

Year 9 RE Skills – Christian Beliefs

Game Changer: 'I can interpret and evaluate Christian ideas and assess how they have impacted the world around me.'

This unit focuses on introducing the key concepts of Christian Beliefs and what they mean for practitioners in today's world. Students will develop their knowledge and key analytical and evaluative skills in assessing the relative importance and impact of different beliefs.

Omnipotent	The idea that God is all powerful.
Omni-benevolent	The idea that God is all loving.
Omniscient	The idea that God is all knowing.
Monotheism	The idea that there is only one God . Christians are monotheistic.
Creation	The idea that God created everything. Christians may believe in the biblical version of 7 day creation or the scientific Big Bang Theory.
The Holy Trinity	The concept of God in Christianity: there is one God but in three parts – the father, the son, and the holy spirit.
Sin	Actions that go against God's wishes.
Original Sin	The first sin: Adam and Eve disobeying God by eating fruit in the Garden of Eden. Meant to be passed on to everyone since.
Problem of Evil	The existence of evil in the world presents a challenge to the idea of an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God. If God is both of these things, why isn't he stopping bad things?
Free Will	Christians believe that God has given them the ability to choose right and wrong, and will judge them for their choices and actions.

Characteristics of God



Christians believe that God, and therefore all parts of the trinity, has certain attributes that make Him unique.

First, God is meant to be omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent. God loves everyone, including people who do bad things, and wants them to seek forgiveness (and will give it if they ask).

God is also meant to be **transcendent**. This means that he is beyond human knowledge and understanding. He also exists outside of time and space, and consequently was not created and cannot die.

Creation and Adam and Eve

In the Bible in the **Book of Genesis**, God creates everything in 7 days. Some Christians believe this version of creation, following a **literal** interpretation of the Bible as the word of God and absolutely true. God then makes the first humans, Adam and Eve, and gives them the **Garden of Eden** to live in, commanding them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge in the middle of the garden. They are tempted by a snake, however, with several awful consequences:

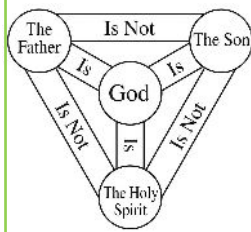
- They are thrown out of the Garden
- They will now age and die (they were immortal inside the Garden)
- Eve and all women then on will have pain in childbirth
- Adam and all men then on will have to work for their food and shelter
- **All** their descendants, which is **everyone**, are born sinful. They are born with desires, and can't control them. We are therefore born **sinful** and **wanting** to sin. As only good people can go to heaven, this potentially means we **cannot get to heaven**.



Many Christians do not believe in this story now, because of the theory of evolution and the Big Bang Theory providing a scientific explanation of how humans and the universe began. They would follow a **symbolic** interpretation of the story, that God created everything, but not exactly as the Bible suggests (e.g. that God made the Big Bang happen).

God and the Holy Trinity

Christians believe in **one** God; they are **monotheistic**. However, they believe that the one God has three different persons – all of whom are different from each other, but make the one God together.



Different parts of the trinity have different roles: The Father is the creator, and the judge of everyone and will send everyone to heaven or hell when they die. The Son is Jesus, and is a role model to Christians on how to live. The Holy Spirit is the part that helps Christians in their day-to-day lives, and answers prayers, helps people in times of crisis and reaches out to people through religious experience.

Problem of Evil

One challenge posed to the Christian idea of God is the **problem of evil**. Natural evil – tsunamis, famines and the like; and moral evil – bad things people do to each other – seem like they should be preventable by a God who is all loving and all powerful. The fact that these are not stopped suggests that God cannot be omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Christians try and explain this contradiction in several ways:



- Free will justifies evil. By giving us the ability to choose good and bad, God has to allow the possibility that we do bad things. The evil that results is worth the cost though.
- Evil helps people grow: by going through suffering we grow as people and grow closer to God.
- Evil exists as a consequence of **original sin**. Because God is omnibenevolent, however, He has provided a way to overcome this (through Jesus).

Trinity



God, creation and sin



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Incarnation	The idea that Jesus was born both fully human and fully God, as the incarnation of the Word, becoming the Son of God.
Crucifixion	The event of Jesus being killed by being nailed to a cross. Significant in that it is meant to enable forgiveness of original sin for everyone forever.
Resurrection	Jesus coming back to life 3 days after being killed. Demonstrates to Christians that there is life after death.
Ascension	Jesus going up to heaven whilst still alive, 40 days after the resurrection.
Salvation	Being saved from the consequences of sin & getting to heaven. Christians generally belief in salvation by faith .
Judgement	The idea that, when they die, Christians will be judged by God, and have the chance of being with him in heaven.

Incarnation



The incarnation is the idea that Jesus was the unification of both God and human in one body. Christians think that God the Son, known as 'The Word', was sent by the Father via the Spirit to join with a human, the result of which was Jesus. Jesus was therefore both 100% human and 100% God. The incarnation ties together lots of key beliefs in Christianity. For instance, Jesus dies in the crucifixion to pardon sin, but could not do this if he was 'just' God, as God cannot die: he needs to be human for the sacrifice. Equally, if he was just human, the sacrifice would be insignificant; he needs to be God for it to matter.

The Crucifixion



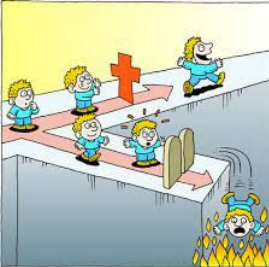
Christians believe that Jesus was executed by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate for claiming to be the King of the Jews. However, they think that Pontius Pilate didn't really want to do this, and felt forced by important Jewish leaders at the time. As Jesus was the Son of God, they believe that he could have avoided dying if he'd wanted. However, Jesus let it happen in order to forgive the original sin and let everyone get to heaven through faith alone.

The Ascension

40 days after the resurrection, Christians believe that Jesus ascended to heaven, whilst fully alive, and is waiting there until the end of the world when the 'second coming' of Christ will happen. The ascension took place in front of the disciples, and is meant to be further evidence of heaven.



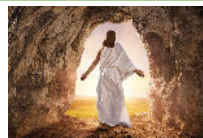
Salvation



Christians believe that, because God is omnibenevolent, everyone can be forgiven and get to heaven, despite the fact that we are all born sinful and are undeserving of it. The main way to do this is **salvation by faith**. Christians believe that **anyone**, regardless of their sins, can get to heaven by simply believing in God, and regretting and asking forgiveness for their sins. Alternatively, some Christians also think that you can achieve **salvation through acts**. In other words, if you don't have faith (e.g. you are an atheist), you can still get to heaven by doing good things and being a good person. Whilst many Christians think that you have to do good things as well as have faith to get to heaven, some disagree that good actions alone are enough, as it makes actually having faith and being a Christian redundant. Christians think that God's grace and love extends the possibility of salvation to all, although not everyone accepts it.



The Resurrection



Christians believe that three days after Jesus was killed, he came back to life. This miracle is meant to show that he was the Son of God, and is also meant to show that Christians can live again too after death, by having faith and repenting their sins.

Judgement and the Afterlife

Christians believe that when they die, God will judge them for their actions and beliefs. God will be a fair and merciful judge, and reward the repentant faithful in heaven. Christians also believe in a **judgement day** – a day when the world ends, the dead are brought back to life (pictured) and a 'new kingdom' of heaven on earth begins with no suffering or death.