



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Religious Studies (4051/4052)
Full and Short Course
Specification A

Unit 6 St Luke's Gospel (405006)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

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Unit 6 St Luke's Gospel

General comments

The majority of candidates were very well prepared for this examination. Answers were generally detailed, accurate, innovative and thoughtful. Candidates coped very well with the new 3-mark evaluation questions. Many of the responses to all the evaluation questions were superb, and this is true for candidates across the ability range, showing excellent teaching, detailed discussion and careful preparation.

On a practical note, a few candidates wrote outside the specified writing frames, although the rubric states specifically that this should not be done. There were a few bullet-point answers to evaluation questions, and a few cases where candidates divided the page into two vertical columns headed by 'Agree' and 'Disagree', sometimes, but not always followed by a concluding paragraph. Such answers did not contain the full development needed to reach the higher levels. Having said that, all candidates obeyed the rubric on answering B5 or B6, which was good, and most coped well with these longer-answer questions: candidates from a wide range of ability gave detailed answers.

Question A1 *Universalism*

For part (a), the text question on the Widow of Nain, most candidates gained full marks, re-telling the story accurately. A few confused it with Jesus' healing of the woman with a haemorrhage.

In part (b), concerning Jesus' choice of a Samaritan to illustrate his parable, a few candidates lost all sense of chronology by jumping nineteen centuries or so to the present, and said that Jesus chose a Samaritan because 'The Samaritans' were an organisation that listens to people. Most, however, gained full marks by explaining that the Samaritans were outcasts, so Jesus was making a point about prejudice or about anyone who helps another being a good neighbour. Some made the perceptive comment that by asking his questioner, 'Who was a good neighbour to the man who was robbed?', Jesus forced the lawyer to say in front of everybody that a Samaritan could be as good a neighbour as a Jewish person, and that on this occasion could be a better neighbour than even a priest or a Levite. A few made comments about the background to the story in the Samaritan schism.

Some candidates received fewer marks than they might have done in part (c) through ignoring the instruction to refer to the Parable of the Lost Son in their answers. Some of those wrote perceptively on what they saw as the differences in human nature then and now but failed to refer to the parable. Some expressed this in a simple way by saying for example that people now are more money-orientated, so they cannot forgive a son who wastes their money. Others suggested that we have crimes now that were not heard of in the days of Jesus. This was a popular comment, although some chose to illustrate it with murder, while others used more credible examples based, for example, on the current crisis in financial affairs. Quite a few pointed out that the parable is allegorical, so the father stands for God, and of course it is impossible for anybody to be as forgiving as God.

The general tendency was to reject the statement by referring to examples of Christians who have indeed been able to forgive people for appalling crimes far worse than theft. Most pointed out that forgiveness was a hallmark of Jesus' teaching, for example in the Lord's Prayer, in Jesus' comments to Peter, and not least what he said from the cross. Quite a few made the very strong point that just by telling the parable, Jesus is commanding his followers to forgive

others in the way that the father did, and that this instruction holds, therefore, whether the father is human or divine. There were some very thoughtful ideas about the elder brother here, for example that his anger might indeed be a justified reaction to his father's loving reception of the returned prodigal son, but the father's love was much more appealing than the elder son's anger.

Question A2 *The Suffering of Jesus*

Among the range of answers to part (a), an evaluation about Judas, some of the most interesting were from those from candidates who insisted that Jesus would never have compromised Judas' free will. Some wrote a fascinating defence of Judas, suggesting that he really did expect a Messiah who would remove Israel from Roman rule, and when it became apparent to him that Jesus would not do so, then he did what he thought was right for the Jewish people, and Jesus understood this. The logic might not always have been clear, but nearly all answers of this nature were awarded full marks. Most suggested that if Judas had not betrayed Jesus, then somebody else would have – in fact somebody had to do so, otherwise the point of the gospel message could not have been fulfilled: a simple but equally effective line of reasoning.

Those who argued that Jesus should have stopped Judas usually took the line that since Jesus knew what was to happen, he should have stopped it, since surely God could have thought of some way of overcoming human sin other than crucifying Jesus.

In part (b) nearly all candidates pointed out that, although he was divine, Jesus was also fully human, in which case he would know the physical and mental horrors of the crucifixion that awaited him. Jesus refers to this in his prayer, that if God willed it, he should not die in this way. The fact that, in the same prayer, Jesus accepted his fate means that he had the additional anguish of knowing that this fate was now imminent. Not only that, he was sorrowful for those he would leave behind, not least, his disciples. The disciples would need all the help they could get to survive, yet they could not even stay awake to pray with him. Some candidates pointed out that Jesus had the special anguish of knowing that his fate was to be sealed by the actions of someone he loved: Judas. A small number of candidates confused this episode with Peter's denials.

Answers to part (c) were outstanding. Quite a few candidates defended Pilate's strategy as good political manoeuvring, bearing in mind his responsibility to maintain peace, law and order in Palestine as a Roman province. His actions in sending Jesus to Herod, in remonstrating with the crowd, and in offering to free one prisoner, were interpreted as the successive efforts of a well-disposed Pilate trying to save Jesus' life. These efforts had to be abandoned in view of the growing hostility of the crowd. Moreover, in Jewish eyes, conviction for blasphemy (no matter how feeble the evidence) would have merited a death-sentence, so some candidates argued that Jesus left Pilate no choice. If we add to that the view of the Gospels, that Jesus' death was necessary for the atonement for human sin, then some argued that Pilate in effect had no choice whatsoever, since God's plan meant that Pilate could never have freed Jesus.

For the opposing case, most focussed on the issue of justice. Pilate was the authority, so he should have had the moral courage to do what he clearly knew was right. He stated publically that he could find no fault with Jesus, and it was clear that Herod also was unable to confirm any guilt in Jesus. Pilate was guilty of bowing to the mob, and was a moral coward. He should have released Jesus, who would then have had longer on earth to teach and heal. God would have found another way to atone for human sin.

Question A3 Salvation

Most realised from the stimulus that part (a)(i) was about Jesus' presentation – the consecration of Jesus, required by the Law for every first-born male child. The story is combined with that of Mary's purification after birth. A few confused it with the ceremony of circumcision.

As with (i), most were able to repeat or paraphrase the text in part (a)(ii). Nearly all remembered Simeon's wish to die in peace now that God's word to him about the Messiah had been fulfilled. The best-remembered lines of the rest were that the child was set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and that a sword would pierce Mary's soul also.

Nearly all candidates secured full marks in part (b) by referring to the crowd's reaction: amazement (then anger), followed by the attempt to throw Jesus off a cliff. Many knew the text verbatim. Some wasted both time and space in detailing what Jesus said and did instead of explaining people's reaction; by the time some candidates reached the relevant part of their answer, they had already filled up all the space in the answer booklet, and had to use additional sheets.

Many candidates achieved full marks in part (c) simply by saying that if Jesus had shown his authority to the people in the Nazareth synagogue, he would have shown himself to be the kind of Messiah who would gain followers by demonstrating power, whereas he was a peaceful Messiah. Some candidates said that the statement is clearly wrong, because by preaching from the Isaiah scroll and then telling the people that this scripture was now fulfilled in their hearing, Jesus had already shown that he was the Messiah. Others used the same point to say that, since the people did not believe him, he should have performed a miracle to prove it. Quite a few explored the idea that Jesus seems to have gone out of his way to offend the people of his own town, whereas he should have convinced them somehow – after all, he had performed a spectacular miracle in the synagogue at Capernaum. Some referred to the theme of the 'messianic secret'. All of these approaches were easily sufficient to carry most candidates to full marks.

Question A4 The Authority of Jesus

The narrative of the temptations of Jesus was very well known in part (a), and most candidates achieved full marks. The best-known temptation and response was that Jesus should turn stones into bread. For the two other temptations, a few candidates remembered the devil's challenge but were unable to give Jesus' reply.

In part (b) nearly all candidates were able to give two titles of Jesus used in Luke's Gospel. A few received only one mark by writing 'Christ' and 'Messiah', forgetting that 'Christ' is the Greek form of 'Messiah'.

God's voice from the cloud at Jesus' transfiguration said three things: This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him. Nearly all candidates achieved the maximum of two marks in part (c) for giving two or more of these statements. A few candidates wrote comparisons with what the voice said at Jesus' baptism which, however interesting, was superfluous to requirements.

In part (d) evaluations of the suggestion that the transfiguration is not a true story were generally excellent. Nearly all candidates made good use of their knowledge of Luke as a historian, and suggested that since he had been so careful to tell Theophilus about his careful compilation of his Gospel from reliable source material, Luke was clearly a man of integrity who would have had no reason to invent any part of the transfiguration story. A few then went on to point out that, even if Luke himself was a careful writer, there is no guarantee that the sources he used were equally reliable, so we cannot know for sure that the transfiguration is a true story.

Some of the very best answers went on at this point to ask what the word 'truth' meant. Luke's story might not be factually correct, for example, but it could be a piece of symbolic writing pointing towards Jesus' resurrection, and to the truth of who Jesus really was – Law (Moses) and Prophecy (Elijah) will disappear, but Jesus will remain. Others said that the whole story is like a vision, or a religious experience, and that is perhaps what happened to Jesus.

Most of the discussion, however, was on a simpler level, and this was often done sufficiently well as to be awarded full marks. For example, some argued that the transfiguration is a true story because right at the start of his Gospel, Luke says that he writes it from eyewitness reports, and there were eyewitnesses to the transfiguration – Peter, James and John – which is how Luke knew about it. On the other hand, most agreed that voices do not normally speak from clouds, clothing does not normally start to shine, and it seems unbelievable that long-dead figures from Israel's past should suddenly appear and talk to Jesus. Moreover, the story ends by saying that the disciples told no-one what had happened, so really Luke could not have known about it. Candidates concluded their answers in several different ways. Some suggested that, since the transfiguration is in all the Synoptic Gospels, this means it is more likely to be true. Some said that if Christians question the transfiguration, then they can question any part of the Gospels, so really Christians should believe all or nothing. Quite a few said that Peter, John and James probably told Luke about it later, and that these three had such an important role among Jesus' disciples that they would have told the truth.

Question B5 *Background to Luke's Gospel*

Question B5 was a less popular choice than Question B6; nevertheless those who answered Question B5 generally did well.

Candidates did not find it difficult to score highly on part (a). For example, most said that L stands for 'Luke', and refers to Luke's special material that appears only in his Gospel, and that it accounts for over a third of his material. Since nearly all candidates were able to give examples from L, most scored up to Level 4 just on L. Most had a working knowledge of synoptic theory and were able to show how Q fitted into that theory. Nearly all candidates achieved Level 4 or better.

In most responses to part (b), 'knowing Luke's sources' received much fuller treatment than 'knowing what Luke says'. For the source material, most candidates used their common sense and built on what they had already written about Luke's source material in B5 (a). Thus many said that since Luke clearly did use sources like Q and L, it is important to know about them because Luke himself says, right at the start of his Gospel, that they were vital for understanding the truth about Jesus. Luke wanted Theophilus to know that his account was reliable, and that it was based on the testimony of those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Luke 1:2). By knowing Luke's sources, therefore, Christians can be sure that what Luke says is the truth, at least as far as Luke understood it. Some suggested that, since the Gospels were not written down till many years after Jesus' death, and since Luke was probably not the first Gospel to be written, the point about accurate sources is all the more important.

For the 'knowing what Luke says' section of the evaluation, many began by saying more or less the opposite of the preceding points – that in reality we do not know Luke's sources, we can only guess. We might as well concentrate on what Luke is trying to say, and in this respect, Luke includes a clear set of commands from Jesus about how people should behave, together

with a clear statement about the consequences of that behaviour. For example, Luke had a special focus in spreading the good news about Jesus to Gentiles, so Christians who read Luke today can make up their own minds about how they can carry on and develop the Christian message. Most concluded that Luke's sources and his message are of equal importance. Knowing the sources gives some assurance that Luke's material is reliable and trustworthy, and that in turn means that his message should be listened to and acted upon.

Responses to part (c) were among the weakest on the paper, with some candidates appearing very hazy even about the meaning of the term Gentile, despite the term being translated in the question, and despite the fact that the Gospel being written for Gentile Christians is included in that part of the specification dealing with the background to the Gospel. The most common piece of knowledge was that Luke includes miracle stories in which Jesus commends the great faith of Gentiles: many candidates referred to the healing of the centurion's servant, for example, after which Jesus tells the crowds that he has not found such faith even in Israel. Some knew also that Luke himself was probably the Gentile physician / convert and friend of St Paul; they also knew that Theophilus, to whom the Gospel was dedicated, was probably a Gentile. Some referred to the story of the Good Samaritan, where Jesus' strategy leads a Jew to admit that a Samaritan could be a better neighbour than even a priest or a Levite.

Most candidates made a reasonable job of showing that Luke has several important messages in his Gospel in part (d). From part (c), most included Luke's concern for Gentiles, and candidates referred also, for example, to Luke's emphasis on the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the value of prayer. With regard to Luke's concern for outcasts, most referred again to the parable that offered hope to the despised Samaritans. Some, having quoted virtually the whole of Luke 4:18-19 in response to A3(b), forgot its relevance to B5(d), although some did remember. There were a number of very good responses from candidates who remembered the types of outcasts referred to in the specification section on Universalism, and who therefore showed how Jesus dealt with tax-collectors and sinners, Samaritans, Gentiles, and women, explaining exactly why they were outcast and how Jesus offered them hope.

The weakest part of responses to B5(d) generally, however, was that answers often turned into a simple list of the ideas to be found in Luke's Gospel, with little attempt to evaluate their importance in comparison with that of Luke's concern for outcasts. The wording of the question was quite specific – that hope for outcasts is the most important message of Luke's Gospel, and this was too often turned into a question about which themes are important in Luke. There were of course many answers which were focussed entirely upon relevant evaluation. Their favoured conclusion was most interesting, holding that, on the one hand, Luke has many themes that are of central importance in his message, yet on the other, it is difficult to disentangle those themes. So, for example, the mission to the Gentiles often hinges on Jesus' treatment of outcasts, many of whom are Gentiles. Similarly, Jesus' mission to bring salvation to all includes salvation for outcasts. The conclusion was, therefore, that all Luke's messages are interlinked and are equally important. At GCSE level, such reasoning is very impressive.

Question B6 *Discipleship*

Nearly all candidates achieved Level 3 or better on the narrative of Peter's denials of Jesus in part (a). Weaker responses were often built around partially invented conversations between various individuals and Peter ending in the accusation that he was one of Jesus' followers. Those who achieved the maximum 6 marks knew the details of the story: for example that the first accusation was from a serving maid who recognised Peter's face in the light of the fire in the courtyard, and that the third was from the man who insisted that Peter must have been with Jesus because he had a Galilean accent. One or two confused the denials by Peter with the betrayal by Judas, but by and large the question was answered very well.

The suggestion in part (b) that Peter had no excuse for denying Jesus produced evaluations that were of outstanding quality. Many excused Peter on the grounds of expediency; it would have been pointless to have risked arrest and crucifixion along with Jesus. Most emphasised that, throughout the Gospel, Luke portrays Peter as a man of insight, passion, and (not least) of normal human failings: he abandons his livelihood to follow Jesus; he has the insight that Jesus is the Messiah, yet he does not understand what the transfiguration is about; and now, like most people, he panics. Peter also had the excuse that his denials were inevitable, since they were predicted by Jesus and were therefore unavoidable, in much the same way as Judas' betrayal of Jesus was part of God's plan and was also unavoidable.

Others begged to differ; like Judas, Peter had free will, so some candidates insisted that Jesus spoke from a knowledge of Peter's weakness, and not from a knowledge of what he could not avoid doing. Being forewarned so explicitly, he should have been prepared. Moreover, Peter set a poor example as a disciple by betraying Jesus. For someone who became the head of the Church, he was hardly a role model. Again, many candidates used an excellent approach to evaluation here by using counter-arguments to their own points: the best kind of role model is one that does have human weaknesses, not one that is infallible – people can relate to Peter because, like most normal people, he made some mistakes (like this one), yet he was able to transcend his failures. He alone among the disciples at least had the courage to follow Jesus at a distance. Moreover, Peter had seen Jesus at a time of mortal weakness in Gethsemane / the Mount of Olives, where Jesus asks God if God is willing to 'remove the cup' from him – that is, he asks to be spared the horrors of crucifixion. It is not remarkable, then, that Peter should have been weak under pressure. The difference is, some candidates said, that Jesus accepted God's will whereas Peter denied knowing Jesus; nevertheless, they said, Peter was only human, and Jesus was fully divine as well as fully human. There were of course many other ideas: that Satan was responsible (Luke 22:31), that Peter had seen Jesus perform great miracles, so should have trusted him in all situations, and so on. All these ideas were well developed.

In part (c) most candidates referred to the section in the specification dealing with the demands of discipleship, for example Jesus told those who wanted to follow him that they had no time to bury parents, to say goodbye, to put a hand to the plough, or even to look back. Unlike the animals and birds, Jesus had no place even to lay his head. Christians might be influenced by these statements to give up what they can in order to be disciples of Jesus. Candidates suggested that Jesus' words can be interpreted in different ways; for example some might take his words literally, and give up everything, like Mother Theresa, or like those who join holy orders as monks and nuns, renounce possessions in order to be disciples. Martin Luther King was often quoted as an example of a Christian who was prepared to suffer and die as a disciple of Jesus in promoting a just cause. Others might set aside money, time, or labour, for example, to be disciples of Jesus, since Jesus words are the inspiration to discipleship, and not necessarily an absolute command. Many candidates referred to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as an illustration that following Jesus means repenting from sins and doing good in this life wherever people are able to do it. Hence some might be influenced to give to charity, to work for an aid agency or to raise money for various causes. The question differentiated by the way in which this material was used. Weaker responses tended to list some of these points without saying how Christians might be influenced by them. The best answers, and many were superb, matched each point with an explanation.

Most candidates concluded that riches do not stop people from doing good in part (d), but that they do make being a disciple far more difficult. Candidates referred to the charitable work of several rich people, suggesting that had they not been rich, they could not have done so much good. Financial systems today are not the same as they were in Jesus' time: money can be moved around in ways that simply did not exist until recently, which means that it is far easier to

support people remotely, for example by donating a monthly amount to a charity such as World Vision. Moreover, money is power in the sense that those who have it and who wish to do good can put pressure, sometimes even on governments, to be more considerate towards people, animals, and the environment as a whole. If rich people give away their wealth in one move, as Jesus urged the rich man to do if he wanted to become a disciple, then they lose that power and influence to do good in the world. The love of money is evil, but money itself is not. Money is needed to buy food and clothing, for example, so it is nonsense to suggest that nobody should possess wealth. Candidates suggested that the danger is always that wealth puts too many temptations in people's way, so that they can become addicted to power, drugs, possessions, sex, and so on, after which they forget about helping others. The favourite quotation here was Jesus' comment that it is easier for a camel to go through the needle-eye than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom. Some made the perceptive comment that Jesus was being humorous with this statement, since the 'needle-eye' was probably a gate in the Jerusalem wall through which camel drovers had to squeeze the fatter camels; and if Jesus could speak humorously in this way, then surely he was not condemning riches: camels did negotiate the gate, otherwise they would not have entered the city; rich men can go to heaven, but they might have to squeeze in.

Against this interpretation, nearly all candidates referred to Jesus' story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, where the rich man was excluded from heaven because he did not help the poor. In the parable of the Great Banquet, the rich are excluded. Jesus tells his disciples that they should not be anxious about life, food or the body. He also tells them that to be disciples, they must leave everything behind, which includes money.

The general conclusion was that Jesus' comments were intended for the people of his time, where the majority of people were poor. In today's society, in the UK, poverty is relative, and it would be impractical for everybody to give away their money, because society would not be able to function without wealth, for example health care is very expensive, but few if any would not want health care to be properly funded. It is not, therefore, difficult to be a disciple of Jesus if you are rich, but it is necessary to use wealth wisely for the good of others. Those who wish to follow Jesus' words to the letter can always join a monastic order, or work in the way that Mother Theresa did. People can be rich and charitable, or they can be dedicated to a life of poverty and serving others: both are acceptable ways of being a disciple of Jesus.

The best answers used a good selection of arguments like these. Weaker responses tended simply to retell the story of the Rich Man who could not give away his money in order to be a disciple of Jesus, and the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This was successful in varying degrees, but on the whole there were very few really weak answers to this question.