

Autumn 1 and 2 - What do you need to know about Christian beliefs and teachings?

The Bible is the Christian holy book. It is actually made up of 66 books, by different authors, which were written over a long period of time.

The **Old Testament** contains 39 books which are also important to Jewish people. They contain stories about the beginning of the world and God's relationship with humans. They are a combination of books about history, law, prophecy (messages from God), poetry and prayer.

The **New Testament** contains 27 books and starts with the four Gospels, which are the stories of the life and teachings of Jesus. The rest of the books are about the early history of Christianity and about what will happen at the end of the world.

Some Christians believe everything in the Bible is literally true because it comes directly from God, but others believe it contains important messages which were inspired by God but written by humans. This means the details may not all be true but the important meanings are. Differences between the stories are explained by the fact that they were written by different people.

The Nativity is the story of the birth of Jesus.

There are two different versions of the story in the Gospels.

They both tell us that Jesus' birth was announced by an angel. He was born in Bethlehem when Mary and Joseph travelled there. They had nowhere to stay and Jesus was laid in a manger (an animal feeding trough) after he was born.

Matthew's version of the story tells us that wise men followed a star to visit Jesus and bring him gifts when he was born.

Luke's version tells us that angels appeared to shepherds and told them to go to see Jesus.



Jesus taught people using **parables**. A parable is a story with a special meaning that helps people to understand difficult ideas by setting them in a familiar situation. For example,

The Parable of the Lost Son

A young man asked his father for his share of the family wealth and left his father and brother behind on the farm where they lived. He spent all the money on parties and fine clothes and soon had none left. He was desperate and decided to go home to say sorry and ask his father to take him back to work on the farm.

When his father saw him, he welcomed him with open arms back into the family and threw a big party to celebrate.

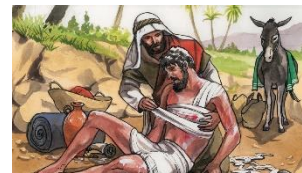
Message? God will always forgive us and welcome us back if we are truly sorry for the things we have done wrong.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Someone said to Jesus, 'You say I should love my neighbour, but who is my neighbour?' Jesus told this story.

A Jewish man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho along a dangerous road when he was attacked by robbers who left him for dead. A Jewish priest and a temple worker both went past but did not stop to help him because it would interfere with their religious duties. Then a Samaritan came past. Samaritans and Jews were enemies of each other, but he stopped and helped the injured man, taking him to an inn and paying for his care until he was recovered.

Message? Everyone is our neighbour, whether we know and like them or not. We must love and help everyone, no matter who they are.



There are many stories in the Bible about Jesus performing **miracles**. A miracle is an event which seems impossible and makes you think God must be behind it. Jesus' miracles are a sign that he is the Son of God. For example,

Feeding the Five Thousand

Jesus fed a large crowd with just five loaves and two fish. He blessed it and told the disciples to share it with the crowd. There was enough for everyone!



Raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus' friend, Lazarus, had been dead for three days. Jesus called for him to come out of his tomb and to everyone's amazement, he did! Lazarus was alive again!



Calming a storm

Jesus was on a boat with his disciples, who were fishing on Lake Galilee. While he slept, a storm broke and the disciples were afraid they were going to drown. Their shouts of alarm woke Jesus, who told them off for being afraid. He stretched out his arms; the storm immediately stopped and the water was calm once again.

Do miracles really happen?

Yes because

The Bible describes them and it is the word of God so it must be true
God has the power to do anything, so he could make them happen

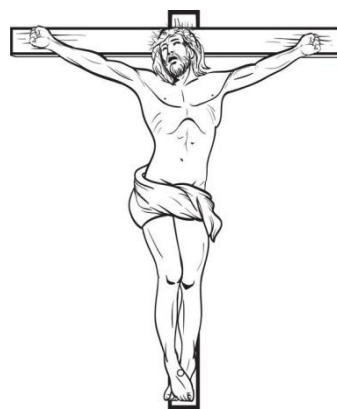
No because

It could be just a coincidence or good luck.
It could be a con-trick
People could exaggerate what happened to get attention

Jesus the Messiah

The Messiah is the Jewish name for a special person who will be sent by God to bring a perfect world. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah because he fits the description of many Old Testament prophecies (predictions) about what the Messiah would be like. For example, there is a prophecy that the Messiah's mother will be a virgin and that he will be born in Bethlehem.

The following prophecy is linked by Christians to the crucifixion: **"But he was crushed for our sins. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed"**. This makes Christians believe that the suffering Jesus endured on the cross took the punishment for all the things we did wrong and allowed us to be made whole again with God.



The Crucifixion

Jesus attracted large crowds of supporters wherever he went. The authorities thought he was a trouble maker and so he was arrested and sentenced to be crucified.

Jesus was led to his death through a large crowd which was guarded by Roman soldiers. A crown of thorns was placed on his head to make fun of the way his followers called him the King of the Jews. He was nailed to a cross and left to suffer and die. Either side of him, two thieves were also being executed.

Some of Jesus' followers witnessed his death. On the cross, he asked God to forgive the people who were killing him and cried out, 'My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?' At the moment of his death, the sky turned black.

Why is the crucifixion important to Christians?

- It shows how much God loves them - Jesus was prepared to suffer and die to take the punishment for their sins.
- If Jesus had not been crucified and taken the punishment for them, they would not have a chance to go to Heaven.
- It is evidence that Jesus was the Messiah because it fulfils an important prophecy about him.

The Resurrection

On the third day after he was crucified and taken to his tomb, some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb to take care of his body. They could not do it earlier because the day between was the Jewish Sabbath, when no work was allowed.

Roman soldiers had been guarding the tomb against any possible trouble from his followers and had seen no-one. However, when the women got there, the stone at the entrance had been rolled away and Jesus' body had disappeared! A mysterious stranger told them not to look for the living among the dead. On their way back to tell the disciples, they met someone who they realised was Jesus. When they told the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, at first the men did not believe them.

Later, Jesus appeared to the disciples as well, even letting one of them touch his wounds. He stayed on Earth for 40 days, giving his final instructions to the disciples about how they should spread the word and continue his teachings, before he was taken up on a cloud to Heaven. This is known as the **ascension**.



Christians remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus at **Easter**. **Good Friday** is the day when they remember the crucifixion and **Easter Sunday** is when they remember the resurrection.



Why is the resurrection important to Christians?

- It is proof that there is life after death.
- It shows that Jesus was not defeated by the authorities who wanted to silence him.
- It proves the power of God.

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?	
Yes because	No because
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were lots of eye witnesses who claim to have seen him alive after his crucifixion • It explains why his body disappeared from the tomb - the soldiers had been guarding it and non-one had visited it • Christians believe God is omnipotent (all-powerful) so he could have made it happen • Jesus had performed miracles before, including bringing Lazarus back from the dead, so he had shown he could do it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is impossible to come back from the dead • There are lots of other explanations for what could have happened to his body, such as it was never buried in the first place or it was smuggled away by his followers. • His followers could have lied about seeing Jesus, because they wanted people to believe in him.

Pentecost

After Jesus went up to Heaven, the disciples were afraid to tell people about him because they knew that the authorities were hunting down and arresting his followers. They hid in a locked room for safety. Suddenly, a bright light and a dove appeared in the room. They felt a rushing wind and saw tongues of flame on their heads! These were signs that the **Holy Spirit** had come to them to give them the courage and ability they needed to be able to continue Jesus' work. They went outside and preached to the crowd in different languages, so that everyone could understand them. God had given them the power to continue their important work. Christians think of this as the birthday of the church.



Key words	
Bible	The Christian holy book, made up of the Old and New Testaments
creed	The official statement of Christian beliefs
crucifixion	The way Jesus died, being nailed to a cross
disciple	A follower of Jesus
Gospels	The four versions of the life of Jesus that appear in the Bible
Messiah	A special person that Jews believed would be sent by God to bring about a perfect world. Christians believe this is Jesus.
miracle	An event which seems impossible and makes you think God made it happen
Nativity	The story of the birth of Jesus
parable	A story with a special religious meaning
Pentecost	The day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples to give them the power to do God's work on Earth
resurrection	When Jesus rose again from the dead



belief	people
believe	prayer
Heaven	religion
holy	religious
miracle	worship

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
 Creator of heaven and earth;
 and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
 Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary;
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died and was buried.
 He descended into hell;
 the third day He rose again from the dead;
 He ascended into heaven,
 is seated at the right hand
 of God the Father Almighty;
 from thence He shall come
 to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the Holy Catholic Church,
 the communion of Saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and life everlasting. Amen.