*B601 Paper 1*

**The End of Life (Christianity)**

**Key words**

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| **Reincarnation** | Hindu belief that when we die we are reborn based on our Karma (good and bad actions in life). Life is a cycle. |
| **Samsara** | The cycle of life death and rebirth in Hinduism |
| **Karma** | Good and bad deeds in life (Hinduism) ‘what goes around comes around’ |
| **Moksha** | When you escape Samsara and reach God in Hinduism. To get to Moksha you need perfect Karma. |
| **Judgement day** | The day when God will judge people on their behaviour in life. A key belief in Islam and some Christian groups. |
| **Heaven** | People who have behaved well in life will go here after death. |
| **Hell** | People who have behaved badly (committed sins) in life will go here after death. |
| **Soul** | The part of us that most religions believe lives on after death in some form. |
| **After life** | The term used to describe any believe about what happens at death. |
| **Sin** | A bad action committed in life |
| **Redemption** | Being forgiven for things that you have done wrong. Christians should try to ‘redeem’ themselves before God. |
| **Salvation** | The act of being saved from sin or evil. |
| **Resurrection** | The Christian belief that Jesus died on the cross and came back to life. |

**Death is the one thing in life we can be sure about and that is why religions have beliefs about what it means!**

**Faith and death**

It is not surprising that people have always asked questions about what, if anything, happens after they die.

Although some people claim to have had ‘near-death experiences’ (NDEs), and others claim to be able to talk to the dead, or to have seen ghosts, there is no scientific proof that such experiences actually provide a glimpse into a possible afterlife. It is possible, therefore, that when people die, they simply stop living and that there is nothing beyond this life.

Ideas about what happens after death, and its connection with how life is lived on earth, is a fundamental part of all religions. The details may differ between religions, but belief in an afterlife almost always:

* helps people to make sense of life, particularly when life seems unfair or at times of suffering (their own, and other people’s)
* gives support and comfort at times of loss and bereavement
* provides a purpose to life

**Christian teaching**

Christians believe there is an afterlife. Although the body dies and is buried or cremated, they believe that their unique soul lives on and is raised to new life by God.

Their belief that Jesus rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion (a Roman method of execution) gives Christians hope that if they follow Jesus’ teaching and accept him as their Lord and Saviour, then this new resurrection life awaits them. By being born as a human being (the incarnation), and then dying on the cross, Jesus made this new ‘life after death’ possible for all.

Jesus said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.’

***John 11:25-26***

**Heaven, hell and purgatory**Christians believe that God is just and fair, and so cannot let evil go unpunished. Most believe in the idea of judgement after death, and that God will treat people in the afterlife according to how they lived their life on earth.

* Although heaven is often mentioned in the Bible, it is rarely described. Christians therefore have very different ideas about it. Some believe that heaven is a physical place, where their body goes after death. Others believe that it is their soul that lives on, and that heaven is a state of being united with God.
* The Bible is even less specific about hell, and Christians have very different ideas about this too. Some Christians believe that hell is a **place** of suffering, and of separation from God. Others (perhaps most) believe that hell is a **spiritual** state of being separated from God for eternity.
* Some Christians, including Roman Catholics, believe in purgatory. This is an in-between state for the majority of people of waiting for heaven, a time of cleansing from sin and preparing for heaven.

Many Christians believe that there is a place in the Kingdom of God for members of other faiths, and for many who have not even believed in God on earth but have ‘done the will of God’ in many ways without knowing it.

Some Christians believe in the Second Coming - the anticipated return of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth. This will bring the general [***resurrection***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/death/chbeliefrev2.shtml) of the dead, the last judgement of the dead and the living, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

**Funeral rites are the different things that take place at a funeral.** They are very important for two reasons:

* It shows respect for the dead and includes various ceremonies which people believe are necessary to ensure that people go on to whatever their next life will be.
* It also gives relatives and friends of the deceased time to mourn and show their grief in a certain way. People often say that showing their grief formally helps them to get over their loss.

At a Christian funeral....



**The purpose of a funeral could be.....**

* To affirm belief in the resurrection of the body
* To honour a life and to commend the dead
* To warn of the finality of death and set people to look towards heaven
* To bring the community together
* To express the love and compassion of God to the bereaved and to share in their loss
* To take leave of the body and help people to say farewell

*“Ashes to ashes dust to dust”*- People were created by God (in Genesis Adam was created from the earth) and when people die they will be buried into the earth.

Flowers- represent the beauty of heaven and ongoing life in heaven.

#### Christian Death and Burial

A funeral is held for friends and family to grieve for the person who has died and give thanks for their life, to show respect for the dead and they give the relatives and friends of the dead person time to mourn and show their grief in a certain way. People often say that showing their grief formally helps them to get over their loss.

If someone is on their deathbed, a minister will prepare them for death by saying prayers of preparation and reconciliation.

The funeral can either take place in a church or at a crematorium. It usually takes this form:

* the priest opens the service with this reading from the scriptures:

*"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again." (John 11: 25)*

* Readings and sermon: Psalm 23 is often read out, *'The Lord is my Shepherd'*. Verses from the Old or New Testament are also read.
* Personal readings: The priest will talk about the person who has died. This can be quite a personal section, reflecting on the person's life and their role in the Christian church. A family member or friend may wish to read out a poem or a passage from the Bible.
* Prayers: of thanksgiving, penitence and readiness for death are said.
* Reflection: The congregation is given a minute to reflect on the deceased.
* Commendation and farewell: The priest speaks these words: "Let us commend (the person's name) to the mercy of God, our maker and redeemer." The priest then reads a prayer of entrusting and commending.
* The committal: this is the most solemn moment of the service. It is when the coffin is lowered into the grave and covered with earth, or at a cremation, when the curtains are closed around the coffin as the following words are said "We therefore commit this body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life." In this way people are reminded that we are all human and made by God.

There may also be a selection of hymns which are sung throughout the service, they are usually about resurrection.

* People often send flowers - t**hey represent the new life and the beauty of the world which the dead person is about to enter.**
* Candles are sometimes lit to remind people that Jesus was the Light of the World and that because of him; **Christians can be saved from their sins and go to heaven.**

#### Roman Catholic funerals are slightly different and can be with or without Mass: There is usually a special Eucharist called a Requiem Mass where prayers are said for the dead person's soul. Holy water is sprinkled and there is an opening song and prayer. Sermons from the Bible are read out, as well as a homily (a practical rather than theological sermon) and a Psalm. Eucharist prayer is said and Holy Communion is received.

**12 mark question info – giving another religious view**

* Hindus believe life is a circle, and each time you die, you are reincarnated (reborn) into another body (animal or human)
* Which body you get born into depends on the good or bad actions you perform in your life- this is called your Karma. Karma is the law of cause and effect (what goes around comes around).
* In Hinduism, God does not judge you. Hindus believe we all take responsibility for our actions.
* This cycle of life, death and rebirth is called Samsara. Hindus can only escape from Samsara when they have lived the perfect life and have perfect karma.
* When Hindus have achieved perfection they reach Moksha which is where their soul becomes with God and nature.

Quotes

[John 11:25-26](http://www.allaboutgod.com/truth/john-11.htm#25) *“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies’*

Wisdom 3:1-9 *‘But the souls of the just are in the hand of God’*

Revelation 14:13 *‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord’*

Isaiah 57 *‘the righteous are taken away   
to be spared from evil’*

John 11: 25*"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again."*

"Let us commend (the person's name) to the mercy of God, our maker and redeemer."

"We therefore commit this body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life."