

GCSE Religious Studies Christianity Knowledge Organiser

Christian beliefs about Jesus as God incarnate

Key concepts

omnibenevolence

omnipotence

omniscience

Holy Spirit

Messiah

Trinity

incarnation

resurrection

agapé

atonement

divine command

inter-faith dialogue

Incarnation (word)

The belief that Jesus was God in human form (incarnation means 'made flesh') and was born as a human baby to Mary. Christians believe that Jesus was fully human and fully divine (God). In John's Gospel, Jesus says "I and the Father [i.e., God] are one" (John 1:30). 'Word' refers to how Jesus is described in John's Gospel as being with God since before the Creation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Son, Holy Spirit

Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, God the Son - "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:11). The Holy Spirit, the third part of the Trinity, works through and around Jesus, e.g. the healing miracles that Jesus performed are believed to be done through the power of the Holy Spirit. "God anointed Jesus ...with the Holy Spirit and ... he went around doing good and healing" (Acts 10:38). Jesus is sometimes called 'Son of God' to show that he was a man, who was also divine.

Messiah, saviour, salvation and atonement

The Messiah ('Christ') was the 'anointed one' sent by God to save humans. Christians believe that God sent Jesus to be the Messiah. Even though Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, his disciple Peter recognised him as such and said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Christians believe Jesus sacrificed his own life on the cross (the crucifixion) to save people from the consequences of original sin, one of which is death. By acting as saviour or redeemer, Jesus was healing the rift (atonement) between people and God that had existed since the time of Adam and Eve. Christians believe this salvation and atonement was planned by God and was the reason for the incarnation. In John's Gospel, it states that Jesus "takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Christians believe he was able to do this because he was the Son of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Birth, Crucifixion, Resurrection

Christians believe that Jesus was born to Mary in Bethlehem. His mother, a virgin, had been told by the Holy Spirit that she would give birth to the Son of God (incarnation). In the Bible accounts, angels appear to shepherds to tell them of the birth, and wise men give symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, showing that Jesus was no ordinary child. Even his name is significant, showing that "he will save people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). After being sentenced to death by the Roman governor, Jesus was whipped and taken to be crucified. Weak after the whipping, he was unable to carry his cross, so a passer-by was forced to carry it instead. At the place of crucifixion, Jesus was put on the cross and left to die. Onlookers shouted insults at him, mocking the idea that he was thought of as a saviour. When he died, a Roman soldier who was guarding the scene said, "Surely this man was the Son of God" (Matthew 15:39). Christians believe Jesus' death leads to salvation as humans no longer need to be apart from God and can have life after death with him in heaven. Christians believe that Jesus came back from the dead three days after his death. Some of his followers visited the tomb to find it was empty. The resurrected Jesus appeared to several people in the days following the Resurrection. For Christians, the miracle of the resurrection is the ultimate proof that Jesus was God and is at the heart of the Christian faith. Forty days after the resurrection, the Bible describes how Jesus ascended to heaven.

Past exam questions

- Describe Christian beliefs about Jesus as the Messiah. [5] 2019
- Explain Christian beliefs about the Holy Spirit. [8] SAMs

Links

Christianity – beliefs about God.
Issues of life and death – beliefs about death and the afterlife.