

Unit 1: Christianity Beliefs & teachings



Key beliefs

Christianity is a **monotheistic** religion – they believe in **one** God.

There are three main branches of Christianity, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. The Protestant branch has split into various denominations or groups. E.g. Methodist, Baptist.

Christians believe God is:

- Omnipotent** (*all powerful*)
- Omniscient** (*all knowing*)
- Omnipresent** (*everywhere*)
- Benevolent** (*loving*)
- Transcendent** (*beyond understanding*)
- Immanent** (*personal*)
- Eternal** (*no beginning and no end*)
- Forgiving** (*he will forgive sins*)
- Just** (*Judge humankind and never support injustice*)

The Trinity

God is understood as the relationship of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three elements are referred to as 'persons', although it is only in Jesus's case that this means a physical presence.

God the Father The creator of all life, omnipotent, omniscient, and present everywhere. Acts as father for all of his children.

God the Son God incarnate through Jesus Christ. Both fully God and fully human. Son refers to his special relationship with the Father.

God the Holy Spirit Unseen power of God at work in the universe. Influences, guides and sustains.



Creation

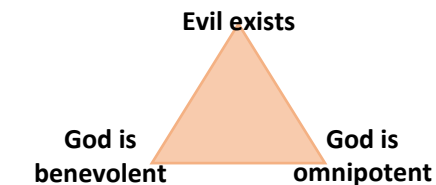


Christians believe in creation by God. The Father designed the universe perfectly and created all life on it. **The Word**, another term for Jesus, was active during this creation as was the Holy Spirit.

'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'
John 1:1-3

Many Christians believe that although not scientifically accurate, the creation story contains many elements of religious truth. Some Christians however believe that creation happened literally within 6 days as it states within Genesis. Christians believe that God created out of choice and that everything was good. They also believe that God continues to create even today.

The Problem of Evil



Moral evil = suffering caused by humans

Natural evil = suffering caused by nature

Responses:

- Suffering is a **necessary** part of life
- Suffering is **temporary**
- Suffering is a punishment for **sin**
- Suffering is caused by humanity's **free will**
- Suffering is a part of God's **plan**
- Suffering is a **test of faith**
Christians believe they will be **judged** on their actions in this life on judgement day

Resurrection and life after death

Some Christians believe that the soul is resurrected soon after death. Other Christians believe the soul will be resurrected at some time in the future when Jesus will return to judge all souls. Some Christians believe resurrection will just be spiritual and not physical at all. Catholics and Orthodox Christians believe in bodily resurrection. This means that although the physical body is lost at death, a new spiritual body will be made which is resurrected into the afterlife with the soul. **'It is raised imperishable'** **1 Corinthians**. Resurrection inspires Christians, shows them that God loves them, gives them hope for the future, gives them proof of life after death and confidence in the face of death.

The Afterlife and Judgement

The Afterlife

Christian beliefs about the afterlife vary but essentially they believe there will be eternal life dependent on faith and judgement from God. They believe in heaven and hell and that Christians will enter one of these places either very soon after death or on the Day of Judgement.

Judgement

God will judge humans based on their actions as well as faith in Jesus. In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats it explains the idea of judgement and what God is looking for. Serving and loving others is essential for salvation. **'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat'**

Heaven and Hell

Heaven

Heaven is traditionally seen as a physical place where God is. Jesus called it **"paradise"** or **"my Father's house"**. A more modern view is that heaven is simply 'with God'.

Purgatory

Roman Catholics believe there is a place before heaven, where people go to have their sins cleansed. People say prayers for **souls** to be released from Purgatory.

Hell

Hell can be an actual place of torment and suffering OR it can be when man is separated from God.

Soul

Our souls are:

- Immortal
- God-given
- Eternal
- Make us distinct from the rest of creation
- Return to God when we die

Key Words

Catholic Orthodox Protestant
Denomination God Omnipotent
Benevolent Omniscient Just
Trinity Holy Spirit Son of God
Creation Genesis The Word
Incarnation Resurrection
Crucifixion Ascension Heaven
Hell Justice Afterlife Day of
Judgement Purgatory Satan Sin
Salvation Grace Forgiveness
Atonement Mass

The Crucifixion of Christ

One of the most detailed stories we have from the whole of Jesus' life is the account of how he died. He was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, and his death was to be by crucifixion.

Even though Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God, it does not mean that he was somehow spared the pain and horror of his crucifixion.

There are several ways in which the crucifixion influences Christians today:

- It gives them **confidence** that if they accept Jesus' sacrifice, sin can no longer destroy their lives because God forgives those who faithfully ask for forgiveness
- They believe that suffering is a part of life, just as it was a part of Jesus' life and that, having experienced it, **God understands** what the sufferer is going through.

Incarnation

Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God. He is God in **human form**, or God '**incarnate**'.

"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"

- Jesus gave humanity an **example** to follow.
- Even though Jesus is God in human form, he valued everyone equally: *"For you are all one in Christ"*.
- God **sacrificed** himself on the cross to take away the sins of human beings: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son"*
- Jesus is both immanent and personal

Unit 1: Christianity Beliefs & teachings Jesus

Jesus' Resurrection & Ascension

Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 6:1; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-9

According to the accounts of Jesus' burial in the NT, he was placed in a tomb late Friday afternoon (Good Friday). How long he remained there is unclear, but we know that some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb to anoint the body. Though details of the story vary between the 4 gospel accounts, they all make it clear that Jesus was nowhere to be found.

The belief that Jesus rose from the dead is known as the **resurrection** and is a key teaching in the Christian faith. For Christians, it is **significant evidence** of the divine nature of Jesus.

Only Mark and Luke's gospels finish off their story by telling their readers that, after meeting his disciples and asking them to carry on his good work, Jesus left them for the last time and **ascended**, body and soul, into Heaven.

Sin and Salvation

Salvation means '**to be saved from a bad situation**'. In Christianity, this bad situation is sin, and the consequences of sin. **Sin** has separated humans from God, and salvation enables humans to get close to God again.

Christians believe that Jesus' death makes up for the **original sin** committed by Adam & Eve and so can bring people back to God.

Jesus knew his death was **necessary** to restore the relationship between God and the believers and make the opportunity for salvation available to all people. Jesus (as the Son of God) could have easily avoided being crucified. His crucifixion was the result of human evil against an innocent man. It needed to happen, in order to **atone** for the sins of humanity.

The two means of salvation are **good works** and **grace**.

Parables

A story used to teach a lesson or a moral

The Good Samaritan

"Love your neighbour"



The sheep & the goats

"Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"



Miracles

An act which seems to break the laws of nature

Calming the storm

This is a miracle over **NATURE**

Water into wine

This was Jesus' **first** miracle

Healing a paralysed man

This is a **HEALING** miracle

Worship

Liturgical – Follows a set routine e.g. RC
Non-liturgical - Does not follow a set routine

Charismatic – informal; spirit-inspired

Rosary – a string of beads with a crucifix attached

Meditation – thoughtfulness, focused on a religious truth

Quaker meetings – Completely informal, with no leader or structure

The Bible – regardless of the type of worship, it will always have a focus on the Bible

Private – worshipping alone

Prayer – Communicating with God

Why is worship important?

- It brings a sense of **togetherness** as a community
- It makes a person **feel closer** to God
- It is **peaceful** – allowing for prayer and meditation
- It is an **external expression** of their faith
- Christians **praise** God as the eternal Being and source of everything that exists

Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a visit to a place regarded as holy for the believer. Often, the journey is also special. Pilgrimage has always played an important role in the history of Christianity, though it is not a compulsory duty and many today see no need to go on pilgrimage.

Some examples of Christian places of pilgrimage are: **Lourdes, Iona**, the Holy Land (Israel) and Canterbury.

Prayer

Jesus spoke about prayer on a number of occasions. Some Christians follow set prayer (such as **the Lord's prayer** (which Jesus taught his disciples), whereas others make them more personal.

There are different types of prayer:

- Thanksgiving
- Adoration
- Confession
- Petition
- Intercession

Practices: Christianity



Sacraments

A **sacrament** = an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace

Protestant Churches = only **2** sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist.

RC & Orthodox Churches = **7** sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick.

Baptism

Jesus was baptised by John and, during the baptism, Jesus experienced the Holy Spirit entering his life and heard God's assurance that he was the Son of God.

Just before his ascension, Jesus told his disciples to: *"Go and make disciples of all nations, **baptising** them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"*. Baptism was a rite of **initiation** into the community right from the start and there are many references to baptism throughout the NT.

Eucharist

The Eucharist is celebrated by nearly all Christian denominations and has many names, such as Holy Communion. The central features are the same: the connection with Jesus' Last Supper, the giving of thanks for the bread and wine (consecration) and using Jesus' words at the last supper. RC Christians believe in **transubstantiation** – the bread & wine literally turns into the body & blood of Christ. Whereas Protestants do not believe this.

"Mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith"

The Church in the local community

The Church has always been involved in caring for others. For example, in the Middle Ages the monasteries provided education, hospitality for travellers and treatment for the sick. In the 20th century, a London church set up the first **Samaritans** phone service for those feeling suicidal. In the Parable of the Sheep & the Goats, Jesus told his disciples that whatever they did or failed to do for someone, however insignificant the deed or situation, they did/or failed to do, for Jesus.

One way in which Christians put their faith into action is through food banks and street pastors.

Key organisations (research these!)

- **Corrymeela** – reconciliation & ecumenism
- **Open Doors** – Supports persecuted Christians
- **Spring Harvest** – Mission & evangelism
- **Community of the cross of nails**
- **CAFOD** – Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
- **Tearfund**
- **Christian Aid**

Key beliefs about God

- There is only **ONE** God (**monotheism**). The 'oneness' of God is called **Tawhid** in Arabic
- Muslims call God **Allah**, which means 'the one true God'
- God cannot be divided and has never had a Son.
- In **the Qur'an** and **the Sunnah**, Allah has 99 'names'. E.g the Merciful, the Just, the Almighty...
- **Allah** is the same God that Jews and Christians worship
- **Allah** has **revealed** his will through his **prophets**
- Muslims share many of the beliefs that Jews and Christians have about God E.g. He is the creator, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, etc.
- **Allah** must never be pictured
- **Allah** is beyond understanding and nothing must ever be compared to **Allah**. Comparing things to **Allah** is a terrible sin
- All humans must 'submit' to the will of **Allah** (Islam means 'submission')



Predestination

- **Allah** is in total control of all events and *knows* everything that will happen
 - Because **Allah** is **transcendent** (beyond time and space), he is not limited by time or space
- BUT**
- **Allah** does not *decide* what will happen
 - Humans have **free-will** and are responsible for their choices
 - Humans will be judged by **Allah** based on their choices

Beliefs & Teachings: Islam

RISALAH: The Prophets

Prophethood

- **Allah** appoints particular people to spread his messages
- These people receive **revelation** from **Allah** through his **Angels**
- There are 25 key **prophets** of Allah identified in **the Qur'an**, including Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus)

Adam

- Created specially by **Allah**.
- Given **dominion** over the earth by **Allah**
- The first human to communicate with **Allah**
- The first Muslim

Ibrahim

- One of **Allah's** most faithful servants
- Opposed **idolatry**
- Risked his life to argue for **monotheism**
- A great role-model
- An ancestor of **Muhammad**

Muhammad

- **Allah's** final and greatest **prophet**
- Received the **revelation of the Qur'an**
- A great teacher
- A great role-model
- A military commander
- Set up the first Muslim community in **Makkah**
- Must be respected but not worshipped

Sunni and Shi'a Islam

Sunni Muslims (majority)

- See the elected **Caliphs** as the successors of **Muhammad**
- Follow the 6 'articles of faith': **Tawhid**, the **Day of Judgement**, the **Prophets**, **Angels**, the supremacy of **Allah's** will and the authority of **the Qur'an**.

Shia Muslims (minority)

- See the **Imams** (descendants of **Muhammad**) as **Muhammad's** successors
- Believe each **Imam** must choose his successor before he dies
- Follow the 5 'roots' of Usul ad-Din: **Tawhid**, **Prophethood**, **Allah's Justice (Adalat)**, **Resurrection** and the **Imamate**

AKHIRAH: Life after death

HEAVEN AND HELL

- Described in different ways by different Muslims
- People go to heaven or hell for eternity after the **Day of Judgement**
- Heaven described in **the Qur'an** as a garden paradise
- Hell described in **the Qur'an** as a place of fire and pain
- Faithful and righteous Muslims will go to heaven
- Non-Muslims and unrighteous Muslims will go to hell

ANGELS

- Bring **Allah's** **revelations** to his **prophets**
- Created by **Allah** from light
- Usually invisible but sometimes take human form
- Pure and sinless
- Do not have **free-will**
- Have various roles
- Some are named E.g. Jibril, Mika'il, Israfil, Iblis

The Day of Judgment

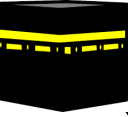
- When all humans will be judged by **Allah** based on how they have lived
- Judgement will lead to punishment (hell) or reward (heaven)
- Preceded by a state of waiting in the grave called **barzakh**
- While in the grave, people are questioned by **Angels**
- People will be **resurrected** before their judgement

The Qur'an

- The word of **Allah** given to **Muhammad** through Jibril
- Originally dictated in Arabic
- The original words have never been altered
- Infallible: corrects all previous **revelation** from God
- Divided into '**Surahs**
- Supplemented by **the Hadiths** and **the Sunnah**

5 pillars of Sunni Islam

Practices: Islam



Shahadah

Declaration of faith

"There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger."

This shows the acceptance of **Allah & Muhammad**.

Role of Shahadah today:

- Said before death
- Whispered into the ears of a new born
- Recited aloud in front of witnesses to become a Muslim

Salah

Prayer

Performing ritual prayers in the proper way 5 times a day. Men are expected to attend the mosque to pray. Prayer can happen anywhere that is clean. Muslims recite verses from the **Qur'an** when performing **Salah**.

"Prostrate and draw near to Allah." (Qur'an)

5 prayers were instructed by **Allah**, so whoever does them will be admitted into paradise.

Sawm

Fasting

Abstaining from food, drink, sex, smoking and bath thoughts/deeds during daylight hours, in the month of **Ramadan**.

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you." (Qur'an)

Exempt:

The elderly, children, pregnant women, those travelling and those who are physically and mentally unwell do NOT have to take part.

Benefits:

Muslims feel closer to **Allah** and develop ideas of self-control and discipline.

Zakah

Almsgiving

Compulsory giving of 2.5% of one's income to charitable causes.

Benefits:

- It helps Muslims grow spiritually and frees them from greed and selfishness.
- It helps those who need it most.
- Wealth is a gift from **Allah** so should be shared.
- It is a sign of unity and supports the **Ummah**.

"Be steadfast in prayer and giving." (Qur'an)

Hajj

Pilgrimage

It is the duty of every Muslim to perform the pilgrimage to **Mecca** at least once in their lifetime.

"Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who are able to undertake it."

"Proclaim that people shall observe Hajj pilgrimage." (Qur'an)

Hajj is intended to allow Muslims to get closer to **Allah**. It reminds them that all Muslims are equal and are part of the **Ummah**.

Salah

Khutbah: Sermon

Minbar: Raised platform

Niyah:

Intention to pray

Rak'ah: One unit of prayer

Jumma prayers

Jumma is the weekly communal Salah performed midday on Friday.

The **Imam** leads the prayer and gives a sermon as part of the service.

Men and women pray separately to STOP all distractions.

To MISS 4 Friday prayers would make a person an unbeliever. Muslims believe that the reward for praying with others is 27 times greater than from praying alone.



First Rak'ah

Second Rak'ah



Wudu: Ritual washing before prayer




Qibla: Direction of Mecca

Adhan: Call to pray

Iqamah: Second call to prayer

"Salah is a prescribed duty that has to be performed at the given time by the Qur'an." (Qur'an)

| Place and actions performed | Significance |
|--|--|
| Arriving on Hajj Muslims put on ihram (white seamless robes). This is also understood by Muslims to be a 'state of ihram', as it includes ideas of behaving appropriately and focusing only on Allah. |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates unity, with all Muslims dressed identically. • Shows equality before Allah. • Strengthens the feeling of commitment between all Muslims in the ummah. |
| Makkah <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims perform Tawaf, which is circling the Ka'aba seven times in an anticlockwise direction. This is also repeated at the end of Hajj. • Muslims also complete the sa'y - running between the hills of Safa and Marwa. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tawaf demonstrates the unity of all Muslims together in submission to Allah as they move in harmony around the Ka'aba. • Sa'y is done in remembrance of the story of Hagar searching for water in the desert. |
| Muzdalifah Muslims camp here overnight. | Muslims need to ensure they rest, as Hajj is a difficult and tiring journey. |
| Arafat The 'Stand' where Muslims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • praise Allah • read from the Qur'an • ask for forgiveness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The heat of standing in the sun reminds Muslims of the Day of Judgement. • This is a time for Muslims to reflect on what they have done wrong and ask Allah for forgiveness. |
| Mina <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims collect and throw stones at pillars. • An animal is sacrificed, men's heads will be shaved and women cut off a lock of their hair. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolises rejecting the devil and evil. • The animal is sacrificed as part of the celebration of the festival of Id-ul-Adha, which remembers the sacrifice Ibrahim was willing to make of his son Ishmael. • The hair is cut as a symbol of purity. |

10 obligatory acts of Shi'a Islam

1. **Salah** - prayer
2. **Sawm** – fasting
3. **Zakah** – charitable giving
4. **Khums** – 20% tax on income
5. **Hajj** – pilgrimage
6. **Jihad**
7. **Amr-bil-Maruf** – encouraging people to do what is good
8. **Nah Anil Munkar** – Discouraging people from doing what is wrong
9. **Tawallah** – to be loving towards friends of God
10. **Tabarra** – disassociating from enemies of God.

Jihad

Jihad is an important concept for Muslims. It refers to struggling against evil, either as an individual or as the collective fellowship of Islam.

Greater jihad is a personal, inward struggle of all Muslims to live in line with the teachings of their faith. **“This is My path, leading straight, so follow it, and do not follow other ways.” (Qur’an)**

Lesser jihad is seen as the outward struggle to defend Islam from threat. In the early days of the faith, this was important when Muslims were being persecuted and they needed to protect their freedom to practise their faith. **“Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you.” (Qur’an)**

| Greater Jihad | Lesser Jihad |
|---|--|
| Inner struggle to be a better Muslim | Military struggle to defend Islam |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studying the Qur’an - Doing good deeds - Attending mosque regularly - Completing the 5 pillars of Islam - Forgiving someone who has insulted you - Giving up things for the poor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fought as a LAST resort - Fought for a JUST cause - Minimum amount of suffering should be caused - Women and children should NOT be harmed - Aims to restore peace/freedom |

Ashura

The day of **Ashura** (Day of remembrance) is a major Shi’a festival that takes place on the 10th day of the month of **Muharram**. Shi’a Muslims remember the **death of Hussein** (Muhammad’s grandson) in **Karbala, Iraq**.

In many Muslim countries a **public holiday** takes place. Some Muslims will beat themselves with chains, **beat their chest** or (a minority) cut themselves. People **wear black** as a sign of grief. **Poems** about the tragedy are read and people will **cry**.

For **Shi’a** Muslims there is a great deal to learn from this festival; firstly **Hussein** should never be forgotten and that they should stand up for **justice** to better society.

For Sunni Muslims, **Ashura** is a day when many **fast voluntarily**. It is a day of **atonement** – sins are forgiven if repented. Muslims also remember how **Nuh (Noah)** left the Ark and how **Musa (Moses)** and the Israelites were saved from the Egyptians.

Festivals

The first **Eid** is believed to have been celebrated by the **Prophet Muhammad**. **‘Eid Mubarak’** means blessed celebration. This is a traditional greeting used by Muslims. The Eid morning, men attend Eid prayers at the mosques which include two sermons explaining the rules of **Zakah** and focusing on **Ibrahim**, the poor and responsibilities Muslims have.

Exam Practice

Give TWO ways Muslims can demonstrate Jihad. [2 marks]

Explain TWO contrasting ways in which Muslims celebrate the festival of Ashura. [4 marks]

Explain TWO ways in which Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. Refer to Muslim teaching in your answer. [5 marks]

Shahadah is the most important of the 5 pillars. [12 marks]

Prayer is more beneficial than going on Hajj. [12 marks]

| | Importance | How it is celebrated |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Eid-ul-Adha | Known as the festival of sacrifice. It remembers & honors Ibrahim (Prophet), who was willing to sacrifice his son on Allah’s command. The story is found in Surah 37. | Forms a part of Hajj; Animals are sacrificed; Muslims give money to the poor; cards & presents are given to friends and family. |
| Eid-ul-Fitr | Marks the end of the month of Ramadan. It is a time to thank Allah for his help in getting them through the month of fasting. | Prayers; decorations; best clothes; feasts; cards & presents |