

Principal examiner reports for teachers

Principal examiner reports for teachers summarise what candidates did well and what candidates needed to improve for this examination series only.

This report is to be used in conjunction with the question paper and mark scheme.

For guidance on teaching and learning we provide resources for many of our syllabuses.

Resource	Where to find it
Grade descriptions – Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Syllabus and specimen materials
Schemes of work – Schemes of work are designed to support you in your teaching and lesson planning.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Lesson planning – Guidance on how to plan a lesson.	Lesson planning
Resource plus – There may be additional resources such as teaching packs containing lesson plans, resources and worksheets and videos for aspects of your syllabus.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Teaching tools	Teaching Tools
Exemplar candidate responses	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Learner guide – A guide for students to help them understand what the course involves.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Community forums – Do you have a question or something to share? Our online forums are great way to keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community.	Community forum on the school support hub
Access to scripts for this series.	Access to scripts service
Results analysis is available for some syllabuses.	Results analysis
Test maker is available for some subjects.	Test maker

Other services from Cambridge International Education

- [Digital mocks service](#)
- [Insight assessments](#)
- [Professional development](#)
 - [Focus on assessment](#)
 - [Online marking workshops](#)

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 2035/12

The Portrayal of God in the Bible

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the prescribed biblical passages and were able to recall key events, teachings and Christian beliefs accurately.
- Responses were most successful when candidates remained focused on the specific demands of the question and selected material directly relevant to the wording used.
- Many candidates supported their explanations with appropriate reference to biblical texts and Christian teachings.
- A number of responses showed a good understanding of major Christian doctrines, including salvation, original sin, the work of the Holy Spirit and the significance of Jesus as the Messiah.
- Many candidates addressed more than one point of view in **Part (c)** questions and supported their arguments with relevant evidence from the Bible and Christian teaching, concluding with reasoned judgements.

What candidates needed to improve

- Candidates could improve their responses by maintaining a close focus on the specific wording of the question throughout their answer. Some responses contained accurate material that was not directly relevant to the question being asked.
- In **Part (c)** questions, many responses would have benefited from a clearer and more developed final judgement that drew together the arguments presented.
- Some candidates used formulaic phrases such as ‘some candidates might say’ rather than presenting viewpoints as Christian beliefs or opinions that people may hold. This sometimes limited the quality of evaluation.
- Responses were often more successful when candidates considered multiple viewpoints. Some answers developed one side of an argument in detail and gave only limited attention to alternative perspectives.
- Candidates would benefit from distinguishing carefully between questions that require explanation of a biblical text and questions that require explanation of Christian beliefs arising from that text.
- Comparative questions were most successful when similarities and differences were both explored throughout the response.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Accurately identified two reasons why Peter and John had been imprisoned and used details from the passage effectively.
- Referred to Peter and John’s preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.
- Some candidates also referred to the healing miracle and the reaction of the religious authorities.

Limited responses

- Identified only one reason for the arrest.
- Referred generally to preaching without identifying the specific preaching that upset the authorities.

- Gave general, rather than precise, details from the passage.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Identified the number of believers and demonstrated secure knowledge of the narrative in Acts.
- Showed familiarity with the wider context of the growth of the early church.

Limited responses

- Some responses gave the figure of 3000, suggesting confusion with a different passage in Acts.

(iii) Comprehensive responses

- Identified several reasons why Peter's message would have been difficult for the rulers and elders to accept.
- The most common explanations referred to the claim that Jesus had risen from the dead and the challenge Peter's message posed to the authority of the Jewish leaders.
- Some candidates referred to Peter's suggestion that the leaders were responsible for Jesus' death.
- Some recognised that the miracle demonstrated God's power working through Jesus' followers.

Limited responses

- Relied too much on material repeated from earlier parts of the question.
- Described Peter's speech without explaining why the leaders would have found it difficult to accept.
- Only considered briefly the perspective of the Jewish leaders.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Many responses linked the passage to God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ and his resurrection.
- Some candidates used the wider passage effectively to explain how Jesus' death and resurrection transformed Peter and John and enabled them to continue Jesus' work.
- Some candidates explored themes such as salvation, eternal life, healing, the work of the Holy Spirit and the growth of the Church.
- Some responses took a broad approach to God's overall plan for humanity and explained how Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, proclaimed salvation through Jesus despite opposition.

Limited responses

- Many responses focused primarily on healing or resurrection without developing wider implications for God's plan for humanity.
- Some candidates described events in the passage rather than explaining what Christians might learn about God from them.
- Limited responses did not always link details from the passage directly to Christian beliefs about salvation and God's purposes.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates explained why Peter and John can be seen as role models because of their courage, commitment and willingness to suffer for their faith.
- Some responses compared the behaviour of Peter and John before and after the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Peter's denial of Jesus was often contrasted with this willingness to face imprisonment and opposition in Acts.
- Some responses discussed John's development from seeking position and status to serving Christ faithfully.
- Comprehensive responses considered more than one viewpoint before reaching a supported judgement.

Limited responses

- Many responses focused almost entirely on Peter and gave little attention to John.
- Some candidates developed only one side of the argument.

- Some answers described events from the lives of Peter and John without evaluating whether these qualities make them role models for Christians today.

Question 2

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Most candidates successfully identified examples of the works of the flesh from Paul's list.
- References to sexual immorality and jealousy were particularly common and usually accurate.
- Comprehensive responses selected three clear examples directly from Galatians.

Limited responses

- Some responses relied on ideas associated with the seven deadly sins, rather than the list in Galatians.
- Some candidates confused the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit.
- Some candidates did not focus fully on the wording of the biblical text.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates explained that Christian freedom does not mean freedom to sin.
- Responses frequently referred to rejecting sinful desires and living according to the Spirit.
- Comprehensive responses developed Paul's teaching about serving others through love.
- Some candidates also referred to becoming servants to one another through Christian freedom.

Limited responses

- Some responses gave general definitions of freedom without linking these directly to Paul's teaching.
- A small number of answers showed some limited engagement with the ideas found in Galatians 5.
- Some responses did not refer directly to Paul's specific teaching about Christian freedom.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates explained Paul's contrast between life led by the Spirit and life led by the flesh.
- Responses often referred to the fruit of the Spirit and explained how these qualities should influence Christian behaviour.
- Comprehensive responses often developed the contrast between righteous living and sinful desires and explained why this distinction was important in Paul's teaching.
- Some responses made effective use of Paul's wider teaching about Christian freedom and discipleship.

Limited responses

- Many responses contained general information about the Holy Spirit without focusing closely on Paul's teaching in Galatians.
- Some candidates described the fruit of the Spirit without explaining their significance within Paul's argument.
- Some responses referred to the fruit of the Spirit as gifts of the Spirit.
- Limited responses did not always focus closely on the contrast Paul draws between the Spirit and the flesh.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many responses discussed both the continuing relevance and possible limitations of Paul's teaching today.
- Candidates often referred to the challenges of living as Christians in a busy and sinful world.
- Comprehensive responses drew upon wider Christian teaching, including the teachings of Jesus, to support their discussion.

Limited responses

- Some candidates explained why the teaching was helpful without considering alternative viewpoints.
- Limited responses focused on descriptive answers, not fully evaluating the statement.

- Some answers talked in general terms about whether or not the teaching is helpful, without exploring its relevance specifically for modern-day Christians.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the Genesis account and summarised the sequence of events accurately.
- Responses often included the serpent's deception, the eating of the fruit and the realisation of nakedness.
- Comprehensive answers provided a clearly structured account that included all the main events up to God speaking.

Limited responses

- Some responses provided only a brief outline and omitted significant details.
- Some answers included material from later in the account, beyond the point specified in the question.
- Limited responses did not always give attention to the sequence and boundaries of the narrative.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates explained clearly how original sin affected the relationship between God and humanity.
- Responses often referred to separation from God, loss of innocence, suffering and mortality.
- Some candidates also explained that God continued to care for humanity and offered hope for the future.
- Comprehensive answers explored both the consequences of original sin and God's continuing concern for humanity.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused primarily on retelling the events of the Fall.
- Some answers referred to punishment without fully explaining how the relationship changed.
- Some answers mentioned that original sin had an impact on the relationship with God in the Garden of Eden and could have explored the impact on the relationship with God over time.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Responses focused directly on the doctrine of original sin and considered its relevance for Christians today.
- Many candidates explored connections between original sin, salvation, baptism, forgiveness and the work of Jesus Christ.
- Some responses discussed different Christian understandings of original sin, including symbolic and literal interpretations.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused primarily on retelling the Genesis account rather than discussing the doctrine of original sin itself.
- Some candidates treated the question as being about the passage rather than the continuing relevance of original sin.
- Some answers discussed sin in general terms, without focusing specifically on original sin.
- Limited responses did not always link discussion directly to Christian beliefs and practice today.

Question 4

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Responses accurately described the events following Goliath's death.
- Many candidates referred to David cutting off Goliath's head, the Philistines fleeing and the Israelites pursuing them.

- Comprehensive answers included David being brought before Saul, Saul's questioning of Abner and David identifying himself as the son of Jesse.
- Comprehensive answers followed the chronology of the biblical account closely.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused on events leading up to the battle, rather than what happened afterwards.
- Some candidates included material about David's later relationship with Saul.
- Limited responses did not always pay close attention to the specific timeframe identified in the question.
- Some responses gave some of the detail from the passage.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates explained David's significance as an important figure in God's plan for humanity and as an ancestor of Jesus.
- Responses often referred to David's faith, humility, bravery and close relationship with God.
- Comprehensive answers explored God's covenant with David and the importance of the royal line leading to Jesus.
- Comprehensive responses maintained a clear focus on why David remains significant to Christians today.

Limited responses

- Some responses described events from David's life and did not fully explain their significance.
- Some candidates focused mainly on the account of David and Goliath or the passage in general, rather than David's significance.
- Limited responses did not always link David directly to Christian beliefs about Jesus and salvation history.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates discussed both the relevance and limitations of biblical stories about war for modern Christians.
- Responses often contrasted Old Testament warfare with Jesus' teachings on peace, forgiveness and love.
- Some candidates referred to ideas such as Just War and considered the importance of historical context.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused only on one side of the argument.
- Some candidates described biblical wars and God's role in them without explaining their relevance to Christians today.

Question 5

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates demonstrated accurate knowledge of Isaiah's description of the suffering servant.
- Responses often referred to the servant bearing the sins of others, suffering on behalf of humanity and bringing healing and righteousness.
- Comprehensive answers remained closely focused on the text in Isaiah and selected relevant details to explain how the servant saves people from sin.
- Some responses supported their outline with well-chosen references from Isaiah 52 – 53.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused extensively on Jesus rather than Isaiah's description of the suffering servant.
- A number of answers contained material that was more appropriate for the comparison required in **Question 5(b)**.
- Some candidates described Christian beliefs about Jesus without explaining what Isaiah says about the servant.

(b)

Comprehensive responses

- Responses compared the suffering servant and Christian beliefs about Jesus by identifying both similarities and differences.
- Many candidates explained how Christians understand Jesus as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.
- References to suffering, sacrifice, rejection and salvation were often developed effectively.
- Comprehensive answers balanced discussion of similarities with consideration of ways in which Jesus' life and ministry extend beyond the picture presented in Isaiah.

Limited responses

- Many responses focused almost entirely on Jesus and offered limited comparison with the suffering servant.
- Some candidates described similarities without considering differences between the two.
- Some responses discussed Jesus and the servant separately rather than making direct comparisons throughout.

(c)

Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates discussed different Christian views about faith, grace, works, repentance and salvation.
- Responses often contrasted the belief that faith alone is sufficient for salvation with views that emphasise the importance of good works and Christian living.
- Comprehensive answers supported their arguments with examples from Christian teaching and practice, considering more than one viewpoint and reaching a clear judgement.

Limited responses

- Some responses described Christian beliefs about salvation without directly addressing the statement.
- Some candidates focused on the idea of faith without fully considering the comparison required by the question.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 2035/22 The Portrayal of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels
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Key messages

What candidates did well

- Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the prescribed gospel passages and were able to recall key events, teachings and beliefs accurately.
- Responses were most successful when candidates focused clearly on the wording of the question and selected relevant material from the set texts.
- Many candidates supported their explanations with appropriate reference to biblical passages and Christian teaching.
- A number of candidates showed a good understanding of major themes in the synoptic gospels, including the ministry of John the Baptist, the kingdom of God, discipleship and Jesus' relationship with the authorities.
- Many candidates considered more than one viewpoint in **part (c)** questions and supported their discussion with relevant evidence.

What candidates needed to improve

- In **part (b)** questions, responses to questions starting with 'explain' need to focus on explanation, rather than narration.
- In **part (c)** questions, some responses would have benefited from clearer and more developed judgements.
- The most successful judgements drew together the arguments presented before reaching a conclusion with justification. Some responses repeated the wording of the question rather than forming a distinct judgement.
- Successful responses to **part (c)** questions needed to consider different viewpoints rather than simply state them.
- Some responses would have benefited from closer attention to the specific passage or topic identified in the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Responses accurately identified John's instructions to share clothing and food with those in need.
- Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the passage and selected the required information directly from the text.

Limited responses

- Some responses gave general references to repentance or baptism.
- A number of responses referred to John's wider message, rather than his answer to the crowd's question.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates identified instructions given to both tax collectors and soldiers.

- Responses often included collecting no more than the prescribed amount and being satisfied with wages.
- Some candidates referred accurately to false accusation and extortion.

Limited responses

- Some responses identified the instructions to tax collectors more successfully than those given to soldiers.
- References to extortion and false accusation were less common.
- Some responses only addressed one group mentioned in the question.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Responses explained that John's preaching attracted opposition because it challenged both political and religious authority.
- Many candidates referred to John's criticism of Herod and his marriage to Herodias.
- Some responses developed the idea that John's message challenged assumptions about religious status and ancestry.
- Candidates often referred to John's popularity and the provocative nature of his preaching.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused mainly on John's role in baptism without explaining why his preaching led to imprisonment.
- Some candidates suggested that John's ministry was primarily aimed at converting people to Christianity.
- Some responses described John's work generally without explaining how specific aspects of his preaching created opposition.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates identified John's role as the forerunner of Jesus and explained how his work prepared people for Jesus' ministry.
- Responses frequently referred to John's call to repentance and the baptism of Jesus.
- Some candidates explained the significance of John's relationship with Jesus and his role in God's plan.
- Many responses considered both the importance of John's work and the view that Jesus' ministry was ultimately more significant.

Limited responses

- Some responses conflated John's baptism and Christian baptism, suggesting that John's baptism washed away original sin.
- Some candidates described John's activities without evaluating their significance.
- Some responses developed one viewpoint more fully than alternative perspectives.

Question 2

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates identified features of the almsgiving practice by the hypocrites.
- Responses referred to actions designed to attract praise and public recognition.

Limited responses

- Some responses contained material more relevant to **Question 2(a)(ii)**.
- Some responses showed limited knowledge of the specific passage.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates referred to giving alms in secret.
- Responses often included the teaching not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing.
- Some candidates also referred to God seeing and rewarding what is done in secret.

Limited responses

- Some responses showed only partial knowledge of Jesus' teaching on almsgiving.
- Some responses gave one accurate point.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates summarised Jesus' teaching on fasting accurately.
- Responses often explained that fasting should be carried out sincerely rather than as a public display of religious devotion.
- Some candidates contrasted the behaviour of sincere believers with that of the hypocrites described by Jesus.
- Comprehensive responses explained what Jesus' teaching reveals about motives, sincerity and relationship with God.

Limited responses

- Some responses described the procedures associated with fasting without explaining Jesus' teaching about sincerity.
- Some candidates repeated details from the passage without discussing their significance.
- Some responses remained descriptive rather than explanatory.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates discussed both the importance of sincerity and possible alternative perspectives.
- Some responses distinguished between fasting for religious purposes and fasting for practical or health-related reasons.
- Responses often explored the significance of motives and personal intention.
- Comprehensive responses drew upon both biblical teaching and examples from contemporary life.

Limited responses

- Some candidates' answers only explained why sincerity was important.
- Some responses focused on fasting generally.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates gave accurate accounts of the healing of the centurion's servant.
- Responses often referred to the centurion's faith, Jesus' praise of that faith and the healing taking place at a distance.
- Candidates who followed the set text closely often produced detailed and accurate responses.

Limited responses

- Some responses confused this miracle with other healing narratives.
- Some answers omitted key events from the account, including the centurion's explanation of authority and obedience.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Responses explained that Palestine was governed as part of the Roman Empire and considered the impact of foreign rule.
- Many candidates referred to Roman governors, Roman authority and limitations on Jewish self-government.
- Some responses explored the activity of the Zealots, Jewish expectations of a Messiah and tensions between Roman rulers and the Jewish population.
- References to Pilate, crucifixion and Roman control over capital punishment were often developed effectively.

Limited responses

- Some responses relied on general knowledge of the Roman Empire rather than first-century Palestine.
- Some candidates focused primarily on negative aspects of Roman rule and gave less attention to the wider context.
- Some responses showed limited understanding of the relationship between Herod, the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates considered both the importance of Roman rule for understanding the gospels and the importance of Jesus' teaching and message.
- References to the trial, crucifixion, Pontius Pilate, Herod and taxation were often used effectively.
- Some candidates also discussed saying such as giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.
- Comprehensive responses balanced historical context with theological and spiritual themes within the gospels.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused mainly on Roman rule without addressing whether such knowledge is necessary for understanding the gospels.
- Some candidates discussed the importance of Roman influence in the modern world, rather than the gospels.

Question 4

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates outlined accurately what happened after the master returned.
- Responses frequently referred to the rewards given to the first two servants and the punishment of the servant who hid his talent.
- Comprehensive responses included the master's comments to each servant and the redistribution of the talent.
- Candidates who followed the chronology of the passage closely often produced detailed accounts.

Limited responses

- Some responses began earlier in the parable than the question required and therefore gave limited detail about the events after the master's return.
- Some candidates omitted details of the conversation with the third servant, including the accusation that the master reaped where he had not sown.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates explained that the parable teaches Christians to use the gifts, abilities and opportunities God has given them.
- Responses frequently referred to responsibility, stewardship and service within the kingdom of God.
- Some candidates explained differing responsibilities and the expectation that all believers should use what they have received faithfully.
- Comprehensive responses often linked the parable to judgement and accountability before God.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused mainly on the talents as money.
- Some candidates described events in the story.
- Some responses made limited links to the kingdom of God.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates considered whether the message of the parable remains relevant in modern society.
- Responses often referred to the continuing importance of using gifts, abilities and resources responsibly.
- Some candidates considered whether modern audiences engage with parables in the same way as first-century listeners.
- Comprehensive responses developed more than one viewpoint before reaching a supported conclusion.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused only on one side of the argument.
- Some candidates wrote focusing only on why the parable is relevant today.

Question 5

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Responses focused closely on the specific passage concerning the plot to kill Jesus.
- Many candidates referred to the chief priests, elders and Caiaphas.
- Responses often explained that the authorities wanted to avoid arresting Jesus during the festival because of the possible reaction of the crowds.
- Comprehensive responses remained within the limits of the set passage and selected relevant details accurately.

Limited responses

- Some responses described the arrest, trial and crucifixion rather than the plot itself.
- Some candidates began with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem or the cleansing of the temple without focusing on the specified passage.
- Some responses treated the question as a general account of Jesus' death.
- Some candidates did not recognise that the question referred to a specific set text from the syllabus.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Responses often explored a range of Jesus' reactions to opposition, including teaching, challenge, criticism and acceptance.
- Many candidates referred to Sabbath controversies, debates with religious leaders and Jesus' cleansing of the temple.
- Some responses discussed Jesus' acceptance of the suffering that would accompany his mission.
- Comprehensive responses supported explanations with examples from different parts of Jesus' ministry.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused mainly on Jesus' calmness in difficult situations.
- Some candidates described encounters with opponents without explaining what those events reveal about Jesus' attitude.
- Some responses relied heavily on narrative and gave limited explanation.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Many candidates discussed incidents that could be interpreted as deliberate provocation, including Sabbath controversies, forgiving sins, the cleansing of the temple and Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.
- Responses often considered whether Jesus intended to provoke opposition or whether he was simply teaching what he believed to be true.
- Some candidates explored the idea that Jesus' actions formed part of God's plan.
- Comprehensive responses considered more than one interpretation before reaching a supported conclusion.

Limited responses

- Some responses focused mainly on events surrounding the arrest and trial and therefore considered a limited range of evidence.
- Some candidates concentrated on Jesus' silence before the authorities.