

Christianity

Ascension

The event 40 days after the Resurrection, when Jesus returned to God, the Father, in heaven, recorded in Luke 24 and Acts 1.

Atonement

Literally 'at-one-ment', it refers to the reconciliation between God and humanity that was sealed by the sacrificial death of Jesus.

Baptism

The sacrament through which people become members of the Church. Baptism involves the use of water as a symbol of the washing away of sin. It is a rite of initiation.

Believers' baptism

Initiation into the Church, by immersion in water, of people old enough to understand the ceremony/rite and willing to live a Christian life. Some denominations prefer this to infant baptism. This form of baptism contains many similarities to the baptism of Jesus.

Bible

Sacred book for Christians containing both the Old and New Testaments.

Catholic

The tradition within the Christian Church which is led by the Pope.

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

A Christian charity that provides emergency and long-term aid to the developing world.

Christ

The leader promised by God to the Jews. The word literally means 'Anointed One' in Greek; the Hebrew equivalent is Messiah. Christians believe Jesus to be the Christ.

Christian

Someone who believes in Jesus Christ and follows the religion based on his teachings.

Christian Aid

A Christian charity that provides emergency and long-term aid to the developing world.

Christmas

The Feast Day commemorating the birth of Jesus (25 December in most Churches).

Church

- The Holy People of God, also called the Body of Christ, among whom Christ is present and active.
- Members of a particular Christian denomination/tradition.
- A building in which Christians worship.

Creation

Christians believe that the world is God's loving creation.

Crucifixion

- Roman method of execution by which criminals were fixed to a cross.
- The execution and death of Jesus on Good Friday.

Easter

The religious season celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It starts on Easter Day and finishes with the feast of Pentecost.

Eucharist

Literally 'thanksgiving'. Another name for Holy Communion and a service in which the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated, using bread and wine. Thanks are given to God for his creation of the world, for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and for the bread and wine which many Christians refer to as Jesus' Body and Blood.

Evangelism

Preaching the gospel (the good news about God) to convert people to the Christian faith.

Evil

The opposite of good. A force that is seen in many traditions as destructive and against God.

The Father

The first Person of the Trinity, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

Food banks

This relates to Christian charities collecting donated food to distribute to the poor in Britain.

Grace

The unconditional and generous love that God shows to people who do not deserve it.

Heaven

The state after death of being with and enjoying eternity with God

Hell

The place of eternal suffering or the state after death of separation from God for those who want no relationship with him.

Holy Communion

Another name for the Eucharist in which the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated using bread and wine.

Holy Spirit

The third person of the Holy Trinity who descended like a dove on Jesus at his baptism. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is present and inspires them.

Incarnation

Literally 'in flesh', or 'enfleshed', the doctrine that God took the human form as Jesus.

Infant baptism

Initiation of babies and young children into the Church, where promises are taken on their behalf by adults. The infant is freed from sin and introduced to the saving love of God and the support of the Christian community.

Informal prayer

This takes the form of extempore prayer, consisting of spontaneous prayers spoken from the heart as opposed to the use of set prayers.

Informal worship

Worship which has no set structure It is usually spontaneous and sometimes charismatic in nature.

Iona

An island of the west coast of Scotland founded by Columba in the 4th century. It is used by Christians today as a centre for pilgrimage and religious retreat.

Jesus

First century Jewish teacher and holy man, believed by Christians to be the Son of God.

Judgement

When God decides whether each person should receive eternal life or eternal punishment.

Just

This refers to the nature of God as one who treats each individual human being fairly and equally.

Liturgical worship

A church service which follows a set structure or ritual.

Law

This refers to the law of God, revealed in the Bible, which Christians are called to obey. St Paul made it clear, however, that salvation is not earned by obedience to the law but is God's free gift.

Lourdes

A town in France, where the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette in a series of visions, and now a place of pilgrimage, where it is claimed that miraculous healings have taken place.

Lord's Prayer

The prayer taught to the disciples by Jesus; also known as the 'Our Father'.

Mission

Literally 'sent out'. It refers to the duty of Christians to spread the gospel (the good news about Jesus).

Non-liturgical worship

A service which does not follow a set text or ritual. This type of worship is sometimes spontaneous or charismatic in nature.

Omnipotent

The belief that God is 'all powerful'.

The Oneness of God

The belief that God is 'One'.

Original sin

The traditional belief that is still held by some Christians that human nature is basically flawed, and so humans have a tendency to go against God's will. Christians who think that the Bible is literally true believe that it has been passed down from Adam and Eve.

Orthodox

The most popular Christian tradition in some parts of Eastern Europe. There are two main Orthodox Churches – Greek and Russian.

Persecution

Throughout the centuries and still in some parts of the world, Christians face punishment and even death for adherence to their faith.

Pilgrimage

A journey by a Christian to a holy site, eg Lourdes, Iona. Pilgrimage is itself an act of worship and devotion.

Prayer

Communicating with God through words of praise, thanksgiving or confession, or requests for his help or guidance. Listening to and speaking to God.

Private worship

A believer giving God praise and worship on his or her own.

Protestant

The Churches that 'protested' against and broke away from the Catholic Church during the Reformation. Services are generally based more closely on the Bible than those of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Reconciliation

- The process of restoring harmony after relationships between people has broken down.
- A sacrament in the Roman Catholic and some Anglican Churches.

Resurrection

- The event celebrated on Easter Day of Jesus rising from the dead, an event recorded in all four gospels and the central belief of Christianity.
- The form that many Christians believe the afterlife will take, referring to either physical or spiritual bodies.

Sacrament

The outward and visible sign of an invisible and spiritual grace. Baptism and the Eucharist are recognised as sacraments by most Christians.

Salvation

Saving the soul and deliverance from sin and admission to heaven brought about by Jesus.

Set prayers

These are prayers written throughout the centuries by Christian holy men and women, which many Christians use. The Lord's Prayer is an example of a set prayer.

Sin

Behaviour which is against God's laws and wishes/against principles of morality. A thought, word or action which is wrong, which people know is wrong and which people freely choose.

The Son

The second Person of the Trinity. This is Jesus, in whom God became incarnate.

Son of God

A title used for Jesus, the second person in the Trinity; denotes the special relationship between Jesus and God.

Sources of wisdom and authority

Christians believe that the Bible, religious leaders and statements of belief, eg the Apostles' Creed, should be respected as conveying deep religious truths.

Street pastors

A Christian organisation consisting of people who work mainly at night on city streets, caring for those who need help.

Suffering

When people have to face and live with unpleasant events or conditions.

Tearfund

A Christian charity that provides emergency and long-term aid to the developing world.

Trinity

The belief that there are three Persons in the One God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are separate, but are also one being.

Word

St John's Gospel 1 describes God creating the world through his Word and links this to Jesus in the statement: 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'.

Worship

Offering to God the praise that he is due. This may be done in public or in private worship.