CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge O Level

BIBLICAL STUDIES **2035/22**

Paper 2 The Portrayal of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels **May/June 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

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General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: • the specific **content** defined in the mark scheme • the specific **skills** defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions • the **standard of response** required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks **positively**. This means that: • marks are not deducted for errors or omissions • marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for **other valid answers** which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate • the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged **only** when the mark scheme indicates that these features are **specifically assessed** in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must **consistently** apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the **full range of marks** defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and **must not** award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
✓	Correct point
✗	Incorrect point
BOD	Benefit of the doubt
Highlighter	Highlighting areas of text
Off-page comment	Allows comments to be entered at the bottom of the RM marking window and then displayed when the associated question item is navigated to.
NBOD	No benefit of doubt given
^	Omission mark
?	Unclear
NAQ	Not answered question
EG	Example / reference
DEV	Development
SEEN	Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given.
EVAL	Evaluation

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Guidance on using levels-based mark schemes

Marking of work should be positive, rewarding achievement where possible, but clearly differentiating across the whole range of marks, where appropriate.

The marker should look at the work and then make a judgement about which level statement is the best fit. In practice, work does not always match one level statement precisely so a judgement may need to be made between two or more level statements.

Once a best-fit level statement has been identified, use the following guidance to decide on a specific mark:

- If the candidate's work **convincingly** meets the level statement, award the highest mark.
- If the candidate's work **adequately** meets the level statement, award the most appropriate mark in the middle of the range (where middle marks are available).
- If the candidate's work **just** meets the level statement, award the lowest mark.

Annotation:

- Ticks have no defined meaning for levels of response marking.
- Other annotations will be used by examiners as agreed during standardisation, and the meaning will be understood by all examiners who marked that paper.

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Level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate knowledge of specified texts and corresponding Christian teachings, beliefs and practices.
- Demonstrate understanding of these texts, teachings, beliefs and practices in both biblical and modern contexts, including areas where there are different views within Christianity.

These level descriptions are used for part **(a)** questions in **Questions 3, 4** and **5** and all part **(b)** questions.

Level	Description	Marks
Level 3	**Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding** • Answers the question, using detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates clear understanding through a well-developed and substantial response. • A well-structured format.	5–6
Level 2	**Some accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding** • Partially answers the question, using some accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates some understanding through a partially developed response, covering some of the points. • Responds in a mostly structured format.	3–4
Level 1	**Limited accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding** • Attempts to answer the question, using limited accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates limited understanding through an underdeveloped response through limited coverage of the points or a response in general terms. • Attempts to present the information in a structured format.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

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Level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation

Use evidence and reasoned discussion of a range of points of view to make judgements about issues within Christianity arising from the texts.

These level descriptions are used for all part **(c)** questions.

Level	Description	Marks
Level 4	**Clear and well-reasoned evaluation in response to the question** • Considers more than one point of view in detail. • Fully answers the question, using relevant evidence to support a well-structured discussion. • Concludes with a clear and well-reasoned judgement.	7–8
Level 3	**Clear evaluation in response to the question** • Considers more than one point of view. • Answers the question, using some relevant evidence to support a well-structured discussion. • Concludes with a clear judgement.	5–6
Level 2	**An evaluation in response to the question** • Considers one point of view; any other attempts to state a point of view are descriptive. • Partially answers the question, using partially relevant evidence to support a structured discussion. • Concludes with a judgement.	3–4
Level 1	**Limited evaluation in response to the question** • Descriptive response with an attempt to state a point of view, describing material linked to the question or topic. • Attempts to answer the question, using limited relevant evidence to support a discussion. • Limited or no judgement present.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)(i)	**<u>Luke 3:7–8, 10, NRSVA</u>** John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' **How does John answer this question from the crowds?** • anyone who has two coats should share with anyone who has none • anyone who has food should do the same Award one mark for each correct response.	**2**
1(a)(ii)	**What instructions does John give to the tax collectors <u>and</u> soldiers?** • collect no more money than prescribed • don't extort money by threats • don't extort money by false accusation • be satisfied with your wages Award one mark for each correct response up to a maximum of 4 marks. Candidates should cover both parts of the question.	**4**
1(b)	**Explain why John the Baptist's preaching led to his imprisonment.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may explain that one of the key reasons for John's imprisonment was that his preaching offended Herod, the Jewish ruler. Herod had married his brother's wife. In addition to this v19 of the passage uses the phrase 'all the evil things he had done' so it seems likely that criticism of Herod was a theme in John's preaching. Candidates may also suggest that the nature of John's overall message was highly provocative. He criticises the people coming to be baptised, calling them vipers and suggesting that their Jewish ancestry will not save them: God could, if he wished, make children of Abraham from the stones. These messages, and John's growing popularity, may well have led the religious authorities to push for his arrest. Some candidates may also suggest that John the Baptist's preaching and arrest are part of God's plan. He is led by God to preach and prepare the way for Jesus, but equally he must make way for the one who will baptise with fire. Hence John's imprisonment is a necessary part of allowing Jesus to come to the fore.	**6**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	**To what extent was John the Baptist's work important?** Use the level descriptors for AO2, evaluation, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Some candidates may argue that John the Baptist's role is important. In the discussion following the transfiguration, Jesus references the tradition that Elijah will return before the coming of the Messiah and states that John the Baptist performs the role of Elijah. Candidates may also argue that the preaching of John the Baptist prepares the way for the ministry of Jesus by presenting ideas such as repentance and forgiveness which will be a key part of Jesus' work. Candidates may suggest that whilst the work of John the Baptist has some value, it is a minor role in the overall story of the gospel. God's plan for humanity is centred on the message of Jesus and his sacrificial death on the cross. It is these events that are important to Christians, and in this sense, John the Baptist has only a minor role in the overall story.	**8**

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)(i)	**<u>Matthew 6:1, NRSVA</u>** 'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.' **State what Jesus goes on to say about the almsgiving practised by 'the hypocrites'.** Any **three** from: • They sound a trumpet before them • They do this in the synagogue • They do this in the street • They aim to be praised by others • They have already received their reward Award one mark for each correct response up to a maximum of three marks.	**3**
2(a)(ii)	**What does Jesus say about how you should give alms?** Any **three** from: • Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing • Your alms should be done/given in secret • Do not sound a trumpet when you give • God sees what is done in secret • God will reward this Award one mark for each correct response up to a maximum of three marks.	**3**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	**Explain what Jesus teaches about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may suggest that in his teaching on fasting, similar to that on prayer and almsgiving, Jesus focuses on the inner motive and intention behind the fast. Jesus teaches that they are to put oil on their head and to wash their face so that it is not outwardly obvious that they are fasting. In saying this, Jesus explicitly draws a contrast with how some of the religious leaders of his day would approach fasting: for them, fasting is all about the outward appearance. The religious leaders have their reward for this immediately from human beings who might be impressed by their piety. Jesus' followers get their reward from God who sees what is done sincerely and in secret. Candidates may also note that Jesus gives these instructions for 'when' his followers fast. There is an implication that this is something that is expected of them. They are not to 'look dismal/gloomy' when they fast. For his followers, fasting should not be a dull religious chore.	**6**
2(c)	**To what extent does fasting need to be performed with sincerity?** Use the level descriptors for AO2, evaluation, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may agree with this statement referencing the teaching of Jesus who focuses on the motive behind fasting. Jesus' main criticism of the religious leaders of his day whom he calls hypocrites is that they are focused on the externals of their religion. This is in keeping with his general message in the Sermon on the Mount where he takes commandments and practices from the Old Testament law and focuses on what happens 'in the heart.' Some candidates may argue that there are benefits to fasting which may be gained regardless of the motive of those involved. These may be physical or spiritual. In addition, there may be days where fasting is required/recommended in a faith e.g. Yom Kippur, Ash Wednesday and there is a value on obedience regardless of the inner motive. Other candidates may take a more nuanced view and observe that motives and sincerity are often highly complex. People may have a range of interconnected motives for fasting and it may be difficult to judge the extent to which an action is sincere.	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	**Give an account of Jesus' healing of the centurion's servant.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. <u>Matthew 8:5–13</u> When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, in terrible distress.' And he said to him, 'I will come and cure him.' The centurion answered, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another, 'Come', and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this', and the slave does it.' When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, 'Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.' And the servant was healed in that hour.	**6**
3(b)	**Explain how first-century Palestine was affected by Roman rule.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may explain that first-century Palestine was not independent but was occupied as part of the Roman empire. This meant that the Jewish people were not free to self-govern and were ruled by governors such as Pontius Pilate. This led to various responses: there were occasional uprisings, and the Zealots were active in attempting to resist Roman rule, but largely the Romans brought peace and order. Although Palestine was a remote province of the empire, Roman rule increased the contact that the region had with the wider world. Candidates may also explain that Roman rule had some impact on the religious practices of the region. Although the Romans generally allowed the Jews freedom to practise their religion, there were tensions produced when the Romans, either inadvertently or deliberately, did things that were deemed sacrilegious. The Bible suggests that on one occasion Pilate had mixed the blood of Galileans with the sacrifices; similar outrage was caused when temple money was used to build an aqueduct. Candidates may also note that one way in which Palestine was affected by Roman rule was that there was an increased messianic expectation.	**6**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	**'Knowing about the impact of Roman rule is necessary to understanding the gospels.' Discuss.** Use the level descriptors for AO2, evaluation, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may agree with the statement as many of the events in the life of Jesus can only be fully understood if we are aware of the Roman background. This is shown in the census at the time of his birth and the fact that the Jews lacked the authority to execute Jesus, thus needing to involve Pilate. Similarly, teaching on giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and going the extra mile are clearer if we have understanding of the Roman background. Other candidates may disagree by suggesting that the key messages of the gospel are clear regardless of the historical context. In some ways it is the Jewish context of the Old Testament law that helps us to understand the Sermon on the Mount. The central gospel message of Jesus dying to save people from their sin and rising from the dead three days later is clear regardless of whether one has understanding of the historical context.	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	**Outline what happens in the parable of the talents after the master returns.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. <u>Matthew 25:19–30</u> After a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest. So, take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'	**6**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	**Explain what the parable of the talents might teach Christians about the kingdom of God.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may explain that one of the messages of this parable is around the responsibilities of those who receive God's kingdom. They are to be active and not passive in the period between receiving the kingdom and their master's return. Life in God's kingdom is about seeking to advance the kingdom rather than cautiously holding on to what one has. Candidates may note that the talents may be sums of money, so using their finances wisely, or may be talents in a more literal sense of the natural abilities that each person has been given by God. The amounts given to each person vary and this may reflect the differing abilities that God gives. Candidates may suggest that the parable in its context in Matthew 25 is primarily teaching about judgement. Those who do well with the resources God has given them are to be rewarded and those who do not do well can expect God's anger.	**6**
4(c)	**'The parable of the talents is no longer relevant today.' Discuss.** Use the level descriptors for AO2, evaluation, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may agree with this statement and suggest that the story that Jesus tells does not translate well into a modern context. They may argue that the parable appears to show God favouring some people above others and this is not really in keeping with the overall message of Christianity Other candidates may disagree and suggest that it is still important in the modern day to use finances and skills to further God's kingdom. The need for Christians to take action in whatever form to spread Jesus' message of love may even be of greater urgency in the modern day. Some candidates may suggest that although the overall message of using talents wisely is still relevant, the threat of judgement and punishment is not the right motive and does not fit with the idea of a God of love.	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
5(a)	**Give an account of the plot to kill Jesus in Matthew.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. <u>Matthew 26:1–5</u> When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.' Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and they conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'	**6**
5(b)	**Explain Jesus' attitude towards the opposition of the authorities.** Use the level descriptors for AO1, knowledge and understanding, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may explain that Jesus' main response to opposition and criticism is to attempt to explain his teaching more clearly to justify his actions. Thus, he responds to objections about working on the Sabbath by explaining Old Testament stories such as the account of David. This shows that he is willing to engage in dialogue with his critics. Candidates may note that on occasions Jesus responds with frustration or anger. On one occasion he accuses the authorities of hypocrisy as each of them would rescue a trapped animal on the Sabbath, yet they criticise his healing work. His frustration with the religious authorities may also be seen in his act of cleansing the temple. Candidates may also note that there is to some extent an acceptance of the inevitability of opposition both for Jesus himself and his disciples. He warns his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. He accepts that the opposition will ultimately lead to his arrest and death.	**6**

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Question	Answer	Marks
5(c)	**'Jesus deliberately provoked the authorities.' Discuss.** Use the level descriptors for AO2, evaluation, to mark candidates' response to this question. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. Candidates may argue that actions such as the cleansing of the temple would inevitably provoke the authorities, particularly the Sadducees who were closely connected to the temple. Candidates may also draw on the Sabbath controversy in Luke's Gospel where Jesus' response is to accuse the authorities of hypocrisy regarding their behaviour on the Sabbath. Other candidates may disagree. Jesus rarely initiates conflict and most of his comments about the authorities are in direct response to their criticism of him. At times, the gospel writers portray Jesus as avoiding conflict, such as when he chooses not to go to Jerusalem for a festival out of concern about the plotting of the authorities. Candidates may consider the extent to which provocation of the authorities was deliberate. The Pharisees and others were upset at the sayings and actions of Jesus, but Jesus' aim may have been merely to speak what he believed was the truth. Other candidates may note that Jesus' provocation may have been deliberate as his death at the hands of the authorities is part of God's plan.	**8**

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