believing in Him (we start trusting Christ, that He did all God requires to avoid judgment for us, by dying and rising in our place).

When we hear good advice about what we can do to avoid judgment, we follow the advice, but we are driven basically by fear, lest, not following the advice, we fall under the judgment that is coming. When we hear good news about what God has done that we might avoid His coming judgment, we seek to please Him and do what He says, but we are driven basically by joy, not fear. "Perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with judgment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:18-19). We are perfected in love when we realize that God loved us while we were sinners, enemies, ungodly, and helpless, and the reason we love God now is because, despite all our rebellion, He set His love on us and sent His Son to die for sin in our place. If God loved while we were enemies, how much can we be assured of His love, now that we are friends reconciled to Him—friends who fail in many ways but are nonetheless friends.

Outwardly, the difference may not be obvious. Christians appear to be very "religious." They are still driven to please God and strive to do what He says. But inwardly, the difference could not be more stark. What drives them is the unimaginable joy of hearing that God sent His Son to die in their place, giving them peace with God! This joy, ministered to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, powerfully motivates us to a life a true holiness.