



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies 4050

Unit 6: St Luke's Gospel

405006

Report on the Examination

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Unit 6: St Luke's Gospel

General Comments

Students were again very well prepared for the examination. Text knowledge was exceptionally good, and the level of evaluative skill was even better. If there is one aspect of the examination where students could improve their performance, this would be in paying closer attention to the wording of the questions. In Question A1(c), for example, the question asks students to evaluate the claim that the resurrection appearances of Jesus prove that he was raised from the dead. A number of students either read this too quickly or did not take it in, since they focussed exclusively on the general issue of whether or not Jesus rose from the dead, making little or no reference to the resurrection *appearances*. The two issues are, of course, related, and some credit was given for answers which focussed simply on the empty tomb, for example; nevertheless a more thorough reading of the demands of the question would have enabled more students to reach the higher Levels on this question. Question B5 was more popular than B6, but there were excellent responses to all the questions in both options.

Part A

Question A1: The Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus

A1(a) A few accounts of the conversation between the criminals and Jesus were impressive works of fiction; otherwise most achieved full marks here.

A1(b) Apart from the use of material not in Luke's Gospel, most achieved full marks here also.

A1(c) As mentioned in the general comments, answers which focussed on the empty tomb or on the general likelihood of Jesus' resurrection were less successful than those which answered the question by referring specifically to the resurrection *appearances*. Quite a few students suggested that the testimony of the women at the tomb was no good, because women were untrustworthy witnesses, thereby missing the point of that allegation. Those who accessed the higher levels did so by referring specifically to Jesus' appearance to the disciples in a manner which showed (e.g. by eating) that his was a bodily resurrection. They referred also to Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, where the fact that they did not at first recognise him might perhaps be taken as an indication that the eventual recognition was wish-fulfilment.

Question A2: Universalism

A2(a) This produced some wonderful answers. Some said that the real benefits to the elder brother would come after his father's death, so in that sense he had no right to be angry. Alternatively, some agreed that he had no right to be angry, but for the sake of the story he *had* to be cross! A few suggested that the elder brother's biggest grievance was that he had probably reared the fatted calf used for the son's welcome-home feast. Others said that the father in the parable is God, and nobody should be angry that God has forgiven.

A2(b) This was very well known, and most were awarded 3 marks. As well as recording the acts of kindness the Samaritan showed to the injured man, students also scored highly by talking in general terms about the fact that Samaritans were looked down on, and would not be expected to intervene in this situation. Many levels of meaning were taken from the parable, and just about all of them were relevant.

A2(c) There were some nice touches here, e.g. that Zacchaeus had *forgiven* the debts owed to him / the tax system, so Jesus' forgiveness of him was reciprocal even if it was greater. The story, said some students, exemplifies grace and atonement, and forgiveness of sins is focal to that, so Christians ought to do their best to contribute forgiveness where they can. Most agreed that this might not be humanly possible in extreme cases, for example where somebody has murdered a relative, or where people have been massacred in one of the wars that still plague humanity. In the same connection, nearly all students gave some attention to the word "everybody". The fact that the tax system, as well as its officials, was hated was used to good effect, especially the fact that by collecting for the Romans, Zacchaeus was doubly hated. In other words, the story is hyperbole in the sense that Jesus is choosing to forgive someone who really is beyond the pale. Others rejected this and suggested that Zacchaeus' sins were trifling by comparison with the evils committed by others, and Zacchaeus must have had some good in him to want to see Jesus in the first place. Jesus' forgiveness of those who crucified him was often used as the basis for the general conclusion that Christians ought to do their best to forgive all sinners, as was the reference to forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, with the moral that those who do not forgive others should not themselves expect forgiveness from God. A few weaker offerings talked in general terms about forgiveness, with little or no reference to the story of Zacchaeus.

Question A3: Background to Luke's Gospel

A3(a) Nearly all students were awarded both marks through some combination of correct translation, e.g. *good news, glad news, glad tidings, God-spell, etc.*

A3(b) A few resorted to invention, in the course of which Theophilus was identified variously and dubiously as a Jew, a Greek, a centurion, a slave, a governor, a general and an author, but since showing his identity was not required to answer the question, nothing was lost by that except the time spent in saying so. For the most part Luke's reasons were well known.

A3(c) A large number of students had very little idea about salvation history, and still less about its appearance in Luke, so the proportion of high-scoring answers was relatively smaller than for most other questions. Level 2 answers were generally about Jesus saving people from their sins. Level 3 answers put this into the context of the history of salvation, i.e. of God's acts in history on behalf of his people, shown for example in electing Moses to lead the Hebrews out of captivity in Egypt and in sending Jesus to atone for the sins of humanity. Level 1 answers usually made one correct comment, e.g. that in Luke's Gospel, people encountered God when they encountered Jesus, or that in Luke's Gospel, Jesus sent God as the Saviour.

A3(d) Some did not know the meaning of 'oppressed', which made for some odd answers. One very effective technique was to refer to Jesus' preaching in Nazareth, where Jesus announces that he has been anointed to preach good news to the poor, release for captives, sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed.

Question A4: Discipleship

A4(a) A few gave an imaginary account of a pugnacious encounter between a Pharisee and a tax collector in which either the Pharisee shouted at the tax collector for charging too much interest, or else the tax collector shouted at the Pharisee because he hadn't paid his taxes. The majority, who knew the parable, knew it well, except perhaps for Jesus; final judgement that the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home (or the following sentence, that those who make themselves great will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be made great).

A4(b) A surprising number forgot that the point of the parable was persistence in prayer, and suggested that it was about being a good neighbour by not making a nuisance of yourself by demanding bread at midnight.

A4(c) Students were very knowledgeable about the ways in which Jesus told would-be disciples that following him would be hard, but many forgot one of the basic points of exam technique, namely answering the question set. This asked students to give *one* way, whereas students commonly gave two or three. Most often correct was the man who wanted to first bury his father, to whom Jesus replied, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead'. This was a simple extended statement for Level 2.

A4(d) Weaker answers sometimes sidestepped the question by writing almost exclusively about the fitness of Jesus and the disciples as role models. Some focussed especially on Peter, suggesting that his failings helped to make him an ideal role model for Christians, which, although perhaps true, wasn't strictly the question. Most argued that modern leaders and celebrities break one or more of the commandments by lying, stealing, murdering and committing adultery, so can hardly be good role models for Christians; although on the other hand there are many such people who do keep the commandments, give generously to charity, and deserve Christian approval. Many examples were given, not least Bill Gates and Barack Obama. Weaker responses tended to ignore the instruction to refer to Luke's Gospel. Stronger ones were often very skilful in referring to Jesus' teaching in Luke about the use of wealth, and several pointed out that money was a strong lure, so that even Judas could not resist it.

Part B

Question B5: Salvation

B5(a) Most knew the text very well indeed, and nearly all students achieved Levels 4-6, with most of these being Levels 5 or 6.

B5(b) Low level answers tended to say that of course the annunciation to Mary happened exactly as Luke describes it, because he was a doctor and historian, and wouldn't have made mistakes. High level answers tended to focus on things like Mary's mental state on receiving such news; the difficulties in verifying any account where there were no external witnesses; the unscientific nature of accounts of angels, and so on. Some suggested that the account is a read-back from what Jesus later achieved, or a piece of writing, well known as a *genre*, in which extraordinary birth narratives become attached to great figures. The suggestions were many and varied, and more often than not made interesting reading.

B5(c) Weaker responses simply retold the story, in which case the only point explained was that about the value of / need for faith. Stronger answers explained a number of themes, such as the messianic power of Jesus, the implication that nobody should ever give up hope, that women are as valuable to Jesus as are men, that Jesus came to help and save the oppressed, and that however marginalised people can become, Christians have a duty to accept them and bring them into the Christian community.

B5(d) Most answers picked up on the raising of the Widow of Nain's son, where the text states that Jesus' heart went out the woman because he was her only son. The woman had no obvious faith in Jesus, so he acted from compassion and not because of anybody's faith. Balanced against this, students recalled several miracles where the faith of the person being healed, or the faith of their friends, is a focal point, e.g. the woman with the haemorrhage, Jairus' daughter, the Centurion's servant and the paralysed man. One interesting comment was that doctors care for and cure atheists, so why wouldn't Jesus also cure people out of care for them? Some of the Level 6 answers suggested that the history of Jesus is the

history of his care for people, even when dying on the cross, so whether or not Jesus demanded faith before healing people, his care for them was always present.

Question B6: The Authority of Jesus

B6(a) As with B5(a), most students achieved Levels 4-6 on this question. A few were confused about what Jesus said to the paralysed man, and about the interplay between the theme of forgiving his sins and taking up his bed and walking / going home.

B6(b) Quite a few did well to begin with Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, in which Jesus' authority from God is clearly shown, from which students extrapolated the view that this included the authority to forgive sins. Similarly, this theme was linked to salvation history, since saving people from their sins is the essence of Luke's understanding of how God acts in history, here through Jesus. Conversely, students pointed out that Jesus was at least being insensitive if not downright provocative in forgiving sins, since this was held by the Jews to be the province of God, through the high priest and through prophets, for example, and Jesus was clearly held by many not to be included in that number, hence the accusation of blasphemy. Weaker responses tended to be simplistic, e.g. asserting Jesus' right to forgive sins but with no evidence to say why he had that right. Some talked about the psychological implication of Jesus' words, since disease was associated at the time with sin, so Jesus forgiving the man's sins was a justified and *necessary* psychological aspect of the cure.

B6(c) Students generally knew quite a lot about both 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God', often linking the former to Jesus' authority in curing the paralysed man. On the whole, however, the link to Jesus' authority was either ignored by some students, or not explained well. Most students made simple links between 'Son of God' and God's delegation of his authority to Jesus. Some developed this to Level 3 or 4 by again referring to what God says at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration. Although many knew that 'Son of Man' can refer to a messianic figure in Daniel, few extended that to the authority of the Son of Man as the figure who comes in judgement and power. Some suggested that 'Son of Man' shows a combination of Jesus' human and divine authority, a comment which figured sometimes in Level 6 answers.

B6(d) This question was (at least in part) interpreted by many to be asking why Jesus did not announce openly that he was the Messiah, so students made valid points about the messianic secret, and about the fact that had Jesus announced who he was, he might not have been able to fulfil his mission. Others suggested that Jesus was not ostentatious in appearance, and did not fit the understanding of the warrior Messiah expected by most Jews at the time, preaching instead a message of peace and reconciliation. Against that, most pointed out that someone who cures the blind and raises the dead could hardly be seen as ordinary. Judging between those two points, some talked about the lack of any kind of modern communications devices, which meant that Jesus could have done spectacular things which might not have been heard of elsewhere or might have been disbelieved if they were. Even when Jesus became well known, many people did not see him as the Messiah, and the disciples themselves were not too clear about it until Peter's 'Confession' at Caesarea Philippi.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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