

## **Christian Beliefs and Teachings**

**Creeds: Statements of Faith which sum up the basic beliefs of the Christian Faith e.g. Apostles Creed:** “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary....”

**Churches:** Different denominations or groups of churches. 1054: Faith split into Western Roman Christianity (Catholic Christianity) led by the Pope, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Further splits include Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal etc.

**Bible:** Collection of 66 books. Divided into 2 sections, the Old Testament and New Testament. Old Testament – Starts with Genesis (39 books in total) and contains the history of the Jewish people e.g. Adam, Isaac, Moses and David. New Testament – starts with the 4 Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which are about the life of Jesus. Remember Jesus was Jewish. The New Testament is further made up of other books and letters that record the spread of Faith.

### **Nature of God**

**Immanent:** God is with us, involved in His creation. Active in the world. Jesus is an example of this aspect of God.

**Transcendent:** God is beyond space and time, not controlled by either. So God is eternal (never born, never to die – ‘begotten not made’). God has continuous existence outside the created world, and is free from the limitations inherent in matter.

**Personal:** We can use human terms to describe this God. We can speak to and listen to this God, and can enjoy a relationship with God.

**Impersonal:** We can’t describe this God, because God is too immense/ vast. God is beyond human capability of description or understanding - we can only worship God.

**Holy:** Christians consider God to be holy, which means something **set apart from everything else for a special purpose and worthy of worship.**

**Trinity:** The belief that there are three persons in the One God (Monotheist); the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate, but are also one being.

**God the Father:** The loving creator and sustainer of the universe - ‘Our Father in heaven’. The Lord’s Prayer

**God the Son:** The saviour who became incarnate (born in flesh) and lived, died and rose again. Jesus. When Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and a voice said ‘You are my Son...’ (Luke 3: 22)

**God the Holy Spirit:** the source of strength which Christians find at work in their hearts. At Jesus’ final meeting on Earth with his disciples, Jesus said to them, ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 28:19).

**Scripture/sacred writings:** The Nicene creed says ‘We believe in One God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth.’ The ‘Word’ referred to in John 1:1-3 not only picks up the idea of God creating through his word i.e. ‘Let there be light’ but also refers to Jesus – the Word – the Son; this shows the trinity was present in Creation.

**Influence/Impact:** In Baptism ceremonies the Trinity is mentioned throughout i.e. The vicar will say ‘NAME, I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen’. Many Hymns mention the Trinity. Humans are made in the image of God and should show that same unity, of love and equality in their relationships.

**Omnipotent: Almighty, having unlimited power; a quality of God.** In order to be the perfect ‘Supreme being’, it is important that God is omnipotent. God can do anything that it makes sense for God to do – doing something morally wrong would be contradictory for a God who is all good.

**Sacred writings:** When the Angel Gabriel spoke to Mary when she questioned her forthcoming pregnancy: ‘**Nothing is impossible with God.**’ Luke 1:37.

**Evidence:** The creation of the universe, wonders of the universe, miracles performed by Jesus and miracles in the modern world. E.g. Jesus calming the storm in St Mark’s Gospel.

**Benevolent: God is All-loving, all-good;** a quality of God. Loves humans, wants the best for us and created us out of His love.

**Agape love:** Agape love is self-giving love which expects nothing in return. Jesus’ death on the Cross shows Agape love - his sacrifice allowed humans to have a relationship with God and to enter Heaven in the after-life.

**Sacred writings/ scripture:** ‘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’ (John 3:16). The Parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates this love (Luke 15:11 -32). (Matthew 5) ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy... Love never fails’ (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

**Influence/Impact:** love each other in their daily lives - treating everybody with care and respect. 1 Corinthians passage is often read at Weddings because this description is seen as important. Give to charities such as *Tear fund* (‘love your neighbour’ - neighbour is anyone in the world in need – Good Samaritan).

**Justice: bringing about what is right and fair according to the law, or making up for a wrong that has been committed.**

God is also believed to be the perfect giver of justice. This not only means deciding on right and wrong but being the perfect judge of human character. (Link with judgement day)

**Sacred writings/ scripture:** The Prophet Amos told his audience to ‘let justice roll on like a river’. Jesus ‘In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you’ (Matthew 7:12).

**Influence:** Christians should try to prevent injustice, prejudice and oppression wherever they encounter them (e.g. work of Martin Luther King). They also believe that God will judge them fairly in the afterlife so that they will be rewarded if they have been just to others and be accepted into Heaven. Buy Fair trade products to bring justice to those being paid unfairly.

**The problem of suffering and evil:** For theists who believe that God is benevolent (all-good and all-loving), omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful) it raises problems.

**Answers:** FREE WILL - God gave free-will despite the risks that we would use our freedom to hurt others. *John 10: 18 Jesus talks about freewill saying "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord"* THE FALL: Evil came into the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience, sometimes called 'original sin'. *1. Corinthians 15: 45 "The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam--that is, Christ--is a life-giving Spirit"* THE DEVIL: Many Christians believe in the existence of an evil force which they call the Devil or Satan – tempts them.

**Purpose:** Suffering can make us appreciate things that we take for granted. Education for our souls - It can make us a better or stronger person. TEST of FAITH: *Job 1: 12 "All right, you may test him"*. PUNISHMENT for sin and that it can teach us a lesson. CAN'T EXPLAIN IT: It should be a trigger for action for showing the love of Jesus to their fellow humans.

**Creation:** The account of God making the world and universe found in Genesis. Days: 1- light and dark, 2- Sky, 3- land and plants, 4- sun, moon and stars, 5 – birds and sea creatures, 6- animals and humans in God's image.

**Literal understanding:** The account of God creating all the different kinds of creatures in 6 days and then resting on the 7 is exactly how creation happened. The writings of the Bible were directly inspired by God and so there are no mistakes. (Fundamentalist/ Creationist Christians).

**Non-Literal understanding:** Each day represents a phase of time, it was created in a certain order. The Hebrew word 'iom' means stream of events. This means that there were six periods of time and they could be over thousands or even millions of years. A Christian who believes this can also believe in the Big-bang and evolution as the longer time frame makes them compatible. Creation account is WHY we are here and the science tells us HOW.

**Myth understanding:** The meaning is what is important. It is a story to tell us that God created the world and everything in it and that humans have a special place in creation. We are created in God's image. It also teaches that every aspect of God's creation was good. Can believe in the Big-Bang and evolution - **God created the world through** them and is the cause of the Big-bang. God is transcendent (outside time and space). (How and why – as above)

**Scripture/Sacred Writings:** *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4God saw that the light was good" (Genesis 1:1-4).*

*"Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground". Genesis 1:26. Genesis 1:31 'God saw all that He had made, and it was very good'.*

**Impact/Influence:** Christians believe that we live in an ordered world created and sustained by God humans are not a result of chance but *has meaning and purpose*. This can encourage Christians to have a positive approach to life even when things go wrong. Being made in God's image *means everyone is of value*, regardless of their physical, mental or intellectual capabilities - responsibility to treat all equally and with respect. Good stewardship – rather than exploiting the earth.

**Incarnation:** God in human form: In – carn (flesh) - in flesh. Jesus (person of the Trinity – The Son)

**Scripture/Sacred writing:** The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** states: *'... Jesus is inseparately true God and true man. He is truly the son of god who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became man and our brother.'* JOHN 1: 14 *"the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"* and also *'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God, something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!'* Philipians 2:5-11 – Laid aside knowledge of God (omniscience) to become man.

**Virgin Birth:** *'This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit'* (Matthew 1:18.)

**Son of God:** Christians believe that the Jewish Prophecy about the Messiah came true in Jesus' life: He was born in Bethlehem. *The Lord says, 'Bethlehem, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times' (Micah 5:2).* He worked many signs and wonders (miracles), healing the sick. *The blind will be able to see, and the deaf will hear. The lame will leap and dance' (Isaiah 35:5-6).*

However, he did not fight the Romans and there were no earth-shaking changes - doubt as to who he really was is the main reason for split between Christianity and Judaism. Many Jews could not, and still cannot, see how Jesus could have been the Messiah if he did not change everything and bring peace on earth.

**Impact/Influence of the incarnation:** Christians see the incarnation as a model for how they should live. 1 John 4: 10-11 *'Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another'*. This humility and selfless love for others can be seen in the lives of some Christians e.g. Mother Teresa left the relative comfort of her convent to live among the poorest people of India as one of them. Father Kolbe offered his own life in order to save another's in Auschwitz. Practically help others rather than just pray – action is needed too.

**Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection:**

**Crucifixion:** Christian theology teaches that Christ's death provided a sacrifice for the sins all mankind, making the crucifix, or cross, one of the defining symbols of Christianity.

**Why did Jesus die? The Sanhedrin** were fed up of Jesus claiming that he was the son of God! They disapproved of the way he interpreted the Torah and Talmud (Jewish scripture) and they feared that he would become more popular as he already had quite a large group of followers (disciples). **Pilate** was not that interested in Jesus so the Sanhedrin told him that Jesus was causing riots and telling people not to pay taxes. Because of this Pilate agreed to give Jesus another trial and let the people decide! **Christians** believe that Jesus had to die to fulfil God's commands for him. Without Jesus' death, human beings could not be reunited with God and could not enter heaven. Human beings had strayed from God's ways separating themselves from Him; Jesus' sacrificial death would atone (make up for) that separation.

Jesus' final hours on the cross lasted from approximately 9 a.m. To 3 p.m. a period of about six hours.

Mark recorded that for the final 3 hours of the crucifixion the land was dark – some Christians believe that Mark used this as a symbol of judgement from God. Mark also said that the Temple curtain that separated the most sacred parts of the building from the rest was torn in two - symbol that Jesus' death destroyed the barrier of sin that had separated humanity from God, making it possible for everyone – Jew and non-Jew to have access to God.

**Scripture/ Sacred writings:** Luke 23: <sup>34</sup> 'Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing'. Luke 23 <sup>42</sup> 'Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." <sup>43</sup> And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:46 'Jesus called out with a loud voice 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'. When he said this, he breathed his last.' According to Mark 15:39 one of the Roman centurions said 'Surely this man was the Son of God!' John 19:30 "it is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." Jesus knew that his mission was now finished.

**Influence/Impact:** Confidence to accept Jesus' sacrifice, sin can no longer destroy their lives because Jesus' sacrifice on the cross made forgiveness possible. God forgives those who faithfully ask. Helps them to cope with suffering. God understands what it feels like to suffer as he suffered himself through Jesus.

**Resurrection:** Rising from the dead. Jesus rising from the dead on Easter day. An event recorded in all four Gospels and the central belief of Christianity.

**Events of the Resurrection:** Christians believe that it is an actual event in history. Jesus is buried. Once Jesus was dead, and the Roman guards made sure that he was, a man called Joseph from Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus so he could bury it. As there was little time to bury Jesus because it was the Sabbath and religious observance was due to start, he laid the body of Jesus in a cave-like tomb and rolled a large stone to block the entrance.

**Scripture/Sacred Writings:** Luke 24: 1-7 "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: <sup>7</sup> 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "

**Christians believe that the resurrection is significant evidence of the divine nature of Jesus.** For 40 days Jesus appeared to several people, including the disciples telling each that he had risen from the dead as he had predicted to them when he was alive. According to the Gospel of John a young man in white revealed himself to Mary Magdalene as Jesus come back to life. The story spread quickly and that there were several different witnesses to the claim that he had risen. These are known as the 'resurrection appearances'. In most of them Jesus is not immediately recognised, either there was something different in his appearance or nobody expected to see him. The stories all stress the physical nature of Jesus' appearance (he wasn't a ghost!)

**Evidence for Christians:** Romans could not have stolen the body as they would have produced it when Christians were causing problems for the Roman Empire; it wasn't the wrong tomb as the women went when he was buried; the Romans checked he was dead so didn't just resuscitate and couldn't have moved the stone anyway; wouldn't use women as reliable witnesses – if you were making it up would choose men; Peter went from denying Jesus to standing in front of the authorities and refused to be quiet; many of the disciples were killed for their beliefs in Jesus. St Paul changed from a Jew who hated Christians to a Christian who was one of the early leaders of the Church after he believed he had met the resurrected Jesus on the Road to Damascus.

**Impact/Influence:** Christians believe it proves the claims of Jesus about being the Son of God. Christians believe that by accepting Jesus, they can also be resurrected in some way. Therefore they have no need to fear death. God can forgive their sins and if they follow the teachings of Christianity they can become closer to God in this life and beyond.

**The Ascension** This is the event 40 days after the resurrection when Jesus returned to God – the Father, in heaven. (Luke's Gospel) A longer account is found in Acts 1:3-11. Jesus took his disciples to Bethany (a place) and blessed them. He was then taken up into heaven. In Acts it says that a cloud 'received him out of their sight'. Some Christians believe it is not a literal story but an image to stress the completion to Jesus' work on Earth and also his Divine Kingship. Some Fundamentalist Christians do take the event literally in terms of Jesus being hidden by a cloud and disappearing into another dimension.

**Scripture/Sacred Writings:** Luke 24: 50 – 53 "When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God."

**Impact/Influence:** Stay faithful to God as the ascension paves the way for the Holy Spirit – Jesus promised he would be with them through this comforter. Gives hope that good will triumph over evil and that God keeps his promises.

**Sin:** An action or thought, which separates humans from God and each other (against God's laws and wishes). It is behaviour which is against God's laws and wishes or against principles of morality.

**Original Sin:** A Christian doctrine developed by Augustine that says that everyone is born with a built-in urge to do bad things and disobey God.

**The Fall:** Story of Adam and Eve – Some Christians believe it is a literal story, others that it is a parable to show that humans have turned away from God. Adam and Eve despite the paradise they lived in sinned against God by breaking an instruction from God. The instruction was not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The serpent tempted them and said that when they ate the fruit they would become like God Himself, they gave in and ate it. This was the first (original) sin. Once they had done this they became aware of sin through their own sinful action, an awareness that is shared by all humans descended from them.

**Temptation:** Humans are tempted to do things to displease God (drugs, excessive spending, harming others).

**Satan:** Tempts humans to disobey God. Many have interpreted the serpent that tempts Eve to eat the fruit to represent Satan (the devil) who is seen as a force of evil.

**Free will:** If people use their free will to make choices that God would not approve of (sins) they will separate themselves from God.

**How to resist temptation:** The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-9; For example: Verses: <sup>13</sup> "You shall not murder," <sup>14</sup> "You shall not commit adultery," <sup>15</sup> "You shall not steal". The Beatitudes which are teachings of Jesus found in Matthew 5 1-12 (which include: 5:9 -Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God) and other Christian teachings give Christians guidance so Christians can use their free will wisely.

**Salvation:** The act of saving someone from sin or evil: the state of being saved from sin or evil. For Christians it means to be saved from sin and the consequences of it, granted eternal life with God.

**Christians believe Jesus' death by Crucifixion was a deliberate act to save humanity from the consequences of Sin and to restore our relationship with God. Jesus' death makes up for the original sin by Adam and Eve.** Jesus' resurrection three days after his death, shows Christians that death has been defeated and that the goodness of Jesus had defeated the evil of sin. God in Christ offered salvation: that is, the cancelling out of original sin and the promise of eternal life. Jesus is referred to as the second Adam as he saves humanity from original sin.

**Grace:** A quality which God shows to humans by providing love and support which they do not need to earn.

**Scripture/Sacred writing:** John 3:16 *'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'*. "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" 1 Corinthians 15:21. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

**Impact/Influence:** Believe that through Jesus' death and resurrection, humans can receive forgiveness for sin, are able to get close to God and will receive eternal life.

**Salvation through Works:** Some Christians follow this approach which is called 'salvation through works'. You have to earn the relationship with God through doing good things and avoiding sin. E.g. by following the 10 Commandments Exodus 20:1-9 For example <sup>13</sup>"You shall not murder", <sup>14</sup>"You shall not commit adultery", <sup>15</sup>"You shall not steal".

**Salvation through Grace:** Salvation is a free gift to those who have faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and accept what he has done for them through his death and resurrection. This faith brings salvation. Jesus in his teachings explained that what pleases his Father is the thoughts in our minds and the love for God and others in our hearts is actually far more important.

Romans 10:10: *"For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."* The word 'grace' occurs many times in the New Testament and refers to the unconditional love that God shows to everyone (underserved). God loves humans *despite what we do or do not do*. Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son is an example.

**Salvation through Spirit** (Closely linked with Grace) The Spirit of God gives Christians the power to keep his law/ the Holy Spirit lives in Christians and makes them gradually more like Jesus and in this way Christians become the sons and daughters of God. Galatians 4:6-7 "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God". Christians believe that they continue to receive God's grace through the presence in their hearts of the Holy Spirit which enables them to try to show love as Jesus did.

**Impact/ Influence:** Believe that they are saved through Grace is being saved by believing in God rather than anything they can do. Hymns which are sung in Christian worship often refer to the act of salvation through the Grace of God. E.g. Amazing Grace by John Newton. Offers hope for the after-life when they die. They feel that they are forgiven for any sin.

**Atonement:** The reconciliation (bringing together) of God and humankind through the sacrifice (sacrificial death) of Jesus Christ. Atonement means the restoring of the relationship between people and God. God is holy and so does not overlook sin. Jesus took the sins upon himself and suffered the penalty for all humankind. He was the only one who could do this.

**Scripture/Sacred writings:** The Bible says atonement removes the effects of sin 1 John 2:1-2 *"... if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*

**Reconciliation:** This is the restoration of a relationship. Christians believe that the relationship between God and humans was so damaged that drastic action was needed – God's self-sacrifice in Jesus.

**Impact/Influence: Follow Jesus' example:** Work as a volunteer with the homeless in Manchester with an organisation called 'Mustard Tree' to bring social justice; Train and take a job as a nurse to help others. **Mass:** this is a ceremony, also called Eucharist, in which the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus is celebrated using bread and wine. Christians carry out this

ceremony in Church services or even in small groups in a home when having a time of studying the Bible together to remember Jesus' sacrifice and to thank Jesus for their salvation.

**After life:** What Christians believe follows life on earth.

**Day of Judgement:** A time when the world will end and every soul will be judged by God and rewarded or punished. Jesus taught that God's love and mercy are unconditional, though many of the parables (stories) he told speak about God's judgement after death. Christianity teaches that there will be a Judgement Day at the end of time and all will be judged by Jesus according to how they behaved. The **Nicene Creed** states that Jesus '*will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead*'. Jesus will make and deliver the judgement.

**Day of Judgement:** **Roman Catholic Beliefs:** The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church states there are two judgments: The particular judgement occurs immediately after each individuals' death and the general or final judgement takes place at the ***Second Coming*** (of Jesus) which is when many Christians believe that Jesus will return to the Earth in Glory. Jesus will judge those who are still alive and those who are dead and as a result of this judgement they will be sent to heaven or hell.

**Important parables about Judgement :** ***The Rich Man and Lazarus*** (Luke 16: 19-31) warns that ignoring the needs of others may have eternal consequences and ***The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats*** (Matthew 25:31-46) warns that on Judgement Day some will be rewarded in heaven for helping others - when they served others they were serving God. The goats, those who did not help others are condemned because they did not.

**Resurrection of the Dead** - that the dead will be restored to life. They have this hope because they believe that Jesus resurrected from the dead. It is also based on his teaching. *Some Christians believe that it is a Spiritual resurrection, others that it is a physical resurrection.* Sometimes the life cycle of the butterfly is used to illustrate this teaching about the resurrection life - there is a continuity of identity. Catholic and some Orthodox Churches – resurrection is a bodily one and that people will once again receive their old body but transformed into a glorified state in which suffering will not exist.

**Scripture/Sacred writings** '*I believe in... the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*' (*Apostles*) Creed. St Paul said belief in Jesus' resurrection was central to Christian faith. '*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men*' (1 Corinthians 15: 17, 19). '*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.... It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*' (1 Corinthians 15:42, 44)

**Impact/Influence:** Christians have a hope that there is life after death.e.g. prayer at the funeral service 'you promised eternal life to those who believe...'. If resurrection is a reality for people once they have died then life after death must be too. Gives hope in the face of death. Many Christians believe that the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit means that they can feel God's presence in their life, gives them confidence of God's love the love.

**Heaven:** Christianity teaches that heaven is a state of being, not a physical place. It is being with God outside time and space. Heaven is where they experience the presence of God forever – eternally.

**Scripture/Sacred Writings:** '*He [God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away* (Revelation 21:4). Revelation 4 '*a rainbow, resembling an emerald*' encircling the throne of God. From this throne comes '*flashes of lightening, rumblings and pearls of thunder*'.

**Impact/Influence:** Heaven encourages Christians to serve God and be obedient to Him. Heaven can be a comfort in times of suffering – this suffering will pass and they have hope for the future.

**Who goes to heaven? 4 different Christian views**

- "**Only Christians** go to heaven". In John 14 (Jesus) "**I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me**". Belief in Jesus **and** following his teaching is also important.
- All those who call themselves Christians act of being baptised into the faith is almost a guarantee of Heaven.
- All who have lived good, principled lives and pleased God in doing so.
- Universalism: ultimately everyone will respond to God's love and this means that everyone will go to Heaven.

**Hell:** The place of being without God or of eternal suffering. Many Christians reject those literal views of hell. Biblical descriptions of hell are symbolic – **hell is eternal separation from God.** This separation results from the deliberate rejection of any relationship with God so hell is not what God decides for people or what He wants but is a result of Free Will – free choice.

**Annihilation:** this means to be completely destroyed so no longer exist. Hell is where the body and soul both cease to exist at the point of physical death. Catholic Church's Catechism which states 'God predestines NO ONE to go to hell; for this, a wilful TURNING AWAY FROM GOD... is necessary and persistence in it until the end'.

**Purgatory: Only Roman Catholics believe in purgatory.** They think this is a middle place between Heaven and Hell.

In purgatory you pay for your sins and when you have done this you can enter Heaven.

This means that Roman Catholics will pray for dead people. They pray that their time in purgatory will be reduced.

After death the soul goes to purgatory if it is destined for Heaven. Purgatory is a place of purification for the soul, so that it can become pure and holy enough to enter Heaven. It is not a physical place.