



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies A (4050)

Unit 6: St Luke's Gospel

405006

Report on the Examination

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Unit 6: St Luke's Gospel

General Comments

Candidates were very well prepared for this examination and, once again, teachers and candidates are to be congratulated on their achievements. Textual knowledge was exceptionally good, and the level of evaluative skill was excellent, with some candidates performing far above GCSE level. On occasion, the level of textual knowledge caused problems for some candidates: for example in Question B5(c), some candidates ignored the instructions in the question and simply wrote out the entire parable in detail. Where the key word in a question is 'explain', clearly such a response will not reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

In terms of the mechanics of the exam, some candidates turned the answer booklets sideways in order to utilise more space, or else wrote two lines of writing in one line of space, neither of which techniques enhanced the quality of their answers, which were sometimes near-illegible as a result. Candidates should request extra pages where necessary. As a further reminder, extra work on questions in Part A should not be written in the answer space for Part B. That said, the need to use extra space is indicative of the fact that candidates had lots to say and were determined to say it, and their overall performance was very creditable indeed.

Part A

Question A1 The Authority of Jesus

A few mixed up the baptism with the transfiguration in part (a), but most candidates gained full marks on this.

Most candidates gained two marks in part (b) simply by saying that Martha was upset because she was doing the housework while Mary was listening to Jesus. There was some very erudite comment about the social status of women, some of it rather over the top, putting women on the same level as outcasts of all kinds.

Part (c) was answered on many different levels. Most candidates took the line that Luke's status as a historian, together with his desire to write an orderly account for Theophilus, means that the temptation narratives are based on fact. Balanced against that, most made the obvious, and perfectly acceptable, comments that the story seems far-fetched, that Jesus could have been hallucinating from lack of food and water, and that there were no witnesses to the temptations. Some of the most successful responses looked at the theological and hermeneutical aspects of the accounts, considering their meaning in relation to Jesus' status as the Messiah, or to Luke's desire to show his readers that temptation can be avoided. Some suggested that all scripture is 'God-breathed', so of course the accounts are factual. Others said that we are dealing here with a primitive world view in which demons and devils are part of the intellectual landscape, and now we know better.

Question A2 The Nature and Purpose of Luke's Gospel

The weakest answers to part (a) were weak simply because candidates did not know the meaning of the word 'Gentile'. Some took it as a general term for 'outcasts'; others took it as a different type of Christian within the Jewish population. Most candidates showed a good knowledge of the purpose of Luke's Gospel, and made useful comments about Luke's special concern for Gentiles, particularly in connection with the 'Song' of Simeon in chapter 2. Quite a few took the line that Luke wrote specifically for Theophilus, which means 'lover of God', so Luke wrote for all those who love God.

Many candidates got full marks in part (b) simply by quoting Jesus' mission statement: that he had been anointed to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, etc. Some made a successful link with Jesus' illustration that no prophet is acceptable in his own country. Others gained full marks simply by saying that Isaiah was a prophet, that the text from his book had messianic implications, and that Jesus was therefore identifying himself as the Messiah.

Answers to part (c) were fairly routine, but generally solid. Against its relevance for today, candidates suggested that it is old, is from a different culture that we cannot really understand, is completely unaware of science, and offers no advice on modern ethical problems such as genetics, cloning and embryo research. For the alternative viewpoint, most said that Luke's ethical content is timeless, that the parables can still be understood or put into a modern context, and that the central message of resurrection is as clear now as it ever was: the word of God can never become irrelevant. Moreover, on a practical level, Luke's Gospel is used in church services, prayer meetings, Bible study classes and the like, so is demonstrably still relevant.

Question A3 Discipleship

Most candidates achieved full marks on part (a). A few confused or conflated Luke's narrative with the similar narrative in John 21.

The most popular quotation used in part (b) was that foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Many candidates were able to give the rest of Jesus' exact words from Luke 9⁵⁷⁻⁶², that disciples cannot say goodbye to those at home, or look back, or even have time to bury their parents. Some referred to the call of Simon, James and John, where they left everything and followed Jesus. Many referred to the Parable of the Rich Man, and many used 9²³⁻²⁴ (Anyone who wants to follow me must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me, etc.).

Some made the mistake of simple re-telling the story in part (c), which missed the focus of the question, which was to explain what it teaches about wealth. Most of the best answers were simple, for example that rich people have a Christian duty to help the poor, and if they do not, they will themselves suffer in the afterlife.

There were many exceptionally thoughtful answers to part (d), for example that being a wealthy Christian is a wonderful opportunity to express your beliefs and put them into practice.

Question A4 Salvation

Most got full marks for part (a), although some confused the angels with the wise men, and others appeared to believe that the shepherds were following a star.

Although part (b) evoked yet more unfounded criticisms of Jewish attitudes to women, most got the point that this woman was a sinner – a prostitute, and that contact with such a person would have defiled Jesus. Some mentioned the Pharisee's belief that had Jesus been a real prophet he would have known that the woman was a sinner. Others suggested that Simon might have been upset at Jesus' response to his complaint.

Most candidates knew the story very well in part (c), and included just about all of it in their answers. Some failed to notice that the question asked both for what Jesus said and what he did to heal Jairus' daughter. Three things were allowable to cover what Jesus did: he went with Jairus to the house; he took with him into the room only the parents, Peter, James and John; and he took the girl by the hand. In writing down everything that was said, some forgot to include any of those three details.

Part (d) was one area in which knowledge of the specification was not as in-depth as elsewhere, in so far as a number of candidates were clearly unacquainted with the term 'salvation history'. Where this was the case, candidates either made very general comments about salvation or ignored the term completely and simply discussed whether or not the story is true. The most common approach for the latter was to state that the story is not true because it is impossible to raise someone from the dead, counterbalanced by the suggestion that it could be true because Jesus had done other miracles. Some focused on the truth being a matter of faith to the exclusion of any other analysis. A surprising number said that there were no witnesses and therefore the story is untrue – this being balanced by the number who stated that Peter, James, John and the parents were witnesses and therefore it must be true. The best answers explored the idea that this miracle was one of a series of acts done by Jesus which show that he is the Messiah, and that salvation comes through him. Some put this into the context of salvation history in the Old Testament. Candidates then explored the question of whether or not being salvation history makes such stories and acts untrue.

Part B

Question B5 Universalism

Part (a) was very well answered, with most candidates scoring highly. One curious aspect of quite a few answers was that the Jewish elders sent by the officer to Jesus became 'elderly Jews'. The officer's second message to Jesus, relayed through his friends, was given with a wide variation in the wording, but most candidates managed to get the gist of it.

Some answers to part (b) showed much confusion about the status of both the centurion and his servant. Some insisted that the servant was a Gentile, although this is not stated in the text and, as some candidates pointed out, several aspects of the story become clear if in fact the servant was Jewish. There was a lot of discussion of Luke's special concern for Gentiles, although this was often marred by candidates identifying some of the Jews healed by Jesus as Gentiles, not least Jairus. Most candidates referred to the fact that, as a Roman officer, the centurion was a Gentile, so Luke is using the story to show that Gentiles can be morally good and worthy of God's Kingdom. One popular comment was that the real focus of the story lies elsewhere, for example in the great faith of the centurion, or else in the fact that Jesus heals the servant from a distance. Others suggested that the story has many equally important levels of meaning: the Gentiles, faith, distance-healing, Jesus' messianic power, and so on.

Despite the wording of part (c) which stated clearly, 'Do not retell the story,' several candidates did exactly that, and in so doing failed to answer the question, which was specifically aimed at explaining the part played by any two characters in the story in Jesus' teaching about forgiveness. The majority of candidates produced thoughtful responses, most choosing the father and the lost son, although some answers referred to the elder brother exemplifying the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and other Jews who thought they needed no forgiveness and so could not understand others forgiving sinners. Weaker treatments of the father and the lost son tended simply to give character sketches of their part in the story, linking these only tenuously to Jesus' teaching about forgiveness. The strongest answers used these characters to illustrate God's unconditional love for the sinner who repents and the certainty that the repenting sinner has of being received into God's Kingdom.

Arguing in favour of the statement in part (d), most argued that some crimes could be considered unforgivable and that it is unreasonable to expect forgiveness in face of atrocious individual or collective crimes. Moreover, forgiveness in these cases rarely reforms anybody,

and soft sentencing and forgiveness can actually increase crime and destabilise law-abiding citizens. Criminals will exploit weakness in potential victims, and a more appropriate response for murder would be execution, since the Old Testament law of *talion* advocates the more realistic policy of an eye for an eye or a life for a life. Moreover, although Jesus taught forgiveness and practised it even to the point of his death, Jesus was God incarnate, so it must be impossible for humans to emulate that. Against the statement, candidates recalled Jesus' various comments about forgiveness, and those actions of his which demonstrated it, concluding that what Jesus commands and shows must be followed by Christians today. To forgive others is a central focus of the Lord's Prayer, and is a requirement of being forgiven yourself. Many answers were amazingly reflective. If there was a weakness, it was in the reluctance of some candidates to consider the word 'impossible'.

Question B6 The Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus

As with B5(a), the text in part (a) here was generally well known, although there was some confusion over the actions and the words associated with the bread and the wine.

There were many good answers to part (b), showing deep insight across a range of Christian theology, not least the doctrine of the atonement. Most concluded that Jesus could have avoided death in this way, and could have spent more time teaching, preaching and healing, but he would inevitably have been arrested at some stage, so this would only have been an avoidance tactic at best. Balanced against an escape from Jerusalem, candidates concluded that Jesus allowed himself no choice: his death was predicted in scripture, was required for the atonement, and would be fulfilled through the resurrection. Some candidates made good use of Jesus' acceptance of his fate on the Mount of Olives, where acceptance was qualified by Jesus' personal agony.

Weaker responses to part (c) talked about the crucifixion rather than the resurrection: what was said was often very deep, but was generally irrelevant. The best answers produced many advanced ideas, for example that the resurrection shows that Jesus was God's Son / the Messiah; that his miracles and promises were true; that Christians can share in the resurrection when they die; that those who suffer in this life can have real hope of a pain-free afterlife; and so on.

Candidates had clearly rehearsed the arguments for and against Jesus' resurrection in great detail. Weaker answers to part (d) simply stated Jesus' resurrection appearances as facts, or else suggested baldly that people who believe in the resurrection need their heads testing. Better essays considered the nature of the evidence, its relationship with Jewish scriptures, the possibility of miracles then and now, and, in particular, the subsequent behaviour of the disciples. For the nature of the evidence, for example, excellent use was made of synoptic theory to consider the implications of the differences between the synoptic accounts of the resurrection and the resurrection appearances: this was very pleasing indeed.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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