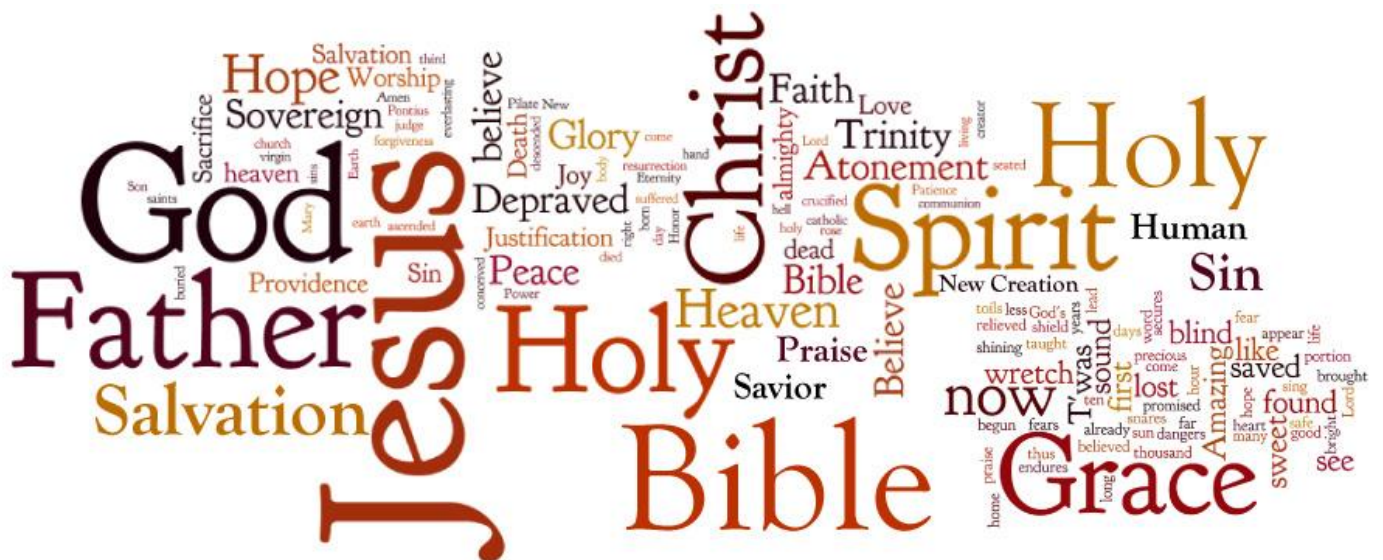
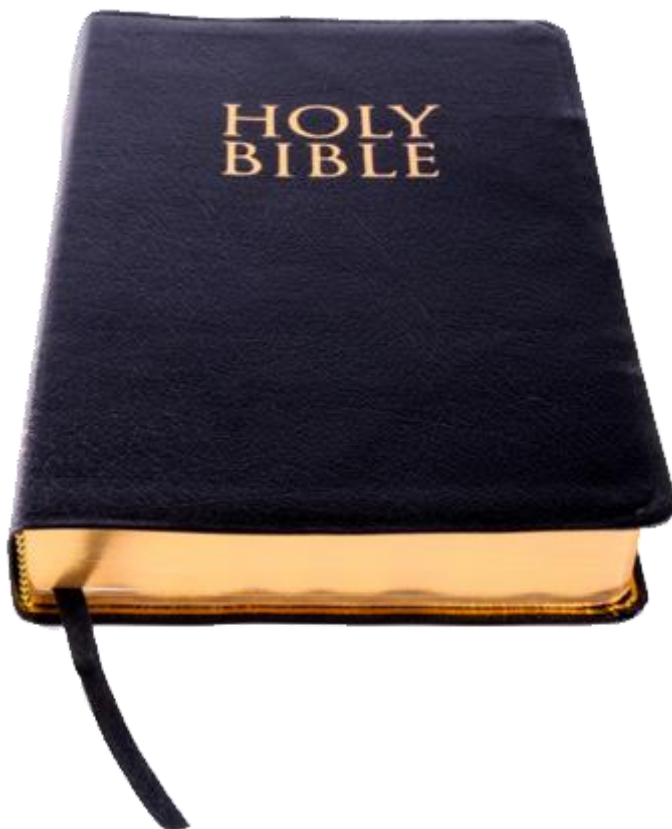


# GCSE Religious Studies

# Paper 1: The study of religions: Christian beliefs and teachings



### 3.1.2 Christianity

Students should be aware that Christianity is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity specified below and their basis in Christian sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Christianity in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of different Christian perspectives in their answers including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. They must study the specific differences identified below.

#### 3.1.2.1 Beliefs and teachings

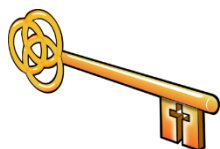
##### Key beliefs

- The nature of God:
  - God as omnipotent, loving and just, and the problem of evil and suffering
  - the oneness of God and the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Different Christian beliefs about creation including the role of Word and Spirit (John 1:1-3 and Genesis 1:1-3).
- Different Christian beliefs about the afterlife and their importance, including: resurrection and life after death; judgement, heaven and hell.

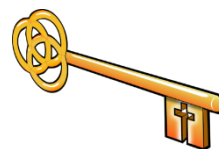
##### Jesus Christ and salvation

- Beliefs and teachings about:
  - the incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God
  - the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension
  - sin, including original sin
  - the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
  - the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.





## KEY TERMS



| <u>Key Term</u>                         | <u>Definition</u>  |
|---|--|
| <b>Apostles' Creed</b>                  | A statement of Christian belief from the Early Church.   |
| <b>Ascension</b>                        | Jesus being taken up to heaven on the 40 <sup>th</sup> day after Easter.                                 |
| <b>Atonement</b>                        | The reconciliation of God and humanity through Jesus' sacrifice.   |
| <b>Catechism of the Catholic Church</b> | A book which clearly sets out Roman Catholic teachings   |
| <b>Denomination</b>                     | The name for the different branches of the Christian church.   |
| <b>Grace</b>                            | Unconditional love and the gift of salvation that God shows to people who do not deserve it.             |
| <b>Immanent</b>                         | Operates within the universe   |
| <b>Incarnation</b>                      | God in human form.   |
| <b>Messiah</b>                          | The anointed one who is seen as the saviour by Christians.   |
| <b>Miracles</b>                         | Events that break the laws of nature. Instances are described as being performed by Jesus.               |
| <b>Omnipotent</b>                       | All-powerful.  |
| <b>Omniscient</b>                       | All-knowing  |
| <b>Omnibenevolent</b>                   | All-loving   |
| <b>Protestant</b>                       | A branch of the Christian church that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church.                         |
| <b>Resurrection</b>                     | Rising from the dead.  |
| <b>Roman Catholic</b>                   | The largest Christian group, based in Rome with the Pope as its leader.                                  |
| <b>Salvation</b>                        | The saving of the soul from sin.   |
| <b>Transcendent</b>                     | Exists outside of the universe   |
| <b>Trinity</b>                          | The belief that there are three persons in one God; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. |
| <b>The Word</b>                         | The term used at the beginning of John's Gospel to refer to God the Son (Jesus)                          |

## Nature of God

| <u>Attribute of God</u> | <u>Evidence/teaching (All quotations are from the Bible)</u>   |
|-------------------------|--|
| Omnipotent              | God created the world. This would require omnipotence.<br><i>"Nothing is impossible with God"</i>  |
| Omniscient              | <i>"Do you know the wonders of him who has perfect knowledge?"</i><br><i>"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight."</i>               |
| Omnibenevolent          | <i>"Whoever does not love does not know God because <u>God is love</u>"</i><br><i>"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."</i>        |
| Just                    | <i>"God is fair and just."</i>   |
| Transcendent            | Since God created the universe, he must exist outside of it.<br><i>"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"</i>                  |
| Immanent                | God performs miracles, this shows that he is operating in the universe.<br><i>"There is one God who is over all and through all and in all."</i> |

### How would these beliefs affect a Christian's life?



Explain two ways in which the belief that God is just influences Christians today. (4 marks)

Explain two ways in which the belief that God is omnipotent influences Christians today. (4 marks)

Explain two ways in which the belief that God is omniscient influences Christians today. (4 marks)

Explain two ways in which the belief that God is benevolent influences Christians today. (4 marks)



Christianity is a **monotheistic** faith meaning that Christians believe in one God: *“There is one God who is over all and through all and in all.”*

This is a core Christian belief, it is even the first of the 10 Commandments: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*

HOWEVER, the Apostles’ Creed states that Christians believe in:

1. God the Father
2. Jesus Christ, our Lord
3. The Holy Spirit

In addition, when describing the creation of humans in Genesis, the Bible states:

*“Let **us** make man in **our** image”*

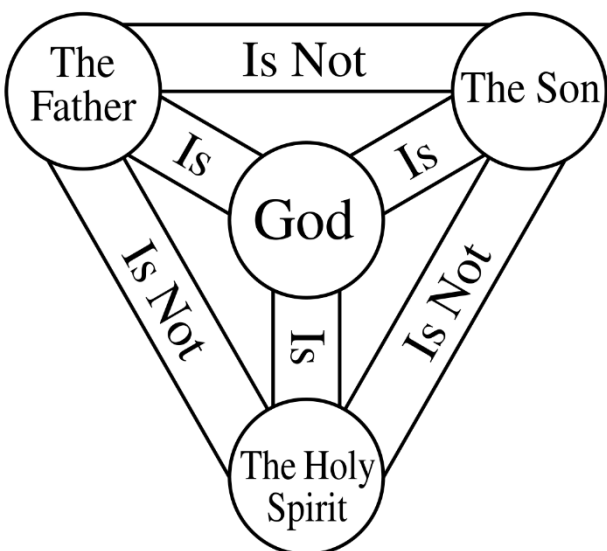
This suggests a plurality of gods.

#### The Apostles’ Creed

**I believe in God, the Father** almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord**,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
**I believe in the Holy Spirit**,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

### The Holy Trinity



Christians explain this with reference to what they call the Holy Trinity. This is to say that Christians believe in one God in three persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is important to note that each of these three persons has distinct characteristics, but all are fully God. (See page 11 for how the Trinity is involved in Creation)

This can be understood by considering water, steam and ice. Each of these are different from one another. However, they are all H<sub>2</sub>O.

Therefore, Christians can affirm the following three statements:

- There is only one God
- Each of the three persons of the Trinity is fully God
- The persons of the Trinity are not the same as each other.

This idea is perhaps most clearly seen in the story of Jesus’ Baptism: *“As soon as **Jesus** was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God descending like a dove** and alighting on him. **And a voice from heaven** said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*





## The Trinity and Creation

John opens his gospel with these three verses. 'The Word' refers to Jesus. This passage demonstrates the role Jesus played in creation:

*"Through him all things were made"*

We also see the role of the Spirit in creation; Genesis 1:2 states:

*"The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."*

Thus, the whole of the Trinity was involved and have existed since the beginning; they all exist alongside one another within the same one God and always have done.

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; nothing was made without him."*

John 1:1-3



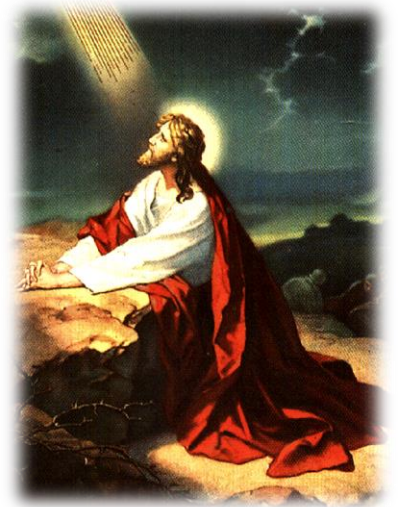
## Challenges to the Trinity

After the Last Supper, Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane where he will be arrested and ultimately face crucifixion. Knowing this, Jesus prays:

*"Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. **Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.**"*

Many have questioned why, if Jesus and the Father are one and the same God, does Jesus have a different will to the Father?

Is Jesus not essentially praying to himself?

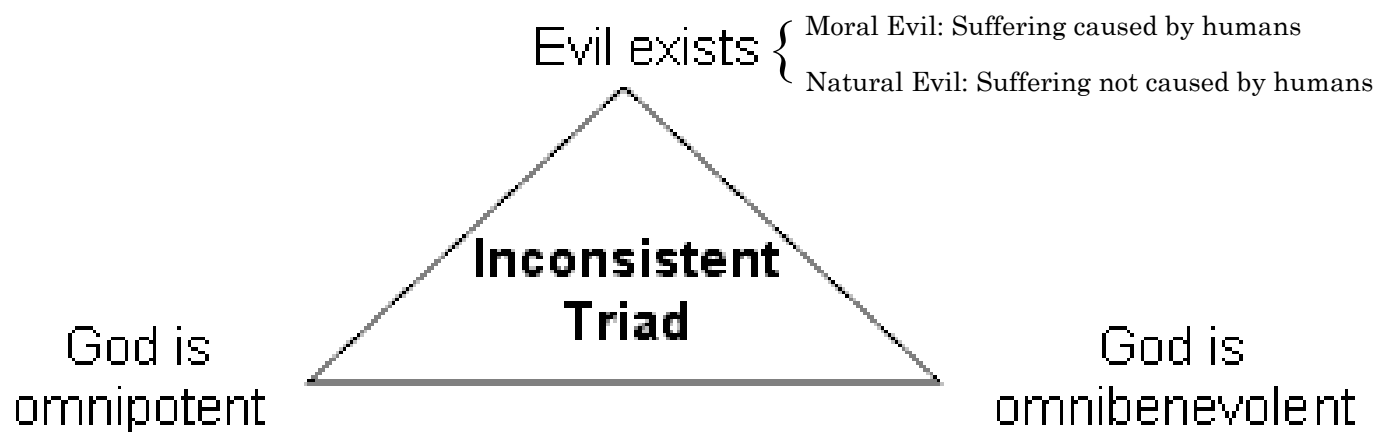


How might Christians respond to this?



# The Problem of Evil and Suffering

J. L. Mackie believed that proposed what he called the ‘inconsistent triad’.



Mackie contends that only two of these sides can be true at once:

- If God were **omnibenevolent** He would **want** a world without evil.
- If God were **omnipotent** He **could create** a world without evil.
- Therefore, if God were both omnibenevolent AND omnipotent, there would be a world without evil.
- However, evil exists.
- Therefore, God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent. This contradicts the Christian concept of God.



Christians attempt to offer theodicies in response to the problem of evil and suffering. A **theodicy** is an explanation for why an omni-benevolent, omnipotent God would allow evil in the world:

| <u>Theodicy</u>  | <u>Evaluation</u> |
|--|-------------------|
| <p><u>Evil is a result of free will</u></p> <p><i>“A world containing creatures who are free is more valuable than a world containing no free creatures at all.” (Alvin Plantinga)</i></p> |                   |

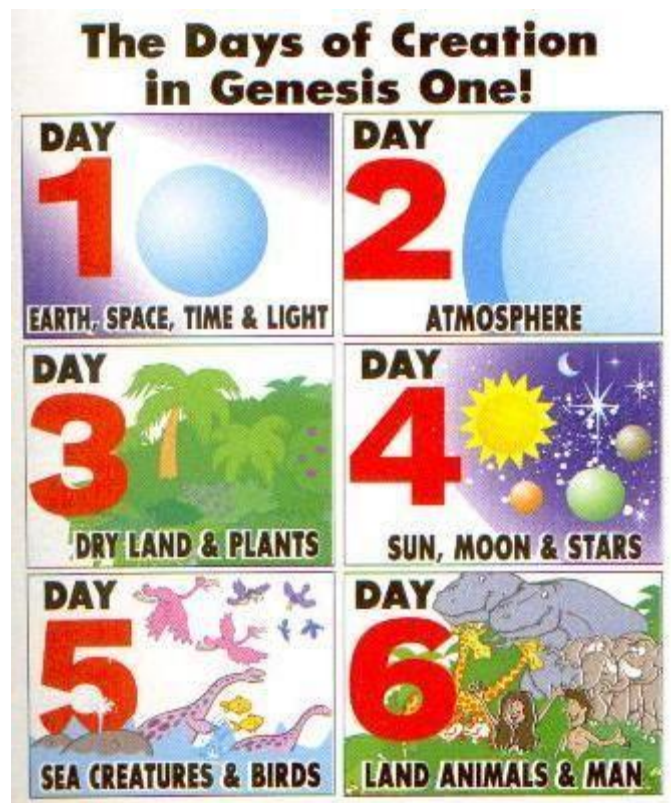


|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evil is a test</u></p> <p><i>“Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so your faith may result in praise glory and honour” (Bible)</i></p>  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evil is a punishment</u></p> <p><i>“The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him” (Bible)</i></p> |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>A greater good comes from evil</u></p> <p><i>“And we know that all things work together for good.” (Bible)</i></p>   |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The Devil is responsible for evil</u></p> <p><i>“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (Bible)</i></p>   |  |

## Creation

The first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1, tells a story about the creation of the world. It states that God created the world from nothing.

"In the beginning God  
created the heavens  
and the earth."  
**Genesis 1:1**



The rest of the chapter describes God creating the world in 6 days and then resting on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Some Christians take this story to be factually accurate. Christians who hold this belief are known as **creationists**.

Other Christians take a different view of this passage:

### Day-Age Interpretation

Many Christians believe that the word 'day' should be understood as meaning 'period of time'. Christians who interpret the passage this way believe that science does not contradict the biblical narrative and in fact, Genesis is very accurate in describing the origin of the world. For example, the order of creation in Genesis is the same as the scientific view.

Arno Penzias, a Nobel Prize winning physicist said:

*"The best data we have [concerning the Big Bang] are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Bible as a whole."*

### Allegorical Interpretation

Many other Christians believe that the Genesis account is not intended as a factual description of creation, but instead teaches **religious truths** such as:

- God is the **sole creator** and sustainer of the universe
- The universe is **ordered**, not random
- God created everything in the universe with a **purpose**
- Humans are created in **God's image**
- Humans have a **responsibility** to care for the world God created.

Francis Collins, Head of the Human Genome Project wrote:

*"I see no conflict in what the Bible tells me about God and what science tells me about nature. I do not find the wording of Genesis 1 to suggest a scientific textbook but a powerful and poetic description of God's intentions in creating the universe. The mechanism of creation is left unspecified"*



# The Incarnation

The word 'incarnation' means to take human form. Therefore, when referring to 'The Incarnation', Christians mean God taking human form. The Gospel of John says:

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

According to Christianity, Jesus retained his divinity (being fully God) whilst also becoming fully human.



The Old Testament contains numerous prophecies of a Messiah, an anointed one.

At the time of Jesus' birth, the Jewish people were expecting the Messiah who would be the Saviour of the Jewish people. They were waiting for a King who would overthrow the ruling Roman forces and return Israel to the Jews. Judaism is still waiting for its Messiah today.

Christians however believe Jesus was that Messiah since they believe he fulfilled the prophecies set forth in the Scriptures including:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ○ He will be born of a virgin.                              | ○ He will teach using parables.            |
| ○ He will come from “among the Jewish people.”              | ○ He will be oppressed yet not complain.   |
| ○ He will be betrayed by a close friend.                    | ○ He will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. |
| ○ He will miraculously heal the deaf, dumb, blind and lame. | ○ His hands and feet will be pierced.      |
|   | ○ He will rise from the dead after 3 days. |

The clearest indication for Christians however is that Jesus himself claims to be the Messiah. Because of these claims, Jesus is put on trial by the Jewish Sanhedrin for **blasphemy**. At this trial, he is questioned by the High Priest:



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

Christians believe that Jesus was a Messiah that saved people *spiritually* rather than politically.

## Why is the Incarnation important?

- For God to become human and live among us is a demonstration of **how much God cares** for humanity. We know that God knows how it feels to live an earthly life.
- In Jesus, we have a perfect role model for how to live our lives.
- Jesus' perfect life and ultimate death on the provides salvation for humans.
- The **festival of Christmas** is a celebration of the incarnation of Jesus.

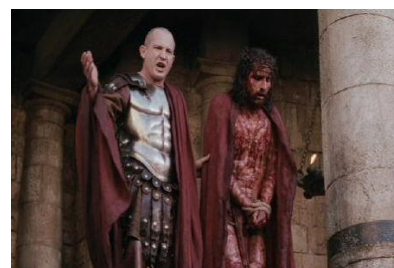
## The Crucifixion



Following his Last Supper, Jesus goes to Garden of Gethsemane. One of his disciples, Judas, betrays Jesus and leads the chief priests to the garden where they arrest Jesus.



In the middle of the night, Jesus is tried before the Sanhedrin. He is found guilty of blasphemy for which the punishment is death. However, the Jews were not permitted to carry out this punishment under Roman law, the Roman governor had to order it.



The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, is initially reluctant to have Jesus executed. He has Jesus tortured first but then relents amid the Priests' insistence and orders Jesus' crucifixion.

It is important to note that Jesus is not just sentenced to death, but to **crucifixion**. Crucifixion is probably the most brutal method of execution that human beings have ever devised. It was so horrific that the Romans would not crucify their own citizens, it was reserved for slaves and citizens of conquered lands.

Following his sentence, Jesus is then forced to carry his own cross to Golgotha, a hill outside the city walls where he is crucified along with two other criminals.

While dying on the cross he cries out a number of times:

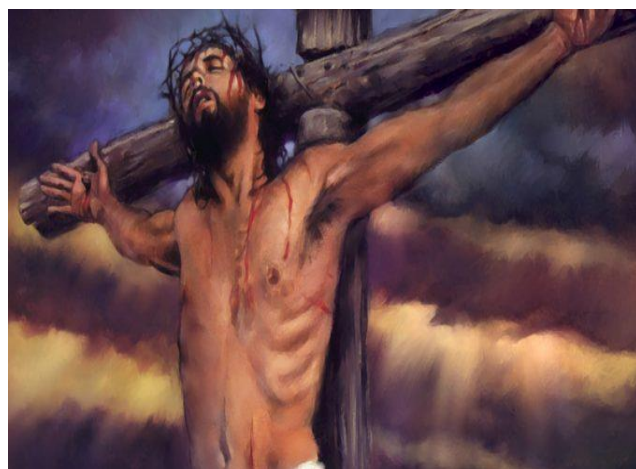


*"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."*

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

One of the criminals being crucified next to Jesus *said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."* And Jesus said to him, *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

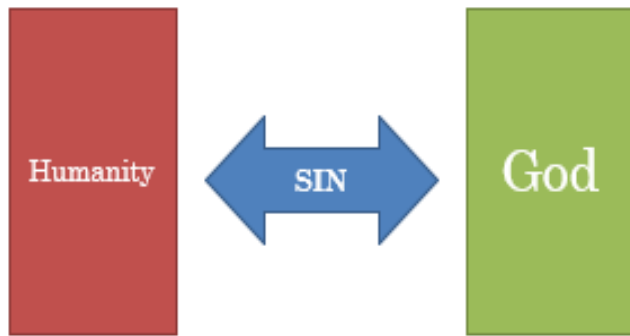
*As Jesus takes his last breath, he says: "It is finished."*





## Why is the crucifixion important?

Christians believe that Jesus' death on the cross paves the way for people to be able to go to heaven:

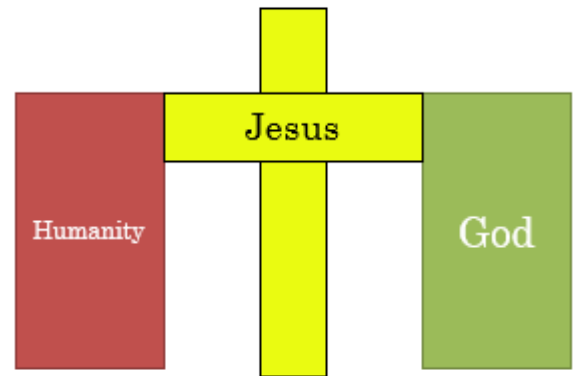


- *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* 1 John 1:8

- Because of our sin, we cannot go to heaven because we are separated from a perfect God: *"Nothing unclean will ever enter into heaven."*

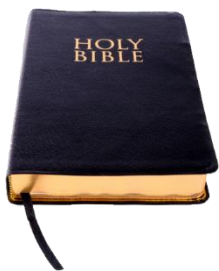
- God is just. Therefore, our sin needs to be punished in order to be erased.

- God is also omnibenevolent. Therefore, he comes to earth and suffers the pain of the crucifixion as a punishment for all the world's sin.
- Since our sin has now been punished, we are no longer condemned by it, we become perfect again. Therefore, we may go to heaven.
- Only Jesus can take this punishment upon himself, as he is without sin.
- Jesus' death is known as the Atonement for sin because it makes God and humanity 'at one' again.



**Atonement**  
(At - one - ment)

Christians believe therefore that there is nothing you can do to get to heaven because you are sinful. Only through God's gift of **grace** can you go to heaven:



*"For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith** — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Although Christians believe that their salvation is not contingent upon their good actions, this does not mean that they grant themselves a 'licence to sin'. Christians are grateful for the sacrifice Jesus made for them and believe they are engaged in a loving relationship with God. Therefore, they **want** to do good in their lives. They choose to do good things **because** they believe they are going to heaven, not **so that** they can go to heaven.

Christians also see in Jesus that God knows what it is like to suffer in life. This means that they know God understands what they are going through when they suffer.

## Jesus' Burial

Crucified dead bodies were usually left up on the cross to serve as a deterrent for others in the city.

However, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin who had supported Jesus, wanted to give Jesus a Jewish burial and so *“went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.”*

Pilate agrees and *“so Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.”*



## The Empty Tomb



*“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

*“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*

Notes:





## How do we explain the empty tomb?

| <u>Explanation</u>                | <u>Strengths</u>   | <u>Weaknesses</u>  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Jesus wasn't really dead.         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <i>"Pilate was surprised Jesus was already dead"</i></li> <li>o We have better knowledge now of conditions that seem like people are dead but are actually not.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Even if he had survived the crucifixion, he could not have walked, let alone rolled a stone away.</li> <li>o The Romans were experienced executioners, they knew how to kill people and how to identify that people were dead.</li> </ul> |
| Someone stole the body.           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The disciples might have wanted to make it look as if Jesus had risen in order to prove their beliefs to others.</li> <li>o The fact that Pilate sees the need to guard the tomb shows that this was a very real possibility.</li> <li>o The only possibility left since the others seem so unlikely.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The tomb was guarded by soldiers.</li> <li>o The disciples are unlikely to have stolen it because they were willing to die for their belief that Jesus had risen.</li> <li>o No-one else had a motive to steal it.</li> </ul>             |
| The women went to the wrong tomb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o There are two burial sites in Jerusalem claiming to be genuine, maybe the women made the same mistake.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o They had witnessed Jesus' burial, it is unlikely they would have forgotten such an important place within the space of 3 days, particularly his own mother.</li> </ul>  |
| Jesus was resurrected.            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The other possibilities have real problems</li> <li>o Jesus appeared to the disciples after his death</li> <li>o The disciples were so convinced that they were willing to die for this belief, even though only days before they had denied knowing Jesus because they were scared.</li> <li>o This belief spread through the Roman Empire, there must have been good reason to believe it.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Science tells us that people can't be raised from the dead.</li> <li>o Jesus is only recorded as having appeared to people who would have a reason to lie or imagine having seen him.</li> </ul>  |

## Why does the Resurrection matter?

The resurrection is *the* key event in Christianity. Without it, there is no Christianity. Christians believe it is so important because:

- The resurrection shows that Jesus is alive and with us.
- The resurrection proves that Jesus was who he said he was: The Son of God.
- Christians believe that the resurrection demonstrates that Jesus has accomplished what his crucifixion was intended for: victory over death.
- Christians believe that by accepting Jesus, they also can be resurrection after death. Therefore, there is nothing to fear from death.

## The Ascension

*“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”*

The above quote describes how, 40 days after the Resurrection, Jesus ascends to heaven, seen by his disciples.

Before ascending, Jesus gives what becomes known as the **Great Commission**. He orders his disciples:

*“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*



The Ascension is significant for Christians because:

- It shows that Jesus is in heaven with God (the Father).
- It shows that after the resurrection, you have eternal life; you will not die again.
- It demonstrates the Jesus is the link between heaven and earth.
- It paves the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit to provide comfort and guidance at Pentecost. As Jesus ascends, the Holy Spirit descends. This shows God's simultaneous transcendence and immanence.

# Sin

## What is sin?

Sin is any action or thought that moves someone away from God, that is, an action or thought against God.

As we have seen, sin separates people from God meaning that they require saving and returning to unity with God: Atonement.

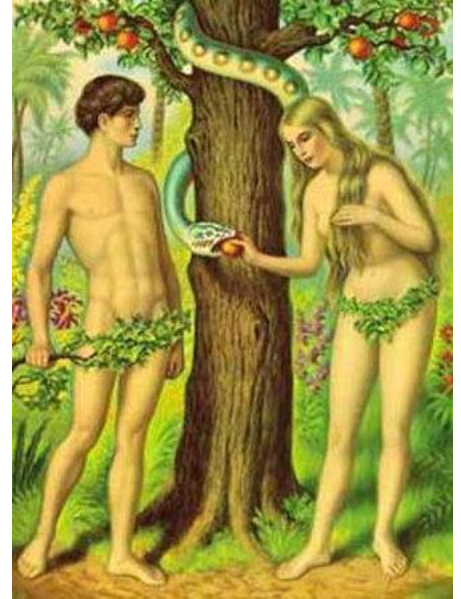
## Original Sin

Within Christian doctrine there is a concept of original sin. This idea comes from the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve eating of the forbidden fruit is known as 'the Fall', when humanity is first separated from God by sin.

Many Christians take this story literally and believe that we are all born condemned by this 'Original Sin' because, as St. Augustine puts it, we were all "*seminally present*" in Adam.

Other Christians take this story to be symbolic: we are all Adam and Eve and are separated from God through sin. Original sin therefore is the name given to the in-built urge to follow our own desires rather than God's.

Regardless of how this story is understood, original sin is the condition, and consequent condemnation, of separation from God due to sin.



## The Role of the Devil



Many Christians believe that a lot of the evil in the world is a result of the Devil who tempts people into committing sin. We see this in the stories of Job, and Adam and Eve.

*"For Satan masquerades himself as an angel of light"*

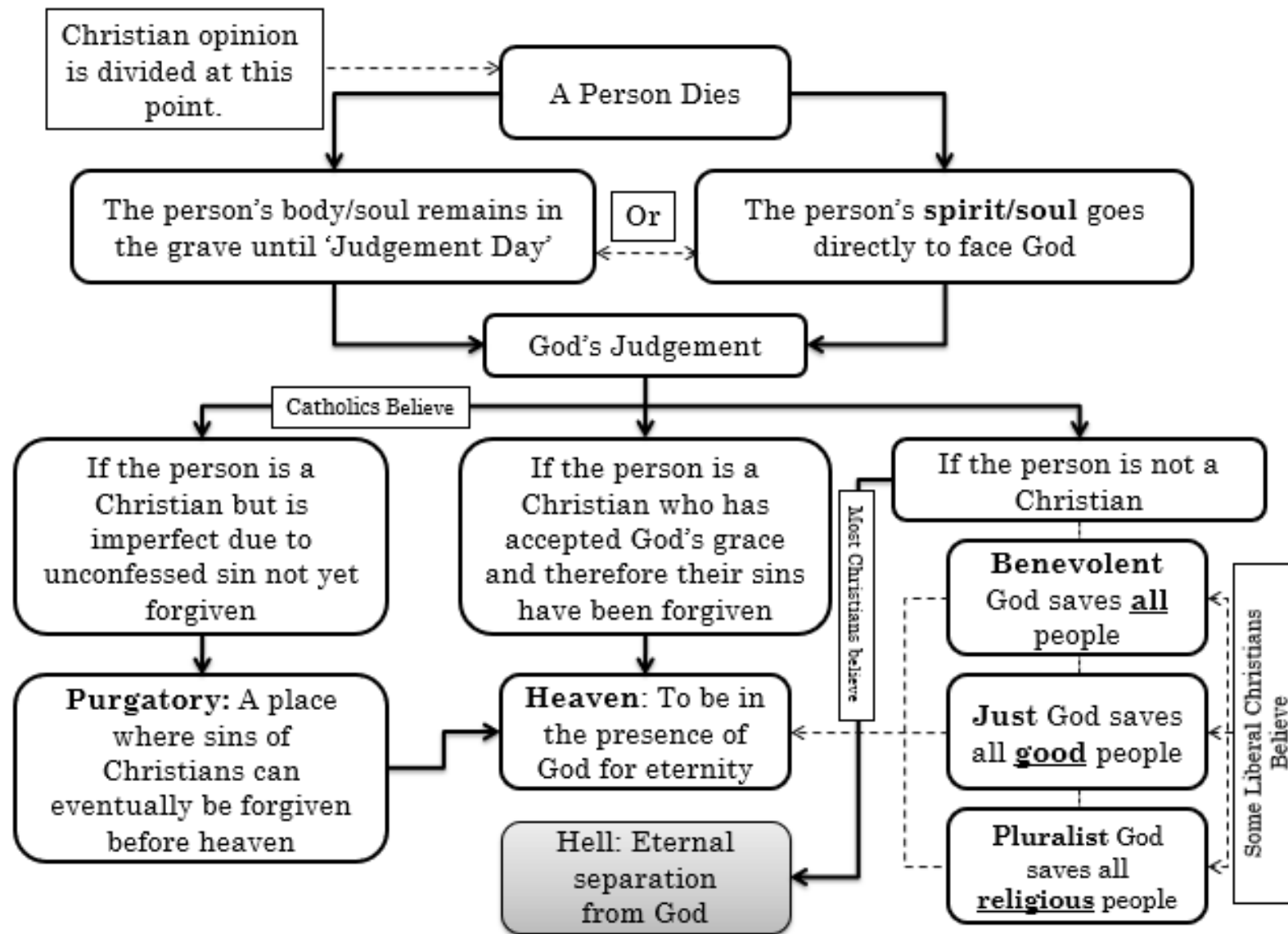


*"The one who does what is sinful is of the Devil."*

We also see the Devil tempt Jesus in the wilderness and, in this story, we see an example to Christians of how they are supposed to respond.

**Some Christians, however, do not believe the Devil to be a real being but simply a personification of selfish human desire: "*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.*"**

## Christian beliefs about life after death



# Resurrection

Christians believe that after death, you will be resurrected to face judgement. However, there are disagreements about the nature of this.

## When does the resurrection take place?



### Judgement Day

- *"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice"*
- Jesus' argument with the Sadducees demonstrates that there was a strong Jewish belief in Judgement Day. When trying to catch him out in their question about the widow who marries multiple times they ask: *"At **the resurrection** whose wife will she be?"*

### Immediately

- As Jesus dies on the cross, he says to the criminal alongside him: *"I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in paradise."*
- In his argument with the Sadducees, Jesus says: *"Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, **I am** the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**"*

## In what form are you resurrected?

### Bodily resurrection

The Catholic Church is clear that resurrection will be a bodily one and that people will once again receive their old body but transformed into a glorified state in which suffering will not exist: *"We believe in the true resurrection of this flesh that we now possess".* (CCC)



### Spiritual resurrection

Some Christians believe that the resurrection will be a purely spiritual one. They say that we no longer need our physical body in heaven and so, at death: *"... the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."*

### Bodily resurrection with a resurrection body

St. Paul seems to put forward a view of genuine bodily resurrection but that your 'resurrection body' will be different you're your earthly body:

*"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; [...] it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."*

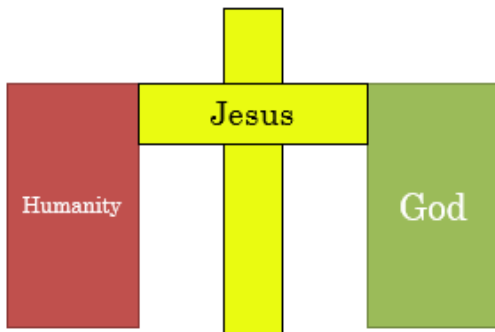




All Christians believe that God decides the fate of all people after their death: judgement.

### Salvation through Grace (*Sola fide* – Faith alone)

As we have seen, Christians have a doctrine of salvation through **grace**, that is, a gift from God that people do not deserve:



*“For it is by **grace** you have been saved, **through faith** — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

Protestants believe that in order to accept this gift, one must simply **believe**: they are saved “*through faith*”

### Salvation through faith and works

Catholics believe there is more to receiving God’s grace than just faith; Christians must **do** certain things in order to demonstrate this faith including confession and other sacraments:

*“If anyone says that the sacraments are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, men obtain God through faith alone, let him be anathema (excommunicated).”*

The above quotation is taken from the Council of Trent, a Catholic council set up in response to what they saw as the heresies of the Protestant reformation.



### Salvation through works



The common perception in society is one of salvation through works, that you are rewarded due to your good deeds and punished for your sins. Some Christian denominations do have this belief, for example The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). People who support this view point to passages such as the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats as evidence for their belief.

Jesus tells this story in which the ‘sheep’ have lived righteous lives feeding the hungry, caring for the sick etc. However, the ‘goats’ did not. As a result, Jesus says:

*“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, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

*[...]*

*Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!’”*



# Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

## Heaven

The Bible does not talk in huge detail about what heaven will be like. It does, however, make clear that heaven is a real place. Jesus says:

*“I am going there to prepare a **place** for you.”*

Ultimately, the Christian belief about heaven is that it is eternal life with God:

*“I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.”*

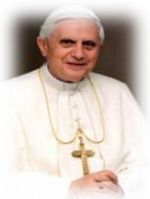
*“From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind.”*

*“Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”*



## Hell

By contrast, Christians believe that Hell is eternal separation from God. There is disagreement about the nature of Hell, even consecutive Popes disagreed about it:



*“Hell really exists and is eternal, even if nobody talks about it much anymore. If sinners do not admit blame and promise to sin no more, they risked eternal damnation — the Inferno.”*



*“I do not believe in a literal hell where people suffer. This doctrine is incompatible with the infinite love of God. We see hell as a literary device; Hell is merely a metaphor for the isolated soul”*



### What does the Bible say about Hell?

*“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

*“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”*

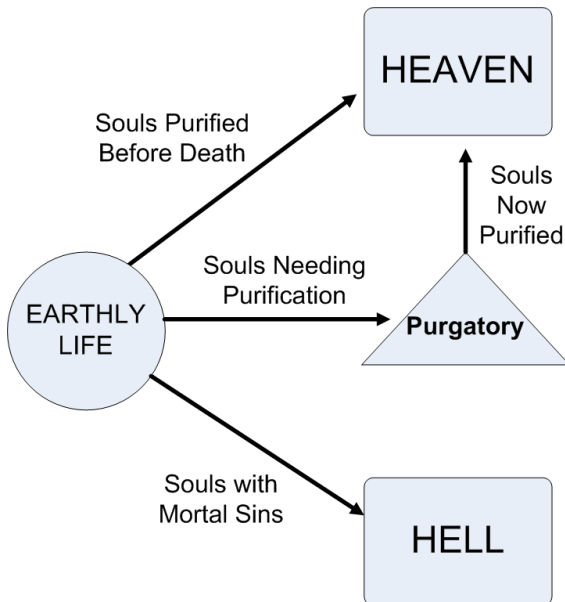


*“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*



## Purgatory

Purgatory is a Catholic doctrine that does not appear in Protestant forms of Christianity. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), purgatory is a “*final purification*” which is afforded to “*all who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified*” so that they might “*achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven*”.



Essentially this means that purgatory is a sort of temporary purifying punishment for unconfessed, and therefore unforgiven, sins before entering heaven.

According to the Catholic Church, the purification is necessary because nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in heaven (“*Nothing unclean will ever enter heaven*”). Therefore, for those Christians whose sins have not been forgiven, a temporary period of purging is necessary in order to enjoy the presence and beauty of God that we were made for.

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# Possible exam questions



## Question 1: (1 mark)

- 1) What term is the idea that God is three-in-one?
- 1) In which book of the Bible can the story of Creation be found?
- 1) What does the word 'omniscient' mean?

## Question 2: (2 marks)

- 2) Give two reasons why the disciples believed Jesus was alive after his resurrection.
- 2) Give two qualities which Christians believe describe the nature of God.
- 2) Give two persons of the Trinity.

## Question 3: (4 marks)

- 3) Explain two ways in which the belief that God is just influences Christians today.
- 3) Explain two ways in which belief in the resurrection of Jesus influences Christians today.
- 3) Explain two Christian teachings about the Incarnation.

## Question 4: 5 marks

**You must** refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer.

- 4) Explain two Christian teachings about the means of salvation.
- 4) Explain two Christian teachings about judgement.
- 4) Explain two Christian beliefs about creation.

## Question 5: (12 marks)

Evaluate the statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Christian teaching
  - give developed arguments to support this statement
  - give developed arguments to support a different point of view
  - reach a justified conclusion.
- 5) 'If God were loving, there would be no suffering in the world.'
  - 5) "Jesus' life was more important than his death"
  - 5) "The Bible tells Christians all they need to know about God's creation."

