

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 2035/12 The Portrayal of God in the Bible
--

Key messages

More specific knowledge of the passages and their interpretation is required.

General comments

In **part (c)** questions, judgements were often underdeveloped, and attention might be usefully given to the bullet points in the level description for Level 4 at AO2. For evaluation questions, where structures are employed, it is important to consider how these structures contribute to gaining the marks at the higher levels – for example, some candidates' final judgements are more of a summary than an actual judgement and others who give judgements through the answer do not give a clear final judgement.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i) Candidates generally identified correctly the sixth day.
- (ii) Candidates often could not identify the three specific things that God spoke to humanity when he first blessed them, indicating the need to be precise in learning passages. Most missed was God telling humanity to fill the earth and subdue it.
- (iii) Some candidates switched here to the second creation narrative, but many were able successfully to identify plants and fruits from trees as the response to this question.
- (b) Candidates needed to realise that the question was specifically asking about the creation of humanity, rather than the creation of the universe/the Earth. Some wrote generally on the creation of humanity, conflating or narrating the two creation stories. A few answers interpreted the question as being about literal and metaphorical interpretations of the passage or about science and creation. The most successful answers showed items of contrast between the two narratives, focusing specifically on humanity.
- (c) The most successful answers were able to use clear evidence and examples to back up the assertions made, including charitable projects they were aware of. Some answers gave a general discussion about the environment, which was not connected to the creation stories. Arguments against the view in the statement, such as the suggestion that dominion suggests the ability to do anything one wishes with the environment, were more difficult for some candidates to write about.

Question 2

- (a) (i) While this question was less popular than **Question 1**, candidates generally were able to identify three names given to the child of the prophecy.
- (ii) Some candidates moved away from the passage being tested, often on to Isaiah 52 – 53 and therefore did not gain credit for this question. Other candidates successfully drew material from Isaiah 9 to answer the question accurately.

- (b) Candidates generally gave sensible suggestions about what the passage might teach about the Messiah. The image of the Messiah bringing great light was often accurately explored, although some relied too heavily on this image. Some candidates spoke of the suffering servant, which is a different passage and so not relevant to the question.
- (c) Some candidates engaged well with the idea that the passage gives a broad overview of the purpose of the Messiah's coming but does not specifically speak of the salvation brought through suffering. Some candidates, in conflating this passage with other Isaiah passages, focused too much on suggesting that the passage gives a foretaste of Jesus' suffering on the cross.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) While candidates generally knew that the angel directed Abraham to sacrifice an animal (not always successfully identified as a ram) instead of Isaac, many did not go further into the passage to explore the angel's reinforcement of the promises made to Abraham by God. Those who did needed to be more specific in the detail narrated.
- (b) Candidates sometimes focused on the importance of angels as messengers, which received credit, but which did not always unpack the relevance of the words in which the promise to Abraham was reinforced that his descendants would be blessed. Some successful responses focused on the importance of the angel's words for Christians today by examining the roles of angels as messengers: to engender faith, obedience and sacrifice in Abraham and present-day believers.
- (c) A good range of answers was seen in response to this question. Candidates engaged well with the concept of God testing Christians and the possible purposes for this. Candidates often explored the idea of the everyday challenges of life being a test with some good examples drawn from their own experiences.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates who correctly identified the passage were able to recall many of the features of the speech. Some candidates narrated the speech of Peter at Pentecost, or one of Paul's speeches, instead of his address to the Jewish rulers after his and John's arrest.
- (b) Some candidates identified the Jewish rulers as requiring a specific message, which was contained in Peter's speech. Others made more general comments about the content of the speech. The best answers saw the speech in its context and location in Acts and in the early spread of the Christian message.
- (c) Candidates often successfully explored the influence that the Holy Spirit had on believers, recognising the message in Acts that the Holy Spirit can give great power and inspiration. In disagreeing with the statement, answers often explored the idea that Peter's ability and knowledge was strengthened through his prior experiences. Candidates who then made a judgement at the end of their answer were able to access the highest marks.

Question 5

- (a) This passage was generally well-known and outlined successfully. Candidates needed to include more detail, such as which passage the eunuch was reading from Isaiah or the moment of baptism at the end of the passage.
- (b) Candidates often were able to pick up on the key themes of the passage and make sensible suggestions about what this might teach about Christian life, especially in their consideration of the role of Scripture in life today. Many candidates focused on the importance of baptism, reading, learning and explaining Scripture and the place of Philip as a role model for Christians today.
- (c) Many candidates engaged well with a discussion about how the passage might inspire Christians in their desire to spread the message of Jesus. Some candidates focused a bit too much on literal elements, for example the idea that we do not travel in chariots today or the suggestion that it is not safe to get into strangers' vehicles. Some candidates did not know what evangelism meant – the word is named on the syllabus – and so struggled to answer the question.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

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

Key messages

While knowledge of the passages was generally good, it should be noted that where there are different versions of passages in two or more of the Gospels, it is important that candidates learn the passage listed on the syllabus.

General comments

The most successful scripts demonstrated the ability to answer the specific question set. This was particularly evident in the **section A part (a)** questions where an understanding of the command words for the questions might lead to appropriate levels of detail. **Part (b)** questions were the most successful when explanation was at the heart of the response (rather than narrative of a section of the Gospels). **Part (c)** questions required a clearly-explained evaluation of the question asked.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates correctly identified these as Moses and Elijah.
- (ii) This question asked for four things that the transfiguration might show about the person and work of Jesus. Some candidates explained each of their points, which was not necessary. Candidates needed to give four distinct points.
- (b) While there were some excellent answers to this question, some candidates did not examine sufficiently the importance of the ministry of John the Baptist and instead narrated sections from his life. The notions of preparation, baptism in water and repentance were hallmarks of the best answers.
- (c) Candidates were often able to explore the titles of Jesus in good detail. Some candidates explained a list of titles without evaluating them in the context of the question. The best responses looked at the title Son of Man and examined whether, for example, it teaches enough about the divinity of Jesus for Christians to understand him fully.

Question 2

- (a) (i) Some candidates were unaware of the category of miracles – there are four listed on the syllabus. However, most were able to identify this as a nature miracle.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to identify two things that happened before the miracle, either from the passage itself or from their understanding of Mark 6 as a whole.
- (iii) Candidates generally could state three things that the account shows about the person of Jesus. Some answers examined the work of Jesus rather than his person specifically.

- (b) Answers often engaged well with the miracle and how Christians might understand it today. Some answers explored literal and figurative interpretations very successfully. Some answers confused the walking on water with the calming of the storm.
- (c) Candidates discussed the relative importance of miracles and the teaching of Jesus. The most successful answers went beyond narrating other passages from the Gospels. The highest marks were available to those who reached a clear judgement at the conclusion of their answers.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Candidates generally knew that Peter denied Jesus three times, although some confused this passage with other passages linked to Peter from the Gospels or Acts. The best answers knew the passage in Luke on the syllabus and gave clear accounts of what happened on each of the three occasions of Peter's denial, successfully identifying what was said and who said it.
- (b) Most candidates suggested fear as the main reason Peter may have denied Jesus. Some very good responses noted that Jesus had foretold it, and that Peter was playing a role in salvation history. Some hinted that Peter may have been influenced by the devil and compared his actions to those of Judas.
- (c) Some candidates explored the idea that Jesus' death was foretold in Scripture. Some looked at events in Jesus' life and whether or not these led directly to his arrest and subsequent death. To suggest that Jesus could have avoided his death on the cross, good answers often explored the idea that he entered freely and willingly into his suffering, understanding the necessity for him to die. Some mentioned the prayer in Gethsemane and the ultimate acceptance to do God's will, whatever that might be.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates knew the essentials of the story, with many being able to recount it in good detail. The best answers were precise in their description of the end of the parable.
- (b) The best answers looked at the different characters and symbols in the parable and suggested what they may represent. Most candidates knew that the parable speaks about preparedness, some were not specific about what one should be prepared for.
- (c) Some candidates identified parables that they argued represented action – such as the Good Samaritan. The counter argument highlighted parables that concentrated more on belief. The best answers used evaluative language and drew in different parables as examples before reaching a clear judgement. Successful judgements often identified the relationship between action and belief and the need for both to be addressed to follow Jesus. Some candidates narrated other parables about Jesus, stating without explanation that they focused on action or belief.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates knew the key elements of this story, with a range of levels of detail, such as Jesus' words. Some candidates gave quite a lot of detail that is not present in the passage, such as stating what Jesus might have seen and thought as he entered the Temple.
- (b) The best answers drew on Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees from throughout the Gospels, rather than focusing on the cleansing of the Temple alone. Where candidates went further than narrating encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees, they were able to explain why Jesus might have stood for things that the Pharisees found challenging or objectionable.
- (c) Some answers engaged well with the statement and discussed the extent to which Jesus could have avoided conflict with the authorities. Excellent answers took the opportunity to broaden their responses beyond simply the Pharisees. Some responses identified when and how Jesus could have tried harder to placate the authorities during his ministry. The counter argument developed reasons for Jesus not being able to avoid conflict by the very nature of his ministry, including his miracles and their effect on different figures of authority, and perhaps because the message of Jesus was so much in opposition to the lifestyle or beliefs of Jewish leaders.