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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

RELIGIOUS STUDIES/BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

GCE Ordinary Level

Note: *Syllabus 2040 will be replaced by a new syllabus (2048), which will be examined for the first time in 2005.*

Paper 2040/01

Paper 1 - The Life and Teaching of Christ as in Synoptic Gospels

General comments

Very few of the parts of **Question 1** were answered with any close knowledge of the biblical text; only **(d)** and **(i)** showed promise. This meant that candidates got off to a poor start. Only essay **Question 3** showed consistently close knowledge of the biblical text. Poor textual knowledge spoiled all the other essays. This was especially noticeable in essay **Questions 4, 6, 8, 9, 10**. The performance of candidates was therefore worse than in previous years and a large proportion of them scored low marks.

It would seem from the answers given that candidates came from worshipping communities, and that they were trying to practice their faith, but this commendable devotion needs to be matched by a much closer knowledge of the texts of the Gospels as a result of constant reading.

On the other hand, there were some outstandingly good scripts allying a high level of textual knowledge with some insightful comments on the text and its background. Hardly any candidates, though, had any real background knowledge about the Samaritans.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** This part of the Matthean account was confused with what else was said to Joseph. Candidates went into arguments about pre-marital sex. Very, very few wrote with any knowledge of Matthew's special emphasis on prophecy and the Jews.
- (b)** This was slightly better answered, but too many answers used the Lukan material instead of what was required (material from Matthew).
- (c)** This part of the Sermon on the Mount was not known well. It was expected that candidates would stress the urgency, priority and difficulty of the kingdom in their explanations.
- (d)** Although most candidates answered this, quite a lot wrongly identified it. Since the marks were all for knowledge of the text, this was an opportunity for making early success, which was not taken as widely as had been hoped.
- (e)** Again, good knowledge of the biblical text was not given. Instead, a thin knowledge of the whole parable was given, and the meanings given were too often those of preachers other than Jesus.
- (f)** This was confused with the reaction to Nativity and to the much later trial before Herod. Relatively few answers gave 'John the Baptist risen', 'prophet', 'Elijah', or 'like old prophets'. Herod's own fear of a risen John was better known.
- (g)** This proved an unpopular context, but it was answered correctly by a very small minority.

- (h) This was also unpopular but it was rather better answered. Perhaps the lurid language helped memories, but too many candidates went into long Old Testament remarks about the flood, which were not required.
- (i) This was answered by almost everyone, and some of the textual knowledge was good. Unfortunately, quite a few candidates confused Peter and Judas. There seems to be general misunderstanding of 'denial' and 'betrayal' as terms.

Question 2

- (a) The narration part of these answers was done moderately well, but too many candidates gave details of what happened at John's birth and circumcision instead of giving full accounts of what was asked.
- (b) Comments on three things the angel said about John and his mission should have included things like:-
- Special name of John indicated the importance of his mission and the fact that God had been specially gracious.
 - The emphasis on joy for Zechariah and others suggested the Messianic kingdom.
 - John was the first prophet for a long time.
 - Abstention implied utter dedication, possibly Essene.
 - John was to lead national repentance.
 - The mention of Elijah and John's preparing people for the Lord suggest the Messiah and his kingdom.

Question 3

- (a) As far as narrative content was concerned, this was the most satisfactory essay on Jesus' three temptations in the wilderness.
- (b) There were indications of sound teaching and learning also in what was written about the importance of the occasion for Jesus. Candidates wrote of Jesus' exploring his Messianic vocation, about using power selfishly, spectacularly, or politically. The temptations were seen as a test of absolute obedience to God, gaining his confidence about Sonship, and identifying with human beings.

Question 4

Although some candidates chose this and **Question 9** because they saw a chance of easy marks, they then found that they knew nothing about one section or had very inadequate or wrong information about other parts.

- (i) Although some know what 'Talitha cumi' (**NEB** 'cum') meant, relatively few described accurately the circumstances of the Aramaic.
- (ii) Few candidates translated 'Corban' correctly and only seldom were the circumstances known.
- (iii) The 'Eloi' was usually translated accurately but the circumstances did not seem to be as well known.

Question 5

- (a) The parable of the wheat and the weeds was fairly popular and quite well narrated.
- (b)(c) The Gospel explanation and comments on that explanation were often mixed up and not well tackled. It was expected that candidates would see it as a parable of the kingdom with an emphasis on the End events. The allegorical interpretation was not seen as unusual. A few said that it was aimed at judgmentalism among the disciples and the early church. Satan's influence and power might have been mentioned, as might the harvesting role of Jesus and his disciples.

Question 6

- (a) A minority answered this question. Very little was known about the Samaritans. Although there were some indications of good teaching here, this is an area where background knowledge needs to be taught more widely.
- (b)(i) Too many candidates simply mentioned the parable. Few knew about the rejection which roused the sons of Zebedee; most confused this with acquiring transport for Palm Sunday.
- (ii) The healing of the ten lepers was known to very few.

Question 7

- (a)(i) The parable of the friend at midnight was moderately well told but explanations showed that the parable was widely misunderstood as an injunction to share, even if inconvenient.
- (ii) The parable about the widow and the judge was told with wild alterations to its plot.
- (b) The explanations of what each taught about prayer were in some cases very satisfactory. Luke attaches 'Ask, seek, knock' to the bread parable as well as commenting that God will certainly be at least as good as human fathers when faced with genuine need.

Candidates saw the need for persistence. Even the bad judge responds to need, and God will do so much more readily. God listens patiently and he will soon act.

Question 8

- (a) The narrative of this confrontation with the temple authorities was not known at all well, though better knowledge was shown of the events which led up to it.
- (b)(c) There were some good responses to the (b) section of this question.

In debate it was allowable to ask a counter-question, and that had to be answered before debate could continue. The leaders thought they had Jesus in a cleft stick. If he claimed God's authority or his own he could be accused of blasphemy.

Jesus' question about John turned the tables on them. The leaders faced physical violence from the crowd or the humiliating admission that John was right, not only in his teaching and practice, but in acting as Messianic forerunner to Jesus.

Question 9

The general comments about **Question 4** also apply here. However, this was rather better tackled.

- (i) Candidates knew most about sword remarks and actions, apart from this one.
- (ii) Most candidates knew the first remark of Jesus but not what followed.
- (iii) This was answered very well.
- (iv) Answers were fairly accurate.

Question 10

- (a) This was quite a straightforward question on the journey to Emmaus, but answers were sometimes given that showed no knowledge of the contents of Luke 24. Where the right incident was mentioned by candidates, it was not remembered in enough detail to score substantial narrative marks.
- (b) Comments on the conversation might have mentioned that they spoke to him on the assumption he was flesh and blood and perhaps a dispersed Jew. The two friends assumed the resurrection impossible, and they did not accept female evidence. They wrongly expected a nationalist Messiah and miraculous victory over Rome.

The Old Testament foreshadows the nature of Jesus' ministry. A suffering Messiah is a necessary element in God's salvation purpose.

Was their invitation to stay perhaps a sign of awakening faith? Jesus enters into their sorrows and lets them unburden themselves on him. As often in the Gospels, his strong rebuke mirrors criticisms of their lack of faith. Jesus does not force himself on them; he made as if to go further.