

C2.1 Christian Beliefs & Teachings

Key Concepts

Omnipotent—the all-powerful, almighty and unlimited nature of God.
Omnibenevolent—The state of being all-loving and infinitely good—a characteristic often attributed to God.
Trinity—The three persons of God; God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Incarnation—God becoming human in the form of Jesus.
Atonement—The belief that Jesus' death on the cross healed the rift between humans and God.
Resurrection—The belief that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, conquering death.

Do all Christians accept the Genesis creation narrative?

Core Questions

- What is monotheism?
- Why are Walsingham and Taizé important places for Christians?
- Do you think Britain is becoming a more secular society?
- Why are there different denominations?
- Do you need to go to church to be a Christian?
- Why did Jesus have to die?
- If God loves us why do we suffer?
- Are heaven and hell real places?

Creation

Genesis One
 God creates a woman from Adam's rib "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh".
Genesis Two
 Adam names her Eve.

God gives Adam and Eve one command, which is to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that grows in the garden of Eden, God says, "You must not touch it, or you will die." (Genesis 2: 3)

Role of the Spirit
 Most Christians believe that 'the Word' represents Jesus - therefore the quote 'in the beginning was the Word' means that Jesus was present when God created the world.

Interpretations
 Literal = word for word (Fundamentalist)
 Liberal = the narrative should be interpreted as a metaphor
 'Day': There are diverse views on how the word 'day' should be interpreted. A literal Christian (a fundamentalist) would mean that a day is 24 hours exactly. A liberal Christian may read 'day' as a period of time and may actually represent millions of years.



Genesis 3 describes 'The Fall' – when Adam and Eve are tempted by a serpent (the devil?) to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil against God's will.

The serpent tricks Adam and Eve into thinking that if they eat from the tree, they will become 'like God' and be as omniscient as God. Eve gives in to the temptation and then gives some of the fruit to Adam.

They confess to God but, as a punishment, God sends them from the Garden of Eden. They are no longer able to eat from the Tree of Life and therefore they are no longer immortal and will die.

For Christians, this represents the point where God's perfect relationship with humans breaks. For some Christians, this is why humans are born with 'original sin'.

This broken relationship is the reason Jesus eventually dies on the cross to restore the human relationship with God.

The Bible and Salvation

Christians believe that they are born with **original sin**, which came into the world as a result of The Fall. Adam's sin has been passed down through the generations. It is original sin that causes humans to go against **God's law** and separates humans from God.

The Bible is a **source of authority** and advice. Readings from the Bible are an important part of church services.

A book of **revelation** (God revealing his truths to mankind). Through the Bible, God is revealed so Christians can know and understand God.

The Bible is a record of **divine law** – rules and laws of God given to mankind by which all Christians should live for example **The Ten Commandments & Parables**.

Interpretations
 The Bible is the 'Word of God' and the content is literally true.
 The Bible requires **interpretation** as it was written in a specific time and culture, different to ours.

Grace and the Spirit
 God grants anyone who repents their sins and shows faith will be given the **forgiveness** they don't deserve.

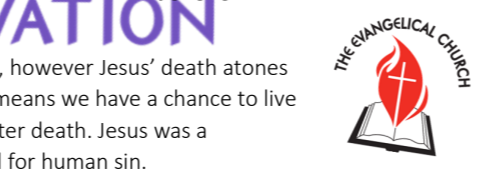
G – God's
R – Redemption
A – At
C – Christ's
E – Expense

Sin separates humans from God, however Jesus' death atones from human sin. Jesus' sacrifice means we have a chance to live with God for eternity after death. Jesus was a sacrifice that paid for human sin.

Roman Catholics believe that by taking part in the Sacraments, they will be able to achieve salvation and go to heaven. They believe that Baptism washes them clean of sin. Confession allows for the Christians to be absolved (freed) of sins committed in life.

Protestants, e.g. Church of England, believe that they must have faith in Jesus and repent their sins to achieve Salvation.

Christians believe in special 'rites' or rituals called '**Sacraments**', for example **baptism** and the **Eucharist**.
 During the Sacraments, the Holy Spirit comes down on the believer



SALVATION



The Nature of God

All Christians sign up to the beliefs stated in the creed.

The most important beliefs are:
 God is an all-powerful creator
 Jesus was born of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit
 Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.
 There will be a day of judgment
 There is one holy and universal Church
 God will forgive our sins
 There will be a resurrection of the body and an eternal afterlife

APOSTLES CREED



OMNIBENEVOLENCE - 'For you Lord are a compassionate and gracious Lord, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness'
OMNIPOTENCE - 'And God said 'Let there be light' and there was light' Genesis 1:3
CREATOR - 'In the beginning God created the heavens and earth' Genesis 1:1
JUDGE - 'There is only one lawgiver and judge; He who is able to save and destroy'

Christians are often **blessed** in church services by a minister saying "In the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"
 Roman Catholics might bless themselves by making the sign of the cross and reciting, "In the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."
God the Father
 Jesus taught to refer to God as 'God the Father'. This refers to God as the all-powerful (**omnipotent**) and all-knowing (**omniscient**) part of God.
Jesus Christ:
 Christians refer to Jesus as the Son of God, but more accurately to Christians, Jesus *is* God. This belief is known as the **incarnation**. Christians believe that by coming to earth as a human, by doing this God revealed knowledge about himself to the world.

God the Holy Spirit:
 After Jesus' death and resurrection God then sent the Holy Spirit into the world to guide Christians to live in the best way possible. The Holy Spirit is able to: Give comfort, courage, inspiration and guidance to all Christians.

Jesus Christ

"And the Word became flesh"
 John. 1,14

Jesus was crucified for **blasphemy** and treason by Pontius Pilate. His was given a crown of thorns for punishment and mocked as he died. Jesus' death **atoned** (made up for) the sins of mankind and gave people a **symbol of hope**. From then, if people accept Jesus as their **saviour** and follow his teachings they can also be saved from eternal death (hell).

After the crucifixion God sent down the Holy Spirit to act as the guide and **power of God on earth** from that point on.



God became **flesh** as Jesus Christ. The **Nativity** story from the **Gospels** teaches Christians about the **miracle** birth of Jesus. During his life Jesus performed miracles to prove the power of God and he **baptised** people with the Holy Spirit. He established the catholic church.

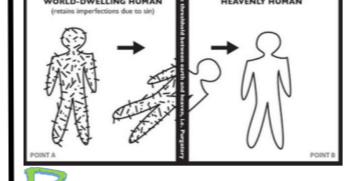
The **resurrection** is essential to the Christian faith. It is the greatest miracle recorded in the **New Testament** and is evidence that Jesus was God. All Gospels agree that on the Sunday following Jesus' crucifixion, some of Jesus' followers went to his tomb. They found that the stone covering the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away and Jesus' body missing.

THE ASCENSION
 During the forty days after his crucifixion:

- ◆ Jesus appeared to the **disciples**
- ◆ Jesus appeared to other people
- ◆ Jesus finally **ascended** (rose) to his Father in heaven

Death & Afterlife

The Bible refers to heaven a lot, however it does not describe it much. Some people believe that heaven is an actual, physical place. Others believe heaven exists in a more spiritual dimension – it is beyond this world. Heaven is described as a reward for redeemed and worthy souls.



Purgatory
 Roman Catholics believe in Purgatory – a waiting room and a place of **cleansing and purification** before entering heaven
 On Judgment Day, all those who are in purgatory will go to heaven
 It is important to pray for the souls of the dead and those in purgatory

- Christians believe:
1. That Jesus was **resurrected** and that they, too, will resurrect
 2. Life is a preparation for an afterlife to be with God in heaven
 3. Jesus' death and resurrection proved that death is not the end
 4. The physical body dies and the immortal soul lives on
 5. The cross is symbolic of death and resurrection
 6. Jesus says that anyone who believes in him will never die (John 14:6)
 7. The way to heaven is through faith in Jesus (John 3:16)

Hell is a place of punishment for the unworthy, unfaithful and unredeemed souls. Many Christians believe that it is a physical place where people burn and are tortured eternally. Others believe it exists in a more spiritual dimension. Most Christians think that the real torment of hell is in absolute separation from God as he is not in hell.

There will be a Judgment Day where people will be judged by the quality of their lives
 On Judgment Day, Jesus will return to earth in a 'second coming'
 Judgment Day marks the end of human existence on the earth.
 This belief is known as the 'Parousia'
 Jesus will separate the people who go to heaven from those who go to hell, like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

