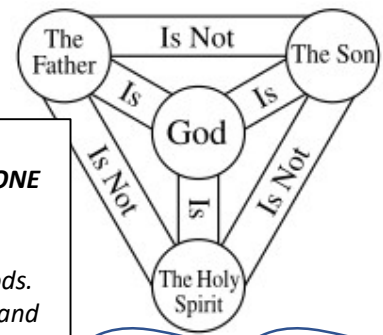


R.S. GCSE Revision: Christian Beliefs



God is **OMNIBENEVOLENT** (all-loving) - God loves everyone! God sacrificed his only son on the cross to show how much God loves everyone. Jesus showed 'agape' love to everyone (a selfless and unconditional type of love)

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught that **everyone should "love your enemies"**

The Trinity
Christians believe that the **ONE GOD is a Trinity of THREE parts**; this does NOT mean there are three different Gods. The Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit are different

'We believe in one God' (Nicene Creed)

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" – Genesis - Bible

Christians believe that God is **OMNIPOTENT** (all-powerful). There is no limit to God's power. E.g. God created the world, and the Son of God (Jesus) performed many miracles.

Christian beliefs about God

Christianity is a monotheistic religion, this means Christians believe in **ONE** God.

This might sound a bit confusing, but Christians believe that the 'nature of God' (what God is like) is something that we will never fully understand.

In the Bible, Jesus told his disciples to baptize people **"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"**

Christians believe that God is **OMNISCIENT** (all-seeing). God sees everything and knows everything. E.g. when we die, God will judge people's lives, so he must know what we have done. – **Parable of the Sheep and Goats**

God is referred to as a **FATHER** because Christians believe that he created US and the WORLD.

God is also the **SON**, Jesus- born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is God incarnate (made flesh) so performed miracles and is a role model for how Christian should behave.

The third aspect of God is the **HOLY SPIRIT** of God that we can feel, but can't see. The part of God that works within the world.

Christians believe that God is **JUST**- God is fair. God expects us to treat each other fairly and work hard to ensure society is fair for everyone.

"Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name"- Lord's Prayer

In the Bible Jesus states "I and the Father are one" and "before Abraham was, I am."

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. (Nicene Creed)

Different beliefs about CREATION

- God created the world **EX-NIHILO**; from nothing.
- God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day.
- In Genesis it says that God saw that his creation was good.
- According to Genesis, God created Eve from one of Adam's ribs.
- Some Christians take a **LITERAL** interpretation (believe that the world was created LITERALLY as it says in Genesis).
- Some take a **NON- LITERAL** interpretation: some of the details of the story may not have happened exactly as it says in Genesis but the story is metaphorical and God still did all of these things, but maybe not in 6 literal days.
- For some, details of the story are not important- what is MORE important is the meaning behind the story. E.g. the story shows us that God is the creator, God was happy with his creation, humans were created in God's image and given authority over the rest of creation.

1. God created Day and Night
2. God created Sky, Land and sea
3. God created Plants & Trees
4. God created Sun, Moon & Stars
5. God created Fish & Birds
6. God created Animals & Humans
7. Day of rest

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'

God 'the Father' is referred to as the creator, but the Holy Spirit was also active in creation.

All three parts of the Trinity can be found in the creation story found in Genesis; the first book of the Bible.

'The spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters'

The Word of God refers to the Son of God. Christians believe that the Son of God, Jesus is the Word of God, was involved in creation.

'In the beginning was the Word...the Word was God... Through him all things were made ...' (Gospel of John)

The problem Of evil & Suffering

The PROBLEM: If God is all loving why does God let people suffer? If God is all powerful why doesn't God prevent evil & suffering? If God is just why does God allow injustice to happen? (This problem is a reason why many people do not believe God is real).

How might a Christian respond to these questions?

By believing that God is just, and so they will trust in God- even if they can't understand why there is suffering, they may trust that **God has a plan** and this is part of it.

By understanding where suffering comes from...
Original sin: When Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they 'fell' from perfection and brought evil into a perfect world (this story is told in the book of Genesis). As a result of this, Christians believe that we are all born with a tendency to 'sin' or do wrong.

THINK- so would a Christian blame God for all the suffering in the world? IF God loves everyone **WHY** do we still suffer? Is suffering a 'TEST'?

By trusting God, just like Job did... **The book of Job is found in the Old Testament.** Job had perfect faith in God but the devil challenged Job (with God's permission). Job lost his house, his family, and his many animals and got a horrible skin disease. **Through all this suffering Job kept his faith in God.** In the end, God restored all of what had been taken from Job. This story shows us that we can't always understand suffering but we should trust in God. It also highlights the idea that anyone can suffer.

Some people believe we can't blame evil on God because **evil is caused by the Devil.** They think that if there is good there must be evil too. Some Christians believe the devil is a fallen angel who tries to fight against God and tempt humans. When God made humans he did not want us to be like puppets only doing what he wanted. So instead he made humans to have a choice; to choose how we want to behave. **God gave us free will**, so all the bad things that happen in the world are a result of people making bad choices- we can't really blame God for this

In Genesis, Adam and Eve are tempted by Satan. Because they have been given freewill, they can sin.

The Inconsistent Triad



Jesus; the Son of God; incarnation

Christians believe that Jesus is the **incarnation** ('human form' or 'embodiment') of God - God came to earth in the human form of Jesus to teach people how they should live. Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah (chosen one).

Belief in the incarnation is important to Christians because...

- God coming to earth in human form shows how omnibenevolent God is – **"For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son"** (Gospel of John in the Bible)
- Jesus was (and is) a role model for Christians for how they should live and treat others – "Treat others how you wish to be treated" (Gospel of Matthew in the Bible)
- The types of selfless love shown by Jesus can be seen in other people, such as Mother Teresa who dedicated her life to working with the 'poorest of the poor' – **The Parable of the Good Samaritan** teaches the importance of helping others, and the **Parable of the Sheep and Goats** – Jesus said **"what you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me"**
- Christians believe that Jesus was BOTH **fully human** (born of Mary) AND **fully divine** (a part of God)
- The Gospels tell the story of Jesus's birth and the virgin birth - Mary gave birth to Jesus but Mary was a virgin... God caused her to become pregnant through the Holy Spirit **"for nothing is impossible with God"**.

*The Bible states that
'The Word became
flesh and lived
among us for a*



Different beliefs about the afterlife; resurrection, judgement, heaven & hell

All Christians believe there is an afterlife, but they don't believe exactly the same.

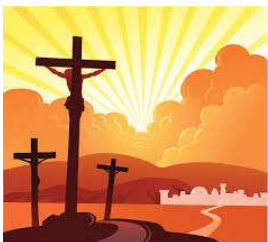
- When we die; the body is buried or cremated and our souls go on to heaven or hell after the person has been **judged by God**. God will judge people based on their behaviour, their actions and their faith in God/ Jesus. Some Christians think this **judgement** will happen soon after death, some think it will happen on 'The day of judgement'- a time in the future when the world will end & Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. Those who have lived in line with Jesus's teachings will receive eternal life in heaven on earth; those who have not will receive eternal punishment. The kingdom of heaven will be on earth and the **dead will be resurrected** (why some choose to be buried not cremated). Jesus made it clear- belief in him was essential for being able to enter heaven.

In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, Jesus is clear that we will be judged on our actions
- **Heaven and Hell:** Some Christians think you need to have lived a good life according to Jesus's teachings, so only those who have 'accepted' Jesus can go to Heaven. Other Christians might say that to get to Heaven you must have responded well to those in need. Heaven and Hell are mentioned in the Bible, they are not really described. Some believe that Heaven is a physical place, where their body goes after death (another reason why some Christians would opt for burial rather than cremation). This could be some form of 'paradise' free from pain and suffering. Others believe that it is their soul that lives on, and that heaven is simply a state of being united with God. Some Christians believe that Hell is a place of suffering, pain and punishment, whereas others (and perhaps most) believe that Hell is a state of being separated from God for eternity.

Jesus said "I am the way and the truth and the life."

In the Bible Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he dies, shall he live."
- **Catholics** believe in **Purgatory- an intermediate state after death**, for people not pure enough to go straight to Heaven. They stay in Purgatory until they are free from sin. It allows people to free themselves of sin so that they may go to Heaven.
- Different Christian ideas about **resurrection**:
 - Some believe a person's soul is resurrected soon after death
 - Some (inc. Catholics) believe in bodily resurrection- resurrection is spiritual and physical (the physical body lost at death will be transformed into a new spiritual body)
 - Some think resurrection will just be spiritual (souls, not bodies, will be resurrected)
 - Some think the dead will be resurrected when Jesus returns for the day of judgement
- **What influence might beliefs in resurrection have?** It means life after death is real, gives hope of a future with Jesus/ God, shows Christians how much God loves them, inspires Christians to live a good life so they can get to heaven.

HOW might these beliefs influence a Christian? Would it have an impact on how they live their life? How they treat others? Would it have an impact on their decision to be buried/ cremated?



Jesus: the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension

The Jewish leaders (Sanhedrin) have found Jesus guilty of blasphemy against God; a crime deserving the death sentence under Jewish law. They have to take him to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. With Palestine an occupied country, only the Romans can put a person to death. This explains why Jesus has to have two trials.

The *Sanhedrin* have found Jesus guilty of the religious offence of *blasphemy*. This would be of no interest to the Romans, so the Jewish leaders have to change the charge against Jesus from claiming to be the Son of God to saying he is the **King of the Jews**. In doing so they are emphasising the **political** rather than religious implications of claiming to be the *Messiah*. The Romans would take action for a political offence, particularly something that posed a threat to Roman rule. Pilate asked Jesus **"Are you the king of the Jews?"** Jesus answered **"So you say"**, but he said nothing in response to the accusations of the chief priests and elders, which surprised Pilate.

Jesus died a slow and painful death on the cross (**crucifixion**). Jesus was arrested, he was whipped, his clothes were stripped off, nailed to the cross (nailed through his wrists and ankles), he was offered wine but refused it, passers-by shouted insults, was left for six hours until he died (the last three hours were in darkness).

As he was fully human (as well as divine) he suffered.

Jesus was placed in a cave-like tomb, covered by a large stone blocking the entrance. The entrance was sealed and two Roman guards were put on duty to protect the tomb. Jesus' burial was rushed as the Sabbath was approaching when no work could be done by Jewish law. When the tomb was visited by Mary Magdalene on Sunday morning, the guards had gone, the tomb was open and Jesus' body was not there. Christians believe that this event when he came back from death in an event known as **the resurrection**.

According to the Bible, Jesus appeared several times to his disciples over the next 40 days. In the Upper Rooms in Jerusalem when the disciple Thomas wanted to see Jesus' wounds before he could believe he had resurrected. Then again on the road to Emmaus, when he appeared to two men and revealed himself as Jesus. Then again at the Mount of Olives, Jesus appears before appearing to 'rise' before them in an event known as "The Ascension". Jesus asked his disciples to carry on his work.

Jesus said "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Why did Jesus have to die?

- 1- he had a new interpretation of the law and was doing things that were considered blasphemy (going against God/ religion) so the Romans sentenced him to death
- 2- Pilate (Roman governor) was worried that it would be reported that he let a Jewish rebel go (he might lose his job) so he had to sentence Jesus to death
- 3- Jesus had to die so the relationship between God and humans improved and so that people could get to heaven

'While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven' (Luke)

"All authority in Heaven and earth has been given to me. Go forth and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and know that I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Why are these events important?

The crucifixion is important as... It gives Christians hope that their sins will be forgiven if they sincerely repent (want to make up for their sins); It also meant that God understands human suffering as Jesus (a form of God) experienced it. Christians can also accept suffering is part of life- just as it was part of life for Jesus.	The resurrection is important as... It shows the power of good over evil and life after death. It gives Christians hope that they will be resurrected after death- there is no need to fear death. It also means their sins will be forgiven if they follow God's laws.	The ascension is important as... It shows that Jesus is with God in Heaven. It paves the way for God to send the Holy Spirit to provide comfort and guidance.
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'The stories of the incarnation prove that Jesus was the son of God' Evaluate this statement (12)

<i>Could you write a level 3 or 4 answer from these notes? What teachings could you use?</i>	Agree	Disagree
	• The story of the virgin birth shows that Jesus was special- he was conceived through the actions of God • Jesus was born- fully human, but his birth was no ordinary event • Jesus was resurrected by God – shows he is the Messiah	• Some may not agree with the story of the virgin birth- this can't be used as evidence that he was the son of God • Perhaps the resurrection and ascension events are better proof of Jesus being the son of God

Explain two ways in which a belief in Jesus's crucifixion influences Christians today (4)

What scripture could you add, if this style of question was for 5 marks?!

Christians believe that the crucifixion was a sacrifice Jesus chose to make for them. This influences Christians to follow his teachings and have faith in Him, so that they can get to Heaven with God.

Also, Christians believe that Jesus forgave the people who were killing him on the cross. This will influence Christians to try and forgive others, as Jesus taught them to do, and so that God will forgive them too.

Sin; original sin; salvation (law, grace, spirit), the role of Christ in salvation; atonement

Sin: any thought or action that separates humans from God.

Salvation: repairing the relationship with God- being saved from sin.

Atonement: 'At-one-ment'... restoring the relationship with God.

The origins of sin

- Christians believe that everyone commits sins.
- Sins like murder, assault or theft are illegal in today's world, but adultery is not illegal yet is against God's laws.
- Many Christians believe in **Original sin**; the belief that all humans are born with a tendency to sin, because of how Adam and Eve disobeyed God. **Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the book of Genesis**, by eating fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil when God told them not to. As a result God gave them certain punishments and threw them out of the Garden of Eden.
- This 'tendency to sin' is like a barrier between humans and God
- Although not all Christians may interpret Genesis 3 (Adam and Eve disobeying God) quite so literally, Christians do understand that humans have a natural inclination to do what they are told not to (including disobeying God)
- To put this right, the son of God, Jesus, was sent to earth to offer salvation
- Salvation is the cancelling out of original sin- This allows people to have a better relationship with God and have eternal life (in Heaven).
- Christians can achieve salvation through...



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

'Salvation through Law and good works'- believing in, following the teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught that what is important to God is what is in our thoughts and our hearts. Our love for God and our love for each other

'Salvation through Grace'- Salvation is given freely by God through faith in Jesus - it is not deserved or earned, but is a gift from God ('Grace' means God's unconditional *agape* love for everyone).

'Salvation through Spirit'- It is the Holy Spirit who gives grace to Christians and continues to guide them in life.

The letters of James states that "Faith without good works is dead"

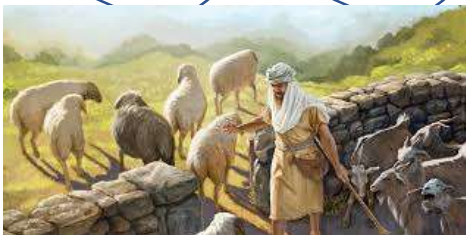
In his letters Paul wrote that "it is by grace you have been saved"

In the parable of the Sheep and Goats, Jesus states "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

In the Bible Jesus stated that "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall have eternal life."

At the end of his ministry, Jesus explains to the disciples that he must leave, so that the Holy Spirit can come to help them.

This event, when the Holy Spirit is believed to have arrived, is called the Pentecost



Practise Questions

1 Mark Questions test knowledge and understanding

They always begin with the command words 'Give two...' or 'Name two...'

They DO NOT need development or explanation. One word or a short sentence depending on the command.

Give one way Christians believe salvation can come about

1. Belief in Jesus as their saviour
2. Through doing good works

Name one belief about the nature of God

1. God is omnipotent
2. God is all-loving

4 Mark Questions test knowledge and understanding

They always begin with the command words 'Explain two'

In the 'Beliefs' paper it will test your knowledge on *influence* of a belief.

Explain two ways belief about the Trinity may influence a Christian today (4)

One Christian belief is that there are three aspects to God, who are all equal but different as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This may influence a Christian to turn to a different aspect of God for different reasons.

Another Christian belief is that Jesus is an aspect of God made in human flesh on earth. This may influence a Christian to accept and follow the teachings of Jesus, as He is God incarnate.

- Explain two ways in which Christian belief about God's omnibenevolence may influence them today.
- Explain two ways in which belief in creation by God influences Christians today.
- Explain two ways in which belief in the resurrection of Jesus influences Christians today.
- Explain two ways in which the belief that God is Just influences Christians today.
- Explain two ways in which belief in Heaven influences Christians today.

6 Mark Questions test knowledge and understanding, with some reference to scripture and teachings needed for full marks.

They always begin with the command words 'Explain two'

In addition, it will ask you to **'Refer to sacred writings or another source of Christian teaching in your answer'** To gain the two extra marks, you must use scripture and the source (1 mark) and apply (explain) the teaching to the answer - why is this teaching relevant?

Explain two Christian teachings about Original Sin (6)

*One Christian belief is that we sin due to the Original Sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They believe that we are all born with a tendency to sin, because in **Genesis in the Bible**, they used their **freewill to go against God**, and this Original Sin continues to cause us to disobey God today.*

Also, many Christians believe that we sin due to the Devil. For example, in the story of Adam and Eve it shows that Satan still has access to humans and can cause us to sin through temptation.

- Explain two Christian teachings about judgement.
- Explain two Christian teachings about the means of salvation.
- Explain two Christian teachings about why there is suffering.
- Explain two Christian teachings about Jesus' ascension.

12 mark statements are to test your analytical and evaluation skills - Evaluate the statement

Always try and give reasoned arguments for either side of the argument. Evaluate the strength or weakness of the arguments you have made and make a final judgement that is NOT a summary of what you have already stated. Answer if the statement is true or false based on the evidence given and why.

- 'If God were loving, there would be no suffering in the world.'
- 'Salvation is God's greatest gift to humans'
- 'The Bible tells Christians all they need to know about God's creation.'
- 'The crucifixion is the most important belief for Christians'
- 'As nobody is perfect, it is impossible not to sin'
- The Trinity is a helpful way of understanding God'