

Nature of God

Omnipotent

God can do anything. Has no limits to strength and ability.

Always there. Never Ending. Knows Everything that happens. Is all knowing.

Omniscient

Mysterious

Very Difficult to understand. Humans Cannot understand God or what he does.

Has Always been. Was not created himself and created everything out of nothing. (ex nihilo)

Eternal

Benevolent

Will never do anything wrong. All-Loving.

Not limited by time and space, can be in all places at all times, all at once. All Present

Omnipresent

WHAT IS GOD?

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Attributes of God

Christians are monotheists. This means that they believe there is **only one God**.

It is very difficult to describe God, because everyday language is always about ordinary things but God is not ordinary.

God is 'holy', meaning special, separate and different.

God created the Universe and everything in it. There are different interpretations of how this was achieved.

Holy Trinity

Many Christians believe in the Holy Trinity. This doctrine is unique to Christianity. They believe that God can take many forms. The Trinity is a way of describing the **three ways of being God** – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It describes the relationship between these three 'persons' which are all part of the one God.

How does this impact on Christians lives?

Christians feel that by believing in God they feel closer to him and he can provide a source of comfort in difficult times. Christians are united in their beliefs about God and the aim to create a "Kingdom of God" so Christians would be more loving towards each other. For example they may donate to charity, help those in need. Christians know that God knows everything as he is Omniscient, this means they would try to please him by doing good actions. If they do sin they would need to ask God for forgiveness. By believing in God and an afterlife in heaven this will bring comfort to many.

Nature of Humans

Created in the Image of God.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

What does this mean?

Christians believe that humans were made in the image of God. This means that they were created to resemble God's spirit. This is also known as Imago Dei. This is what sets humans apart from animals. This is why Humans can communicate with God. By being created in God's image this means that Christians believe they must act in a way that would please God. Christians believe that God is all Loving and therefore they should act like that.

Freewill

Christians believe that God gave all Humans Freewill. Freewill is the ability to make decisions for themselves. However Christians believe that God has planned everything in the Universe out. Some would argue this is incompatible with Freewill. However Christians would answer this by saying that they free to make their own choices but God will know what choice they will make.

Having Freewill means that Humans are free to make decisions- Christians believe that everyone should be using their Freewill wisely. They should look to the Bible for guidance as to how to live their life as well as follow the example of Jesus. It impacts on a daily basis as they should be thinking about what would please God in each situation.

Original Sin

You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again.

(Genesis 3: 19)

What is Original Sin?

Original Sin, refers to the passage in Genesis in the Bible, where Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden for disobeying God's commands. This can also be known as **The Fall**. Many believe this is a literal story and this is how sin was brought into the world. Others believe it is a story or analogy used to explain why there is evil in the world, because humans have gone against God's word.

What does this mean for humans?

Augustine developed the idea of what has come to be known as 'original sin'. Due to Adam and Eves actions in the Garden of Eden, the whole of humanity carries the same stain of sin and suffers and dies. Humanity needs God to save them from the suffering.

Christians believe that God gave them **freewill** and his word through teachings in the Bible, Jesus and preachers show Christians how God would like them to live their lives but it is up to each individual to make that choice.

An explanation for the evils of the world

Some Christians believe that original sin explains why there is so much wrong in a world created by a perfect God, and why people need to have their souls 'saved' by God.

The Fall and the Origin of Evil

Christians believe that when Adam and Eve sinned in Eden and turned away from God they brought sin into the world and turned the whole human race away from God.

The doctrine absolves God of responsibility for the evils that make our world imperfect by teaching that Adam and Eve introduced evil to a perfect world when they disobeyed him.

An alternative understanding of the story of the fall emphasises that Adam and Eve did wrong because they 'gave in' to the temptation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

These two versions offer radically different ideas about the origin of evil:

- in the first version Adam and Eve bring evil into the world by disobeying God
- in the second version evil already exists, and Adam and Eve bring sin to humanity by giving in to it

This second understanding fits well with human psychology. Looking at it this way, original sin becomes the tendency for human beings to 'give in' when tempted by the prevailing evils of the society around them, rather than standing up for good, and it helps explain why each individual finds temptation so hard to resist.

A third understanding teaches not so much that Adam's sin brought sin into the world, but that it removed from humanity the gift that enabled people to be perfectly obedient to God.

Getting rid of original sin

The only way a person can 'cleansed' their soul from sin is to:

- accept that Christ's death on the cross atoned for this sin
- accept that only God's grace can cure this sin
- confess their sins and ask for forgiveness

- be baptised

Many churches accept that infants can be cleansed of original sin by being baptised soon after birth. The other elements required are carried out by adults on the baby's behalf during the ceremony.

Beliefs about Jesus

Incarnation

Jesus' birth is often referred to as the Incarnation. Incarnation means in the body, Christians believe that Jesus is God in Human form. Jesus was born in humble surroundings, he was not born in a Palace. This shows a lot about Christian beliefs about him, Jesus was a symbol for the ordinary people. He is relatable. Jesus' birth was foretold in the Old Testament. He was the saviour or Messiah that the Old Testament spoke of.

Why is Jesus so important?

Jesus came to teach people God's will for them, and to show them what life would be like in the Kingdom of God. For Christians, the Kingdom of God is both an **inner change of heart** and a symbol of **peace on earth**. Jesus showed God's love and power through his use of miracles. He made a blind man see, raised someone from the dead, walked on water and turned water into wine.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah (Christ) for Christians, is important. He not only taught people about God, he showed them what God is like. Jesus was put to death on the cross. This was the **crucifixion**. Christianity says that because Jesus (who was God) chose to die because he loved humanity and wanted to save them, all people were forgiven their sins and so had a chance to go to heaven.

Christianity teaches that **death was not the end for Jesus**. They believe that he rose from the dead on the third day, after being placed in the tomb. This is the **resurrection**. Christians believe that Jesus was not just a man in the past, but is a living **saviour**, relevant to their lives today.

Jesus taught people how to live their lives through telling parables.

Parables of Jesus

Jesus used to tell parables - stories that have meanings. Each would give a little insight into how he wanted people to live their lives. Here is an overview of some of them.

The Good Samaritan

This is a story that highlights the fact that we should Love our neighbour regardless of who they are or what their background is. The story is about several people walking past a man in need before a Samaritan (someone who didn't get on with Jews) helped the man.

The Talents

This is the story of a man giving three of his workers bags of gold, 2 went away and invested it. The third buried the money. When their employer returned he was angry that the man had just buried the money rather than using it. This parable is used to explain that we should use the talents and skills that God has given us.

The Lost Son

This is the story of a father giving his two sons money. One went away and spent it all, the other stayed at home. The son who went away soon ran out of money and had to work on a pig farm. He eventually went back to his father and asked for forgiveness. His father was so happy to see him he celebrated his return. The son who stayed was angry that he was being celebrated. The message of this parable is that Christians should be forgiving to all regardless of what they have done wrong.



Creation

Christians believe that God created the Universe. He chose to create it out of love for humanity. Some may argue that he created it because he wanted to be worshipped, therefore it was selfish his creation however Christians would debate this. They would argue that as God is Omnipotent he doesn't need to be loved.

One of the main theme running through Christianity is the theme of Love. God is full of Love as we should all be. For Christians it is not important how God created the Universe, as they believe that is beyond their own imagination and for them it doesn't really matter. This is their faith. There are different arguments for the compatibility of God and Science. Read about them here. There are two versions of the Creation story in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 1

Genesis 1 is also known as the 7 Day creation story. This is the story that God created the Universe in 6 days and rested on the 7th.

Creationist Christians

There are different types of Creationist Christians (You can read about this in more depth here) In general they believe that the story in the Bible is the literal truth.

Genesis 2

Genesis 2 is the story of Adam and Eve. Where God created humans first and placed them in a Garden. This provides an account of how sin entered the world

Liberal Christians

Liberal Christians take these as stories or parables. Stories that help tell a more complex idea. This is how many Christians would then link in these ideas with Scientific Theories like the Big Bang Theory and Evolution.

This links with the Philosophical ideas of Teleological and Cosmological ideas.

Living According to the Gospels

The word gospel literally translates to meaning “Good News”. In the Bible this refers to the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament. This is the section of the Bible where you would read about the life and teachings of Jesus.

The Gospels are stories and teachings of Jesus. His central theme was to teach about the **Kingdom of God** and how to obey **God’s Law**

God demands love not just for him but also for other people. It was God’s love for the world, that led him to send Jesus into the world. The love God demands from humanity is a love that brings everyone together.

How does Jesus show love?

Jesus expresses love for God and others in a number of ways throughout his ministry. He eats with tax collectors and sinners and touches social outcasts who, because of sin or uncleanness, everyone else avoids. The gospels tell us that his final sacrifice, death, was also an act of love for others: ‘The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them’ (John 15: 13). Everyone must take up their cross and show love to neighbours, no matter what the cost to the self. Jesus shows Christians how to live through telling parables or stories that people can apply to their own life.

The Kingdom of God

Christians believe that it is their duty to create a “Kingdom of God” – This means a land where God would be happy to live. A Land full of love, peace and harmony. Jesus taught this love will start small but it has to grow and start somewhere.

Judgement and Heaven

Christians believe there is an afterlife. Although the body dies and is buried or cremated, they believe that their soul lives on and is raised to new life by God.

Their belief that Jesus rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion gives Christians hope that if they follow Jesus' teaching and accept him as their Lord and Saviour, then this new resurrection life awaits them. By being born as a human being (the incarnation), and then dying on the cross, Jesus made this new 'life after death' possible for all.

Judgement

Christians believe that God is just and fair, and so cannot let evil go unpunished. Most believe in the idea of judgement after death, and that God will treat people in the afterlife according to how they lived their life on earth.

What is Heaven and Hell?

Christians therefore have very different ideas about what Heaven is. There is no real description of it in the Bible. Some believe that heaven is a physical place, where their body goes after death. Others believe that it is their soul that lives on, and that heaven is a state of being united with God.

The Bible is even less specific about hell, and Christians have very different ideas about this too. Some Christians believe that hell is a **place** of suffering, and of separation from God. Others (perhaps most) believe that hell is a **spiritual** state of being separated from God for eternity.

Some Christians, including Roman Catholics, believe in purgatory. This is an in-between state for the majority of people of waiting for heaven, a time of cleansing from sin and preparing for heaven.

Who gets into Heaven?

Many Christians believe that there is a place in the Kingdom of God for members of other faiths, and for many who have not even believed in God on earth but have 'done the will of God' in many ways without knowing it.

Is there going to be a second coming?

Some Christians believe in the Second Coming - the anticipated return of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth. This will mean a *resurrection* of the dead, the last judgement of the dead and the living, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Worship

Individual Worship

Christians believe that they can have a relationship with God through prayer. Christians may pray to give thanks, ask for help, seek forgiveness or to ask God to watch over others. Prayer can be done individually or in groups, it can be done anywhere at any times.

Christians may also read the Bible in their own time. This will give them the opportunity to read God's word and understand their own lives further and how they should be living.

Community Worship

Community worship may be led by a priest or a minister. Christians may attend church on a Sunday to worship, pray and study the Bible as a group. Hymns (religious songs) may also be sung. The minister may preach a sermon - which is a lesson on a key theme of the Bible - e.g. Forgiveness.

Christians may take part in communion. This is a symbolic ritual, which is also known as Eucharist. This is where Christians eat bread and drink wine like Jesus did at the Last Supper. The bread symbolises his body and the wine his blood. This is a way for Christians to remember the sacrifice of Jesus.

Rites of Passage

Christians may choose to have a Christian wedding. This is where a minister would conduct the ceremony and bring in the theme of God's love to the marriage. This is as much as a spiritual joining as well as a legal joining of the couple. Christians believe marriage is a gift from God.

Christians may also have a christian funeral. This is where the loved ones may look to God and the Bible for support and guidance. The funeral may have hymns and prayers and reiterate the idea of heaven and life after death.

Festivals

Throughout the year there are many Festivals Christians may celebrate. For Example Christmas. This is the celebration of Jesus' Incarnation. There is a lot of religious symbolism such as giving gifts which represents the wise men's gifts.

Easter is another major festival. In the time leading up to Easter some christians take part in Lent, where they give up something. They also take part different events during Holy Week - the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.