CHRISTIANITY: AN OVERVIEW

Question 1
Jesus of Nazareth spent his entire life as a practicing Jew. In light of this, explain why he is viewed as the 'Founder of Christianity'.

Question 2
The concept of the Messiah is significant to both Christianity and Judaism. What is its meaning and how do the two faith traditions differ in regard to it?

Question 3
The Nicene Creed is a summary statement of Christian belief.
(a) Research and describe the origins of the Creed.
(b) Locate a copy of this Creed.
(c) Much of the Creed refers to the Trinitarian nature of God in Christianity (i.e. God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit). In your workbook, construct a table like the one below and complete it to explain the beliefs about each aspect of God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Holy Spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) Describe any other beliefs expressed in this Creed in your own words.
(e) Account for the use of the term 'catholic' when this creed is used by many Christian denominations.

Question 4
While many people and events have shaped the course of Christianity, several events stand out as being pivotal. Describe the significance of the events below.
(a) 312 CE Constantine the Great makes Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire
(b) 1054 Schism between Rome and Constantinople
(c) 1388 Western schism
(d) 1517 Martin Luther — 95 Theses
(e) 1534 Henry VIII becomes head of the Church of England
(f) 1545 Council of Trent
(g) 1859 Darwin’s The Origin of the Species
(h) 1945 World Council of Churches
(i) 162–65 Second Vatican Council

Question 5
The ethical code of Christianity is based on two major teachings — The Decalogue of the Hebrew Scriptures (Exodus 20:2–14) and the Beatitudes of the Christian Scriptures (Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–26). Use a Bible to find these passages.
(a) What similarities can be found?
(b) Matthew and Luke differ in part. What are these differences and how can you account for them?
(c) If the passages were the only evidence you had at your disposal, how would you describe the moral obligations of a Christian?
CHRISTIANITY: AN OVERVIEW CONT

Question 6
Define the following terms relating to Christianity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLOSSARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>altar:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bishop:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catechism:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clergy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denomination:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Rites:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecumenism:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encyclical:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharist:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evangelical:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fundamentalist:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Synod:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heresy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hermeneutics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>icons:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarnation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liturgy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministry:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Church:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious life:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sacrament:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theology:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vestments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHRISTIANITY: STRUCTURED ESSAY

Question 7
(a) Outline the principle beliefs of Christianity.
(b) Great people and events in history have shaped Christianity. Choose two such people and/or events in history and describe their impact on the development of this religious tradition.
(c) ‘Despite bleak periods in its history, Christianity has survived as one of the major expressions of faith and ethics in the world.’ Discuss this statement with particular reference to a contemporary understanding of Christianity.
Christianity

Christianity developed from Judaism towards the middle of the first century, CE. Its founder was a Jewish man, Yeshua ben-Joseph, whom Christians claim as Jesus, the Christ. Jesus, who grew up in a small town in Israel called Nazareth, was a devout and committed Jew who lived in Palestine under Roman occupation. At the time in which he lived, his nation Israel had known suffering and oppression for hundreds of years. The Jews struggled to understand how to be faithful to their covenant while ruled by foreign oppressors, and there were many streams of thought in Judaism about this. Jesus of Nazareth, whom many New Testament scholars believe was a disciple of the prophet John the Baptist until John was executed by the Roman government, taught his own unique understanding of Judaism. He gathered around himself a close group of disciples who continued his teaching after his death. The two most important insights that Jesus taught were:

- **God is a Father.** Jesus had a deep understanding of God as a loving Father who cared for his sons and daughters. He saw himself as a Son of God, and addressed God in prayer and teaching as Father.

- **The Kingdom of God.** Jesus taught that the messianic age for which the Jews hoped was very close. He spoke of the day when the Kingdom of God, which he saw as a Kingdom of justice, love and peace, would be instituted on the earth. He saw those who were poor, outcast or excluded for various reasons from Jewish society as being particularly loved by God. These, he taught, were the people of God’s Kingdom.

Jesus of Nazareth was executed in Jerusalem at Passover time, by the Roman government in Israel at the direction of the Roman official, Pontius Pilate. The crime of which he was accused was sedition. The death of Jesus of Nazareth would have largely gone largely unnoticed in Jewish contemporary life, since the Roman occupiers used this method of execution all the time. However, after his death his disciples came to a profound belief that he had risen from the death, an event he had spoken of often in his teaching. This belief transformed the group of disciples into a missionary community, who proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah whom God had sent to Israel.

Under the direction of the Apostles who had been Jesus' closest disciples, and joined by a former Pharisee, Paul of Tarsus, the new religious movement developed and spread throughout the Roman Empire. It suffered much persecution from Roman leaders and gradually became distinct from Judaism, especially after the destruction of the Temple in 70CE caused the Jewish community to re-group and re-organise themselves under the Rabbis. Eventually Christianity separated completely from Judaism, and by 313CE it was the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Today Christianity is a major world religion, and it has many branches throughout the world. In Australia, approximately twelve and a half million people identified themselves as Christian on the 1996 census. These people identify with a wide variety of Christian churches, including Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventist, Salvation Army, and Uniting Church.
THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

- Described as a religion of S.............. o........
- J........ was a J........ who lived the approximate dates of ..... BCE and ..... CE
- His name means “S...........”
- He was immersed in the J........... religious culture of the f........ century
- Jesus cannot be understood apart from Judaism of his time
- Judaism was the centre on the h........ in the o...... G...... “YAHWEH”, who is the focus of their s........ h...........
- It is expressed in the T........ and other part of H........... S..............
- G..... has called God’s people into c............., a special a............. that made the c........... p............. of G........
- Through M........ God delivered them from s........... gave them the law and led them into the P............. L.............
- However, for centuries the land of the Jews had been dominated by foreign powers
- R............. occupation, dated from 63BCE was a bitter time for the Jews who suffered social and religious deprivation
- Their w........ of the one God was inhibited
- Their religious authority was fractured into a number of sects
- Among these two groups were:
  - The Z............., who advocated violent rebellion against Rome
  - The P............., a reform group of lay people. Their leadership and oral interpretation of the Torah were to redefine Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans during a Zealot rebellion in 70CE
- For centuries the Jewish religious expectation was the God would once again intervene in their history
- There were various i............. about the way in which a new reign of God would be established
- The p............. L........... and other referred to a deliverer, or M...........
- At the time of Jesus messianic hopes were high
- Some, like the Zealots saw the Messiah as a political liberator who would other throw Roman rule
The Beloved Son  
At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan by his cousin John.  
And just as he was coming out of the water,  
he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.  
'You are my son, the Beloved;  
with whom I am well pleased.' Mark 1:9

The Preacher  
On one of the first public occasions of his ministry,  
Jesus spoke in the synagogue in the town of Nazareth where he grew up. In words that would shape his future ministry, he read from the prophet Isaiah:  
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
so that the oppressed go free. Luke 4:18

The Healer  
In his ministry Jesus regularly healed many people.  
That evening, at sunset, they brought to him  
all who were sick or possessed with demons.  
And the whole city was gathered around the door.  
And he cured many who were sick with various diseases,  
and he cast out many demons. Mark 1:32

The Storyteller  
Jesus continually told the people stories and parables about his vision of a life of justice, peace and love, which he called 'the kingdom'.  
And he began to teach by the sea.  
Such a large crowd gathered around him that  
he got into a boat on the sea and sat there...  
He began to teach them many things in parables. Mark 4:1

The sharer of meals  
Each of the gospel stories describes Jesus engaging with people specifically at meals. It seems to have been a deliberate strategy. He shared meals with many, often including religious leaders and the socially disreputable. At these he would at times break the rules of accustomed respectability.  
While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him.  
So he went in and took his place at table. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not wash before dinner. Luke 11:37
The Angry Critic
One of the significant moments in Jesus’ ministry was when he confronted those who were despoiling the sacredness of the Temple of Jerusalem, and in doing so offended the religious authorities of his day.
And he entered the temple area and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves...
‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.
But you have made it a den of robbers.’
Mark 11:15

The Last Supper
Jesus invited his disciples to share the ancient ritual meal of the Jewish Passover with him the night before he was put to death. In this highly significant meal Jesus invites those who carry on his tradition to celebrate this meal ‘in memory of him’.
While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it.
He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant...’
Mark 14:22

The Crucified One
After being sentenced to death, gravely humiliated and beaten, Jesus is brought to Calvary, a place outside the gates of Jerusalem where he dies on a cross.
Then they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha...
And they crucified him and divided his clothes among them...
When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice... ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’...
Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.
Mark 15:22, 33, 37.

The Risen Lord
After his death on the cross, God the Father raised Jesus to new life and he appeared in various mysterious ways to his disciples. On one such occasion Jesus joined two disciples as they left Jerusalem on their way to a nearby village called Emmaus. Jesus appeared in the guise of a stranger and only gradually did they recognise him as their Risen Lord.
Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing.
Luke 24:13-16
The historical and cultural context of the origins of Christianity

- Christianity grew out of Judaism in the first century CE. Initially there were "Jewish Christians" who were a sect of Judaism and over time this movement became Christianity as we know it today.

- Jesus lived in Palestine between 6 BCE and 30 CE (approximately).

- During this time, Palestine displayed the following characteristics:

  a) It was occupied by foreigners; The Romans, Caesar Augustus was the Emperor at the time of Jesus' birth and Tiberius was the Emperor at the time of his death.

  b) Rome allowed the practicing of Judaism and Palestine had a Jewish context. The Jews claimed they were in "The Promised Land" due to their Covenant with God.

  c) Jews suffered deprivation and hardship under Roman rule.

  d) One of the burdens on the Jews were the harsh Roman taxes.

  e) Palestine had previously suffered oppression by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Russians and the Greeks.

  f) There was no central Jewish authority, yet there were many different Jewish sects (eg: Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots) Hence, religious politics ranged from conservatism to militant Messianism.

  g) The Temple was the central place of worship for the Jews.

  h) Palestine was very multicultural. Jews lived side by side with Greeks, Aramaeans, Canaanites, Phoenicians and Samaritans (a particularly despised group)

  i) The predominant occupation was farming.

  j) Many occupations were craft based such as tent makers, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters and sandal makers. The skills were usually passed from parent to child.

  k) Women worked at home grinding corn and making clothes.

  l) Children were considered a blessing from God.
Development of the Early Christian Communities

- After Jesus' death the Apostles and other converts recounted his life to others and hence the beliefs and practices of Jesus spread.

- The 12 Apostles (probably chosen by Jesus in reflection of the 12 tribes of Israel) were led by Simon (Aramaic: Kepha, Greek: Petros-Peter the Rock)

- Peter eventually travelled to Antioch, Ephesus and Rome.

- James (the brother of the Lord) was the Christian leader in Jerusalem until his execution in 62 CE.

- Saul of Tarsus (A Roman citizen and persecutor of Christians) converted to Christianity after a vision of Jesus.

- Saul changed his name to Paul and became a missionary and converted Jews and gentiles through his journeys into Turkey and Greece.

- Paul's founding of the Christian communities and letter writing were the cornerstones for the establishment of Christianity.

- It is the letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles (written by Luke) which allows us to follow the development of Christianity after Jesus' death.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER EVERYONE WHO KNEW JESUS WAS DEAD?

- Many people found the message of Jesus to be appealing and by 150 CE many Christian communities existed in the Roman Empire.

- Unity within the communities was needed and the following roles were formed:
  a) Presbyteroi (Elders): Appointed as an authority
  b) Diakonos (Servants): Caring for the sick
  c) Episkopos (Overseer): Community leader, Baptiser and distribution of the Eucharist.

- A Canon of text was needed in addition to the Hebrew Scriptures. All Gospels were written between 60-100 CE, yet there were many other writings too which were either included or excluded from the Canon. It was formalized by Augustine's Council in 419 CE.
# The Major Stages in the Development of Christianity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>OCCURRENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecost</td>
<td>Acts 2-4. The death and resurrection of Jesus is announced to the people of Jerusalem. They developed the gift of tongues due to the gift of the Holy Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter v Paul</td>
<td>Acts 10:11, 13:4, 15 Disagreements between Peter and Paul about whether the gentile Christians must practice the cleanliness rituals of the Jewish-Christians. This is a major point that leads to them travelling on different missionary paths. The conclusion is: One does not need to be a Jew in order to access the Kingdom of Heaven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s Mission</td>
<td>Expansion of early Christianity through Turkey and Greece. Paul acts as a guide for the followers through his instructive letters on how to behave, believe and follow Jesus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main streams of Christianity:

**Roman Catholic**
- Indian
- Coptic
- Armenian
- Syrian
- Russian
- Greek

**Eastern Orthodox**

**Western Catholic**

**Protestant**
- Pentecostal
- Baptist
- Methodist
- Congregationalist
- Reformed/Presbyterian
- Calvinist
- Luther
- Anglican/Episcopal

16th Century
The Reformation

(1554)
The Great Schism

Council of Nicaea
Jesus
Variants of Christianity: Catholicism

- In Catholicism worship is sacramental.

- Teachings are drawn from scriptures and religious traditions.

- It is hierarchical and structured and under the authority of the Pope.

- Catholicism is divided into 8 Catholic Rites:
  a) Armenian
  b) Byzantine
  c) Coptic
  d) Ethiopian
  e) Chaldean
  f) Maronite
  g) Roman
  h) West Syrian

- The Eucharist is the focus of worship and Catholics believe that Transubstantiation occurs to make Jesus physically present in the bread and wine. (Body and blood).

- Catholics believe that faith and good deeds are necessary for salvation.

- There is an increased focus on Mary.

- There is an increased focus on saints.

- Catholic belief includes 7 sacramental areas:
  1) Baptism
  2) Eucharist
  3) Reconciliation
  4) Confirmation
  5) Marriage
  6) Holy Orders
  7) Anointing of the Sick

- There is a strong belief in heaven and hell.

- Catholicism has a Latin tradition in the liturgy.

- There is a strong tradition of monasticism in the priesthood and convents.

- There has been a special role of Catholics in the history of society through education and social reforms.

- Women are not able to be ordained as priests.

- Priests must be male and:
  a) Unmarried (if a Roman Rite)
  b) May be married (if a non-Roman Rite).
Variants of Christianity: Protestantism

- Protestantism evolved out of the Reformation period.
- The 2 major contributors to the Reformation were:
  a) Martin Luther (1483-1546)
  b) John Calvin (1509-1564)
- Martin Luther especially denounced the corruptions which existed in the Catholic Church (especially the selling of indulgences) and the supremacy of the Pope.
- The Bible became the source of authority for each denomination of Protestantism. Eg: Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists.
- These denominations developed unique Christian traditions out of the theology of their founders.
- Protestants believe in the transcendence of God.
- Protestantism is less liturgical and sacramental than Catholicism.
- Protestantism places more emphasis on preaching the word of Jesus.
- Protestantism allows an increased role for women leaders than Catholicism.

Variants of Christianity: Anglicanism

- Developed as a variation to Catholicism during the reign of Henry VIII in the 16th Century.
- Theology and politics were behind the separation from the Roman Church and the Pope.
- It was influenced by the theology of Martin Luther.
- Anglicanism does not have the Pope as the central authority.
- The focus is on Biblical authority with a special place held for the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Anglicans are often divided into:
  a) Low Anglican: this includes a variety of Protestant faiths.
  b) High Anglican: This group is most closely affiliated with the Catholic Church and is hence known as "Anglo-Catholic".
- Anglicans allow a greater role for women in the priesthood, although this is not universally accepted through all denominations.
Variants of Christianity: Orthodoxy

- The heart of orthodoxy is *Divine Liturgy*, the celebration of the Eucharist.
- In orthodoxy there is a heavy use of *icons* and other symbolism.
- The liturgical celebration is often very long.
- There is a predominant use of incense.
- The liturgy is often wholly sung.
- Parts of the celebration are hidden from the view of the congregation.
- Greek is the language of orthodoxy.

- There is a profound view of *sacramentalism*.
- Orthodoxy places emphasis on *monasticism*.
- Orthodoxy did not develop monastic or religious orders for a specific purpose. Eg: Education.
- Only men may become priests, yet they may be married.
- Orthodox churches developed after the East-West schism in the Roman Empire in the 4th Century.
- This schism was the result of the disagreement about the theology of the holy trinity, the doctrine of which was stipulated by the Pope. The East believed matters of doctrine should be determined by religious councils, not by one individual.
- The East tended to use Greek as the primary language, whereas the West used Latin.
Variants of Christianity: Pentecostalism

- Pentecostalism originated in the USA in the Methodist movement of the 19th Century.

- They are Christian Charismatic Churches and they seek to restore the Holy Spirit to the Church.

- Emphasis is on the corporate element of worship ie: a group response.

- There is great spontaneity in the celebration which is demonstrated by the followers.

- “Baptism of the Spirit” occurs when a baptized person received the gift of tongues. (Glossolalia)

- Pentecostalists value healing, prophesy and prophetic interpretation.
Jesus: Principal Life Events

- Jesus' life is reported in the Gospels, yet the writers of these had a Christian bias, they were not historians. Hence, they are not to be taken literally as historical narrative.

- Other historians, Josephus, Pliny, and Eusebius have also made references to Jesus in their works.

- Jesus' birth occurred circa 6 BCE, as determined by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which contain the birth narratives. (Lk 2:1-7 and Mt 1: 18-25)

- His birth is reported as being in Bethlehem, (yet this is argued as unlikely and probably only written to uphold the prophesy of the Hebrew Scriptures as to where the Messiah would be born. (Micah 5:2) Many scholars believe that Jesus was probably born and lived in Nazareth.)

- Herod the Great was the Roman ruler at the time and Caesar Augustus was the Emperor.

- Jesus' mother was Mary and his legal father was Joseph.

- Jesus was circumcised 8 days after his birth. (Lk 1:21)

- The family then returned to Nazareth. (Lk 2:39)

- He grew up in a largely agricultural community and spoke Aramaic.

- Every year the family returned to Jerusalem for Passover.

- At age 12 Jesus has his Bar Mitzvah.

- Jesus was an artisan. (Mk 6:3)

- Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. (Mk 1:9, Mt 3:13, Lk 3:21, Jn 1:29-34)

- Jesus has a ministry involving him wandering around the countryside. His ministry lasted for 3 years.

- He eventually ends up in Jerusalem.

- He is arrested.

- He is brought before Pontius Pilate, the Emperor's Procurator in Jerusalem and he imposes a death sentence.

- Jesus is executed via crucifixion at age 33 (approximately).
Jesus: The Model for Christian Life

- Jesus' ways were authentically Jewish. He addressed Jews and his ideas, language and imagery were Jewish.

- Jesus used parables as a form of storytelling. He challenged those who followed religious authority in a blind, literal and uncompassionate way.

- Jesus focused on the notion that all are welcome in the Kingdom of God.

- His "words" and deeds were reported in the Gospels and the letters of Paul. These writings act as a framework for how Christians should behave and believe.

- The events in Jesus' life, his birth, life and death have formed the basis of the Christian calendar.

- The Gospels were written in Greek between 70 CE and 100 CE, long after Jesus had died.

- Jesus is the "Christos", the anointed one, the one chosen to be the Messiah and hence the saviour of the world.

- Jesus demonstrates the forgiveness of God and the possible relationship with God after death.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gospel Writer</th>
<th>When Written</th>
<th>Audience written for</th>
<th>Events at this time</th>
<th>Portrayal of Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Circa 65-70 CE</td>
<td>Jewish Christians</td>
<td>Peter has died. End of the 4 year war between Israel and Rome. Persecution of the Christians. Earthquakes are mentioned. There were 3 in Nero's reign. Mark reacts against the believers in the Parousia. Tradition believes this Gospel was written in Rome.</td>
<td>Jesus is a suffering Messiah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Circa 85-90 CE</td>
<td>Jewish Christians</td>
<td>Suggested as being written in Antioch. Threats of persecution have passed. Yet, tensions between Jews and Christians persist.</td>
<td>Jesus fulfils the Hebrew Scriptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A Jewish convert)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Circa post 70 CE</td>
<td>Gentiles</td>
<td>Possibly written in Greece. There is growth within the church and community.</td>
<td>Jesus is a prophet and the saviour of the oppressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Presumed to be a physician)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Circa 90 CE</td>
<td>Greek Speakers</td>
<td>Probably written at Ephesus. Increasing tensions within the synagogue as Jewish Christians are torn between their 2 faiths. Christians are still persecuted.</td>
<td>High Christology-Jesus is God incarnate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The idea that this John is the Beloved Disciple is seriously questioned by scholars)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beliefs about the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus

- Jesus was both fully human and fully divine.
- Jesus was the son of God and a human being.
- All humans are created in the image of God.
- The incarnation of Jesus as a human is an act of love from God for humanity.
- Jesus was born to a human woman and died as a human man.
- Jesus is part of the trinity or tri-unity.
- The 3 “persons” in the trinity are eternal.
- Jesus is God and therefore has the power to defeat evil and because he is human, he is the archetype for human behaviour.
- Jesus’ humanity shows the interrelatedness between God and humans. His incarnation involved cooperation and salvation occurs through that cooperation. Sin obstructs cooperation and therefore prevents salvation.
- Jesus is true revelation. He is the revealed Lord.
The Trinity

- Christianity is a monotheistic religion which reflects its Jewish roots.

- The trinity is a belief that Jesus was both human and God. He was God incarnate.

- The trinity is not a biblical concept but was probably first used by Tertullian in the 2nd Century.

- There is a “threeness” to God-father, son and spirit. Yet, all aspects are unique, equal and eternal.

- The 3 aspects are distinct, but they are NOT 3 gods.

- There are 3 persons but only one divine being. They dwell in each other (circumincession).

- The Christian teaching is generally that the trinity is a mystery never to be comprehended by humans in their lifetime.

- Over the centuries there have been many attempts to understand the trinity. (Especially by Augustine of Hippo)

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

- Historians such as Josephus wrote that Jesus was executed via crucifixion.

- This death penalty was typically used by the Romans for the crimes of insurrection and sedition.

- After interrogation by Pontius Pilate (the Roman Procurator) Jesus was sent to Golgotha (the Hill of the Skulls) and executed alongside two other criminals.

- Both Jews and Romans had reasons for wanting him dead.

- For Christians the suffering experienced in Jesus' life is overcome by resurrection and reunion with God.

- Christians see that each believer will one day also be reunited with God in the same way. The implication is: the human person will be transformed beyond death.

- The resurrection is not a historical event but a faith based event. There remains much theological discussion about it.

- The essence of the resurrection is that Jesus conquered death and rose bodily from the grave and returned to God. Yet, his body is spiritual and not necessarily the same as it was on earth.

- The Christian variants of faith see the resurrection as either bodily or spiritual.

- The resurrection is a belief in life beyond death.
Revelation

- Revelation is the transmission of knowledge from the divine to humanity.
- Hence, it is knowledge given by God to humans about things previously hidden or partially known.
- It is seen to be an invitation into communion with God.
- Revelation can be seen as a call to action.
- It is a call to belief and faith.
- In Christianity, God's revelation is focused on Jesus Christ.
- The eastern variants of Christianity see revelation as focusing on the Holy Spirit.
- Revelation speaks of all of human history and includes the present.

Salvation

- Christians believe that God has the intention to save.
- Human sin interrupts salvation.
- Salvation is a belief that humans require deliverance by God from sin.
- God's intervention in salvation history includes the incarnation of Jesus and his resurrection.
- Jesus Christ's death was salvific as it atoned for the sinfulness of humanity.
- Salvation is seen as being delayed until the afterlife.
- Only in the presence of God is salvation fulfilled.
- It is through the grace of God that humans achieve salvation.
- Some churches see that anyone who strives to do God's will, regardless of their religious tradition, will be saved. Other faiths would oppose this notion.
- For most Christians, salvation is really about the overwhelming power of God's love.
- The Bible is divided into:
  
a) The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)

- Use of the name "Old Testament" is considered to be offensive to Jews as it presumes their faith has been replaced by a newer religion.

- The Christian Scriptures are a collection of stories about the life and deeds of Jesus.

- The writings are seen to be divinely inspired yet of human origin.

- The Bible is a basic source of belief for Jews and Christians alike.

- It teaches about the nature of God and the teachings of Jesus.

- The major aspects of Christian belief are derived from the Christian Scriptures:
  
a) Jesus is God  
b) Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
c) There will be a Judgement Day  
d) Love thy neighbour  
e) Discipleship

- Liturgical ceremonies also have their origin in the Bible such as:
  
a) Baptism  
b) Eucharist  
c) Prayer  
d) Anointing the sick

- The Bible is integral in the daily life of believers.

- It assists with the ethical decision making of believers and can be used in all daily rituals.

- The Bible has been through many translations. The Christian Scriptures were originally written in Greek, it has since been translated into almost every language.

- Hence, there are many discrepancies in the translations of the words from the original intentions and contexts of the authors.
Principal Ethical Teachings: The Ten Commandments

- The Ten Commandments or Decalogue, were given by God to Moses in Exodus 20:2-17 as a revelation for life.

- The Ten Commandments are understood to be the direct word of God given to the people of Israel.

- They are believed to be written in God's own hand onto tablets of stone.

- The Ten Commandments are a summation of the relationship between humanity and God.

- Christians see the Ten Commandments as rules to be practiced out of love for God, not out of fear of damnation.

- Christians see that beyond and outside the Ten Commandments is a life of sin, alienation and unhappiness.

Principal Ethical Teachings: The Beatitudes

- The Beatitudes is the name given to the 9 sayings of Jesus Christ which are expressed in Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" and Luke's "Sermon on the Plain".

- The word Beatitude is Latin for "blessed" hence all Jesus' sayings begin "Blessed are........".

- The Beatitudes have their origin in the Jewish Scriptures such as in:

  a) Psalms 1:1 "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked."
  b) Psalms: 41:1 "Happy are those who consider the poor."
  c) Psalms 106:3 "Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times."

- The intention of the Beatitudes is encouraging humans to aspire to certain virtues or to celebrate the potential of future rewards.
Principal Ethical Teachings: Jesus' Commandment of Love

- Christian ethics generally include repentance and love.

- Christians see that their God is a god of love and that this is expressed through Jesus Christ.

- Jesus’ discussion of love has a Jewish context. This love has qualities of personal attachment. This is a love between God and humanity as expressed through the covenant between God and Israel.

- Jesus’ commandment of love is really about a longing for God and the constant seeking of good in one’s neighbour.

- Love involves suffering yet, in following Jesus’ path, there is victory over that suffering and hence victory over sin and death.
Personal Prayer

- Prayer may be public or private.
- Christian Churches generally favour prayer and worship which could be:
  a) Private
  b) Communal
  c) Liturgical
- Prayer is a way for adherents of a faith tradition to have a relationship with the divine.
- Some Christian variants also pray to intermediaries such as Mary, who they believe will act as a link to God.
- In history prayer has been described in many ways:
  a) Raising the heart and mind to God
  b) Communion with God
  c) Attentiveness to God
  d) Attunement to the divine
- Jesus is described as praying privately, silently or in solitude.

- Jesus used prayer to alleviate his distress and to guide in decision making.
- Prayer can be:
  a) Vocal
  b) Mental
  c) Contemplative
  d) Meditative
- In addition to establishing a connection to God, the aims of prayer are often to:
  a) Celebrate one's life
  b) Reflect on life and God
  c) Empty the self
  d) Recollect God
  e) Achieve inner stillness.