

# Beliefs & teachings: Christianity



## Key beliefs

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

Christians believe God is:

**Omnipotent** (all powerful)

**Omniscient** (all knowing)

**Omnipresent** (everywhere)

**Benevolent** (loving)

**Transcendent** (beyond understanding)

**Immanent** (personal)

**Eternal** (no beginning and no end)

**Forgiving** (he will forgive sins)

Father

The Holy Trinity

Holy Spirit

Son (Jesus)



## The Design Argument

Our world is too **complicated** and full of intricate working systems, to have just happened by chance. If we came across a watch, we would assume it has been 'designed' due to its **complexity**. Like the watch, some assume our world had a designer.

## Reasons for believing in God



### The Cosmological Argument

We live in a world of **'cause and effect'**. Something must have 'caused' our world to have come into existence. The only being powerful enough to do this is God – the 'uncaused cause'.



### The Moral Argument

We all have a sense of **right** and **wrong**, and feel feelings of guilt when we do bad things. Christians believe this **moral conscience** comes from God and supports their belief that He is real.



### Christian upbringing

Many people are Christians because they were **brought up** to be a Christian. Having spent so much time around other Christians, a belief in God would come very **naturally** to them.

## The problem of evil

Evil exists

God is benevolent

God is omnipotent

**Moral evil** = suffering caused by humans

**Natural evil** = suffering caused by nature

### Responses:

1. Suffering is a **necessary** part of life
2. Suffering is **temporary**
3. Suffering is a punishment for **sin**
4. Suffering is caused by humanity's **free will**
5. Suffering is a part of God's **plan**
6. Suffering is a **test of faith**

Christians believe they will be **judged** on their actions in this life on judgement day – **Parousia**.



## Creation



Science tells us that our universe is approx. 14bn years old, and our planet is approx. 4bn years old.

An explosion (The Big Bang) led to the creation of all space, time and matter. Humans have evolved over time, through a process of **natural selection**. This is called **'evolution'**.

Genesis 1 & 2 says that God created the world in 6 days, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> He rested. Some Christians take this **LITERALLY** and read this story as **fact (fundamentalist)**.

Others see the Genesis story as a **symbolic** story (**Liberal**)

## HEAVEN

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

## PURGATORY

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

## HELL

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

## Soul

Our souls are:

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

## Life after death

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

## The suffering of Christ

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

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

**There are several ways in which the crucifixion affects Christians today:**

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

## Incarnation

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

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

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

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## 'Jesus'



### Jesus' resurrection & ascension

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

According to the accounts of Jesus' burial in the NT, he was placed in a tomb late Friday afternoon (Good Friday). How long he remained there is unclear, but we know that some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb to anoint the body. Though details of the story vary between the 4 gospel accounts, they all make it clear that Jesus was nowhere to be found. The belief that Jesus rose from the dead is known as the **resurrection** and is a key teaching in the Christian faith. For Christians, it is **significant evidence** of the divine nature of Jesus.

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

## Salvation

Salvation means **'to be saved from a bad situation'**. In Christianity, this bad situation is sin, and the consequences of sin.

**Sin** has separated humans from God, and salvation enables humans to get close to God again.

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

Jesus knew his death was **necessary** to restore the relationship between god and the believers and make the opportunity for salvation available to all people.

Jesus (as the Son of God) could have easily avoided being crucified. His crucifixion was the result of human evil against an innocent man. It needed to happen, in order to **atone** for the sins of humanity.

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

## Parables

A story used to teach a lesson or a moral

**The Good Samaritan**  
*"Love your neighbour"*



**The sheep & the goats**  
*"Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"*



## Miracles

An act which seems to break the laws of nature

**Calming the storm**

This is a miracle over **NATURE**

**Water into wine**

This was Jesus' **first** miracle

**Healing a paralysed man**

This is a **HEALING** miracle