

Part 1: The study of religions

1 Christianity

1.1 The nature of God

■ Christianity as a world faith

Around one in three of the world's population claim to be Christians. Some are more committed to their faith than others but there is no doubting the fact that Christianity is a major influence on the lives of many people. Christianity is over 2000 years old, with roots that go even further back in history. It has had a massive influence on the history of the world and still exercises a great influence in the present day, even on people who are not Christians.

Christianity is founded on a belief that around 2000 years ago Jesus died and rose from the dead. Christianity initially grew as early followers spread the teachings of the resurrected Jesus, and the messages inspired by Jesus' disciples and the apostle Paul. In the fourth century, it became the official religion of the Roman Empire when the Emperor Constantine became a Christian.

In 1054 the faith split into Western Roman Christianity (now known as the **Catholic** Church), led by the Pope, and Eastern **Orthodox** Christianity. These two groups still exist today, although the Western Roman Church in England was split in the sixteenth century when King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the newly established Church of England. Also during this period Christians in Western Europe were breaking away from the Roman Church, and the **Protestant** branch of Christianity was forming. This is known as the Reformation. The Protestant Church has, since then, split further into groups (called **denominations**) such as the Baptist and Pentecostal Churches.

The three main branches of Christianity (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) now exist side by side and all three are rightly called Christianity.



Objectives

- Understand the importance of Christianity as a world faith.
- Consider what Christians believe about the nature of God.

Key terms

- **Catholic:** a branch of Christianity, based in Rome and led by the Pope
- **Orthodox:** a branch of Christianity mainly, but not entirely, practised in Eastern Europe
- **Protestant:** a branch of Christianity, originally Protestants were called by that name because they protested against some of the practices of the Catholic Church; there are many Protestant denominations, but they agree on the central belief that the Bible is the only authority for Christians
- **denomination:** a distinct group within the Christian faith, with its own organisation and traditions

◀ All over the world the cross is a familiar symbol of Christian faith

■ Beliefs about the nature of God

Even though the three branches of Christianity have some differences in their beliefs, ways of worship and lifestyle, their belief in **God** is universal. Christianity is a **monotheistic** religion. This means all Christians believe there is only one God, who they believe creates and sustains all that exists. God is believed to work through history, guiding and inspiring people to do God's will for the good of all people. Christians claim to have a relationship with God and communicate with God through prayer. A key Christian statement of belief called the Nicene Creed begins: 'We believe in one God'. The first of the Ten Commandments that Christians should obey is:

“ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. ”
Exodus 20:2-3 (NIV)

It is important to remember that this commandment was first given to the Jews. Christianity has strong roots within Judaism including sharing the same one God.



▲ Here God is shown creating Adam in Michaelangelo's painting for the Sistine Chapel

Although many Christians refer to God as 'he' and 'Father', they do not believe that God is male. God is thought to exist without the restrictions of gender, showing both traditional ideas of male characteristics, such as power and strength, together with traditional ideas of female characteristics, such as care, gentleness and love.

Describing God is very difficult. God is sometimes pictured in the sky in a human form but Christians do not believe God has a physical human body. The Bible says that God is spirit (John 4:24) and, in Luke 24:39, it is written that a spirit does not have flesh and bones. However in Hebrews 1:3, it says that Jesus was God's son, and is the exact representation of God on earth. God has no restrictions caused by physicality but exists as a spiritual being that defies description. Christians consider God to be **holy**, which means something set apart from everything else for a special purpose, and worthy of worship.

Key terms

- **God:** the Supreme Being
- **monotheistic:** a religion that believes there is only one God
- **holy:** separate and set apart for a special purpose by God

Activity

Take just five minutes to write a paragraph containing what you already know about people's beliefs about what God is like. Compare your paragraph with a partner's and discuss any similarities and differences. Be prepared to share your ideas with others in the class.

Discussion activity

With a partner, come up with a list of ways Christianity has influenced world history. In what ways does it still influence life today?

★ Study tip

Even if you do not believe in God or the importance of God in the lives of others, it is important to remember that you are learning the views of Christians who do believe in God. It is not necessary to challenge these beliefs in the exam unless you are asked to do so in an evaluation question.

Summary

You should now have greater understanding of the importance of Christianity, of different denominations within Christianity, and of the nature of God.

1.2 God as omnipotent, loving and just

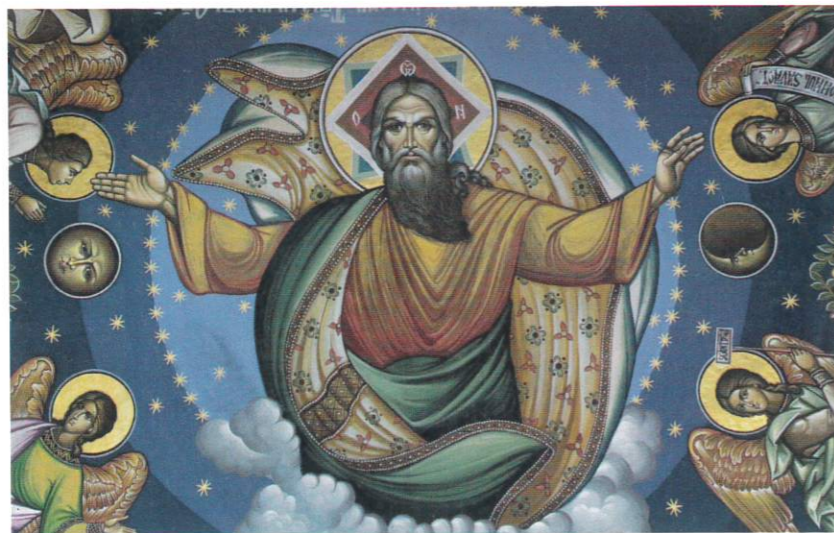
Christians believe that God has various qualities or attributes. They believe that God is perfect and that these qualities are proof of God's perfection. Some of God's qualities are not possible for humans to achieve but others are, and provide examples that Christians should aspire to.

■ God as omnipotent

In order to be the perfect 'Supreme Being', it is important that God is **omnipotent**. This means all powerful with unlimited authority – there is nothing God cannot do or achieve. In the Bible, the angel Gabriel answered Mary when she questioned her forthcoming pregnancy:

“Nothing is impossible with God.”

Luke 1:37 [NIV]



▲ A traditional image of God

Although many traditional images show God's omnipotence in terms of physical power and strength, it also consists of power and authority to do good. This is how Christians often interpret omnipotence: God's omnipotence is **benevolent**.

■ God as loving

For Christians, the idea that God is loving is very important. They believe that because God loves humans, God wants what is best for them. They believe that God created humans because he is all loving and desired to bestow his love upon creatures. This encourages Christians to love each other in their daily lives by treating everybody with care and respect.

Objectives

- Understand some qualities of God.
- Consider to what extent these qualities of God can be found in human beings.
- Consider the problem of evil and suffering in relation to the qualities of God.

Key terms

- **omnipotent**: almighty, having unlimited power; a quality of God
- **benevolent**: all-loving, all-good; a quality of God
- **justice**: bringing about what is right and fair, according to the law, or making up for a wrong that has been committed

Links

You will find more ideas about God's qualities in Chapter 5, pages 118 and 119.

Activities

- 1 Explain the three qualities of God as outlined on these two pages.
- 2 Why is it important for Christians to believe God has these qualities? Explain your answer.
- 3 What other human qualities do you think God should have? Do you think God has them? Christians believe they should try to develop these qualities in themselves. Explain how they may do this and evaluate how doing so may help Christians to live as they believe God wants them to.

Christians believe that God's greatest act of love was sending God's Son, Jesus, to earth.

“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 [NIV]

The Bible contains this definition of love:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

1 Corinthians 13:4–8 [NIV]

This description of love suggests some qualities that Christians should aspire to. Many Christians recognise the importance attached to this description of love by choosing to have it read at their wedding ceremony.

Discussion activity

Is there anything you can add to this description of love from 1 Corinthians? If so, explain why you think it does or does not apply to God.

■ God as just

With unlimited power and authority, together with total love, God is believed to be the perfect giver of **justice**. This not only includes deciding on right and wrong but also being the perfect judge of human character.

As the ultimate source of justice, God will never support injustice, ill-treatment, prejudice or oppression. Therefore Christians should do all they can to prevent these wrongs wherever they encounter them.

The problems of evil and suffering

Many people question why a loving God would allow people to suffer, rather than prevent the evil actions of others from happening. Christians believe that a just God treats all people fairly and is incapable of making a wrong judgement. Therefore, Christians are sure that they can trust God even when things appear to be going wrong.

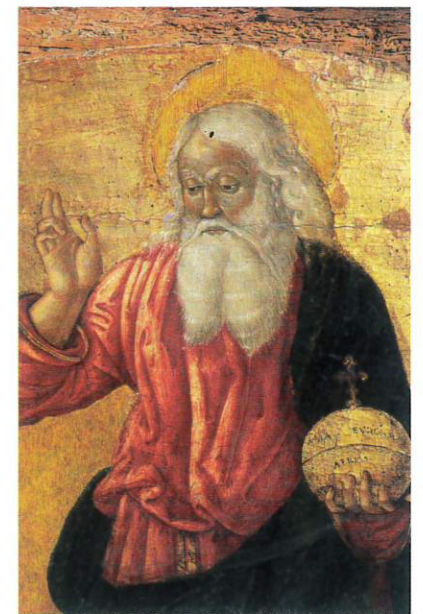
Links

Sections 1.5 and 1.12 explain more about what the arrival of Jesus means for Christians.

There is more about the problem of evil and suffering in Chapter 5, page 113, and Chapter 7, pages 150 and 151.

★ Study tip

Because this quote from 1 Corinthians applies to both God and humans, you may find it useful when considering Christian responses to issues in the second half of this book because a Christian response is a loving response.



▲ This painting shows God as the perfect giver of justice

Summary

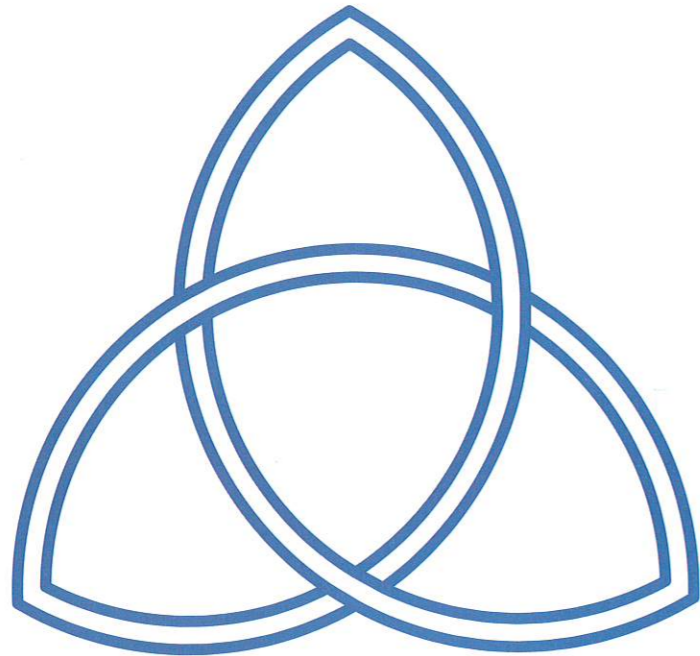
You should now understand three of the qualities or attributes of God. You should have had the chance to think about these qualities and how they may relate to the way Christians should live their lives, including during times of suffering.

1.3 The Oneness of God and the Trinity

■ The Oneness of God and the Trinity

In 1.1 and 1.2, we learned that Christians believe in one God, a belief called monotheism. This belief is developed in the idea of the **Trinity**.

In simple terms, the concept of the Trinity is that there are three 'persons', all of which are God. The idea of the Trinity is a mystery and Christians accept that it is difficult to explain in words. Any attempt to compare the concept of the Trinity with something humans can fully understand will have limited success. However, Christians have tried to explain a little of what the Trinity may be like in different ways so that people may begin to understand it. For example, just as a clover leaf is made up of what seems to be three separate leaves, the one God is made up of three 'persons'—God the Father, God the Son and God the **Holy Spirit**.



▲ A common representation of the Trinity: you can't see where the lines begin or end, but there are three distinct parts

God is not a physical being, although one 'person' of the Trinity – Jesus (the Son) – did have a physical presence in history. It may be best to think of these three 'persons' as non-physical elements or realities. They are all God and so, within the Trinity, the idea of the Oneness of God should not be forgotten. God can be seen as one in three and three in one, all at the same time. This may seem like a contradictory idea, and difficult for the human mind to fully understand.

The Trinity describes all three of the following at once:

- There is only one God
- Each person of the Trinity is fully God
- The persons of the Trinity are not the same.

Objectives

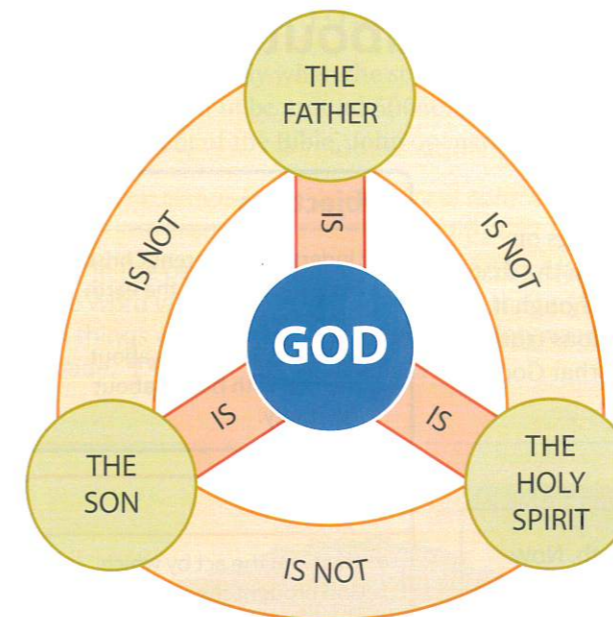
- Understand and analyse the concepts of the Oneness of God and the Trinity.
- Evaluate what may seem to be conflicting ideas about God.

Key terms

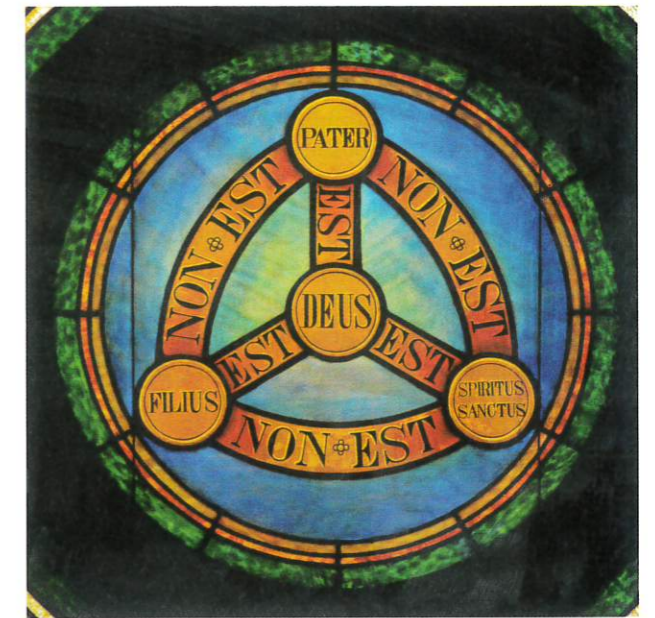
- **Trinity:** the belief that there are three persons in the One God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate, but are also one being
- **Holy Spirit:** the third person of the Trinity whom Christians believe is the inspiring presence of God in the world
- **Son of God:** a title used for Jesus, the second person of the Trinity; denotes the special relationship between Jesus and God the Father

Activities

- 1 In pairs, without looking again at the information on these two pages about the Trinity, try to explain the Trinity to your partner.
- 2 Explain how the symbol on this page can represent the Trinity. How would you label it to make it relevant to the Trinity?
- 3 Try to think of a different comparison or way of explaining the Trinity.



▲ The Trinity: the diagram (left) is an English translation of the Latin text in the photo (right)



Discussion activity

How would you describe the colour red to someone who has been blind from birth? Try doing this with a partner. How might this activity help you to understand why some Christians might find it difficult to explain the concept of the Trinity?

God the Father

Christians believe that the first person of the Trinity is God the Father. The Lord's Prayer, a prayer Jesus taught his disciples and which is commonly used in worship, begins with the words:

'Our Father in heaven'.

God the Father is believed to be the creator of the earth and all living things on it. As creator of life, he acts as a good father would towards his children. He is believed to be all powerful (omnipotent), all loving (omnibenevolent), all knowing (omniscient) and present everywhere (omnipresent).

God the Son

The second person of the Trinity is often referred to as the **Son of God** and became incarnate on earth and in history through Jesus. Christians believe Jesus was both fully human whilst on earth and also fully God at all times.

God the Holy Spirit

Christians believe that once Jesus had left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit 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 in the past, present and future.

Research activity

Find a copy of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. What do they say about the Trinity?

★ Study tip

Many people find it easier to remember pictures and diagrams rather than words. Remembering the symbols on these pages that help you to recall what the Trinity is all about.

Summary

You should now know and understand what Christians believe about the Trinity and be able to use this understanding to express a reasoned opinion about the concept.

1.4 Different Christian beliefs about creation

■ Creation: Genesis 1:1–3

Christians believe that God created the earth and all living things on the earth. One story about the **creation** of the world is found in the first book of Genesis in Chapter 1. Many Christians believe that although it may not be scientifically accurate, this account contains religious truth, explaining that the process of creation was God's choice and that God designed and caused it to happen.

The book of Genesis begins:

“ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. ”

Genesis 1:1–3 [NIV]

The story continues by giving an account of how the universe was created, how the earth was made fit for life and finally how God created life, including humans, who were the last of God's creations. This is believed to have happened in six periods of time (days) after which God rested. While the whole story is interesting, for Christians the most important part is what is included in the quotation from the very beginning of the story (above), together with the belief that everything was created ‘good’.

The role of the Spirit

Many Christians interpret the story in Genesis 1 as a way of describing the creation of the world by God. Not all Christians believe that God made the world in literally six days. However, the belief that God is the creator, a role that continues today with the start of each new life, is central to their faith.

It is interesting to note the reference to ‘the Spirit of God’ hovering over the waters. It could be argued that even though God the Father is referred to as the creator, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, was already active in what has become the world. This perhaps reinforces the Oneness of God rather than the three ‘persons’ of the Trinity.



▲ A traditional picture of God creating light

Objectives

- Understand different Christian beliefs about how the earth was created.
- Link Christian beliefs about creation with beliefs about the Trinity.

Key terms

- **creation:** the act by which God brought the universe into being
- **the Word:** term used at the beginning of John's gospel to refer to God the Son

Extension activity

Read the rest of the Genesis creation story in Genesis 1:4–2:3. It includes the words ‘God saw all that he had made, and it was very good’ (1:31) Why do you think Christians consider this sentence to be very important?

■ Creation: John 1:1–3

No one knows exactly when the story in Genesis 1 was first written but experts believe it to be around 500BC. Around 600 years later, in the New Testament of the Bible, John opened his gospel with the following passage:

“ 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 [NIV]



▲ ‘Through him all things were made’

Experts have discussed this extract for many years, and specifically the identity of **the Word**. Most are now agreed that ‘the Word’ refers to God the Son, who entered history as Jesus. This shows that not only was the Holy Spirit involved in the creation, but that the Son was as well. Thus the whole of the Trinity were involved and have existed since the beginning. Christians believe that the three ‘persons’ of the Trinity are not part of a chain with God the Son replacing God the Father and in turn being replaced by the Holy Spirit. As explained on pages 12–13, they all exist alongside each other within the same one God and always have done.

As the passage on this page was written as an introduction to John's account of the life and work of Jesus, it shows that he clearly believed that Jesus was no ordinary man, not even just a special man, but God the Son, and therefore within the Oneness of God. The references to the creation of the earth in the Bible make it clear to believers that the world was made by God. As mere humans, this is something our minds cannot fully comprehend, and is part of the mystery of God. Christians have used the concept of the Trinity to help them to understand that this is a divine mystery.

Activities

- 1 Explain carefully what Christians believe about the creation of the earth.
- 2 What do Christian beliefs about the creation of the earth teach about God and the Trinity?
- 3 Why do you think John uses the passage about ‘the Word’ to begin his account of the life and work of Jesus?
- 4 Do you think it really matters how the earth started? Explain your reasoning.
- 5 Explain why the human mind cannot fully understand the ‘mystery of God’. Would it be better if it could?

Links

For more information on Christian beliefs about God and creation, including the Design argument and the First Cause argument, see pages 106–109.

★ Study tip

If asked to write about God the creator, you don't have to believe the story to be historically correct and gain marks.

Summary

You should now understand different Christian beliefs about creation, the world and about God.

1.5 The incarnation and Jesus, the Son of God

■ The incarnation

Many people in the world today know the Christmas story, the account of what happened when Jesus was born. Even though some of the details of the story we traditionally hear at Christmas may not be historically accurate, it does express basic Christian truths.

We don't know whether people who lived at the time of Jesus, even many of those who followed him and believed that he was teaching the truth, knew anything about the circumstances of his birth. He is often referred to as Jesus from Nazareth (the town in which he grew up) but there is little mention of Bethlehem, where he was born, apart from in stories about his birth. For Christians, the belief that Jesus was God in human form is more important than the details of his birth.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke explain quite clearly that Mary, Jesus' mother, did not conceive Jesus sexually. She was engaged to Joseph who took Jesus as his son, even though he knew he was not his natural father. An angel appears to Mary in Luke's Gospel (Luke 1: 26–38) and to Joseph in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 1: 20–21). In both cases the angel explains that the conception was no ordinary conception and that the child would be no ordinary child. Mark and John do not include any information about the birth of Jesus. Maybe they did not think the story important, but they are both clear that Jesus is the Son of God.

“ 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 [NIV]

Although many people question the virgin conception because it is not a natural thing to happen and is unlikely to have happened since, for Christians it is very important.

It gives evidence for the belief, shared by all Christians, that Jesus is incarnate – made flesh in human form, fully God yet fully human and thus God the Son as part of the Trinity. It is a fundamental Christian belief that through the **incarnation**, God showed himself as a human being for around 30 years.

Objectives

- Know and understand the incarnation of Jesus.
- Understand the belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

Key terms

- **incarnation:** becoming flesh, taking a human form
- **resurrection:** 1. rising from the dead; 2. Jesus rising from the dead on Easter day. An event recorded in all four gospels and the central belief of Christianity
- **blasphemy:** a religious offence which includes claiming to be God



▲ This stained glass window shows the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary the coming of Jesus

■ Son of God

Instead of telling the story of Jesus' conception and birth in his gospel, John is more interested in the meaning of it:

“ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. ”

John 1:14 [NIV]

Prior to this, in verse 1, John seems to identify 'the Word' as God the Son – one of the three persons of the Trinity. For Christians this gives clear support to the belief that Jesus was God incarnate, in the flesh as a man. This gives his words, deeds and promises great authority because they are the word of God, delivered by a man who was fully God as well as fully human. The belief that Jesus was God incarnate makes it easier for Christians to explain and accept as truth some of his actions whilst on earth, including miracles and his **resurrection** (rising from death).

Christians refer to Jesus as the Christ. It comes from the Greek word, *Christos*, which means 'anointed one', which in turn is a translation of the Hebrew word *mashiach* (Messiah). The Jews developed an expectation well before Jesus was born that God would send a special leader, the Messiah, to save his people from tyranny and establish an age of global peace. Jews do not accept that Jesus is this Messiah. Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, but a spiritual one rather than a political one.

When Jesus was baptised, a voice from Heaven said 'You are my Son' (Mark 1:11). On one occasion, the disciple Peter referred to Jesus as the Christ. During this conversation at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–30) Jesus immediately warned the disciples that they should not use this term for him, possibly because his opponents would have arrested him for **blasphemy** (claiming to be God). The gospel writers do use it in their writings but it should be remembered that they were writing some years later. According to one of the gospel accounts, Jesus later accepted its use for himself at his trial when he was asked a direct question:

“ Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am,' said Jesus. ”

Mark 14: 61b–62a [NIV]

“ You may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. ”

John 21: 31 [NIV]

“ When Jesus was baptised, a voice from Heaven said 'You are my Son' ”

Mark 1:11 [NIV]

Activities

- 1 Explain fully why Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God.
- 2 Do you agree that the belief in the incarnation is more important than the details of the Christmas story? Explain why.
- 3 Explain how the fact that Christians believe Jesus is God incarnate helps them to understand the Trinity.
- 4 Using what you know of people's beliefs about God, do you think the idea of incarnation is possible? Explain your answer.



▲ A stained glass window showing the baptism of Jesus

★ Study tip

When you write about the life of Jesus, particularly his birth, aim to use the Gospels as sources of information.

Summary

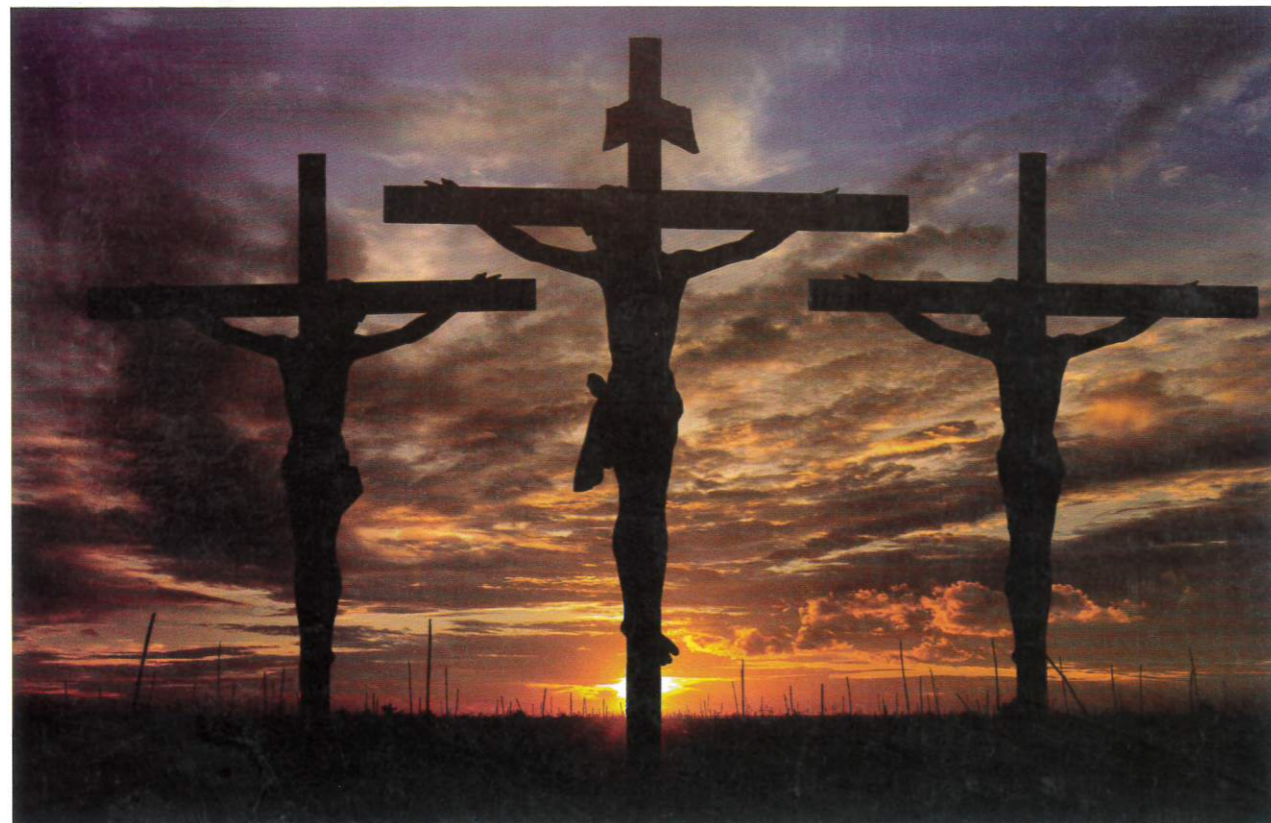
You should now understand more about who Jesus was and why Christians believe him to be important in their faith. You should have developed your understanding of the Trinity.

1.6 The crucifixion

Jesus' crucifixion

One of the most detailed stories 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**.

Crucifixion was a particular form of execution favoured by the Romans. It consisted of the victim being laid down onto a large wooden cross, attached to it using nails, rope or sometimes both and then having the cross lifted upright. Once the cross was upright in the ground, the victim waited for death, usually by asphyxiation (not being able to breathe). Some managed to resist death for a couple of days whilst others lasted a matter of a few hours. All of this happened in public. Jesus was crucified in a similar way to others, including the two men crucified on either side of him.



▲ A representation of Jesus' crucifixion

Even though Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God, it does not mean that he was in some way spared the pain and horror of his crucifixion. Not only was he fully God, he was also fully human, and had the same feelings as anybody else. However, according to Luke's version

Objectives

- Learn details about the crucifixion of Jesus.
- Understand the impact of the crucifixion on Christians today.

Key term

- **crucifixion:** 1. Roman method of execution by which criminals were fixed to a cross; 2. the execution and death of Jesus on Good Friday

Links

To find out why Christians believe Jesus' death was important, see 1.12, pages 30 and 31.

of the story, possibly told to him by people who were there, Jesus forgave the guards who crucified him because they did not realise the significance of what was going on. He also had conversations with the two men who were crucified with him, promising one of them that soon he would join God in paradise. Finally, after around six hours on the cross:

“ Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last. ”
Luke 23:46 [NIV]

One of the Roman centurions in charge of the crucifixion praised God and acknowledged that Jesus had been a righteous man who had done nothing to deserve being crucified. According to Mark 15:39, he said:

“ Surely this man was the Son of God! ”
Mark 15:39 [NIV]

The impact of the crucifixion for Christians today

There are several ways in which the crucifixion affects 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 also experienced it, God understands what the sufferer is going through.

Jesus is buried

Once Jesus was dead, and the Roman guards had made sure that he was, a man called Joseph from Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus so he could bury it. Joseph was a member of the Council that had pressed for Jesus to be crucified but he had himself disagreed with it. As there was insufficient time to bury Jesus properly because the Sabbath day of rest and religious observance was due to start, he laid the body of Jesus in a cave-like tomb and rolled a large stone to block the entrance. You will learn more about this on the next page.

Activities

- 1 Explain how the crucifixion impacts on the lives of Christians today.
- 2 Why do you think Christians use a cross or a crucifix as a symbol to remind them of Jesus?
- 3 Given the choice, do you think it is more helpful to use a cross or a crucifix? Explain your choice.
- 4 You can read more about the crucifixion in Luke 23:26–49. Does reading this change your opinion about Jesus at all? Give reasons for your answer.
- 5 Put yourself in the place of Jesus, the Roman centurion who believed Jesus was innocent or a spectator in the crowd. Write your account of what happened at Jesus' crucifixion. Include what you saw, heard and felt about it.



▲ A plain wooden cross is used by many Christians as a symbol of their faith



▲ Other Christians choose to use a crucifix as a symbol of their faith

★ Study tip

Crucifixion is one of many difficult key terms to spell correctly. It is important to use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Summary

You should now know about crucifixion and, in particular, what happened at Jesus' crucifixion.

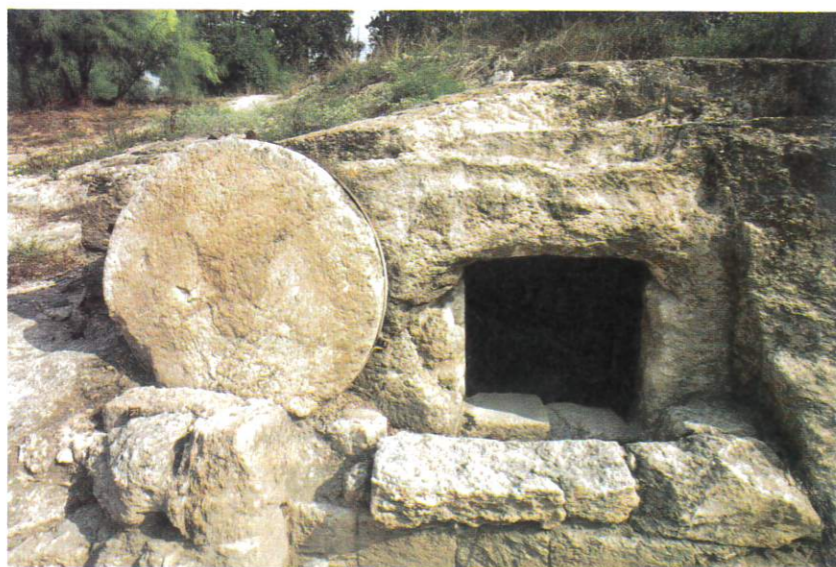
1.7 The resurrection and ascension

It is quite normal that once a person dies, they only live on in the memories of those who knew and loved them, and maybe in the work they did while alive. However, in Jesus' case his death was not the end. This only makes sense if Jesus is, as Christians believe, the Son of God.

■ The resurrection of Jesus

According to the accounts of Jesus' burial in the New Testament, he was placed in a tomb late on Friday afternoon. We know this because it states that Shabbat (the Sabbath) was due to begin and Jews keep Shabbat at sunset every Friday. There was no time to anoint his body and bury him properly, so he was laid in the cave-like tomb. How long he remained there is unclear because early on the Sunday morning after Shabbat had ended, some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb to anoint the body and prepare it for proper burial. There are some differences in the gospels as to the identity of these women, although all four name Mary Magdalene as one of them, and according to the Gospel of John she was the only one.

Although other details vary between the four versions of the story, they all make it quite clear that the body of Jesus was nowhere to be found, a fact that was reported to the disciples. Each story mentions the women meeting a man or two men, who may have been angels, who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead and that they should pass the word on to his followers, including the disciples. 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.



▲ An empty tomb: a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus

Objectives

- Develop knowledge of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
- Understand the meaning and significance of these two stories for Christians.
- Understand the different views held by Christians about these events.

Key terms

- **resurrection:** 1. rising from the dead 2. Jesus rising from the dead on Easter day. An event recorded in all four gospels and the central belief of Christianity
- **ascension:** the event, 40 days after the resurrection, when Jesus returned to God, the Father, in heaven
- **heaven:** a state of eternal happiness in the presence of God; the place of eternal peace ruled over by God

Research activity

The four stories of the resurrection are in Matthew 28:1–7, Mark 16:1–8, Luke 24:1–12 and John 20:1–9. Read each story and note down some of the main similarities and differences.

For the next few days or weeks, Jesus appeared to several people, including Mary Magdalene and the disciples, telling each that he had risen from the dead as he had predicted to them when he was alive. This ensured the story spread quickly and that there were several different witnesses to the claim that he had risen.

■ The ascension of Jesus

Just as the resurrection is a matter of faith and interpretation, so is the **ascension**. There are other explanations but if Jesus had the special power of God to rise from the dead, it is equally possible that this same power means he was able to leave the earth physically and return to **heaven**. Only Mark's 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.

“ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ”
Luke 24:50–51 [NIV]

Activities

- 1 What does the fact that this event is called the ascension tell you about where Jesus went? Explain why.
- 2 How else might Jesus' final disappearance be explained?

■ The significance of the resurrection and ascension for Christians today

- Christians believe the resurrection shows the power of good over evil.
- Christians believe that by accepting Jesus, they can also be resurrected in some way. Therefore they have no need to fear death.
- Jesus' resurrection assures Christians that God will forgive their sins if they follow the teachings of Christianity. By doing so, they will become closer to God in this life and beyond.
- For Christians, the ascension shows that Jesus is with God. It paves the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit to provide comfort and guidance.
- Without the resurrection, there would be no Christian faith.



▲ A representation of the ascension

Extension activity

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–32 and summarise the points Paul makes about the importance of the resurrection.

★ Study tip

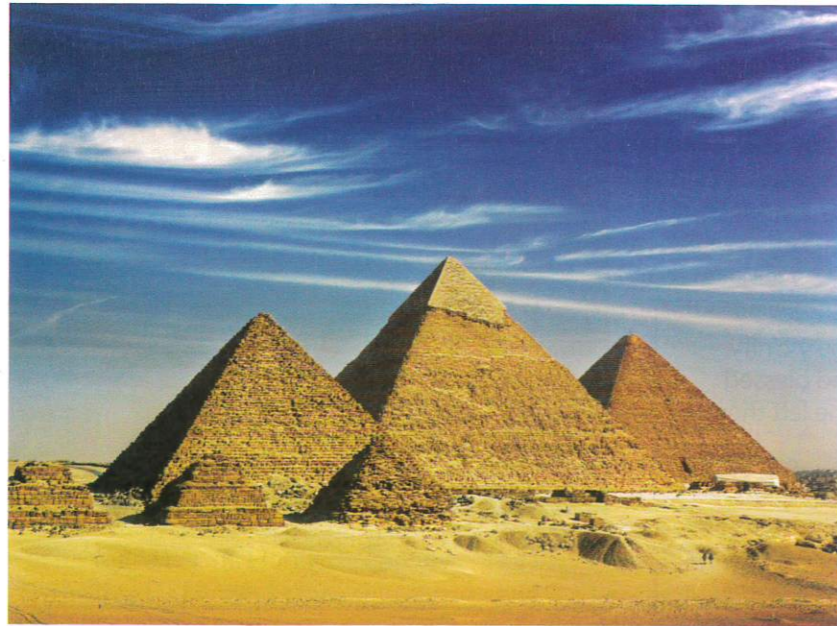
If asked to show understanding of a story, do not give your opinion about whether it happened unless you are asked to do so.

Summary

You should now know details about the resurrection and ascension, have considered the significance of these events for Christians, and have had the chance to analyse how likely they are to have happened.

1.8 Resurrection and life after death

For thousands of years, people have believed that death is not the end and that there is new life after death. Ancient civilisations such as the Egyptians invested a huge amount of time and money in preparing for death and burial long before an individual had died. Many of the grave treasures buried with important people were put there for the dead person to use in the afterlife.



▲ Some Egyptian Pharaohs were buried in pyramids, alongside treasures and even slaves for them to use in the afterlife

Going even further back in time, there is evidence that bodies were buried respectfully with flowers, jewellery, weapons and valued possessions. Christians may differ in their practices but the dead are treated with a similar respect, and life after death in some form is expected.

■ Resurrection

In the previous two pages, you read about the resurrection of Jesus. Many Christians believe that resurrection is a reality. However, there are different beliefs amongst Christians about what happens when a person who has died is resurrected. Some believe that a person's soul is resurrected very soon after death occurs. Others believe that some time in the future, when Jesus will return to judge, the dead will be raised. The Catholic Church and some Orthodox Churches are quite clear that this resurrection will be a bodily one and that people will once again receive their old body but transformed into a glorified state in which suffering will not exist.

Objectives

- Understand the meaning and importance of different Christian beliefs about resurrection and life after death.
- Analyse and evaluate whether believing in life after death affects the way Christians live.

Activities

- 1 Explain what Christians believe about resurrection and life after death.
- 2 Do you think that belief in life after death guides Christians in their behaviour towards others? Give reasons for your opinion.
- 3 Does it really matter to Christians whether resurrection is physical or spiritual, or that it may be a long way in the future? Say why.

Discussion activity

Why do you think the dead have been treated with respect though the ages? Evaluate whether the fact that people have always treated the dead with respect proves that there is an afterlife.

“ So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ”

1 Corinthians 15:42–44 [NIV]



▲ A Christian cemetery

What the resurrection of Jesus means for Naomi

I believe that the penalty for sin is to be separated from God, which I deserve. Since Jesus took that punishment himself when he died on the cross, by trusting in him I no longer face that penalty. Instead, while I know my life now is temporary, I have a certain hope of a permanent eternal future with Jesus. This changes my whole perspective in life. In 1 Corinthians it is written by Paul how Jesus has been vindicated – proven right – in his resurrection, and all who are trusting in him can be sure they will have eternal life with him, so I am sure that it is true and am confident in the face of death.



▲ Naomi believes that trusting in Jesus assures eternal life with him

■ Life after death

If resurrection is a reality for people once they have died, life after death must also be real. In the case study, Naomi makes it clear that her belief in life after death affects how she lives her life in a positive way. Like other Christians, she feels God's presence in her life and is confident of the love that God shows towards her. She believes that by trusting in God her life after death will remain in the presence of God.

Research activity

Read the rest of the passage from 1 Corinthians 15:12–58 for more information about Christian beliefs about resurrection. Write down the main points.

★ Study tip

No one knows exactly what will happen after death. It would be helpful to remember that there are some different beliefs amongst Christians about what will happen after death.

Summary

You should now understand more about different beliefs about resurrection and life after death, and have thought about how believing in a life after death in the presence of God may affect the way Christians live their lives.

1.9 The afterlife and judgement

The belief in resurrection complements the belief that there is another life when this one ends. For Christians, there are different 'options' which are seen as rewards or punishments. As these options last for eternity, the decision-making process has to be operated perfectly. Christians are comforted by the belief that this process is under God's control.

■ The afterlife

Religions have varying ideas on the **afterlife**, and groups within religions have slightly different views. Christians, for example, believe that human beings receive eternal life as a gift from God, and so a belief in the afterlife is for Christians dependent on a belief in God. The afterlife either begins upon death or at the **Day of Judgement** when Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead, as the Apostles' Creed says below. At this time, Christians believe their souls enter a different dimension about which little is known.

The Apostles' Creed, a statement of Christian belief dating back to around 400CE but which is still considered to be important today, contains the following beliefs:

“ He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead:
I believe in ...
The resurrection of the body;
And the life everlasting. ”

The Apostles' Creed



▲ This Italian painting shows Christian people greeted by angels at the gates of heaven

Objectives

- Understand different Christian beliefs about the afterlife and judgement.
- Analyse the effect these beliefs have on Christians.

Key terms

- **afterlife**: what Christians believe follows life on earth
- **Day of Judgement**: a time when the world will end and every soul will be judged by God and rewarded or punished

Discussion activity

If you were able to judge the fate of people when they die, how would you make the decision? What criteria would you use to help you to be fair? Discuss answers to these questions in a small group.

Activities

- 1 Explain carefully what Christians believe about the afterlife and judgement.
- 2 'The afterlife is a good way to get people to behave themselves and help others.' Evaluate this statement.

■ Judgement

Christians believe that it is God who decides the fate of those who die. God will take into account the life of the person and the extent to which they have tried to get close to him, by following the teaching and example of Jesus. Jesus told a parable recorded in Matthew's gospel that contains a vivid description of God at work in judgement:

“ When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your

inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ”

Matthew 25:31–36 [NIV]

The 'sheep' on his right asked when they had done these things. They were told that whenever they had done them for others, they had done them for him. He then condemned the 'goats' for not acting in this way for others.

This passage gives Christians a good idea about the criteria God uses in judgement and shows what they need to do to be saved. Jesus makes it clear that in serving other people, Christians are serving him. In his gospel, John records a conversation Jesus had with his disciple Thomas, in which Jesus was preparing his disciples for his death. Jesus told them that he would go and prepare a place for them so that they could join him. Thomas said, 'We don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus answered him:

“ I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ”

John 14:6 [NIV]

So 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 following his teaching is also important.

★ Study tip

When you are answering questions on Christianity, try not to include other beliefs that are not part of Christianity.



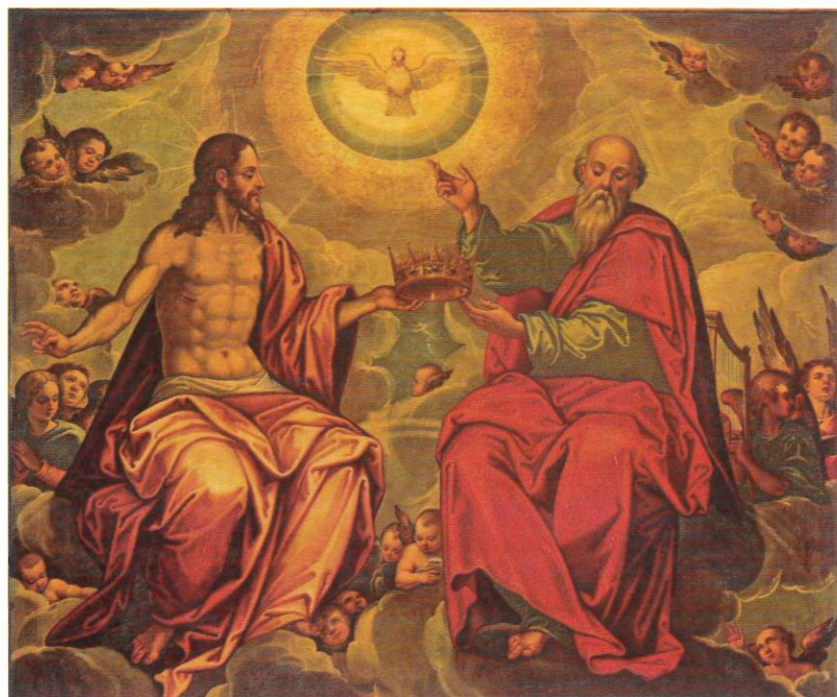
▲ 'He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.'

Summary

You should now have greater understanding of different Christian beliefs about the afterlife and God's judgement, and have evaluated these beliefs.

1.10 Heaven and hell

The quote about judgement from Matthew 25 on page 25 paints a vivid picture of what judgement may be like. The result of this judgement for Christians is either that they are able to experience the presence of God eternally (**heaven**) or that they are unable to experience God's presence (**hell**). Catholics believe in an intermediate state called **purgatory** where the souls of some Christians wait to receive their place in heaven. Because nobody has experienced heaven, hell or purgatory and come back to earth to tell us about it, our knowledge of them is very limited and often linked to imagery from centuries ago.



▲ Traditional paintings of heaven such as this one show God sitting on a huge throne in the clouds, with angels flying around; in this painting Jesus is shown on the left, giving a crown to God

■ Heaven

Traditional paintings of heaven show it as beyond the clouds and where God sits on a huge throne, surveying the earth with angels flying around. It is seen as a place of peace, joy and freedom from pain, and a chance to be with friends and family who are already in heaven. Whether this is a spiritual or physical existence is unclear. In pictures and images it is often represented as a physical paradise rewarding the good, possibly because this is the easiest way to represent it. However, this does not mean that Christians necessarily believe it is physical and not spiritual.

Among Christians there are different opinions about who will be with God eternally. Some Christians believe that only those who believe in

Objectives

- Gain knowledge of the Christian concepts of heaven and hell.
- Understand the difference between literal and modern interpretations.

Key terms

- **heaven:** a state of eternal happiness in the presence of God; the place of eternal peace ruled over by God
- **hell:** the place of eternal suffering or the state of being without God
- **purgatory:** the intermediate state where souls are cleansed in order to enter heaven
- **Satan:** name for the Devil – the power and source of evil

Extension activity

Some believe that ideas about heaven and hell were invented by people as an effective way of justifying suffering in the present life: good people go to heaven as a deserved reward for a virtuous life, and bad people go to hell as a just punishment for an immoral life.

What do you think? Think of arguments for and against this viewpoint with reference to Christian beliefs.

Jesus will be with God in heaven. Other Christians think that heaven is reserved for Christians and perhaps followers of other faiths who have lived good, principled lives and pleased God in doing so. Others believe it is for all those who call themselves Christians regardless of how they live their life, and that simply the act of being baptised into the faith is almost a guarantee of heaven. All Christians believe that God will forgive sins and this will enable people to approach God's presence. The Parable of the Sheep and Goats does seem to indicate that it is a reward for **both** faith and actions – only one is insufficient.

A more modern and less literal view which many Christians hold is that heaven is a spiritual existence of peace and happiness in the eternal presence of God.

Discussion activity

Why do you think heaven and hell are often talked about as if they are physical places? With a partner, give a reasoned answer to this question.

■ Hell

Hell is often seen as the opposite of heaven. Christians understand it to be a state of existence without God. It is often depicted in paintings to be a place of eternal suffering, terror, fire and torture ruled by the Devil (**Satan**). It is pictured as a fiery pit somewhere beneath the earth. This is perhaps a believer's image of what it would be like to be permanently without God.

This leaves the difficult question about whether non-Christians go to hell if heaven is reserved for Christians. This would appear to be very unfair and, as Christians believe God is incapable of being unfair, many believe that all those who believe in God and try to follow him will be accepted by God and be welcomed eternally into his presence.

However, there is great debate about whether a loving God would condemn people to eternal torment and pain. If this is not the case, perhaps a more modern interpretation is that hell is an eternal state of mind of being cut off from the possibility of God. This would be what awaits a person who throughout their life did not acknowledge God or follow his teachings.

★ Study tip

If asked to describe Christian beliefs about heaven or hell, it would be helpful to use a range of images to describe them, rather than just one.

Activity

What criteria do you think God uses to decide whether someone goes to heaven or hell? Explain your answer.



▲ An image of hell in a stained glass window

Summary

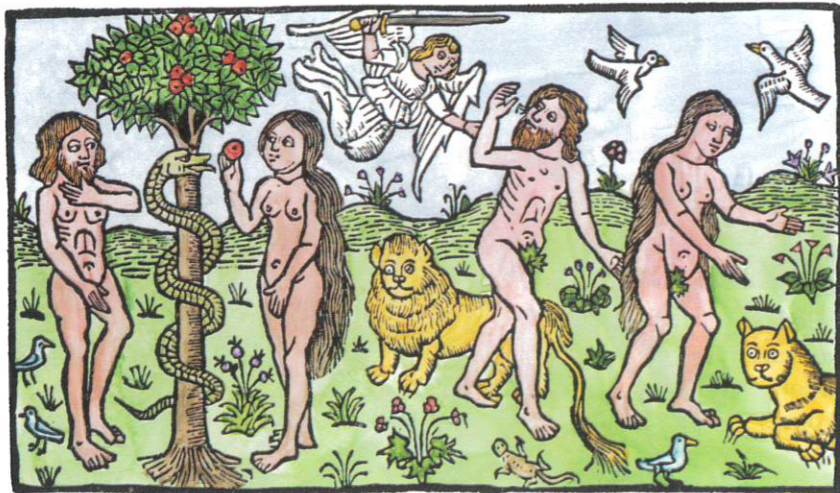
You should now know and understand what Christians believe about heaven and hell. You should also understand that different Christians hold different views about heaven and hell.

1.11 Sin and salvation

■ The origins and meanings of sin

Sin is any action or thought that separates humans from God, that is, an action or thought against God's laws and wishes or against the principles of morality God requires his people to follow. Sinful thoughts such as anger can lead to sinful actions such as assault or murder; lust can lead to adultery or rape. Many sinful actions such as assault, murder and rape are also illegal (against the laws of the state) whereas some, such as adultery, are not. However, just because some sinful actions are not illegal, as far as Christianity is concerned it does not make them right. Christians believe that all humans commit sins. Indeed as nobody is perfect, it is impossible not to sin.

This is further reinforced by the idea of **original sin** in which some Christians believe. This idea suggests that human beings are born with an in-built tendency to do wrong. This idea is introduced in the story of Adam and Eve, who, despite the paradise they lived in, sinned against God by breaking an instruction from God. This instruction was not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Once they had done this, they became aware of sin through their own sinful action, an awareness that is shared by all humans descended from them. The result was a separation from God, and death.



▲ This painting shows the serpent tempting Adam and Eve to eat the fruit, and the consequences of doing so

Discussion activities

- 1 Discuss with a partner what you think the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve is trying to teach humans today. Aim to come up with at least three ideas.
- 2 'As nobody is perfect, it is impossible not to sin.' Do you agree that it is impossible not to sin?

Objectives

- Understand Christian beliefs about the origin and nature of sin, including original sin.
- Consider the effect that sin has on salvation.

Key terms

- **sin:** 1. any action or thought that separates humans from God; 2. behaviour which is against God's laws and wishes or against principles of morality
- **original sin:** an Augustine Christian doctrine that says that everyone is born with a built-in urge to do bad things and to disobey God; an important doctrine within the Catholic Church
- **salvation:** saving the soul, deliverance from sin and admission to heaven brought about by Jesus
- **grace:** a quality of God which God shows to humans by providing love and support which they do not need to earn

Links

To discover more about salvation and Jesus' role in it see 1.12, pages 30 and 31.

Research activity

Read the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:4–3:24.

Many have interpreted the serpent that tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit to represent Satan (the Devil) who is seen as a force of evil. Christians recognise that humans are tempted to do things that displease God, such as abusing drugs, misusing money by spending it on things God would not approve of or using the opportunities technology provides in a way that is harmful to others. As temptation is powerful and difficult to resist, some Christians believe its origins are with Satan who is constantly trying to tempt humans to disobey God.

Christians believe that God gave humans free will in order to choose how they live their lives. However, this does not mean that they can do whatever they want. They believe that if people use their free will to make choices that God would not approve of, these will be sinful and will separate them from God. The **Ten Commandments** (Exodus 20:1–19), the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–12), and other Christian teachings give guidance to allow Christians to use their free will wisely rather than to commit sinful actions.

■ Salvation

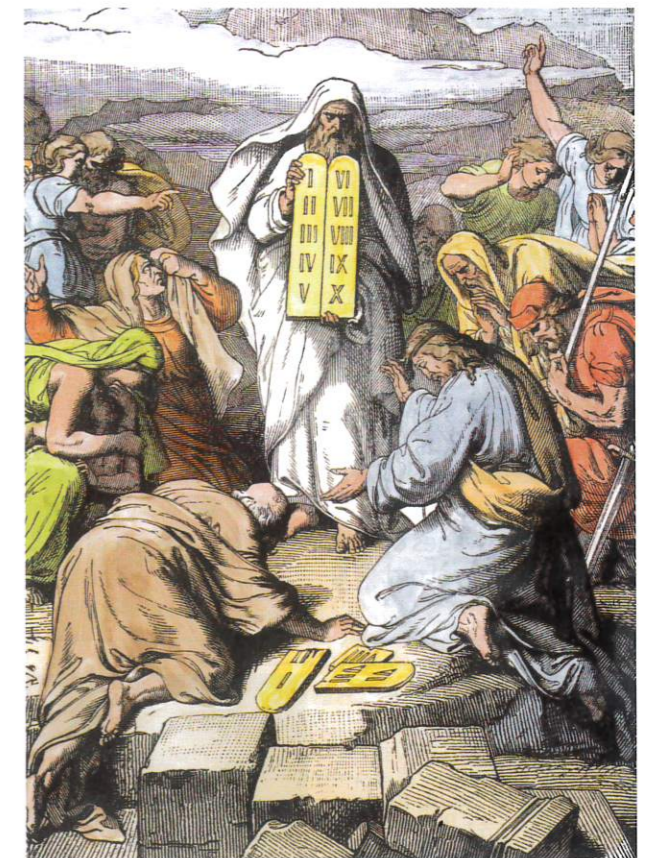
In Christian belief, **salvation** means to be saved from sin and the consequences of it and be granted eternal life with God. Sin has separated humans from God who is holy, and salvation enables humans to get close to God again. These are the main Christian ideas about how salvation can come about:

- Salvation through good works – the Old Testament makes it clear that a person achieves salvation by having faith in God and obeying God's law
- Salvation through **grace** – salvation is given by God through faith in Jesus. It is not earned or deserved but is a gift for the faithful.

While salvation by works is a predominantly held viewpoint, many Christians dispute this and argue that elsewhere in the Bible there is evidence of salvation by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Activities

- 1 Explain in your own words what sin is.
- 2 According to Christian belief, how did sin come into the world?
- 3 If God wants humans to obey Christian laws and teachings, why do you think God allows temptation to exist?
- 4 Do you think temptation is always bad? Give reasons and examples.
- 5 What guidance can Christians follow to help them use their free will wisely to avoid committing sin?
- 6 Explain the main ideas about salvation.



▲ The Ten Commandments give guidance to allow Christians to use their free will wisely

Extension activity

Think of your own image to represent sin and salvation and either draw or fully describe it.

★ Study tip

If writing about salvation, try to show your depth of understanding by referring to the two ideas about how salvation can happen.

Summary

You should now be able to understand the concept of sin, including original sin, and its origins in Christian thought and relate this to salvation.

1.12 The role of Christ in salvation

■ The role of Jesus in salvation

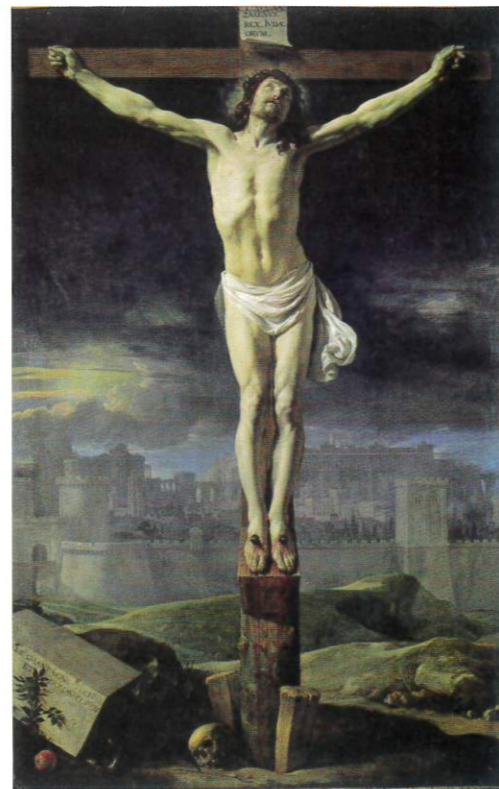
Many people have wondered why Jesus is seen by Christians to be so special. They accept much of his teaching as being a way of living a good life but find it hard to grasp the meaning behind Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

The book of Romans in the New Testament is believed to have been written by Paul, around 25 years after Jesus was crucified, to explain that salvation is offered through the life and teaching of Jesus:

“ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ”

Romans 6:23 [NIV]

Christians believe that Jesus' death makes up for the original sin committed by Adam and Eve and so can bring people back to God. The crucifixion was the result of human evil set against an innocent man. As Son of God, Jesus could easily have avoided being crucified. Indeed, while he was being crucified, some people shouted to him that he should use his powers to get down from the cross. However, he knew that his death was necessary to restore the relationship between God and believers and make the opportunity for salvation available to all people.



▲ Christ on the Cross, before 1650, a painting by Philippe de Champaigne

Jesus' resurrection, three days after his death, shows Christians that death has been defeated and that the goodness of Jesus had defeated the evil of sin. So Christians believe that through Jesus' death and resurrection, humans can receive **forgiveness** for sin, are able to get close to God and will receive eternal life.

Objectives

- Understand the role of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in salvation.
- Know and understand the idea of atonement in salvation.

Key terms

- **forgiveness:** showing grace and mercy and pardoning someone for what they have done wrong
- **atonement:** restoring the relationship between people and God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
- **Mass:** ceremony, also called Eucharist, in which the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus is celebrated using bread and wine

“ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ”

Paul writing in 1 Corinthians 15:21 [NIV]

★ Study tip

A lot of information in this chapter is linked to salvation. If answering a question about salvation, you may use any relevant information from any of the topics.

The fact that Jesus rose from the dead shows that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice as **atonement**, which means that Jesus restored the relationship between God and humanity. Jesus made salvation possible because God will now forgive anybody who asks in faith. Christians believe that this is why God came to earth in the form of Jesus and that it demonstrates the importance of following his teachings.

■ Atonement

As the Bible makes clear, atonement removes the effects of sin and allows people to restore their relationship with God. This is only possible because Jesus atoned for the sins of mankind when he died and rose again. In the first letter of John, it is written:

“ [...] if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 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 [NIV]

God is holy and so does not overlook sin. For many Christians, although the penalty of sin must be paid, Jesus took the sins upon himself and suffered the penalty for all humankind. He was the only one who could do this. Not only did Jesus pay the debt of sin on behalf of those who believe and put their trust in him but he also made it possible for all those who follow his teachings to receive eternal life with God.

What salvation means for Charis

I believe in the teachings in the book of Romans. Sin is described as something so serious that God sent his son Jesus to die for it. As a Christian I believe that instead of facing death for sin, Jesus took my sin upon the cross. Since I was a child I have accepted this gift of God's love and put my faith in Jesus. Whether at home or at work, I choose to live a life of gratitude to God who has given me the greatest gift, salvation.



▲ Charis, like many Christians, lives a life of gratitude to God for giving her salvation



▲ Orthodox Christians carry crosses through the streets of Jerusalem to mark the death of Jesus on Good Friday

Activities

- 1 Explain in your own words Jesus' role in salvation.
- 2 'Salvation is God's greatest gift to humans.' Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
 - refer to Christian teaching
 - give developed arguments to support this statement
 - give developed arguments to support a different point of view
 - reach a justified conclusion.
- 3 Explain the meaning of atonement.
- 4 Write down your thoughts about the information in the case study. What questions would you like to ask Charis about her belief in salvation? What do you think her answers might be?

Summary

You should now understand the Christian belief about Jesus' role in salvation and understand the idea of atonement.

Key beliefs – summary

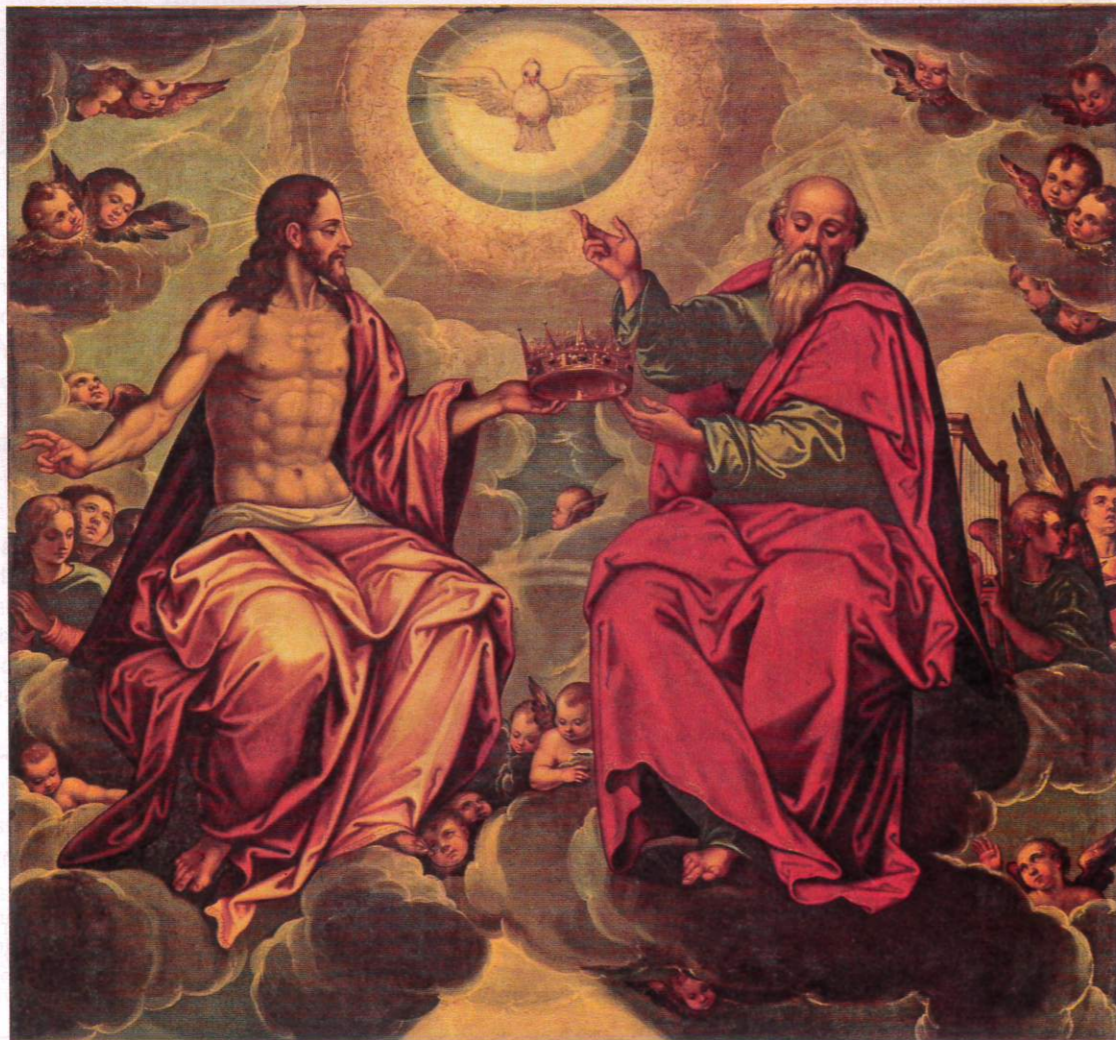
You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain about the nature of God, including the belief that God is omnipotent, loving and just
- ✓ explain the problem of evil and suffering
- ✓ explain the Christian belief in the Oneness of God and the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- ✓ explain different Christian beliefs about creation, including beliefs about the Word and Spirit from Genesis 1:1–3 and John 1:1–3
- ✓ explain different Christian beliefs about the afterlife and their importance, including resurrection, life after death, judgement, heaven and hell.

Jesus Christ and salvation – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain Christian beliefs and teachings about the incarnation and Jesus as Son of God
- ✓ explain Christian beliefs and teachings about the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus
- ✓ explain Christian beliefs and teachings about sin, including original sin
- ✓ explain Christian beliefs and teachings about the means of salvation, including by law, grace and Spirit
- ✓ explain Christian beliefs and teachings about the role of Jesus in salvation
- ✓ explain Christian beliefs and teachings about the idea of atonement.

**Sample student answer – the 4 mark question**

1. Write an answer to the following question:

Explain two ways in which Christian beliefs about the afterlife influence Christians today.

[4 marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

"Some Christians believe that when someone dies, they go to heaven, a place above the clouds where God and their family live happily. Others believe that the afterlife is a spiritual existence in heaven with the possibility of God's influence. Whichever is right, the belief influences them to live how God wants them to and go to church every Sunday. Bad people go to hell with the Devil so Christians try to avoid doing things God doesn't want them to do. This all happens after the Day of Judgement."

3. With a partner, discuss the student answer. Can you identify two different ways beliefs influence behaviour? If so, are they simple or detailed? How accurate are they? Can the answer be improved? If so, how?
4. What mark (out of 4) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO1). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?
5. Now swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 4) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Sample student answer – the 5 mark question

1. Write an answer to the following question:

Explain two Christian teachings about God the creator. Refer to sacred writings or another source of Christian belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

"Christians believe that God is the creator. He is believed to have done this in seven days (or seven specific periods of time). Humans were the last to be created once God had made everything we need to live. This includes plants and animals for food.

Everything that was made was God's choice, and he was able to do this because he has unlimited power (omnipotent). He designed it all and caused it to happen. Although Christians believe that God exists as a Trinity, it is mainly God the Father who is the creator."

3. With a partner, discuss the student answer. Can you identify two different pieces of relevant and accurate teaching? If so, are they simple or detailed? How accurate are they? Is there anything important missing from the answer? How can it be improved?
4. What mark (out of 5) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO1). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?
5. Now swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 5) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Sample student answer – the 12 mark question

1. Write an answer to the following question:

'The crucifixion is more important to Christians than the resurrection.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Christian teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[+ 3 SPaG marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

"It is important to remember that without the crucifixion, the resurrection could not have happened. However, I disagree with the statement because the resurrection means more to Christians. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, his mission would have been pointless. He came to earth to save people from sin and close the divide between them and God. If Jesus had not been resurrected, there would be no Christianity and Christians would not have any access to God. The resurrection showed that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice when he was crucified so the crucifixion also had to happen.

Both events are connected with atonement so again, both had to happen. When Jesus died he took the sins of everybody upon himself and when he rose again, he showed he had defeated sin and evil and paid the penalty for the sins of us all so we can have eternal life in God's presence. This is summed up in the New Testament where it says that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for not only our sins but also for the sins of everybody else.

In conclusion, I believe that Christians think both the crucifixion and resurrection are important because when he allowed himself to be crucified, Jesus was sacrificing himself for our sins and the resurrection shows that God accepted the sacrifice and opened up the way to salvation. You can't have one without the other."

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. Consider the following questions:

- Does the answer refer to Christian teachings and if so what are they?
- Is there an argument to support the statement and how well developed is it?
- Is a different point of view offered and how developed is that argument?
- Has the student written a clear conclusion after weighing up both sides of the argument?
- What is good about the answer?
- How do you think it could be improved?

4. What mark (out of 12) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO2). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?

5. Swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 12) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Practice questions

1 Which **one** of the following means that God is all-powerful?
A) Omnipresent B) Omnishambles C) Omnipotent D) Omniscient [1 mark]

2 Give **two** persons of the Trinity. [2 marks]

★ Study tip

If a question asks you to 'give' a piece of information, you do not need to give any explanation.

3 Explain **two** ways in which a belief in Jesus' crucifixion influences Christians today. [4 marks]

4 Explain **two** Christian beliefs about salvation.
Refer to sacred writings or another source of Christian belief and teaching in your answer. [5 marks]

5 'The stories of the incarnation prove that Jesus was the Son of God.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Christian teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[+ 3 SPaG marks]

★ Study tip

You need to think carefully about the quote before you start writing. When you have finished writing, read what you have written to make sure you have included all that the question asks you to provide.