



AQA 9-1 GCSE Religious Studies

Christianity: basic facts about beliefs, teachings

The characteristics of God

1. Omnipotent – all powerful
2. Omniscient – all knowing
3. Omnipresent – present everywhere
4. Omnibenevolent – all loving
5. Just – brings about what is right and fair; the perfect judge of human character

The Trinity

6. Christians believe in the Trinity – 3 persons, One God – Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
7. These persons are separate but also one being, and each is fully God.
8. God the Father is believed to be the creator of the earth and all living things.
9. God the Son became incarnate on earth through Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus was both fully human whilst on earth and also fully God at all times.
10. God the Holy Spirit is believed to be the unseen power of God at work in the world in the past, present and future. Christians believe that once Jesus had left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit to influence, guide and sustain the earth and all life on it.

The Christian creation story

11. Christians and Muslims believe that the universe didn't just make itself but that it was designed and made by God. He created the universe out of nothing.
12. Some Christians believe that the creation stories describe exactly how the universe was created. Fundamentalists believe every word in the Bible is true.
13. Some Christians believe that everything was created in six days whereas others interpret 'day' as representing a longer period of time.
14. Liberal Christians believe that the Bible's authors are guided by God, but that not everything they wrote is a literal account of what actually happened.

Liberals tend to regard the creation stories as more like parables or symbolic accounts, where the main message is that God brought into being the universe and all that is in it.

Creation – Genesis 1

15. Christians believe that God created the earth and all living things on it.
16. Many Christians believe that although Genesis may not be scientifically accurate it contains religious truth, explaining that the process of creation was God's choice and that God designed and caused it to happen.
17. Genesis says that the creation of the earth happened in six periods of time (days), after which God rested. 1 – day and night; 2 – sky; 3 – seas and land; 4 – sun, moon and stars; 5 – fish and other animals in the sea and birds in the air; 6 – animals on land and humans (in His own image); 7 – God rested and made it holy
18. 'God saw all that he had made... and it was very good.'
19. '...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' shows that the Holy Spirit was involved in creation.

Creation – John 1

20. John 1: 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us'.
21. Most Christians agree that 'the Word' refers to God the Son, who entered history as Jesus. This shows that God the Son was involved in creation.

God's love

22. Christians believe that because God loves humans He wants what is best for them.
23. Christians believe that God created humans because He is all loving and desired to bestow His love upon his creatures. This encourages Christians to love each other in their daily lives by treating everybody with care and respect. Christians believe that God's greatest act of love was sending Jesus to earth.

Incarnation

24. Incarnation means becoming flesh and taking a human form.
25. The gospels of Matthew and Luke show quite clearly that Jesus was not conceived sexually but that he was the Son of God.
26. Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and Joseph (separately) and told them that she would have a child that was the Son of God. Joseph took Jesus as his son, even though he knew he was not his natural father.
27. The incarnation is important to Christians because it shows that Jesus is fully God but also fully human. It is a fundamental Christian belief that through the incarnation God showed himself as a human being.

Jesus, the Son of God

28. John 1: 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' supports the idea that God became flesh. This gives Jesus' words, deeds and promised great authority because they are the word of God.

29. Christians refer to Jesus as 'The Christ' which means 'the anointed one'. This is a translation of the Hebrew word 'Messiah'.
30. Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, a special leader sent from God.
31. When Jesus was baptised, a voice from heaven said 'You are my Son' (Mark).
32. At Jesus' trial he was asked 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' and he replied 'I am'. (Mark).

The crucifixion

33. Jesus was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor.
34. Even though Jesus was the Son of God, it does not mean that he was in some way spared the pain and horror of his crucifixion because he was fully human.
35. Christians believe that, if they accept Jesus' sacrifice, sin can no longer destroy their lives because God forgives those who faithfully ask for forgiveness.
36. Christians believe that suffering is part of life, just as it was a part of Jesus' life.
37. Christians believe that God understands suffering as He has gone through it.
38. Once Jesus was dead, a man called Joseph from Arimathea asked for his body so that he could bury it. He laid the body in a cave-like tomb and rolled a large stone to block the entrance. This was done on late Friday afternoon.

The resurrection

39. Some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb to prepare His body for proper burial. The body could not be found. The women met a man who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead and that they should tell his disciples.
40. The belief that Jesus rose from the dead is called the resurrection. For Christians, it is significant evidence of the divine nature of Jesus.
41. For the next few weeks Jesus appeared to several people including Mary Magdalene and the disciples, telling them that he had risen from the dead.
42. Christians believe that the resurrection shows the power of good over evil.
43. Christians believe that by accepting Jesus they can also be resurrected in some way. This means that they have no need to fear death.
44. Jesus' resurrection assures Christians that God will forgive their sins.

The ascension

45. The ascension is the event, 40 days after the resurrection, when Jesus returned to God, the Father, in heaven.
46. For Christians, the ascension shows that Jesus is with God. The ascension paves the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The afterlife and judgement

47. Christians believe that humans receive eternal life as a gift from God and so a belief in the afterlife is dependent on a belief in God.
48. Some Christians believe the afterlife begins upon death; others think it begins at the Day of Judgement when Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.

49. Christians believe that it is God who decides the fate of those who die. God will consider the life of the person and the extent to which they have tried to get close to Him by following the teaching and example of Jesus.
50. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats tells Christians about the criteria God uses in judgement and shows what they need to do to be saved. Simply treating other people well and in accordance with Christian morality is not enough to guarantee a good afterlife – believing in God and following Jesus' teachings are also important.
51. Christians believe that heaven is a free gift to those who believe and put their trust in Jesus. Many Christians believe that following Jesus means living a life of doing good and avoiding sin, but salvation does not need to be earned as the price for salvation was paid by Jesus' death.

Heaven and hell

52. The result of God's judgement (at Judgement Day) is that Christians will either experience the presence of God eternally (heaven) or that they are unable to experience God's presence (hell).
53. Catholics believe in an intermediate state called purgatory where the souls of some Christians wait to receive their place in heaven.
54. It is not clear whether the afterlife in heaven/hell is a physical or spiritual existence. Some Christians believe that they will be in heaven in their physical bodies and others believe that it is their souls that live on for eternity.
55. There is a great debate about whether a loving God would condemn people to eternal torment and pain in hell.

Different opinions about who will be with God in heaven

56. Some Christians believe that only those who believe in Jesus will be with God in heaven,
57. Other Christians believe that heaven is reserved for Christians and perhaps followers of other faiths who have lived good, principled lives and please God in doing so.
58. Other Christians believe it is for all those who call themselves Christians regardless of how they live their life – the act of being baptised into the faith is almost a guarantee of heaven.
59. All Christians believe that God will forgive sins, and this will enable people to approach God's presence.

Sin

60. Sin is any action or thought that separates humans from God – actions and thoughts that are against God's laws and wishes or against the principles of morality that God requires His people to follow.
61. Christians believe that all humans commit sins – as nobody is perfect, it is impossible not to sin.
62. The doctrine of 'original sin' says that everyone is born with a built-in urge to do bad things and to disobey God. This idea is introduced in the story of Adam and Eve.

63. Christians believe that God gave people free will in order to choose how they live their lives. However, this does not mean that they can do whatever they want. They believe that if people use their free will to make choices that God would not approve of, these will be sinful and will separate them from God.

Salvation

64. Salvation means to be saved from sin and the consequences of it and be granted eternal life with God. Sin has separated humans from God who is holy, and salvation enables humans to get close to God again.
65. Grace is a quality of God which God shows to humans by providing love and support which they do not need to earn.
66. There are two main Christian ideas about salvation:
- (a) Salvation through good works – the Old Testament makes it clear that a person achieves salvation by having faith in God and obeying God's law
 - (b) Salvation through grace – salvation is given by God through faith in Jesus – it is not earned or deserved but is a gift for the faithful.

The role of Christ in salvation

67. Christians believe that Jesus' death makes up for the original sin committed by Adam and Eve and so can bring people back to God.
68. Jesus' crucifixion was the result of human evil set against an innocent man. As Son of God, Jesus could easily have avoided being crucified but He knew that His death was necessary to restore the relationship between God and believers and make the opportunity for salvation available to all people.
69. Jesus' resurrection, 3 days after His death, shows Christians that death has been defeated and that the goodness of Jesus had defeated the evil on sin.
70. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead shows that God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice as atonement, which means that Jesus restored the relationship between God and humanity.