

## What is the church?

Christianity is focused on the life and teachings of **Jesus Christ**, who Christians believe to be the Son of God. Jesus was born in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Today, there are over 2.2 billion Christians around the world, making Christianity the most followed religion. It is based on a belief that 2000 years ago Jesus died and rose from the dead. Christianity initially grew as early followers spread the teachings of the resurrected Jesus, and the messages inspired by Jesus' disciples and the apostle Paul. In 1054, the faith split into Western Roman Christianity (now known as the Catholic Church), led by the Pope, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. These two groups still exist today, although the Western Roman Church in England was split in the sixteenth century when King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the newly established Church of England. Also during this period Christians in Western Europe were breaking away from the Roman Church, and the Protestant branch of Christianity was forming. This is known as the Reformation. The Protestant Church has, since then, split further into groups (called denominations) such as the Baptist and Pentecostal Churches.



Genesis is the first book of the Bible. Genesis 1 describes the creation of the heavens and the earth, while Genesis 2 focuses on the creation of the first humans, Adam and Eve: Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

Genesis 1 explains how:

God is the only creator.

God existed before he created the world.

The world was well planned and is sustained by God.

God blessed creation; all creation is holy.

God created everything in Heaven and on Earth in six days.

On the seventh day, God rested.

### Key terms

**Afterlife** - Life after death.

**Benevolent** – kind.

**A church** - the building in which Christians worship.

**The Church** - the community of believers of Christianity.

**Conscience** - An inner sense (or 'voice') which communicates what is right or wrong in one's behaviour.

**Dominion** - To have rule or control over something, in this case humans having control of the world.

**Genesis** - The first book of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) describing the origins of humanity and humans' relationship with God.

**Heaven** - A place, or a state of mind, associated with God and the afterlife.

**Hell** - A place or state of torment and punishment for those who have done wrong.

**Holy Spirit** - The third element of the 'Trinity' (God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit is active as God's presence and power in the world.

**Incarnation** -The belief that God took human form in Jesus Christ. It is also the belief that God in Christ is active in the Church and in the world.

**Monotheist** – Belief that there is only one God.

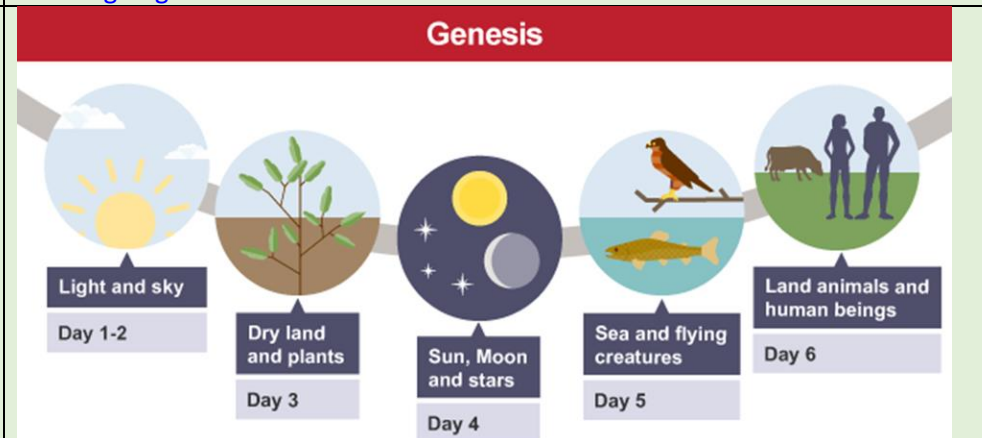
**Mortal** -Being subject to death.

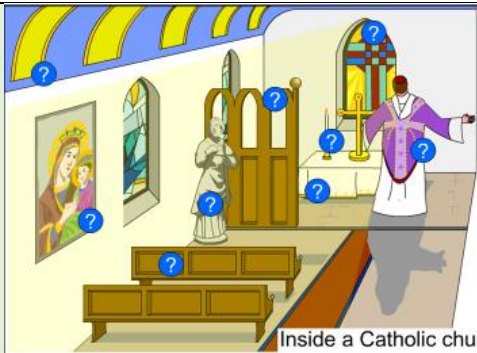
**Nicene Creed** – A set of beliefs that ALL Christians have.

**Omnipotent** – All powerful.

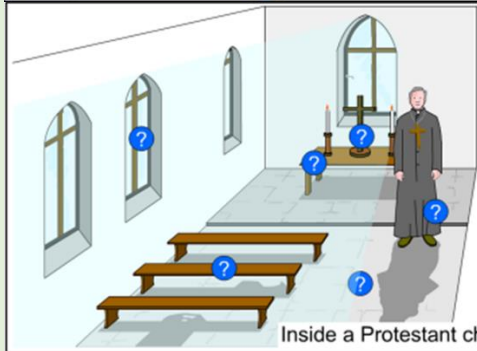
**Original sin** - The transference of Adam and Eve's breach of God's trust to all of humanity.

**Purgatory** - Purely Catholic belief. Where the soul goes to be cleansed of sin before going to Heaven.





Inside a Catholic church



Inside a Protestant church

### Differences between Catholic and Protestant churches

Jesus Christ is the founder of Christianity. About 2000 years ago Jesus was born a Jewish boy to a human woman, Mary, in Bethlehem. Jesus Christ is believed to be the Son of God and came to earth to teach about love and fellowship. He represents the person that all Christians must try to be. As Jesus was a human he could feel pain, sadness and suffering like you and me. Jesus lived for 33 years before being crucified by the Romans – he was crucified around A.D. 30 in Jerusalem. After Jesus was sent to Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman governor of Judea at the time, Pilate offered the choice of who to condemn to death to the crowd, as was tradition. The crowd chose to free Barabbas, a well-known criminal, thereby condemning Christ to death. He died on the cross so that those that believe in him will be forgiven all their sins. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead – this is called the Resurrection. Jesus is also known as the Son of God, the Light of the World, the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd.

### Christian charity

Christian Aid operates in 3 main ways:

1. Emergency Aid after disasters (e.g. food and shelter after 2015 earthquake in Nepal)
2. Long-term aid and education to help the poor feed themselves e.g. medical care, clean water and farming equipment
3. Political campaigns-2012 marches in London against climate change



Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who tried to bring together black and white people in South Africa following the end of apartheid. When Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa, Archbishop Tutu chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, where the perpetrators of terrible crimes met with and were forgiven by their victim

The **Eucharist**, also known as **Holy Communion**, is a sacrament that commemorates the **Last Supper**. Not all Christians celebrate this sacrament.

The most important element of the Eucharist is the bread and the wine, but there are varying beliefs about the roles of these items.

**Belief 1 - Catholics** believe that the bread and the wine become the actual flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. This belief is known as **transubstantiation**.

**Belief 2 -** Some Christians believe that the Holy Communion is a re-enactment or commemoration of the Last Supper. The bread and wine are seen as symbolic of Jesus' death.

**Belief 3 - Baptists** believe the bread and wine are symbols that can be used to bring people together as a community. They use non-alcoholic wine and the bread is offered from person to person.

**Belief 4 - Orthodox Christians** believe that Jesus is mystically present in the bread and wine.

**Belief 5 - Church of England** Christians believe that the bread and wine hold the spiritual presence of the body and blood of Jesus but do not become it.

Ecumenism – The unification of the Christian movement

The Ecumenical movement aims to bring Christians together by getting churches working together and organising conferences and events around the world