

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 2035/12
The Portrayal of God in the Bible

Key messages

There was a disparity between Papers 12 and 22 in terms of the depth in which the passages are known and understood. Candidates should be able to describe all the passages in detail as well as explain their relevance, as guided by the syllabus. Candidates must also be able to demonstrate an understanding of these texts in both biblical and modern contexts, guided by the wording of the question.

General comments

Knowledge of the passages was varied and candidates' ability to answer **part (b)** questions which apply the knowledge of the text to a specific line of questioning both depended on the depth of understanding of the passage and, also, the candidate's engagement with the specific question set. Evaluation responses were often broad and interesting, although several candidates relied on a structure that did not give a judgement or conclusion to the writing.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) (i) The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

(ii) Some candidates knew the answer to this question but there was also a broad range of incorrect responses.

(iii) Candidates generally identified God's words to Abraham about Sarai accurately. Candidates may have benefited from the use of bullet points to ensure that they made four distinct points in response to this question.

(b) Some candidates repeated the content of the passage, or different elements of the Abrahamic covenant. Some talked about the importance of the covenant in general terms. The best responses focused on the specific wording of the question and understood the nature of the covenant in terms of God's overall plan for humanity.

(c) Candidates generally engaged positively with this question, exploring arguments that discussed whether or not a God of love should enter some sort of 'deal' with people. There were some wise words observed about the nature of any relationship as two-way and therefore the role of people in their side of the covenant.

Question 2

(a) (i) Candidates were generally able to identify the location of this passage in the book of Jonah and therefore the response of the people.

(ii) While some candidates talked more about what the king (and sometimes the people) did, rather than what he said, there were generally accurate responses seen to this question. Again, candidates answering this question might have benefited from a layout (such as bullet points) that ensured they were making four distinct points.

(b) There were some excellent responses to this question that showed a solid understanding of the book of Jonah. The best answers sought to explain, rather than describe, and so they explored the inner journey of Jonah in their own words. Some candidates limited themselves with short responses that simply stated that Jonah did not get his own way or had struggled much.

(c) Some candidates attempted to respond to this question by focusing on the book of Jonah and, while it was possible to achieve full marks from this approach, it was perhaps easier to answer this question at face value and to explore the nature of prayer. There were some interesting responses that explored the nature of prayer and whether God can change his mind at all. Some excellent responses limited themselves by not providing a sound judgement at the end.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Some candidates answered this question well and were able to distinguish between the two parts of the text being tested. Others recounted the revelation of God's name, and some did not go on to the response of the elders of Israel. A number of answers gave information about the instructions given to the people of Israel to avoid the angel of death, rather than how the elders responded. The broad story of Moses from the prescribed texts is clearly known but some candidates would have benefited from a detailed knowledge of each section of the passages.

(b) Although some candidates missed the word 'today' and spoke in general terms about Moses's role in the freeing of the Israelites from Egypt, there were some excellent responses that explored the Ten Commandments, the symbolic nature of Moses as deliverer (compared to Jesus) and the idea of Moses as a leader and mouthpiece of God.

(c) Some candidates did not fully engage with the word 'force' and others interpreted it in different ways, with varying results. For example, some talked about persuasive force and others talked about physical force. All valid interpretations of the word were credited. Many candidates who rejected the proposition did so by considering Jesus' message of peace, showing a good and broad understanding of the syllabus.

Question 4

(a) Although this question was not as popular as the other two questions in **Section B**, there was some excellent consideration of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians. Some candidates spoke in general terms about the cross. Some thought that the passage was referring to a speech from Acts. Some candidates did not know what 1 Corinthians was.

(b) Some candidates clearly did not know that 1 Corinthians was written to a church in Corinth. Good responses were able to locate the particular beliefs held in Corinth with the style that Paul adopted to engage them. The conflict for both Jewish and Gentile audiences was brought out successfully in these responses.

(c) In this question, candidates were permitted to broaden their scope to any teaching of Paul about the message of the cross. Most focused on the idea of the resurrection. Many simply observed that the cross was the pivotal moment in the work of Jesus; others were able to explore the way that Paul taught it and to consider whether or not this approach would be helpful for Christians today.

Question 5

(a) Candidates generally knew the passage being tested and recounted it in good detail. Some missed the nuances of the passage – such as the number of times the encounter happened or the context in which it took place.

(b) Some candidates did not examine the significance to the early church or explore the significance to Christianity in general. The best answers understood the conflict within Christianity and showed an understanding of the process the early church went through to accept Gentiles in their own right, rather than making them become Jews first or follow Jewish custom. This was a process that led to the church becoming a religion in its own right, rather than a sub-section of Judaism. Some

Cambridge Ordinary Level
2035 Biblical Studies June 2025
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

candidates talked about visions in general and their significance in early Christianity, an approach that usually received limited credit.

(c) While some candidates talked about visions in general and whether or not they have anything to teach modern-day Christians, others focused on the specific vision being explored in this question. There was some good engagement with whether it is necessary for modern-day Christians to understand the needs and struggles of the early church or whether they should focus on modern-day issues.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 2035/22
The Portrayal of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels

Key messages

It is important that answers to **part (c)** questions always include a clear judgement to be able to access the highest marks. Some excellent discussions did not do this and so credit was lower than it could have been.

General comments

Candidates generally showed a good understanding across the syllabus for this paper and were able to make useful links to show an understanding of the application of the passage. Sometimes, understanding about the broader context (especially about the groups Jesus encountered or about the different Gospels) was weaker.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) (i) The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

(ii) Candidates were able to answer this question if they had correctly identified the passage. Some candidates recounted Jesus' response in a different part of the Synoptic Gospels and received little or no credit.

(b) There were some very good responses to this question that engaged well with Jesus' approach to those who promoted legalism. Some kept their responses to face-value explanations of what differed between the two sides and others explored the motivations of those involved: both approaches were valid approaches.

(c) While some candidates perhaps limited themselves a bit by suggesting that it was obvious that Christians should have a Sabbath, there were some broad and balanced responses to this question that explored the pressures on Christians who live in a society that does not stop on a Sunday, while contrasting this with the need to make space for rest and worship.

Question 2

(a) (i) The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

(ii) Some candidates knew exactly how the Pharisees reacted to the event, but others applied more guesswork to their responses.

(iii) There were some good responses to this question that used the evidence of the events of the triumphal entry to illustrate what the passage demonstrates about the person of Jesus.

(b) Although some candidates missed that the question was asking about the ascension, rather than Palm Sunday, most were able to give excellent responses that examined the significance of Jesus returning to heaven after his resurrection. Some candidates limited themselves by trying to answer about the resurrection rather than the ascension.

(c) Some successful answers showed excellent appreciation for the whole history of salvation, studied in the syllabus. They identified the resurrection as part of the time of culmination of God's plan to restore salvation following the fall. Others kept to more general comments about the importance of the resurrection with variable success.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Although some candidates tried to talk about the encounter with Simeon and Anna, most candidates identified the passage correctly and recounted the whole passage. Some attempted to put the passage into their own words or to change the order of the text, which meant that key details were sometimes lost.

(b) Candidates were often very strong on understanding the differences between these two key groups, although some remembered the key differences but attributed them the wrong way around. Other candidates did not recall the differences between the two groups. Some tried to discuss the interactions each group had with Jesus, which did not lead them on to the key differences because they started by stating that both groups were in some form of conflict with Jesus.

(c) Candidates often struggled with this question. Some tried to answer it from the perspective of the birth narratives; others tried to suggest that one Gospel is wrong while the other right and some did not engage with the phrase 'portrayal of Jesus'. Better responses looked at the focus of each Gospel on different audiences or themes (e.g. Luke on outcasts and Matthew on members of a Jewish community) and considered whether the Jesus they portrayed was entirely different or simply had a different emphasis.

Question 4

(a) Generally, candidates knew the parable and were able to recount it with some accuracy, with many excellent answers.

(b) Some candidates did not recognise the grouping of parables from the syllabus, but credit was given to interpretations of the question that addressed in general terms the notion of the kingdom being something that could be received in some way. Answers that went beyond the narration of other parables received the most credit.

(c) Candidates seemed well-equipped to answer this question. Some answers were limited in their general approach to evaluation questions, for example, where a judgement was not clear or the second side of an argument was not clearly expressed. There were some interesting examinations of the kingdom of God as a future event and the idea of heaven as the expression of the kingdom.

Question 5

(a) The nuance of there being two passages on the syllabus about perseverance in prayer from different Gospels was sometimes missed and so some candidates received no marks for this question. Candidates who knew the passage being tested were often able to give clear descriptions of Jesus' teaching.

(b) Candidates generally knew that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that almsgiving should take place in secret or between the person and God. Some candidates limited themselves simply by describing the teaching. Better responses explained the teaching in candidates' own words, thus fulfilling the requirements of the question more specifically.

(c) Candidates tended to engage well with this question and explore the idea of Jesus coming to replace the Law as opposed to Jesus coming to fulfil the Law. Some candidates observed that in some ways, Jesus' expectations were harder than those of the Law because it is harder to intend good sometimes than to do good.