

## Christianity beliefs and teachings (Unit 2)

### Topics covered:

1. Nature of God
2. Evil and Suffering
3. The Trinity

4. Creation

5. The Incarnation

6. The Crucifixion

7. The Resurrection

8. The Ascension

9. Life after death

10. Heaven and Hell

11. Sin and Salvation

12. Jesus and salvation

13. Atonement

**Remember:** if a question is asking you for the influence of something on Christians, it is asking you for what it makes them think, say, feel or do!

### 7. The Resurrection

- ✓ According to accounts Jesus was placed in the tomb late on Friday afternoon.
- ✓ How long Jesus remained in the tomb was unclear because when some of Jesus' followers went on Sunday after Shabbat they found the tomb empty.
- ✓ All accounts make it clear that Jesus' body was nowhere to be found
- ✓ Each story mentions the women meeting men (who may have been angels) who told them that Jesus had risen and to spread the message.
- ✓ The belief that Jesus rose from the dead is called the resurrection and is a key teaching of Christianity.
- ✓ For the next few days or weeks Jesus appeared to several people.
- ✓ He told each of them he had risen from the dead as he has predicted when he was alive.
- ✓ The story spread quickly and there were several different witnesses that said he had risen.
- ✓ Christians believe the resurrection shows the power of good over evil.
- ✓ They believe by accepting Jesus they can also be resurrected in some way.
- ✓ They have no need to fear death.
- ✓ It assures them that God will forgive their sins if they follow the teachings of Christianity.
- ✓ Without the resurrection there wouldn't be a Christian faith.

### 9. Life after death

- ✓ Christians believe humans receive eternal life as a gift from God, and so a belief in the afterlife is dependent on a belief in God.
- ✓ The afterlife either begins upon death or at the **Day of Judgement** when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

Judgement:

- ✓ Christians believe it is God who judges the fate of those who die.
- ✓ He will take into account the life of the person and the extent to which they have tried to get close to him.
- ✓ Jesus makes it clear that in serving others, they are serving him.
- ✓ Christians believe that simply treating other people well and in accordance with Christian morality is not enough to guarantee a good afterlife.
- ✓ They believe that Jesus is the Son of God and in order to gain a good afterlife you have to have faith in him and following his teaching.

**'And the life everlasting'. The Apostles Creed**

**'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'. John 14:6**

### 12. Jesus and Salvation

- ✓ Christians believe that Jesus' death makes up for original sin and so can bring people back to God.
- ✓ Jesus knew that his death was necessary to restore the relationship between God and humans and make salvation available to all people.
- ✓ Christians believe through Jesus' death and resurrection; humans can receive forgiveness for sin.
- ✓ The fact that Jesus rose from the dead shows that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and atonement, which means Jesus restored the relationship between God and humans.
- ✓ Jesus made salvation possible because God will now forgive anybody who asks in faith.

**'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Romans 6:23**

### 8. The Ascension

- ✓ The ascension is a matter of interpretation.
- ✓ If Jesus had the power to be able to rise from the dead, it is possible that the same power meant he could leave the earth physically and return to heaven.
- ✓ After meeting his disciples and asking them to carry on his good work, Jesus left them for the last time and ascended to heaven.

**'While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven'. Luke 24:51**

### 10. Heaven and Hell

Heaven:

- ✓ Traditional paintings show it as beyond the clouds and where God sits on a huge throne watching the earth.
- ✓ It is seen as a place of peace, joy and freedom from pain.
- ✓ Whether it is spiritual or physical is unclear.
- ✓ Some Christians believe that only those who believe in Jesus will be allowed in to heaven.
- ✓ Other Christians believe that heaven is reserved for Christians and followers of other faiths who have lived good lives.
- ✓ Other Christians believe that heaven is for those who call themselves Christian regardless of how they have lived their life. Simply being baptised guarantees you a place.
- ✓ All Christians believe that God will forgive sins and this will enable people to approach God's presence.

Hell:

- ✓ Often seen as the opposite of heaven.
- ✓ Christians understand it to be a state of existence without God.
- ✓ It is often depicted as a place of eternal suffering, terror, fire and torture ruled by the devil.
- ✓ It leaves a difficult question as to whether if heaven is reserved for Christians where do non-Christians go.
- ✓ Many believe that all those who try to follow God will be accepted by him and not be sent to hell.

**The parable of the sheep and the goats indicates heaven is a reward for both faith and good actions – only one is insufficient.**

### 11. Sin and Salvation

Origins of Sin:

- ✓ Sin is any thought or action which separates humans from God.
- ✓ Christians believe that all humans commit sins as nobody is perfect. It is impossible not to sin.
- ✓ Some Christians believe in the idea of **original sin**. This is the idea that humans are born with an inbuilt tendency to do wrong.
- ✓ The idea is introduced in the story of Adam and Eve where they ate the forbidden fruit and were banished from the Garden of Eden.
- ✓ Christians believe that God gave humans free will in order to choose how to live their lives, but it doesn't mean that they can do whatever they want.
- ✓ Christians believe that the Christian teachings such as the give them guidance on how they should use their free will.

**The Ten Commandments. E.g. 'Thou shall not kill' and 'Honour thy mother and father'. Exodus 20:1-19**

Salvation:

- ✓ Salvation means to be saved from sin and the consequences of it.
- ✓ Salvation enables humans to get close to God again and be granted eternal life with God.
- ✓ Christians believe there are two main ways to get salvation:
  - **Salvation through good works** – the Old Testament makes it clear that a person achieves salvation through faith in God and by obeying God's law e.g. the Ten Commandments.
  - **Salvation through grace** – salvation is given by God through faith in Jesus and his teachings. It is not earned or deserved but a gift for the faithful.
- ✓ Whilst salvation through works is the most widely believed type of salvation, many Christians believe it is possible to achieve salvation through grace along as there is evidence of it in the Bible

### 13. Atonement

- ✓ Atonement removes the effect of sin and allows people to restore their relationship with God. This is possible because of Jesus.
- ✓ God is holy and therefore does not overlook sin. The penalty of sin must be paid, and Christians believe it was paid through Jesus

**'He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world'. 1 John 2:1-2**

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11. Sin and Salvation and Jesus (12).

13. Atonement

## 1. Nature of God

Christians believe God is:

- ✓ Immanent (present in earth and involved with humanity)
- ✓ Transcendent (outside life and beyond understanding)
- ✓ Omnipotent (all-powerful)
- ✓ Omnibenevolent (all-loving and all-good)
- ✓ Merciful (compassionate and forgiving)
- ✓ Just (fair and judges humans actions)

**'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son'. John 3:16**

**'Nothing is impossible with God'. Luke 1:37**

## 2. The problem of evil and suffering

- ✓ Many question why a loving God would allow people to suffer rather than prevent it.
- ✓ Christians believe God treats all people fairly and is incapable of making the wrong judgement.
- ✓ Christians are therefore sure that they can trust God even when things appear to be going wrong.

## 4. Creation

Genesis:

- ✓ Christians believe God created the earth and all living things.
- ✓ Genesis chapter 1 tells us the story of creation
- ✓ The story gives an account of how the universe was created, how the earth was made fit for life and finally how God created life including humans.
- ✓ It is believed to have happened in six days after which God rested.
- ✓ For Christians the most important part of the story is the fact that everything was created 'good.'

**'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth'. Genesis 1:1**

Literal Interpretation of creation:

- ✓ They believe it is literally true.
- ✓ Everything that is in the story is the word of God and happened exactly as it is told.
- ✓ God created the world in seven days exactly as described in the story.
- ✓ Evidence of science and fossils is false and should be ignored.

God inspired interpretation of creation:

- ✓ They believe that the account contains the truth but is not literally true.
- ✓ The world was created by God but the story was not dictated by God therefore may have some errors.
- ✓ God did create the world and all that is in it but may not have created it in seven days as described.

Inspired by the world and a sense of God interpretation of creation:

- ✓ They believe that the story should not be taken as truth but is to show that God created the world and the Bible is to show them the message that God has to send us.
- ✓ In the case of creation, it is to show that we were created by a loving God who created us all and created a world for us to live in.

The Word:

**'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made'. John 1:1-3**

- ✓ Experts have debated this teaching for year and specifically the identity of the Word.
- ✓ Most agree the Word, refer to God the Son who entered in history through Jesus.
- ✓ This shows that all three persons of the trinity were present in creation.
- ✓ Therefore, the trinity has existed since the beginning.
- ✓ This passage shows that the three persons are not part of a chain with the Son replacing the Father and so on, they have been present since the beginning.

## 3. The Trinity

- ✓ The concept of the trinity is that there are three 'persons' all of which are God.
- ✓ God is made up of three persons, not three separate people.
- ✓ God is not a physical being.
- ✓ Think of the three persons as non-physical elements.
- ✓ The trinity describes the following:
  - There is only one God
  - Each person of the Trinity is fully God
  - The persons of the trinity are not the same

### The Father

- ✓ The first person of the trinity is the Father.
- ✓ God the Father is believed to be the creator of earth and all living things on it.
- ✓ As the creator, he acts as a good father would towards his children.
- ✓ He is believed to be omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient.

### The Son

- ✓ The second person of the trinity is referred to as the Son of God.
- ✓ The Son became incarnate on earth through Jesus.
- ✓ Christians believe Jesus was both fully human whilst on earth but also fully God as well.

### The Holy Spirit

- ✓ The third person of the trinity is the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Christians believe when Jesus left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit is there to influence, guide and sustain the earth and all life on it.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit is believed to be the unseen power of God at work in the world.

## 5. The Incarnation

- ✓ Incarnation means becoming flesh, taking a human form.
- ✓ It refers to the act of when God became human in the form of Jesus.
- ✓ Christians believe that Jesus was both fully human and fully God during his time on earth.
- ✓ The gospels of Matthew and Luke explain clearly that Mary did not conceive Jesus sexually, but rather that it was an immaculate conception.
- ✓ It is a fundamental Christian belief that through the incarnation, God showed himself as a human being for around 30 years.
- ✓ Christians refer to Jesus as Christ, which is translated in to a Hebrew word which means Messiah.
- ✓ Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, sent to save God's people.
- ✓ When Jesus was baptised, a voice from Heaven was heard and said **'You are my Son' Mark 1:11.**
- ✓ On another occasion Peter referred to Jesus as 'Christ'.

**'This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit'. Matthew 1:18**

**'You may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name'. Mark 14:61b-62a**

## 6. The Crucifixion

- ✓ Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion (where criminals are nailed to a cross and lifted).
- ✓ Christians believe that even though Jesus was the Son of God, it does not mean he was spared the pain and horror of his death.
- ✓ Jesus forgave those who crucified him because they did not realise the significance on what was happening.
- ✓ The crucifixion gives Christians confidence that if they accept Jesus' sacrifice, sin can no longer destroy their lives as God forgives those who faithfully ask for it.
- ✓ It helps them to understand that suffering is a part of life, just as it was for Jesus and God understand what the sufferer is going through.

**'Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I coming my spirit.' When he has said this, he breathed his last'. Luke 23:46**

- ✓ Once Jesus had died a man called Joseph asked for the body so it could be buried.
- ✓ Due to it being the Sabbath day there was insufficient time to bury it properly, so Joseph laid the body of Jesus in a tomb and rolled a large stone to block the entrance.

