



# Christian Beliefs



Key Word	Definition
Anglican	A worldwide denomination that includes the Church of England.
Ascension	Jesus being taken up to heaven on the 40 <sup>th</sup> day after Easter.
Atonement	The action of making amends for wrong doing.
Crucifixion	A capital punishment used by the Romans which nails a person to a cross to kill them.
Denomination	The name for the different branches of the Christian church.
Grace	Unconditional love that god shows to people who do not deserve it.
Incarnation	God in human form.
Just	Fair – think “justice”. Christians believe God is just = God is fair.
Lord’s Prayer	The prayer Jesus taught his disciples to show them how to pray.
Messiah	The anointed one who is seen as the saviour by Christians.
Nicene Creed	A statement of belief used in Christian services.
Omnipotent	The idea that God is all-powerful.
Omniscient	The idea that God is all knowing
Omnibenevolent	The idea that God is all loving
Oneness of God	The idea that God is ‘one’.
Protestant	A branch of the Christian church that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church.
Reconciliation	The process of making people in conflict friendly again.
Resurrection	The physical return of Jesus on the third day after he died.
Roman Catholic	The largest Christian group, based in Rome with the Pope as its leader.
Salvation	The saving of the soul from sin.
Trinity	The belief in God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

**JUST** – this means ‘fair’ (think ‘justice’).

Christians believe that God **does not discriminate**, and expects his followers to treat people fairly as well.

- The **Parable of the Sheep and Goats** teaches that all people will be judged on how they have lived, and the good will be rewarded, and the wicked will be punished. People who suffer in this life will not always suffer.



## The Nature of God: What is God like?



**OMNIBENEVOLENT** – this means all loving. God is the source of goodness and love in the world

**John 3:16** – “*God so loved the world that He gave His only son*”



**OMNIPOTENT** – this means all powerful. Nothing is impossible for God.

- The **created universe** is evidence of God’s omnipotence – only a powerful God could do that.
- ‘**Nothing is impossible with God.**’ (Luke 1:37)



### How these beliefs **influence** Christians

Beliefs about the nature of God might influence Christians in the following ways:

- The belief that God is all powerful might lead Christians to **believe in miracles**, such as miraculous healing. As a result they may pray for God to help people who are sick or dying.
- The belief that God is loving might lead Christians to follow his example and treat others according to **agape love**. This might mean they offer help and support to all people, not just those that they personally know
- The belief that God is just means that Christians believe that **God will judge them fairly** based on how they have lived their lives. They know that they will be punished for their bad deeds, and also rewarded for their good deeds
- The belief that God is just, and that God is loving, might mean that Christians **volunteer for charitable organisations** to help those who are less fortunate.



## The Trinity



### The belief

Christianity is **monotheistic** – this means they worship only one God.

God's nature is understood in three ways:

The **creator and sustainer** of the universe (God the Father)

The **saviour**, who lived, died, and lived again (God the Son)

The **unseen power of God, the guide and sustainer**. (God the holy spirit)

The Trinity is a way of **understanding the complex nature of God** – God is a Trinity of three 'persons' or aspects.

Some people find the Trinity difficult to understand. However, God's **true nature is beyond human understanding** – this is one way of trying to make more sense of it

Symbols of the trinity show the idea of 'three in one'. They each symbolise that the three persons of God are part of the same whole

### Teachings

During the baptism of Jesus, a voice from Heaven states '**You are my beloved Son**'.

The **Trinity** is also a key part of the **Nicene Creed** '**he came down from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit**.'

During baptism services, Christians are baptised '**in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**', as Jesus commanded.

How belief in the Trinity **influences** Christians



- The trinity demonstrates unity between the different persons of God. Each is a part of a greater whole.
- Similarly, Christians believe they should show similar unity in their lives, and be respectful and loving towards others.
- Belief in the Trinity influences worship – prayers, church services, and hymns contain references to it.

### Do all Christians agree?

Arguments against belief in the Trinity  
Some Christians believe the Trinity does not make sense and that there is only one God – two examples of these are Unitarians, and Jehovah's Witness'. Some people think belief in the Trinity is so important that these groups are not denominations of Christianity at all, but a separate religion.



## The Incarnation



### The Belief:

- **Incarnation** means '*in flesh*'. It refers to God becoming human and living on Earth in the form of Jesus
- Christians believe God is both fully human, and fully divine.
- This is another concept that is difficult to fully understand and seems to defy logic. However, God is mysterious.

The Bible teaches that Jesus' mother Mary was a virgin, and only God could create life this way

He is the image of the invisible God  
(Colossians 1:15)

The **Gospel of Luke** tells that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit, therefore Jesus **did not have a human father**. This is further explained in the **Nicene Creed**

The Gospel of John refers to '*the Word became flesh and lived among us*', suggesting that Jesus is God **incarnate**.

## How belief in the incarnation **influences** Christians



For God to become human and live among us is a demonstration of **how much God cares** for humanity. That he would ultimately sacrifice Jesus on the cross for the salvation of humans further develops this idea. The Bible teaches *'since God so loved us, let us also love one another'*. Christians might follow this example in their daily lives of caring for others and showing **agape** love.

The **festival of Christmas** is a celebration of the incarnation of Jesus. This is the second most important festival after Easter, as it celebrates the **miracle of his birth**. It is the most widely celebrated birthday of any figure.

## Issues with the incarnation of Jesus

- No one has ever before or since had a **virgin birth**. While it makes sense for Jesus to have one because he is the Son of God, it does make the story more difficult to believe
- Jesus cannot be both fully human and fully God, because God is omnipotent, and humans are not. He would either be living a superhuman life, or he would no longer have the qualities of God e.g. omnipotence
- **Jesus communicates with God through prayer** throughout the Gospels. Why would Jesus need to do this, if he was God incarnate? Wouldn't this mean he is talking to himself?
- But.....
- **Jesus prays to show humans how to pray**, and how to **build a relationship with God**. He's an **example to follow** – what a good human should be like.



**Creation**



**Symbolic meaning**

## The story of Creation is found in the book of Genesis, in the Old Testament of the Bible

Genesis teaches that God created the world in **6 days**, and rested on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

- Some Literalist Christians believe:
- The Bible is the word of God. There are no mistakes in the Bible.
- God is all powerful, and it makes sense for an all powerful God to create the universe this way
- Other Christians believe the story has symbolic or **religious truth**. This means that the story teaches about the nature of God and his relationship with humans. They might believe this because:
  - The Bible needs to be viewed in a **modern context** – science has proven that the Earth is older than the Bible claims it is
  - They may believe that religious truths about the relationship between humans and God are more important than the historic truths of what day God created each part of the universe

## The role of the Trinity in creation

- God created the world, and God is Trinity. Each part of the Trinity has a role in the act of creation
- The creative, life giving part of God is usually referred to as the **Father**. Genesis begins with ***"In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth"***.
- In John's Gospel, there is reference to 'the Word' – ***"In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...through Him all things have been made"***.
  - "Word" refers to Jesus. This shows that Jesus was part of the Trinity long before he became incarnate.
  - **John's Gospel** states that *"the Word became flesh and lived among us for a while"*, linking the Word with Jesus.
  - This passage also shows the importance of Jesus in creation.
- In **Genesis**, it states *'the earth was formless...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters'*. This is a reference to the **Holy Spirit**, transforming chaos into order. This image of 'hovering' is often compared to a dove, which is a **symbol for the Holy Spirit**



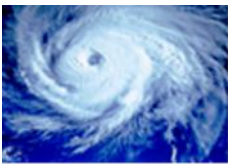
## How beliefs about creation might **influence** Christians

The creation story explores the idea that humans are made *'in the image of God'*. All **humans deserve respect** and fair treatment because all humans are made in the image of God.

As all humans are equal, Christians may work to **promote social justice** and equality in society

Because humans have been given responsibility to care for the world, they may be more likely to work towards **promoting environmental issues** such as recycling or green energy.

Because the world is made according to God's structure and order, there is a purpose to everything that happens. This links with the 'problem of evil' topic



# The Problem of Evil and Suffering



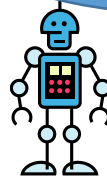
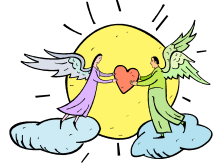
Moral Evil: Suffering caused by humans. Eg, war, rape, murder

Natural Evil: Suffering caused by natural disasters

If God was all powerful, all knowing and all loving then WHY does he allow suffering?

The story of **Job** offers another possibility. Some people believe that suffering is a test of faith. Humans should trust God through good and the bad. It's easy to be thankful when things go your way, but more important to keep faith when things go wrong

Christian responses to evil and suffering



The story of **Adam and Eve** teaches how humans disobeyed God. Originally, there was no pain and suffering. Suffering only entered the world because human beings sinned against God. Some Christians believe suffering is a punishment for sin.



The story of Job also implies that **suffering is part of God's plan**, and that Christians must trust that there is a purpose to their suffering – even if they cannot understand it.

We have free will to choose to do good or bad. It is not God's fault.



Don't just sit there...do something! Follow the example of Jesus and help others who are suffering.

How beliefs about the problem of evil **influence** Christians



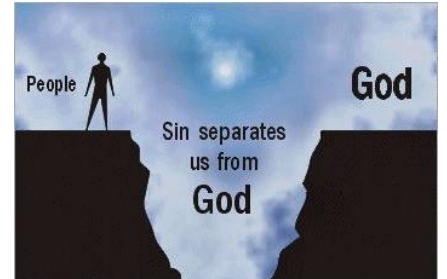
If Christians believe that suffering gives them an **opportunity to develop and grow spiritually**, then they may take that opportunity to help others.

Additionally, they may believe that it is their **responsibility**, not God's, to **fix the problems in the world**. Most moral evils could be eradicated if people shared wealth more equally and were kinder to one another.

If suffering is a **test of faith** then Christians will be **more likely to pray** for support and guidance



Sin



## Beliefs

Sin is **disobedience to God's laws**. It is not the same as breaking man made laws. Many man made laws are also sins e.g. murder, but some sins are legal e.g. adultery.

The **first human sin** is found in the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve break God's only rule, and eat **forbidden fruit**.

Adam is punished with **hard work**, and Eve is punished with **pain in childbirth**, and now must be a servant to her husband.

Christians believe that sin of Adam and Eve **passes from generation to generation**, and that as we are all descended from Adam and Eve, that we carry the burden of this original sin. Because of Original Sin, we have a tendency to make poor moral choices, commit further sins, and harm others

Humans cannot stop this without the help of God

"But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:17)

Jesus states '**the only way to the Father is through me**', suggesting that the **only** way to enter Heaven is to **accept Jesus as saviour to remove sin**.





# Salvation, Grace and Atonement

## Salvation

The saving of the soul from sin.

### Salvation through works

- Some Christians believe that by following God's laws, they can **earn a place in Heaven**
- Others believe that it is not just about following the law, but also by having a **pure heart and mind** – good actions done purely for reward, and not with good intentions, are not worthy of reward.
- The important idea about salvation through works is that it means people can **earn their place in Heaven through their own actions**



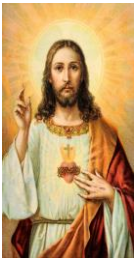
### Salvation through grace

- Grace** is also referred to as **God's love**, or God's blessing
- Most Christians believe that without God's grace, **humans cannot be truly good**.
- God's love is best shown through his **sacrifice of his son Jesus**, to take away Original Sin, and allow people to lead moral lives
- While this gift is given to all people, they must be open to it, and accept it into their lives.
- God's grace is made known to people through the **Holy Spirit**

*"God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son; that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" – John 3:16.*

**To gain salvation, you must exercise faith in Jesus and demonstrate that faith by obeying his commands (Acts 4:2)**

## The role of Jesus



- The death of Jesus is key to **God's plan of salvation**. It was a planned event that would allow for the forgiveness of original sin.
- Because sin was brought into the world by humans, it could **only be removed by humans** – this is why God becomes incarnate and is sacrificed on the cross
- Jesus takes on the sins of the world, and **pays the debt of sin** with his death.
- When humans sin, they separate themselves from God. Jesus' death allowed for atonement (making amends for past mistakes), which was necessary as humans were not capable of doing this themselves
- Jesus' death is also an **act of reconciliation** (repairing broken relationships). The relationship between humans and God was so damaged, only a drastic action like self sacrifice could repair it.



## The Crucifixion



### WHAT HAPPENED?

Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, after he was betrayed by Judas.

Jesus is beaten, whipped, and made to wear a crown of thorns

He is crucified at Golgotha, meaning 'place of the skull'. His hands and feet are nailed to the cross. As he is being crucified, darkness covers the land for 3 hours

Jesus' last words, according to Mark, were **'My God, why have you forsaken me?'**. According to John, they were **'Father, I give you my spirit; it is finished'**.

### How learning about the crucifixion might influence Christians

- Learning how God suffered and died for humans might influence Christians to put the needs of others before their own.
- Learning about the brutality of the crucifixion might strengthen their belief that God cares for them, because Jesus' death was so painful that only a truly loving God would sacrifice his Son for humans this way.
- The events of the crucifixion are strongly linked with the idea of salvation and atonement.

### Why did Jesus die?

- Jesus ignored many traditional rules of Judaism, and was critical of the way that religious leaders had power and influence over others.
- Many Jewish people felt that Jesus was a troublemaker, and taught things that went against Judaism. They may have genuinely believed they were doing the right thing by having him executed, or they may have been doing this for their own benefit.
- The death of Jesus was part of God's plan for salvation. Without his sacrifice, Original Sin

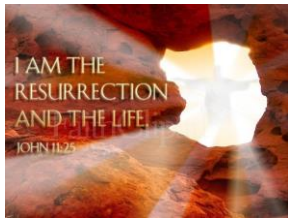
# The Resurrection

## WHAT HAPPENED?

- Following Jesus’ death, he is placed in a tomb. It was nearing the Sabbath (day of rest) , and the body needed to be made safe very quickly.
- After the Sabbath, his women followers return to find that the tomb is empty.
- They are told that Jesus has returned to life.
- In **John’s Gospel**, it is the risen Jesus who tells **Mary Magdalene** about his resurrection, and tells her to tell the disciples what she has seen.
- Jesus makes several ‘**resurrection appearances**’ to his disciples. He appears the disciple **Thomas**, who does not believe it is Jesus until he touches the wounds of the crucifixion.



- **ASCENSION**
- Jesus’ ascension is the end of his life when he is taken into Heaven, with his **spiritual body** intact.
- It suggests that he rises up through the clouds until he is out of sight.
- It symbolises that his work on earth is done.



## How does this **influence** Christians today?

Christians believe the resurrection shows the power over good and evil. By accepting Jesus, they can also be resurrected in some way. Therefore they have no need to fear death.

Jesus’ resurrection assures Christians that God will forgive their sins if they follow God’s teachings.

**Without the resurrection there would be no Christian faith.**

While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. (Luke 24:50-51)

The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again. (Luke 24:7)

He is not here; he has risen, just as he said (Matthew 28:6)

# The Afterlife and Judgement

What do they believe	Why do they believe it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christians believe in life after death.</li><li>• They believe when they die, they will be judged on how they have lived, and this will affect whether they go to a place of reward called Heaven, or punishment, called Hell</li><li>• God is loving and just. Christians trust that he will be fair when they receive judgement. A loving God is one who punishes those who deserve it, as well as rewards those who have earned it.</li><li>• Some Christians believe that there will be a judgement day, where all bodies will be resurrected and united with souls. Some don’t believe in this.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Nicene Creed states that “Jesus will come in glory to judge the living and the dead”. This suggests it is the Son in the Trinity that delivers judgement</li><li>• The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus warns of a rich man who is sent to Hell, and is unable to cross from there into Heaven. The consequences of human decisions are permanent</li><li>• The Parable of the Sheep and Goats also states that Jesus will return to judge the living and dead, and that he will decide based on whether people chose to help others during their lives, or ignore people who were suffering.</li></ul>

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. The Apostles’ Creed

Do not judge, and you will not be judged..... Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:37)



The Rich Man and Lazarus  
Luke 16:19-31



# Heaven and Hell



- Christianity teaches that Heaven is a place of peace and reward.
- The Bible teaches that Heaven is not a physical place, but a state of being. It is existence with God, outside of time and space – an eternity of bliss.
- Hell is described as a place of torment, usually a place of fire
- Some Christians believe that there cannot be a Hell if God is loving, as a loving God would not send people to eternal punishment for a temporary sin.
- They might also believe that God can forgive any sins, so even a person in Hell can be redeemed.



## Resurrection

- Christians believe that their body will be resurrected, like Jesus' was after the crucifixion. They will be given a new, spiritual body, which does not decay, and will live forever.
- Life after resurrection would be very different from mortal life. It is the continuation of an individual, but a different kind of existence. Think about how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly.
- Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is a core part of Christianity. The resurrection is proof that he is the Son of God. It is also proof of life after death for all Christians. St. Paul claimed 'if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile'.
- No one really knows what the resurrection will be like – Christians trust that God has the answers.

### How beliefs about the afterlife and judgement influence Christians



- If Christians believe their body will be resurrected, then they may choose to be buried rather than cremated. Christians who believe in a spiritual resurrection however may not mind.
- Christian funerals focus on the next stage of an individual's existence, praying for their entry into Heaven
- Christians believe they will be judged on how they have lived, so they will try and follow the teachings in the Bible and care for others so they can go to Heaven
- Christians who believe in Hell may also be less likely to behave badly, out of fear of punishment.

**Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (Matthew 24:46)**

**And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain (Revelation 21:4)**

**Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. (Corinthians 15:42)**

## Practice questions

### Two mark questions

- Name two characteristics of God
- Name two persons of the Trinity
- Explain two reasons why Jesus had to die
- Name two types of salvation
- State two things Christians believe about judgement

### Four mark questions

- Explain two ways in which a belief in the resurrection of Jesus influences Christians today
- Explain two ways in which beliefs about the creation of the world might influence Christians today
- Explain two ways in which learning about the crucifixion might influence Christians today
- Explain two ways in which believing that God is loving might influence Christians today
- Explain two ways in which believing in Judgement Day might influence Christians today

### Five mark questions

- Explain two Christian teachings about judgement
- Explain two Christian teachings about salvation
- Explain two Christian teachings about creation
- Explain two Christian teachings about God
- Explain two Christian teachings about the incarnation of Jesus

*Refer to scripture or sacred writing in your answer*

### Twelve mark questions

- “Christians should focus on this life, not the next life”
- “If God were loving there would be no suffering”
- “Salvation was God’s greatest gift to the world”
- “The existence of Hell does not fit with belief in a loving God”
- “It does not matter if the creation story is not true”
- “The most important Christian belief is the resurrection”
- “The stories of the incarnation prove that Jesus was the Son of God”.
- “The death of Christ was a great tragedy”

*Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:*

- *refer to Christian teaching*
- *give developed arguments to support this statement*
- *give developed arguments to support a different point of view*
- *reach a justified conclusion*