



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Religious Studies

RSS07

(Specification 2060)

Unit G New Testament

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It was encouraging to see a noticeable improvement in the quality of work overall. There were some good answers showing clear understanding and thorough study of the course material.

However, some students fail to do themselves justice because they ignore some basic exam skills. For instance, the importance of reading the question carefully cannot be emphasised enough. Every question set has a particular focus that requires the student to select material rather than just repeat general class notes. Key words in the question need to be picked up in the answer to help guide selection of material. The focus must drive the structure of the answer. Selection and ordering of material is a key aspect of the AO1 skill.

Many students continue to struggle to get beyond Level 5 in the AO2 questions. Evaluation is about weighing up an argument using reason and giving justifications. Just listing arguments for and arguments against does not equate to evaluation, since there is no weighing up of the persuasiveness or otherwise of the arguments.

A significant number of students write out the question, or spend the first paragraph repeating the thrust of the question and explaining that this is what they are going to answer. Such approaches are a waste of time and students need to launch straight into answering the question.

A few students misjudged the timing and spent far too long on their first question. As a result their second question was only a few lines in length. It is vital that equal time is spent on each question.

Question 1 *How the synoptic gospels came into being*

01 Many students showed a good understanding of the various theories concerning the relationship between the three synoptic gospels and were aware of the scholars connected with the theories. Often these were illustrated and supported by relevant evidence from the text, particularly in connection with the priority of Mark's gospel.

A number of students showed some confusion as to which documents were being referred to by the two and four source theories. The source 'Q' was another area of confusion by some students.

02 This was generally well answered, with students evaluating the arguments given on both sides of the debate.

Question 2 *Aspects of Jesus' teaching and action, parables and healings*

03 The focus of the question was 'purpose of miracles' but many students drifted into the teaching of the miracle. It was encouraging that most students avoided narrating the miracle. Higher level answers alluded to the text in support of the point they were making. This should always be the approach and the correct use of text in essays. It is an example of the skill of selection.

A surprising number of students confused the healing of Legion with the healing of the centurion's servant. A few students continue to refer to the miracles as parables with some actually referring to parables, such as the sower, in answer to this question.

Very few responses linked the purpose of miracles to the coming of the Kingdom or made reference to such text as Luke 7:18f, where John the Baptist sends his disciples to question Jesus.

04 The focus of the question was 'miracles have no meaning'. However, most students debated whether miracles happened, which is a different focus even though there is some overlap.

Question 3 *The arrest, trial and death of Jesus*

- 05 The question was based on material from the accounts of the trial and death of Jesus. However, a significant number of students spent time discussing the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and ignored the material from the trials. The material from the arrest could not be credited. Students also struggled to illustrate Jesus as the Messiah. Few made reference to fulfilment of prophecy or the titles of Jesus. In the Luke material, although the aspect of innocence was well illustrated, that of Jesus being human was less well answered.
- 06 This was generally well answered with many students showing a good knowledge and understanding of biblical criticism. The question specifically focussed on the material discussed in Question 05 ('these differences') and higher level answers made good use of examples this material to support their arguments.

Question 4 *The resurrection of Jesus*

- 07 Surprisingly, this question was the least popular. Although there were some good answers, many students just focussed on the differences between the accounts. The question focus was 'problems' (plural) and higher level answers contained more breadth, with discussions about the supernatural nature of the event and whether it should be regarded as literal or symbolic, as well as issues such as the ending of Mark's Gospel.

As in Question 05, some students discussed the wrong text and wrote about Jesus' death rather than his resurrection. A few gave AO2 rather than AO1 answers. It should be noted that no cross credit can be awarded.

- 08 This very much depended on the problems identified in question 07. There were some well reasoned answers showing good AO2 skills. The higher level answers exhibited critical analysis, evaluating the success or otherwise of the solutions offered to the problems.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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