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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

Paper 2040/01

The Life and Teaching of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels

General comments

Difficult questions for this session's candidates were **Question 1 (b), (c) and (f), Question 2 (a)(ii), Question 3 (a), Question 4 (a) and Question 7.**

The performance of candidates this session was poor, with only one small Centre accounting for most of the high grades.

Candidates need to read the questions more carefully and keep checking that they are answering *relevantly*. For instance, in answering the question about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount, far too many candidates used irrelevant material from Jesus' answer to a question about fasting on another occasion.

Candidates get excited when they know the story of the passion well, with the result that in **Question 9**, instead of giving what they are asked to give, they give an account of the Last Supper, and, although warned to stop before the actual betrayal, they give it in detail.

The standard of written English and the accuracy of spelling reflect great credit on Teachers and candidates. It was seldom that the standard of handwriting fell below legibility.

There are still candidates who answer **Question 1** in both versions. This rubric needs to be emphasised to candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Answers in completion of the saying and what Mary said about the humble, the hungry, and the rich were disappointing. In explaining why she said these things candidates could have said that she felt as Hannah did, she was very blessed in being chosen, and she was praising the graciousness of God.
- (b) This was too often confused with the earlier experiences of Joseph and Mary. Candidates should have noted that the quotation referred to the time that Herod died. The prophecy about a Nazarene needed mentioning.
- (c) The exegesis of this context should make it plain that Jesus was doing good and saving life, and that his opponents were doing evil and were plotting to kill him.
- (d) The speck and the plank got mixed up too often, but the lesson Jesus was teaching was well answered.
- (e) The bearers halted because Jesus touched the bier at Nain. What happened next was quite well known.
- (f) Despite the wording of this question and the quotation, most candidates who did this gave the longer parables about the wheat and the weeds or the four types of ground and growth. A mark would have been given for saying it was about the Kingdom of God. Other answers might have said that it was about the work of the Holy Spirit, or that it was telling the disciples they could enable the process to start, but they could not *make* it happen.

- (g) Those candidates who tackled this usually managed to remember the context fairly well.
- (h) Answers were muddled but there were some good comments about the meaning of the parable, though few mentioned Jesus' resurrection.
- (i) Cleopas was sometimes identified, but Jesus' request for information and the reply he got were not known thoroughly.

Question 2

Although candidates knew moderately well what happened at John's circumcision, they were seldom able to remember any of Luke 1.76-79. Instead they supplied material from what the angel said to Zechariah in the Temple at the beginning of the material about John. This meant that it was rare for candidates to obtain more than a third of the available marks.

Question 3

- (a) A surprising number of candidates thought this incident was about Zaccheus.
- (b) The parable of the Lost Sheep was much better answered.
- (c) Candidates answered well. Jesus broke the rules to save and was prepared to accept persecution. Jesus was concerned for the lost, the excluded and the despised. The self-righteous and the separatists voiced their opposition, but the lost were attracted to Jesus' love.

Question 4

Usually Sermon on the Mount material is known thoroughly. This year, answers were not as full as usual. Other examples of insincere religion were quite well known.

Question 5

This question, on the action Herod took against John the Baptist, was the most popular. The narrative material was given with a fair degree of accuracy, but full detail seldom appeared.

Candidates did try to show some of Herod's good points and were not totally condemnatory.

Question 6

This was also a popular question on Jesus' meeting with the man possessed by devils among the tombs. Narrative material was reasonably well given, but too many candidates said that Jesus forbade the cured man to say anything. Comments were weak.

- (i) Jesus was not usually destructive, but he did, for instance, destroy a fig tree. There was a need to convince the man of his cure.
- (ii) The locals' reactions were caused by loss of profit, utter fear and panic, and, perhaps, conscience about keeping pigs.
- (iii) It was not usual for Jesus to refuse a follower, but there was a need for local witness because Jesus was told to leave. Part of the cure was to give them a role in the community.

Question 7

Far too many candidates wrote about the woman with an issue of blood on the way to raise Jairus' daughter. The narrative concerning the dropsical man was not well known.

Comments on what happened after the healings might have been as follows: The Ruler, although angered by Jesus, attacked the congregation for using the Sabbath wrongly; Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of unloosing animals for watering but binding humans by rules; what better day than the Sabbath for untying the devil's works; 18 years' bondage set against their regular Sabbath habits; Jesus challenged about a drowning son or animal; presumably they were valuable and would be rescued on the Sabbath; what did that say about their sense of values?

Question 8

Most candidates attempted this question, but few were able to narrate the conversation correctly, especially Jesus' part. Too many mixed it all up with arguments and teaching about divorce. Very few remembered Jesus' remarks about reading God's word, about Moses' bush experience, and about the God of the patriarchs, the God not of the dead but the living.

Comments on the traps were not well done. Could Jesus have been led to criticise the law, or be made to look silly in his belief in the after-life? If Jesus could have been made to side too much with the Pharisees he would upset the High Priest's party more. The Sadducees' scriptural quotation was intended to 'fix' Jesus, but he counter-attacked from scripture about their limiting God. Jesus used the Sadducees' Torah to trap them about life after death, using the present tense about God's relationship to the patriarchs. Note that some scribes congratulated Jesus, and that questions ceased thereafter.

Question 9

This question, on the events in the garden of Gethsemane, was a frequent choice for candidates. The first half of the narrative was not known at all thoroughly, the second half was somewhat better.

Significant aspects of Jesus' prayers might have included his use of the Lord's Prayer (Father, your will, enter not into temptation), the intimacy of 'Abba', the metaphors of 'cup' and 'hour', parallels with the Last Supper, the posture used, and the need for companionship, and the natural shrinking from extreme ordeal.

Question 10

This was a new departure in questions about the trials. Although there were many wrong attributions there was very little irrelevant material. Candidates were most successful in recounting what the false witnesses said.

In drawing out the significance of things said, the High Priest wanted Jesus to incriminate himself, which was against the Law. He put Jesus on oath, forcing him to answer, thus leading to accusations of blasphemy. Pilate was baffled by Jesus' reticence. He realised the Jewish charges were flimsy, and that Jesus was probably innocent, but he could make no headway because Jesus did not defend himself.

The false witnesses seized on Jesus' remarks about the Temple, trying to turn them into a blasphemy accusation. Their failure to agree angered the High Priest. The religious leaders tried to panic Pilate by political accusations, some wild, but some based on things Jesus said about himself and on tax to Caesar.