

Course Companion for GCSE AQA A (Short Course)

Christianity: Beliefs and Teachings

H Dixon

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Teacher's Introduction

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

Remember!

Always check the exam board's website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

The information is comprehensive, and images help to illustrate concepts. Keywords and Bible quotes are included to help students to understand the material and to further their grasp of the subjects. A brief introduction to the course and answering exam questions 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 a textbook, as a class text or for independent learning or revision. Alternatively, teachers might use a section for a specific classroom activity or homework.

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

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

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

H Dixon, January 2017

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Register your email address to receive any future free updates* made to this resource or other Religious Studies resources your school has purchased, and details of any promotions for your subject.

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Introduction to the course and how to answer exam questions

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

The material covers what Christians believe, and why. There will be reference to the importance of various aspects of Christianity to Christians; the influence of beliefs and teachings on Christians today; and different points of view from within Christianity. These are reinforced with reference to the Bible, Christian scripture.

This course companion is designed to equip you with the information you need, and help you to test your knowledge and ability to answer related questions. Not all the questions and activities included here are 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.

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 the 12-mark question. 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.

At the end of the course:

- ☐ Make sure that you understand all the material, the content and themes
- ☐ Check that you are confident with answering exam questions
- ☐ If you are unsure about anything, revisit topics, or practise answering questions

If you are ever **unsure** about a particular topic, or how to answer a question, always **ask your teacher** for further explanation and help – that's what they're there for!

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 extra examples, as you can only get two marks.

The **4-mark question** asks you to 'explain' two ways in which a belief or teaching influences Christians. You need to give two different points, and, to get full marks, you must develop or justify both; for example, with a quote or other evidence. So you can think of it as being a mark per point and a mark for developing each point. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to recall it. Try to make each way or view and each justification as different as possible so that you get all possible marks.

The **5-mark question** asks you to 'explain' two Christian teachings and refer to scripture or sacred writings. This is similar to the 4-mark question, but as well as making two points and developing/justifying both, you must refer to scripture / sacred writings as appropriate (for an extra mark). Again, try to make sure your points are as different as possible so that the person marking gives you credit for every point/development you make.

The **12-mark question** is the longest, and there is a little more to remember. You will need to evaluate a statement. This means giving arguments and justifications **for** and **against** the statement (so agreeing with it, and also suggesting an alternative point of view). Make sure you have good reasons for all the points you make and link them together well. To get top marks you need to come to a conclusion, picking the most convincing side of the argument (based on the arguments you have given!) and saying why you think this is the case. You need to refer to Christian teaching in your answer.

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 **Credo**s; and from **theologians** and philosophers who have sought to answer difficult questions about religion. Different Church **denominations** have different beliefs, depending on how they interpret the 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 teachings
- ♦ **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
- ♦ **parable** – a story 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 this
- ♦ **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 humanity. 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 the Jews in this way: God sent his only Son into the world, so that all might have life through him.’ (1 John 4:9 NRSV)

Christians believe 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 and 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 God is **just**, he should not abandon his people or allow good people to suffer.

Did you know?

The Christian God’s love is often referred to 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, by sending 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 his people?
- ◆ Or is there some other explanation that allows there to be an **omnipotent** God who allows 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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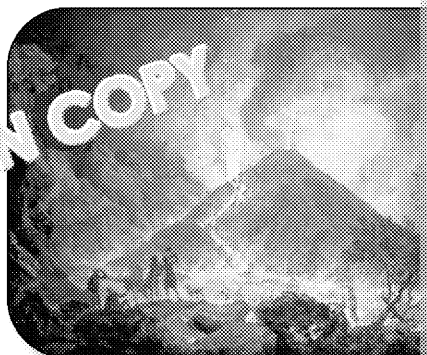
Some believers wonder why they should trust in a God who allows bad things to happen, so they question their **faith** and whether they should keep believing. Some people have left Christianity, because its portrayal of God is (in their opinion) not accurate, and therefore not a Christian faith.

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.

Moral suffering is suffering (pain) caused by human actions. It is suffering caused by a human being choosing 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.

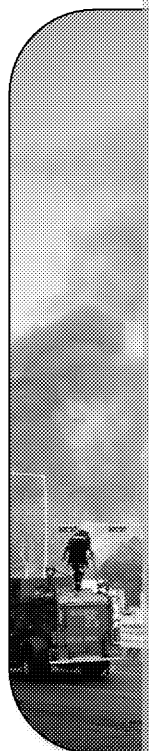


Volcanoes cause natural suffering.

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 of free will*. Some Christians believe 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 you were offered the ability to plug into a miraculous machine and experience a virtual life that was 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 you would be real. Choices, work hard for your own goals, and trust your friends. Many people feel that the free will solution is the only one that makes sense. (This scenario is based on a thought experiment called the 'Trolley 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. It does not seem just.

'You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed ones, who wander from your commandments. Do not let them prosper, O LORD, according to your word.' (Psalm 125)



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 opposite is also true. Could this be because the more people feel less of a need for help, the more likely they are to do a bad thing, depending on the situation.

Some people are not able to accept that God is right to allow **evil and suffering**. They may see God as **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 as a result, 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 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 human nature
- ◆ **gospel** – meaning '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.

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 (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), the Nicene Creed states that:

- ◆ God is the Father, the Creator of all things.
- ◆ 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>

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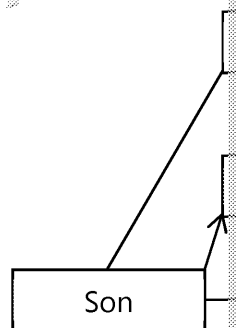
The Emperor Charlemagne, alive in the eighth and ninth centuries, made an addition to the Nicene Creed, based on **theology** from St Augustine. Previously, the Creed had claimed that the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father', but this was changed to 'the Father and the Son'. The Orthodox Church disagreed 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 part of Christian belief for a long time. Significant aspects 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 Holy Spirit as the comforter.



The Oneness of God

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

- ♦ The God of the Jewish people in the **Old Testament** is one God. Christians believe in 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; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...' (Exodus 20:4-5 NRSV)

- ♦ If Jesus (God the Son) is the same being as God the Father, then all his actions 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, 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: spirit) 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.

He is given to the people of God.

'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 to one another in psalms and hymns, singing and making melody from the heart, to the Lord, with instrumental accompaniment, as the Lord directs in the heart of each one.' (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, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on 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. Some Christians believe 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 from sin
- ♦ **literal** – something exact and factual
- ♦ **metaphorical** – something which is symbolic
- ♦ **Spirit** – the third person of the Christian Trinity: God
- ♦ **stewardship** – the act of managing resources in a responsible way
- ♦ **symbol** – 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?
and 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. For example, in this account, the creation of woman comes before the creation of animals. Furthermore, the creation of woman is described as she is created after the animal out of one of man's ribs. Man is commanded to guard 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 makes them aware that 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:

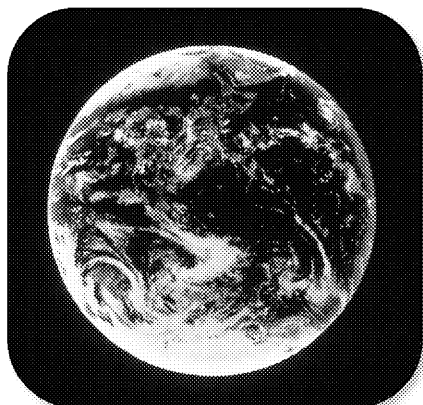
God's **Word** is with God at Creation, and God creates through him. It then goes unrecognised, but grants humans God's **grace**. This passage supports Christianity as it was embodied in the person of Jesus – that God the Son pre-existed Jesus and Jesus was God. It claims that the Word, Jesus, was present at Creation, so existed before the beginning 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 important because he brought God's teaching (his word) to Earth – this is significant because if 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 account of the Trinity (God (the Father), Jesus and the Holy Spirit), emphasises the relationship between them 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 account in different ways. These views are not necessarily grouped together. For example, different Catholics may have different views, and different Protestants may have different views.

- ◆ Some believe that it is **literally** true that the world was created in seven days, and that the first people were called Adam and Eve. Christians who believe this are often called **fundamentalists**. The term 'fundamentalist' originated to describe those who held to certain beliefs, e.g. that the Bible is the word of God (or necessary to 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 the word of God. Note: this does not mean that they see the Bible as untrue, but rather that they see it as a metaphor.

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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 celebrates 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 dominion over the world, 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 that yields seed on 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 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 – which 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 dead** – 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 beliefs below). Some believe in both; that the soul will enter the afterlife immediately after death, but the **resurrection** for everyone at **judgment** at the end of time, where souls and bodies, people will enter a spiritual realm after death based on their actions. Some believe they will go to purgatory to **atone** for sins (see more on this below). At the end of time, everyone 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 chance 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 they will be resurrected while some believe that it will not be, and that in heaven they will have new bodies, 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 and 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. Jesus told the thieves on the cross that he would be in heaven that day, which implies that he 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. Catholics do 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 example 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 section). (**Note:** If Christians, such as Catholics, believe in **immortality of the soul** then 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.

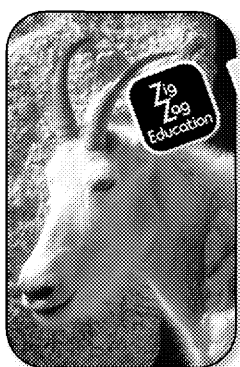
Jesus taught that after death people would be judged depending on how they lived. He taught that they were prepared for God and his Kingdom. He told **parables**, or stories like Aesop's fables, to explain what **judgment** and the end of time would be like. The parable of the sheep and the goats, and 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 (the sheep) from the bad people (goats). He will reward 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: The Parable of the Talents – where Jesus says that those who are faithful will be rewarded favourably and those who are not will be punished.



'To be judged, we must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due 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 bring his **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 told 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 the way to the place 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, which showed scenes of judgment, were common on the walls of churches to remind Christians that they would be judged and not be condemned to the terrible punishment of hell.

Some Christians believe in a place called **purgatory**, where Christians can go to be purified of their sins before being allowed to enter heaven. Belief in purgatory is taught by Catholics and Protestants. For those they believe to be in purgatory, in the hope of helping them, they pray. 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 groups of Christians. 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 in life after death. Those who feel that they are living lives pleasing to God may not fear death because they believe that life 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 – in order to 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 encourages them to isolate themselves from normal life – many Christians have felt this because they value the afterlife more than human life that they have on earth. This belief encourages Christians to 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 not love your neighbor as yourself

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 can experience God and it may prompt them to work with people of other religions for common goals. They believe that all people ultimately want the same things.

Quick Questions

8. Give **two** examples of places where Christians may believe people enter heaven.

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 follow 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 (see page 17).

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 died for the law, so that Christians do not have to follow it anymore
- ♦ **miracle** – in Christianity, something which appears to have been done by God and seen as evidence of his power
- ♦ **Transfiguration** – when Jesus was transformed and began to shine, in front of his disciples, on Mount Tabor, and Moses and Elijah appeared to him

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. He 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 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 in life after death, meaning that God has the power to grant life after death, meaning that people can live forward to the afterlife.
- ♦ It helps Christians to have a personal relationship with God, because they can relate to him as a human. Some Christians feel that by following Jesus they can come closer to God, and having an incarnated God makes it easier to relate to him.
- ♦ 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 and to save them from condemnation.
- ♦ Belief in Jesus being God incarnate (or the only incarnation of God) is one of the core beliefs of Christianity. Some Christians 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 (which was 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 1:1–3)

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



Without doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He (Or: God) was made visible 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!” (Matthew 17:5)

- 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 and a blind man, and he raised Lazarus from the dead (Luke 7, Matthew 8 and 9, John 4 and 11).
- Jesus performed other **miracles**, such as making five loaves of bread 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 12).
- Even though he was killed, he was **resurrected**, confirming his power over death (Mark 14–16, Luke 22–24, John 18–21).

Does not believe in reflecting practices of other religions

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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 divine. Christians also use Jesus' humanity to explain **miracles** in the Gospels where he showed knowledge – if he were only God and not a man, 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 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 of the suffering. Jesus' Passion is remembered especially during the Easter period, 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 meal with his disciples on the night of the Jewish Passover
- ◆ **Lent** – the period of 40 days before Easter. Christians remember Jesus' suffering and death during this time
- ◆ **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 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 New Testament that tell the story of Jesus' life.)

Before the Crucifixion:

Jesus eats a last meal (the **Last Supper**) with his **disciples**, where he shares bread and wine, saying 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 arrested by Jewish authorities; the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate; and in Luke's account by King Herod. Pilate and the Jewish 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 made a traveller called Simon of Cyrene carry Jesus' cross to the **crucifixion**; in John's Gospel, he carries it himself. Jesus is offered a drink of wine, but refuses it.

Jesus is crucified between two other criminals, and the soldiers gamble for his clothes. 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 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.

'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 do 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 woman 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 Gospel accounts, she reports that Jesus was ill, which she cured. She is often referred to as the 'Apostle to the Apostles' because there is no other apostle mentioned in the Bible.

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. He appears to Simon Peter and the other disciples, proving to them that he is alive and teaching them. He tells them to wait in Jerusalem [for the Holy Spirit] and then to go out to preach the good news about him.



When the women were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling robes stood before 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 also more in the section on *The Place of Mission, Evangelism and Church Growth*. Mark's Gospel 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 The Last Days and Their Influence Today

Christians believe that the purpose of Jesus' life was so that he could teach God's love, 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 and resurrection correspond to Old Testament prophecy . Some believe that Jesus is the 'servant' mentioned in Isaiah 53. Some believe that sold his clothing and Jesus' burial clothes correspond with prophecy (among other things). If Jesus fulfilled prophecy, this shows that his resurrection and 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, in his trial in front of the Jewish Council in some gospels it was interpreted that he meant himself; that God dwelt within him. When the Jewish Temple was destroyed, less than 50 years after Jesus' death, many Christians see Jesus as replacing the physical Temple – that they should worship Jesus, not through animal sacrifices, when Jesus was the sacrifice.

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

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 consequences are 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 event that humans lost God's grace when they disobeyed him
- ◆ **virgin** – the belief that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, 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 grace to be saved from human condition.

Augustine felt that fallenness and sin from the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – this inherited fallenness is called **original sin** after the first, original sin. This doctrine has been particularly emphasised within the Catholic Church, which teaches that humans are born with original sin from birth, regardless of what they do themselves.

The only human thought to be free from original sin is Mary, Jesus' mother. The Catholic Church teaches that she was conceived without original sin being passed on to her, in the Immaculate Conception refers to Mary's conception, but is often confused with the doctrine of the Incarnation, which states 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 that individuals do that are against God's will. Some Christians only believe in personal sin, so do not feel the need for God's grace. 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 to restore the relationship with God despite sin. Regardless of whether humans inherit sin, Christians believe that humans 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 and turn to God. 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 are 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. It was not necessarily a punishment 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, but 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 may view men as 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 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 death, or punishment, and can have a new start, having faith that God loves

Christians believe that doing wrong (**sin**) separates them from God, and causes death. However, Jesus died in their place and paid the price which they should have had. So, when they die, this will be on with God's forgiveness. So salvation is important because it offers Christians an opportunity to cancel their debt of sin – God forgives them.

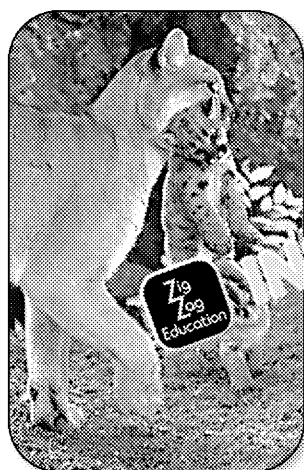
'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:23 NRSV)

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 a person has 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 judge the individual has done.

A second view held by some Christians is that humans have **free will** to choose to accept what Jesus has done for them, and that salvation is down to the individual. People must accept God's grace and follow Jesus. This seems positive because no one is automatically excluded. 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 carrying 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 be 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. 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 sent by God to help Christians. God can 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 who has come from heaven, so that those who believe in him can have eternal life, and 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' **disciples**. Peter proclaimed this in Acts 4:8–12 – that everyone must be

“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, but it is 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, 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 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 idea that a sacrifice defeated the devil so that he could no longer control sinners. Some think atonement 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 he saved humanity. Atonement refers to *how* Christians believe he did it –

Now Try This...

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

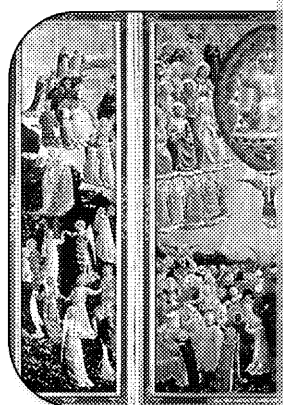
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Summary for Beliefs and Teachings

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 different 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 the flesh. Because of the Incarnation, Christians may feel that they are closer to God 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. That when Adam and Eve betrayed God in the Garden of Eden this was the **original sin** since then. All Christians believe in personal acts which are against God's will.
- ♦ Christians have different views on whether God only extends **salvation** to those who believe in Jesus and the Holy Spirit in their lives. Some believe that Jesus fulfilled the **Jewish law** so that Christians could now be saved through following his teachings. Christians believe that salvation is an extension of God's grace.
- ♦ Christians believe that Jesus brought them **salvation** by dying for their sins. They believe that Jesus **atoned** (made up) for their **sin**.

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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 human sin. <p>Accept any relevant point, 1 mark per point (maximum 2)</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians believe that God is caring. This means they feel that he cares about what is best for them. They believe this because they feel God has shown his love through his actions recorded in the Bible, such as by sending Jesus to save the world. This has been 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 they believe that God 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 and 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"> Many Christians believe in 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 written in 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 can 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, each with justification OR Several linked and justified arguments for one position</p> <p>The argument reaches a level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered or there is no mention of religion</p> <p>Very 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 refer to the resurrection of the dead at the end of time, e.g. saying that the graves will rise. Therefore, people go immediately to the afterlife. Many Christians believe in the end of time – it does not mean that people to enter heaven or hell have been judged. Many Protestant Christians 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 refer to the resurrection of the dead at the end of time, e.g. saying that the graves will rise. Therefore, people go immediately to the afterlife. Many Christians believe in the end of time – it does not mean that people to enter heaven or hell have been judged. Many Protestant Christians 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 3)</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 the world so much that he came to Earth and live with them. Many denominations believe 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) Some Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Some believe that Jesus was a special human with a special relationship with God, and others feel that Jesus 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 in the Fall and original sin feel that women are inferior because it was Eve who ate the forbidden fruit, and so they view women negatively. They may believe that women should not have 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 how they try to obey God and not to sin, in order to please God. It will also influence how they view 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, and that Jesus needed to make up for their sins because sin would condemn them to 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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