



RS.CB12 Christian Beliefs About the Atonement and the Meaning of the Cross

AQA 8062 · Calculators not allowed · about 50 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

- 1** This question checks a basic definition used in Christian theology about the cross, in the topic of atonement.

- ☐ Atonement means the removal of all records of wrongdoing so that nothing is remembered,
- ☐ Atonement is the process by which humans are reconciled with God through Jesus' death,
- ☐ Atonement is the idea that humans no longer need moral rules,
- ☐ Atonement is a title given to Old Testament prophets

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Outline three Christian beliefs about what Jesus' death on the cross achieved, in the context of the doctrine of atonement.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

- 3** Give two ways Christians describe the cross as a sacrifice, in teaching about atonement.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

- 4** Give two Christian phrases connected to the idea of the cross as a ransom, naming how each phrase expresses release from sin's power.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

- 5** State two ways Christians sometimes talk about the cross as a victory over death and evil, in the context of hope and resurrection.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

- 6** Explain two Christian beliefs about how the cross brings forgiveness, in the theological discussion of atonement.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

- 7** Explain two Christian beliefs about the cross as a victory over sin and death, in the context of hope for believers.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** Explain two contrasting Christian beliefs about the meaning of the atonement, for example substitutionary atonement and moral influence theory.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

- 9** Explain two contrasting Christian beliefs about the significance of Jesus' death for salvation. Refer to a source of wisdom and authority in your answer and name it.

(Total for Question 9 is 5 marks)

- 10** Give three differences between Catholic and many Protestant emphases about the role of the cross in salvation, in the context of Christian teaching on atonement.

(Total for Question 10 is 3 marks)

- 11** Give two ways Christian believers might respond in worship to the meaning of the cross, focusing on practice and attitude.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Evaluate the view that the cross is the single most important belief for Christians. In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments and teachings, and reach a justified conclusion. Include spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) in your answer for up to 3 additional marks.

(Total for Question 12 is 15 marks)

Mark scheme · RS.CB12 Christian Beliefs About the Atonement and the Meaning of the Cross

Question 1

- **B1** selecting the option that defines atonement as the process by which humans are reconciled with God through Jesus' death, oe
- **Answer: Atonement is the process by which humans are reconciled with God through Jesus' death.**

Question 2

- **B1** belief 1: it brings forgiveness of sins, oe
- **B1** belief 2: it acts as a sacrifice or substitute offering for humanity, oe
- **B1** belief 3: it defeats the power of sin and death, giving believers hope of new life, oe
- **Answer: Any three: forgiveness of sins; a sacrificial substitute for humanity; victory over sin and death leading to new life.**

Question 3

- **B1** it is described as Jesus offering himself in the place of sinners, a substitute sacrifice, oe
- **B1** it is described as the fulfilment or replacement of Old Testament sacrifices, bringing atonement once and for all, oe
- **Answer: E.g. Jesus as substitute sacrifice for sinners; the cross seen as fulfilling or replacing Old Testament sacrifices.**

Question 4

- **B1** phrase 1: 'ransom for many', indicating Jesus pays a price to free people from slavery to sin, oe
- **B1** phrase 2: 'redeemed' or 'redemption', indicating people are bought back from the power of sin, oe
- **Answer: Examples: 'ransom for many' showing Jesus pays a price to free people; 'redeemed' or 'redemption' showing people are bought back from sin.**

Question 5

- **B1** it is spoken of as defeating death, so believers have hope of eternal life, oe
- **B1** it is described as Christ's triumph over the powers of evil, freeing people from spiritual bondage, oe
- **Answer: E.g. defeat of death giving hope of eternal life; triumph over the powers of evil freeing people from spiritual bondage.**

Question 6

- **B1** point 1: the cross is seen as enabling God's forgiveness by Jesus taking the penalty for sin, oe
- **B1** development: this allows God to remain just while offering mercy, so human sin can be forgiven without undermining divine justice, oe
- **B1** point 2: the cross restores the broken relationship with God, removing barriers caused by sin, oe
- **B1** development: this restored relationship means believers can be reconciled to God and receive his grace, affecting their moral and spiritual life, oe
- **Answer: E.g. Jesus takes the penalty so God can forgive while remaining just; the cross restores the relationship with God so believers are reconciled and receive grace.**

Question 7

- **B1** point 1: the cross is followed by the resurrection, which is seen as the decisive victory over death and so secures hope for eternal life, oe
- **B1** development: this belief underpins Christian confidence that death is not the final reality and motivates Christian living in hope, oe
- **B1** point 2: the cross defeats spiritual powers, so Christians believe evil no longer has ultimate authority, oe
- **B1** development: this is expressed in teachings about Christ's triumph and the Christian calling to reject sin and evil as already judged, oe
- **Answer: E.g. victory shown in resurrection securing hope of eternal life; defeat of spiritual powers so evil has no ultimate authority, motivating rejection of sin.**

Question 8

- **B1** belief 1: substitutionary atonement teaches Jesus died in the place of sinners, taking punishment so humans can be forgiven, oe
- **B1** development: this emphasises justice satisfied through Christ's sacrifice and is often associated with Protestant theological traditions, oe
- **B1** belief 2: the moral influence theory sees the cross as demonstrating God's love, inspiring moral change in humans rather than satisfying a penalty, oe
- **B1** development: this view focuses on personal transformation and the example of Jesus' self-giving love, and is found in various liberal or non-substitutionary traditions, oe
- **Answer: Contrast: substitutionary atonement, Jesus as punished substitute (emphasis on justice), versus moral influence, the cross as example of God's love that changes people internally.**

Question 9

- **B1** belief 1: many Protestants emphasise that the finished work of the cross brings justification by faith, so salvation is received through trust in Christ, oe
- **B1** development: this stresses Christ's one-time sacrifice as sufficient and central to personal forgiveness, oe
- **B1** belief 2: many Catholics emphasise the cross in the context of the Mass as re-presenting Christ's sacrifice, linking grace and the sacraments to ongoing salvation, oe
- **B1** development: this view sees the Eucharist and Church life as participating in the saving work of Christ, not replacing it, oe
- **B1** for: accurate reference to a source of wisdom and authority, e.g. Romans 5:10 or Mark 10:45, named and linked to one of the beliefs, oe
- **Answer: E.g. Protestant: the finished work of the cross effects justification by faith (Romans 5:1-2); Catholic: the Mass re-presents Christ's saving sacrifice and connects believers to grace through sacraments (linked to tradition and teaching).**

Question 10

- **B1** difference 1: Catholics often stress the role of the Mass and sacraments in applying Christ's saving work, whereas Protestants stress faith alone, oe
- **B1** difference 2: Catholics may emphasise participation in the Church's ongoing sacramental life, Protestants emphasise personal trust in the finished sacrifice, oe
- **B1** difference 3: Catholics may use sacrificial language tied to liturgy, Protestants may stress forensic language of justification and imputed righteousness, oe
- **Answer: Any three differences: Mass/sacraments application vs faith alone emphasis; participation in Church life vs personal trust in finished sacrifice; liturgical sacrificial language vs forensic justification language.**

Question 11

- **B1** response 1: thanksgiving and praise for Christ's saving work, expressed in hymns, prayers or Eucharist, oe
- **B1** response 2: repentance and commitment to moral change, seeking to live in gratitude for forgiveness, oe
- **Answer: E.g. giving thanks in worship and Eucharist; repentance and renewed moral commitment in light of forgiveness from the cross.**

Question 12

- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-developed, balanced evaluation that addresses both the view and alternatives, uses detailed religious arguments and teachings, and reaches a reasoned conclusion.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear evaluation that considers both sides with some religious argument and comes to a supported conclusion, though the argument may be less developed.
- **Level 2** (4-6): A partially developed response that addresses the statement and provides some relevant reasons or evidence, but with limited balance or depth.
- **Level 1** (1-3): A basic response with simple, relevant points and limited development, possibly one-sided.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant material.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments supporting the statement: the cross is central because it is the means of atonement, enabling forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and is commemorated in core Christian rites like the Eucharist, making it foundational to Christian identity.
 - Reference to religious teaching supporting its centrality, for example Romans 5:10 on reconciliation through Christ, or John 3:16 on God's love expressed through the giving of his Son.
 - Protestant emphasis: the doctrine of justification by faith centres the cross as the decisive, once-for-all act that secures salvation for believers, so the cross is supreme in Protestant theology.
 - Catholic and Orthodox perspectives that the cross must be understood with the resurrection and sacramental life, so while the cross is essential it is not the only foundational belief; the Church, sacraments and ongoing participation in grace matter too.
 - Arguments against the statement: other beliefs are equally or more central for some Christians, for example the resurrection (which secures victory over death), the nature of God as love, or the doctrine of the Trinity which shapes all Christian worship and theology.
 - Some Christians argue the cross cannot be isolated from the resurrection and ascension, so calling the cross the single most important belief risks oversimplifying the New Testament narrative and the fullness of salvation history.
 - Consideration of diversity: different traditions weight the cross, resurrection, incarnation, and Church teachings differently, so a universal claim that the cross is single most important may not hold across Christianity.
 - A reasoned conclusion weighing the strength of the cross as central to atonement against the need to include resurrection and other doctrines, and a judgement about whether 'single most important' should be accepted or qualified.