



Christianity in Close-up

Key Stage 3 RE
The Christian Church

BOOK 2

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Educational

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Activity



Discussion



Questions



Thinking exercise

SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES KEY

Cross-curricular Skills, and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

Com	Communication
ICT	Using ICT
Ma	Using Mathematics
MI	Managing Information
BC	Being Creative
TPD	Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
SM	Self-Management
WO	Working with Others

Learning for Life and Work

EfE	Education for Employability
Cit	Local and Global Citizenship
PD	Personal Development

The early Church

TPD
Cit

What is the Church?



Is it



the building?

OR

Is it



the people?

If you go to, or have ever been to, a church or another place of religious worship, how would you describe it to someone who asked?

The Christian Church began almost 2,000 years ago, on the day of **Pentecost**.

At his **Ascension** Jesus promised the disciples the gift of the **Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit arrived 50 days later, when the disciples were celebrating the harvest festival of Pentecost.

This event is known as the birthday of the Church because after this the Church really began to grow. You will learn more about Pentecost on page 7.

TPD

Read Acts 2. What does this make you think?



Com
BC
TPD
WO

In groups set up your own secret society or club.

You need to think about and discuss:

The purpose of your club and its main aims

Rules for membership

A name and symbol for your club

When you have finished, talk about what was easy to decide and what was more difficult.



The Holy Spirit

Com
BC
TPD
WO

The Holy Who?

Do you think spirits exist? Why, or why not?

What do you think a spirit is?

If you could see one, what would you expect it to look like?

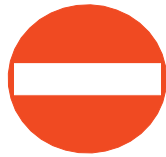


In fact, we can't describe what the **Holy Spirit** looks like, because we can't see it – it is a *spirit*.

However, the Bible gets over the problem by using symbols to describe it.

Cit

Here are some symbols you might see around you. Can you identify them?



Com
BC

Design a symbol that you think could represent your school. Your symbol should sum up what school means to you. Try not to use words.



It is easy to draw a symbol for something that we can see, but it is much more difficult if the thing you are trying to represent has no physical form – like the Holy Spirit.

Here are some symbols showing what many Christians believe about the Holy Spirit.

Fire gives light ...

You can curl up in front of a fire on a cold day ...



The Holy Spirit shows people how to live in a dark world.

The Holy Spirit gives comfort during hard times.

Water cleans and refreshes ...



The Holy Spirit enters a person's life and cleans them when they believe in Jesus.

Wind is invisible ...

The wind is powerful ...



You cannot see the Holy Spirit, just what it does.

The Holy Spirit has more power than people can understand.

A dove is gentle ...

A dove is the symbol of peace ...



The Holy Spirit deals gently with people.

The Holy Spirit gives peace of mind.

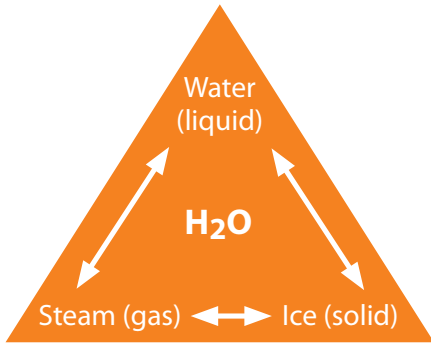
MI
BC
TPD

Design your own symbol for the Holy Spirit.
Write a paragraph to explain your design.
Why do you think yours is a good symbol for the Holy Spirit?

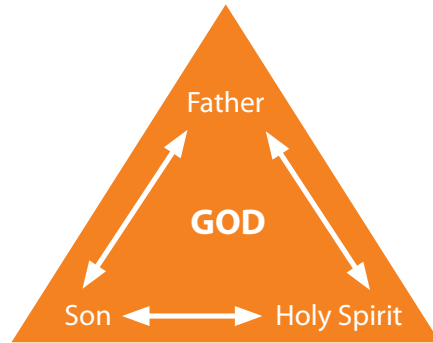


The Trinity

The **Holy Spirit** is part of the **Trinity**. There are three parts to the Trinity – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three parts, yet one God. Think about it like this:



Three different forms of water, but they are all H₂O



Three different forms of God, but they are all God

The Father – the God beyond who created the world

The Son – the personal God who came to Earth and lived a human life

The Spirit – the God all around who helps Christians everyday

Com Can you think of any other examples to describe the Trinity?
 MI
 BC Which do you think is the best example and why?
 TPD
 WO



A modern tapestry of the Trinity by John Piper, at the altar in Chichester Cathedral

Com Look at the tapestry on the left.
 TPD
 WO Which biblical symbols for the Holy Spirit do you see in the tapestry?



Why do you think the designer included the images of the cross and the sun?

Which images do you think reflect God the Father?

Do you think this tapestry helps people to understand the Trinity better?

Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit

Com
MI
TPD
SM
Cit

Find out what a pilgrim is.
Today members of many faiths still go on **pilgrimages**, eg the Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish faiths.
Pick one faith and research pilgrimages made by its followers.
You could use your research to make a short presentation to your class.



Pentecost was a harvest festival that was taking place 50 days after the **Ascension** of Jesus. This was a very important Jewish festival and many pilgrims from across the Roman Empire made the long journey to Jerusalem to attend the Temple.
The **apostles** were in Jerusalem, in an upstairs room. They were afraid to go outside in case people knew they were supporters of Jesus and arrested them.
This was when the **Holy Spirit** came to them.

Com
WO

The picture above shows how someone imagined Pentecost.
How do you think the apostles felt at this time?



Com
MI
TPD

Write a paragraph to explain why the coming of the Holy Spirit at this particular time was good for the spread of Christianity.
(clue – pilgrims)



TPD
PD

Now read the story of what happened in Acts 2 again, especially v 1–15 and v 38–47.
Why do you think there were Jews from so many different countries in Jerusalem at the time?
Would you be willing to travel hundreds of miles for anything?



Com
MI
BC
TPD
SM

Read some newspaper articles. Then think about the following questions and make a list:
What makes a good article?
What should it include?
Now write your own article on the events of Pentecost. Make sure it includes all the features on your list.



BC
TPD

Design a birthday card to celebrate Pentecost as the birthday of the Church.



Prejudice and discrimination

TPD
Cit
PD

Sometimes the way we see people affects the way we treat them.

Look at the photographs below and, without thinking too much, write down the first five words that come to mind for each one.



Now look at the photographs again and ask yourself:

Why do you think those words came to mind?

Would you change your mind about any of them now? Why, or why not?



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Discrimination is an *action*. It means treating someone unfairly because of your prejudice. For example, "I won't employ him because he is a different religion to me."

Prejudice is an *attitude*. It means having an opinion that is not based on fact. For example, "I think he is a troublemaker because he wears a hoodie."

BC
TPD
Cit

Draw two columns with the headings 'Prejudice' and 'Discrimination'.

Decide whether each statement is an example of *prejudice* or of *discrimination* and write it in the correct column. Then try to think of more statements to put in each column.



I think Polish people should be sent back to Poland because they take our jobs.

I won't offer her the job because she has a disability.

Homeless people are only in that situation because they won't help themselves.

All women are bad drivers.

In the United Kingdom (UK), gay people weren't allowed to join the army until 2000.

All teenagers are troublemakers.

The Indian family had to leave their home because of racist attacks and abuse.

I won't get on a plane if I see any Arabs getting onto it.

Persecution of the Church

Com What is persecution?

MI Can you think of examples happening today?

WO Try to think of local examples as well as examples from around the world.



The Christians were a **minority** following a new religion. Because of this many people were suspicious of them.

The prejudice against the Christians came from two main sources:

- 1 The Jews – they disagreed with the Christian idea that Jesus was the **Messiah**. They also objected to Christians allowing **Gentiles** into their meetings.
- 2 The Romans – Christians wouldn't worship Roman gods and the Romans felt that the gods were angry because of this and that disasters would happen.

For these reasons, both groups persecuted the Christians.

THE JEWISH PERSECUTION

Com What is a martyr?

TPD Can you think of any modern examples of people who are thought of as martyrs?

WO Why might people disagree about whether or not someone is a martyr?



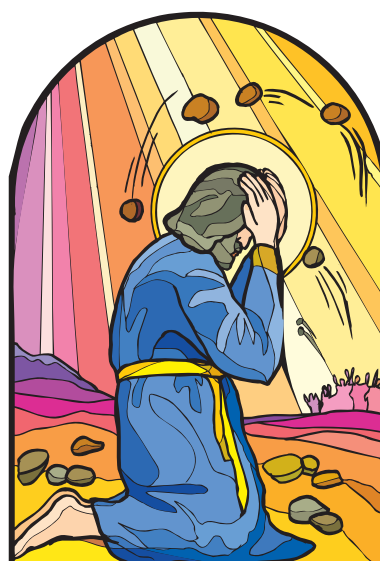
The death of Stephen – the first Christian martyr

Stephen was a **deacon** at the beginning of the Church in Jerusalem. He was a very good speaker and was popular with the people, but he also had many opponents amongst the Jews. They started arguments with Stephen in the hope that he would say something they could use against him, but Stephen always spoke wisely.

The Jews then persuaded some men to claim that Stephen had **blasphemed** against God. Stephen was arrested and brought before the **Sanhedrin** for trial.

In his answer at this trial Stephen criticised the Jewish priests. He also questioned the Jewish idea that God lived in the **Holy of Holies** in the Temple by saying that God “*does not live in houses made by men*” (Acts 7:48).

This made the Jews angry and they ordered people to drag Stephen out of the city and stone him. As they stoned him Stephen prayed that God would forgive them for what they were doing.



Stephen being stoned

Stephen became the first Christian martyr – the first person to die because he was a Christian.

You can read more about Stephen in Acts 6–8.

Com **Priority pyramid**

MI Working with a partner, draw a pyramid and give it the title ‘Things that make Stephen memorable and important’.



TPD Fill in your pyramid, putting the things which you think are the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom.

SM You could then report back to the rest of the class, explaining your choices.

THE ROMAN PERSECUTION

For years the Romans persecuted the followers of Christ. Many Christians died for their faith – they became martyrs.

The first Roman Emperor to persecute the Christian Church was called Nero.



But why did Nero begin to persecute the Christians?

In AD 64 a great fire broke out in Rome and much of the city was destroyed. The residents of the city called for those responsible to be caught.

Many people think that Nero planned the fire himself because he wanted to build a new and more modern city as a symbol of his power. However, when he saw the public's reaction he became afraid of people beginning to suspect his involvement. He looked around for someone to blame and the Christians became his scapegoat.

MI
PD

What is a scapegoat?

Can you find out where the word comes from?

Can you think of examples of people being used as scapegoats?

Have you ever been used as a scapegoat?



But why would the people of Rome be so willing to believe that the Christians would commit such a terrible crime?



The answer to this question is quite simple – many of the Romans already hated and feared the Christians.

There were a number of reasons for this:

- 1 The Christians met in secret and their meetings were open only to Christians. This made the Romans suspect the Christians of plotting against the Empire.
- 2 Loyalty to the Emperor was very important in Rome. Every Roman citizen was expected to burn incense to the Emperor as a symbol of this loyalty. Christians would not do this, because it broke one of the **Ten Commandments**: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Deuteronomy 5:7). So the Romans thought that Christians were disloyal to the State.
- 3 The Romans heard that Christians ate the body and blood of Christ. They did not realise that, to these Christians, bread and wine were *symbols* of the body and blood of Christ. The Romans accused the Christians of cannibalism – they thought that they ate their own children!
- 4 The Christians refused to make an idol to their God so the Romans accused them of **atheism**, which means not believing in any god at all.
- 5 The Romans worshipped **pagan** gods and they believed that when the gods were happy the Roman Empire did well. However, if people did not worship the gods the Romans believed they would become angry and bad things would happen to the Empire (eg floods, invasions, famine). When these things happened some Romans blamed the Christians for making the gods angry.
- 6 Christians did not believe in violence and some of them would not join the army. The Romans saw this as a lack of loyalty to the Empire and this made them suspicious of the Christians.
- 7 Christians referred to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. When the Romans heard that Christian brothers and sisters were getting married, they misunderstood this and thought that *real* brothers and sisters were getting married!

So really the Romans hated the Christians because they did not understand them and had confused ideas about Christian practices.

How Nero persecuted the Christian Church

Nero killed thousands of Christians in many horrible ways:

- 1 Christians of all ages were thrown to the lions and wild dogs in the arena.
- 2 Christians were sewn into the skins of wild beasts and were attacked by dogs.
- 3 Some Christians were crucified.
- 4 Christians were burned alive. Nero had Christians tied to posts in his garden, where pitch and tar were poured over them and they were set alight. They burned as human torches and Nero ran his chariot races through a lane of burning men and women.



Two famous Christians who are believed to have been martyred during Nero's reign are Peter and Paul. Because he was a Roman citizen, Paul was beheaded instead of being crucified like Peter. Tradition says that Peter asked to be crucified upside down.

SECRET SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

It was very dangerous to be a Christian at this time and so the early Christians used secret signs to communicate with each other.

If you were a Christian arriving in a new town, you couldn't just go up to anyone and ask where the local Christians met for worship. Secret symbols were used to mark fellow Christians' homes, and places where they worshipped. The symbol may have been discreetly carved on the doorpost of a house or painted on a wall.

The fish was used as a symbol because the Greek word for fish (*ichthus*) spells out the Greek initials of the words 'Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour'.



The chi-rho was made by joining the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ.

The anchor sign was used by the early Christians in underground caves and tunnels, called catacombs, in Rome. It may have been used because it looks like a cross or because of the passage in the Bible which says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul ..." (Hebrews 6:19).



The letters 'INRI' are the initials of the Latin words for 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews'. They were

the words written by Pilate and fastened to the cross on which Jesus was crucified (John 19:19).

TPD

Why do you think Peter asked to be crucified upside down?



MI
TPD

- 1 What is a martyr?
- 2 Who was the first Roman Emperor to persecute the Christian Church?
- 3 When did this persecution begin?
- 4 Explain why Nero began to persecute the Church?
- 5 Why did many Romans already hate the Christians?
- 6 Outline some of the ways in which Nero persecuted the Christians.
- 7 Do you think there are any Christians in the world today who still suffer for their beliefs? Explain your answer.



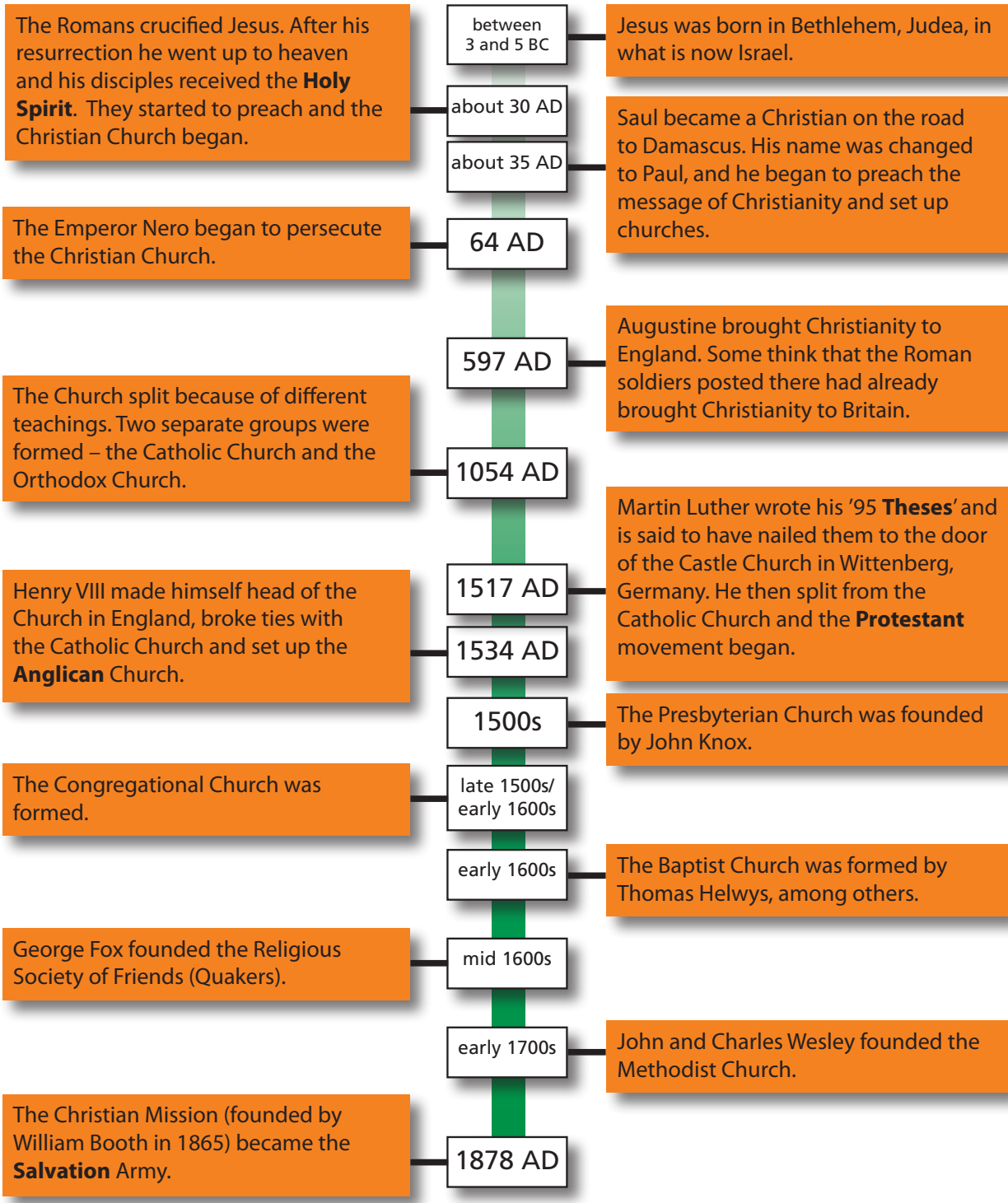
Com
BC
TPD

Design your own secret symbol for Christians.

Write a paragraph to explain the meaning behind your design.



An outline of Church history



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At first all Christians belonged to one organisation, but over 2,000 years they have broken into many different groups. Each of these groups practises Christianity in a slightly different way.

MI
TPD

Before you study any more, write down two reasons why you think Christians have split into different groups.