



2016 specification
First exams in 2018

Course Companion for GCSE AQA A (Full Course)

Christianity: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices

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Teacher's Introduction

This resource has been designed to support the learning and teaching of AQA GCSE Religious Studies A, Component 1. Christianity 'Beliefs and Teachings' and 'Practices' are covered, and questions and activities are included to test students' knowledge and ability, and to help them engage with the topics.

The information is comprehensive, and images help to illustrate concepts. Keywords and Bible quotes are included to help students to understand further their grasp of the subjects. A brief introduction to the course and an overview is provided for students at the start, and answers and a mark scheme are included at the end.

This course companion can be used in full as an alternative or complement to the specification, or for independent learning or revision. Alternatively, teachers might use a section as a classroom activity or homework.

This specification covers a particularly broad range, in terms of time periods and aspects of a Christian's faith and Christianity's impact on their lives. This should encourage students to think and develop their thinking, enabling them to approach issues from different perspectives.

We have sought a balance between explaining relevant concepts in sufficient detail, without oversimplification, while not going beyond GCSE level and becoming too complex. We have tried to present all views in a neutral and informative way.

Hopefully this resource will encourage students in their learning and help them to succeed in exams. It should take the pressure away from teachers by providing the bulk of what they want to teach to their class.

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Introduction to the course and how to answer

This course aims to cover many aspects of Christianity and to assess your understanding. You should be aware that Christianity is one of many different beliefs and traditions in Great Britain, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. Christianity is currently the largest religion in the UK and is closely linked with the culture.

The range of material covers several subject areas: what Christians believe, and why they believe it, and how the Church as a whole operates. There will be reference to the influence of Christianity on Christians; the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on Christians; and the influence of Christianity on the world. These are reinforced with reference to the points of view from within Christianity. These are reinforced with reference to the points of view from within Christianity.

This course companion is designed to equip you with the information you need to answer questions. It gives you the knowledge and ability to answer related questions. Not all the questions and answers are in exam-style, but those which are should be answered in particular ways.

The exam board will ask you to give quick facts and statements, as well as asking you to 'explain' and 'evaluate' beliefs, opinions and practices.

When answering all questions it is important to try to use technical terms where possible, and to write well, using both a style that is easy to follow and correct spelling and grammar. More or less writing will be required, depending on the number of marks. Try to spend as little time as possible on the shorter questions to allow yourself more time for the longer ones.

For each of the two sections (Beliefs and Teachings, and Practices) you will get a 1-mark, 2-mark, 4-mark, 5-mark and 12-mark question in the exam.

Five extra marks are given for spelling, punctuation and grammar on one of the 12-mark questions. This also goes for the other religion you study, and you will keep the highest of the two SPaG marks.

Hopefully, this resource will be interesting and informative, and help you to achieve good results.

For the **1-mark question**, you will be given a multiple-choice question and you need to choose the right answer. Make sure not to fall for trick answers!

For the **2-mark question**, you need to give two examples or facts. You do not need to elaborate on these, and do not waste time giving examples, as you can only get two marks.

The **4-mark question** differs between the sections on beliefs and teachings and on practices. In the section on beliefs and teachings you will be asked to 'explain' two ways in which a belief or teaching is carried out. In the section on practices you will be asked to 'explain' two contrasting views on practices. Here, you will lose marks if you do not explain a practice. You need to give two different points, and, to get full marks, you must develop or justify each point. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to apply it. Each point should be supported by a quote or other evidence. So you can think of it as being a mark per point and a mark per justification. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to apply it. Each point should be supported by a quote or other evidence. So you can think of it as being a mark per point and a mark per justification. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to apply it.

The **5-mark question** also differs between the sections on beliefs and teachings and on practices. In the section on beliefs and teachings you will be asked to 'explain' two Christian teachings and refer to scripture. In the section on practices you will be asked to 'explain' two ways in which a practice is carried out, or two contrasting views on practices. Here, you will lose marks if you do not explain a practice. You need to give two different points, and, to get full marks, you must develop or justify each point. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to apply it. Each point should be supported by a quote or other evidence. So you can think of it as being a mark per point and a mark per justification. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to apply it.

The **12-mark question** is the longest, and there is a little more to remember. You will need to give arguments and justifications **for** and **against** the statement (so agreeing with it, and disagreeing with it). Make sure you have good reasons for all the points you make and link them together. You need to come to a conclusion, picking the most convincing side of the argument (based on the arguments you have made). You need to refer to Christian teaching in your conclusion.

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Beliefs and Teachings

A key part of any religion is its beliefs and teachings. These are particularly important within Christianity, especially mainstream branches, compared to many other world religions (such as Islam, Judaism and Buddhism) which can be seen to be more practice-focused.

Teachings can come from interpretations of the **Bible**, **Old Testament** and **New Testament**; from the Church, often expressed in **Creeds**; and from **theologians** and philosophers who have sought to answer difficult questions about religion. Different Church **denominations**, have different beliefs, depending on how on which teachings they accept.

Important
The exam may ask you about various things, and what it is about one being powerful – the

Keywords:

- ♦ **Bible** – the Christian Scriptures, made up of the Old and New Testaments
- ♦ **creed** – a statement of belief
- ♦ **denomination** – a particular branch within a religion, e.g. Catholicism, Anglicanism
- ♦ **New Testament** – section of the Bible concerning the life of Jesus and his early church
- ♦ **Old Testament** – section of the Bible concerning the time before the birth of Jesus
- ♦ **theologian** – someone who studies religion and God

Key Beliefs

The Nature of God – God as Omnipotent, Loving and Just, and the Problem of Evil and Suffering

Keywords:

- ♦ **benevolent** – loving and kind
- ♦ **Book of Job** – a book in the Bible about one man's suffering
- ♦ **charity** – giving to and helping others
- ♦ **Creation** – the account of how the world and universe were made
- ♦ **evil** – tends to refer to moral badness and choosing to do the 'wrong' thing
- ♦ **faith** – here, belief in God and trust in him
- ♦ **free will** – the ability to choose what to do
- ♦ **just** – fair, right and good
- ♦ **moral suffering** – suffering caused by a human being's wilful action, like murder
- ♦ **natural suffering** – suffering caused by natural events, like a tsunami, or disease
- ♦ **omnipotent** – all-powerful
- ♦ **parables** – stories with an inner meaning, for the purpose of teaching
- ♦ **prayer** – communication with God
- ♦ **Psalms** – book of poetic writings in the Bible
- ♦ **salvation** – being saved, having been saved; in Christianity, Jesus brought humanity salvation
- ♦ **sin** – something that separates people from God, going against God's will
- ♦ **suffering** – experiencing pain

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The Nature of God

Christians believe that God is powerful. Many believe that he is all-powerful, particularly shown in his **creation** of the world, and the **salvation** of human beings. All-powerful can, theoretically, do anything.

‘For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome,
(Deuteronomy 10:17 NRSV)

Christians believe that God is loving, or **benevolent**, and many believe that God is omnibenevolent. He protected and guided the Jewish people in the **Old Testament** to save humanity from **sin**.

‘God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.’ (1 John 4:9 NRSV)

Christians also think that God is **just**; that he is fair, right and good. Therefore, when he has promised to care for them – a fair God will keep his promises. If he is fair in rewarding the good and punishing the bad.

‘The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his acts to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love.’ (Psalm 103:6–8 NRSV)

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

The problem of **evil** and **suffering** is one issue which has faced Christians and their **faith**. It can be posed as a question:

‘If God is **omnipotent**, loving and **just**, then why does he allow evil and suffering?’

If he is omnipotent, then he could stop evil and suffering. Human conceptions of love imply that someone who loves someone else does not want any harm to come to them, so, if God is loving, he should not want humans to suffer. If he is just, he should not abandon his people or allow good people to suffer.

Did you know?

The Christian God’s love is often described as ‘agape’, a Greek term often translated as ‘unconditional love’. This means that God loves them regardless of what they are, and that God does what is best for them, regardless of what they want. This is why God sent Jesus to die for them.

The Problem of Evil and Suffering with Regard to God’s Nature

The fact that there is **evil** and **suffering** in the world raises questions about God’s nature.

- ◆ Can he stop evil and suffering?
- ◆ Does he care that humans suffer?
- ◆ Has he unfairly abandoned humans?
- ◆ Or is there some other explanation that allows there to be an **omnipotent** God while there is evil and suffering in the world?

How the Problem May Cause Believers to Question Their Faith or the Nature of God

- ◆ If God *is* **omnipotent**, loving and **just**, it does not make sense for him to allow the innocent to suffer when the wicked often succeed.
- ◆ If God *is not* omnipotent, loving and just, this seems to undermine Christian belief in a loving God, holds that God was powerful enough to **create** the world and is fair and good.

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Some believers wonder why they should trust in a God who allows bad things to happen, so they question their **faith** and whether they should keep believing. Some people have left Christianity, because its portrayal of God is (in their opinion) not accurate, and therefore not a Christian faith.

Some believers question whether they should believe in the existence of God. If God *would* be omnipotent, loving and just, but clearly *is not* – so he cannot be God.

Nature and Examples of Natural Suffering and Moral Suffering

Natural suffering is suffering (pain) caused by natural events, such as natural disasters or disease. Examples include pain caused by tsunamis, volcanoes, earthquakes, HIV/AIDS and cancer.



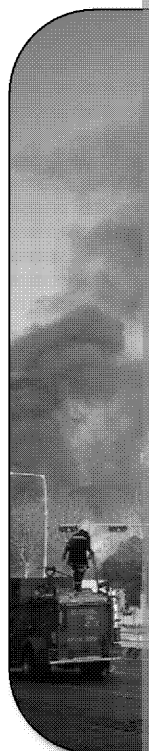
Volcanoes cause natural suffering.

Moral suffering is suffering (pain) caused by something a human being chooses to do, such as killing someone else. Some would say that moral suffering is a result of **evil**. Examples of moral suffering include the pain caused by murder, theft, and exploitation.

The importance of separating these two types of suffering is important for understanding the problem of evil and suffering.

Solutions Offered to the Problem of Evil and Suffering and an Omnipotent God

- ♦ Most Christians would not deny that God is loving but *some Christians* believe that God is not **omnipotent**. Maybe there are limits to his power. Some believe that there are things which are not possible, however powerful God is. Others say that there are things which are not possible, however powerful God is. People ask if it is possible for an all-powerful being to create something so heavy that they could not lift it, or to create a being more intelligent than themselves. These are paradoxes – it is impossible to find a satisfactory solution. This could theoretically go for the world too – it might be impossible to have created a planet which supported life which did not have bacteria and viruses which cause illness, and which did not have earthquakes and volcanoes which cause destruction.
 - Most Christians do not accept that this is the case.
- ♦ Many Christians believe that *people are able to do evil things because God gave humans free will*. Some Christians argue that it is more loving to allow people to make their own decisions – otherwise humans would merely be puppets, and that would not really be living. In order to have genuine choice, the consequence is that some people will make bad choices which hurt others. This also shows that people are genuinely good if they choose not to do evil – if people had no choice to do wrong, would they really be good?
 - This does not solve the problem of natural suffering.



Some fires are caused by human actions.

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Pause for thought:

You can see whether you accept the free will solution by asking yourself: 'If I were offered the ability to plug into a miraculous machine and experience a virtual life that was perfect and happy. But none of your 'friends' in the machine would be real and none of the people you would be real either. Or, you could remain in real life, with struggles and hardships, but with real choices, work hard for your own goals, and trust your friends. Many people feel that the free will solution is better. They are convinced they would not want to live a 'fake' life. (This scenario is based on a thought experiment called the 'Experience Machine', created by the philosopher Robert Nozick.)

- ♦ *God is being **just** in allowing evil and suffering, as humans deserve punishment for their sins. They are already lucky that Jesus died to bring them eternal life.*
 - However, the innocent do seem to suffer, sometimes more than evildoers. This does not seem just.

'You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments. But you, O LORD, dealt well with your servant, according to your word.' (Psalm 138)

Activity

Make notes of strengths and weaknesses of these solutions to the problem of evil and suffering. Some solutions have been given for you.

Extension – think of or research another solution to the problem.



Did you know?

There is a strong correlation between being well-off and having high rates of suffering. The reverse is also true. Could this be because people feel less of a need for help when they are rich? Or is it a bad thing, depending on the situation?

Some people are not able to accept that God is right to allow **evil and suffering**. They believe that God is **omnipotent** and for them the solutions are not successful. They may lose faith in God.

For others, these solutions do solve the problem of evil and suffering and accept that evil and suffering is **just**, God cannot do everything, and/or free will with evil is preferred.

Quick Questions

1. Which of these is a type of moral suffering?
 - a) Earthquake damage b) Death by murder c) HIV AIDS
2. Give **two** examples of solutions to the problem of evil.

Now Try This...

3. Explain **two** Christian beliefs about the nature of God. Refer to scripture.

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The Nature of God – The Oneness of God and the Trinity Holy Spirit

The **Trinity** is a concept within Christianity which refers to the belief that there is one God, existing as three persons at the same time. The three persons are God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. However, there is unity within God – there are not three separate gods, but one God. This can be a rather confusing, and it has caused much controversy and debate within Christianity. Not all Christians believe in the Trinity, but most do.

Keywords:

- ◆ **Ascension** – when Jesus was raised up into heaven after his resurrection
- ◆ **baptism** – here, immersion in water to symbolise spiritual cleansing
- ◆ **disciples** – followers, here of Jesus, often referring to his closest twelve male followers
- ◆ **divine** – godly, above humanity
- ◆ **gospel** – means ‘good news’; the four books at the start of the New Testament
- ◆ **idolatry** – worshipping something other than God, which is forbidden in Christianity
- ◆ **ministry** – here, Jesus’ work of teaching and healing
- ◆ **Pentecost** – when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples after Jesus’ ascension
- ◆ **prophets** – people who speak to God and/or can predict the future
- ◆ **resurrection** – coming back to life after dying; Christians believe Jesus was resurrected
- ◆ **Ten Commandments** – ten important rules given to the prophet Moses by God
- ◆ **Trinity** – the concept that God is one being, but three persons

The Trinity as Expressed in the Nicene Creed

Because Christians in the early Church were not sure exactly how to describe the **Trinity**, there were different opinions. One priest called Arius, for example, did not think that Jesus was God. However, a bishop called Athanasius argued that he was. Different people and groups had varying ideas. The Emperor Constantine was fed up with the disputes and called a Church council (a meeting of Christian figures of authority) in 325 CE to decide the matter – this was the first Council of Nicaea (named after the place where it was held). The Nicene **Creed** was not actually completed until the first Council of Constantinople in 381 CE, but by then it was decided that God was one substance, but he contained three different Persons – this granted Jesus full **divine** status.

Important

The persons of the Trinity are not to be thought of as ‘he’. Some Christians believe God is male, but this is not gendered, but a gender attribute of our society. Also, the Bible says that both Father and Son are in God’s image and likeness.

The Creed mainly contains what Christians believe about the three Persons of the Trinity, and other Christian beliefs about the Church and the world.

About God (and his nature), the Nicene Creed states that:

- ◆ God is one.
- ◆ God the Father made the world and everything else.
- ◆ Jesus is also God, and everything was created by him / with his help, as the Son of God.
- ◆ Jesus came to Earth as a human, born of the Holy Spirit and his mother Mary.
- ◆ Jesus died, rose, and **ascended** to heaven.
- ◆ Jesus will come at the end of time to judge humanity (those alive and those who have died).
- ◆ The Holy Spirit gives life and has influenced **prophets**.

¹ <http://anglicansonline.org/basics/nicene.html>

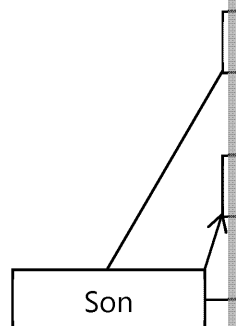
The Emperor Charlemagne, alive in the eighth and ninth centuries, made an addition to the Nicene Creed, based on **theology** from St Augustine. Previously, the Creed had claimed that the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father', but this was changed to 'the Father and the Son'. The Orthodox Church disagreed with this alteration, because they saw no reason for it, and this is one of the reasons for their split from the Catholic Church.

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Some Christians think different Persons of the Trinity have different importance, with the Father being more important than the Spirit. Others see no reason for this belief and view them as equal.

The Creed says different things about the different Persons of the Trinity, but teaches that they are one God. The Creed shows that the Trinity has been an important aspect of Christian belief for a long time. Significance of the Trinity, and the way the Trinity is expressed in the Nicene Creed includes:

- ♦ Christians believe that God wanted to save them, and that his plan has been in place for a long time (indicated by the belief that Jesus has existed since creation and that the Holy Spirit has spoken through prophets, including Isaiah).
- ♦ Christians see the different Persons of God in different ways – they perceive the Father as the creator, the Son as the saviour, and the Spirit as the comforter.



The Oneness of God

As stated above, Christians believe in one God, not three gods. So God's name is significant for a number of reasons:

- ♦ The God of the Jewish people in the **Old Testament** is one God. Christians are expected to be worshipping the same God, not a different God.

'Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.' (Deuteronomy 6:4)

- ♦ Christians are expected to worship only one God, and worship of anything other than God is **idolatry** (worshipping a false god) and this is forbidden in the Old Testament **Commandments**.

'You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them...' (Exodus 20:4-5 NRSV)

- ♦ If Jesus (God the Son) is the same being as God the Father, then all his teachings should be followed.

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Each of the Persons Individually

There is biblical support for different persons of God the **Trinity**.

- ♦ Genesis, the first book of the Bible, refers to both 'God' and 'the spirit of God' (Genesis 1:1–2 NRSV).
- ♦ In the **New Testament** Jesus addresses the creator God, who was worshipped by the Jews, as 'Father' (e.g. Matthew 5:16 NRSV).
- ♦ Jesus was referred to in the **Gospels** as the 'Son of God' (e.g. Mark 1:1 NRSV), sent from the Father, and when early Christians worshipped him as God they distinguished him from God the Father in this way.
- ♦ At **Pentecost**, the early **disciples** received the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus which is said to have descended on them like flames (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit is thought to guide and inspire Christians.

The Father

As shown in the Nicene **Creed**, God the Father is believed to be the creator of the world, and to have sent Jesus (the Son) to save humanity. He is significant because he decided to create humanity and also to save it – without him Christians believe they would not be here, and would not have a hope of heaven. The Father is seen as powerful, and the God who was in contact with the Jewish people in the **Old Testament**.

'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was dark and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God (Or: word) swept over the face of the waters.' (Genesis 1:1–2 NRSV)

The Son

As shown in the Nicene **Creed**, Jesus is believed to be the Son of God (and believed to have existed before Creation, and to have come to Earth to save for Christians, because they believe that it is through him that they have been in relationship with God, and go to heaven after death.

'Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."' (Matthew 16:16 NRSV)

The Spirit

The Holy Spirit is often seen to be the Person of God who communicates with people in the everyday – he has spoken through **prophets**, and, as promised by Jesus, was sent to the **disciples** after Jesus' death (this event is known and celebrated as **Pentecost**) so that God would be present with humanity. Some Christians say that he lives in their hearts. He is significant to Christians as he is the Person of God who they can continually experience.

'Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.' (Acts 2:3–4 NRSV)

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All the Persons Individually – Together

One good example in the Bible where all the different Persons of God are present (see Matthew 3:13–17). Jesus begins his **ministry** by being baptised, and God's approval of Jesus as the Holy Spirit descends to be with Jesus.

‘And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, his clothes were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting over him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”’
(Matthew 13:16–17 NRSV)

Influence Today

- ◆ Most Christians believe in the **Trinity**.
- ◆ Some Churches use **creeds**, such as the Nicene Creed, which express their beliefs about the Trinity, in worship.
- ◆ Christians celebrate Trinity Sunday, the birth of Jesus at Christmas, his death and **resurrection** at Easter, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost**.
- ◆ Christians **pray** to Jesus as well as God the Father, and may pray to God the Father ‘in Jesus’ name’.
- ◆ Blessings can be, and **baptisms** are, given ‘in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’.
- ◆ Christians may feel that they experience the Holy Spirit acting in their lives. Christians put particular importance on the role of the Spirit.

Quick Questions

4. Which of these is not a Person of the Trinity?
a) Father b) Son c) Sister
5. Give **two** Christian beliefs about the Trinity.

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Different Christian Beliefs about Creation

Christianity, like many religions and world views, has a **Creation** story to explain the world; the creation of the universe and humanity. Christians believe that God entrusted it to humans. There are several different interpretations of the Creation story. God believes the same thing about it.

Keywords:

- ♦ **dominion** – control over something
- ♦ **fundamentalist** – in Christianity, someone who holds that certain beliefs are based on the Bible is true
- ♦ **grace** – what God grants to humans, which saves them
- ♦ **literal** – something exact and factual
- ♦ **metaphorical** – something which is symbolic
- ♦ **Spirit** – the third person of the Christian Trinity: God
- ♦ **stewardship** – a state of managing resources in a responsible way
- ♦ **symbolic** – something which represents something else
- ♦ **Word of God** – Jesus; through which God's power is expressed, and his teaching

Synopsis of Biblical Accounts of Creation, including the Role of the Word of God

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, gives two different accounts of **Creation**.

Genesis 1 and the start of Genesis 2:

Before the creation of the world, there was nothing. But God's **Spirit** moved, and God spoke, and things began to come into being. God was present at Creation and played an important part. Over a period of six days, God created water and the sky; land and plants; the sun, moon and stars; fish and birds; and finally, humans in God's image. God gives the world to humans to look after, is pleased with the work, and rests on the seventh day.

Why do Christians believe in the Word of God? See John 1:1-14.

'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God (Or: spirit) swept over the face of the waters.' (Genesis 1:1-2 NRSV)

'Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.' (Genesis 1:3 NRSV)

'So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1:27 NRSV)

Genesis 2:

This differs to Genesis 1. There is more detail, and some things even happen in a different order. In this account, God created Adam first, then Eve, and then animals. Eve was created before animals in this account. Furthermore, the creation of woman is different; she is created after the animals, out of one of man's ribs. Man is commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:

The serpent tempts the woman to eat the forbidden fruit. She protests that she is not to eat, and shares it with the man. They lose some sense of innocence, which is why they are naked and hiding from God. God discovers that they have eaten the fruit and casts them out of the Garden of Eden.

Note: Christianity shares the Creation account given in Genesis with Judaism. Both religions believe everything in the same way as Christians.

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John 1: 1–18:

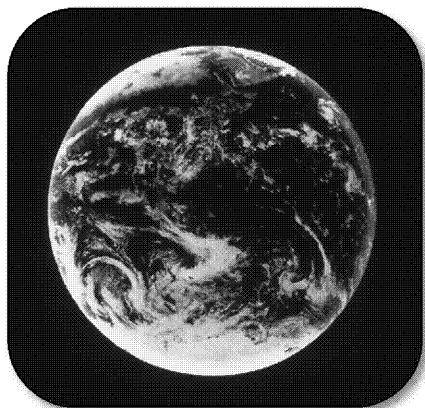
God's **Word** is with God at Creation, and God creates through him. It then goes unrecognised, but grants humans God's **grace**. This passage supports Christianity as it was embodied in the person of Jesus – that God the Son pre-existed Jesus and Jesus was God. It claims that the Word, Jesus, was present at Creation, so existed before. The Word is important in Creation at different levels – he helped to create the physical world and the new beginning for humans who want a relationship with God. Jesus is God because he brought God's teaching (his word) to Earth – this is significant because it came from God, then it should be followed.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him, nothing came into being... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.' (John 1:1-3)

The accounts mention God (the Father), Jesus and the Holy Spirit, emphasising the Trinity in the Bible.

For the exam you specifically need to know about John 1:1-3 (see the first page of the book). The main points are:

- ◆ The Word of God is God.
- ◆ The Word was present before creation.
- ◆ The Word played a part in creation.



The world, which Christians believe was created by God.

Different Ways in which Biblical Accounts are Interpreted by Christians

Different Christians interpret the Creation story differently. These views are not necessarily grouped together. For example, different Catholics may have different views, and Protestants may have different views.

- ◆ Some believe that it is **literally** true that God created the world within seven days, and that the first people were called Adam and Eve. Christians who believe literally are often called **fundamentalists** or 'fundamentalist' originated to describe those who hold that certain beliefs, e.g. that the Bible is literally true (or necessary, for Christianity).
- ◆ Some believe that the Creation story is **metaphorical**; that God may be seen as starting the process of evolution, and that the Bible is not necessarily literal. Note: this does *not* mean that they see the Bible as untrue, but rather that they see it as a metaphorical story.

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Influence Today

Creation influences different Christians today in different ways.

A **literal** interpretation may make it hard for Christians to trust scientific findings. Christians feel special, as humans are, on this interpretation, uniquely created in God's image, not evolved from monkeys. Believing a literal account of Creation can be a sign of God's power – if he was able to create everything in a week. Interestingly, this is a modern phenomenon (developing within the last two centuries and becoming more prominent in the last few years ago), rather than an older view displaced by science.

A more **metaphorical** interpretation will not conflict with Christians learning about the world, and may help in reconciling their religious and scientific beliefs. They may believe that God created everything, but through scientific methods.

Creation is important for many Christians because they believe that God gave them the right to rule it, or have **dominion** over it.

'God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant of the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them." (Genesis 1:28–29 NRSV)

Some Christians believe this means that the world is theirs, to exploit for their own benefit, whatever they want, and control animals.

However, many Christians believe that dominion also comes with great responsibility. God has made them **stewards** of his creation; people who manage it and protect it. This creation reminds them that the world is God's and they should care for it.

'Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.' (1 Peter 4:10)

The account of Creation in John 1 is important because it reinforces to Christians that Christ existed, as has the Trinity, and that God cared enough about his creation to send his son to save humanity.

Quick Questions

6. Which of these biblical books mentions Jesus' involvement in creation?
- a) Genesis b) Judges c) Matthew

Now Try This...

7. Explain **two** different Christian beliefs about creation. Refer to scripture.

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Different Christian Beliefs about the Afterlife and The

Christians believe in an afterlife – that there will be another life after death. This is an important belief within Christianity.

Keywords:

- ◆ **atonement** – making up for something; in Christianity, Jesus achieving salvation by paying a price
- ◆ **heaven** – a place people go after death, where God is
- ◆ **hell** – a place people go after death away from God
- ◆ **immortality of the soul** – where a spiritual part of a person continues forever
- ◆ **judgment** – when people will be rewarded or punished for their lives
- ◆ **parables** – stories with an inner meaning, for the purpose of teaching
- ◆ **purgatory** – a place Catholics believe people may go after death to do penance
- ◆ **resurrection of the body** – the physical raising of a person who is dead

Resurrection and life after death (resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul)

Not all Christians agree on how life after death works. Some believe that God will raise our bodies at the end of time. Others believe that a spiritual part of a person, the soul, survives death and goes straight to **heaven/hell/purgatory** (see the section on these below). Some believe in both; that the soul will enter the afterlife immediately after death, but that the **resurrection** for everyone at **judgment** at the end of time, where souls and bodies are reunited. In other words, people will enter a spiritual realm after death based on their actions. Those who are good will go to purgatory to **atone** for sins (see more on this below). At the end of time, everyone will be judged on their actions during life *and* after death, and people will then enter the rest of eternity (people who had previously been in purgatory have the opportunity to enter heaven).

Therefore, there are varied beliefs about the nature of resurrection: some believe it is immediate at death; some believe that it is delayed until the end of time; some believe we will be resurrected while some believe that it will not be, and that in heaven the resurrected bodies are completely different to earthly bodies. However, all Christians agree that this is available to them because Jesus has saved them and God has the power to raise the dead.

Different Bible passages support different ideas about resurrection.

Some Christians believe in **resurrection of the body** because Jesus was raised from the dead in a bodily form, and he raised others from the dead physically; for example, Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5). Also, Jesus taught that the dead will be raised from their graves.

“Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and will come out...” (John 5:28–29 NRSV)

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However, other Christians believe in **immortality of the soul** because Jesus (6:47; 17:2), not life which ends and then starts again at some point in the future. He told the thieves on the cross that he would be in heaven that day, which implies that they would wait to be resurrected at the end of time.

[to the thief on the cross] "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."
(Luke 23:43 NRSV)

The Catholic Church teaches that both will happen, because the Bible teaches both. The Church does not want to deny any teachings of Jesus.

Resurrection is important because:

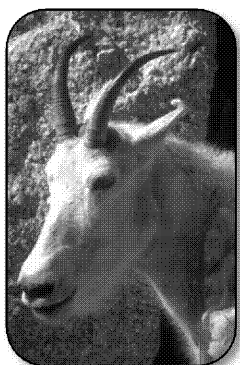
- ♦ Christians believe that there will be life after death.
 - This can comfort them because they know death will not be the end.
 - This can encourage them to live good lives because they know God will reward them.
- ♦ The existence of resurrection illuminates the character of God.
 - God is powerful enough to overcome death (demonstrated by Jesus being brought back to life in the Bible).
 - God is loving and forgiving – he wants humans to enjoy heaven with him.

Judgment

Judgment is the event at the end of time and/or when each individual person is judged based on what they believed, and whether they lived a good or bad life. Judgment results in people being sent to heaven, hell or purgatory (see the next page). (**Note:** If Christians, such as Catholics, believe in **immortality of the soul** and eternal life, they believe that people are judged twice – when they die *and* at the end of time.)

Judgment is important because it decides the eternal fate of a person – whether they are saved or condemned.

Jesus taught that after death people would be judged depending on how they lived. He said that they were prepared for God and his Kingdom. He told **parables**, or stories like Aesop's fables, to explain what **judgment** and the end of time would be like. Examples include the parable of the sheep and the goats, and the parable of the ten bridesmaids.



The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats Matthew 25:31–46 NRSV

Jesus will come back at the end of time and separate the good people (sheep) from the bad people (goats). He will grant the sheep the 'kingdom' and 'eternal life' because they fed and watered him, welcomed him, clothed him, and cared for and visited him. The sheep will ask when they did these things. Jesus will tell them that when they did these things for anyone, they did it for him.

He will then tell the goats that they did not care for others, and help them. They will be condemned to 'eternal punishment'.

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The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids Matthew 25:1–12

Ten bridesmaids were waiting for the bridegroom, but he was delayed, so they for five had brought extra oil for their lamps. When the bridegroom (representing Jesus) came, the five with extra oil had run out. They had to go to buy some more. When they got back to the wedding (representing heaven), everyone else had gone in, but the doors were locked and they were not ready for the kingdom of heaven to come at any time.

It was not just Jesus who taught that people would be judged at the end of time. Early Christians believed in judgment and continued to teach about judgment.

Taking it further

Read more about the end of time: Matthew 25:1–12, the Parable of the Talents – where Jesus says that those who will be judged favourably and those who will not.

‘For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.’ (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Heaven, Hell (and Purgatory)

Most Christians believe in **heaven**, which is a place where people will be with God. From the passages about **judgment** and the end of time, Jesus says he will judge the **disciples** in heaven (John 14:2–4). Those writing in the New Testament also believed in life after death, as expressed in 1 Corinthians 5:1–10.

“‘In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have said to you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know where I am going.’” (John 14:2–4 NRSV)

‘For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, eternal in the heavens.’ (2 Corinthians 5:1 NRSV)

Most Christians also believe in **hell**, somewhere outside of heaven and away from God. About judgment Jesus does not make hell sound very nice. It is compared to

“‘[being thrown out into the darkness], where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matthew 25:30 NRSV)

Hell has been portrayed in many different ways. In medieval times, ‘doom’ paintings, depicting scenes of judgment, were common on the walls of churches, to remind Christians that they would be judged and not be condemned to the terrors of hell.

Some Christians believe in a place called **purgatory**, where Christians can go to purify their sins before being allowed to enter heaven. Belief in purgatory is taught by Catholics who **pray** for those they believe to be in purgatory, in the hope of helping them. However, many other churches, such as the Church of England, teach that there is no purgatory.

Belief in heaven, hell and purgatory is significant, as it encourages Christians to live good lives. These beliefs are also significant because they create boundaries between different beliefs about purgatory held by the Church of England and Catholics.

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Importance and Influence Today

Because Christians believe Jesus died so that they could have eternal life, many Christians believe that death is not the end. Those who feel that they are living lives pleasing to God may not fear death because they believe that life after death is not the end. The teachings about life after death are important because they help Christians to make decisions, knowing that they will be judged after death.

““Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live” (John 11:25)”

The teachings of judgment in the New Testament also encourage Christians to consider a ‘good’ life (for example, taking care of the hungry and the sick, shepherding the sheep and the goats, Matthew 25), in order not to ‘go to **hell**’. So the teachings are important because they help Christians to make decisions, knowing that they will be judged after death. The teachings about life after death are not reassuring, but scary – many Christians know what will happen if they are not good.

Because some Christians believe that they should focus on the afterlife, belief in life after death is important in influencing them to isolate themselves from normal life – many Christians have felt that because they value the afterlife more than human life that they should focus on worshipping God and on the afterlife.

Some Christians interpret...

““No one comes to the Father except through me [Jesus]” (John 14:6)”

... to mean that only Christians will go to **heaven** – such Christians, therefore, feel that they must believe and practice Christianity in order to go to heaven when they die. This often leads to Christians trying to convert others to Christianity so that they too can experience heaven. This belief is important because it influences Christians’ views of non-Christians and also their actions – without such a belief they might not be as concerned with converting others. Do Christians believe in life after death? Do they love their neighbours? Do they give to the poor?

However, other Christians interpret John 14:6 as meaning that no one can experience God except through Christianity, but that people can experience God in other ways. This belief is important, as those who hold it will feel that people of other religions ultimately want the same things.

Quick Questions

8. Give **two** examples of places which Christians may believe people enter after death.

Now Try This...

9. Give **two** ways in which belief in the afterlife influences Christians today.

10. ‘Immediately after death, people go to heaven, hell, or purgatory.’ Evaluate this statement.

Argue for *and* against this statement. You must refer to Christian teachings which follows from your argument.

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Jesus Christ and Salvation

Beliefs and Teachings about the Incarnation and Jesus

Most Christians have come to believe that Jesus is God, and so during his time on earth he was **incarnate**; or God in the flesh. They also believe that he is the Son of God (so

Keywords:

- ♦ **Incarnation** – in Christianity, the belief that Jesus was God in the flesh
- ♦ **Jewish law** – what the Jews followed in order to please God. Many Christians believe that Jesus was God in the flesh, so that Christians do not have to follow it anymore
- ♦ **miracle** – in Christianity, something which appears to be done by God and seen as a sign of God's power
- ♦ **Transfiguration** – when Jesus was transformed, and began to shine, in front of his disciples, and Moses and Elijah appeared

Nature of the Person of Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God

The exact nature of Jesus as both God and human has been debated within Christianity.

- ♦ Some early Christians claimed that Jesus was completely God and merely appeared to be human.
- ♦ Some Christians have claimed that Jesus was a **divine** being, but not on the same level as God.
- ♦ Some Christians have believed, and still believe today, that Jesus was fully human, but had a special relationship with God. All humans can be referred to as God's children, so 'Son of God' does not necessarily indicate divine status, but rather that Jesus was a special human chosen by God with a special relationship with him.
- ♦ Mainstream Christianity teaches that Jesus was fully human and fully God – the **incarnate** Son of God. Most Christians feel that Jesus' human nature and divine nature were both present all of, or most of, the time. Jesus felt pain as any other human, but he had the power of God. Some Christians believe that Jesus was not completely aware of God's plan all of the time. Jesus, as the Son of God, is believed to be one member of the **Trinity**, as much God as God the Father.

Importance of the Person of Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God, and why it is important to Christians Today

Jesus being the **incarnate** Son of God / the Incarnation is important to Christians for several reasons:

- ♦ This shows God cared about Christians enough to become a human and die for them.
- ♦ This shows that Jesus had God's authority and taught his will, and so Christians can follow his teachings and practice for certain.
- ♦ This shows that God has power – to become human, raise the dead, people believe that Jesus' resurrection establishes that God has the power to grant life after death, meaning that there is life forward to the afterlife.
- ♦ It helps Christians to have a personal relationship with God, because they can see a relationship with them. Some Christians feel that by following Jesus they can come closer to God, and having an incarnated God makes it easier to understand God's will.
- ♦ Belief in the Incarnation has led many Christians to see Jesus as a fulfilment of prophecy, meaning that they no longer need to follow this for their **sins** to be forgiven, but rather that they are saved from condemnation.
- ♦ Belief in Jesus being God incarnate (or the only incarnation of God) is unique to Christianity. Some people view Jesus as a **prophet**, and some Hindus believe that Jesus was one particular god) among many. Therefore, belief in the Incarnation sets Christianity apart from other religions and is one of their core beliefs.

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Biblical basis for the teaching of the Incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God

The word '**incarnation**' originates in Latin; as such, it does not occur in the Bible (it is written in Greek). The belief in the Incarnation is not universally held, and it is not one of the **Gospel** writers and other writers of the **New Testament** did not believe in. However, the New Testament can still be used to provide evidence for the Incarnation.

References to Jesus as God Incarnate:

- John 1:1–18 claims that Jesus has existed as God since before **Creation** and is the **incarnation** of God.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us... Jesus Christ...' (John 1:1–18)

- 1 Timothy 3:16 claims that God was revealed as a human [as Jesus].

'Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He (Or: God) was made manifest in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in and glorified, taken up in glory.' (1 Timothy 3:16 NRSV)

References to Jesus as the Son of God:

- At Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan, he received the Holy Spirit from God, and God was heard saying,

""This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."" (Matthew 3:17)

- At the **Transfiguration**, Jesus was changed, and 'his face shone like the sun' and 'his clothes became dazzling white'; again God was heard saying,

""This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"" (Mark 9:7)

- Others also referred to him as the Son of God in the New Testament:

'Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."' (Matthew 16:16)
'God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Timothy 1:1)

References to Jesus' God-like Qualities / Divine Nature:

- Jesus healed many people, including the Centurion's servant, a leper, the woman with haemorrhages, a blind man, and he raised Lazarus from the dead (Luke 7, Matthew 8 and 9, John 9 and 11).
- Jesus performed other **miracles**, such as making five loaves and two fish feed thousands, walking on water, and calming a storm (Matthew 14, Mark 4).
- Jesus claimed the authority to forgive **sins** and cast out demons, typically which he backed up with his healing abilities (Mark 2 and 5, Matthew 9 and 10).
- Even though he was killed, he was **resurrected**, confirming his power over death (Mark 14–16, Luke 22–24, John 18–21).

Disbelieving people reflected Jesus' teachings in their practices and attitudes. Jesus does not condemn them.

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Jesus' Humanity

The Bible also references Jesus' human nature – he is reported to:

- ◆ have eaten (e.g. Mark 3);
- ◆ have felt tired (e.g. John 4) and slept (e.g. Mark 4);
- ◆ have cried when his friend died (John 11:35);
- ◆ have suffered leading up to his death (e.g. Luke 23); and
- ◆ he died a painful death on the cross (e.g. Matthew 27).

Christians do not believe that Jesus being the **incarnation** of God made him God. Christians also use Jesus' humanity to explain times in the Gospels where he seemed to lack knowledge – if he were only God and not human, then this might not make sense.

Importance of the Biblical Basis for the Incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God Today

- ◆ Christians have a source, which they trust, which can be used as evidence for the Incarnation and Jesus being the Son of God.
- ◆ Christians can make a case that belief in the Incarnation and belief that Jesus was God were around early on in Christianity, and were not developed centuries later.

Quick Questions

11. Give **two** reasons why the Jesus of the Gospels seems divine.

Now Try This...

12. Explain **two** Christian beliefs about the person of Jesus. Refer to Scripture.

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Beliefs and Teachings about the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Ascension

The belief that Jesus died and was raised from the dead is of central importance to Christianity. The events surrounding Jesus' death are often referred to as his '**Passion**', because it is from the Greek word for suffering. Jesus' Passion is remembered especially during Lent, but it is crucial to the whole religion.

Keywords:

- ◆ **covenant** – a promise between people and God
- ◆ **Crucifixion** – when Jesus was put to death on a cross
- ◆ **Eucharist** – sacrament which involves sharing bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus
- ◆ **Great Commission** – when the risen Jesus told his disciples to go and preach the Gospel to all nations
- ◆ **Last Supper** – Jesus' final celebration of the Jewish Passover with his disciples
- ◆ **Lent** – the period of preparation before Easter. Christians remember Jesus' time of suffering and sacrifice Jesus made by dying
- ◆ **Passion** – referring to the events surrounding the suffering and death of Jesus
- ◆ **Passover** – an important Jewish festival celebrating God's deliverance of the Israelites from first-born, and slavery in Egypt
- ◆ **Sabbath** – the Jewish holy day
- ◆ **sacrament** – a particularly important worship practice which has even higher status in some churches, such as the Catholic and Orthodox Churches
- ◆ **Temple** – the Jewish holy building in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus, which was destroyed in 70 AD

Synopsis of Biblical Accounts

The **Gospel** accounts do not *all* agree on *all* the details of Jesus' **Passion** and Resurrection. Some events occur in some gospels and not others. (The Gospels are the four books in the Bible that tell the story of the life of Jesus.)

Before the Crucifixion:

Jesus eats a last meal (the **Last Supper**) with his **disciples**, where he shares with them that these are his body and blood given for them, and that they should share in the remembrance of him. After this, Jesus is betrayed by his disciple Judas. Jesus is taken to the Jewish authorities; the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate; and in Luke's account by King Herod. Pilate and the authorities convince Pilate to kill Jesus.

Crucifixion:

Jesus is beaten and mocked by soldiers before being led to be crucified. They put a crown of thorns on his head, and mock him as the King of the Jews. In Matthew's, Mark's and Luke's Gospels the soldiers make a traveller called Simon of Cyrene carry Jesus' cross to the **Crucifixion**; in John's Gospel, he carries it himself. Jesus is offered some type of wine, but refuses it.

Jesus is crucified between two other criminals, and the soldiers gamble for Jesus' clothing. The plaque on the cross detailing his crime states that he is the King of the Jews. Jesus is mocked, taunted and told to save himself by the Jewish authorities, and also by the Roman soldiers in some accounts. In Luke's Gospel he talks to the criminals either side of him. When one of them asks Jesus to remember him, Jesus tells him that he will be remembered in heaven.

'Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. They came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the two criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing.]' (Luke 23:32-34)

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Different accounts convey different words of Jesus from the cross. For example, in Matthew's and Mark's accounts Jesus quotes Psalm 22, asking why God has forsaken him, and in Luke's Gospel Jesus commends his spirit to God before dying.

The sky goes dark from about midday until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when Jesus dies. When Jesus dies, the curtain in the **Temple** is ripped in two. In some accounts, the Roman centurion, upon witnessing Jesus' death, states that he must have been God's son (Matthew and Mark), or that he must have been innocent (Luke).

Jesus' death is witnessed by some of the women who followed him. In John's Gospel soldiers pierce Jesus' side with a spear to check that he is dead.

Jesus' body is given to one of his followers, Joseph of Arimathea, to bury. The Jews did not want bodies left on the crosses, as it was the day of preparation for the Passover.

Resurrection:

Jesus died on the Friday, and the **Sabbath** (Saturday) the next day was kept. Consequently, the women who followed Jesus could not go to prepare his body for burial until the morning. The **resurrection** story varies greatly between the different gospels. The following are the accounts of the resurrection in all four versions (in the order they appear in the Bible).

- ◆ In Matthew's Gospel, an angel appears to the women and tells them that Jesus has risen. Then Jesus appears to his **disciples** when the women have told them to go.
- ◆ In Mark's Gospel, a man (often presumed to be an angel) is sitting in the open tomb and tells the women that Jesus has been raised. In the longer ending of this Gospel, Jesus appears to **Mary Magdalene** and then to his disciples.
- ◆ In Luke's Gospel, two men (often presumed to be angels) appear to the women and tell them that Jesus has risen. The women are scared and tell the disciples.

Mary Magdalene is the first to see Jesus, and she is often referred to as the 'female disciple' in several of the gospels. In several reports that she had an illness, which she was cured of. She is often referred to as the 'disciple' because there is no other woman mentioned in the gospels.

The disciples do not want to believe them, though Peter goes to investigate. Jesus appears to two of his followers on a journey, though they do not realise it is him until he breaks bread down to eat. He also appears to Simon Peter and his other disciples, preaching and teaching them. He tells them to wait in Jerusalem [for the Holy Spirit] and then to go out and preach the good news about him.

'While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling robes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen." (Luke 24:4-5 NRSV)

- ◆ In John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene finds the empty tomb and alerts some of the disciples. Two angels sitting in the tomb, and then she sees Jesus. Then Jesus appears to the disciple Thomas, and then again when Thomas is present. Thomas is called 'Doubting Thomas' because he would not believe that Jesus had risen until he saw him. Jesus then appears to his disciples again when they are fishing.

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Ascension:

The **ascension** is not specifically mentioned in Matthew's Gospel or John's Gospel. Luke's Gospel ends with Jesus telling his disciples to go out and teach about him and make disciples of all nations, implying that he is leaving them physically. This is known as the Great Commission. It is discussed more in the section on *The Place of Mission, Evangelism and Church Growth*. Mark's Gospel also has a similar ending, also given in Mark's Gospel. John's Gospel ends with a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, and a testimony from the Gospel writer.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus blesses his **disciples** and ascends to heaven, and the Gospel mentions that Jesus was taken up into heaven and seated next to God.

'While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.
(Luke 24:51 NRSV)

Importance of These Events and Their Influence Today

Christians believe that the purpose of Jesus' life was so that he could teach God's will, and then die as a sacrifice to save humans from their **sin**. Christians believe that Jesus' life and death formed a new **covenant**, a promise between God and humankind. Jesus replaced the old **covenant** of the **Jewish law**, so that Christians no longer needed to follow this, but could instead be saved through Jesus.

Different aspects of Jesus' resurrection and crucifixion also have particular significance for Christians in understanding the person of Jesus Christ.

Aspect of Jesus' last days	Significance
Jesus died at the time of the Passover festival	For Christians, Jesus became the Passover lamb. The Jews celebrated the Passover to remember when they had marked their doorposts with blood so that they were saved from the plague of death in Egypt, and from the Egyptians. Now, for Christians, Jesus was the sacrifice.
Jesus' death, predicted at the Last Supper	Many Christian denominations remember Jesus' sacrifice through the sacrament of the Eucharist ; sharing bread and wine as a reminder of Jesus giving his life to save them from their sin – Jesus died because of his sacrifice.
Fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy	Many Christians believe that various aspects of Jesus' death correspond to Old Testament prophecy . Some believe that the 'suffering servant' mentioned in Isaiah 53. Some believe that sold his clothing and Jesus being mocked correspond with prophecy (among other things). If Jesus fulfilled prophecy, this shows that the plan to redeem humankind had been part of God's plan for a long time. (Some Christians believe these prophecies were fulfilled, and do not believe in the first place.)
Destroying the Temple and rebuilding in three days	When Jesus had spoken about destroying the Temple and rebuilding it in three days, during his trial in front of the Jewish Council in some gospels it was interpreted that he meant the Temple in Jerusalem where they worshipped. However, Jesus interpreted that he meant himself; that God dwelt within him. When the Jewish Temple was destroyed, less than 50 years after Jesus' death, Christians saw Jesus as replacing the physical Temple – that they should worship Jesus, not through animal sacrifices, when Jesus was the

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Aspect of Jesus' last days	Significance
The Temple curtain tearing in two	<p>The Temple curtain separated the Holy of Holies (the place where God was supposed to dwell) from the rest of the Temple. The tearing was seen to symbolise that Jesus' death had removed the barrier between God and humans. Christians today believe that anyone can come to God through Jesus.</p> <p>Christians believe that this applies to gentiles (non-Jews) as Jesus' death removed the barrier between God and all of humankind.</p>
Jesus rising from the dead	<p>Christians believe that Jesus overcame sin and death. The religion of Christianity has continued due to belief in his resurrection. Christians celebrate at Easter time.</p>
Jesus' resurrection and ascension	<p>These show Jesus' divinity and remind Christians of his power. He could overcome death and rise to heaven. As Jesus ascended, he was believed to be alive – able to help and watch over Christians.</p>

Catholics tend to emphasise the importance of the crucifixion when Jesus died. Protestants tend to emphasise the resurrection when Jesus overcame death.

Pause for thought:

What do you think would have happened if Jesus' disciples did *not* believe that he had risen from the dead? Would Christianity exist today?

Quick Questions

13. Which of these do the Gospels report happening when Jesus died?
- a) The Temple Curtain tore b) Soldiers flogged his body c) Pilate washed his hands

Now Try This...

14. Explain **two** ways in which beliefs about the crucifixion of Jesus influence Christians today.

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Beliefs and Teachings about Sin, Including Original Sin

The term '**sin**' often refers to acting against God's will, but can also refer to God due to humans not matching up to God's perfection. The consequence is death and hell – if people act against God, they will be punished by dying and going to hell. Christians believe that if they confess their sins and ask God to forgive them, then they can go to heaven, but will receive eternal life in heaven.

Keywords:

- ◆ **doctrine** – set teaching or belief
- ◆ **Immaculate Conception** – the doctrine that Mary was conceived without original sin
- ◆ **original sin** – sin all humans inherit because of the Fall
- ◆ **personal sin** – sins committed by an individual
- ◆ **reason** – a rational capacity for understanding and making decisions
- ◆ **saviour** – someone who saves; Jesus came to save Christians from sin
- ◆ **the Fall** – the doctrine that humans lost God's grace when they disobeyed him
- ◆ **virgin birth** – the belief that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, not conventionally, but by the Holy Spirit

Original Sin

One interpretation of **creation** leads to the **doctrine** of the **Fall**, largely associated with Augustine. This expresses that it was through the **sin** of humans taking and eating the forbidden fruit from God's **grace**. Humans cannot redeem themselves from this, and need God's help to escape human condition.

Augustine felt that fallenness and sin from the disobedience of Adam and Eve passed on to all humans – this inherited fallenness is called **original sin** after the first, original sin. This doctrine has been particularly emphasised within the Catholic Church, where humans are sinful from birth, regardless of what they do themselves.

The only human thought to be free from original sin is Mary, Jesus' mother. Christians believe that she was conceived without original sin being passed on to her, in the **Immaculate Conception**. The **Immaculate Conception** refers to Mary's conception, but is often confused with the **virgin birth**, that Jesus was conceived by Mary and the Holy Spirit, not through sexual intercourse. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus himself was without original sin, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Not all Christians agree with the concept of original sin. Not all agree with the doctrine of the Fall / with the extent to which Augustine thought humans were corrupted. For example, St Thomas Aquinas argued that humans were not completely fallen, as he thought humans still had their **reason** as a moral compass.

Personal Sin

Christians who believe in **original sin** also believe in **personal sin** – things we do against God's will. Some Christians only believe in personal sin, so do not feel the need for God's help to escape human condition. They believe that any disobedience to God is sinful, but that humans do not inherit sin.

Jesus can be seen as a second Adam, who came to remedy the **Fall** and/or restore the relationship with God despite sin. Regardless of whether humans inherit sin, Jesus will sometimes, and so they need **saving** – through Jesus.

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Jesus gave many teachings on sin, recorded in the **New Testament**. He taught sinners, to rescue people from the consequences of sin. He told many people they were forgiven and preached that God would forgive the sins of those who repent. Jesus had the authority to forgive sins.

‘For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.’ (Matthew 9:13)

‘When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

‘If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they will be retained.’ (John 8:1-11)

Jesus also taught that sin was severe – it should be avoided at all costs.

‘And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.’ (Matthew 5:29-30)

Further, Jesus corrected a misconception about sin which was common at the time. Sin was not necessarily the result of sin – God may not punish sin on Earth, and good deeds were not a sign of sinlessness or God’s favour.

‘His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he is born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him.”’ (John 9:2-3 NRSV)

Influence Today

If Christians subscribe to the idea of the **Fall** and of **original sin**, they may view women as inferior to men because Eve tempted Adam. Some Christians believe in a **saviour**, Jesus, because they feel they are so lost.

Christians who do not agree with St Augustine’s Doctrine of the Fall are less likely to view sin negatively. For example, many see women as equal to men because Genesis says that women were created in the image of God. While such Christians feel they need to repent, they may be more positive about the human condition. They may view the **Creator** as someone who was once so close to God, it may be possible to draw closer to him again if they follow his teachings and try not to sin.

Christians try not to sin, but believe that if they do God will forgive them, because of his mercy in Jesus.

Quick Questions

15. Give **two** types of sin Christians may believe in.

Now Try This...

16. Explain **two** ways in which beliefs about sin may influence Christians today.

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Beliefs and Teachings about the Means of Salvation, Life and Spirit

Keywords:

- ♦ **predestination** – the idea that God has chosen who will be saved in advance

Nature of Salvation

Salvation refers to the view within Christianity that Christians have been saved from death and resurrection, from **sin** and its consequences (death). This means that Christians have died, or punishment, and can have a new start, having faith that God loves them.

Christians believe that doing wrong (**sin**) separates them from God, and causes death (death). However, Jesus died instead – he paid the price which they should have paid to have a relationship with God, a clean slate. Also, when they die, this will be a new start on with God in heaven. So salvation is important because it offers Christians new opportunities and cancels their debt of sin – God forgives them.

‘For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ (Romans 6:23 NRSV)

Different ideas about salvation:

Christians accept that there is salvation because Jesus died and rose again. However, there are different views about who can receive salvation, and how.

One view which some Christians, such as St Augustine, hold is that salvation is given by God and that God has **predestined** who to save; chosen them at the beginning of time. If you have sinned, they have no right to salvation, and God has not chosen to save everyone. This means that humans do not have to worry about being perfect, because God does not care what individual has done.

A second view held by some Christians is that humans have **free will** to choose whether to accept what Jesus has done for them, and that salvation is down to the individual. You must accept God's grace and follow Jesus. This seems positive because no one is automatically excluded, but it puts pressure on Christians to believe and live good lives.



How to remember this?

Some people liken the first view of salvation, through predestination (being chosen by God), to a cat. Cats pick their young up by the neck to carry them.

Some people liken the second view of salvation, where the human must reach out to God, to a monkey. Baby monkeys must grab onto their mothers to be carried.

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Other Means of Salvation

Law: Before Jesus, Jews aimed to achieve **salvation** through following God's law (the Jewish law), but many Christians believe that this was not a permanent solution, and Jesus' sacrifice replaced this (most Jews still follow the Jewish law). Instead of following a written law, they should instead follow the spiritual law of love, perfectly expressed in Jesus.

'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' (Hebrews 8:10 NRSV)

Because of Jesus, Christians today can feel free from sin, and also free from the law. This is not to say that they can do anything they want, but that they do not need to purify themselves, and that if they do something wrong and repent, they are forgiven. This means Christians do not have to fear death, or punishment, and have faith that God loves and cares for them.

However, while Christians do not follow all of the rules in the **Old Testament**, they should follow the principles of God's law – just because Jesus died for humans does not mean that Christians can do anything they like. However, St Paul makes it clear that we are saved by following the law, only by following Jesus.

'... yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.' (Galatians 2:16 NRSV)

Grace and the Spirit: Christians believe that **grace** is a spiritual gift which God can give to people in order to save them. For example, Christians believe that sending Jesus to save humans was an extension of God's grace.

'From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.'
(John 1:16 NRSV)



The Holy Spirit, the third Person of God in the **Trinity**, is also believed to be able to send his grace; by sending Christians the Holy Spirit to help them in the future. Christians feel that they can also receive God's grace through his teaching in the **sacraments**; for example, reliving Jesus' sacrifice in the **Eucharist**, or accepting forgiveness through **baptism**.

'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.' (Romans 8:2 NRSV)

Quick Questions

17. Which of these is **not** a means of salvation?

- a) Grace b) Spirit c) Law

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Beliefs and Teachings about the Role of Christ in Salvation

Idea of Atonement

Christians have complex and varying beliefs about **salvation** and **atonement**.

The Role of Christ in Salvation

Jesus' role in **salvation** is that he brought humans salvation – without him, no chance at a relationship with God. In John 3:10–21, Jesus explains to a man that he has come from heaven, so that those who believe in him can have eternal life. He says that those who believe will be **saved**, but those who do not believe will not.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NRSV)

Christians, from the beginning of Christianity, have taught that salvation comes through Jesus' **disciple** Peter proclaimed this in Acts 4:8–12 – that everyone must be saved through him.

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 NRSV)

Some people wonder why Jesus had to die to end this separation between God and humans. Could he just click his fingers and make everything ok if he wanted to? One Christian belief is that God is both **just** and merciful. Wrong had been done, so a just God *has* to punish. However, he is merciful and wants to forgive. The solution: he accepts the punishment for them. He can forgive humanity. This is like paying a debt for a friend – the debt is paid by someone else instead of them.

The Idea of Atonement

Atonement refers to *how* Jesus achieved **salvation**, and how he redeemed humans for (or atoned for) their sins, so saved them from the consequences.

Atonement is a significant concept because it explains how it was possible for God to pay humans' debt himself and heal the rift between God and humans. If God, by atoning for humans' sins, he could not have brought them salvation.

Different ideas about atonement:

There are different ideas about how Jesus managed to atone for sin and save humans. Some think he could pay the price to redeem humans because he was human, but he was able to overcome death because he was **divine**. Some think Jesus achieved atonement through sacrifice. Sacrifice is necessary for sin – death (this view is used throughout because it is a popular view). Some think the sacrifice defeated the devil, so that he could no longer control sinners. Some think it is not fully explainable.

[Jesus, speaking about himself:] ‘For the Son of Man came not to be served but to give his life a ransom for many.’ (Mark 10:45 NRSV)

The link between salvation and atonement: Salvation is *what* Christians believe Jesus did – he saved humanity. Atonement refers to *how* Christians believe he did it – through his sacrifice.

Now Try This...

18. Explain **two** teachings about atonement within Christianity. Refer to sources.

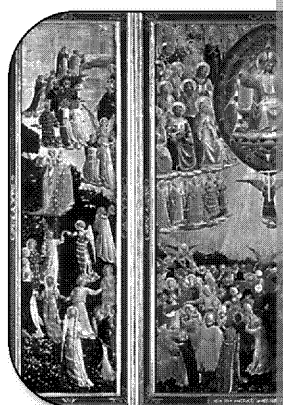
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Summary for Beliefs and Teachings

Key Beliefs

- ♦ The Christian God is believed to be **omnipotent** (all-powerful), loving, and just. The problem of **evil** and **suffering** exists because it is hard to explain why, if God is just, he allows evil and suffering to exist. Believers may question their faith and wonder if God should not allow **natural suffering** or **moral suffering**.
- ♦ Many Christians believe in one God, in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, known as the **Trinity**. Christian beliefs about the Persons of God can be found in the Nicene Creed.
- ♦ Christians believe that God **created** the world. Accounts of this are found in Genesis and John. Some Christians believe that these accounts are to be interpreted literally, while others believe they should be interpreted **metaphorically**. Christians may take from these accounts that humans are special because they are created in God's image, and that they should live in a way that reflects God's character.
- ♦ Christians have various understandings concerning the afterlife. Jesus taught that people would be **judged** after death and that they should be prepared for God's Kingdom. Most Christians believe in **heaven** and **hell** and some believe in **purgatory**, a place to do penance before heaven. Some Christians believe that God will **resurrect** people's physical bodies at the end of time, and some believe that the **soul** lives on immediately after death and is **immortal**; some believe in both. Some Christians believe that only Christians will go to heaven, because Jesus is the only way to God, but not all do.



Jesus Christ and Salvation

- ♦ Many Christians believe that Jesus was the **incarnation** of God: God in human form. Jesus was the Son of God. Because of the Incarnation, Christians may feel that God is closer to them through Jesus' teaching, and that they are saved through his sacrifice.
- ♦ Christians believe that Jesus was **crucified**, buried, and then rose back to life. After his death, by his disciples and giving them instructions, he **ascended** to heaven. His death and **resurrection** saved them, and allowed them to have a relationship with God.
- ♦ Christians believe in **sin** – acting against God's will / a separation from God. They believe that when Adam and Eve betrayed God in the Garden of Eden this was the first sin, and that this was automatically **sinful** through **original sin** since then. All Christians believe that personal acts which go against God's will are also sinful.
- ♦ Christians have different views on whether God only extends **salvation** to those who are Christians, or if it is available to all who seek it and Jesus and the Holy Spirit in their lives. Many Christians believe that Jesus fulfilled the **Jewish law** so that Christians could now be saved through faith alone, without following the rules. Christians believe that salvation is an extension of God's love for humanity.
- ♦ Christians believe that Jesus brought them **salvation** by dying for them. They believe that Jesus was **atoned** (made up) for their **sin**.

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Practices

Religious practices are very important within Christianity. Christians **worship** God in various methods and speak to him through **prayer**. Special practices called **sacraments** are part of many **denominations**. Christians have set celebrations and may make **pilgrimages**. These practices are very important to many Christians.

Keywords:

- ♦ **church/Church** – has various meanings: a collection of Christians OR a Christian building (church) OR the authority in a particular denomination (Church)
- ♦ **pilgrimage** – making a physical journey to draw closer to God
- ♦ **worship** – devotion to God

Worship and Festivals

Different Forms of Worship and Their Significance

Worship is a very broad term covering acts of devotion to God. This often includes prayer and song. In Christianity it also covers things such as asking for forgiveness and learning about God. It can be formal or informal, in a group or done individually; so it can vary in practice.

Keywords:

- ♦ **baptism** – a sacrament which involves being anointed with, or immersed in water, symbolising new life in Jesus
- ♦ **charismatic** – in Christianity, a movement which emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic may be lively, and open to the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ **congregation** – the members of a Church who are not leading a service
- ♦ **creed** – a statement of belief
- ♦ **icons** – important religious images within churches like Orthodox Churches
- ♦ **liturgy** – set worship; either exact words or a format

Liturgy

What – *Liturgy can be used to describe a set service, where specific words are followed, but it can refer more generally to a format for worship.* The priest or minister leads the majority of the service, but there may also be parts where the **congregation** has general responses, prayers, or to take part in **creeds**.

When – A **liturgy** where everything is set may be used when the service involves a **liturgy** for the **Eucharist** is very common, as are **baptism** liturgies. There are also special celebrations, such as Easter and Christmas, and events such as marriages and funerals.

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Why –

- ◆ Such liturgies serve the purpose of unifying Church practice, as the same different churches within the same **denomination**. This means that the same sacraments, for example, are being celebrated in line with Church tradition.
- ◆ Having set words can also help to unify Christians who attend different services. If they attend a service at a different Church with the same liturgy, they will be able to follow in the same way.
- ◆ Participating in the same liturgies can allow congregations to participate in what is coming, and consequently do not need to try hard to understand what they already know and understand it.
- ◆ Having a set service can make celebrations and sacraments seem special. Putting up decorations can help to make people feel festive; the service itself reminds people of what they are celebrating, and that it is special.

Liturgical Worship

What – *Liturgical **worship** involves a set format for worship, though each service will be different.* A service might, for example, include a set number of hymns or songs; a sermon or a talk; prayers of different types; a set number of Bible readings; meditation; focusing on **icons**; or other elements of worship. However, these hymns, prayers and readings etc. will vary between different services with the same structure. Not all liturgical services will contain all elements. Liturgical services can contain **liturgies**.

When – Such services will be common at many churches if there is no particular celebration, or sacrament being celebrated. Sometimes part of a service will follow a liturgical format, but a particular liturgy will be introduced for a part of the service which involves a sacrament.

However, no particular elements are necessary to qualify a service as liturgical. Services in the Quaker Church, a Protestant denomination, which involve sitting in silence and waiting to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, could be called liturgical, as they still involve a structure.

Why –

- ◆ Churches often perform services according to a structure which their denomination follows.
- ◆ Churches often use a structure, or structures, which appeal to their congregation to follow the service easily and know what is happening.
- ◆ Liturgical structure allows services to be planned in advance.
- ◆ Liturgical structure allows all desired elements (e.g. prayers and a sermon) to be included without being forgotten.

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Non-liturgical Worship

What – Non-liturgical **worship** is where there is no set structure to worship; it is spontaneous.

When – Spontaneous, personal worship is non-liturgical; where an individual worships through song, or **prayer**, for example. However, some churches or groups of people talk or pray spontaneously, and where the service has not been strictly planned.

Why –

- ◆ If Christians decide to worship God spontaneously, then worship will be spontaneous.
- ◆ Some denominations choose to have non-liturgical services because they believe it is more genuine if the structure is planned and there is less flexibility to worship as people want to.

Some people will class Quaker worship as non-liturgical because no hymns, prayers, or songs are planned in advance. Some Pentecostal Churches, Protestant Churches which emphasise the Holy Spirit, are non-liturgical, and worship with less structure. This is because they believe they should worship as they are led to by the Holy Spirit. When they worship, they believe the Holy Spirit, who they believe will tell them what to pray, and how to praise God.

Informal Worship

What – Informal **worship** is worship which is more relaxed in some sense. It can be thought to be informal – worship might be said to be informal if people are dressed in smart dress; if the worship is non-liturgical and spontaneous; or if it is held in a home rather than at church. Informal worship is sometimes **charismatic** – lively, and emphasises the Holy Spirit.

When – Informal worship can be held at any time. It may be held on a Sunday when people desire to worship in this way, or at any other time when people want to.

Why –

- ◆ Many Christians like to see God as a friend, who they do not have to be afraid of, and are more comfortable with informal worship.
- ◆ Christians often want to worship God when they are not at church service, and prefer the same style of worship as that led by a minister.

Private Worship

What – Private **worship** is any worship done individually. This includes worshipping on one's own; going into a church for private prayer; and sometimes within a church service are occasions for personal worship (sometimes there is space given for private prayer of a service or at times of **prayer**).

When – Private worship can be done at any time, whenever someone wants to.

Why –

- ◆ Most Christians feel that Christianity is a personal **faith**. They want to have a personal relationship with God, and choose which worship practices they want to follow.
- ◆ Christians cannot always attend public worship when they feel like worshipping.

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Worship Practices

Different **worship** practices are incorporated into worship services of all styles.

Sermon/talk – many Church **denominations** listen to a priest or other worship leader talk about a particular passage in the Bible and/or a religious theme such as salvation. This can take place in a formal service, but it could be spontaneous.

Prayer – there are many forms of prayer, through which Christians talk to God. Prayer can be ordered in a formal service, but Christians can pray whenever they wish, in formal, informal and individual.

Singing – through this Christians can praise God and reflect on religious themes. Singing takes place in structured worship, but Christians may sing to praise God individually.

Sacraments – these have varying importance in different Churches. Some Christians believe in sacraments. Some feel that sacraments are a way for Christians to remember what God has done for them. These are associated with more formal services and take place within a **liturgy**.

Meditation – Christians may meditate on God, the Bible or their religion, or on their own lives, among other things. This is more likely to be personal and informal, but could be built into structured worship.

Focusing on icons – in some churches, such as Orthodox Churches, Christians express devotion in worship through paintings of Jesus and the saints. This helps them to get closer to the divine; this can be during worship, or at home individually.

Use of the Bible

Reading the Bible – this is done because it holds God's teachings and Christians learn from them through it. This can be done in a formal service, or informally in a small group.

In most church services in mainstream **denominations**, the Bible will play some part in **worship**. Many services will have Bible readings from the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**. If a **sermon** is preached, it is often based on the Bible readings used, so Christians can see how and why the Bible readings are relevant to their **faith** and what they can learn from them. Some hymns and worship songs are based on Bible passages, which provide Christians another way to connect to these. Bible readings in church are used to teach Christians about God, and also about what God wants them to do with their lives. Some churches follow a **lectionary**; a set list of which Bible passages are to be read at which times. In more non-liturgical/informal services someone might read a Bible passage they feel has relevance to them at that time.

Individuals may read the Bible at home, to build a relationship with God. For example, Christians could pick a Bible passage to read that helps them with something current in their lives. Christians may also hold Bible study groups to look at Bible passages in more depth, or may study the Bible on their own, or with help from scholarly books.

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Christians may read the Bible to feel comfort from knowing that God cares for humans. Much of the Bible can be used to reassure Christians; 1 Corinthians

‘Will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also give you the way out, so that you may be able to endure it.’

The Bible also shows other people in difficult situations, which can show Christians alone in experiencing difficulties.

Christians also use the Bible as a source of guidance to help them to know their own decisions, especially following the example of Jesus, and commandments which they will follow exact commandments, and others will try to apply broader principles.

Significance of Worship

Worship is significant to Christians because they want to maintain and develop their relationship with God. Worship allows them to praise and thank him; ask him for help; repent of their sins; learn about God's will; and concentrate on becoming better Christians.

Christians from Churches such as the Catholic Church are likely to feel that **sacraments** and liturgical **worship**, are particularly important. The Catholic Church should take part in sacraments, and **liturgies** help to explain the purpose of worship. Practices which have been authorised by the Catholic Church as appropriate ways of worshipping God, and practices associated with it, are significant because they pass on God's **grace**. Catholics will also worship God privately, and this may be non-liturgical. The Catholic Church does not see this as a substitute for liturgical worship.

Christians from the Church of England or other Protestant Churches such as the Methodist Church, have strong feelings in favour of liturgical worship, like the Catholic Church. Some feel that liturgical worship is important because it helps Christians to understand their faith. Different individual practices are significant – Christians should not forget to pray, for example, and so liturgical worship is significant because it allows Christians to worship in different ways, and Christians attending liturgical services do not have to be creative. God – the worship is prepared for them. Some such Protestants will also practice non-liturgical, informal and private worship – feeling that it is significant because it is a more personal form of worship than liturgical worship. Personal prayer with God is meaningful and connected with God themselves as individuals.

Some Christians do not see liturgical worship as significant at all. Some feel that non-liturgical practices (other than prayer) which need to be carried out in order to have a relationship with God, that formally-structured worship does not help Christians to reach God. Some Christians see non-liturgical worship as significant, because if they wait for God the Holy Spirit to come, then they will be worshipping authentically – they will see any practice as significant because they are called by God to do it (such as singing) as significant because they are called by God to do it. Practices should be carried out for the sake of it.

Quick Questions

19. Give **two** worship practices which Christians may use to worship God.
20. Give **two** reasons why Christians read the Bible.

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Prayer and Its Significance

Prayer is communication between Christians and God. Christians believe that God may answer, possibly directly through a **vision**, or indirectly by **inspiration** or an event which happens in their lives, and this makes it significant. Prayer is often said in church services, but they can be said at any time. Christians feel that prayer is very important to their relationship with God, and because the ability to **pray** helps Christians to receive guidance. Prayer is also significant because it fulfils Jesus' command (to pray without ceasing).

Keywords:

- ◆ **crucifix** – a cross with Jesus on it
- ◆ **inspiration** – an indirect communication from God to humans that they believe in
- ◆ **Lord's Prayer** – a prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to pray
- ◆ **rosary** – a beaded necklace with a cross or crucifix attached
- ◆ **vision** – an apparition, often of Jesus, which may communicate explicitly to Christians

Types of Prayer

There are different types of **prayer**. Some prayers are *set prayers*, and some are more *informal* types of prayer.

Set Prayers - Set prayers are prayers which have exactly the same words every time they are used, or follow a set structure – the same prayer will be used by different Christians. Some set prayers are prayed on many different occasions, for example the **Lord's Prayer**. There are also set prayers for particular occasions or days, sometimes called a 'collect'. Others may have some set words but places where alterations can be made, such as praying for others and adding in relevant names; or they may have no set words but a set structure, such as confessing **sins** and then asking for forgiveness.

Set prayers can be used when Christians do not know what to pray, or when they know a particular and know a prayer which expresses this well. They are often used in church services because Christians believe they ought to pray these prayers, and pray in the way he taught them to in the Lord's Prayer. Different **denominations** have different prayers which express the things they feel it important to express to God, and which are important to their faith.

Some, especially the Catholic Church, will think that set prayers are particularly important because they have been taught by Jesus, other sections of the Bible, and the Church. They feel that by praying these prayers they communicate what is in their hearts to God. Set prayers can also be significant because they know that other Christians pray these prayers, and so praying them makes them feel connected to the Christian community.

Informal Prayers - However, Christians can pray anything to God, and may use many types of prayer without planning this, or just have a conversation with God, which is called informal prayer. An example would be someone having a conversation with God about something happening currently in their life. Christians can use informal prayer whenever they want, and may use this type of prayer when they pray on their own, and when they are in a situation where the issues are personal to them – informal prayer can be better in these circumstances because they do not have set prayers to hand, and set prayers will not contain details personal to them.

Some Christians, such as liberal Protestants, feel that informal prayer is part of their relationship with God should be personal – some see praying set prayers as being too formal and are not personal and so have less meaning (in their opinion).

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Different Prayers

Different types of prayers can be said depending on what a Christian wants to say. Psalms are good models for Christian prayer, and examples of different types of prayer. Prayer is significant in allowing Christians to praise and thank God, and ask for themselves and others.

Adoration – praising God and marvelling at his creation and his work in the world, to let God know what he means to them because they love him.

‘Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard the sound of my pleadings. The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, because of his faithfulness, thanks to him.’ (Psalm 28:6–7 NRSV) (adoration and thanksgiving)

Thanksgiving – being grateful to God for what he has done for humanity and personally, when/because Christians want to let God know that they are grateful.

Confession – telling God that one is sorry, and what for, and asking for forgiveness. Christians believe they have acted against God’s will, because they want to apologise.

‘Both we and our ancestors have sinned; we have committed iniquity, have not obeyed, have not kept your commandments, nor have we listened to your voice, O Lord our God...’ (Psalm 106:6, 47 NRSV) (confession and asking for forgiveness)

Intercession – asking God to help others, when Christians know of others in need. For an individual, they are highly changeable and personal. Christians may often pray for other Christians in the world and to guide politicians, because they believe he can hear their prayers. Many prayers of intercession will be very individual; for example, ‘Please God, help my mother to find a new job’. Christians will pray for someone in need because they want God’s help.

Rosary – Catholics often pray with the help of a rosary, a beaded necklace with a cross or **crucifix** attached. Holding the beads reminds them of which prayers to pray and helps them to focus. Praying with the rosary can be an aid to **meditation**. There are some set prayers which can be said with the rosary, including prayers affirming faith and confessing sin. One rosary prayer, the Hail Mary, is said in devotion to Mary, and because Catholics want her to speak to God for them.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Holy Mary, Mother of Jesus, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

The Lord’s Prayer

The **Lord’s Prayer** is very important and significant to Christians because it was taught by Jesus to his **disciples** to pray. What is usually used today has been slightly modified from the original in Matthew 6:9–13. The Lord’s Prayer incorporates adoration and confession to God’s will and asking God to help the person praying. These are also features of many other prayers, as many Christians want to ask God for strength and guidance. Christians pray the Lord’s Prayer because they want to have a relationship with God in the way he wants. The Lord’s Prayer is often used in many church services to unite Christians in a common prayer to God, and when they want to strengthen their relationship with God.

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When teaching the Lord's Prayer, Jesus also teaches that prayer should be done for show. He tells the disciples to pray sincerely for what they need – need, so they do not need to use fancy words. Jesus warns that if Christians God will not forgive them.

“Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:9-13)

Quick Questions

21. Give **two** types of prayer.

Now Try This...

22. Explain **two** ways that prayer is important to Christians. Refer to Christ's teaching.

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The Role and Meaning of the Sacraments

Keywords:

- ◆ **altar** – a table on which a sacrifice is made; in Christianity, where the bread and wine of the Eucharist, remembering Jesus' sacrifice, are blessed
- ◆ **baptism** – a sacrament which involves being anointed with, or immersed in water, in the name of Jesus
- ◆ **conversion** – when someone starts to follow a religion after having followed another or had no religion
- ◆ **Eucharist** – sacrament which involves sharing bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus
- ◆ **ordained** – someone who is a member of the clergy, such as a priest or a vicar, who has authority to perform services and administer sacraments
- ◆ **ordinance** – religious ritual which demonstrates the participants' faith
- ◆ **real presence** – the belief that Jesus is somehow present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist
- ◆ **sacrament** – a particularly important worship practice which has even higher status than other rituals, such as the Catholic and Orthodox Churches
- ◆ **transubstantiation** – the Catholic belief that the bread and wine at the Eucharist become the body and blood of Jesus

Role and Meaning of Sacraments in Different Denominations

Sacraments are a few really important practices within Christianity. Christians see them as an important part of their Christian life and help them to commit to God and his teachings. The word 'sacrament' comes from a Latin word meaning a soldier's oath, and so, from this perspective, a sacrament is something a Christian does as a commitment to God.

Roman Catholicism

Some Christians, such as Catholics, believe that there is spiritual power with sacraments. The Catholic Church holds that God's grace is given *through* the practice of the sacraments for this purpose.

The Catholic Church observes seven sacraments: **Eucharist**, **Baptism**, **Matrimony**, **Holy Orders**, **Penance**, and **Anointing of the Sick**.

Orthodox Christianity

The Orthodox Church observes the same seven **sacraments** as the Catholic Church and also refers to them as 'mysteries'. It also holds many actions taken by the faithful as sacraments. For example, some Orthodox Christians feel that burial is a sacrament. The Orthodox Church sees sacraments as a way of communicating with God, though how this happens is debated.

Anglicanism/the Church of England and some other Protestant Denominations

Most Protestant **denominations** do not observe seven **sacraments**. Many Protestants see **Baptism** as sacraments (e.g. the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church). Some see the Eucharist as sacraments, other rituals not considered sacraments (e.g. marriage). However, not all 'Catholic' sacraments, such as penance, were observed by all Protestants.

Variation in Protestant Denominations

There is variation within Protestant Churches; for example, some Lutheran Churches see Penance (Penance) as a sacrament, whereas Quakers and the Salvation Army do not. Some do not have baptisms or practice the Eucharist at all, as they do not see them as sacraments. Christians to rely on outward **symbols**.

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Some Protestant Christians see sacraments as **symbolic**, rather than having. Many Protestants feel that sacraments are an outer *sign* of God's **grace**, or commitment to God, rather than God's grace given to humanity. So sacraments are symbolic in some Protestant Churches; however, some Protestants, such as Lutherans, have a similar attitude to sacraments as Catholics.

Sacraments other than Baptism and the Eucharist

Some **denominations** recognise **sacraments** other than **baptism** and the **Eucharist**. The sacraments recognised by the Catholic Church are confirmation, matrimony and anointing of the sick. You could research these further if you wanted to.

Baptism and the **Eucharist** are covered in more detail below and overleaf.

The Sacrament of Baptism and Its Significance for Christians

Christians practice **baptism** because Jesus was baptised and commanded his followers in his name.

[The Great Commission] "'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:19-20 NRSV)

Some Christians think that baptism is particularly important because Jesus was baptised (and believe) will be saved. Some feel that he implied that those who are baptised will be saved.

'The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16:16 NRSV)

Baptism involves being anointed with, or immersed entirely in water. Anointing is done by pouring water over the head. The former is normally done if an infant is being baptised, the latter if an adult is being baptised. Baptism is important because it shows the parents on their behalf, wishes to commit to the faith and begin a new life in the Church. Churches, such as the Methodist Church, allow people to choose to have their infants baptised, or to wait so they can choose adult baptism for themselves when they are older.

Baptism is significant because it symbolises a new life following Jesus, and a new life through accepting his sacrifice. Christians also hope to receive the Holy Spirit (through the sacraments) to help them in their life with God. Many Christians feel that baptism is a commitment to the Christian community, and so it is also significant for this reason. It is important that those who are baptised can expect to have their sins forgiven.

Infant Baptism

Denominations such as Catholicism and Anglicanism practice infant baptism, baptising children into the Church, and follow this with confirmation when a Christian is older. In the **faith**. If infant baptism, also called christening, is practiced, water for the baptism is poured into a receptacle which could hold a bowl of water. In some churches, the font is used. In the church, to show that baptism is a spiritual entering into the Church, the baptistries of many denominations believe that it is baptism which welcomes people into the Church. It is important for all children to be baptised to make them part of the community.

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Usually, the child will be baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with water poured over their head at least three times, as the priest/vicar mentions each Person of God. (Some Catholic babies will be immersed in the font.) The children may be signed with the sign of the cross (on their forehead) to show that, through baptism, they now belong to Jesus. Parents and godparents will be asked to make promises to raise the child in the Christian faith. A candle may be presented to symbolise Jesus' light in the child's life.

There have been controversies linked to infant baptism. Some schools will not baptise children who have been baptised elsewhere first. This has led to some parents not wanting to baptise their child (because they do not want them to have a Christian upbringing) or they want them to choose baptism for themselves when they are older). It has also led to some parents who take baptism seriously and do not want people to get their children baptised at school. This is a wider issue – many parents in Britain get their children baptised at home, not because of religious faith, which can be frustrating for Christians.

Believers' Baptism

Denominations such as the Baptists only practice believers', or adult, baptism. People must be old enough to make their own decision to commit to Christianity, after growing up in a Christian home or experiencing **conversion**, seeing this as more reflective of Jesus' baptism in the Bible. Christians will be asked to affirm their **faith** and promise to follow Jesus. Water is poured over the head. Many Christians feel that baptism should only be practised when someone is old enough to make their own decision to commit to Jesus, and that infant baptism should not be practised as it is too young to make their own expression of faith.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) and Its Significance

The **Eucharist** is the sharing of bread and wine which represent Jesus' body and blood, given on the cross for the forgiveness of **sins**. Jesus told his **disciples** to do this to remember him. He shared bread and wine with them at the **Last Supper**, and to remember his sacrifice for them **salvation**; many Christians feel that it is important to celebrate the Eucharist as Jesus commanded it. Taking part in the Eucharist is significant to Christians because they believe they are saved through Jesus' **crucifixion** and **resurrection**; Jesus' sacrifice means they have a new relationship with God. The Eucharist has other names, including Holy Communion.

'Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
(Luke 22:19 NRSV)

'Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
(Matthew 26:27-28 NRSV)

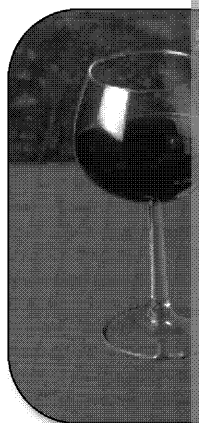
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Different Ways the Eucharist is Celebrated and Different Interpretations

Similarities between Catholic and Anglican Eucharist

Bread and wine are blessed by the member of the clergy presiding at the Eucharist. Usually the congregation receives the bread and wine at the **altar**. The bread and wine must be administered by someone **ordained**; by priests and deacons (and bishops).



Bread and wine

The Eucharist may take place within a set **liturgy**. In Catholicism, this is the Mass. The liturgy will include words with congregational responses, and set prayers. **Creeds** are also included, as well as some set hymns, or words to music. There will also be a sermon, Bible readings and extra hymns, but these may vary. During the service, the **congregation** will be asked to confess their **sins**. The Eucharist reminds them that their sins are forgiven.

Wafers are used instead of normal bread. Among other things, crumbs are a way (and because the bread represents Jesus, it is important). Alcoholic wine is given in a big cup, called a chalice. A blessing is usually available for those who do not receive the bread and wine.

Catholic Eucharist Details

Within some churches, such as the Catholic Church, any bread and wine left over after the service is called reserved **sacrament**. The bread and wine are stored safely in a box called a tabernacle.

Catholics believe in **transubstantiation**; that the bread and wine in the Eucharist become the body and blood of Jesus when blessed. This is one reason why it needs to be consumed immediately. The Eucharist is particularly important to Catholics as it represents the sacrifice again, every time they celebrate it. Most Catholics will not receive the Eucharist at a Church of another **denomination**, because the beliefs about the Eucharist are different. Belief in transubstantiation is the main difference between Catholic and Anglican churches. Anglicans do not believe in transubstantiation.

In the Catholic Church someone must have a special First Communion Service before they can receive the Eucharist.

Anglican Eucharist Details

Occasionally, in some Anglican churches someone who is not **ordained**, but is a member of the church, is allowed to help with the distribution.

Some Churches, such as the Anglican Church, believe in the **real presence** of Jesus in the Eucharist, meaning that Jesus is spiritually in the **Eucharist**.

Some Anglican churches expect those receiving the Eucharist to be confirmed in their own church. Some Anglican churches allow those of other denominations who receive the Eucharist in their own church to receive it in an Anglican Church.

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Other Denominations

There is a lot of variation in the practice of the **Eucharist** in other **denominations**.

In the Baptist Church, Baptists are all handed bread and wine in their seats at the same time, to show unity in Jesus. (Small individual glasses are used for wine.)

The Church of Scotland passes the bread and wine of the Eucharist from member to member in the congregation.

The Methodist Church uses non-alcoholic wine and normal bread (many denominations use unleavened bread).

In the Orthodox Church, the (normal) bread and wine are given mixed together in a single vessel.

Many Christians see the bread and wine as symbolic, but not actually, in any way Jesus – unlike strict Catholics or Anglicans. In many denominations it is a personal choice whether to receive the Eucharist or not and confirmation is not necessary.

Quick Questions

23. Which of these is another name for the Eucharist?

- a) Last Lunch b) Lord's Party c) Jesus' Feast

Now Try This...

24. Explain **two** contrasting ways baptism is practised in Christianity.

25. 'Baptism is the most important religious practice for Christians.'
Evaluate this statement.

Argue for *and* against this statement. You must refer to Christian teaching.
Reach a conclusion which follows from your argument.

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The Role and Importance of Pilgrimage

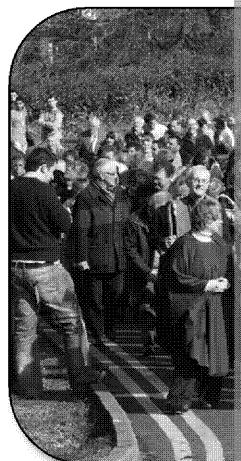
Keywords:

- ♦ **monastic** – relating to monks; men who remain unmarried and devote their lives to living in religious communities
- ♦ **pilgrimage** – making a physical journey to draw closer to God

Nature, History and General Role/Purpose of Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage usually involves a physical journey which is undertaken to become spiritually closer to God. Pilgrimage is an opportunity for Christians to focus on and develop their faith, and this is what they aim to do while on pilgrimage.

Christians could choose to make a pilgrimage to anywhere, but there are many popular pilgrimage sites, and often an important part of pilgrimage is interacting with other pilgrims who have similar reasons for pilgrimage.



A procession as part of a pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is not only a Christian practice and has been going on for thousands of years. It became important early in Christianity because Christians wanted to visit places Jesus visited, and other important locations within early Christianity. As Christianity spread, pilgrimage sites also spread further afield, and are visited for many different reasons.

Specific Roles and Importance of Pilgrimage

Jews went on **pilgrimage** to Jerusalem, where God was thought to reside in the Temple. Christians feel that they should go on pilgrimage, as the Jews did, to become closer to God. Some Christians feel that this is a Jewish custom, and as Christians do not celebrate Jewish festivals or follow Jewish commandments, they do not need to go on pilgrimage. Jesus died as a sacrifice for all, so Christians do not need to undertake pilgrimages to ensure their **salvation**.

‘Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread [Passover], at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths.’ (Deuteronomy 16:16 NRSV)

Many Christians do feel that **pilgrimage** is important to Christians today. Some feel that their **faith** has been strengthened by visiting a special place. Some feel better about their faith when they are also seeking him at pilgrimage sites. Some communities are able to support themselves and can deepen their **faith** as a group. Some religious communities are able to sustain themselves on God because of money they receive from being visited by pilgrims (people who are on pilgrimage).

When Jesus was on pilgrimage in Jerusalem he used it as an opportunity to teach about the meaning of scripture, and to teach. Some Christians will use their pilgrimages for the same purpose. Jesus' pilgrimage as a model for theirs.

‘After three days they found him [Jesus] in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.’ (Luke 2:46–47 NRSV)

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Catholics are more likely to deem pilgrimages important because of the places visited, e.g. somewhere Jesus or the apostles lived, or where a vision has been seen. Some Catholics journey to particular sites because they are thought to be places of healing.

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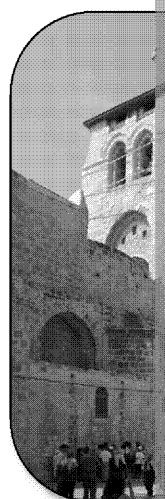
Not all Christians believe places are important in themselves; many Protestants believe that geographical locations hold any spiritual importance. Protestants are more important if it is a means to spend time **worshipping** privately or with others. Meeting and sharing with other like-minded Christians is important.

Some Christians do not think that pilgrimage is important for Christians today. They can spend time developing their relationship with God without travelling. The point of spending time and money worshipping somewhere else when they

Significance of Places people go on Pilgrimage

There are different things that are special about different pilgrimage sites. Reasons for pilgrimage sites being special include:

- ◆ They are places where Jesus lived, taught, died and rose.
- ◆ They have a lot of Christian history – they were important places in the early Church, or have many Churches and Christian sites.
- ◆ They are places visions have been seen.
- ◆ They are sites of healing.
- ◆ They house Christian communities or they are places people come together to worship/study Christianity.



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre
Jerusalem

Contrasting Examples of Christian Pilgrimage: Lourdes and Iona

Lourdes
Lourdes in France is a **pilgrimage** site which is particularly important to Catholics. In 1858, a girl called Bernadette claimed to have seen **visions** of Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary, in the nineteenth century. Since then, Catholics have come to Lourdes to pay devotion to the place where she appeared to Bernadette, and also in search of healing. The vision led Bernadette to dig into the ground, and the spring of water which came forth was believed to have healing properties – thousands of people have claimed to have been healed of other medical conditions at Lourdes. The Catholic Church recognises Lourdes as a pilgrimage site and supports people making pilgrimages there.

Iona

Iona is an island off the coast of Scotland. Hundreds of years ago it contained a **monastic** community who helped to evangelise the surrounding area. Situated here now is a centre where many Christians come to participate in a Christian community, which incorporates different Christian denominations. Iona is not only significant because of its heritage, but because Christians can come here to worship. As well as worship and other Christian activities, pilgrims can tour the abbey on Iona and go on walks to see important spots.

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These pilgrimage places are contrasting because of the primary reasons why Christians visit Lourdes because it is believed to be a special place – they want to see where Mary was seen, and possibly experience healing (they may also want to spend time with the community there). While some Christians do believe that Iona has spiritual value as a place, many visit Iona for other reasons. They want to spend time with the community there – they would be happy to live there just happens to be a community in Iona.

Quick Questions

26. Give **two** places where Christians may go on pilgrimage.

Now Try This...

27. Give **two** reasons why Christians may go on pilgrimage.

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The Role and Importance of Celebrations

Celebrations are very important to Christians. The whole Church year is built up to celebrations. Two of the most important are Christmas

Keywords:

- ◆ **Annunciation** – the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus
- ◆ **apostles** – Jesus' disciples after his death, who spread Christianity
- ◆ **martyrs** – people who die for their faith
- ◆ **Messiah** – meaning anointed/chosen one, referring to Jesus coming to save the world
- ◆ **Paschal Candle** – a special symbolic candle used in some church services, in remembrance of the resurrection
- ◆ **prophets** – people who speak to God and teach his word, they may see the future
- ◆ **saints** – Christians who have died, especially those recognised by the Church as
- ◆ **vigil** – staying awake at night for a reason, such as meditation or prayer

Christian Celebrations

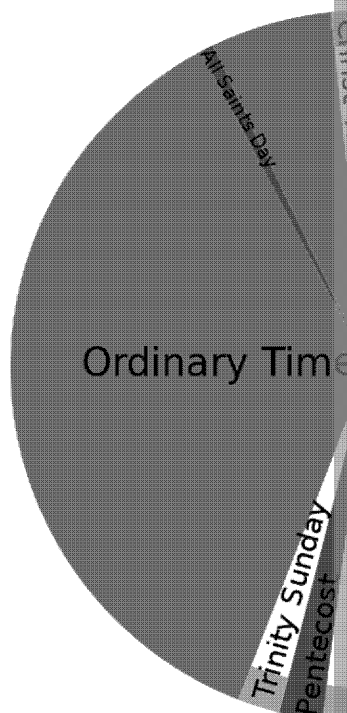
Much of the Church year is classed as 'ordinary time' – no festivals are being celebrated.

The main festivals in the Church year are Christmas and Easter.

Christmas is preceded by advent (the time leading up to Christmas) and followed by Epiphany – which celebrates the wise men's visit to Jesus in western Christianity and Jesus' baptism in the Orthodox Church – and the rest of Christmastide, the period after Christmas. Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth.

Easter is preceded by Lent (the time of preparation before Easter), and is also linked to Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension). Easter celebrates Jesus' resurrection.

Other festivals include All Saints Day and **Trinity** Sunday, which celebrates God the Trinity. The Catholic Church celebrates many more saints' days, in memory of important saints. All Saints Day remembers saints (all dead Christians are saints in this context), to honour them, and in some traditions to pray for their souls to help them in the afterlife. Saints' days in general stem from early Christian tradition to honour **martyrs** – those who die for their **faith**.



This diagram shows the Church year (though the Catholic Church has a different calendar).

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Christmas

Role and Importance of Celebrating Christmas

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, believed to be the Son of God, who saves humans from their **sins**. At Christmas, Christians may refer to Jesus as Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'. While Easter, which celebrates Jesus' death and **resurrection**, may be more important, there would be no Easter without Christmas, and so Christmas is celebrated by Christians in Great Britain today. Without Jesus coming to Earth, he could not save humans from their sins. Not only that, but Jesus, as God **incarnate**, could give Christians an example of how to live. **God's Word** is reliable. One reason for celebrating Christmas is to give Christians an opportunity to reflect on this, and to aim to improve their relationship with God. Christmas is also a time to love and pray for peace in the world. Christmas is celebrated on different days in different countries and traditions. In England, it is normally 25th December, but this was probably not always the case.

Advent, the time leading up to Christmas, is an important time for preparation. Christians symbolically welcome their **Messiah** into the world again. Note: this starts four weeks before Christmas, not on the first of December! This means that sometimes it begins in late November and sometimes in early December. Historically, it was more like Lent, a time of fasting and prayer, as emphasised today. It is important for Christians in Great Britain today to prepare spiritually for Christmas.

[Prophesy, taken to be about Jesus] 'For a child has been born for us, and a son given to us; the authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' (Isaiah 9:6 NRSV)

Practices associated with Christmas and Advent

Many Churches run Advent courses, to **meditate** on the meaning of Christmas.

Many Churches also have Advent wreaths; an Advent wreath is a ring made of greenery, with four candles around the outside, and one in the centre. For each Sunday in Advent, one, or one more, of the candles is lit. On Christmas Day, the candle in the centre is lit in addition. The four candles are normally said to represent God's people, the **prophets**, John the Baptist, and Mary, Jesus' mother; or hope, peace, love, and joy. The central candle represents Jesus, the light of the world. Additionally, the circularity of the wreath can be taken to represent the everlasting, and the greenery to symbolise new life. Lighting candles on the four Sundays of Advent is the focus Christians' meditations on the events leading up to Christmas, and its meaning.

Often Churches hold carol services, to remember Jesus' birth and its meaning. A Christingle service, where a candle is inserted into the top of an orange to represent the light of the world. Many churches hold a midnight service including the **Evangelical** Christmas, and Jesus into their hearts.

History of Christmas – Synopsis of biblical accounts of Christmas and the Nativity

Both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke contain birth narratives and they do not agree on the details of what happened when Jesus was born, so this combines the main points from both.

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A woman called Mary received a visit from an angel telling her that she had would have a baby. This is called the **Annunciation**. Mary was not sure how because she was a virgin, but the angel told her that the baby would be born to Joseph, Mary's fiancé, found out that she was pregnant, and was going to be an angel appeared to him in a dream and explained.

Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem for a census (to be counted), so many citizens he had. There were no rooms available, so they stayed in a stable. They were visited by shepherds, who had been told by angels that the **Messiah** was born.

Three wise men travelled from the East following a star which they believed was the King of the Jews. They asked King Herod where they might find him. Herod's soldiers went to Bethlehem. Herod was worried about there being another king, and asked them where they had found the Messiah. The wise men also visited Jesus and his parents, and told them not to go back to Herod. The visit of the wise men is celebrated at Epiphany, on 6th January. Herod decided to kill all the male babies within a certain area in order to kill Jesus. Mary and Joseph escaped with Jesus to Egypt, after being warned by an angel.

Many Churches teach that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth, and that Jesus was not Joseph's biological child. Not all scholars or Christians agree with this position, but it is widely accepted. Note: this is the **virgin birth**, and this is not to be confused with the **immaculate conception**, which is believed predominantly by Catholics; that Mary, Jesus' mother, did not inherit **sin** because of the **Fall**, unlike other humans.

Jesus' birth and these events are celebrated by Christians at Christmas.

Easter

Role and Importance of Celebrating Easter

Easter celebrates Jesus being **resurrected** from the dead after being **crucified**. Christians in Great Britain today because it celebrates that Jesus fulfilled the humans' **sins**, and brought **salvation**, allowing Christians to be saved from their sins through a close relationship with God. Easter is tied to the Jewish **Passover**, which does not happen every year. Easter falls on an appropriate Sunday in March or April.

Easter can also be considered important because it indicates to Christians that there is life after death of the dead if Jesus was raised, so Easter gives Christians real hope for the future because the whole of the Christian faith rests on Easter: the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then Jesus has not brought salvation, and there is no point in following him. But if Christians believe in the resurrection, they can expect a heavenly reward.

'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are to come. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.' (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

Easter's role is to remind Christians of these important aspects of their **faith** and their need for salvation and eternal life. This reminder should also help them to work on their sins.

Holy Week refers to the week before Easter (Sunday to Saturday), and is included in the Lenten season, a period of preparation, sometimes including fasting, for forty days, excluding Sundays, but special days include Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. Lent is a time for Christians to prepare for Easter, to repent of their sins and affirm their acceptance of Jesus.

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The Events Easter and Holy Week Celebrate and How They are Celebrated

Palm Sunday celebrates the Triumphal entry, where Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was enthusiastically greeted by the crowd, who laid cloaks and tree branches on him, and shouted:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Matthew 21:1–11 NRSV)

Many churches have crosses made out of palm branches. It celebrates Jesus' death for humans' **salvation**. It serves to remind Christians that Jesus was a revolutionary in conventional sense.

Also often remembered during Holy Week is the turning of the tables in the Temple, when Jesus went into the Temple and threw out all the people who were making a profit, by selling animals for sacrifice or changing money. He then heaped up the tables, though the priests were angry. This is significant, because it shows that the God of Israel is devoted to him, and is not concerned with people making expensive sacrifices.

[Jesus cleansing the Temple] ‘He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers.”’ (Matthew 21:12–13)

Maundy Thursday celebrates the **Last Supper**. The **Last Supper** was when Jesus celebrated **Passover** with his closest **disciples**: 12 male followers. Passover celebrates the liberation of Jewish people from the land of Egypt. Jesus told his disciples that he would establish God's Kingdom. He took bread, and told them that it was his body, and to do this in memory of him.

“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19)

He shared wine, saying that it was his blood.

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:20)

This sharing of bread and wine is reflected in the Christian practice of the Eucharist (on *Sacraments*).

Services are often held on the evening of Maundy Thursday and may include the Eucharist, and sometimes foot-washing. Sometimes Jesus' arrest and trials are remembered here.

Good Friday and Easter celebrate the events described in the section *The Crucifixions, the Resurrection and the Ascension*. It might be worth recapping these.

A service is often held on Good Friday morning or afternoon, depending on the individual church and denomination, to remember the **crucifixion**. Sometimes the arrest and trials are remembered then.

In the evening, Jesus was washed.



Hot cross buns are eaten on Good Friday (in the UK).

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Services on Easter Sunday celebrate the **resurrection**. The Eucharist will be celebrated and the church will be decorated with flowers as a sign of new life. Easter is not just important because we celebrate, but the fact that they do celebrate is important also. Celebrating Easter is a sign of **faith** and it makes sure they remember why they are Christians, and why they celebrate. Celebrating festivals such as Easter, it might be easier for Christians to stop thinking about the events. Celebrating festivals means that the events important to Christians are brought to the forefront. The aim that this will deepen their relationship with God.

Different ways of celebrating Holy Week are carried out in different churches. Some hold **vigils**, where people stay awake overnight. In some churches the church is decorated with stations to meditate; and symbols, such as a cross, a whip, a candle, are placed in prominent positions.

In the Catholic Church, the church sanctuary (church room) is left dark after service, to show the darkness of Jesus' death. At Easter, the church is re-entranced (a special symbolic candle) is lit to represent the light of Jesus returning to life. The candle is used in different services throughout the year, but a new one is started at Easter. The candle accompanies the Easter lighting of the candle, and it may also be processed through the church.

Other ways of celebrating may take place during Lent, Holy Week and Easter. In modern times to celebrate Easter by giving chocolate Easter eggs, but this is not from religious roots. The Orthodox and Catholic churches, especially, have a tradition of dyeing eggs. For example, eggs may be dyed red to represent the blood of Christ. Eggs are also used as a representation of the empty tomb – normal eggs do not appear living because they are in a place of death, but Jesus rose from the dead and came out of the tomb. Some Christians crack eggs at Easter to symbolise the opening of Jesus' tomb. There are many different traditions surrounding eggs and Easter, often varying between countries.

Quick Questions

28. Which event in Jesus' life is remembered on Good Friday?

- a) The Triumphal Entry b) The Last Supper c) The Crucifixion

Now Try This...

29. Explain **two** ways that celebrating Easter is important to Christians. Refer to Christian teaching.

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The Role of the Church in the Local and Global Community

The Role of the Church in the Local Community

The local church, within Christianity, refers to both a building for worship and a group of Christians. An area within which a church works is sometimes called a parish. Churches hold services on Sundays; they do many other things as well.

Keywords:

- ♦ **ecumenism** – cooperation between different churches and different denominations

Role and Importance of the Local Church

The role of the local church is to help Christian believers – those who attend church – and also to help the community in general. It is important because...

For Christians, a local church can do a lot. It will aim to be the centre of Christianity for its members through living practices, by providing worship and a good example for Christians.

It will provide services, usually once or twice on a Sunday, but within some churches, services are held throughout the week as well. These allow Christians to **worship** God and to receive sacraments. For Christians for whom sacraments are important, the Church is essential to their faith. Services for **baptisms**, marriages, funerals, and other such occasions allow Christians to participate in important moments in their lives. As well as services, there are often Bible study groups, or other religious meetings, such as **prayer** meetings, at the Church, or other venues such as members' houses. Structured worship is especially important for Christians who are not sure about the best way to worship God. Activities such as listening to sermons and being led in prayer can teach a Christian something they did not already know, or make them reflect on an aspect of their faith they had not really thought about before. Churches may facilitate different age groups by running separate activities for younger children, or run services in local schools.



The our

When Christians are in hospital, or unable to attend Church, a priest/vicar or other clergy member can take them access to a recorded service, take them sacraments, or go to spend time with them. Churches broadcast their services, or stream them online to be more inclusive. Clergy members may also visit Christians who need to discuss a religious issue, or who are struggling with something that has happened in their lives and they need support. Sometimes, this is something that the church can do for them. These visits are important, as they make sure that everyone is supported by those who need it.

As well as worship, services and church groups allow Christians to spend time with each other, build friendships, and allowing them to talk about their **faith** and share life experiences. Some church activities are not necessarily worship-focused, such as youth groups or weekly meetings. These allow Christians to connect with each other. Friendship and community are also an important part of the church's role.

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Some churches also take part in **ecumenism**; which is where churches work with different **denominations**, and carry out joint activities or services, and work is important because it helps to unite the Christian community, and can also achieve more, when used in partnership with those of other churches.

Local churches can also do a lot for the community who may not be church-goers. Some outreach activities (those that reach out to the community), such as Alpha courses, may be aimed primarily at **evangelism**, which can be important in introducing people to the Christian faith. Others may be more aimed at catering for practical needs. Churches run activity clubs for young people, toddler groups, lunch kitchens for the homeless and many other things. For some people the church is a provider of activities, companionship, or basic necessities, which means that it improves their lives.

Local churches may also undertake projects on a larger scale, such as building or running another type of charity project. Local churches often have collection charities and good causes, and may also support local issues and raise concerns.

Food Banks and Street Pastors

Some churches support **food banks** which provide food for those in financial need. Some churches provide food or money to food banks and then food banks provide the food to those in need, as identified by official figures such as doctors and social workers. This means people who are in need, such as some of those who have just been made redundant, can feed themselves and their families.

Some support **street pastor** initiatives – putting volunteers on the streets to provide practical support to communities and vulnerable people; for example, deterring vandals with their presence and providing clothing for those who walk home. In some areas where there are street pastors, crime levels have decreased. Community involvement can be really important in benefiting the community. If the hungry will be fed and the vulnerable will be cared for and have a voice.

Why the Local Church helps the Individual Believer and the Local Area

Local churches (those who run and support them) wish to help Christians (improve their) spiritual lives, through teaching them, providing them with **sacraments**, and supporting their **faith** by cultivating Christian friendships and helping others. They may do this because they want what is best for other Christians/people. They know that faith is important in their lives, and so want to help others in this way. They may also do this for this reason – they want them to be happy.

[The Golden Rule] 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; this is the love of law and the prophets.' (Matthew 7:12 NRSV)

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The local church also wants to help individual believers and the local area by providing support and care. The church would serve him.

‘... whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.’ (Mark 10:43–44 NRSV)

‘And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.”’ (Matthew 25:40 NRSV)

The early Church also emphasised that church leaders should serve their members. In 1 Peter 5:1–4, the writer tells Church elders that they should look after their community by serving God, and they will be rewarded for it. It also tells them to be good examples to the flock.

‘... I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge as God would have you, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you to be an example to the flock.’ (1 Peter 5:1–2 NRSV)

Many Church leaders will, therefore, feel that they must look after individual Christians in their communities and do so willingly. Some may do this for the heavenly reward, while others may be more motivated out of compassion. Some may interpret this passage to emphasise churches caring for Christians (God’s flock), and *not* non-Christians in the local community, but others will feel that everyone is a member of God’s flock, whether they accept it or not, and so everyone should be provided for.



The outside of a church.

Providing activities and aid as a church also means that church members can get involved in helping others; so, by facilitating this, churches help people in two ways – helping those in need and doing good by helping them.

Churches also wish to evangelise new Christians to help others come to know Jesus and become new members.

Quick Questions

30. Give **two** reasons that the Church helps Christians in the local community.

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The Place of Mission, Evangelism and Church Growth

The twenty-first century is an interesting time for Christianity. Christianity has been declining in Western countries which had traditionally been strongly Christian, and **agnosticism** is spreading. However, Christianity does appear to be on the rise in the South. If this trend is to continue to flourish, Christians should learn lessons from the past, and

Keywords:

- ◆ **agnosticism** – neither believing nor disbelieving in God or gods
- ◆ **atheism** – disbelief in God or gods
- ◆ **evangelism** – spreading the news about Jesus and trying to convert people
- ◆ **food bank** – somewhere people can go to receive food when they are in financial difficulty
- ◆ **Great Schism** – the split between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in 1054
- ◆ **missionary work** – committing time to evangelism and helping people practice their faith
- ◆ **Reformation** – the split between the Catholic Church and Protestant Church (and other aspects of Catholicism) in the 1500s
- ◆ **St Paul** – a key figure for Christians; he helped to spread early Christianity around the world
- ◆ **street pastor** – a Christian volunteer who provides practical support on the streets

Purpose of Missionary Work and Evangelical Work

Evangelism is spreading the news about Jesus with the aim of **converting** others. Since Jesus' death, Christians have been trying to convert others, with many of them doing **missionary work**. This is where Christians specifically commit time to evangelising others and meeting their practical needs. This can be voluntary or paid.

Christians evangelise in the aim of fulfilling Jesus' command to spread the news about him – he commanded his **disciples** to do this before **ascending** to heaven. This is known as the **Great Commission** (commissioning is giving someone a task to do).

'And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation."
(Mark 16:15 NRSV)

John 20:21–22 also makes it explicit that the purpose of missionary and evangelism is to continue Jesus' mission – God the Father sent Jesus, and then Jesus sent his disciples to help from the Holy Spirit.

'Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."
When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

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Church Growth

Christian **evangelism** and **mission** began with Jesus. He reached out, taught and reached a relatively small group of people compared to the number of Christians of Christianity began after his death.

To begin with, after Jesus' death, evangelism took place very locally. Jesus and his followers lived, in Jerusalem and in the surrounding areas. Within a few decades further, for example to Greece and Italy. Most evangelism was still by word of mouth as communities kept in touch via letter writing.

'And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord was with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.' (Acts 1:8)

Within a few centuries, Christianity had more of a structure; there were priests and bishops, and it had become centralised in Rome. It benefitted greatly from State power, for example when the Roman Emperor Constantine **converted** in 313. When rulers converted to Christianity, they tended to evangelise their subjects, and Christianity spread with colonisation in surrounding countries and via trade.

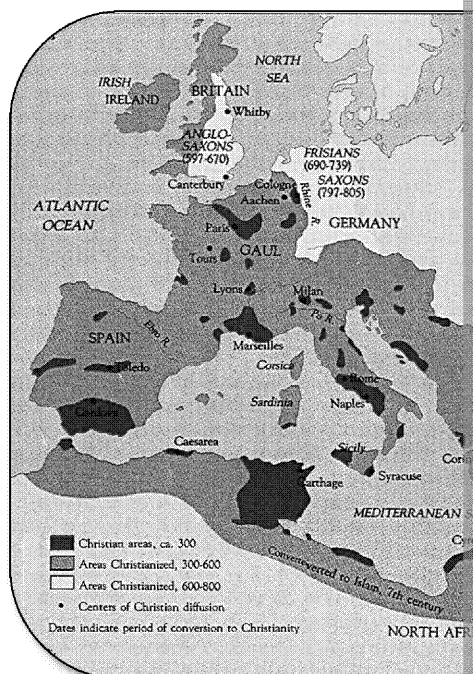
From the fifteenth century onwards, European countries began to colonise overseas. **Missionary work** was practically important to them because if they converted the

people they colonised then the native people were more likely to accept the religion. This continued, with later missionaries more interested in converts than state power.

In modern times evangelism and missionary work can be local and global. It is needed because more people in Christian countries may be atheists and agnostics. The majority of people (who did not belong to another religion) attended church. Modern transport overseas has made it easier for missionary organisations to send people.

The Church is now growing in areas such as parts of the southern hemisphere and in some developed countries. This may be partly due to people feeling a greater need for spiritual or less material security. It may also be due to the types of Christianity which are growing, such as Pentecostal Christianity, which is often lively, and places an emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal Christians will feel that they are likely to experience the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is declining in areas where it was previously very popular, such as in Europe. For Christianity to grow in these areas it needs to modernise; to have a more lively faith that appeals to younger people; to modernise some of its values to match common values (such as accepting homosexuality, for those **denominations** which do not); to have greater outreach to appeal to modern people (such as a greater presence on social media); and needs to regain people's faith after scandals involving sexual abuse and the like.



Map showing the spread of Christianity

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Different Ways Mission and Evangelism are Put into Practice by the Church and Globally

Missionary work and **evangelism** can be local, national or global.

Local

- ◆ Some local church communities hold events and activities (e.g. toddler groups, the elderly) for the local community; to provide for them, and also as a way of evangelism. (missionary and evangelism)
- ◆ Vicars and priests go into schools to introduce children to Christianity.
- ◆ Some local churches help local charities to benefit the community. (missionary)
- ◆ **Street pastors** (volunteers who do not have to be **ordained**) provide practical support, talking to members of the community, providing support for vulnerable people, and preventing antisocial behaviour. (missionary)

National

- ◆ There are national initiatives to evangelise, such as Alpha courses, which provide an introduction to Christianity. (evangelism)
- ◆ Messy Church is another national initiative – where churches provide activities and incorporate worship, to introduce families to the Church. (evangelism)
- ◆ Many **food banks** are run by Christian organisations to help those who are in need. (missionary)

Global

- ◆ Many missionaries work in countries where Christians are struggling, or where Christianity is not well-established; as well as in less-economically-developed countries, where they provide practical considerations, such as health care (helping with physical as well as spiritual needs). (missionary and evangelism)

Christian Attitudes as to why Evangelical Work is Important for the Church and Individual Christians

Christians **evangelise** for many reasons. Primarily, this is because Jesus commanded his **disciples** to go and make more disciples after he rose from the dead, in the **Great Commission**. **St Paul**, an important **apostle** who was active shortly after Jesus' death, who is highly regarded by many Christians, also spent much of his time evangelising (as recorded in the biblical book the Acts of the Apostles (Acts) and detailed in his letters in the New Testament). Therefore, many individual Christians and Churches feel that evangelism is important, and evangelise as part of their service to God.

St Paul was a Christian who was persecuted for his faith. He had a vision of Jesus speaking to him, which cured his blindness by the laying on of hands. He wrote many of the letters in the New Testament.

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Some individual Christians are also incentivised to evangelise out of compassion for those who do not know God, especially those who believe that Christianity is the only way to get to heaven. They feel that it is important to help other people to know God. In the Great Commission, Jesus said that those who did not believe would not be saved.

'The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16:16 NRSV)



Aside from these reasons, the Church needs to evangelise in order to maintain members, which it needs if it is to raise funds and encourage volunteers to serve the local and global communities. Evangelism is important to the Church because it helps to keep the Church going.

Quick Questions

31. Give **two** examples of methods of evangelism.

Now Try This...

32. Explain **two** ways evangelism is important. Refer to Christian teaching

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The Importance of the Worldwide Church

The worldwide church can refer to the entire global Christian community, or individual Christian **denomination** globally; for example, the Catholic Church. An **ecumenical** organisation which aims for all churches to work together worldwide, like them the same, is the World Council of Churches. This incorporates many of the major denominations. The Catholic Church is not a member, but cooperates and works with the Council of Churches wants Christians to work together for a better world, and to live in Jesus.

Keywords:

- ◆ **persecution** – being treated badly, for example because of religious beliefs
- ◆ **reconciliation** – being reunited in a positive sense with someone one was separated from

An entire Christian **denomination**, or group of denominations, has much more influence than a local church. The Church has campaigned worldwide for many issues, including:

- ◆ for peace, and **reconciling** civil conflict and conflict between nations
- ◆ for the end of racism and other inequalities and breaches of human rights
- ◆ for welfare for the poor

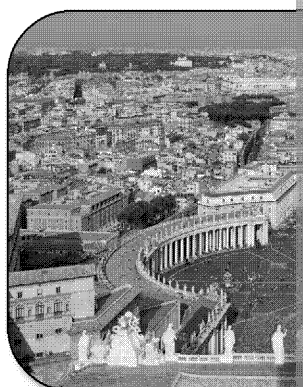
The worldwide Church is important if it can make a positive impact on these issues and make a difference to people's lives.

The Church works for worldwide evangelism which is important because Christians can bring others to their **faith**, and also provides the Church with members.

On a global scale, denominations can try to set guidelines for worship practices and particular beliefs. If they did not do this, then there might not be unity within different churches of the same denomination.

The worldwide church may be important to Christians because they know that there are many other Christians who are committed to their faith and experience similar life situations. With modern technology, a worldwide Christian community can help Christians, as even if they cannot find someone who can answer their questions or help with their problems locally, they may be able to find another Christian to help them with a religious or practical problem further afield.

The Church also supports many charities worldwide which seek to evangelise and provide aid, providing spiritual and physical help to others.



Vatican City – the centre of the Catholic Church

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Working for Reconciliation

The worldwide church is important because it works to **reconcile** conflict and i Some Church leaders try to negotiate between conflicting parties to get them t example, Pope Francis, 266th leader of the Catholic Church, worked to reconcile speak out against inequality and campaign for laws to change to make things Christian Church, including members such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu (an A white people and black people after apartheid in South Africa.

The Church works for reconciliation out of compassion. They want everyone to better world. They also work for reconciliation because Jesus stressed that this treat enemies well, to forgive others, and to treat people with respect.

‘So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that y sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.’ (Matth

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enem enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”’ (Matthew 5:4

‘Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you (Matthew 18:21-22 NRSV)

““You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”” (Matthew 22:39

The Church also works to reconcile people with God, through **evangelism**. covered in the section on *The Place of Mission, Evangelism and Church Gro*

How Christian Churches Respond to Persecution

Many Christians worldwide are **persecuted** for their beliefs. They may not b or have access to Bibles, and they may even face threats and violence. This state dislikes all religious beliefs (which has occurred in communist states), Christian religion (such as North Korea); or where a country officially allows other religions wish to eradicate Christianity and promote only their religion Boko Haram in Nigeria). This is not new, and indeed Christian states and Ch **atheists** and members of non-Christian religions as well.

The Church has tried to support persecuted Christians, but this is not always can try to combat persecution in several ways. It can seek to forge political of worship in different countries, and sometimes tries to work together with for a more tolerant society.

Some Christians seek **reconciliation** with their persecutors, and forgive them, Christians try not to lose **faith** due to persecution, believing it is part of God’s Churches may meet and worship in secret to preserve the safety of their memb forced to leave their homes to escape persecution.

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Charity

Many Christians feel that they should give money as/to charity, and do good things to help others.

Jesus taught Christians to love their neighbours and his life shows how much he helped others; charitable gifts and actions are a practical application of loving others.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31–46) Jesus taught that those who help others, and provide clothing, food and shelter, will be the ones to inherit the kingdom of heaven – as they are really doing it for him – and those who do not, will not.

‘Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you gave me shelter, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family.”’
(Matthew 25:34–36, 40 NRSV)

Some Christians give a tithe, which is a set amount of their income (often a ‘tenth’ derives from), because this was commanded in the Old Testament. Some calculate it as a percentage of expenses such as taxes; others calculate it in different ways, or try to give a proportion of their income.

‘Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly to the Lord your God.’
(Deuteronomy 14:22 NRSV)

Work of Christian Aid – What it does and Why

There are many charities which work worldwide to help others, for example Christian Aid. Christian Aid aims primarily to support people (Christians and non-Christians) practically. They do a lot of their work in less-economically-developed countries, responding to natural disasters; helping the hungry; providing medical care, shelter and education; and helping refugees.

One of the main projects which Christian Aid has been working on in recent years is the Syrian crisis – the Syrian people need food, shelter and medical supplies, as well as education.

Christian Aid often works with small, local organisations in the places it helps, to provide the best support which people actually need. It often tries to use sustainable methods, for example, giving a family a chicken, so that when the chicken lays eggs, they can eat them and sell them for food and/or income.

Christian Aid also campaigns for change, hoping that governments will work to improve the lives of people in need.

Christian Aid campaigns in various ways, including television and Internet advertising, and fundraising. In May every year it holds Christian Aid week, where volunteers go door-to-door through people’s doors and then go back to collect them. Many churches hold a collection for Christian Aid.

Christian Aid carries out its work because of the biblical teachings to help the poor and for those who do not have what they need to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. Everyone deserves the chance to have a fulfilling life without living in poverty, and this is a reality.

Quick Questions

33. Give **two** reasons why Christians support charities such as Christian Aid.

Now Try This...

34. Explain **two** ways in which Christians work for reconciliation. Refer to Christianity.

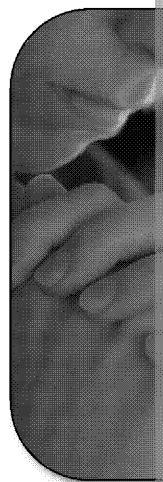
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Summary for Practices

Worship and Festivals

- ♦ **Worship**, devotion to God, can be practiced in many ways. Some worship words and actions, and some follow a liturgical pattern. Others do not. Worship can be informal, public or private. Many practices can be included in worship, including singing, **prayer**, **meditation** and **sacraments**. The Bible is used to teach, guide and inspire.
- ♦ **Prayer**, talking to God, can take place at many times and in many forms. Prayers can be set (exact or structured) or informal. Common types of prayer are adoration, thanksgiving, confession and intercession. The **Lord's Prayer** is particularly important to Christians as this is the prayer which Jesus taught them to pray.
- ♦ Some **denominations** practice up to seven **sacraments**, special **worship** practices. Most, though not all, accept **baptism** and the **Eucharist** as sacraments. Baptism is where a Christian is welcomed and accepted into the Church through being anointed with, or immersed in water. The Eucharist is the remembrance of the **Last Supper**, where bread and wine are shared to remember Jesus sacrificing his body and blood for the **salvation** of the world and the forgiveness of **sins**.
- ♦ Many Christians go on **pilgrimages** – they go on a physical journey to a place of **faith**. Some go because they feel that a particular place is significant, to spend time worshipping and to be with other Christians. Popular pilgrimages include the Camino de Santiago and Iona.
- ♦ Christmas and Advent are important for Christians to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus. Holy Week (including Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday) is a time to remember Jesus' sacrifice when he was **crucified** and celebrate the new life he brought because of his **resurrection**.



Candle

The Role of the Church in the Local and Worldwide Community

- ♦ The local church is important for different reasons. It provides services and activities for Christians and the local community, in order to help Christians live their faith and **evangelise**.
- ♦ The future of the Church is uncertain. **Evangelism** – **converting** others to Christianity through **missionary** work – has always been important to Christians because it helps to make more Christians to make more **disciples**. Evangelism happens in many different ways, including through national church outreach, and through travelling missionaries, among others.
- ♦ The Church does many things in the worldwide community – including addressing social inequality, and **evangelising** – and individual **denominations** try to establish their own beliefs. Some Christians are **persecuted**, and this is a problem for the Church. The Church provides worldwide support charity, including charitable organisations such as Christian Aid.

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Answers

Beliefs and Teachings

Question Number	Answer / Mark Scheme
1	b) Death by murder
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is more loving for God to allow humans free will than to control them, and allow them to commit evil. God is not omnipotent and cannot stop evil and suffering. Evil and suffering are just punishment for humans. <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians believe that God is loving. This means they feel that he cares about them and wants what is best for them. They believe this because they feel God has spoken through history, recorded in the Bible, such as by sending Jesus to save them. 'God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.' (1 John 4:9 NRSV) Many Christians believe that God is omnipotent (all-powerful). This is because he created the world and humanity and they feel that he has performed miracles. The Bible shows God's power. 'For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome.' (Deuteronomy 10:17 NRSV) <p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture. If <i>only</i> one religious belief is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture</p>
4	c) Sister
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholics believe that God the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Christians believe that God is one being but three persons. Many Christians believe that God the Son helped God with creation and became the person of Jesus. <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
6	d) John
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Christian may believe that the Bible and its account of the creation of the world is true and happened exactly as the Bible says. They may believe that the world was created by God that God created Adam and Eve as the first people; and that God spoke and created the world. 'Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.' (Genesis 1:3 NRSV) A Christian may believe that the biblical account of Creation is metaphorical. They may believe that it is symbolic and not literally true. They may believe that God created the universe through the Big Bang and humans through evolution, and that the biblical account of Creation, not factual. <p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture- If <i>only</i> one religious belief is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture</p>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heaven Hell Purgatory <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>

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Question Number	Answer / Mark Scheme		
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Christians believe that they must help others to enter heaven, as this is what Matthew 25 (the parable of the sheep and the goats). Therefore, Christians help others – feeding, clothing and visiting them – because they want to ensure they enter heaven. The belief influences how they live their lives and their life choices when they help someone else, or not. ♦ Some Christians believe that only Christians can enter the afterlife, because Jesus was the way to the Father. They may choose to evangelise others so that they can enter heaven. This belief in the afterlife influences them because they want to be able to help others to come to God. <p>Accept any relevant points 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4)</p>		
10	<p>One argument with justification</p> <p>Different arguments for and against, with justification OR Several linked, justified arguments for one position</p> <p>This is the highest level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered or there is no mention of religion</p> <p>Good, well-justified arguments for and against, linked together</p> <p>Definite reference to religion</p> <p>Very well argued. Well-justified arguments for and against, linked together and leading to a reasonable conclusion.</p> <p>Appropriate reference to religion used to answer question</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p>Points and Justification for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Jesus tells the thief on the cross next to him that he will be in paradise with him today – this implies that he will be in heaven immediately after death. ♦ Jesus told his followers that they would inherit eternal life, not life that stops and starts again, so Christians must live on in heaven or purgatory after death. ♦ Churches such as the Catholic Church teach that this is the case – that people will go to one of these realms. </td><td> <p>Points and Justification against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Many verses in the Bible speak of the resurrection of the dead at the end of time, e.g. saying that the graves will rise. Therefore, people will go immediately to the afterlife. ♦ Many Christians believe in purgatory at the end of time – it does not mean that people to enter heaven have been judged. ♦ Many Protestant Christians do not believe in purgatory, just in heaven. Purgatory is not talked about in the Bible. </td></tr> </table> <p>Accept any relevant point or justification.</p>	<p>Points and Justification for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Jesus tells the thief on the cross next to him that he will be in paradise with him today – this implies that he will be in heaven immediately after death. ♦ Jesus told his followers that they would inherit eternal life, not life that stops and starts again, so Christians must live on in heaven or purgatory after death. ♦ Churches such as the Catholic Church teach that this is the case – that people will go to one of these realms. 	<p>Points and Justification against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Many verses in the Bible speak of the resurrection of the dead at the end of time, e.g. saying that the graves will rise. Therefore, people will go immediately to the afterlife. ♦ Many Christians believe in purgatory at the end of time – it does not mean that people to enter heaven have been judged. ♦ Many Protestant Christians do not believe in purgatory, just in heaven. Purgatory is not talked about in the Bible.
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11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ He could perform miracles. ♦ He healed people. ♦ He rose from the dead. <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>		
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Many Christians believe that Jesus was the incarnation of God: God in the flesh. This means that God loved them enough to come to Earth and live with them. Many denominations teach belief in the incarnation, and it is also supported by the Bible. ♦ 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word became flesh and lived among us... Jesus Christ...' (John 1:1, 14) ♦ Many Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Some believe that he was a special human with a special relationship with God, and others feel that he was God – one person of the Trinity. They believe that as Jesus was the Son of God, he has authority. ♦ 'Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."' (Matthew 16:16) <p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture. If <i>only</i> one religious belief is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture reference</p>		
13	<p>a) The Temple curtain tore</p>		

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Question Number	Answer / Mark Scheme
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Christians believe that Jesus' death saved them from sin and made it possible to have a relationship with God. This means that they feel freed from following the law as they feel that they have salvation through Jesus. They worship Jesus and his sacrifice instead. ♦ Christians believe that Jesus' crucifixion made it possible for anyone to have a relationship with God, not just Jews. This means that Christians do not worry about who can come to Jesus, and will evangelise all. <p>Accept any relevant points 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4)</p>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Original Sin ♦ Personal Sin <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Some Christians who believe that there is original sin due to the Fall and that it was passed on through sexual intercourse feel that women are inferior because it was Eve who ate the forbidden fruit, and so they view women negatively. They may believe that they should forbid women having authority over men, and to only practise sex within marriage. ♦ Christians believe that they sin against God and that this is wrong. This will influence their behaviour to try to obey God and not to sin, in order to please God. It will also influence their attitude for forgiveness, and praise him for offering them salvation. <p>Accept any relevant points 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4)</p>
17	d) Sin
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Christians believe that they receive salvation because Jesus atoned for their sins, meaning that Jesus needed to make up for their sins because sin would condemn them to eternal separation from God. ♦ 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.' (Romans 8:2 NRSV) ♦ Some Christians believe that Jesus atoned for sin by paying the price of death as a ransom. They may believe that he was God, and so his death was enough to atone for the sin of all. ♦ [Jesus, speaking about himself:] 'For the Son of Man came not to be served but to give his life a ransom for many.' (Mark 10:45 NRSV) <p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture. If <i>only</i> one religious belief is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture</p>

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Practices

Question Number	Answer / Mark Scheme
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Bible reading ◆ Singing hymns ◆ Sermon <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To comfort them when they are in trouble. ◆ To guide them in following God's will. ◆ Because they want to maintain their relationship with God. <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Set Prayer ◆ Informal Prayer <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prayer is important because it allows Christians to praise and thank God. They know that he is amazing and they are grateful for him sending Jesus to save everything he does in their lives. Prayer allows them to do this and build a relationship with God. ◆ Prayer is important because Jesus taught that people should pray. He instructed them to ask God for assistance and for forgiveness of their sins. This is particularly true as Jesus taught that God would forgive sins when asked (as long as people forgive others). ◆ "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9–13 NRSV) <p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture If <i>only</i> one religious way is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture reference</p>
23	d) Holy Communion
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some Christians practise infant baptism. They do this by anointing a young child and getting their parents to make promises to raise them in the Christian faith. They feel that baptism welcomes people into the church family, and want to welcome all children. ◆ Some Christians practice believers' baptism. This involves an adult (or older child) making a personal commitment to Christianity and being immersed in water. They do not feel that baptism should be an expression of faith of the one baptised, and only those baptised as an adult and his followers baptised adults. <p>Accept any relevant points 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) If the two ways baptism is practised are not <i>contrasting</i>, maximum 2 marks</p>
25	<p>One argument with justification</p> <p>Different arguments for and against, with justification OR Several linked, justified arguments for one position This is the highest level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered or there is no mention of religion</p> <p>Good, well-justified arguments for and against, linked together Definite reference to religion</p> <p>Very well argued. Well-justified arguments for and against, linked together and leading to a reasonable conclusion Appropriate reference to religion used to answer question</p>

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Question Number	Answer / Mark Scheme	
25 (cont.)	<p>Points and Justification for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Jesus told his disciples in the Great Commission (Matthew 28) that those who were baptised would be saved and those who were not would not be. ♦ Baptism welcomes Christians into the Christian family. Some people do not consider people who are not baptised to be proper Christians. ♦ The two sacraments which most churches carry out are baptism and the Eucharist – and some churches do not let people take the Eucharist if they are not baptised, so baptism is important in welcoming Christians into the Church and allowing them to access the Eucharist. 	<p>Points and Justification for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The Catholic Church celebrates sacraments; all are important, but the Eucharist and baptism are clearly more important. ♦ Quakers and the Salvation Army do not celebrate baptism or the Eucharist; for them baptism is not as important. ♦ Even for Christians for whom baptism is important, many believe it is more important to have a good relationship with God – to pray regularly, to help others – than to be baptised.
	Accept any relevant point or justification	
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Jerusalem ♦ Iona ♦ Taizé ♦ Lourdes 	
	Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)	
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Many Christians go on pilgrimage because it enables them to spend time in prayer. ♦ Some Christians go on pilgrimage because they believe that certain sites are places of healing. 	
	Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)	
28	c) The crucifixion	
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Celebrating Easter is important to Christians because it reminds them of Jesus' death. Christians find this important because it shows them that Jesus conquered death and that they can hope for eternal life. ♦ 'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are to be raised. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.' (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) ♦ Celebrating Easter is important to Christians because it reminds them of Jesus' death from sin by paying the price for sin by dying and rising triumphant. Christians believe because of this they can have a relationship with God because they are not separated from him by sin. 	
	<p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture.</p> <p>If <i>only</i> one religious way is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for reference to scripture</p>	
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Church members want to show others compassion, as Jesus taught this. ♦ The Bible teaches that church elders should use their role to help others. ♦ Christians may want to receive a heavenly reward for their actions. 	
	Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)	
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Churches can evangelise through running Alpha courses to introduce people to Christianity. ♦ Vicars and priests can go into schools to introduce children to Christianity. ♦ Missionaries can travel abroad to introduce people to Christianity in countries where Christianity is not the main religion. 	
	Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)	
32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Evangelism is important because it enables churches to grow – they need more people to carry out church work and to make a difference in the world. ♦ Evangelism is important because evangelising fulfils Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations and also ensures that more people will be saved rather than condemned if they do not believe. ♦ 'And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation.'" 'The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16:15–16 NRSV) 	

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Question Number	Answer / Mark Scheme
32 (cont.)	Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to scripture. If <i>only</i> one religious way is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture
33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christians give charity because Jesus taught that those who helped others were blessed. ◆ Christians give charity because Jesus taught that people should love others as they love themselves. ◆ Christians may give charity because the Old Testament teaches that people should love God. Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)
34	<p>Explain two ways in which Christians work for reconciliation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Many Christians work to reconcile people who have been in conflict with each other. They may try to negotiate between injured parties, e.g. Pope Francis helping to reconcile Cuba. They may also pray for those who hurt them, trying to forgive them so that they will stop the conflict. ◆ 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...' (Matthew 5:43-48) ◆ Many Christians also try to work to reconcile inequality. They may campaign to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, and aim to treat everyone as they would want to be treated. ◆ "'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:39 NRSV) <p>Accept any relevant points and reference to scripture 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) 1 mark for reference to scripture If <i>only</i> one religious way is mentioned, maximum 2 marks + 1 mark for scripture</p>

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