



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

Religious Studies

RSS07

(Specification 2060)

Unit G New Testament

Report on the Examination

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General comments

The two most popular questions were question 1 and question 2.

It was encouraging to note that fewer students wrote lengthy narratives. However, weaker students tended to retell the parable of the Tenants of the Vineyard in Q 03. It should be noted that very little credit can be awarded for narrating the parable given students have access to the Bible in the exam. What is required is allusion to the relevant text to illustrate or justify a point. The paragraphs should be centred on the focus of the question, not the narrative.

Examiners commented on the poor handwriting of a significant number of students. This made the scripts difficult to read and much time and effort was spent trying to make sure the words were not misread.

It was also noticeable that a number of students spent the first paragraph repeating the question or listing what they were going to do in the essay. The time available to answer each question is quite short and often the introductory paragraph is best omitted.

Another exam technique weakness was the timing. There was an increase from previous years in the number of students who run out of time and were unable to answer part of a question. It is vital that students allocate the right amount of time to each part-question.

Question 1 *How the synoptic gospels came into being*

01 Many students did not read the question carefully. There were two parts to this question and a number of students only answered one part. The question asked “Examine why” but some students seemed to have read it as “Examine how”. Other students read the question as a question on the synoptic problem. Hence, although the information given was correct, it was not made relevant to the question asked and so could not be credited with many marks. There were some good answers that clearly addressed both aspects and were awarded full marks.

02 This was generally well answered, and most students seemed well prepared for this debate. Some students clearly find evaluation difficult and still tend to treat it as a knowledge-based question. Evaluation requires reasoned argument and a weighing up of alternative views, i.e. it requires some sort of judgement about the evidence rather than just stating what the evidence is.

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

03 Weaker students, apart from narrating the parable, also just interpreted it in terms of the analogy. However, the focus of the question was on the purpose of parables, not on their interpretation. The structure of the answer should have been on various purposes, some of which could be identified and illustrated from the parable.

A significant number of students continue to use the healing of the Centurion’s Servant (slave) as an example of a parable. The specification clearly lists the story as a miracle story. There were some excellent answers that were well focused and each paragraph identified and illustrated a different purpose of parables.

04 This was a well-rehearsed issue and produced some good answers. Most students discussed the problems of interpreting and the possible adaption by the editors but then struggled to challenge the claim. More able students addressed the aspect of “fully” understood.

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

05 As in previous years, this section covering the arrest, trial and death of Jesus is not a popular section. It may be that the heading of the section confuses students but a surprising number discussed the trial rather than the crucifixion and death. As expected, some students drifted into a general narration of the text but failed to focus on the differences.

There were some excellent answers, however, that not only identified the differences but examined them, discussing such things as the interests of the editors and the possible readership of the Gospels.

06 Again, students did not always focus on the crucifixion and death but widened it to cover the arrest and trials. Credit can only be awarded for relevant material. Students found it easier to argue the case for the accounts not to be historically reliable. Listing a set of arguments for one side and then listing another set of arguments for the other side is not really evaluating. There needs to be some assessment of the relative strengths/weaknesses of the arguments.

Question 4 *The resurrection of Jesus*

07 As in previous years, this was the least popular question but attracted a similar number of students as Q3 (05/06). Many students did not develop their answer any further than the human/divine aspect of the person of Jesus. More able students included fulfilment of prophecy, must suffer and then enter glory, authority, and being worshipped.

It was encouraging to see some scripts where the student made good use of the text to support and develop their point.

08 Some students had clearly rehearsed this issue and produced some good answers. There were a variety of views taken by students with some agreeing with the statement whilst others disagreed. Good evidence was given for the different views but the justification for the conclusion reached was not always made clear. Sometimes students just stated a conclusion without any indication as to how they arrived at that conclusion as opposed to another.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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