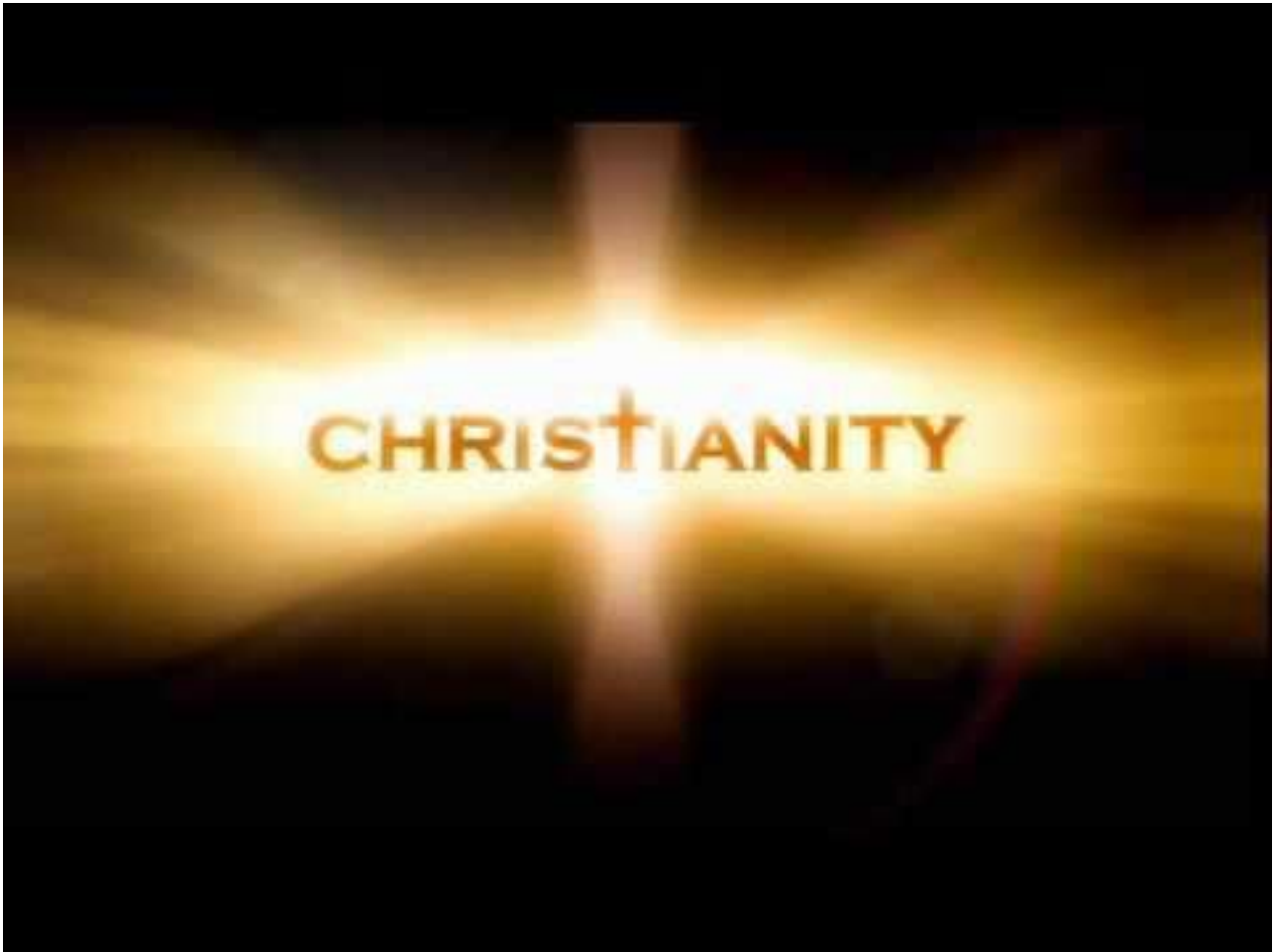


# World Religions: Christianity

---

---





---

## Contents

Contents .....	3
Introduction to Christianity.....	5
1. The Nature of God .....	7
2. The Nature of Human Beings - Image of God .....	13
3. The Nature of Human Beings - The Fall.....	19
4. A Religion of Salvation.....	24
5. Beliefs about Jesus' Birth: Incarnation .....	30
6. The Teaching of Jesus .....	35
7. Following the teaching of Jesus .....	49
8. Beliefs about Jesus: Death.....	60
9. Beliefs about Jesus: Resurrection.....	66
10. Judgement – Heaven & Hell.....	72
11. Prayer & Worship .....	77



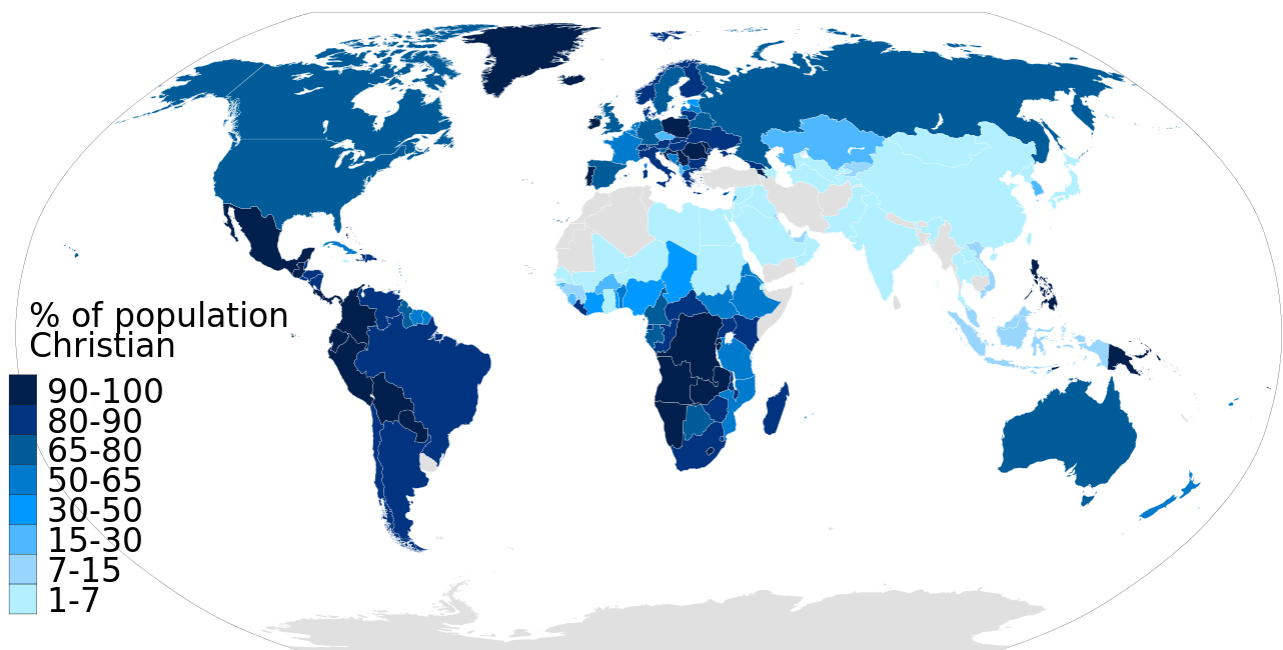
---

## Introduction to Christianity

Christianity is a 2000 year old religion but its roots extend back into the religion of Judaism. The holy book of Christianity is the Bible which is split into two main sections - the Old Testament and the New testament

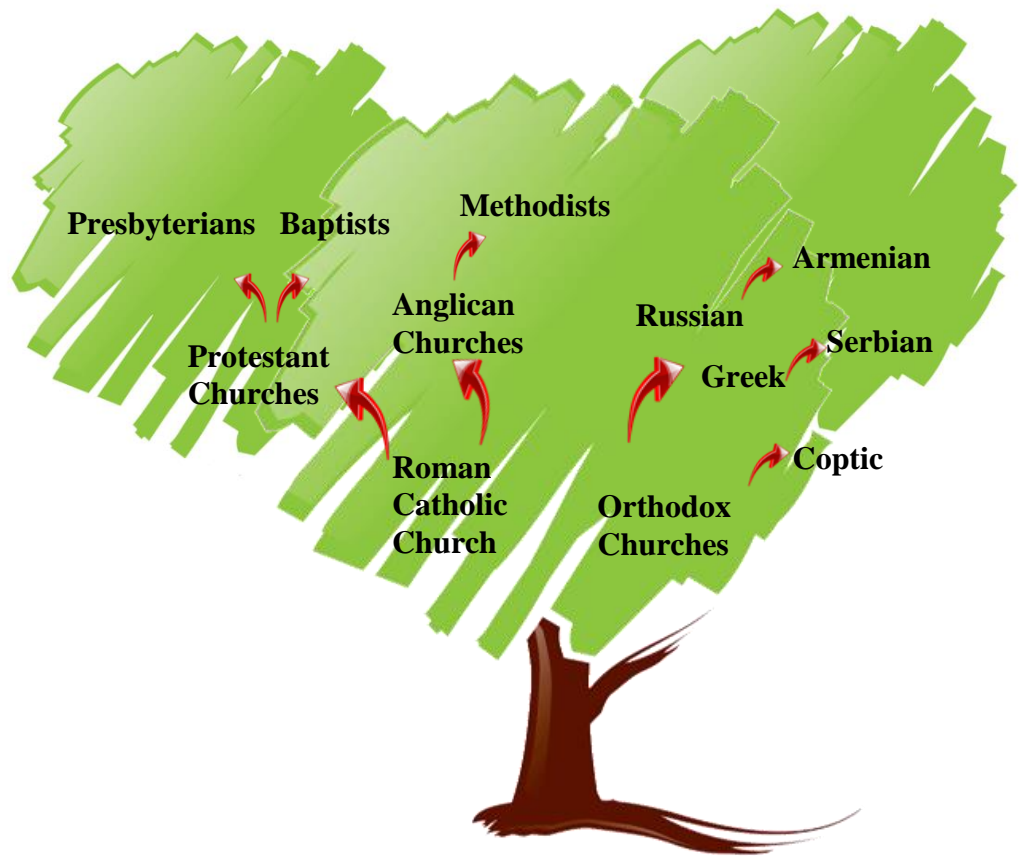
The Old Testament, tells the story of Creation and of how God made covenants (i.e. a sacred agreement/contract) with Noah, Abraham, Moses and King David that their descendants would be God's Chosen People. God would do good things for them and through them God would do great things for the entire world. They were to offer an example to how other people were to live their lives.

The New Testament tells the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the Gospels and how his followers understood and developed his teaching in the Acts of the Apostles, letters of St. Paul and others



Christianity is numerically the world's largest religion. It has members on every continent. An estimated two billion people identify themselves as Christians, i.e. followers of Jesus Christ. To be a Christian a person must first be baptized. Then depending on which Christian church they belong to they may go on to receive other sacraments.

There are different Christian Churches or Denominations. They broadly fall into 3 groups - the Roman Catholic Church; the Orthodox Churches; and Protestant Churches.



Christianity is also a way of life for its members. Being a Christian should affect their behaviour in lots of different ways:

### **The Spiritual:**

A Christian worships God, in private and as part of a church community. A Christian prays to God, receives sacraments and recognises that he or she owes everything to God – their life, their world, the universe. Everything!

### **The Moral:**

Christianity has an extensive range of moral teachings which affect the way its followers behave in everyday life. They will live by the 10 commandments but also follow a range of other teachings which come from Jesus e.g. the Sermon on the Mount, his parables and the example he gave his followers of how to treat others, especially the poor, disabled and other vulnerable or victimised groups.

### **The Social and Political:**

Christianity is about faith but it is also about action. Christians are very often involved in charitable organisations and activities. E.G. SCIAF or Mary's Meals. Christians are also often very politically active because they believe that their faith has much to offer in a wide range of issues that affect our countries and communities.

### **Task:**

**There are different types or branches of Christianity. Do a quick internet search and see how many different kinds you can find.**

---

## 1. The Nature of God





## The Nature of God (Beliefs)

Christians believe in one God, who created everything.

Many teachings of Jesus and the earliest Christian statements of their belief support this, e.g. the Creed

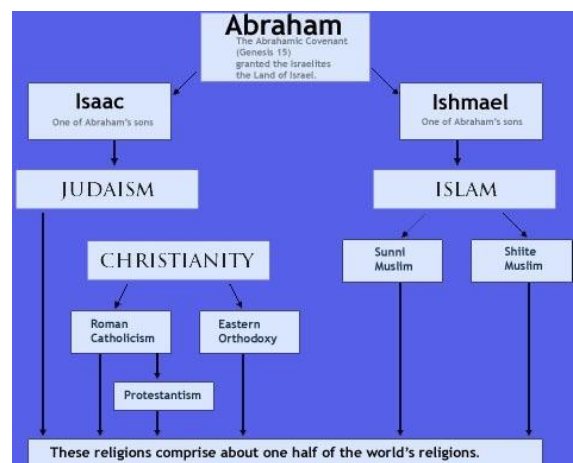
‘I Believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth,  
of all things visible and invisible’

## The God of Abraham - One God - Monotheism

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

This belief in a single God is called **monotheism**.

Christianity is also one of the ‘Abrahamic’ religions along with Judaism and Islam.



All three major religions trace their roots back to Abraham who God made his covenant with.

Abraham’s belief that there is only one God shapes the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity.

## God the Creator

### Source: Gen 1: 1-5

*1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.*

### Source: Gen 1: 26 - 31

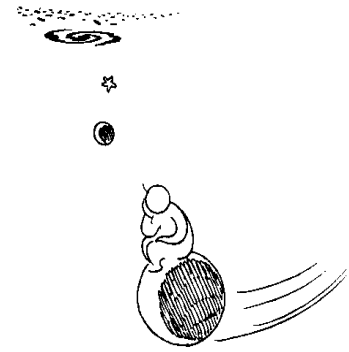
*26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”*



---

## Creator Ex Nihilo

The idea of God as creator is first found in the Genesis story and is an important part of Christian teaching. When Christians look at the world and the universe around them they believe they can see evidence to support their belief that God is the creator of the universe and life. They believe that nothing this amazing could be the result of pure chance. The phrase Ex Nihilo means out of nothing. This is important to Christians because it reminds them of God's power (omnipotence). Everything owes its existence to God. God as creator guarantees the 'goodness' of creation, he is pleased with what he has created (Genesis 1: 10). A number of important Christian beliefs about God are related to this.



- God is one.
- God and creation are very different.
- Only God can be worshipped.
- Nothing created can be worshipped.
- God has power over all creation.
- God intended his creation to be perfect and good.

Key Characteristics of God are:

<i>Eternal</i> -	God always has been and always will be.
<i>Omniscient</i> -	God knows everything.
<i>Omnipotent</i> -	God is all powerful.
<i>Omnibenevolent</i> -	God all loving and good.

***N.B Eternal is not the same as immortal. Eternal means no beginning and no end. Immortal means cannot die.***

### SOURCE: Isaiah 40 extracts

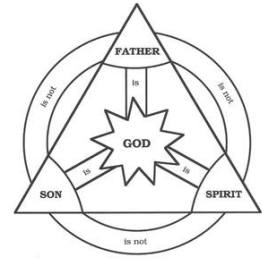
*He who sits on a throne above the earth  
on which the inhabitants are like  
grasshoppers  
he who stretches out the stars like a  
cloth  
and reduces princes to nothing...  
Yahweh is the everlasting God,  
he creates the remotest part of the  
earth...  
I, Yahweh, am the first and till the last I  
shall still be there...  
No god was formed before me and  
none will be after me.  
I am Yahweh  
and there is no other saviour except  
me...  
I am the first and the last;*

---

## Trinity - One God Three Persons

Although Christianity believes there only one God, it believes that God has revealed himself as three distinct persons:

- God the Father
- God the Son (Jesus)
- God the Holy Spirit.

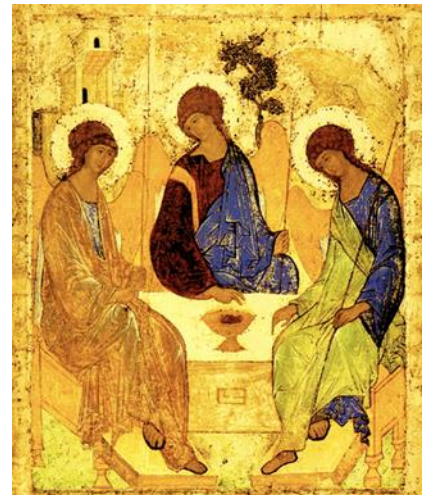


The Trinity makes it possible for God – in the person of Jesus – to make the ultimate sacrifice to save humanity from its sins. The Old Testament makes it clear that humans cannot save themselves, only God save us.

### Where does belief in the Trinity come from? - The Old Testament

There are hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament. God refers to himself in the plural: *“Let us make man in our own image.”*

Another piece of the Old Testament to suggest a Trinitarian God is in the book of Genesis in the story of God visiting Abraham. Three figures appear to make God’s promise to Abraham: that he and Sarah will conceive a son. Christians have interpreted this as a representation of the true nature of God.



### Trinity in the New Testament

All through the Gospels Jesus talks about himself and his Father. Then later on he talks about the Holy Spirit as well. This is where Christian belief in the Trinity really comes from. It is because of their beliefs about who and what God is that they...

- pray to God in the first place.
- begin every prayer with the words “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.
- build churches to worship God;
- celebrate occasions in the life of Jesus,
- gather together in these churches to celebrate what God means to them and has done for them.

Christian belief in God and their prayer and worship are inseparable.

---

## The Creed

The creed is a statement of Christian beliefs. This is the 'Nicene Creed' which was finalised at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. At this Council the members of the Church settled on the belief that God was Trinity = One God. Three Persons.

In the Nicene Creed there are distinct sections about each person of the Trinity in the creed highlighted for you and there are also some key words that you should be familiar with listed below.

### Key Ideas:

#### ***The Father -***

Is identified as the Creator

#### ***The Son - Jesus***

Is one with the Father from all time.

He is the one who becomes human.

He is the Saviour.

#### ***The Holy Spirit -***

Is the one who speaks God's message through the prophets.

### SOURCE: NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of  
the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the  
Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the  
giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the  
Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is  
adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.

The biggest revelation about God is Jesus himself. His **life, death and resurrection** tell Christians more about who God is and what god is like than anything else. You can see this even from the number of lines he gets in the Creed above.

---

## Quick Questions

1. How would you describe what God is to someone?
2. What are the four basic characteristics Christians believe God has?
3. What does it mean when Christians say God created the world *ex nihilo*?
4. What do Christians mean when they describe God as Trinity?

## Questions that will develop your analysis and evaluation skills

1. Explain what Christians believe about the nature of God.
2. Christian beliefs about the nature of God are still relevant today. How valid is this statement?

---

## 2. The Nature of Human Beings - Image of God



*This is a section from the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. It depicts the creation of Adam. He is meant to like the perfect man because the artist (Michelangelo) is trying to communicate the Christian belief that God's creation is perfect and flawless.*

**SOURCE: Genesis 1:27**

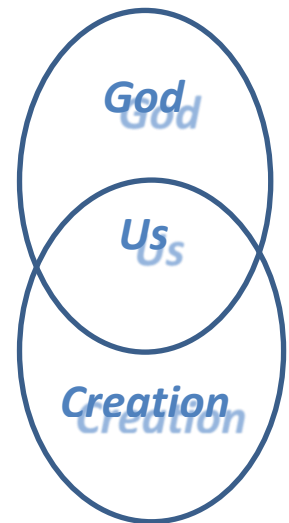
*Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

**Imago Dei - Made in the image of God**

The source tells us that humanity is created in **the image of God** and placed at the head of God's creation. The image of God is often referred to by the Latin phrase '**Imago Dei**'. This tells us something about what Christians believe about human nature.

What this means is that God...

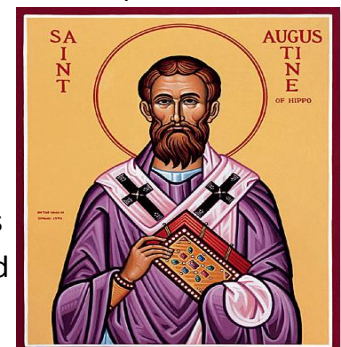
- **sets humanity apart** from all other living things.
- **starts a relationship** between himself and humans
- places humans **closer to God** than any other living creature.
- creates everyone as a valued person with dignity – **a someone** not something!



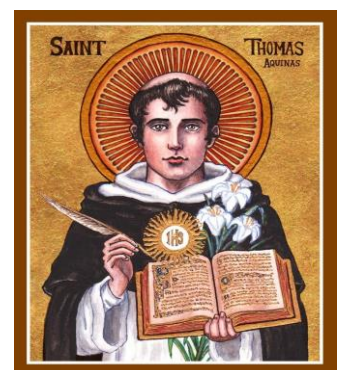
Christians believe that we are invited into a relationship with God, and a relationship with each other. In Genesis 2, God says that **'it is not good for man to be alone'** suggesting that part of what it means to be human is to form relationships with others, which in turn brings people closer to God since all persons are made in his image and likeness.

**Humanity shares characteristics with God**

For **Saint Augustine**, Luther and St. Thomas Aquinas, the image of God is in humanity's mind, intellect and will. It is also in thought and reason and the ability to use language and appreciate art. Thomas Aquinas believed that humans have a higher order of functioning and in that sense they are similar to God and closer to God.



We will see in the story of Adam and Eve the snake says the reason why God won't let them eat the fruit of the tree is because they will become like God because of their knowledge of good and evil not because they will become immortal or all powerful. Knowledge is what makes us god-like.



---

## What being created in God's Image means (Analysis)

- **Applies to all people**

God creates humans male and female which brings with an equality of position and purpose regardless of race, gender, etc.

- **Uniqueness and Dignity**

*Imago dei* means humans have a special place of dignity and responsibility not shared by other created beings. To kill a human is an attack on God.

- **We belong to God**

We are and always remain God's creation. All that we are we owe to God since he makes it possible for us to exist.

Christians believe that humans have a unique relationship with God. There is something about us that separates us from the rest of creation. What makes humans unique, from the point of view of Christianity, is that...

- **humans are relational**
- **humans are rational**
- **humans are creative**
- **humans have free will**

### Relational

Our likeness to God comes from our relationship with God and others. Moral decision-making and consciousness are all things that are needed for relationships. Just as the three persons in one God (the Trinity) are in relationship, so humans are in relationship with each other and with God. J

St. Augustine wrote,

***'You made us yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you'. For Augustine, only in God is humanity's true meaning found.'***



---

## Rational

For great Christian thinkers like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas it is our ability to think, our mind, our intellect and our free will that make us like God. The ability to reason, to use language and to create and appreciate art is also part of the similarity. This is not unique to Christianity. The commonly held belief is that one of the main things that separates humans from the rest of humanity is our ability to think in a rational way.

## Free will

Free will links the the Relational and the Rational. We are not forced into a relationship with God or anyone. We have to be free to choose. So God is in a sense obliged to give us free will so we can have a meaningful relationship with him. So part of **human nature** is our ability to choose freely to do whatever we want. We have **Free Will** and we can turn towards God or we can turn away from him completely if we want.



Christians believe that human free will is a gift from God. At the time of creation, God gifted all human beings with intellect and free will. So, people have the ability to think for themselves and make decisions using those thoughts. Intellect allows for persons to experience and understand the world in which they live in and so, weigh up decisions as well as evaluate outcomes in order to make good moral choices. St. Augustine described how humans have a moral conscience and are free to do what they want. Humans are not robots, programmed to act in a certain way, but free persons able to make their own decisions, both good and bad.

## Conscience

Our conscience helps us to make those decisions and it develops through age, experience and through knowledge and understanding of what God wants for us. We learn what he wants from us through studying the Bible, learning about the teachings of the Church and following the example of Jesus who God sent to us to give us the ultimate example of how to have good relationships with each other and with God.

---

## Creative

Unlike other creatures we can imagine things that do not exist. Not only that but we can then turn those ideas into reality. We can create new things. We can create effectively out of nothing.

## Stewards of the earth

Humans also have responsibility for the world which God created for them. For this reason, humanity is given the stewardship of the earth. In Christianity, this means that humans have the duty to preserve, maintain and use wisely what God has given them in creation – **everything!**

Stewards are people *responsible* for something that does not belong to them. They are caretakers of others' possessions. In biblical times a steward was the highest-ranking servant, the person who managed the possessions of his master.

Stewardship reminds humanity that creation does not belong to them, (it is God's) but humanity is responsible for the world's care. The idea of stewardship provides a framework in which human responsibility for our planet can be understood. Stewardship makes humanity responsible for the environment, care and wellbeing of all created beings. Humans are responsible for creation because they are made in God's image.

Stewardship can be contrasted with human *ownership* of the world. If the world belongs to and exists for humanity alone, there is no reason why humanity should not 'use and abuse' it. However, the stewardship concept reminds Christians that they are caretakers of one of God's most valuable possessions.

### DEFINITION

**Steward** – Person who administers another's property

### SOURCE: Genesis 1:28-31

*[God] blessed them [human beings], and said, 'Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.' Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

---

*Complete the table*

Discuss what you think the different responses to the world issues listed below would be from someone believing that humans own the world, and someone acting as a Christian steward.

<b>World issue</b>	<b>Humans own the world</b>	<b>Christian stewardship</b>
Ecological issues (e.g. global warming)		
Natural resource use		
Endangered people and species		

**Quick Questions**

1. What does it mean for Christians that they are created in the image and likeness of God (Imago Dei)?
2. What are the key elements of the “Shared Characteristics” view?
3. What is the significance of the Steward in the Bible?
4. What does it mean in practice for Christians to say that humanity are stewards of creation?
5. What is free will and what are the implications of having free will?

**Deeper Question**

Humans are unique in all of creation. How might a Christian back up this statement?

---

### 3. The Nature of Human Beings - The Fall



To try to explain why we are not perfect the book of Genesis uses the story of Adam and Eve. It explains how sin and suffering entered into God's perfect creation. Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God led to suffering and death because the image of God within them was damaged.

The term used to describe this choice and its consequences is 'The Fall'.

In Genesis 3, God tells Adam and Eve that they may have anything in the Garden of Eden except for the fruit from the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil or the tree of Life. Tempted by evil in the form of a serpent, they go against God's wishes and eat from the tree of knowledge. The story really has to be treated symbolically as rebellion against God and human pride leading to sinfulness.

Why was this act so devastating? Surely having knowledge is a good thing? For the writer, full knowledge of all creation, good and evil belongs to God alone. It is not for humanity to know because we are not God; we are only human. So the action of eating the fruit is more than going against a simple instruction, it is suggesting that the first humans were saying that they did not need God; they can be gods themselves. This is why the consequences were so severe.

Now the serpent... said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die".' 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.' To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it", cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'

Source: Genesis 3: 1–19

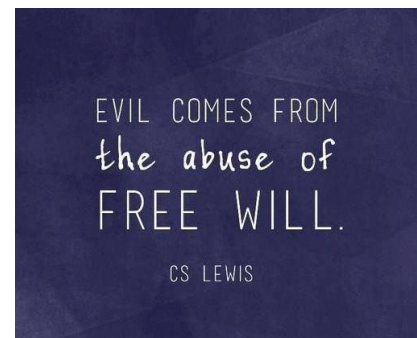
### An explanation

1. Doubt is cast on the truth of God's words
2. The truth is the first thing to go as he snake tempts the woman. He lies he says they will be like God
3. The woman takes the fruit and gives some to her husband
4. They lose their innocence.
5. They become afraid and feel guilty
6. They separate themselves from God by sinning symbolised by their hiding from God
7. They turn against each other and pass the blame for their actions
8. God points out the consequences of their actions
9. Disharmony between mankind and nature
10. New life becomes a risk
11. More disharmony between humanity and nature
12. Ultimately death is the consequence of separation from God through sin.

---

## Original Sin (Belief)

Original Sin is the belief that the sin committed by Adam and Eve is inherited by all generations of humans afterwards. This means, that all human beings are born with this Original Sin because of The Fall. As a result human nature is flawed and corrupted and needs the intervention of God to achieve salvation and reconciliation.



St. Augustine developed the idea of 'Original Sin'. He said that due to Adam's failures in the Garden of Eden, the whole of humanity carries the same sin - suffers and dies. Humanity needs God's help in order to be rescued from their situation. Augustine saw that human free will was weakened, though not totally destroyed, by sin. Like a pair of unbalanced scales, evil intentions and choices often would, under the influence of original sin, outweigh good intentions and choices.

Augustine developed his theory of Original Sin to explain...

- why even the most saintly of humans can feel the pressure of behaving badly irresistible.
- the need to baptise babies as soon as possible (to wash away original sin).
- that humans are still reliant on God and his grace and goodness.
- that Original Sin works in 2 ways: inherited guilt for a crime and spiritual weakness.

SOURCE:  
(Catholic Catechism)

'To try and understand what sin is, one must first recognise the profound relations of man to God, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him.'

Protestant theologian John Calvin went a step further by saying that Original Sin has led to the complete corruption and depravity of human nature that extends not just to our actions and our bodies, but our souls.

In summary the Fall undermines the quality of the relationship between humanity and God. We have moved further away from him and share less in his secondary attributes of justice, fairness honesty and so on. **Original Likeness** has been replaced by **Original Sin** and only with God's intervention can we get back to that state.

---

## The consequences of the fall (Analysis)

### (a) Alienation from God

If you are alienated from someone, you are like a stranger to him or her. At the fall, humanity was alienated from God. This results in:

- being cut off from God
- an inability to reconcile ourselves to God by ourselves. We need God's help
- our special relationship has been damaged i.e. the image of God in us is weakened, our free will and moral reasoning is damaged, our links with nature is damaged

### (b) Alienation from each other

Adam tries to blame Eve for his disobedience. Eve then blames the serpent. Neither wants to take responsibility for their actions. Humans are set against each other and all of creation.

- relationships are damaged by our tendency to blame each other for our faults
- our desires become misplaced and distorted
- we don't accept responsibility for what we do wrong

### (c) Suffering and death

The consequences of turning away from God and choosing to follow a lie are all around us

- Suffering and death enter our lives
- Fear of death is a result of being separated from the giver of life – God
- Death in a spiritual sense as well. Part of the good in us has died.



---

## Power of original sin

Humanity through the fall is prone to sin. Augustine used images of sin as disease, power and guilt to explain what he meant.

- Sin is like a disease that is passed through the generations.
- Sin is a power that keeps humanity in prison.
- Sin is like guilt transferred from one generation to another.

St. Augustine developed the idea of '**concupiscence**' – the belief that original sin is passed on to the next generation during the moment of sexual intercourse. He used the term to describe the sexual desires which can be bad, because they can overwhelm a person and take away all self-control and rational thought. He is not saying sexual intercourse is bad, but potentially immoral desires that can be attached to it.



The Fall gives Christians a way to understand human free will and the connection of all humanity with sin. The cause of sin, suffering and death is humanity's wrong moral choices and disobedience.

## The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Catholic Practice)

Being aware that you have a problem is the first step in dealing with it. Christians have realised this for a long time and they know that if they are going to be better people then they have to recognise when they have committed sins. In the Catholic Church, believers can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and confess their sins to a priest. He then absolves them of their sins in the name of God if they are sincere about their sorrow and willingness to do better.

## Questions to deepen your understanding

1. Describe how scripture reveals the nature of humans in the Christian tradition.
2. Explain the Christian view of God's relationship with humanity.
3. Explain the impact of 'The Fall' on Christians today.

## Question that will develop your analysis skills

1. Explain how Christianity believes the events of 'The Fall' and the impact on Christians today.

---

## 4. A Religion of Salvation



Christianity is a religion of salvation. Christians believe that the relationship between humanity and God was damaged by our decision to disobey God.

- This resulted in all humanity becoming less than perfect through Original Sin.
- This means humans are in need of God's saving help.
- This is why God reaches out to humanity through the Covenants
- Christians believe that Jesus death and resurrection are part of God's saving plan.
- Baptism is how Christians remove Original Sin and become a member of the Church.

### Salvation History - The Covenants

This refers to the whole story of God's saving activities in as told in the Bible. At the point of creation humanity is as close to God as we can get. But through the Fall we separate ourselves from God. The Covenants are God's way of trying to bring us back to him.

### Noah - A Covenant with all Nations

After the Fall God effectively tears up the script and starts again. He makes the decision to destroy his entire creation by flood. Genesis says God regrets having created anything because of the corruption that he was seeing. However, there is one good man and his family who have found favour with God - Noah. God asks that

Noah put his faith in him and build the ark into which he and his family and the animals go to be saved. The story has Noah's sons and daughters with their spouses becoming the ancestors of the nations on earth. So this is a covenant with the whole human race since they are all that is left after the flood. God's intention is to begin all humanity's journey back to him.

*These were the tribes of Noah's sons, according to their descendants and their nations. From these came the dispersal of nations over the earth, after the flood.*

### Abraham - Faith in God

The story of Abraham is all about faith in the one, true God. One feature of Abraham's covenant with God is Abraham's recognition that there is only one God. Another feature is Abraham has

---

complete trust in God and put complete faith in him. This covenant is signified with the circumcision of Jewish boys.

### **Abraham's acts of faith**

- He leaves his home and travels to a new land because God asks him.
- He trusts in God when he promises him a son even though he and his wife are old.
- He is prepared to sacrifice his long awaited son Isaac at God's request.

*God said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing.*

*Genesis 12:1-2*

The reward for recognising and trusting in the One, true God is the promise that Abraham will be the Father of a great nation. A nation that will be an example to all others of how to live in right relationship with the One, true God.

### **The Covenant with Moses - God's Law for God's Chosen People**

The details of exactly how to live out that relationship with God comes in the Covenant with Moses. This takes the form of God's Law (Torah). The Covenant with Moses tells them how to live out the role as God's Chosen People.

God strengthens the covenant with his Chosen People by giving him his Law to live by. It is their way to salvation and it is their responsibility to make it known to the world so everyone can be saved. This Law is summarised in the 10 commandments which tell the Chosen People their duties towards God and towards each other.

*I am the Lord your god who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have not gods except me!*

*Exodus 20:1-3*

---

## The Covenant with David - God's Anointed

King David is God's Anointed. David is God's chosen one and is blessed with all sorts of good fortune. God promises David that his 'house' or 'line' will last forever. The story of David begins with him being sought out by the Prophet Samuel and being anointed as king over God's people. This starts the theme of 'The Lord's Anointed'.

*Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."*

*So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David.*

*1 Samuel 16:12-13*

This idea of the anointed one is very important because the word **Messiah** translates as **anointed one** which in Greek is the word **Christos**. So as the descendant of David, Jesus assumes the role of being God's Anointed, the Messiah.

## Prophecies of a Messiah

The Covenants are God's way of restoring his creation to its original perfection but they cannot achieve this on their own. The Davidic Covenant points towards a future Messiah / Saviour who would bring this about.

One of the main tasks of the Prophets had was to point out to the people when they were falling short of following the Covenants but they also had the job of providing hope for the future. This was especially true following the fall of Jerusalem in 587BC when it was conquered by the Babylonian empire and their people taken off into exile.

It is then that the prophet Isaiah offers them hope of a new covenant. The understanding of Messiah at that time is of a person who would deliver them from slavery; much like Moses had delivered them to freedom. Later they also saw the Messiah as someone who would deliver them from their slavery to sin. **Christianity believes that Jesus is the promised Messiah.**

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman[1] is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. [2]*

*1 Samuel 16:12-13*

*[1] the virgin*

*[2] God is with us*

---

## The Sacrament of Baptism: Removing Original Sin

Sacraments are seen as an outward sign of God's Grace. Grace is something received from God that helps a person respond to Him more positively and more often. Grace is...

- The free and undeserved help God gives us
- Part of God's saving plan
- Christ's gift of his life to us
- The gift of faith

Sacraments also help develop fellowship and community and they remind Christians of God's promises of **salvation**. Sacraments are seen as effective words, actions and symbols that bring about what they say and represent.

Christians agree that sacraments are a significant part of the life of a Christian but the roles of the sacrament itself and the faith of the person taking it can differ greatly.

Catholics believe that sacraments have a real power which God uses to transform a person's heart. The sacrament causes a transformation inside an individual. Because Catholics believe that the sacraments are the means that God used to give his **saving** grace, they believe that sacraments are required in order for a person to receive **salvation**.

Protestants view sacraments as an outward sign of a change that has already happened inside of a person. An individual's inner change is the motivation that prompts him or her to participate in the sacrament. Protestants believe you receive grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

### Baptism

The Christian rite of pouring water on to a person's forehead or of immersing him in water, symbolising purification or regeneration and admission to the Christian Church.

(Concise Oxford Dictionary)

Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn . . . we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church)



---

One of the last things Jesus says to the apostles is to go out to the whole world and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism has two main purposes – **to bring someone into the community of the Church** and **to remove the stain of original sin.**

There are 4 symbols used in Baptism which show what it is all about.

<b>Water</b>	<b><u>Washing away the stain of original sin</u></b> and also new life and growth
<b>Oil of Chrism</b>	Anointing is a sign of <b><u>being specially chosen.</u></b>
<b>White Garment</b>	Symbolises purity from sin but also <b><u>a new life in Christ</u></b>
<b>Candle</b>	<b><u>The light of Christ</u></b> in the life of the person baptised.

Most Christians today are baptised as infants and brought up in the faith. Parents do this because they believe that the religious experience will benefit them, make them better people, more willing and able to help others. Some people are not baptised till later in life – adult baptism. They usually prepare for this for a while before taking the plunge (pun intended). For them getting baptised is a declaration of faith.

### **Questions to deepen your knowledge and understanding**

1. What does the phrase “Salvation History” mean?
2. What is a Covenant?
3. What Covenants have there been between God and his creation?
4. What is a sacrament?
5. What are the two purposes of the sacrament of Baptism

### **Analysis Question**

1. Explain the connection between the Fall and the Covenants?

### **Evaluation Question**

1. Christianity is a religion of salvation. How valid is this statement?

---

# JESUS

## Life. Death. Resurrection.

It is historical fact that Jesus was born in Palestine just over 2000 years ago and that he lived for about 33 years before being executed by the Romans on behalf of the Jewish leaders at that time. During the final 3 years of his life he travelled around his country preaching and teaching. The gospels also say that he performed miracles, cured people and after his crucifixion, that he rose from the dead. Christians link all of this together by using the phrase Life, Death and Resurrection.

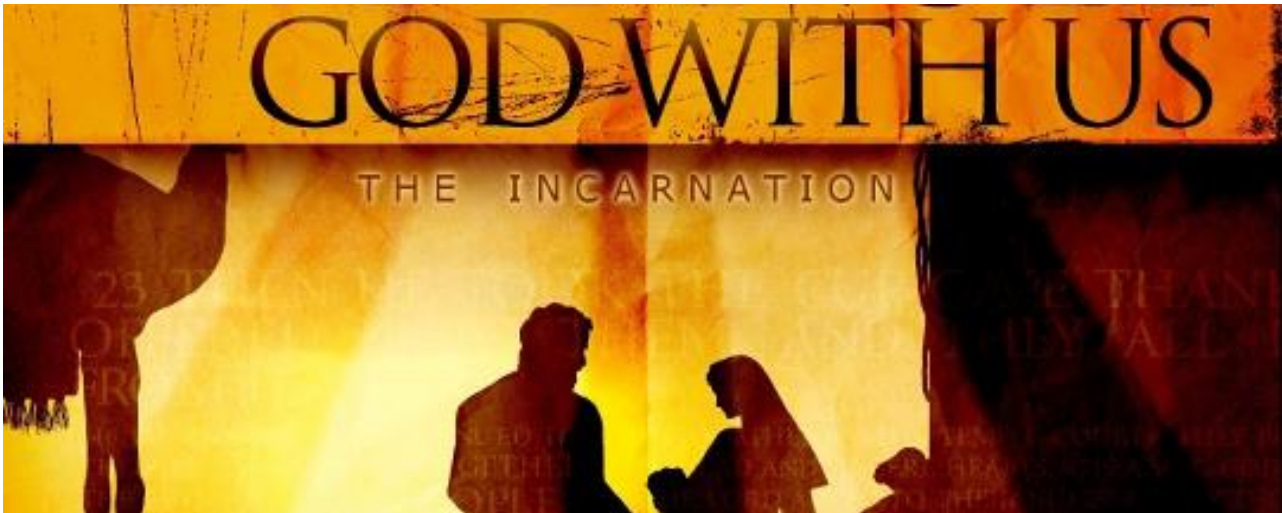
Jesus practiced what he preached. This means that his life death and resurrection are just as much part of his teaching as his spoken words.

- Life** Will look at beliefs about his birth and what his known as his public life which includes his teachings and some of his miracles.
- Death** Will look at the reasons why Jesus was arrested and executed from both a historical and a theological perspective and link it to the Old Testament tradition of sacrifice for atonement for sins and the Passover.
- Resurrection** Will look at the events of the resurrection, what Christians believe about it and what they believe it means for them – the possibility of life after death.



---

## 5. Beliefs about Jesus' Birth: Incarnation



### Christian Belief:

- Jesus birth is called the incarnation. That means “in the flesh”
- Jesus is God who became man by being born to Mary.
- He is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity who becomes human.
- He is for his time on earth both God and Man.

Jesus was born during the Roman occupation in Israel. It was a time of political and social unrest. In the past God’s chosen people had been subjected to a number of foreign invasions, including an exile to Babylon for a number of years. The impact of this was that the people were **waiting for the coming of their promised Messiah** – someone like King David who would bring them freedom and restore the land of Israel, as promised to them by God.

The name Jesus is derived from a Hebrew word meaning ‘God saves’. The Nicene creed sums up in a few lines the link between Jesus birth and his role as saviour. He saves us by being born as a man, suffering death, rising to life and ascending to his Father in heaven.

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus are the most significant events in the history of salvation. Jesus saves us from sin if we believe in him and follow him.

### SOURCE: Nicene Creed

*“For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of  
the Virgin Mary, and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and  
was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the  
Father.*

---

The story of Jesus' earthly life begins with the 'Annunciation' – Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel who tells her that (although a virgin) she is to bear a son whom she will Jesus and he will be the Son of God, and saviour of mankind. The Messiah the people had been waiting for.

The story continues with the story of Jesus birth.

**SOURCE: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 1:26 – 37**

*In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Rejoice, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."*

*Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.*

*The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants*

When we look at the stories of the birth of Jesus we see that they are full of references to God's original anointed one - King David. This links Jesus to the expectation of the Messiah. The stories are located around Bethlehem, David's home town.

**SOURCE:**

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their own town to register.*

*So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.*

*While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.*

*An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

*This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."*

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were*

The story of his birth is full of symbolism too. The first people to see Jesus are the shepherds. Today we often think of this as being cute. Shepherds with little lambs. But at the time shepherds were often outcasts who could not get work in the town. The only work they could get was outside. The first visitors to Jesus tells us something about his mission. He is here to save the lost.

The final part of the story of Jesus birth involves the wise men from the East. Like the earlier parts of the story it is full of symbolism that reminds us about who Jesus is and the reasons why he has been born as a human.

### Key Words:

#### Anointed one

*King David is the original anointed one of the Old Testament. He is taken from being a shepherd and anointed as King of Israel.*

#### Messiah

*The Hebrew words meaning 'anointed one'.*

#### Christ

*From the Greek words Christos meaning 'anointed one'*

### SOURCE:

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Judea, in the days of Herod the king, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he, who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him."*

*When Herod heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he enquired of them where the Christ was to be born.*

*They told him, "In Bethlehem in Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:*

*'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,*

*Are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah;*

*For from you shall come a ruler*

*who will govern my people Israel.'"*

*Then Herod summoned the wise men and found out at what time the star had appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem saying, "Go and search carefully for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that too may come and worship him."*

*When they had heard what the king had to say, they went on their way; and the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was.*

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then opening their treasures, they gave him gifts of gold, and frankincense and myrrh.*

The gifts tell us something about who this child is that has been born.

<b>Gold</b>	Represents Jesus kingship. He will be crucified as King of the Jews
<b>Frankincense</b>	Represents his divinity. It was used in the sanctuary in the temple as a sign of God's presence.
<b>Myrrh</b>	Used to anoint the bodies of the dead. Jesus is born to die for mankind.

---

The visit of the wise men is known as the Epiphany. An epiphany is a moment of revelation. In this moment, Jesus is symbolically revealed to the rest of the world as King, God and Saviour.

### Jesus is born to save us

Christians believe that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. The 'Son' – Jesus, became human to save humanity from sin. Christians believe it was a mission that only Jesus (because he is God) could complete. In a passage from Luke's gospel Jesus sends out a clear message about who he is and what his mission and ministry will be when he returns to his home town of Nazareth. He announces himself as the person who fulfils the prophecies of the Old Testament.

#### **SOURCE: Luke 4:16 – 22**

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled even as you listen."*

There is a symmetry to the history of Salvation. Adam undoes the work of the Creator through his failure to respond properly to God. Jesus restores the situation through his proper response to God's will, up to and including being prepared to sacrifice his life. Unlike Adam, Jesus does what God asks him to.



---

## Why did Jesus have to become human? (Analysis)

Humanity turned its back on its true calling to love and serve God. Instead of using our Free Will to love God, we used it to for our own agendas. Humanity is now caught in a trap of its own making. St. Augustine says that we are unable to break free from our sin. Our only hope lies in being set free by God himself. Christians believe human nature, was intended to be perfectly good, but now we are very far from God intended us to be. Humanity is need of salvation. However, because we are imperfect we cannot save ourselves. We need God to save us. Only a saving act of God would bring about the renewal and restoration of humanity that was cut off from God by sin and death.

## What does Jesus birth mean for Christians

- They believe God became Man
- He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour
- Jesus is God, therefore his words are literally God's Word
- It means they know who to follow and how to follow him

## Celebrating Jesus' birth

The birth of Jesus is celebrated at Christmas. Christians prepare for the 4 weeks of Advent for this celebration. The gift giving at Christmas not only mirrors the gifts of the wise men but also God's gift of his Son to save us.

The use of Advent wreaths with candles reminds Christians that Jesus is the light of the world in the darkness of winter.

Christmas is a 12 day celebration that runs from Christmas day till the Epiphany on January 6th when Christians celebrate the visit of the wise men.

## Questions to deepen your understanding

1. What do Christians believe about the Incarnation of Jesus?
2. With reference to the previous section - why do Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah
3. Outline and explain some of the key elements of Jesus message?

## Questions that will develop your analysis and evaluation skills

4. *"For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,"* Christians believe that Jesus had to come to save us.

Explain what this statement means for Christians.



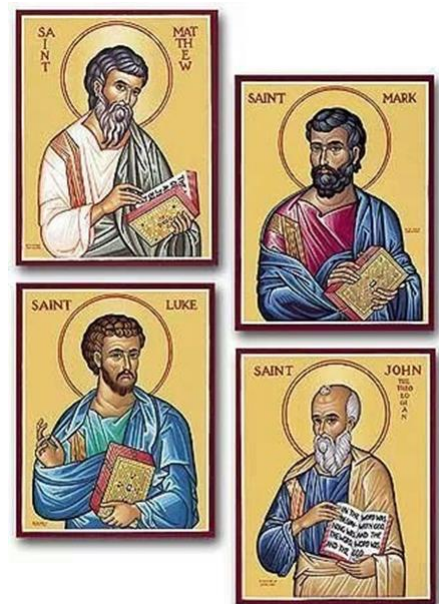
---

## 6. The Teaching of Jesus



The teaching of Jesus is contained in the four gospels. The other books in the New Testament e.g. the Acts of the Apostles or the letters of St. Paul and others are the efforts of the early Christians to understand and apply those teachings.

There are four Gospels (meaning ‘Good News’) written by **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**. These four books are the most important books in the Bible for Christians because they are the revelation of God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Christians have a particular respect for them because they quote the words of Jesus in many parts and since Christians believe Jesus is God, they believe that these literally are the Words of God.



That is why Catholics always stand in church to listen to the Gospel as a sign of respect. On special occasions there will even be a special procession where a book containing only the four gospels will be carried with great ceremony to the place from which it will be read. It is hard to overstate the importance of the Gospels for Christians. They will always go to the gospels first for information and inspiration.

In the gospels we can learn about the teachings of Jesus in great detail but the teaching comes in different forms.

---

### **Teaching through Parables:**

This was a common method of teaching used by Rabbis (Jewish religious teachers) at that time. Very often they were stories that used familiar settings or ideas to communicate an important message to the listeners.

### **Direct teaching:**

There are several occasions when Jesus talks at length about what it means to be his follower. Among the most famous of these is the Sermon on the Mount which we will learn more about later. This covers a whole range of topics from the qualities of a Christian to the moral standards Christians are expected to live by.

### **Teaching by example:**

Jesus is best known for teaching by example. It's what Jesus does that people remember. He cures those who cannot walk, see or hear. He cures lepers, is kind to prostitutes and tax collectors. He feeds the hungry. Jesus also taught his followers to pray e.g. the Our Father and encouraged them to take time to themselves to be with God and to pray. Ultimately he dies on the cross because it is what the Father asks him to do.

When it came to the message of God, Jesus did not discriminate. Although a practicing Jew, he preached to people of all nations as well as gentiles (non-Jews). This would have been very controversial amongst the Jewish community, who believed that they alone were God's Chosen People.

There would have also been another underlying controversy. Jesus was from Nazareth – a town in the north of the country, which was considered a poor backwater from which nothing good ever came. Additionally, Jesus was conceived outside of marriage; something not unusual now, but in first century Israel it would have meant that Jesus and his family were more than likely considered outcasts by the majority of the community. Therefore, Jesus had the great challenge of not only getting people to take him seriously, but also to just listen to what he was saying.

As well as preaching to all nations and faiths, Jesus also made sure that those living on the margins of society at the time not only heard his message, but were cared for and loved. He openly associated himself with those considered to be social outcasts: adulterers, prostitutes and other sinners, tax collectors, the poor, the sick and the dying.



par • a • ble(s)  
an earthly story  
with a spiritual truth

The word parable means comparison, where one thing is used to illustrate another. Parables are typically stories drawn from everyday life. **Parables were essential to the teachings of Jesus, because they clearly showed his followers how they should behave.** Today they are still sources of guidance for Christians, showing exactly how to behave the way God wants. Jesus' parables make it clear that charity, love, generosity and forgiveness are most important, and being a true Christian means living life with these values at the centre of their day to day lives.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan answers a challenging question about who deserves our help. It is told in answer to the question "Who is my neighbour?"

**SOURCE: The Parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37**

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'*

*'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?'*

*He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and, "Love your neighbour as yourself."*

*'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'*

*But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'*

*In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead.*

*31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.*

*Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."*

*'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'*

*'The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'*

*Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'*

---

Here are some key thoughts we can take from it.

- Show compassion and love to everyone we may meet.
- Do not discriminate, set aside prejudice in the name of compassion.
- Everyone is our neighbour.
- Put the needs of others before our own.

It is one thing to love the poor and sick of the world, it is quite another to be asked to love enemies or those who have wronged us. Yet this is precisely what the life, teachings and example of Jesus Christ asks Christians to do. The 'punchline' of the parable of the Good Samaritan lies in the fact that Jews and Samaritans were enemies. There was a lot of hatred between them. Jesus tells of righteous Jews passing the injured Jew on the roadside and of a Samaritan finally being the one to help the man. The Samaritan showed love and counted a person who he may have regarded as an enemy, but instead he treats him as a fellow human being – a neighbour. The message for Christians today is that they must be prepared to help those in need even when those in need might be life-long enemies.

#### **Significance at the time of Jesus**

*The man who is attacked and ignored by the priest and the Levite is a Jew (one of their own)*

*Both the priest and the Levite fail to help their fellow Jew, probably because to touch the bleeding body would make them unclean and unable to perform their religious duties in the temple*

*The man who helps the Jew was a Samaritan - Samaritans and Jews hated one another.*

*Your biggest enemy can be the truest neighbour*

*Christ is showing the expert in the Law that anyone who needs him is his neighbour and that anyone who is prepared to help him is his neighbour*

#### **Significance Christians today**

*Whether someone is friend or enemy makes no difference to their human needs and their right to dignity and respect.*

*It emphasises unconditional love as the key to eternal life.*

*True love mirrors God's love for us. Self-giving love that thinks of the needs of the other person first.*

*It is a love that overcomes hatred and division.*

*It is therefore the Christians task to work to overcome hatred and divisions wherever they find them.*

*Pope John Paul II spoke of 'social love' meaning the kind of love that shows itself through social responsibility.*

---

## The Parable of the Tenants

Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

### What does each element represent?

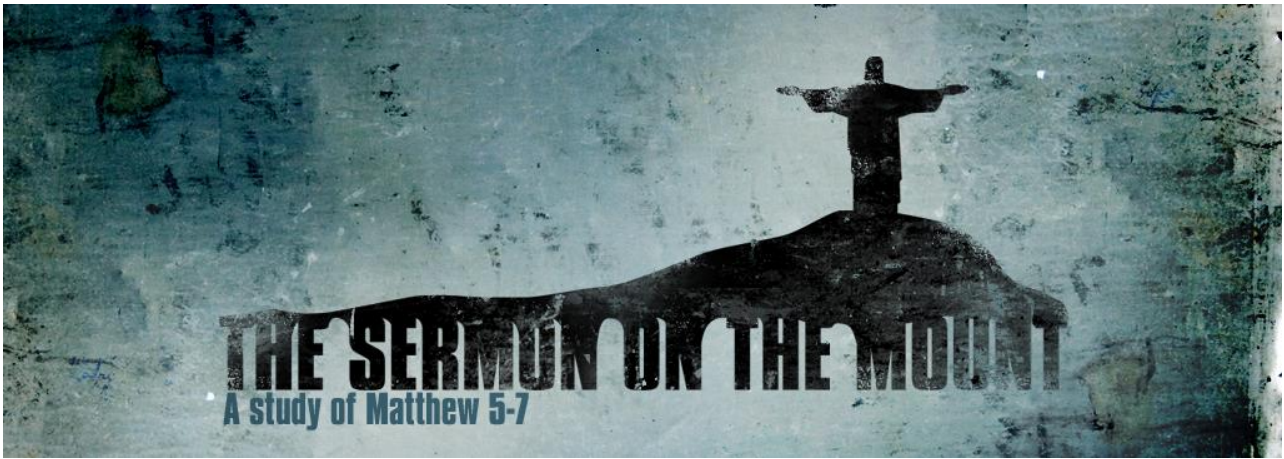
<b>The Man</b>	
<b>The vineyard</b>	
<b>The tenants</b>	
<b>The servants</b>	
<b>The son</b>	

### What do you think the parable means?

**Task: Choose one of the following parables. Read it and find out what it means. Write up your findings:**

The Parable of the Talents      Matthew 25:14–30

The Prodigal Son                      Luke 15:11-32



A key aspect of living the gospels for Christians is knowing what sort of person God wants them to be. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a new interpretation of the Law and tries to sum up what it means to be a follower of God.

Contained in the Sermon on the Mount is a very famous passage called the Beatitudes (happiness or blessing). You can read them in the box on the right. This presents a counter-intuitive way of thinking about how we should live our lives.

Today we value strength, drive, determination etc. and so we should but the Beatitudes suggest that there are other qualities and characteristics that are worth pursuing if we want to have happiness in heaven. The Beatitudes express the essential characteristic of a true disciple. A true disciple has a spirit of complete trust in God alone.

**SOURCE: Matthew 5 – 7:28**

*Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:*

*'Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for  
righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because  
of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*'Blessed are you when people insult you,  
persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil  
against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be*

---

## The New Law – The New Moses

Matthew portrays Jesus as the new Moses bringing a new Law. The Law of Jesus is more positive than the Law of Moses but it goes even further. It is important to remember that Matthew is writing for a Jewish audience who are becoming Christian and he is sensitive to their traditions and heritage. Jesus completes the Law of Moses by making clear the will of God and the kind of life that brings salvation.

The Sermon on the Mount spells out in some detail the demands of this law. It sets out the ethical requirements of the Kingdom and shows how people should live in right relationship with God and others. In accepting Jesus teaching the Christian does not “perform” to achieve God’s reward. Instead the Christian has to place their lives in God’s hands in thanks and love. Christians have to respond to other out of love also rather than out of self-interest.

### A higher standard

He teaches that his followers should love those who persecute them and do good to those who hate them. By doing this they will show that everyone has a God-given dignity about them and although it can be very difficult to love those who hate you, it is essential for eternal life. As Pope Benedict puts it in his encyclical ‘Deus Caritas Est’ (God is love) “Love grows through love”. If we respond with love to those who hate us it will help them to see our own God-given dignity and worth.

There is also the question as to why God should reward us with the Kingdom of Heaven if we only love those who love us. The reward is for making the effort to love those we find it hardest to love. This is the challenge the Sermon on the Mount presents to Christians. It shows itself in Christian teaching for example through the Church’s opposition to the death penalty.

**SOURCE: Matthew 5 :27-30**

**27 ‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.”[e]  
28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.**

---

## The Sermon is important for Christian morality because:

- God is at the centre – it is here that Jesus gives humanity the Lord’s Prayer.
- Clearly describes the law of God concerning murder, divorce, sexual immorality and oaths.
- Emphasises the necessity of love, forgiveness, prayer and inclusion.
- Explains explicitly the danger and consequences of sin.
- Promises the Kingdom of God.

All Christians try to put their faith into action - to live out the Gospel in their lives. At the heart of Christian faith in action is the concept of **praxis** which at one level simply means action or doing, but on another level means all those actions that cause a transformation of attitudes, conditions, social and political situations that do not live up to the values of the gospel.

Christians have duty therefore to see the image of God in every human being, no matter what their race, colour, creed or status in life. Furthermore, Christian values and their liberating vision of the world and kingdom of God should be demonstrated and encountered in practical changes within the world.

Christians are called to live out their faith in the world through following the example actions of Jesus Christ. Christians must follow the example of Jesus and actively work against anything that separates human beings from one another. This includes prejudice on the basis of religion, race, gender, social class, sexuality or disability. As St Paul said in one of his letters:

*‘There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus’*

(Galatians 3:28)

### SOURCE: James 2:14-17

‘My brothers and sisters, what good is it for people to say that they have faith if their actions do not prove it? Can that faith save them? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don’t have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, ‘God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!’ – if you don’t give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.’





### **Jesus Taught by Example**

Jesus spent time with a whole range of people who were considered to be sinners, outcasts or unworthy of the company of good people for various reasons. In Jesus time many people associated hardship and disability with punishment for sin from God. So unlike today where we try to treat the poor, the sick and disabled with kindness; back then things were less sympathetic. People were often shunned for their poverty, their illness or their disabilities. People who were known sinners e.g. prostitutes were really treated very badly.

Then along comes Jesus who not only preaches about the virtue of caring for these people but actually spends time with them, he cures them, he eats with them, he allows them to touch him. All this would have been a challenge to the moral standards of the time. This is why Christians have a long tradition of caring for the poor, the sick and the disabled.

Whole organisations made up of monks and nuns set up hospitals and facilities to care for people in need and many can still be seen today. In countries where diseases such as leprosy still exist it is often Christian organisations that are at the forefront of dealing with the problem because of the stigma that often surrounds the condition. When the Ebola epidemic broke out in West Africa, it was often Christian nursing nuns who were first into the affected areas and last out. But it is in dealing with social outcasts that Christians are often challenged in their attempts to follow Jesus example.



---

## Jesus example of compassion

In these stories Jesus shows compassion for the sinful people he comes into contact with. It is important to note that he does not condone their sinfulness and the purpose of their meeting is for him to call them back to a better way of living. From these 3 stories Christians learn the importance of compassion and forgiveness and are reminded of the words of the Our Father which urge them to forgive each other as God forgives them for their sinful acts.

The message is clear. Christian lives should be a model of goodness, forgiveness and compassion.

### Jesus forgives and challenges the sinner

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

### Jesus eats with sinners

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

### Jesus and the sinful woman

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,[a] and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The message of this story is similar to the first two but the difference here is that the woman is well known for her long term sinfulness. In the story Jesus draws attention to the goodness in her that has moved her to carry out a very public act of sorrow.

From this Christians can take courage that no matter what their sins are, if they are truly sorry and repentant, they will be forgiven. They also have to realise that it is their duty to show the same levels of forgiveness to those they come into contact with who have sinned. Even long-term sinners.

## Jesus example of service

The passage on the right is one of the most famous “examples” Jesus gives to his followers. The job of washing feet of guests at a meal was the job of a servant or slave. By taking on the job himself Jesus sets a standard for Christian leadership. Leadership is about loving service not about power.

This example of service is immediately followed by the ultimate example of loving service to God. Jesus gives his life on the cross because God asks him to. What does this tell Christians? Well, like the parables about the Kingdom of God, it reminds them that they should be prepared to give up everything to follow God’s will and achieve eternal life.

Jesus also went against strict religious teachings of the time – healing a man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had created so many rules to try and stop people from sinning it had meant that you could not even try to heal someone on the Sabbath - Jesus flouted this rule in front of them.

Jesus showed his followers how a person should love in a spirit of self-sacrifice, even to the point of death. In many ways the life of a Christian should be a journey from our childish self-centredness to an adult self-giving. Jesus taught

*‘the greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them’.*

(John15:13)

**SOURCE: John 13: 1-17**

**Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.**



Jesus constantly taught about the Kingdom of God. For Christians the kingdom of God can refer to both Heaven and the kind of world they are trying to create on earth by living out the teachings of Jesus.

The idea is that each Christian should live a good life. Together as the church they should lead people to live a good a life. This will lead them all to eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. One of the simplest examples of this teaching can be found in the best known Christian prayer – The Our Father. In it Jesus clearly points out the double aspect of the Kingdom of God

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Vatican II (a special gathering of Catholic bishops in the 1960s) declared the church as

**‘the initial budding of the kingdom’**

and saw it the way the gospel would be proclaimed and sins could be forgiven. The community of believers is a sign of God’s presence in the world. Jesus gave clear indications of what it meant to build up the Kingdom of God through his parables. There are a series of short parables that all begin with the phrase “The Kingdom of God is like...”. Here are is a very short one.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.



---

These short parables compare the Kingdom to something of extreme value, something to be sought after, something worth investing everything in. What Christians would believe from this is that the Kingdom of God is something very important.

- It is something which exists in their **future** in the form of Heaven. Christians see the Kingdom as something that will come about at the end of time when all humanity will be judged.
- But it is also something which they must work to build up in the **present**, on earth in order to gain entry into heaven. They believe that by following the teachings of Jesus they will be able to build up the Kingdom of God on earth and by doing that gain entry into the eternal Kingdom of God they call Heaven.

### Quick Questions

1. What two meanings might Christians give to the phrase Kingdom of God?
2. What is a parable?
3. Give an example of a parable and what it means?
4. What was the Sermon on the Mount?
5. Give an example of some of the teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?
6. Jesus taught by example. Give examples of how he behaved and treated other people?

### Analysis question

Explain how Jesus uses three different methods of teaching and explain how they might affect Christians today.

### Evaluation question

Following the example of Jesus is the most important thing a Christian can do. Discuss.

---

## 7. Following the teaching of Jesus



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

*applying the good news to our lives and the church's life*

The most important thing for any Christian to do is to try to follow the example of Jesus. Christians should try to follow the teaching of Jesus in all areas of their lives. We saw in the introduction there are three main areas of life that the teaching of Jesus should influence.

### **The Spiritual:**

A Christian worships God, in private and as part of a church community. A Christian prays to God, receives sacraments and recognizes that he or she owes everything to God – their life, their world, the universe. Everything!

### **The Moral:**

Christianity has an extensive range of moral teachings which affect the way its followers behave in everyday life. They will live by the 10 commandments but also follow a range of other teachings which come from Jesus e.g. the Sermon on the Mount, his parables and the example he gave his followers of how to treat others, especially the poor, disabled and other vulnerable or victimized groups.

### **The Social and Political:**

Christianity is about faith but it is also about action. Christians are very often involved in charitable organisations and activities. E.G. SCIAF or Mary's Meals. Christians are also often very politically active because they believe that their faith has much to offer in a wide range of issues that affect our countries and communities.

### **SOURCE: James 2:14-17**

'My brothers and sisters, what good is it for people to say that they have faith if their actions do not prove it? Can that faith save them? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!' – if you don't give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.'



---

People who are famous for following the example of Jesus are well known to us. To begin with there are the apostles and people like St. Paul who wrote about and taught about Jesus during his many travels around the Mediterranean. Through the centuries the Catholic Church has recognised as saints many people who followed his example. This determination to follow Jesus example continues today through the many Christians who devote all or part of their time to serving and helping others. Here are just two of the more famous examples from last century.

### **Saint Teresa of Calcutta**



Saint Teresa was a Catholic nun sent to Calcutta to teach in a school for well-to-do children. But she was struck by the poverty of the city and left her order to go and live in the slums of Calcutta amongst the poor and destitute. She opened schools, health centres and rehabilitation centres, as well as orphanages for disabled and unwanted children.

Eventually she founded a new order of nuns, called the Missionaries

of Charity, who still today wear a sari-like habit and can be found across the world working amongst the poor of society. She had a profound faith, and continued to defend traditional Catholic doctrine on issues such as birth control and abortion. Her devotion to the poor in India and elsewhere touched the whole world. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and in 1989 received the Star of India. When she died she was given a state funeral in honour of her great humanitarian work.

#### **Mother Teresa**

'The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for and deserted by everybody.'

'By blood and origin I am Albanian. My citizenship is Indian. I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.'



### **Martin Luther King**

Martin Luther King lived out his Christian faith through leadership in the civil rights movement. He peaceably campaigned to outlaw discrimination against Black Americans. He championed non-violent opposition against segregated public transport in the State of Georgia, opposed the Vietnam war and campaigned against poverty, organising a march in Washington DC in 1963. He was instrumental in getting legislation passed on civil and voting rights. As a result he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Many of King's famous speeches echoed biblically inspired teaching and images.



---

In one of his speeches he compared himself to the biblical prophet Moses, glimpsing the Promised Land. He stated on the day before he was assassinated 'I may not get there [the promisedland] with you but we as a people will get to the Promised Land'. He knew that his fight for justice was putting his life at risk, that there were those who would try to stop him and his work. But he stayed true to his faith and the example of Jesus. Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968 whilst on a mission to support striking workers in Memphis. Fortunately, few Christians die for their beliefs these days but it does still happen occasionally.

**Martin Luther King (1929–68)**

'I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.'

'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'

**Research Task:**

**Find another Christian who has tried to live the gospel in their life and provide a short summary of that.**

# Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching is based on the values of the Gospels and is another for Christians trying to live out the Gospels in their everyday lives. It is based on a number of key principles that affect all areas of life.

## 1. Respect for the Human Person

Where the value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty; or through the targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks Catholics have a duty to speak out and act. They try to protect the right to life wherever they feel it is being threatened.

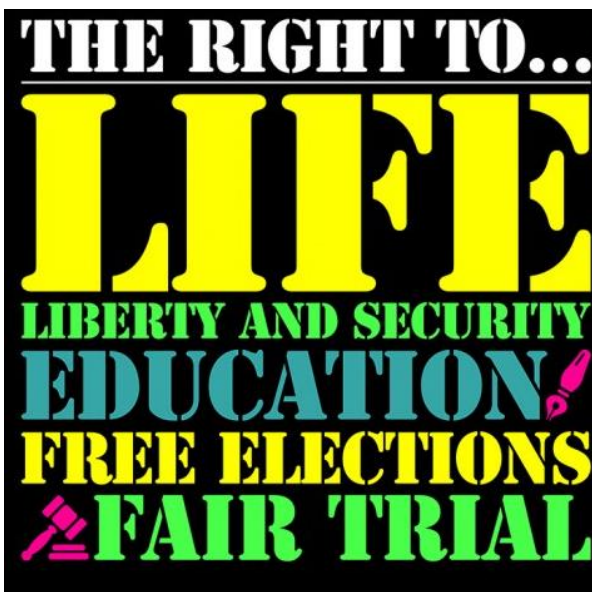


## 2. Family

The family is seen as the foundation of a good and stable society. Catholics believe that it is important to stand up for the rights of families and children.

## 3. The Common Good

Our economy, our politics, our laws – all affect human dignity and our ability to grow as part of our community. Catholicism teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to promote the common good and make sure nobody gets left behind.



## 4. Rights and Responsibilities

Human dignity can only be protected and a healthy community can be achieved if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. We also have duties and responsibilities -- to one another, to our families. All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a matter of justice.

## 5. Stewardship of creation

Catholic Christian tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Christians are called to protect the planet, living in harmony with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions which cannot be ignored.



## 6. Dignity of the work and the workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. They also have a fundamental right to organise and join unions. No one should be allowed to have excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life.



## 7. Preferential Option for the Poor

The moral test of a society is how it treats the poorest members of that society. Government decisions should be judged on how they affect the poor. The option for the poor is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good. A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs, to those who are poor and on the margins of society



## Christian Organisations

If you were searching for a collective group of Christians, the first place you would probably think to look would be a parish. But Christianity is so much more than that. Christianity is everywhere. An example of this is in schools. Across the world there are Christian religious primary, secondary and higher education institutes. Although they may differ in denomination, they all have one universal purpose: to promote the values of the Gospels and to hand on the message of Jesus Christ.



Another example of organisations that promote Gospel values are charities:

<http://www.charitychoice.co.uk/charities/religious/christian>

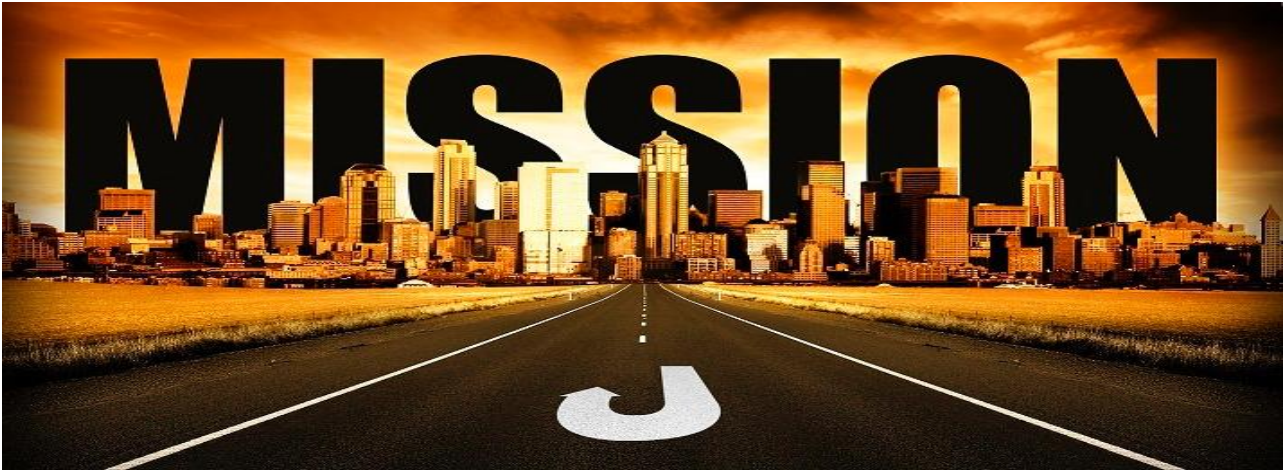


SCIAF is a charitable organisation set up and run on behalf of the Church in Scotland. It is part of the Church's mission. It describes its vision and mission in the following way

As the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland and part of the global Caritas family, the work of SCIAF is born of deeply held values which inspire all our work. The SCIAF vision is of a world in which all people, especially the poor and oppressed, have the opportunity and the means to live life and live it to the full. In our mission we are inspired by the Gospel call to build a just world. SCIAF challenges injustice by strengthening poor and oppressed people and by stimulating the Scottish public to share in our common struggle for human dignity. We are proud to be Scotland's Aid Agency. SCIAF hopes that you will join us in our work to reduce poverty and create a just world for all.

### Task:

**Research and identify as many different ways that Christians try to follow Jesus example of love, compassion, forgiveness and service to others.**



Jesus talks about mission and the impact of spreading the Gospel in the only parable he explains to his apostles.

### **The Parable**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

### **The Explanation**

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

From this parable it is clear that spreading the word of the Gospel is an important duty for Christians.



Christians can live out the Gospels by being part of the Church's mission. The apostles of Jesus' (the first Christians) were given clear instructions by Jesus just before he ascended into heaven: to go out and spread his message of salvation to all people.

The early Christians set about spreading the Good News (Gospel) and baptising in the face of all sorts of persecution. They took their mission very seriously. There is clearly a message in this for modern day Christians who perhaps lack the early enthusiasm of those first followers.

**SOURCE: Matthew 28: 16-20**

Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them.

When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated.

Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look. I am with you always; yes, to the end of

## **Pentecost**

The Day of Pentecost is regarded as the Birth of the Church. The reason for this is because the apostles start to do what Jesus asked them to do before returning to heaven. Christians believe that the apostles received the gifts of the Holy Spirit (at the event known as Pentecost) such as the ability to speak in different languages, which equipped the apostles to carry out their mission.

**SOURCE: Acts 2:1-12, 22-23**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Then Peter addressed the crowd... "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.

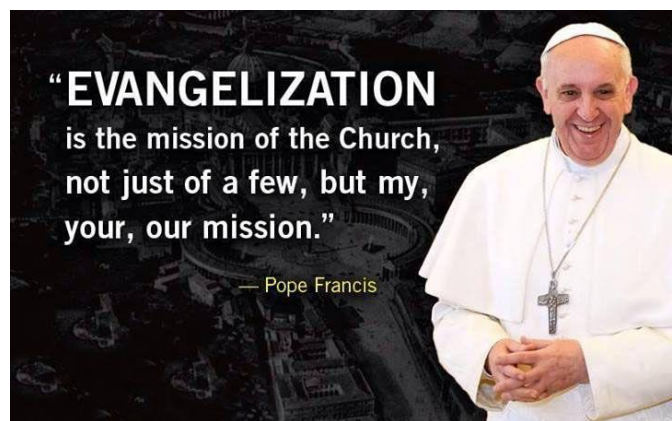
## Paul's Missionary Journeys

The spread of Christianity in the first century would not have been as successful as it was if not for St Paul. He is one of the most important figures in early Christianity because of the journeys he made spreading the teachings of Christ as well as the letters he wrote, letters which make up a large portion of the New Testament. Paul not only spread the message to people, he gave clear instructions on how to live faithfully according to Gospel teachings, how to behave morally, how to build God's kingdom.



## Evangelisation

In order to spread God's word and be actively involved in the mission of the church, Christians are called to proclaim and witness the Gospels. This is known as evangelisation. Historically, the Christian community had a tendency to focus on evangelising to those who were not Christian, those who perhaps had not yet heard the saving word of God.



In 1975 however, the Catholic Church (under leadership of Pope Paul VI) released *Evangelii Nuntiandi* or 'Evangelisation in the Modern World', which explained that evangelising was for all people – not just those who were not Christian in an attempt to bring the Word to them, but also to those who were already baptised Christians. Later in 2013, Pope Francis emphasised the importance of evangelisation within the mission of the church:



**SOURCE: Evangelii Gaudium, 2013 (Pope Francis)**

*Lastly, we cannot forget that evangelisation is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him. Many of them are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet.*

How might Christians evangelise today?

- 1** Be positive and joyful. Offer 'digital smiles' and have a sense of humour. As Pope Francis says, 'no "funeral faces" or "sourpusses"!'
- 2** Never bear false witness on the internet. Never 'like' a lie!
- 3** Fill the internet with love. Seek to include a sense of solidarity with the suffering in the world.
- 4** Avoid aggression and 'preachiness' online; try not to be judgemental. Instead, try Pope Francis's approach of 'tenderness'.
- 5** Have a broad back when criticisms and insults are made. When possible, gently correct.
- 6** Pray in the digital world! Establish sacred spaces, opportunities for stillness, reflection and meditation online.
- 7** Church has always been about 'gathering'. Create connections and build community. Share posts that have a powerful Gospel witness.
- 8** Promote online behaviours that keep everyone safe. Use the internet responsibly!
- 9** Respect your dignity and the dignity of others in all that you do online.
- 10** The internet has the power and potential to bear witness — share the Good News online!

---

### **Questions to deepen your understanding**

1. Explain the importance of early Church writings on the lives of Christians today.
2. Explain the key teachings of the Gospels and the impact of these teachings on Christians.

### **Questions that will develop your analysis and evaluation skills**

3. 'Scripture is a helpful source of morality for Christians.' Evaluate the statement.
4. 'The words of Jesus Christ are as relevant to society today as they were 2,000 years ago.' Evaluate the statement.

---

## 8. Beliefs about Jesus: Death



### Why did Jesus have to die?

Christians believe that Jesus died to save us from sin and death. The New Testament deals with this issue in two different ways. There are historical reasons why he was arrested and executed and there are theological reasons.

#### SOURCE: Nicene Creed

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,*

### The Historical Reason

The historical approach helps us understand the religious approach. Jesus death has to be seen in the context of God's saving plan for humanity and this has to be more than just a series of connected historical events. At the time, Jesus words and actions unsettled the Jewish and Roman authorities. Jesus definitely upset the Jewish leaders

- with his claims about himself
- his healings on the Sabbath
- and his interpretation of the Law of Moses.

He condemned the Pharisees and Sadducees as hypocrites and they accused him of blasphemy over his claims about his relationship with God. This is demonstrated in his

- 'Cleansing of the Temple' when he rages against the misuse of his 'Father's house'
- and his triumphal entry into Jerusalem like a king

---

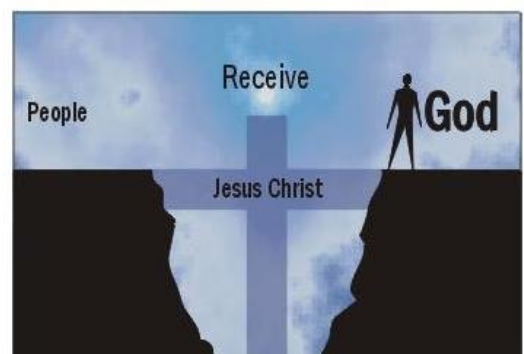
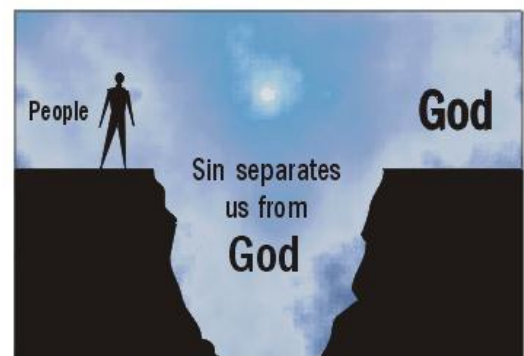
Actions like these led the Pharisees and Sadducees to see him as a danger not only to their own power and position but also to the religious faith of the people. The Pharisees and Sadducees really feared that the people were falling for a false Messiah.

At his trial Jesus is found guilty of blasphemy – **for claiming to be the Christ** – **effectively claiming to be God**. He was sentenced to death. While the Law of Moses did include the death penalty, the situation in Palestine at that time meant that only the Romans could put a person to death. Unfortunately for the Jewish leaders, blasphemy was not a crime under Roman law and the Gospels tell us that when Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, he could find no case against him. So to get the death penalty they convince Pilate that Jesus is also **guilty of treason for claiming to be 'King of the Jews'**. Pilate gives in to this demand because he senses that there will be a riot if he refuses. So by letting the crowd decide he avoids upsetting the Jewish leaders and the potential riot. **So from a historical point of view, Jesus dies because it makes everyone's life easier.**

### The Religious Reason

However, the historical approach on its own does not take into account the religious and theological significance of all that Jesus said and did. Nor does it take into account the religious history of the Jewish people themselves. Jesus life, death and resurrection have to be seen in terms of the whole story of God's involvement in human affairs. Christianity is nothing if not story of salvation.

God made Covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David as the first steps in restoring the broken relationship with Humanity. These Covenants were often sealed with sacrifices of one kind or another. For Christians, Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice in the ultimate Covenant. He dies so that humanity can be saved.





Just before the people were freed from slavery in Egypt, the Jewish people were told to sacrifice a lamb to God and mark their homes with the blood, so that they would be spared from the angel of death and live. At the time of Jesus, animal sacrifice was an integral part of Jewish worship. The purpose of animal sacrifice in Judaism at the time of Jesus was to allow a person **atone** (make up) for their sins by offering the life of the animal to God in place of their own. God in his merciful nature accepts the animal sacrifice in place of his or her own life.

Jesus' great sacrifice pays the price of all sin and therefore, for those who believe in him, there is no longer a need for animal sacrifice to pay the price of sin. For this reason, Christians sometime refer to Jesus as 'The ransom for sin' or 'The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'

**SOURCE:** (Roman Missal)

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice not for his own sin, but for the sin of **all** humanity: past, present and future. So the timing of Jesus death is rich with religious significance. He is 'sacrificed' during the Passover festival. This is why Christians make the link between the first Passover and Jesus sacrifice on the cross.

Christians believe that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah and God in human form. For Christians if God does not become man in Jesus, die, rise from the dead and ascend into heaven; eternal life is not possible for humanity. The whole point of God becoming man was to die and rise again in order to save humanity from sin, so that it would be possible for all to inherit eternal life. The source passage from Hebrews notes that Jesus offered service to God so that the sins of the people may be forgiven.

**This is atonement.**

**SOURCE:** (Hebrews 2: 17–18)

*This means that he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order to be their faithful and merciful High Priest in his service to God, so that the people's sins would be forgiven. And now he can help those who are tempted because he himself was tempted and suffered.*



---

## Atonement

Atonement is about ways in which God and humanity can be 'at one' again. It is the means by which a sinful person can be forgiven and reconciled to God. Christians understand that Jesus offered the perfect atonement on the cross for humanity's sins. Sin had estranged humanity from God, but Jesus' action for salvation meant that humanity and God could be 'at-one-ment' again.

### Different ideas about atonement

#### Ransom

For us, a ransom is money paid to a kidnapper to free someone. In the Roman world it could also be the fee paid to free a slave. The New Testament often talks about humanity as being 'slaves to sin'. So Jesus death becomes is the ransom payment to free us from the slavery of sin.

**SOURCE:** (Mark 10:45)

*'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'*

#### Sacrifice

In Old Testament Judaism animals were sacrificed to atone for sins. By accepting the sacrifice; God forgave the person their sins.

Jesus becomes the ultimate sacrificial lamb. In the Last Supper he showed how his death would lead to the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation of God with humanity.

**SOURCE:** (Leviticus 5:17-18)

*If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands...[he] is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering and ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way, the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed.*

#### Payment of a debt

Humanity is in debt to God for their sins. Humanity has to make up for these sins somehow but does not have the ability to do this on its own. So God intervenes and allows his Son to become one of us so that he can offer himself as payment for the debt we owe to God. Jesus has the ability as God to do this makes suitable payment for the offences committed by humanity.

**SOURCE:** (Luke 22:20)

*'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you'.*

**SOURCE:** (1 Corinthians 5:7)

*'For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed'.*

**The key belief is that the Christ had to suffer and die in order to save us from our sins.**



---

## The Sacrifice of the Mass / The Eucharist

The Eucharist or Sacrifice of the Mass is the most central form of worship for Catholics because they believe that through the Mass they are recreating the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The word **Eucharist means “Thanksgiving”** and the Mass is celebrated in thanksgiving for all that God has done for his people. Thanking God for...

- His creation
- His revelation of himself in scripture / the Bible
- For all his saving actions
- Especially the sending of his Son to die for our sins.

At the heart of the Eucharist is the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. This links the Mass to all the sacrificial actions that were used to seal the covenants and to the sacrificial acts that were traditionally used to help people atone for their sins.

The bread and wine at Mass have their origins in the Passover meal Jews celebrate to commemorate their freedom from slavery in Egypt. At the Last Supper (celebrated on the night before Passover) Jesus gives these traditional symbols new meaning for Christians; he reinterprets them to represent his own body and blood; his own sacrifice on the cross. This time the sacrifice frees from the slavery to sin. The earliest Christian communities met for the ‘breaking of the bread’. The historic sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is made present in the Mass.



**SOURCE: St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans**

**For this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said: ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me.’**

**In the same way, after the supper he took the cup and said, ‘This cup is God’s new covenant, sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me.’**

## What Catholics believe about the Eucharist

- They are uniting themselves with Jesus’ sacrifice by offering themselves to God
- They are part of the Last Supper celebrated by Christ.
- Catholics Christians believe that the bread and wine are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ at consecration. They believe that Jesus is actually present in the bread and wine at communion.

---

**Questions to deepen your understanding**

1. Outline two approaches to answering the question “Why did Jesus have to die?”.
2. How does the death of Jesus link to the ritual sacrifices of the Old Testament?

**Questions that will develop your analysis and evaluation skills**

3. “Atonement” sums up who and what Jesus is all about. To what extent does the concept of atonement sum up Jesus life and death?

---

## 9. Beliefs about Jesus: Resurrection



St. Paul identifies the resurrection as the most central belief of the early Christian community. Jesus must suffer and die but Jesus' death is only half of the story. In order for the mission to be complete there has to be the resurrection: **Death and resurrection = salvation from sin and eternal life for all humanity.**

It is the belief of Christianity that on the third day Jesus rose from the dead. Because Jesus is human he is able to die in the ultimate sacrifice for sins. Because he is divine he is able to rise from the dead and give us the chance of eternal life.

Christians believe that Jesus died and then rose from the dead. This was the first and most basic belief of Christians.

- They lived for it.
- They preached it.
- They died for it.

### **SOURCE: Luke 24: 1-5**

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.*

### St. Paul and the Resurrection

Originally called Saul, Paul was a Jew and a Pharisee. He believed in one God, followed the commandments, **He believed in the Messiah. But NOT Jesus**

To begin with Paul actively sought out Christians and had them imprisoned or killed. He was responsible for the death of the first Christian to die for his beliefs – Stephen. Stephen believed so strongly in the resurrection that he was prepared to die for that belief. Paul is so convinced the other way that he is prepared to oversee his execution.

### SOURCE: 1 Corinthians 15:12-14,17

*12 Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching has been useless and your faith has been useless...17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*

The big change for Paul comes with his journey to Damascus. On that journey he experiences something that changes his life forever. He has, what he believes is an encounter with the **RISEN Jesus**. From then on he travelled all over the Mediterranean preaching the Good News of the resurrection.

### Task

Read through the 4 versions of the resurrection in the gospels and then complete a comparison grid similar to the one below.

Common to all 4	Unique in Matthew	Unique in Mark	Unique in Luke	Unique in John

---

## Resurrection = Victory over Sin and Death

For Christians, Christ's resurrection is a victory over sin because he defeats death. By rising from the dead Jesus gives everyone the opportunity of overcoming sin and death because new life after this one is now possible.

All Christians believe that the way to eternal life is faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Humanity shared in the original sin of Adam and were sentenced to suffering and death, so now humanity shares eternal life with Jesus. Those who have been baptised share in Christ's death and resurrection and look forward to being with the risen Christ.

Humanity shared in the original sin of Adam and were sentenced to suffering and death, so now humanity shares eternal life with Jesus. Those who have been baptised share in Christ's death and resurrection and look forward to being with the risen Christ.

Christ's resurrection ensures that . . .

- Sin, suffering, evil and death caused by the Fall will be defeated
- Christians will also be raised
- There will be an eternal life with God through Christ
- Christ can help Christians in the present through the Holy Spirit

### **SOURCE: (1 Corinthians 15: 22)**

*For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ.*

### **SOURCE: (1 Corinthians 15: 45)**

*For the scripture says, 'The first man, Adam, was created a living being; but the last Adam is the life-giving Spirit.'*

The resurrection

- Proves that Jesus is who said he was - how else could he overcome death?
- Is proof of the power of God
- Means everyone can share in the resurrection by accepting Jesus.

---

## **Physical and spiritual understanding of resurrection**

All Christians believe that there will be eternal life with God for the faithful but have debated over what form the resurrected body will take. Much of the discussion hinges on the understanding of Jesus' resurrection and whether it should be understood in physical, spiritual or other terms.

### **Resurrection as physical fact**

The gospels all report an empty tomb on Easter morning. Mary Magdalene saw the risen Lord in the garden and the disciples saw him, spoke with him and ate with him.

### **Resurrection of spirit**

The resurrection is a different sort of existence from an earthly resuscitated body. Resurrection experiences are Christ's spirit, which survived death, communicating with the apostles. The disciples' very real experiences led to physical interpretations of resurrection.

### **Resurrection beyond historical analysis**

The resurrection is not the sort of event that can be studied like history. The empty tomb proved that the resurrection was not just a spiritual event, but how a body was or was not brought back to life was not the central issue. The New Testament emphasises that the response required to the event was one of faith. Faith in resurrection rather than its historical details is what is most important.

A final belief about Jesus is that he appeared to some of his followers after his Resurrection.

**Task: Look up one of these stories and summarise what happened.**

- his first appearance to Mary Magdalene at the tomb
- showing himself to his disciples in the upper room (often referred to as the story of 'Doubting Thomas'),
- the road to Emmaus
- meeting Simon Peter by the sea of Galilee where Jesus tells him how and when he will die
- and other appearances to both small and large groups of followers.



---

## The resurrection today - Easter

Christians prepare for Easter by preparing with 40 days of

- Prayer
- Fasting
- Giving to charity

This period of preparation is called Lent

It echoes the 40 years the Hebrew people wandered the desert in preparation for entering the Promised Land and the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his public life.

Lent finishes with the great services of Holy Week that chart the last days of Jesus' life.

- Palm Sunday - his triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- Holy Thursday - when he gives his apostles the task of celebrating the Mass
- Good Friday - when he dies to save humanity from sin
- Easter Sunday - when he rises to new and eternal life



Easter Sunday is celebrated with a special nighttime Mass (Vigil). This is celebrated (ideally at midnight) at the end of Holy Saturday. It is a long but joyful celebration in 4 parts

- The Service of Light

Begins with a lighted fire outside the Church from which a single candle is lit. The lighted candle represents Jesus and his life-giving good news. The light from this candle is then passed on from one person to another. This reminds Christians of their need to share their faith with others. Our mission to spread the gospel – evangelization

---

- The Liturgy of the Word

Unlike other times of the year there are up to 7 readings from the Old Testament at the Easter Vigil. These recall the History of Salvation. So the story of the Covenants made by God with his people are retold leading up to the story of Jesus' resurrection which Christians believe is the final part of the plan.



- The Liturgy of Baptism

One of the ways Christians believe that Original Sin can be removed from an individual is through the sacrament of Baptism. Since the Easter vigil is all about the story of salvation the Church traditionally carries out baptisms of adults at the Easter vigil. This highlights what the whole night's celebration is about. Being saved from sin.

- The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The central part of any Catholic service is the celebration of the Eucharist. This recalls how Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross and gives them his body and blood in the form of bread and wine to commemorate his sacrifice.

### Questions to deepen your understanding

1. In what 3 ways do Christians understand the resurrection of Jesus?
2. For Christians, what does the resurrection of Jesus achieve?
3. St. Paul talks about Adam and Jesus' resurrection in two passages above. What link is he making between the Fall and the Resurrection?

### Questions that will develop your analysis and evaluation skills

4. Based on everything you have learned about the resurrection in this section explain how significant for Christians is the belief in the resurrection?

---

## 10. Judgement – Heaven & Hell



Christians believe that there will be a point at the end of time when God will judge all humans. Each person will be judged on how they have spent their time on earth: Have they followed God's commandments? Have they loved their neighbour? Have they lived a morally good life?

Christianity links ideas of judgment with the Jesus. He is the Messiah or Christ (the anointed one) who brings the start of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus often used parables to illustrate an important message to his listeners. One of these is 'The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats' in which Jesus gives his audience an insight as to what the end of time will be like. The parable shows that it is our actions towards our neighbours which is what we will be judged on. However, because Jesus himself identifies with the person who is a prisoner, hungry person etc. the issue of judgment is also about our relationship to Jesus as the Son of the Father. For whoever believes in the Son of the Father is promised eternal life (John 5: 22).

### SOURCE: MATTHEW 25:31-46

*'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 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."*

*'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?"*

*'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

*'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me."*

*'They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?"*

*'He will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."*

*'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'*

---

So...

- Jesus will return as king at the end of time
- All people will have to stand and be judged
- They will be divided into the good/righteous (sheep) and the bad/unrighteous (goats)
- The good will inherit the Kingdom of God and eternal life
- The bad will be sent to hell and eternal punishment

The Gospel of John says that people who believe in Jesus will not die, but will have eternal life (John 3: 16-17). It also says that no one comes to the Father (heaven) except through Jesus. For the Christian therefore, Jesus is a central channel for humanity's eternal life with God.

**SOURCE: (John 3:16-17 ).**

*“Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.”*

### **Roman Catholicism view on Judgement**

- Roman Catholics believe an individual judgement takes place after each person's death, and a general judgment will take place at the Second Coming of Christ.
- Roman Catholics also believe that most people must be purified before entering Heaven and that time is spent in purgatory - a place between earth and Heaven - purging away' or cleansing the sins that have been committed.
- Part of Roman Catholic teaching states that living people can do deeds to benefit people already in purgatory.

### **Protestant view on Judgement**

- The Church of Scotland and other Protestant churches have rejected the belief in purgatory stating that purgatory is not mentioned in the Bible either in the New Testament or the Old Testament, and that Jesus had already paid for the sins of the Fall.
- The Church of Scotland does, however believe in life after death. In Protestant funeral services a person's soul is committed to God for safekeeping. Funeral readings also reinforce the belief that after death a person's soul goes to God in Heaven.
- The Church of Scotland states that at the end of time they will receive a new body, just as Jesus did after he has been raised from the dead.



The consequences of judgement for the Christian are often seen in terms of two opposing destinations, heaven and hell. The belief in heaven and hell exists in a number of religious traditions. In Christianity, the belief is simple: Life extends beyond the grave to an afterlife because of their belief in the nature of God and in the saving acts of Jesus Christ.

While the general resurrection will be at the last day, some Christians speak of individual resurrections after death, where the saints are with God in heaven. For example, Jesus on the cross says to the repentant robber 'today you shall be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23: 43).

### **Heaven**

For Christians, heaven is the place of God where all those judged righteous on the last day will receive their eternal reward and reign with Christ in glory. Heaven has been described in different ways in the course of Christian history. The New Testament gives us some clues regarding the nature of heaven. Jesus calls it his 'Father's house' and 'paradise'. New Testament parables picture heaven as a communal experience (a banquet, wedding feast etc.). Some see it as blissful rest, others as a vision of God, and the Book of Revelation sees it as a heavenly Jerusalem, a holy city. All agree that in heaven we will live eternally in God's presence and be in a loving relationship with him.





---

## Hell

In Christian theology, hell is seen as the complete opposite of heaven, reserved for those who do not repent for their sins. Hell is variously seen as a place of torment, torture and fire; where those who refuse to repent their sins are separated from God for ever. All chances of happiness and peace are lost in hell. The New Testament pictures hell as a prison with gates and bars.

Some Christians, however, have felt uneasy with the idea of hell; not least because it seems to go against the idea that God will overcome evil; also such a form of 'justice' seems to question the idea of an all-loving God. In 1996 the Church of England, in a report entitled *The Mystery of Salvation*, said that hell should be understood symbolically as annihilation. If one does not go to heaven, one becomes in effect 'nothing'.

Since Jesus' death is accepted as the act which frees humans from sin, Christians believe that it is possible for all persons to achieve eternal life with God in heaven – that is the ultimate goal. In order to achieve this, a person needs to be free from sin. All humans are born with Original Sin but because of Jesus, all sins can be forgiven. Therefore according to Christianity, eternal life in heavenly paradise is



achievable on the conditions that a person believes in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus **and** repents and is forgiven for their sins before entering God's kingdom.

## Purgatory

Option three in Christianity is something called 'Purgatory'. It is thought to be an immediate state after death for those destined to go to heaven, but are not yet ready. Those who die in a state of partial grace, who have not yet reached a certain level of holiness yet, go to purgatory first. So in simple terms, Christians believe it to be a transitional place, sometimes compared by some to a waiting room.

The belief in purgatory does not exist in all Christian traditions. It is most commonly associated with the Roman Catholic Church, but there are other Christians that accept this teaching. Additionally, some Eastern Orthodox Churches believe in the notion of a change of the soul occurring after death through the prayers and intercessions of those still alive.



---

According to the Christian belief, the amount of time a soul spends in Purgatory is dependent upon their sins: The greater the sin, the longer the purification process. The Christians that accept the existence of purgatory also believe that the time a soul spends in purgatory can be shortened by the prayers of those still living. That is why Catholics regularly pray for the dead and especially during the month of November which begins with two celebrations for all those who have died.

1. All Saints Day – when they celebrate those who have died and are in heaven.
2. All Souls Day – when they pray for all those souls in purgatory in hope that they will soon enter the full joy of heaven.

### **Exam Questions**

In what ways are Christian beliefs about the nature of human beings and judgement connected?

---

## 11. Prayer & Worship



The thing probably most associate with being a Christian is the fact that they go to church – a lot. Christians go to church...

- Every Sunday to celebrate Mass (Catholics) and to recall Jesus saving death and resurrection
- For Baptisms of both infants and adults (usually at Easter)
- For Weddings – a covenant between couples and God
- For Funerals – an expression of faith in the resurrection
- To commemorate special events in the life of Jesus
  - Christmas – his birth
  - Palm Sunday – his triumphal entry into Jerusalem
  - Holy Thursday – the Last Supper
  - Good Friday – his death on the cross
  - Easter Sunday – his resurrection

### **The Church**

The word Church is Greek in origin meaning ‘The Lord’s House’. But in the New Testament the word ‘ekklesia’ is often used, which means community of Christian believers worshipping. Its only later that the building where the believers go to worship becomes known as a church.

This is linked to Jesus’ words that humans are now Christ’s body on earth. Christianity is very much a faith centred on togetherness, and this is reflected very much in Christian worship. For example, going to Church on a Sunday not only because of the commandment to “Keep the Sabbath holy” (Exodus), but to come together in faith and love as Christ’s body on earth.

---

## Prayer and Worship

Think about God and humanity being in a relationship and how they keep that relationship going. Christians believe it is important to maintain a good relationship with God and they do this through maintaining a good level of communication with Him. This communication with God is called **prayer**.

Prayer is a central part Christianity. In his letters, St Paul repeatedly said that although it can sometimes be challenging to include prayer in everyday life, it is of the highest importance because it brings the faithful closer to God.

Christians pray in a number of ways e.g. regular prayer at different times of the day, prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of intercession. The oldest Christian prayer is The Lord's Prayer or the 'Our Father', given by Jesus himself during his Sermon on the Mount and is said by all Christian denominations. The Our Father is a good example of two different types of prayer in one. The first part is all praise and worship of God.

Praise and Worship	Intercession (asking for help)
<i>Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come Thy will be done On earth as it is in heaven.</i>	<i>Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.</i>

Some types of Christianity practice spontaneous prayer with very little structure, preferring instead to be led by the Holy Spirit.

The Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches have a number of set prayers. For example, the Book of Common Prayer used in the Anglican tradition includes Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany, prayers for Holy Communion as well as Baptism, Marriage and prayers for funerals. In the Roman Catholic rite, there are several books used for prayer such as the Missal and Lectionary used for Mass, and the Divine Office which consists of Morning and Evening Prayers.

In the Catholic and Orthodox Churches there are the prayers of devotion (**not worship**) to saints – those who led good Christian lives and are now with God so can be called on through prayer to intercede for humanity.

---

## Private Prayer

Most people pray privately at some time or another in their lives. Very often their prayer comes into one of the following areas:

Petition	Asking God for something
Thanksgiving	Exactly what it says. Thanking God for prayers answered or out of appreciation for what we have.
Penance	Saying sorry to God for things we have done wrong and asking for his forgiveness.



Private prayer can take place anywhere and take all sorts of forms. It can be spoken or silent. It can be based on scripture or some other focus e.g. an icon. It can involve meditation or it can take the form of learned formal prayers. It can be done sitting, kneeling, standing or even lying down.

## Meditation

Meditation is one of the oldest forms of private prayer used by Christians. It is a way of reflecting on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, his example and his teaching. usually there is some sort of focus to the meditation e.g.

- a candle
- a passage from the Gospels
- a repeated word or phrase

A Christian meditating on a passage from the Gospel might read the same passage 3 times and meditate on what it meant to the people who were there, what it meant to the early Christians and what it should mean for them today as they try to live out their life as a Christian.

## Fasting

Another less obvious form of prayer is fasting. This can mean eating less or avoiding eating certain foods e.g. meat. Christians traditionally fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This reminds them of Jesus fasting for 40 days before beginning his public life and his enforced fast during his arrest, trial and execution. Fasting helps Christians focus on the true meaning of these events and also enables them to think about how they should respond to the example of Jesus.

Why do Christians pray?	What impact does prayer have?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get closer to God and understand what God wants of them</li> <li>• For comfort in the face of physical, emotional or spiritual difficulty</li> <li>• To ask God for help</li> <li>• To thank God for something</li> <li>• Because they see it as part of what it means to be a Christian</li> <li>• To set the tone for their day</li> <li>• To examine their conscience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can bring them closer to God</li> <li>• It can strengthen their faith</li> <li>• It can serve as an example for others</li> <li>• It can provide support and comfort for others</li> <li>• It can draw attention to the needs of others (think candlelit vigils)</li> <li>• It can witness to faith (religious processions or outdoor Masses)</li> </ul>

### Public Prayer and Worship

Jesus made it clear that coming together to pray was one way to experience his presence. Depending on the circumstances public prayer can vary greatly from informal prayer and meditation groups to full scale liturgical celebrations involving huge numbers of people.

**SOURCE: Matthew 18:20**

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

### Sunday

In Christianity the most important day of the week is Sunday - the day of the resurrection. This traditionally is the day that Christians go to church. The church building is a place of communal and public worship. In the very early days of Christianity there were no specialised church buildings so Christians would meet in houses or other buildings for the celebration of the Eucharist. As the numbers of Christians increased the buildings became custom built for celebrating the Eucharist.

---

Sunday services involve a wide range of different prayers and signs of worship. For example...

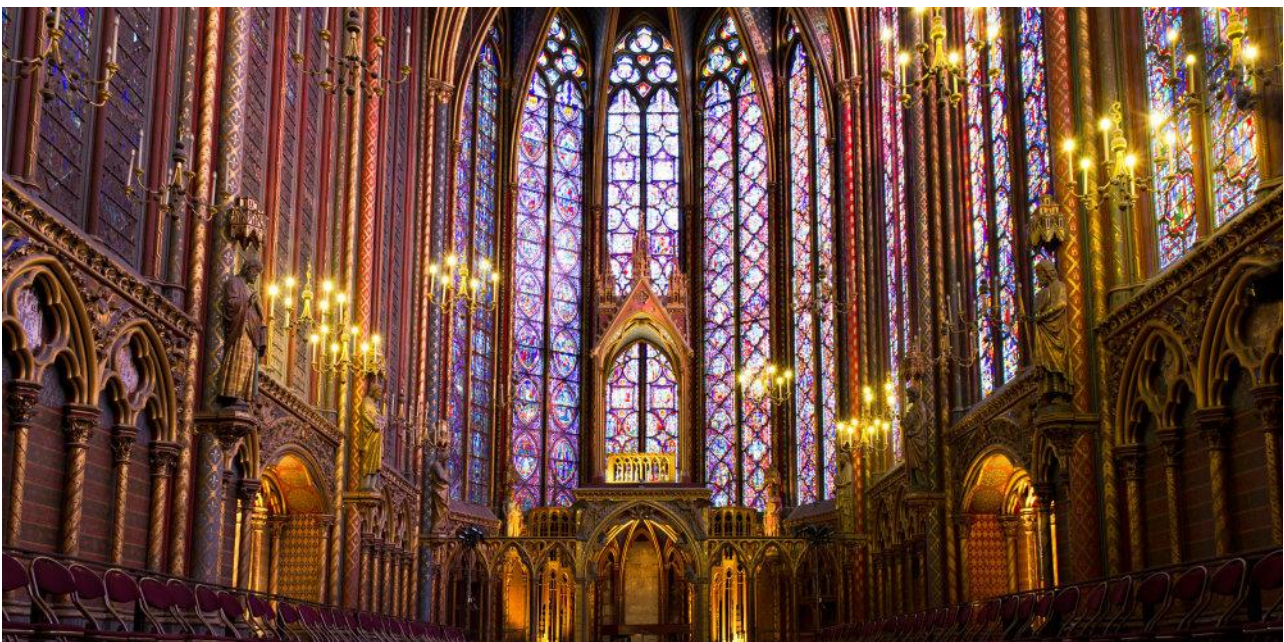
- Christians kneel before God as a sign of respect.
- They stand to listen to the Gospels at Mass because Jesus words are God's words.
- They say set prayers together like the Our Father
- They listen to readings from the Bible and reflect on the meaning and message.
- They sing hymns of praise, thanksgiving and sorrow

Even the buildings that Christians worship in are part of the activity. Church Buildings are often

- **Cross shaped** to remind worshippers of Jesus dying to save them.
- **Very tall** which was meant to draw the believers mind upwards to heaven
- **Faced east** so that the rising sun would shine in and again remind worshippers of Jesus own rising from the dead.
- **Statues** and **stained-glass** windows showing saints or scenes from the bible.

All this was designed to remind people of why they were there. Churches were designed to support worship by...

- Bringing the community together
- Focusing the worshippers' minds on key beliefs
- Strengthening their sense of faith and belonging
- Providing a space that was different from the rest of the world. Something that made them think about of the Kingdom of Heaven.





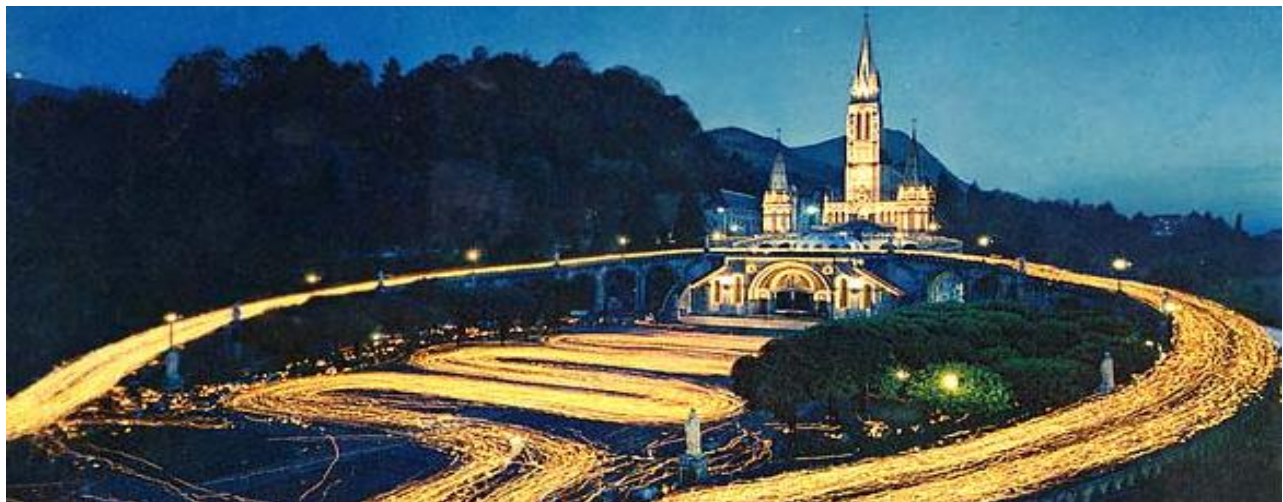
---

## Pilgrimage

Another form of public worship is going on pilgrimage. Christians, might go on pilgrimage to places of special importance to them e.g. Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem. They go there because of the connection to Jesus.



In addition to these places Catholics also visit places where Mary is believed to have appeared at different times. The most famous of these places is Lourdes, where the rosary is prayed during a spectacular candlelit procession.



## Devotion to Mary

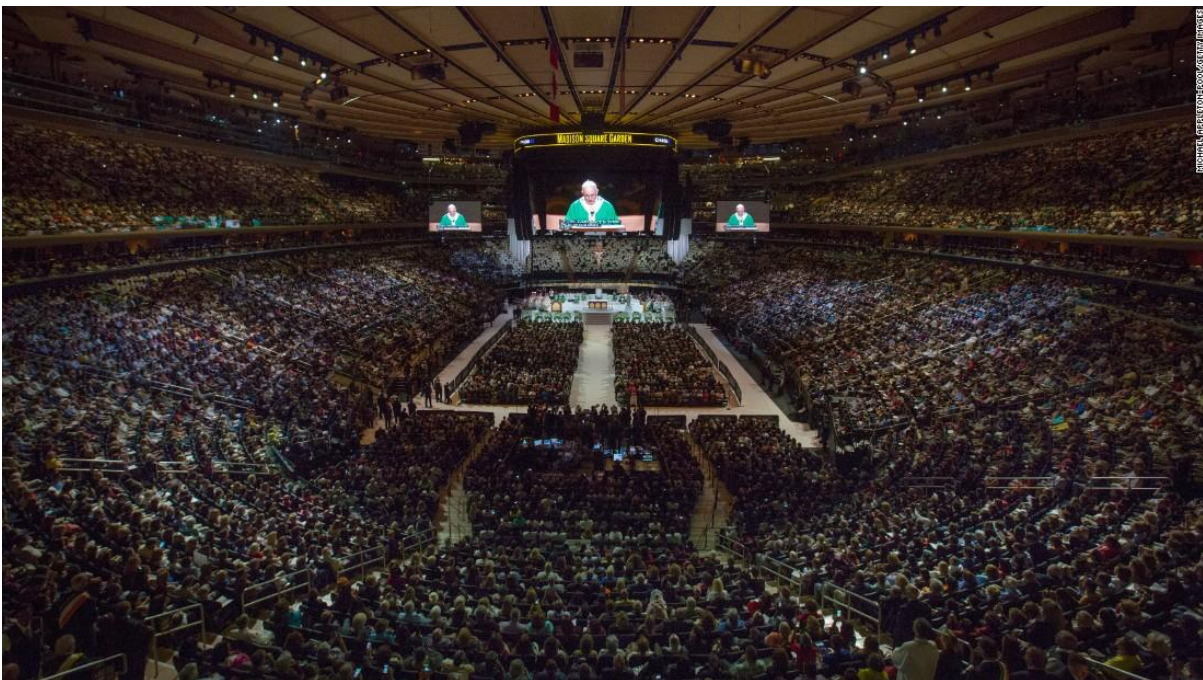
Over the years Christianity has developed a huge number of prayer styles. Prayerful devotion to Mary the mother of Jesus is limited to Catholic and Orthodox Christians. She is the Mother of God and because of this, Mary has a special place in the Christianity. Catholics will pray the rosary. During this they say batches of 10 Hail Marys while reflecting on events from the life of Jesus. The repetition of the Hail Marys gives a rhythm to the prayer and helps cut out any distractions. It is important to note that Christians **do not worship** Mary, they pray to her asking her to intercede on their behalf, since she has a relationship with God like no other person. Mary is **not** worshipped –only God is worshipped.

---

## Large Scale Religious Services



Religious worship can take place just about anywhere. Here Pope Francis is celebrating Mass for an estimated 3 million Catholics on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro. And here he is again in Madison Square Gardens in New York.



Large scale events like this have the benefit of bringing people together from all over the world and reminding Christians that they share their faith with millions of people. This can be very reassuring at times when they feel that their beliefs and values are being rejected or mocked by others.



---

1. (a) Describe one way in which Christians worship. **3**

1. (b) In what ways might worship affect Christians in their daily lives? **5**

**Answers could refer to any of the following**

**2. To what extent does worship benefit Christians?**

Knowledge and understanding may include:

- Examples of sources
- Christian beliefs related to worship
- Christian practices related to worship

Evaluation may include:

- Judgements about whether worship is beneficial or not to individuals
- Judgements about whether worship is beneficial or not to the Christian community
- Judgements on the impact of individual and/or community worship in Christianity on them and the wider community