

Biblical Perspective on Other Religions

by Craig Paardekooper

Clusters of Religion

- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Zoroastrianism

- Hinduism
- Jainism
- Buddhism
- Sikhism

- Confucianism
- Taoism
- Shintoism
- Shangti

- Spiritualism
- Ancestor worship
- Nature Spirit
- Canaanite

- Egyptian
- Assyrio-Babylonian
- Persian
- Greek
- Roman
- Celtic

- Inca
- Aztec

- Olmec
- Mayan
- Toltec

Each of these families has distinctive characteristics. They are clusters, where the similarity of the members within family is greater than the similarities between families. It is similar to within species variation compared to variation between species. We can explore how these broad families differ from one another.

But first, I will outline what makes the Abrahamic religions unique.

Characteristics of Christianity

Ethical vs amoral

Their ethic is global rather than tribal, and consistent rather than temperamental.

Monotheism vs polytheistic

They believe in one God rather than many. Only the Abrahamic religion have ethical monotheism.

Covenantal vs abstract - (special vs General revelation)

Judaism, Christianity claim that their revelation is special and ongoing – relational. They claim to be in a relationship with God – expressed through a history of covenants. Consequently, their revelation is immediate and direct, rather than an abstract and derived from nature. We say that they have special revelation, rather than general revelation. Only the Abrahamic religions claim a personal relationship with God.

Sabbatical vs works

The covenants follow a Sabbath cycle, indicating the importance of mercy, in the Covenant relationships. Each covenant ends in a judgement, emphasizing God's dual role as Judge and Savior. God comes to us in Grace, rather than we having to come to God through works. Only the Abrahamic religions have a weekly sacred day of rest. All other religions seek God but in their own effort – through philosophy, spiritual practice, ethical practice or nature communion.

See <https://howbad.info/weeks7-2.pdf>

Incarnation vs prophetic

Christ claimed to be an actual incarnation of God, as compared to being just a prophet. This emphasizes the direct nature of revelation compared to indirect revelation. God came as one of the people rather than just sending a messenger. Only Christianity has an incarnation of God – showing how God comes to us in love and mercy.

See <https://howbad.info/ai-shroud.pdf>

Prophetic vs temporal

Prophecy demonstrates an ability to see the future, and this ability follows from the eternal nature of God who sees all times as now. Judaism and Christianity have a strong prophetic tradition, and make distinct claims of fulfilled prophecies as a credential for the authenticity of their religion. Abrahamic religions emphasise prophecy more than other religions.

See <https://howbad.info/9d-wheels.pdf>, and <https://howbad.info/6a-visiondaniel.pdf>

Miraculous vs causal

The Creator is the Prime Mover, so we would expect His religion to depict miracles. These include the 40 miracles before the resurrection, the resurrection, and 40 miracles after the resurrection. They also include the Sign of Jonah, and the reverse pattern of events in 66 A.D. compared to 30 A.D. Abrahamic religions emphasis miracles more than other religions

See <https://howbad.info/9a-jonah.pdf>

Transformational vs superficial

We were created to be like God, and through alignment with His will we find our true self and come alive. It is a second birth – water and fire. Christianity is absolutely unique in this, and its founder demonstrates transformation with His resurrection.

So, when people contrast Christianity with other religions, they are correct in saying it is **ethical monotheism**.

But it is also distinct in being a **covenantal** religion – that is – an ongoing relationship – **a direct relationship** with God – rather than an abstract idea. We call this “**special revelation**” as opposed to “general revelation”.

This relationship is based on the **mercy of God** – God reaching out to us rather than us reaching out to God – it is not based on works alone. That’s why the Covenantal relationship with Israel was timed according to the **Sabbatical cycle**. The Sabbath was decreed as a day of mercy, and forgiveness of debts.

This relationship takes the form of **prophets or messengers** sent by God and authenticated by prophecy and by miracle.

This relationship also manifests with **the incarnation of God Himself** – his death and resurrection, to save us from the penalty of sin.

We are invited to participate in the life of God Himself – by being transformed through the alignment of our wills with God’s. Born again as **children of God**.

So, the description of ethical monotheism, though correct, is abstract and dry. What we have is a unique relationship to the Divine, a special revelation based on the mercy of God revealed through

1. Covenantal history
2. Sabbath cycle
3. Prophetic sight
4. Divine incarnation

resulting in entry into the family of God as His children.

When we actually look at what the religions of the other nations are, the religions seem commendable enough, but they are seeking God in their own strength.

Indian religions approach God through spiritual practices, philosophy and a general revelation. Chinese religions approach God through ethical living, philosophy and communion with nature. Once again, it is general religion. Their approach to God is through their own efforts.

The Empire Religions and the Beast

The empire religions of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome were deeply tied to self-gain, power and political legitimacy rather than covenantal ethics. They were focused on legitimizing human rulers. They were polytheistic and often manipulative – the gods served the empires interests rather than demanding ethical transformation. These religions gave birth to modern secular materialism, atheism and moral relativity. The final Beast Kingdom is the child of these lesser beasts.

Our modern stance of materialism, secular atheism, moral relativity and empire building, is the spiritual child of the empire religions. Daniel represented those empires as beasts. The current Beast is the spiritual child of Daniel's beasts.

See <https://howbad.info/6a-visiondaniel.pdf>, see <https://howbad.info/x-symbol-37.pdf>

The religions of the Aztecs, Incas and Olmecs share many characteristics with the empire religions of Egypt, Assyria etc., in that they were inseparable from empire building, sacrifice was used to reinforce dominance over conquered people, and their gods symbolized imperial expansion. These were all polytheistic empire religions rather than covenantal ethics or monotheism. The only exception to this was the religion of Quetzalcoatl.

See <https://howbad.info/9h-walkedamericas.pdf>

Animism as Spiritualism

The final class of religions are the animistic religions that focus on harmony with ancestors, nature. They are polytheistic, and usually carry out rituals to acquire success in hunting, fertility, healing or protection. Animism is not an empire religion, but more akin to spiritualism.

Summary

All these religious movements have something good to offer, because they are all efforts to approach God and the transcendent. They approach God through Philosophy, meditation, spiritual practices, ethical living, communion with nature, and these are all essential skills.

But you can see what really makes Abrahamic religions unique. Their special purpose is to reveal a way of salvation to the world – **not found through our efforts** – but extended to us through the mercy of God, through the Sabbath covenants spaced throughout Israel's history, and the incarnation of God.

This is God reaching out to us, to offer us a gift – the gift of eternal life. You have seen how Jesus was transformed – that's your destiny too.

Are other gods real?

This is only a draft, but the Bible says some very interesting things about other gods.

1. There are other spiritual beings besides God
2. God is in charge
3. These other spiritual beings can be good or bad

Before the Flood there were Watchers assigned to the whole globe. After the Flood / Babel, angels were assigned to look after each nation.

4. An angel was assigned to each nation after the flood / Babel. These angels are appointed guardians, and members of a divine council.
5. Some of these national angels are in rebellion

There are also false gods / demonic powers – such as Baal, Molech - who are not part of the divine council, and not appointed guardians. They pose as gods, but are demonic distortions. They are ethically destructive.

- God
- Divine Council: Angels assigned to each nation; some are in rebellion
- Demonic: Angels completely outside of any divine role
- Nature spirits
- Gods that are the creation of our own hands - materialism

Consequently, religions are a mixture of –

1. Human desire for transcendence & meaning
2. Misguided by rebellious national gods
3. And corruption of human thought by demonic influence

God incarnated as the national God of Israel for the purpose of circumventing a more corrupted transmission.

Questions

What part does Satan play in this hierarchy?

Does the 70 generations link to the 70 angels of the 70 nations?

Is there an over-all hierarchy of evil. Do the rebellious angels organize into a global strategy?

What is demonic possession, and how does this fit into this world view?

How does this relate to the Canaanites and to the Nephilim?

How does this relate to Babel?

Satan is depicted as the chief rebel in the divine council.

The 70 guardians are judged in accordance to the 70 nations they corrupted

Organized rebellion takes the form of –

1. The Pre-flood rebellion
2. Babel
3. Daniel's Beasts
4. The Beast Kingdom

All of these systems aspire to be global and exercise complete centralized control. They are all godless – or elevate man to the level of God.

God's periodic judgements against these powers indicates His supremacy over them – Sodom, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome

The worst weapons during the pre-flood rebellion were called Astras.

To understand why God chose a single nation for a special relationship, we need to understand what happened before. After Babel the peoples separated and scattered into 70 separate nations, and each nation was accorded a guardian or angel. Even today, there is an angel for each nation on earth.

These angels, as appointed guardians of the nations, belong to a divine council. Not all of these angels act in alignment with God, since we are told that Michael battled with the guardian angels of Persia and Greece before being able to bring a message to Daniel.

God chose 1 nation to be in a special relationship with him so they could reveal salvation to the whole world. God himself was their guardian, ensuring a pure transmission of information, since God would also be the message – a message of divine unity, justice, mercy, and of His own incarnation and sacrifice.