

Paper 1

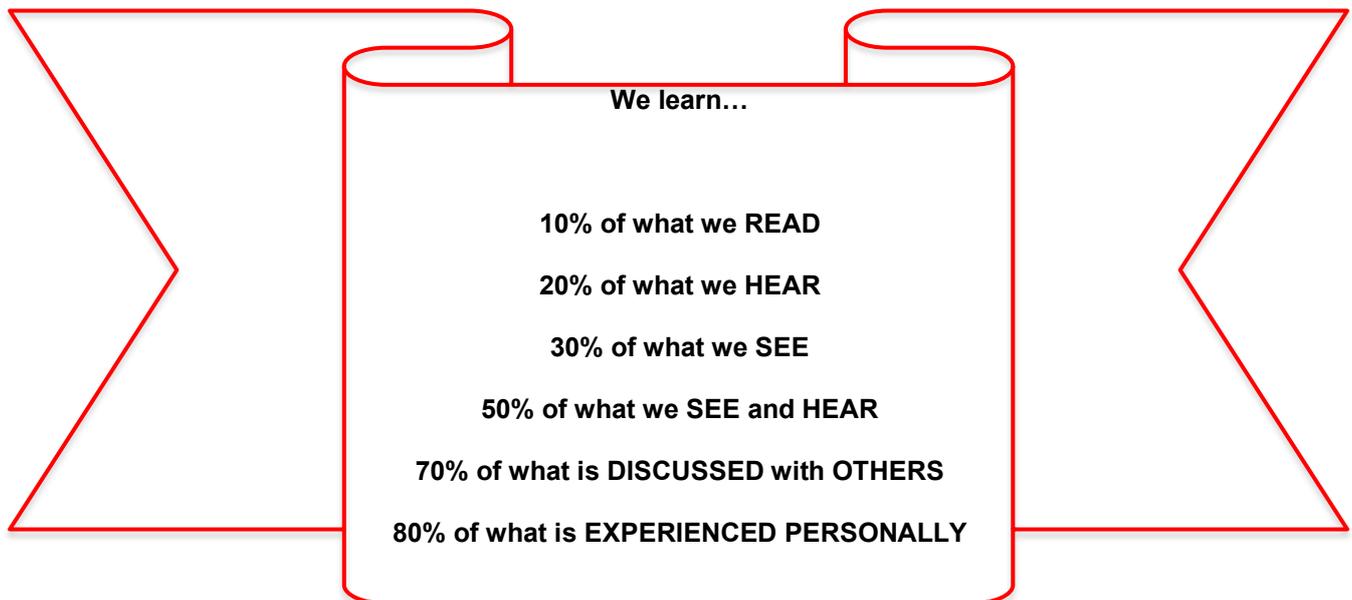
GCSE R.S. Revision Guide

How to revise

Make sure you do something **ACTIVE**...revise with a friend, parent or sibling...discuss key issues with each other...test each other...write quizzes for each other...**DO NOT JUST READ!!!** (see below)

What you need to revise:

- You need to learn all **key words** and their meaning
- Ensure that you know at least 1-3 **quotes** for each topic
- Be sure that you know what you think about each topic – don't wait until the exam to think about it! - **have an opinion ready** to give in the exam and **reasons** to support your answer!



Unit 1: A study of Religions: Beliefs and teachings - CHRISTIANITY

Background:

Christianity began nearly 2,000 years ago after Jesus was **crucified (Good Friday)** and **resurrected** 'rose from the dead' (**Easter Sunday**). His teachings were recorded by his disciples and followers like **St. Paul**. Christianity became to official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century when Emperor Constantine converted.

Denominations

In 1054 the church split into East (Orthodox) and West (Catholic) and in 1500, Henry VIII declared himself head of the Church in England at a time of the reformation in Europe. This led to the Protestant churches. There were subsequent protestant splits occurred, e.g. Baptist and Pentecostal; many churches today prefer to be called 'Free churches'.

Despite some differences, they all agree on his nature:

- One God – monotheism. A law given to the Jewish people
- He is Holy – separate and set apart for a special purpose and worthy of worship. He creates, sustains all that exists. He has always worked to guide and inspire people to do his will for the good of all.
- People can have a relationship with him and communicate through prayer
- Although they use 'He' and 'Father', they do not believe him to be male, he is without the restrictions of gender, but has attributes of both: power, strength, care, gentleness and love. Described as a spirit, as they do not believe he has a physical human body, this is in the Gospels 'a spirit does not have flesh and bones'. Yet, St. Paul says Jesus was God's son and is the exact representation.

The Qualities of God:

Omnipotent (power):

God is believed to be the perfect so he must be omnipotent – there is nothing he cannot do e.g. created the world, caused Mary to become pregnant:

'Nothing is impossible with God' (Angel Gabriel) Luke 1.37

Although often shown as physical power Christians believe his omnipotence also consists of power and authority to do good.

Just:

God is seen as supreme with unlimited power and authority, together with total love, so he is believed to be the ultimate source of justice. Christians believe God will never support injustice, ill treatment, prejudice or oppression'. Jesus spoke out against injustice, working amongst the poor, oppressed and sick. He disliked hypocrites; people who acted religious, but didn't act on it

Benevolent (love)

God loves humans and He has given them everything. Christians feel they should reflect this by loving others and treating them with care and respect.

'Love is patient....kind... does not envy... is not proud...not easily angered.....does not delight in evil...rejoices with the truth...always protects... 1 Corinthians 13

The existence of evil:

To appreciate and value eternal life in paradise requires experience of the imperfect, so when things go wrong, Christians believe it is part of God's plan.

Many Christians believe:

Jesus is a **final sacrifice**, **'the lamb'** that takes away the sins of the world' by taking the punishment meant for them. Jesus taught **love and compassion** so he should serve as a **role model** so humans should care for others in the same way he cared for them: ***"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 Trinity:

The Oneness of God and the Trinity - Christians believe in one God, known as **monotheism**, which has been developed into the idea of the **Trinity**. God is not a physical being, although one 'person' of the Trinity, **the Father, Son and Holy Spirit**, are non-physical elements or realities. They are **one in three and three in one** all at the same time. It is an idea the human cannot fully understand, so is a mystery.

God the Father – Jesus taught his disciples (followers) to pray starting with the words: “Our Father in heaven...” The ‘Father’ is the creator of life and omnipresent.

God the Son – Jesus, the second person of the Trinity is often referred to as the ‘**Son of God**’ as God **incarnated** (became human in Jesus). Most Christians believe Jesus is both God and human.

God the Holy Spirit – Jesus left the earth 40 days after his **resurrection (Easter)** and was replaced by the Holy Spirit (**Whitsun**), whereby the Holy Spirit continues to exist so as to influence, guide and sustain life. It is seen as the unseen power of God at work in the world, past, present and future:

The Nicene Creed:

*I believe in **one God**, the **Father Almighty**, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord **Jesus Christ**, the **only-begotten Son of God**, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of **one substance** with the Father, by whom all things were made.*

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; ... He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

*And I believe in the **Holy spirit**, the Lord and Giver of Life; who **proceeds from the Father** [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets... Amen.*

Creation

God created the earth and every living thing (Genesis); Some Christians would say that although not scientifically right the Bible has religious truth, that the process was God’s choice, designed and caused. The earth it was made fit for humans and God saw everything was good. “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘let there be light’, and there was light.... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*” **Gen 1:1-3, 31**. However:

- For some, the ‘spirit of God’ is the third person of the **Trinity** active at the beginning.
- Some believe ‘the word’ refers to Jesus, as mentioned by John, which one reason why many Christians refer to Jesus as being the ‘Word of God’. ‘in the beginning was the word and the word was God...he was with God in the beginning.. **1 John** It is this interpretation that many Christians use to help explain why they believe Jesus is God, the incarnation of God and therefore the second person of the Trinity. John clearly believed Jesus was no ordinary man but God the Son. The Genesis version clearly states God created the world, so they mystery of God exists.

They believe God created the heavens and the earth and “the Spirit of God hovered over the waters”, with the Spirit being the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Since Jesus, by some, is believed to be the Word of God, according to John, he therefore is God, the second person of the Trinity.

Other Christian views

Jehovah Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity as the Bible never describes God as a Trinity. The belief that God came to the earth and lived as a man does not date back to Jesus. Jesus was not the incarnation of God. They believe Jesus only ever called the ‘Father’ to be the only true God. Jesus is the “only begotten Son”, “the first-born of all creation”, “the beginning of God’s creation”.

Mormons believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not all one, but three distinctly different things.

The **Christmas** story, the **birth of Jesus** could be used to ‘prove’ Jesus is God as a human. Although some parts may not be historically accurate, the basic message is accepted. A **miracle** birth: “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive through the Holy Spirit and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel*” (which means, **God with us**). Matt 1:23. Jesus called the ‘**Son of God**’ - the second person of the Trinity.

Jesus is the ‘**Messiah**’, (the word ‘Christ’ comes from the Greek word meaning anointed one, which is a translation of the Hebrew word ‘Messiah’) the one foretold to come in the future and save people from their persecution, sins. At one stage Jesus told his followers not to use ‘Christ’ possibly to avoid a blasphemy charge, but later accepted it at his trial. Jesus was **crucified on Good Friday** and rose from the dead (**resurrection**) on

Easter Sunday. They see this as evidence of God only having power over death; therefore Jesus is the **incarnation** of God.

The word was made flesh and dwelt among us' John 1:14

'Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am" said Jesus' Mark 14:61

'When Jesus was baptised, a voice from Heaven said "You are my Son"' Mark 1:11

Crucifixion

Jesus - sentenced to death by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. For Christians, Jesus although the Son of God; Fully God yet fully human he was not spared the pain and horror of his crucifixion. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus forgave those who crucified him as they did not realise fully what was going on. He also spoke to the good thief, crucified with him that he would join God in Paradise. Just before death "Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'" *Luke 23:46.*

The impact of the crucifixion for Christians today

- By accepting Jesus' sacrifice, sin can no longer destroy their life.
- God forgives those who faithfully ask for forgiveness.
- Suffering is a part of life and as Jesus suffered, God understands the suffering we have to go through.

The resurrection

After Jesus' death, he was placed in the tomb as Sabbath was about to start. On the Sunday morning, some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb but the body was not there. Despite variations in the gospels, Mary Magdalene is present. For the next few days or weeks, Jesus appeared to several people, including Mary Magdalene and the disciples, telling them he had risen from the dead as he had predicated. *"For death came through man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through man..in Adam all die, in Christ we'll be made alive' Corinthians (St Paul)*

The ascension of Jesus

As the resurrection is a matter of faith and interpretation, so is the ascension. There are other explanations, but if Jesus had God's power God to rise from the dead, it is possible that he was able to leave the earth physically and return to heaven. Only Mark's and Luke's gospels finish off their story saying that, after meeting his disciples and asking them to carry on his good work, Jesus left them for the last time.

" ..he lifted up his hands and while he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven.." Luke 24:50

The significance of the resurrection and ascension for Christians today:

Some believe that the spirit will be resurrected immediately after death, others that the whole body will be at some stage in the future when Jesus returns to judge people. Catholics and Orthodox believe people will get the bodies back but will be transformed into a perfect state where there is no suffering. **ALSO:**

- The resurrection shows the power of Good over evil.
- By accepting Jesus, they can also be resurrected and do not need to fear death.
- Assures Christians that God will forgive their sins if they follow the teachings of Christianity. By doing so they will become closer with God, confident of his love
- The ascension shows that Jesus is with God, so the Holy Spirit takes over to provide comfort and guidance.
- Without the resurrection, there would be no Christian faith.

The afterlife:

Christians believe that human receive eternal life as a gift from God. This either begins upon death or at the **Day of Judgement** when Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead, as the Apostles' Creed says: *'He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead: I believe in... The resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.'*

At this time, Christians believe their souls, enter a different dimension about which little is known.

Physical – Jesus resurrected physically

Spiritual – Jesus on the cross speaking to the thief 'You will be with me in heaven this day'

Judgement:

God decides the fate of the dead, taking into account the life of the person and how they have tried to get close to him. Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats recorded in Mathew's gospel contains a description of this. It tells of the judgment and division of the world's people into the blessed, who are welcomed by the Father, and the cursed, who are cast out. The division is based on the acts of kindness and mercy done by people to their

disadvantaged fellow men; Jesus identifies such kindness with kindness towards himself. This gives Christians a good idea about the criteria God uses in judgement and shows what they need to do to be saved. Some Christians believe that treating others well is not enough to guarantee a good afterlife. They believe that Jesus is the Son of God and following his teaching is also important. When Jesus told Thomas he was preparing a place where they could join him, he replied 'how do we know the way?' Jesus' response: 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' John 14:6

Some Christians believe in a Physical Heaven – resurrection of the body

After they die their body will rise to life again and be with God in a physical heaven just as happened to Jesus

Others believe in a Spiritual Heaven - immortality of the soul

When people die their soul live on. In this view, heaven is not a place but a state of mind.

Heaven

Some Christians believe that only those who believe in Jesus will be with God in heaven. Jesus said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6).

Other Christians believe that heaven is reserved for Christians and those of other faiths who have live good lives pleasing God in doing so. They would look at the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats as a guide being judged on how they have treated others. This implies it is actions not belief that will matter.

Others believe heaven is for those who call themselves Christian regardless of how they live their life, and that simply the act of being baptised into the faith is almost guaranteed of heaven.

However, Christians believe that God is loving and forgiving to those people who truly repent the things they have done wrong. This is because they believe that Jesus was crucified to take the punishment for their sins.

Hell

Some Christians believe that the bible should be taken literally: God cannot let evil go unpunished or God would not be just or fair. Also all who haven't accepted Jesus will burn therefore for eternity. Others find it difficult to believe in both a God of love and hell.

Other Christians believe in 'hell' but think the picture-language of the bible e.g. the burning pit, are symbolic of the suffering someone would feel by being excluded from God's presence for eternity.

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" (Matthew 25:41)

'Whoever did not have his name written in the book of the living was thrown into the lake of fire'(Revelation)

Impact on Christian lives: As well as giving their lives purpose they:

Will want to be judged well and so will follow teachings such as Parable of Sheep and Goats

Will want to stay faithful to the belief in God, his nature and the role of Jesus, his son

Sins are actions or thoughts which separate people from God, in other words going against his laws and principles of morality. Actions e.g. murder and thoughts e.g. anger can lead to actions that are also often illegal. Most people including Christians believe that as nobody is perfect it is impossible for us not to 'sin'. In the Abrahamic Faiths this links to **Original sin**, introduced into the world by **Adam and Eve**, picking and eating the fruit from the **Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil** in the Garden of Eden, which God had forbidden. Having sinned they became aware they had done wrong and were then kicked out of paradise (**The Fall of Man**). This awareness of sin and the subsequent punishment was passed down through their descendants. This action separated them from God and brought about death. Christians realise they are often tempted to do the wrong things which displease God: drugs, immoral actions etc. Some believe the origins are to do with the Devil who encourages disobedience of God. Many believe the serpent (in the Garden of Eden) represents Satan (devil).

Free will

God gave humans the choice of how to live which also means they are free to do bad as well as good!!! The result is sin which will separate them from God. To help them avoid evil: The Ten Commandments -God to Moses (Exodus), The Beatitudes (Sermon on the Mount) – Jesus (Matthew) and Parables - Jesus

Due to the **Fall of Man** Christians believe that a **price had to be paid to save humanity** from their sin. Jesus felt his death was necessary to restore God's relationship with humans. With his death and resurrection, death and sin has been defeated, humans can receive **forgiveness**, get close to God and have eternal life. This is why they believe God came down in the form of Jesus and why his teachings are so important. Jesus' resurrection also shows that God accepted his sacrifice as **atonement** (at one with) – making amends for a

wrong, restoring the relationship. Those who ask in faith believe in Jesus and his teachings will receive **salvation**. Atonement removes the effect of sin as Jesus atoned for them all.

How salvation is gained:

Good works as reminded in the Old Testament – having faith in God and following his rules

Grace – love and support, favour, generosity of God, given to those e.g. who are faithful, believe in Jesus...

..**prayer** at times when we need it or, asking for **forgiveness** when we have made a mistake. Some believe help is given through the **Holy Spirit**.

Unit 2: A study of Religions: Practices - CHRISTIANITY

Worship: Giving worth to

- For many Christians, worship (giving worth to, i.e. recognising someone's importance and value) is one of the most important ways of expressing their belief in God. They believe they are communicating and connecting with him. They may do it alone or with others in a church or home. Through it they are praising him, asking for help/guidance or it gives them comfort.

Liturgical worship, key features and importance

This is often a service that has a set pattern (usually worldwide) and is usually led by a priest e.g. The Eucharist for Catholics, Orthodox and Anglican churches. There are formal prayers with set responses, Bible passages are read and there is a sermon. There may be music, hymns or chanting. This is community based; giving people the encouragement of others whilst showing commitment and being in a place of worship can deepen the experience.

- People receive forgiveness from God through the priest
- Receive the 'living Jesus' in Holy Communion
- Bible readings follow the Christian Calendar including Jesus' and Paul's teachings
- Worldwide similar order – familiar to all
- Rituals passed down over the generation – sense of tradition

Non-Liturgical and informal worship, key features and importance

This is often a service that has no set pattern; in some e.g. Baptist, Methodist the people who plan can choose an order. The focus is on Biblical readings, a sermon and there may be Holy Communion once or twice a month. Informal worship is more spontaneous, a person sharing thoughts or prayers. Quakers are often mainly silent only speaking when they feel God's Spirit going through them. Community or church houses just meet up to share their faith, recreating the practices of the early Church. Others e.g. Pentecostal are often Charismatic (led by the 'Spirit') people clapping, speaking in tongues. This style is closer to that of the early Christians, allowing for a personal interpretation which may make it a deeper experience and people can take an active part without being trained.

Private Worship

This is where individuals spend time with God alone or with close friends or family and may involve meditation, studying the Bible or using an aid such as an icon or rosary.

Prayer

Whether private or public, prayer gives people strength to cope with life; whether formal e.g. The Lord's prayer, informal or meditation it allows for peace in order for that sense of connection with God. Many Christians use pray as a form of meditation, at mealtimes, before bed, some keel whilst praying, some press hands together, some have open hands, some use rosary beads and some use icons. The different forms are: ADORATION - praising God for his greatness, THANKS GIVING - Thanking God for his good gifts, CONFESSION/PENITENTIAL - Asking for forgiveness of sins, PETITION - Praying for your own needs and INTERCESSION - Praying for other people in need. One of the most popular is the Lord's Prayer: *'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen'*. They pray because they follow the example of Jesus, it helps reinforce their relationship with God and they trust that if it is God's will they may be answered. If they are not answered, they do not lose trust in God, knowing that it may not be right for them or that he may answer them in a different way.

Sacraments: Rituals that represent an inward blessing from God. Catholics and Orthodox recognise 7: Baptism,

Confirmation, Holy Communion, marriage, Holy Orders, Reconciliation and Anointing of the sick. Some Christians, such as **Quakers**, do not have any sacraments. Most **Protestant denominations** recognise two sacraments that are mentioned in the Gospels: Baptism and the Eucharist. Christians believe these can help to strengthen their relationship with God by making him a part of their life. They are important to the Christian community because they affirm that Christians are part of the Body of Christ, the Church, with responsibilities. **Baptism**: the water represents the washing away of Original Sin and they are baptised in the name of the Trinity. Most churches favour Infant baptism, initiating and protecting the child from an early age. The Godparents make promises on behalf of the child, white is worn for purity, water for cleansing and oil for blessing are used and a candle given to represent it being a light of Christ.

Believers' Baptism

Some churches prefer to baptise members who fully understand what they are doing, they feel that this is more meaningful and closer to the early church practices plus Jesus was baptised as an adult. The person wears white, gives a testimony – a statement of their faith and willingness to change their life. They might read a bible passage– and then is baptised by total immersion three times in the name of the Trinity, the minister goes into the water as well. In churches that do not practise Infant Baptism, hold a service to dedicate the baby to the Christian faith and to thank God for the gift of the child. In Matthew, Jesus said: *'Go forth to people everywhere and baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'*. Also when Jesus was baptised by John in the River Jordan, God's voice from heaven said: *'This is my son, in whom I am pleased'*. Matthew.

Holy Communion

A service of thanksgiving in which the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated using bread and wine; also called Eucharist, Mass, the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of Bread, and the Divine Liturgy. In the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions they believe the bread and wine to be the Body and blood of Christ through some mystical process (transubstantiation) and take it during every service; others believe them to be symbolic (consubstantiation) and may only take communion once or twice a month. It reminds them of Jesus at the Last Supper in which he instructed his followers to 'eat and drink his body and blood' Luke and Matthew. Those who take communion believe they receive grace from God, it allows them as a community to come together, reminds them of the love shown by Jesus and reminds them of those less fortunate than themselves. Those who do not take communion believe that the act alone does not guarantee anything and that faith must be a main part, sexist as some churches don't allow women to give out Holy Communion, the issue of alcoholism for some (much stronger now than in the past) and that there were very few references to it scripturally.

Pilgrimage

A journey made for religious purposes; this could be alone or with other Christians. It can be a physical or spiritual journey towards God. The journey and the place give them time out to meditate, concentrate and time to pray and think and spend time with fellow Christians. They may go for a variety of reasons: to say sorry to God for something they have done wrong, they are ill and want God to heal them, looking for an answer to a problem or difficulty. **Lourdes**, southern France where the Virgin Mary appeared many times to a young girl called Bernadette who was illiterate. One vision had Bernadette did for water, later to discover that the water had healing properties. Today, many people from all over visit the shrine and bathe in the water, many miracles have been claimed. The churches organise for disabled groups to have the opportunity to visit Lourdes. Many although not experiencing a physical healing often claim to find spiritual healing. **Iona**, off the Scottish mainland, once had a large monastic community. Today, the Iona community care for it; there are daily services in the Abbey Church, walks to historic spots, meditation, quiet reading and workshops. Pilgrims help out with daily chores and meals. It is very remote place and windswept, many pilgrims feel like it is a place where nature reveals God's infinite power and presence.

Festivals

These help Christians to remember key events in their faith and allow them to plan events public and private throughout the year. They also help Christians remember the central teachings that God gave Jesus to humans to save them. **Christmas**: commemorates the Incarnation of Jesus usually December 25th. The celebration lasts 12 days and ends with the feast of Epiphany. Homes are lit with lights reminding them of Jesus being Light of the World, the nativity scene that Jesus was sent amongst them. It's a time of peace and goodwill, exchange of presents (Wise Men) and giving to others less fortunate. Some churches have carol services and midnight services. It's a time for Christians to thank God for, and celebrate with joy, the Incarnation of God in human

form – Jesus Christ and the second coming, a time for both giving and receiving from loved ones; symbol of love shared, a time to remember those who, like Jesus and his family, live in difficult circumstances. Christians should give generously to those in need. **Easter:** the most important festival, it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. The week before is Holy Week, Christians remember the events that led to the sacrifice of his crucifixion that Jesus made on Good Friday. Flowers and candles light the churches. The saying ‘He is risen’ is repeated many times. Midnight services are held by some churches and a sharing of food will take place by some including the eating of eggs (new life). It is important because: Proof of God incarnate or Son of God – rising from the dead, he foretold it, proof of life after death, proof of miracles, evidence that what Jesus said must be true and should be followed, early development of Christianity and the strength of a community.

The church in the community – street pastors, foodbanks, Parish nursing

Many Christian churches and individual Christians feel that at the centre of their lives, working for those less fortunate is what they should be focusing on. Teachings such as: ‘*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.*’ The Sermon on the Mount. ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke) all support their actions as they reflect the examples of Jesus, who put himself out to help others. Street Pastors, Food bank organisers such as the Trussell Trust and Parish Nurses all go out into the community, feeding, advising, caring, guiding those in need.

Mission, evangelism and church growth

“*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” Matthew 28:19-20. This teaching along with the 1Corinthians which sees the disciples receive the Holy Spirit Persuading giving them the courage and ability to go out and grow the community, encourages Christians to encourage people to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour and continue the growth of the church. This is how the church grew under St. Paul. They try to encourage others especially by actions and for some this is including abroad where people are suffering and humanitarian needs are greater. The Alpha course initially used to aid Christian understanding of faith, now also part of an evangelical movement, exploring the meaning of life. Runs in homes, churches, prisons and has many workshops and programmes for youth and counselling. The Church is growing rapidly in South America, Africa and Asia. Discipleship encourages Christians to invite others to the faith in order for them to do the same.

Persecution and reconciliation

The primary mission of the worldwide Church is to proclaim that Jesus came to earth to restore the relationship between people and God. Christians argue that sin caused this relationship to be broken and separated the world from God who is holy. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, Christians believe that he saved humans from sin. Through his grace he made it possible for ‘God’s enemies’ (mankind) to be forgiven and become his friends. Reconciliation is a key part of Christian teachings found in St Paul’s letters and Matthews Gospel. Not just reconciliation with God but also with each other. Jesus could forgive his killers on the cross and so Christians are expected to reflect that also. The World Council of Churches runs many initiatives to promote reconciliation and example of this type of work was seen in Northern Ireland where there was hostility between Catholics and Protestants. Persecution – although it is to be fought against is seen to help develop faith and strengthen their beliefs as when challenged they have to decide whether they are truly committed. Some accept their persecution in the knowledge that it is what Jesus went through and so fully experience him.

- ‘*overcome evil with good.*’ Romans.
- ‘*If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.*’ Matthew.
- ‘*Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Jesus will be persecuted.*’ (2 Timothy 3:12)
- ‘*Blessed are the persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..*’ Matthew (The Beatitudes)

World Poverty and aid agencies

For Christians, Jesus spent his time helping the suffering, speaking out against injustice and reminding people of their duty to help others but share their wealth. Jesus himself had very few personal possessions and was often

critical of those who had wealth. The parables of the Rich Man and Lazarus, The feeding of the 5,000, The Beatitudes and the Parable of the Good Samaritan mainly focused on these teachings.

- **Christian Aid**, helping refugees, also the hungry and homeless at home and abroad. Fighting for justice e.g. cancelling debts owned by LDCs, helping recover from and prepare for natural disasters.
- **Cafod** – Catholic aid agency, does similar work for overseas areas in need. Helps increase access to clean water, education, healthcare, fairer working practices, lobbies governments and during conflicts and disasters works with other agencies to bring relief and rebuild lives.
- **Tear Fund** - Started 1968 after the terrible famine in Nigeria. Work in areas of need, disaster and vulnerable communities living in poverty. They fundraise and work with other churches worldwide.

The Background

Muhammad was born in Makkah (Mecca) around 570CE. His parents died when he was six years old. His uncle brought him up. Over time he gained a good reputation for being honest, at 20, he married his employer a wealthy widow named Khadija. He was religious and would go to mount Hira to pray. In 610CE the Angel Jibril appeared to him with the first of many messages from God. These messages over the next 23 years were combined together to form the Qur'an. After 3 years of revelations Muhammad started to preach to the people of Makkah about the oneness of God and that complete surrender to God is the only acceptable way to live. The people of Makkah gambled, drank and worshipped idols and so rejected his new religion (Islam) because they would have to stop that. One night Muhammad was taken by Jibril on a night journey to Jerusalem where he was taken up to heaven meeting God and other prophets including Isa (Jesus), it was here the command to pray 5 times a day was agreed. As Muhammad's life was at risk in Makkah, he and his follower fled to Medina, this event is known as the **Hijra**, which means **departure** and it was in Medina that Muhammad set up his first Muslim community (**the Ummah**). Despite trying to use peaceful means to convert (revert) the Makkans, there followed many battles, eventually Muhammad won and removed the idols from the Ka'aba. The new religion was established and everyone worshiped one God called Allah. Muhammad's teachings and practice (**Sunnah**), which are found in the Hadith, are still used as sources of Islam law (**Shariah**).

The Status

Muslims believe that Islam had been gradually revealed to all Prophets 124,000 in every nation over time, from the first man (Adam) through to the last the Prophet Muhammad were all Muslim. They believe the other faiths came about by people changing them.

The Oneness of God:

"Say, 'He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot (given birth to) no one nor was he begotten (born of anyone). No one is comparable to Him.'" Qur'an 112:1-4

- God is eternal, he has no sons or daughters, has no need of them. God is absolute so all has need of Him.
- Muslims believe in Jesus. Jesus is mentioned in the Qur'an. In Islam he is not 'The Son of God' and is not the 'incarnation of God'. He is a Prophet of God.
- To be a Muslim is a simple but serious decision. To be one is to believe in the following statement known as the '**Shahadah**' (declaration of faith): 'I believe there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet'.

The supremacy of God's will.

Muslims accept whatever happens as God's will, both good and bad. It is common for Muslims to say 'All praise belongs to God' after either good or bad things happen. They also say 'God willing' (inshallah – insha'Allah) when promising to do something. This shows that they believe God is in control of everything. For some they believe he controls everything humans do, others believe he gives them free will.

Denominations

Sunni

After Muhammad died – many felt the Qur'an and Sunnah (his teachings and actions) had the authority to guide. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's old friend and father-in-law was chosen a leader (caliph) to act on Muhammad's behalf and enforce the laws once scholars had given their verdicts. Sunni = followers of the Sunnah.

Six articles of faith in Sunni Islam:

1) **Tawhid** – Oneness of God. 2) **Angels** – messengers from God, made from light. 3) The **Qur'an** – sacred text written by God. 4) **Muhammad** – last of the Prophets. 5) **Day of Judgement** – at the end of the world, all will be judged by God. 6) The **supremacy** of God's will. He is just and wise and humans will be accountable to him

Shi'a

Others felt Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali had been chosen and the true 'Imams' had to be descended from Muhammad and chosen by God, each Imam would choose their successor. Ali's claims were ignored and the split began. They only accept Muhammad's sayings that have passed down through Ali or his followers.

The five roots 'Usal ad-Din in Shi'a Islam

1. Tawhid – Oneness of God. **2. Muhammad** – the last of the Prophets. **3. Supremacy** of God's will. **4. The Imamate**, accepting the 12 Imams judgements as they are seen as guards of the truth of the religion without error **5. The Day of Judgement** – at the end of the world, all will be judged by God.

The Nature of God:

Muslims believe God to be all things: Immanent, Transcendent, Omnipotent, Beneficent, Merciful, Fair and Just. When praying Muslims use the name of God in order to help them feel his presence. God acts with fairness and justice and requires that they do the same to their fellow human beings.

*"This is God, your Lord, there is no God but Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him; He is in charge of everything. No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision. He is the All Subtle, the **All Aware.**" Qur'an 6:102-103*

Predestination – either pre-planned or pre known.

Some Sunni Muslims believe God has DETERMINED everything including human actions. He is omnipotent and nothing happens without his permission. What about Free will and judgement if you are not responsible for your actions how do punishment and reward work? Many Shi'a believe God KNOWS everything that will happen like a parent, he doesn't decide, people are free to make choices to do what Allah wants or not. The whole point of sending messengers from Allah is to allow humans to use their free will. If life is a test, then it's pointless if God has pre-determined human choices. *'Those who believe, do good deeds, keep up the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms will have their reward with their Lord' Qur'an 2:277*

Angels in Islam

Angels are supernatural beings created from light before humans were created. Their role in Islam is to bring God's word to the prophets. They are part of the six articles of faith (Muslims have six main beliefs: Belief in Allah the one God, Belief in angels, Belief in the holy books, Belief in the Prophets, Belief in the Day of Judgement, Belief in Predestination)

"...Praise be to God who made the heavens and the earth, who made the angels, messengers with wings - two, or three, or four (pairs)..." (Quran 35:1)

- Angels are able to pass on God's messages directly as they are pure and sinless. Unlike humans they have no freewill and so cannot displease God, they continually praise and worship him.
- They are involved with humans from birth to death.
- *Each person has angels before him and behind, watching over him by God's command' Qur'an*
- The Qur'an says ' anyone who is an enemy of God's angels, Jibril and Mika'il is an enemy of God Qur'an 2:98)

Jibril (Gabriel) the most important angel. He is the one who appears in Judaism and Christianity. He is seen as the angel responsible for giving Allah's messages to the prophets. He is meant to have originally appeared with Mika'il, when the Prophet was a child to purify his heart so that he would be able to receive God's words later. When Muhammad was around 40 years old Jibril appeared to him in a blaze of light on Mt Hira. The first part of the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad, illiterate, he managed to memorise them and others over the next 23 years. Jibril is also mentioned during Muhammad's Night journey and ascent to Paradise.

Mika'il (Michael) Another main angel known in Judaism and Christianity. Described by Muslims as an angel of mercy, his is known to be responsible for looking after Paradise and rewarding righteous people for the good they do, he also protects holy places and brings nourishment for humans and the earth in the form of rain (but also lightning and thunder).

Extra Quotes: "Behold! We said to the angels, "Bow down to Adam": They bowed down except Iblis. He was one of the Jinns, and he broke the Command of his Lord" Sûrah al-Kahf: 50

Adam and Prophethood

Despite there having been many prophets over time, the Qur'an mentions 25. The most important prophets are called messengers or apostles, some are Adam, Ibrahim (Abraham) Musa (Moses - the Torah), Isa (Jesus - the

Holy Gospel) and Muhammad (the Qur'an), who Muslims believe to be the final prophet. Each time the message was forgotten a new prophet was sent to get them on the right path again. Muslims believe that the message they received was a special revelation, meaning that however wise the prophets were, their message did not come from their own wisdom, but from Allah; knowledge that wisdom, intelligence or common sense could never reveal. The messages were given directly by Allah or the angel, Jibril. *'God sent prophets as bearers of good news and as warners and revealed to them the book with truth'* Qur'an 2:153

Adam

God gives Adam understanding and the names of all things and is told to tell the angels. God told the angels to bow down to Adam as a mark of respect for his knowledge. Iblis (the devil, one of the Jinns who were made from fire) refused, was thrown out of Paradise and vowed to tempt humans to disobey God. Adam is given Hawwa (Eve) as a companion; they live in perfection but then are encouraged by Iblis to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, bringing evil into the world. Their actions get them kicked out of Paradise (Garden of Bliss) and all humans from here on will be judged on the Day of Judgement.

'He taught Adam all the names of things; He showed them to the Angels and said tell me the names of these things....they said we only have knowledge of what you have taught us.' Qur'an 2:31

Why is Adam important?

First man on earth, first prophet, and father of the human race, everything he learnt was passed down. He was the first to plant and harvest and cook food, dietary rules as well as dealing with the dead.

'One of His signs is that He created you from dust....you became human and scattered far and wide.....' Qur'an 30:20

Abraham

Abraham although married to Sarah, married Hagar and had Ishmael, later he had Isaac with Sarah. The Qur'an mentions Abraham trying to set up another dwelling with Hagar and Ishmael. Muslims believe Ibrahim had a dream that God asked him to sacrifice his son to him which he agreed to do but was stopped at the last minute. As a Covenant Muslim boys are now circumcised. Much Islamic tradition including Hajj - stems from the pre-Islamic era and are translated into Islamic rituals through Abraham. Hagar looked for water for her and her son, and ran between two hills, this is enacted in the Hajj ceremony as a symbolic gesture of what Hagar was doing and pilgrims do that. She was rewarded with a well (ZamZam).

God said to Abraham, "I'd like you to build my house for me..." - that is a Ka'aba - "...here on this mound of earth, in this sacred place and I'd like you to erect the walls and I want you to purify this place." Part of this purification is what we see today in the Ka'aba. The Islamic tradition has restricted this purity ritual to Muslims only. Pilgrims praising God is actually a legacy left from pre-Islamic days when pilgrims also came to the Ka'aba - not to worship the one God, but to worship idols. There are various things that are part of the Abrahamic story such as throwing the stones at the 3 pillars (rejection of the devil), culminating in the ultimate sacrifice which is carried out on the last day of Hajj. As a symbolic gesture, Muslims re-enact what Abraham was going to do with Ishmael by sacrificing a lamb or sheep - Eid-ul-Adah.

The Imamate: (the divine appointment of Imams)

After Muhammad's death, there was a split Sunni & Shi'a as there was no clear successor. Sunnis chose Abu Bakr (Muhammad's father-in-law) as their first **Caliph**. However, Shi'as wanted Ali (Muhammad's son-in-law) believing that the prophet had appointed him by divine instruction and so the leadership should follow the family line, and he became the first Imam. When Ali died, his son became the **Imam**. Each Imam that followed was the son of the previous Imam (except Husayn ibn Ali, who was the brother of Hasan ibn Ali).

Why have Imams

Muslims believed that 1) Allah would never leave the people to find their own guidance, hence he chose Imams who he Purified and gave them knowledge to be capable to guide the Muslims towards the straight path. Therefore, after Muhammad's (pbuh) death, Allah gave the duty of teaching and guiding of the final message to his selected people... the IMAMS. These had special qualities, just like Prophet Muhammad and **the prophets before him in order to continue guiding the people.** 2) It would also ensure that they would be guardians of the faith to protect Islam from being destroyed, corrupted or the message from changed. 3) God would always want a representative amongst mankind. First it was the prophets and after the end of Prophet hood, it was the Imams. 4) Allah wanted to unite all Muslims under one leader. A leader who would be in his time: **The most knowledgeable, Just, brave, devoted, the most kind and generous**

The Twelvers:

A branch of Shi'a Islam who believe there have been 12 Imams in total. The last, Muhammad al-Mahdi, (886ad) is believed to have been kept alive by God and hidden on earth and will return with Jesus to bring justice and equality. They believe that Imams rule justly but can maintain and interpret the Qur'an and Shariah law without fault. Humans need divine guidance.

What is the Qur'an

The word of God which is perfect so cannot be changed or re-written. For Muslims, it is a complete guide to life. As well as some historical accounts, it has rules and laws written in it about believing In one God, prayer, charity, fasting, what types of food are and are not allowed to be eaten. It also explains about marriage, divorce, buying and selling, crimes and punishments and many more:

- *Worship God and obey and be kind to your parents.**
- *Do not kill those who have not harmed you.**
- *Do not drink Alcohol or use any drugs, as they harm the body.**
- *Show forgiveness and be forgiving.**

'This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of God' Qur'an 2:2

Where did it come from and why is it important

Over a period of 22 years God (Allah in Arabic) revealed his message through the archangel Gabriel to Muhammad. The message was to worship the one true god. These revelations were written down by his companions (Muhammad was illiterate) to form the Qur'an. Muslims believe the Quran is the final book to be revealed by Allah after a collection of other books including the Torah and the Bible. There are 114 Surahs (chapters) in total. It begins with a short Surah called 'al Fatihah', which means 'The Opener'. This is a prayer to God for guidance and is used in daily prayers. The remaining Surahs are arranged approximately in order of length with the longest first (286 verses) and the shorter chapter first. Muslim children are encouraged to learn Arabic so they can read the Qur'an in its original language. Qur'anic recitation is highly valued as Muslims believe that it brings blessings. Those who are able to recite the whole Qur'an from memory are given the title 'hafiz' (one who remembers/keeper).

Why in Arabic?

As the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic it must be recited in Arabic too. Humans should not question that. Not one word has changed since 1400 years; any translation can change meanings of words. Initially Muhammad recited them to his followers. One official copy was commissioned by Abu Bakr. As more converts joined Islam, reading and writing the Qur'an the worry of parts being changed occurred, so the third Caliph Uthman organised one official version to be followed everywhere. The original Qur'an is in heaven, so when they read the Qur'an they believe God's words speak directly to them.

How is respect shown:

1. They perform Wudu (a special way of washing themselves) the washing their hands, faces, arms and feet.
2. The Qur'an is usually kept wrapped up in a cloth and place on a high shelf to keep it safe and to show respect.
3. It's kept on a special stand like the one in the picture so that it doesn't touch the floor which can be dirty.

Other holy books

*The Torah (Tawrat) is mentioned many 18times. Muslims believe that the Torah was given to Moses (Musa).

*The Psalms (Zabur) is mentioned 3 times. Revealed to David.

*The Gospel (Injil).The word Injil occurs 12 times. It is believed that the 'book' was revealed to Jesus (Isa)

"We sent Jesus, son of Mary, in their footsteps, to confirm the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospel with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed- a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God." (Qur'an 5:46)

The scrolls of Abraham are also referred to in the Qur'an, but these have been lost and no longer exist. They are thought to have been one of the earliest scriptures of Islam, which were revealed to Ibrahim.

Life after death is AKHIRAH. After death there will be a state of waiting called **Barzak** ('barrier'). People cannot go back to make **amends** or **warn** the living. When in the grave God sends two **angels** to question them about their faith. If answered correctly they will see the **rewards** that are to come but if incorrect and **deny** God they will see the **punishments** that are to come. On the Day of Judgement, announced by the angel **Israfil**, everyone will be **raised** from the dead and given a new body and judged by God. If they receive the Book of deeds in their **right** hand they will go to heaven but if in the left they will go to hell. Heaven is described as: 'feasting on pure drink in the garden of happiness'. Hell is described as a place of fire and **torment** 'garments of fire will be tailored for those who disbelieve.. Scalding **water** melting them..' Belief in life after death encourages the idea of **responsibility** and **accountability** for your actions, it encourages people to avoid **sin** and do the right thing. It also **satisfies** a human need for **justice**, *punishing those who avoided it in this life.*

Effects on actions:

- Responsibility for own actions as they will be held accountable by God
- Do good and avoid evil
- Follow the teachings of the Qur'an e.g. the 5 Pillars
- They follow the Sunnah - the example of the Prophet Muhammad
- Recognise life is a test and look to Allah for help in life
- Muslims take care of others, especially other Muslims
- Some see the descriptions as literal, others metaphorical

Unit 1: A study of Religions: Practices - ISLAM

The Five Pillars

These are central to Muslims practices. They have a big impact on the day to day life of a Muslim.

Muslims believe that the pillars support the main principles and beliefs of Islam, just as pillars are used to support a building. They can be seen as the key to living a perfect Muslim life.

- 1) Shahadah – declaration of faith (passive)- ‘There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet’. In Shi’a Islam they add: ‘And Ali is the friend of God’.
- 2) Salah – prayer (active)
- 3) Zakah – charitable giving (active)
- 4) Sawm – fasting (active)
- 5) Hajj - pilgrimage (active)

The Ten Obligatory Acts

Twelver Shi’a Islam, there are ten duties called the Ten Obligatory Acts (also known as the Ancillaries of the Faith). They include all the Five Pillars except Shahadah (which is covered by some of the additional acts). They are:

1. **Salah** – prayer
Sawm – fasting
2. **Zakah** – charitable giving
3. **Khums** – a 20% tax on income once all expenses are deducted. Half goes to charity and half goes to Shi’a religious leaders
4. **Hajj** – pilgrimage
5. **Jihad** – the struggle to maintain the faith and defend Islam. For many Muslims this means the struggle to live by their faith as well as possible, for example by obeying the Five Pillars, contributing to the community or doing voluntary work.
6. **Amr-bil-Maruf** – encouraging people to do what is good
7. **Nahi Anil Munkar** – discouraging people from doing what is wrong
8. **Tawallah** – to be loving towards the friends of God, including Muhammad and the Imams
9. **Tabarra** – disassociating from the enemies of God

Prayer:

- In Islam, there is the formal prayer known as ‘**Salah**’ and informal prayer known as ‘**Du’a**’ which can be prayed at any time.
- When a Muslim prays **salah**, they need to follow it in a formal way, through a number of movements and each set of known as ‘**rakahs**’ and during which certain words need to be recited.
- They pray 5 times a day whilst Shi’a condense it to 3 a day by joining midday and afternoon, sunset and night prayers together

Muslims must be spiritually clean before prayer and so they perform a ritual cleansing called WUDU. If there is no water they can use sand or dust. In the mosques there will be a wash room for men and one for women. When praying, Muslims face the holy city of Makkah. This means that all Muslims are physically and mentally focusing on one place associate with God, in the same way that all Muslims should focus every part of their lives to God. There is a niche, mihrab, in the quiblah wall to show the direction of Makkah. Although men and women are separated, they pray at the same time and the Imam’s voice leading prayers will be broadcast through to their room. There will be special carpets for praying.

The daily prayers are made up of a number of rak’ah, this is a set sequence of actions and recitations including bowing an prostration showing a complete obedience to God. Congregational prayers take place on a Friday (the day they believe Adam was created) This is Jummah and is a way of emphasising the Ummah the Muslim community – all praying in the same language, facing in the same direction and prostrating showing their awareness of the greatness of God. Men are expected to attend but women can pray at home, having cleansed and using a prayer mat whilst facing Mekkah.

“You who believe, when you are about to pray, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe you heads, wash your feet up to the ankles and, if required, wash your whole body.” **Qur’an 5:6**

“So woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayers.” **Qur’an 107:4-5**

“Your Lord says, ‘Call on Me and I will answer you.’” **Qur’an 40:60**

“Believers! When the call to prayer is made on the day of congregation, hurry towards the reminder of God and leave off your trading.” **Qur’an 62:9**

Sawm – Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and for Muslims the most important. They believe that it was during Ramadan that the Qur'an started to be revealed to Muhammad. Some Muslims choose to recite the whole Qur'an in daily sections over the month. Ramadan is known as the month of fasting because Muslims fast during daylight hours for the whole month. They are also not allowed during this time to smoke or have sex. They get up every day before sunrise in order to eat and drink enough to keep them going until sunset. Then the fast is broken and Muslims are allowed to eat until dawn the next day. Many share this meal with friends followed by extra prayers and readings. By fasting Muslims can empathise with those who do not have enough food to live on. This may inspire Muslims to give more to charity, help charities, inviting people to join their breaking of the fast.

- It is an action Allah accepts for Him alone and therefore has many blessings.
- It is an act of atonement (at one with). Making amends for a wrong

If a person is old, sick, pregnant or young, they can refrain from fasting. Some may choose to add on extra days at the end and youngsters as part of their training will do a shortened version.

The Night of Power:

This is an important festival that marks the beginning of God's revelation to Muhammad. The exact date this happened is not agreed on, but it is believed to be one of the odd-number dates in the second half of Ramadan. Many choose to stay awake devoting themselves to prayer and reading the Qur'an. This is meant to bring many blessings including entrance to heaven.

- 'God has said: "Every action of a human is for him except for fasting, for that is solely for Me (God) and I give a reward for it"'.
Qur'an 2:183
- 'There is a gate to Heaven that is called Ar-Rayyan. On the Day of Judgement this gate will call out: "Where are those who have fasted?" When the last one who has fasted has passed through the gate, it will be locked for ever'.
- *"What will explain to you what the Night of Power is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months."*
Qur'an 97:2-3
- *"It was in the month of Ramadan the Qur'an was revealed as guidance to mankind... So any present that month should fast; those who are ill, on a journey can make up for lost days later."* Qur'an 2:18

Zakah

By giving Zakah, Muslims are acknowledging that everything they own comes from God and belongs to him, and that they should use their wealth to remember God and give to those in need. It frees people from desire, and teaches self-discipline and honesty. Zakah literally means to purify or cleans. Muslims believe that giving Zakah helps to purify the soul, removing selfishness and greed. In addition to giving Zakah, Muslims are encouraged to voluntarily give their money and time to charity at any point of the year. This is called Sadaqah.

"Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts need winning over, to free slaves and help those in debt, for God's cause, and for travellers in need."

Qur'an 9:60

Significance of Zakah

- In giving Zakah, Muslims are fulfilling a duty imposed by God. The Qur'an makes it clear that giving Zakah is a sign of a true Muslim.
- Paying Zakah gives Muslims a good attitude towards money. They learn to share it and not be greedy with it.
- Zakah strengthens communities by making the rich support the poor.
- Zakah links well with salah. Prayers should make Muslims feel concern for others, and Zakah puts this concern into action.

Khums:

This refers to the excess income or earnings that a Shi'a Muslims makes, and is still set at 20% (the word means fifth). Half of the money collected as Khums goes to Shi'a religious leaders, to be spent on behalf of God on the things considered necessary for religious matters, while the rest is given to charity or the poor. This is in addition to zakah.

Haji

This is the **5th pillar** of Islam. Hajj starts and ends in the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. It always takes place from the 8th to the 12th of Dhul-Hijjah, which is the last month of the Islamic calendar. It is a **pilgrimage**, whereby Muslims follow the 'footsteps' of **Abraham**, to recall the occasion when Abraham was challenged by God to **sacrifice** that which was precious to him – **his only son**, the one he longed for, for so many years. This was a major challenge **to** his faith; would he put his son before God? To a practising Muslim, this encourages them to always put God first in all that they do. During Hajj, Muslims will retrace the events that led to this and remember the **three** occasions when the Devil tried to put Abraham off **sacrificing** his son. Today, Muslims will stone three pillars that mark the spots where these temptations took place, to **symbolically**, inwardly, fight against evil within oneself. The sacrifice was stopped by God and a **sheep** was sacrificed instead. Today, the sacrifice of animals still takes place as one of the rites marking the end of Hajj. A Muslim believes when they have completed Hajj, and provided it is accepted by God, they will become as sinless as a new born baby. They also believe, through God's mercy, forgiveness that the Gates of Paradise will be open for them on the Day of Judgement.

Origins of Hajj:

Goes back to when Abraham was asked to take Hijrah and Ishmael to Arabia and leave them there for a while. They ran out of food and water, Hijrah ran between the hills of Safa and Marwa praying to God for help. Ishmael started digging his heel in the sand and water came gushing out. When Abraham returned God asked him to build a place of worship to him – The Ka'aba and to call people to pilgrimage there. Years later Makkah was established near the well. By Muhammad's time the people had gone back to worshipping idols, he arrived with a large group of Muslims and rededicated the Ka'aba back to God, this was the first Islamic pilgrimage.

- Entering the sacred state of Ihram. Muslims before performing Hajj have to have a ritualistic bath (shower), then put on ihram. This is a kafan, a burial shroud (cloth). Two white pieces representing purity and equality. The women have to wear one colour and be covered apart from the face.
- They circle anti-clockwise the Ka'aba and aim to touch the black stone (from first Ka'aba or send down from paradise). They say 'here I am lord at your service'.
- They walk seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah, go back to the Ka'aba and collect water from the Zam Zam well and stay in Mina overnight on way to Arafat.
- They stand at Arafat in the afternoon (the place of Muhammad's last sermon) and pray. They believe if they truly acknowledge their wrongs and are sorry and will make up for them then God will forgive their sins.
- On way back to Mina the next day they have picked up 3 small stones. They then throw these at the 3 pillars Jamarat representing rejecting the devil.
- They then celebrate (as the world over) the end of Hajj and Id-ul-Adha. An animal is sacrificed and uneaten meat given to the poor. The men will cut or shave their hair and the women cut a lock. They return for seven more times around the Ka'aba. They go back to Mina spending two nights there contemplating the pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage:

Provides spiritual transformation, discipline, forgiveness, unity and equality, reminder of God, humility.

Some communities will provide financial support for a poor Muslim to make the pilgrimage because it is a religious obligation and not a holiday

"Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God by people who are able to undertake it." Qur'an 3:97

Greater Jihad:

This is the personal struggle of all Muslims to live according to the teachings of the faith. :

- The Shahadah states the basis of faith putting God above everything else
- Zakah requires them to care for others as a duty
- Sawm requires discipline putting God above bodily needs for a month
- Hajj means for 10 days leaving the material world behind and concentrate on God's will.

How beliefs about Jihad influences Muslims today:

- Most recognise the difference between Greater and Lesser and remember to focus on Greater as that will affect any issues over Lesser
- The Greater jihad means they must strive at all times to be a good Muslim doing what God wants including following the Five Pillars

- Some may believe that they are justified in the War against the west as due to western involvement in Middle Eastern policies they have experienced pain and suffering and so feel that they must fight the cause to protect the faith.

Islamic rules for war – the following must be met:

- Must be declared by a fair religious leader
- Cannot be used to convert to Islam
- Must be as a response to threat
- Must not be used to gain territory or wealth
- Must be as a last resort, all peaceful methods must be used first
- Innocent people should not be harmed (men, women, children, those not fighting)
- Must not disturb those in prayer or places of worship

Must not destroy crops, fruit trees or water supplies.

References

'We decreed to the Children of Israel that if anyone kills a person – unless in retribution for murder or spreading corruption in the land – it is as if he kills all mankind, while if any saves a life it is as if he saves the life of all mankind.' 5:32

"This is my path, leading straight, so follow it, and do not follow other ways: they will lead you away from it –

'This is what He commands you to do so, so that you may refrain from wrongdoing.'" Qur'an 6:153

"But those who have believed, migrated, and striven for God's cause, it is they who can look forward to God's mercy: God is most forgiving and merciful." Qur'an 2:218

Id-ul-adha: The story of Ibrahim's sacrifice

Id-ul-Adha celebrates the occasion when Allah appeared to Ibrahim in a dream and asked him to sacrifice his son Isma'il as an act of obedience to God. The devil tempted Ibrahim by saying he should disobey Allah and spare his son. As Ibrahim was about to kill his son, Allah stopped him and gave him a lamb to sacrifice instead.

Note: This story is also found in the Jewish Torah and the Christian Old Testament (Genesis 22). Here God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, his son with Sarah. Isma'il was his son with Hagar.

Celebrations

It is a public holiday in Muslim countries and Muslims all over the world, who can afford it, sacrifice a sheep (sometimes a goat) as a reminder of Ibrahim's obedience to Allah. In Britain, the animal has to be killed at a slaughterhouse. They share out the meat among family, friends and the poor, who each get a third share. The day usually starts with Muslims going to the Mosque for prayers, dressed in their best clothes, and thanking Allah for all the blessings they have received. The Imam preaches about sacrifice and reminds them of what they are celebrating. It is also a time when they visit family and friends as well as offering presents. It is obligatory to give a set amount of money to charity to be used to help poor people buy new clothes and food so they too can celebrate.

Id al-Fitr – the festival of breaking the fast (Sugar feast/lesser id)

Muslims are not only celebrating the end of fasting, but thanking Allah for the help and strength that he gave them throughout the previous month to help them practise self-control. The festival begins when the first sight of the new moon is seen in the sky and can last over 1-3 days. Muslims in most countries rely on news of an official sighting, rather than looking at the sky themselves. The celebratory atmosphere is increased by everyone wearing best or new clothes, and decorating their homes.

There are special services out of doors and in mosques, processions through the streets, and of course, a special celebratory meal - eaten during daytime, the first daytime meal Muslims will have had in a month. The sermon in the mosque reminds them of forgiving and forgetting any disputes, making amends and to focus on helping the poor. Some may also visit the cemetery to remember deceased family members.

Ashura

The Shia were a political faction (the "party of Ali") that supported Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed and the fourth caliph (temporal and spiritual ruler) of the Muslim community. The great schism between Sunnis and Shias occurred when Imam Ali did not succeed as leader of the Islamic community at the death of the Prophet. Ali was murdered in AD 661 and his chief opponent Muawiya became caliph. Caliph Muawiya was later succeeded by his son Yazid, but Ali's son Hussein refused to accept his legitimacy and fighting between the two resulted. Hussein and his followers were massacred in battle at Karbala. Both Ali's and Hussein's deaths gave rise to the Shia cult of martyrdom and to their sense of betrayal and struggle against injustice and tyranny.

Celebrations

It falls on the 10th of Muharram (first month of the Islamic calendar), marked by with a voluntary day of fasting commemorating the day Noah left the Ark, and the day that Moses was saved from the Egyptians by God. For Shia Muslims, Ashura is a solemn day of mourning the martyrdom of Hussein in 680 AD at Karbala (Iraq). It is marked with mourning rituals and passion plays re-enacting the martyrdom. Shia men and women dress in black parading through the streets slapping their chests and chanting. Some Shia men seek to emulate the suffering of Hussein by flagellating themselves with chains or cutting their foreheads until blood streams from their bodies. Some Shia leaders and groups discourage the bloodletting, saying it creates a backward and negative image of Shia Muslims. Such leaders encourage people to donate blood.