

Christianity

Ascension

Going or being taken up; the event forty days after the resurrection when Jesus returned to glory in heaven.

Atonement

Making amends or payment for a wrong. The belief that reconciliation between God and humanity that was brought about by the death of Jesus as a sacrifice.

Baptism

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

Believers' baptism

Initiation into the Church, by immersion in water, of people old enough to understand the ceremony/rite and who have made the decision to live a Christian life.

Bible

Source of wisdom and authority; a holy book containing both the Old and New Testaments.

Catholic

The tradition within the Christian Church which is led by the Pope; also called the Roman Catholic Church. (Note: The term 'catholic' refers to the communion of all Christians, the universal Church, although it is not a term included on this specification).

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

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

Christ

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

Christian Aid

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

Christmas

The festival/celebration to remember the birth of Jesus.

Church

- The People of God/Body of Christ, among whom Christ is believed to be present and active.
- Members of a particular Christian denomination/tradition, eg Roman Catholic, Methodist.
- A building in which Christians worship.

Creation

Bringing the world into existence; the belief that the world is God's loving creation.

Crucifixion

The death of Jesus; a form of the death penalty used by the Romans.

Easter

Festival/celebration of the resurrection of Jesus; the Easter season ends with Pentecost (50 days after Easter Sunday) which remembers the coming of the Holy Spirit to earth following the ascension.

Eucharist/Holy Communion

Literally 'thanksgiving'; a sacrament in which the death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated, using bread and wine.

Evangelism

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

Evil

The opposite of good; a cause of suffering and against the will of God.

The Father

The first Person of the Trinity, the belief in God as creator and sustainer of the universe.

Food banks

Places in local communities where people in need can go to collect food; often run/supported by local churches and religious charities.

Grace

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

Heaven

Belief that after death Christians can enter a state of being with God for eternity.

Hell

Belief in a place of eternal suffering, or a state after death of being in separation from God.

Holy Spirit

The third Person of the Trinity; believed to be present with believers since Pentecost and active on earth.

Incarnation

Literally 'in flesh', or 'enfleshed;' belief that God took on human form in the person of Jesus.

Infant baptism

Sacrament of initiation of babies and young children into the Church.

Informal prayer

Spontaneous prayers spoken from the heart which are personal and unique to the person/people at the time.

Iona

Place of pilgrimage founded by St Columba in the fourth century.

Jesus

Believed by Christians to be the Son of God, he was a first century Jewish teacher living and travelling in Palestine/Israel.

Judgement

The belief that God will decide whether each person should receive eternal life or eternal punishment based on their earthly life.

Just

Fair or equal treatment, a state of justice. Belief about the nature of God as treating all people justly.

Liturgical worship

A church service which follows a set structure or ritual.

Law

Rules or commands which must be followed; the law of God is revealed in the Bible.

Lourdes

Place of pilgrimage where the Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette in a series of visions and 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' and widely said by Christians in both church services and privately.

Mission

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

Non-liturgical worship/informal worship

A service which does not follow a set text or ritual; sometimes spontaneous or charismatic.

Omnipotent

The belief that God is 'all powerful'.

The Oneness of God

The belief that God is one singular divine being (who can be manifest in the Three Persons of the Trinity).

Original sin

Belief human nature is flawed, and that we all have the tendency to sin; traditional belief held by some Christians that this came from Adam & Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit as recorded in Genesis 3.

Orthodox

A denomination/tradition of the Church popular in some parts of Eastern Europe. There are two main Orthodox Churches – Greek and Russian.

Persecution

Facing hostility and ill-treatment; some Christians face punishment and death for practising their faith.

Pilgrimage

A religious journey to a holy site/sacred place, it is 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 their own.

Protestant

Christian denominations in which authority is generally based on the Bible, rather than Church tradition/teaching. (eg Anglican, Methodist, Baptist).

Reconciliation

Making up and rebuilding relationships between two groups/sides after disagreement.

Resurrection

- Being raised from the dead; the event three days after the crucifixion when it is believed that God raised Jesus from the dead.
- 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. (eg Baptism and the Eucharist are recognised as sacraments by most Christians).

Salvation

Being saved; belief that through God's grace, Jesus' death and resurrection brought about salvation for humanity. Saving of the soul and being able to enter eternal life in heaven.

Set prayers

These are prayers written throughout the centuries which many Christians worldwide use (eg The Lord's Prayer).

Sin

Behaviour which is against God's laws and wishes/against Christian principles of morality.

The Son

The second Person of the Trinity; Jesus believed to be God incarnate.

Son of God

A title used for Jesus; the second Person of the Trinity. Shows the special relationship between Jesus and God.

Street pastors

A Christian organisation involving people working, mainly at night, on city streets giving care to those who need it.

Suffering

An effect of evil; undergoing pain and hardship.

Tearfund

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

Trinity

The belief that God as One includes God also being manifest in three Persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Word

In the Bible, John 1 describes God creating the world through his eternal Word. This links the eternal Word to Jesus in the statement: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Worship

Showing adoration and reverence; offering praise to God.

Islam

Ablution (wudu)

Ritual washing before prayer.

Adalat/justice

Part of the nature of God in Shi'a Islam; the belief that God is fair.

Adam

One of the prophets of Allah. The father of humankind; built the Ka'aba.

Akhirah (life after death)

Belief in a new stage of life after death.

Angels

They are spiritual beings created from elements of light. They gave God's messages to the prophets and watch over humans.

Arafat

Part of the Hajj pilgrimage. Place where Prophet Muhammad preached his last sermon and pilgrims gather to pray.

Ashura

Important festival in Shi'a Islam, to commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein (Muhammad's grandson). Sunni Muslims observe Ashura as a day of repentance for sins in the belief that they will be forgiven.

Authority

Having power and status. The Qur'an has supreme authority as the word of Allah, this means it must be believed and obeyed.

Beneficence

Literally 'doing good'. One of the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah and belief about his nature, the generosity that Allah shows to humans.

Day of Judgement

The day when Allah will decide about individual deeds and on reward or punishment.

Fairness

Belief about the nature of God; refers to Allah's justice. He treats all humans equally and as they deserve.

Fasting

Not eating or drinking; one of the Five Pillars is Sawm during Ramadan.

The Five Pillars

Important duties for Sunni Muslims which support the main principles of Islam. Shahadah, salah, zakah, sawm and hajj.

The five roots of Usul ad-Din

The foundations of the faith in Shi'a Islam; five key beliefs: Tawhid (the Oneness of God), Adalat (justice), prophethood, imamate, resurrection.

Friday prayer/Jumma

Friday prayers in the mosque, where a sermon (khutbah) is heard.

Giving alms

Giving alms means giving to those in need, eg money, food, time. A key practice in Islam; one of the Five Pillars/Ten Obligatory Acts (Zakah).

The Gospel

Holy book /source of authority ; literally 'good news' and it is the good news about Isa (Jesus), who was a prophet of Islam.

Greater jihad

The personal struggle of every Muslim to live by the teachings of their faith.

Hajj

One of the Five Pillars/Ten Obligatory Acts; pilgrimage to Makkah, which all Muslims must undertake at least once in their lives, unless prevented by problems over wealth or health.

Heaven

Referred to as Paradise; Allah's reward after death to those who have been faithful to him and who have repented of their sins.

Hell

It is a place of great suffering after death for those who have rejected the Qur'an's teachings and have led a wicked life. For some it will last forever.

Human accountability

The belief that everyone must take responsibility for their actions and will be questioned about them on the Day of Judgement.

Human freedom

Humans have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions.

Human responsibility

Humans are responsible for most of what they do because they have free will and so will be accountable on the Day of Judgement.

Ibrahim

One of the prophets of Allah. He rebuilt the Ka'aba.

Id-ul-Adha

Festival; celebration of the Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son for Allah.

Id-ul-Fitr

Festival; celebration that comes at the end of Ramadan and marks the end of fasting.

The imamate

One of the Five Roots of Usul-ad-Din, 'Leadership.' Shia belief in the twelve imams who succeeded Muhammad as the leaders of Islam.

Immanence

The belief that God is close to humanity and involved in the world.

Jibril

Angel who dictated the Qur'an to Muhammad; on Judgement Day he will assist with the weighing of a person's deeds.

Jihad

'To struggle'. The personal or collective struggle against evil.

The Ka'aba

Part of the Hajj pilgrimage; cube-shaped building in the centre of the Grand Mosque in Makkah. All Muslims face towards it when they pray.

Khums

One of the Ten Obligatory Acts in Shi'a Islam; practice of alms giving.

Lesser jihad

This refers to the military struggle to defend Islam. It is carried out according to strict and clear cut rules.

Makkah

Place of pilgrimage during Hajj; the spiritual centre of Islam.

Mercy

Belief about the nature of God and one of Allah's 99 Beautiful Names; God's willingness to forgive the sins of those who repent.

Mika'il

Angel who gives spiritual and material help to humans; on Judgement Day he will assist with the weighing of a person's deeds.

Mina

Site of pilgrimage during Hajj; where pilgrims take part in the stoning of pillars.

Mosque

Muslim place of worship.

Movements (rak'ahs)

Actions and ritual movements made during salah (prayer) consisting of recitations, standing, bowing and prostration.

Muzdalifah

Site of pilgrimage during Hajj; where pilgrims hold a night prayer and rest after the Stand on Mount Arafat.

Muhammad

The last and greatest of the prophets. He received the Qur'an and his Sunnah and Hadiths are also important sources of authority.

The Night of Power

The night on which Muhammad received the first revelations of the Qur'an.

Omnipotence

All-powerful; belief about the nature of God and one of the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah.

Pilgrimage

A religious journey to a holy site/sacred place, it is an act of worship and devotion.

Predestination

One of the Six Articles of Faith in Sunni Islam; the belief that everything that happens has been decided already by Allah.

The Psalms

Holy book/source of authority; sacred prayers and poems written by King Dawud (David), a prophet of Allah.

The Qur'an

Holy Book and most important source of authority in Islam. It was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad and is the final revelation of God to humankind.

Ramadan

Month during which Muslims fast (sawm) from dawn to sunset.

Recitations

Part of the practice of salah (prayer); the reciting of verses from the Qur'an.

Resurrection

One of the Six Articles of Faith and Five Roots of Usul ad-Din; belief that after death, all people will be raised from the dead to face judgement.

Revelation

When God is revealed to humans; belief that Allah shows his nature and will through the words of the Qur'an.

Risalah (Prophethood)

One of the Six Articles of Faith and Five Roots of Usul ad-Din; belief in the prophets as messengers sent by God to communicate to people.

Salah

Prayer; one of the Five Pillars/Ten Obligatory Acts.

Sawm

Fasting from dawn to dusk during Ramadan; one of the Five Pillars/Ten Obligatory Acts.

The Scrolls of Abraham

Holy book/source of authority; individual revelations to Ibrahim that were written on parchment but have perished.

The Shahadah

Muslim declaration of faith; one of the Five Pillars in Sunni Islam.

Shi'a Islam

Muslims who believe in the Imamate, successorship of Ali.

Six articles of faith

The foundations of the faith in Sunni Islam; six key beliefs: Tawhid (the Oneness of God), Angels, Holy Books, Prophethood, Akhirah, Predestination.

Sunni Islam

Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

Tawhid (the Oneness of God)

One of the Six Articles of Faith and Five Roots of Usul ad-Din; the oneness and unity of Allah.

The Ten Obligatory Acts

These are requirements for Shi'a Muslims. They include salah, sawm, zakah, hajj and jihad (duties also for Sunni Muslims) but the final five are not part of the Sunni tradition – khums, encouraging good, discouraging wrong, showing love for God and people, disassociation with enemies of God.

The Torah

Holy book/source of authority; given by God to the prophet Musa (Moses) on Mount Sinai.

Zakah

One of the Five Pillars and Ten Obligatory Acts; giving alms.