

Overview

Christianity is focussed on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who Christians believe to be the son of God. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the Middle East over 2000 years ago.

Key Concepts

Omnibenevolent The state of being all-loving and infinitely good - a characteristic often given to God.
Omnipotent The all-powerful, almighty and unlimited nature of God.
Omniscience God is all-knowing.
Trinity The three persons of God: God the father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Incarnation God becoming human in the form of Jesus.
Atonement The belief that Jesus' death on the cross healed the rift between humans and God.
The Divine Command Theory essentially teaches that something is good because God commands it to be done or evil because God forbids it from being done.
Agape - Unconditional, selfless love which is referred to in the New Testament.
Interfaith Dialogue -exploring common grounds between different faiths.
Resurrection - The belief that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, conquering death.
Holy Spirit - the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost is the third person of the Trinity: God shown as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; each person itself being God.
Messiah -The chosen one or saviour.

The Nature of God

Monotheism - Christians believe that there is only one God.
Trinity - most Christians believe that there are **three distinct Persons** to this one God and that these three Persons form a unity. This belief is called the doctrine of the Trinity: 1. **God the Father** - the **creator** and **sustainer** of all things. 2. **God the Son** - the incarnation of God as a human being, Jesus Christ, on Earth. 3. **God the Holy Spirit** - the power of God which is active in the world, drawing people towards God.
Holy - God is 'other', different from anything else - separate and sacred.
 Don't forget the four 'omnis' when describing God - omnibenevolent, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent.

Ethical decision making

Christians have different beliefs and approaches when it comes to ethical decision making. Divine command theory is the belief that things are right because God commands them to be. It is an **absolutist** theory. This means that there is no debate or discussion over whether an action is right or wrong. Any act that goes against what God has commanded is classed as wrong, no matter the situation or circumstance.

Easter

Holy Week: Palm Sunday is the first day of Holy Week and celebrates Jesus's arrival in **Jerusalem** riding on a donkey. Crowds of people came out of the city to greet him, throwing down **palm branches** on the road.

On Maundy Thursday Christians remember when Jesus ate the **Passover meal** with his disciples, breaking bread and drinking wine. Christians refer to this meal as the **Last Supper**.

Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Sunday. It commemorates the execution of Jesus by **crucifixion**. Good Friday is a day of mourning in church. During special Good Friday services Christians remember Jesus's suffering and death on the cross, and what this means for their faith. **Easter Sunday** marks Jesus's **resurrection**. After Jesus was crucified on the Friday his body was taken down from the cross and buried in a cave tomb. The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers and an enormous stone was put over the entrance. On Sunday **Mary Magdalene** and some of Jesus's disciples visited the tomb. They found the stone had been moved and that Jesus's body had gone. Jesus was seen later that day by Mary Magdalene and the disciples. His followers believe he was raised from the dead. Christians call this the resurrection.

What did Jesus teach?

If you had to sum up Jesus in just one word, **agape** would be it! Everything Jesus did and taught can arguably be seen as an expression of agape love. Here are some examples to illustrate this point: **1.** Jesus taught his followers not only to love their neighbour, but to love their enemies as well and to even pray for their persecutors - that's really self-sacrificial! **2.** He told his followers to sell what they have to give to the poor. **3.** Jesus suffered and died for the sins of humankind. The Gospel of John tells us: 'for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' **Agape comes from the Greek word for unconditional love.

Important teachings: Parable of the Sheep and Goats Parable of the Good Samaritan Parable of the Prodigal Son

The Good Samaritan

*A **parable** is a story with a meaning.

The story: Jesus is tested by an expert in religious law. In reply, Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan: A man is attacked by robbers. A priest and a Levite walk by. The priest and the Levite were religious people. They might have been thinking fine thoughts, but they were not doing the right actions. They did not act justly. A Samaritan takes pity on the attacked man. At the time of Jesus, Jews and Samaritans hated each other. So, for a Jew, there was no such thing as a 'good Samaritan!' Jesus said differently. This Samaritan was not put off by racial barriers. He did not say, 'I'll leave that man - he is a Jew,' but said, 'He needs help, so I'll help him.'

Moral: **'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and your neighbour as yourself.'**

Treasures in heaven

Matthew 6:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

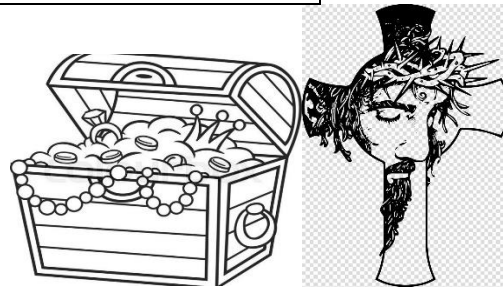
It would seem Jesus does not support the accumulation of wealth: **'Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth.'** He teaches that in the afterlife there are 'treasures' that are much more valuable and have nothing to do with money - we should be pursuing those treasures now.

In Jewish thought, 'treasure in heaven' could refer to acts of kindness or the quality of one's character. These things are not always valued by people, but they are always valued, say believers, by God.



Key questions

1. How did Christianity begin?
2. Give three facts about the life of Jesus.
3. According to the Gospel of Luke, who visited Jesus?
4. How do different Christians observe Lent?
5. How did Satan try to tempt Jesus?
6. What is a parable?
7. Why did Jesus tell the parable of the Good Samaritan?
8. Why was the parable of the Good Samaritan so shocking when Jesus told it?
9. What does 'treasure in heaven' refer to?
10. What is the meaning behind the rich man and Lazarus?
11. Describe what Jesus meant by agape. Include examples.
12. Why is the resurrection so important to Christians?
13. What happened during Holy Week?
14. 'Gimme Five' about the crucifixion of Jesus.



Key vocabulary

Agape
Belief
Christian
Christianity
Christmas
Crucifixion
Disciples
Easter
Holy Week
Jesus
Last Supper
Lent
Maundy Thursday
Palm Sunday
Parable
Resurrection
Treasures

Rich man and Lazarus

¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

²⁵ "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

²⁷ "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

"No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"