



## Syllabus

# Cambridge International AS & A Level Biblical Studies 9484

Use this syllabus for exams in 2024, 2025 and 2026.  
Exams are available in the June and November series.



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## Why choose Cambridge International?

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Cambridge International prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for students to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources.

We review all our syllabuses regularly, so they reflect the latest research evidence and professional teaching practice – and take account of the different national contexts in which they are taught.

We consult with teachers to help us design each syllabus around the needs of their learners. Consulting with leading universities has helped us make sure our syllabuses encourage students to master the key concepts in the subject and develop the skills necessary for success in higher education.

Our mission is to provide educational benefit through provision of international programmes and qualifications for school education and to be the world leader in this field. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged – equipped for success in the modern world.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge students from 10 000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

**School feedback:** ‘We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.’

**Feedback from:** Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA

### Quality management



Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international qualifications and education programmes for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001)

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## **Important: Changes to this syllabus**

**For information about changes to this syllabus for 2024, 2025 and 2026, go to page 44.**

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2021.

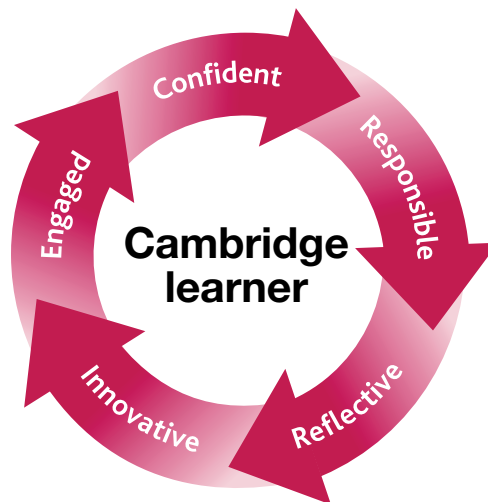
# 1 Why choose this syllabus?

## Key benefits

The best motivation for a student is a real passion for the subject they're learning. By offering students a variety of Cambridge International AS & A Levels, you can give them the greatest chance of finding the path of education they most want to follow. With over 50 subjects to choose from, students can select the ones they love and that they're best at, which helps motivate them throughout their studies.

Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme helps students develop abilities which universities value highly, including:

- a deep understanding of their subjects
- higher order thinking skills – analysis, critical thinking, problem solving
- presenting ordered and coherent arguments
- independent learning and research.



**Cambridge International AS & A Level Biblical Studies** develops a set of transferable skills. These include: a reflective understanding of different values, opinions and attitudes and the ability to present and analyse differing perspectives and the concepts and values that underpin them.

Our approach in Cambridge International AS & A Level Biblical Studies encourages learners to be:

**confident**, understanding complex social, religious and/or philosophical concepts and expressing views, opinions and judgements around these

**responsible**, recognising the complexity and sensitivity of issues that give rise to religious debate

**reflective**, considering the diversity of views and the ways in which they are supported and justified

**innovative**, exploring different Christian understandings of key issues, including views that may differ from personal views

**engaged**, by the complexity and diversity of religion and its responses to challenges.

**School feedback:** 'Cambridge students develop a deep understanding of subjects and independent thinking skills.'

**Feedback from:** Principal, Rockledge High School, USA

## Key concepts

Key concepts are essential ideas that help students develop a deep understanding of their subject and make links between different aspects. Key concepts may open up new ways of thinking about, understanding or interpreting the important things to be learned.

Good teaching and learning will incorporate and reinforce a subject's key concepts to help students gain:

- a greater depth as well as breadth of subject knowledge
- confidence, especially in applying knowledge and skills in new situations
- the vocabulary to discuss their subject conceptually and show how different aspects link together
- a level of mastery of their subject to help them enter higher education.

The key concepts identified below, carefully introduced and developed, will help to underpin the course you will teach. You may identify additional key concepts which will also enrich teaching and learning.

The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level Biblical Studies are:

- **Beliefs, faith, teachings and sources**  
Understanding teachings from the Bible and other sources, in order to understand religion, beliefs and faith. Appreciating and responding critically to beliefs, faith and attitudes.
- **Practices, application and ways of life**  
Exploring the impact of religion, beliefs and faith on how people have lived their lives. Appreciating that religious practices and ethics are diverse, change over time and are influenced by locations and cultures.
- **Expression**  
Acknowledging that, throughout history, individuals and cultures have expressed their beliefs, faith, ethics and values through many different forms.

## International recognition and acceptance

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world. Every year thousands of students with Cambridge International AS & A Levels gain places at leading universities worldwide. Our programmes and qualifications are valued by top universities around the world including those in the UK, US (including Ivy League universities), Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

UK NARIC, the national agency in the UK for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills, has carried out an independent benchmarking study of Cambridge International AS & A Level and found it to be comparable to the standard of AS & A Level in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge International AS & A Level qualifications are accepted as equivalent, grade for grade, to UK AS & A Levels by leading universities worldwide.

Cambridge International AS Level Biblical Studies makes up the first half of the Cambridge International A Level course in Biblical Studies and provides a foundation for Biblical Studies at Cambridge International A Level. Depending on local university entrance requirements, students may be able to use it to progress directly to university courses in Biblical Studies or some other subjects. It is also suitable as part of a course of general education.

Cambridge International A Level Biblical Studies provides a foundation for biblical or religious studies or related courses such as theology or philosophy in higher education. Equally it is suitable as part of a course of general education.

For more information about the relationship between the Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level see the 'Assessment overview' section of the Syllabus overview.

We recommend learners check the Cambridge recognition database and university websites to find the most up-to-date entry requirements for courses they wish to study.

Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition)

**School feedback:** 'The depth of knowledge displayed by the best A Level students makes them prime targets for America's Ivy League universities.'

**Feedback from:** Yale University, USA

## Supporting teachers

We provide a wide range of resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge International AS & A Level. To find out which resources are available for each syllabus go to [www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)

The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

Find out more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)

Support for Cambridge International AS & A Level			
<b>Planning and preparation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next steps guides.</li> <li>• Schemes of work.</li> <li>• Specimen papers.</li> <li>• Syllabuses.</li> <li>• Teacher guides.</li> </ul>	<b>Teaching and assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endorsed resources.</li> <li>• Online forums.</li> <li>• Support for coursework and speaking tests.</li> </ul>	<b>Learning and revision</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example candidate responses.</li> <li>• Past papers and mark schemes.</li> <li>• Specimen paper answers.</li> </ul>	<b>Results</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidate Results Service.</li> <li>• Principal examiner reports for teachers.</li> <li>• Results Analysis.</li> </ul>

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates)

## Professional development

We support teachers through:

- Introductory Training – face-to-face or online
- Extension Training – face-to-face or online
- Enrichment Professional Development – face-to-face or online

Find out more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/events](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/events)

- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications

Find out more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev)



### Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers.

Find out more at: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

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## 2 Syllabus overview

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### Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to:

- develop knowledge and understanding appropriate to a specialist study of the Bible and its historical and philosophical context
- develop an understanding and appreciation of Christian thought and practice, especially as recorded in the Bible
- develop an interest in a rigorous study of Christian teachings and texts
- engage with scholarly debate about the Bible and issues in the Christian faith and develop an ability to express and justify their own opinions
- adopt an enquiring and reflective approach to the study of Christian teachings which will form a solid foundation for further study.



Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The contents of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.



## Content overview

The syllabus content is presented in four broad topics. Candidates must study all the subject content.

The Four Gospels and The Development of Christianity will be assessed in the AS Level examinations, Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Prophets of the Old Testament and Christian Understandings of God, Life and the Universe are assessed in the A Level examinations, Paper 3 and Paper 4; they build on the knowledge and skills developed in the AS Level course.

### Paper 1 The Four Gospels

#### 1.1 The person of Jesus

- 1.1.1 Introduction to Jesus' life in the gospels
- 1.1.2 Key events in Jesus' life and ministry
- 1.1.3 Miracles
- 1.1.4 The seven 'I am' sayings in John's Gospel

#### 1.2 The teaching of Jesus

- 1.2.1 The kingdom of God and the nature of God
- 1.2.2 Ministry to the marginalised
- 1.2.3 The demands of discipleship

#### 1.3 The passion and resurrection narratives

- 1.3.1 Jesus' final evening with the twelve disciples
- 1.3.2 The trials of Jesus
- 1.3.3 The crucifixion and burial
- 1.3.4 Resurrection narratives

### Paper 2 The Development of Christianity

#### 2.1 The origins and expansion of the early Church

- 2.1.1 The Christian community in Jerusalem
- 2.1.2 The early expansion of Christianity
- 2.1.3 Further expansion of Christianity in the Acts of the Apostles

#### 2.2 The Christian community in Corinth

- 2.2.1 Division and unity
- 2.2.2 Issues relating to Christian life
- 2.2.3 Worship

#### 2.3 The Christian Church in the Roman world

- 2.3.1 Tensions between Christians and non-Christians
- 2.3.2 The social status of many early Christians

## Paper 3 Prophets of the Old Testament

### 3.1 The nature of Israelite Prophecy

- 3.1.1 Prophecy in the ancient world
- 3.1.2 Prophetic identity and actions
- 3.1.3 Attempts to distinguish between true and false prophets

### 3.2 Early prophets: Samuel, Nathan, Gad and Elijah

- 3.2.1 The place of Samuel in the prophetic tradition: prophetic involvement with kings and court
- 3.2.2 The continued involvement of prophets with kings: Nathan and Gad as court prophets
- 3.2.3 Elijah as the preserver of Yahweh worship in confrontation with the monarchy

### 3.3 The involvement of prophecy in times of national destruction and reconstruction

- 3.3.1 Amos and the destruction of Samaria
- 3.3.2 Jeremiah and the Babylonian destruction of Judah; exile and return
- 3.3.3 Deutero-Isaiah, prophet of a return from exile through God's agent, Cyrus, King of Persia

## Paper 4 Christian Understandings of God, Life and the Universe

### 4.1 Origins and responsibilities

- 4.1.1 The origins of the universe
- 4.1.2 Animals and the environment

### 4.2 Death and salvation

- 4.2.1 The possibility of life after death
- 4.2.2 How the belief in life after death influences Christians

### 4.3 Responses to evil and suffering

- 4.3.1 The nature of God and the problem of evil
- 4.3.2 Job and the problem of suffering

**School feedback:** 'Cambridge International AS & A Levels prepare students well for university because they've learnt to go into a subject in considerable depth. There's that ability to really understand the depth and richness and the detail of a subject. It's a wonderful preparation for what they are going to face at university.'

**Feedback from:** US Higher Education Advisory Council

## Assessment overview

AS Level candidates take two compulsory papers, Paper 1 and Paper 2. A Level candidates take four compulsory papers, Papers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

### Paper 1

The Four Gospels 1 hour 30 minutes  
50 marks

Section A: Short passage questions. Candidates answer **three** questions from a choice of four.

Section B: Longer passage question. All candidates answer this question.

Section C: Structured question. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Externally assessed  
50% of the AS Level  
25% of the A Level

### Paper 3

Prophets of the Old Testament 1 hour 30 minutes  
50 marks

Section A: Short passage questions. Candidates answer **two** questions from a choice of three.

Section B: Longer passage question. All candidates answer this question.

Section C: Essay question. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Externally assessed  
25% of the A Level

### Paper 2

The Development of Christianity 1 hour 30 minutes  
50 marks

Section A: Structured question. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Section B: Structured question. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Externally assessed  
50% of the AS Level  
25% of the A Level

### Paper 4

Christian Understandings of God, Life and the Universe 1 hour 30 minutes  
50 marks

Essay questions. Candidates answer **two** questions from a choice of three.

Externally assessed  
25% of the A Level

Information on availability is in the **Before you start** section.

There are three routes for Cambridge International AS & A Level Biblical Studies:

Route	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
<b>1 AS Level only</b> (Candidates take all AS components in the same exam series)	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>2 A Level</b> (staged over two years) Year 1 AS Level*	Yes	Yes	No	No
Year 2 Complete the A Level	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>3 A Level</b> (Candidates take all components in the same exam series)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* Candidates carry forward their AS Level result subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Candidates following an AS Level route are eligible for grades a–e. Candidates following an A Level route are eligible for grades A\*–E.

## Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

### AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specified texts and Christian teachings, beliefs and practices as recorded in the Bible.

### AO2 Analysis and evaluation

Analyse, evaluate and discuss evidence, points of view and issues in Christianity.

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of each qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in AS Level %	Weighting in A Level %
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	50	45
AO2 Analysis and evaluation	50	55
Total	100	100

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %			
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	50	50	40	40
AO2 Analysis and evaluation	50	50	60	60
Total	100	100	100	100

## 3 Subject content

This syllabus gives you the flexibility to design a course that will interest, challenge and engage your learners. Where appropriate you are responsible for selecting resources and examples to support your learners' study. These should be appropriate for the learners' age, cultural background and learning context as well as complying with your school policies and local legal requirements.

The Bible passages printed on the question papers will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA) and will be limited to the specified texts listed in the subject content below. The NRSVA is freely available at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

You may wish to use other versions of the translated texts for teaching. If this is the case, please make candidates aware that there may be differences between the versions used in teaching and those that appear on the question papers.

In the specified texts below, biblical references are presented with a comma between verses and a semi-colon between chapters. For example:

- Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–40 refers to Luke's Gospel Chapter 1 verses 26 to 38 **and** Luke's Gospel Chapter 2 verses 1 to 40.
- 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 19:20 refers to the Book of 1 Samuel Chapter 10 verses 6 and 10 **and** the Book of 1 Samuel Chapter 19 verse 20.

### Paper 1 The Four Gospels (AS Level)

The texts set for study for Paper 1 are taken from all four gospels. There is no requirement to read texts other than those set for study, though candidates would benefit from having read all four gospels and they should understand the distinctive characteristics of the gospels. Candidates should be encouraged to work across topics where appropriate, e.g. the parable of the good Samaritan could be used in both 1.2.2 Ministry to the marginalised and 1.2.3 The demands of discipleship. Candidates should understand the influence of the Old Testament on the material in all four gospels, for example the emphasis on fulfilment of prophecy in the birth stories recorded in Matthew's Gospel; other examples can be found in the specified texts for this paper.

#### 1.1 The person of Jesus

The focus in this section is on claims made about the identity of Jesus. Particular attention should be paid to the significance of the following titles that were used of Jesus: Christ/Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, Son of David, the Word (*Logos*).

##### 1.1.1 Introduction to Jesus' life in the gospels

###### Content

- The birth stories of Jesus as recorded in Matthew's Gospel: Matthew 1:18–2:23
- The birth stories of Jesus as recorded in Luke's Gospel: Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–40
- The Prologue to John's Gospel: John 1:1–18

### 1.1.2 Key events in Jesus' life and ministry

#### Content

- The proclamation of John the Baptist: Mark 1:2–8
- The baptism and the temptation of Jesus: Matthew 3:13–4:11; Mark 1:9–13; Luke 3:21–22; 4:1–13
- Conflict with religious leaders: Mark 2:23–28
- The rejection of Jesus at Nazareth: Matthew 13:54–58; Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:16–30
- Caesarea Philippi: Mark 8:27–33
- The transfiguration: Mark 9:2–8
- Blind Bartimaeus: Mark 10:46–52
- Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem: Mark 11:1–11; John 12:12–15
- Jesus cleanses the temple: Mark 11:15–18; John 2:13–17
- The anointing at Bethany: Mark 14:1–11; John 12:1–8

### 1.1.3 Miracles

#### Content

- Healings and nature miracles in the synoptic gospels
  - Jesus heals one who was mute: Matthew 9:32–34
  - The man with an unclean spirit: Mark 1:21–28
  - Jesus heals a paralytic: Mark 2:1–12
  - Jesus stills a storm: Mark 4:35–41
  - Feeding the five thousand: Mark 6:30–44
  - Jesus walks on the water: Mark 6:45–52
  - Jesus cures a blind man at Bethsaida: Mark 8:22–26
  - Jesus heals a centurion's servant: Luke 7:1–10
- The seven signs in John's Gospel
  - The wedding at Cana: John 2:1–11
  - Jesus heals an official's son: John 4:46–54
  - Jesus heals on the Sabbath: John 5:1–18
  - Feeding the five thousand: John 6:1–15
  - Jesus walks on the water: John 6:16–21
  - A man born blind receives sight: John 9:1–12
  - The story leading up to and including when Jesus raises Lazarus to life: John 11:1–44

### 1.1.4 The seven 'I am' sayings in John's Gospel

#### Content

- I am the bread of life: John 6:35–59
- I am the light of the world: John 8:12
- I am the gate and I am the good shepherd: John 10:1–18
- I am the resurrection and the life: John 11:17–27
- I am the way and the truth and the life: John 14:1–7
- I am the true vine: John 15:1–17

#### For 1.1, candidates should be able to:

- show understanding of the claims made about the person of Jesus and the challenges to Jesus' authority in the accounts of Jesus' birth and ministry as recorded in the gospels
- understand the Old Testament, Jewish and, where appropriate, the Greek background to the titles used for Jesus and consider the appropriateness of these titles when applied to Jesus
- consider similarities and differences between the synoptic gospel accounts of Jesus' mighty works and the Johannine seven signs, and whether the presentation of Jesus in the fourth gospel is significantly different from that in the synoptic gospels
- understand the symbolism contained in the 'I am' sayings and the associated teaching about the person of Jesus.

## 1.2 The teaching of Jesus

The focus in this section is on three aspects of the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the gospels: the kingdom of God and nature of God, ministry to marginalised people, and the nature of discipleship.

### 1.2.1 The kingdom of God and the nature of God

#### Content

- The labourers in the vineyard: Matthew 20:1–16
- The parable of the talents: Matthew 25:14–30
- The 'seed' parables and the purpose of the parables: Mark 4:1–20, 26–29, 30–32
- Receiving the kingdom like a child: Mark 10:13–16
- The rich man and the problems of wealth: Mark 10:17–31
- Mary's song of praise: Luke 1:46–55
- The kingdom of God and judgement: Luke 10:8–12
- The goodness of God: Luke 11:9–13
- The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal and his brother: Luke 15:1–32



## 1.2.2 Ministry to marginalised people

### Content

- Jesus calls Levi: Mark 2:13–17
- The Syrophenician woman's faith: Mark 7:24–30
- A sinful woman forgiven: Luke 7:36–50
- The parable of the great dinner: Luke 14:15–24
- The parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector: Luke 18:9–14
- Jesus and Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1–10
- The woman caught in adultery: John 8:2–11

## 1.2.3 The demands of discipleship

### Content

- The Sermon on the Mount
  - The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:1–12
  - Salt and light: Matthew 5:13–16
  - The law and the prophets: Matthew 5:17–48
  - Avoiding hypocrisy in acts of charity, prayer and fasting: Matthew 6:1–18
  - Putting God and the kingdom of God first: Matthew 6:19–34
  - Judging others: Matthew 7:1–5
  - Hearers and doers, the parable of the two house-builders: Matthew 7:24–29

**Note:** Candidates would benefit from reading the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. Only the texts set for study will be examined.

- Attitudes to others
  - The parable of the unforgiving servant: Matthew 18:21–35
  - The judgement of the nations as the sheep and the goats: Matthew 25:31–46
  - The request of James and John: Mark 10:35–45
  - The first and greatest commandment: Mark 12:28–34
  - The parable of the good Samaritan: Luke 10:25–37
  - The rich man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19–31
  - The new commandment: John: 13:34–35

For 1.2, candidates should be able to:

- understand the concept of the kingdom of God in Jewish thought, the nature and purpose of parables and Jesus' teaching on the kingdom and nature of God as recorded in the specified texts
- understand the reasons for certain groups being marginalised in first-century Jewish society and Jesus' attitude to them
- consider Jesus' teaching on the demands of discipleship and whether in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was setting an ideal standard or a goal that could actually be achieved.

### 1.3 The passion and resurrection narratives

With the exception of the resurrection appearances, candidates should focus on the accounts found in Mark's and John's Gospels, but they should understand also the significance of key differences in the other gospel accounts. They should study in detail the accounts of the resurrection appearances in all four gospels. The focus throughout this section should be on the distinctive emphases of the four gospels and on the key similarities and differences in the accounts.

#### 1.3.1 Jesus' final evening with the twelve disciples

##### Content

- The Last Supper: Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–23; John 13:1–35
- The prediction of Peter's denial: Matthew 26:31–35; Mark 14:26–31; Luke 22:31–34; John 13:36–38
- Gethsemane: Matthew 26:36–56; Mark 14:32–52; Luke 22:39–53; John 18:1–11

#### 1.3.2 The trials of Jesus

##### Content

- Before the Sanhedrin (the Council): Matthew 26:57, 59–68; Mark 14:53–65; 15:1; Luke 22:54, 63–71; John 18:12–14, 18–24
- Peter's denials: Matthew 26:58, 69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:15–18, 25–27
- Before Pilate: Matthew 27:1–2, 11–31; Mark 15:2–20; Luke 23:1–25 (including the trial before Herod); John 18:28–19:16

#### 1.3.3 The crucifixion and burial

##### Content

- Crucifixion: Matthew 27:32–56; Mark 15:21–41; Luke 23: 26–49; John 19:16–37
- Burial: Matthew 27:57–66; Mark 15:42–47; Luke: 23:50–56; John 19:38–42

#### 1.3.4 Resurrection narratives

##### Content

- The empty tomb: Matthew 28:1–8, 11–15; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10
- The resurrection appearances: Matthew 28:8–10, 16–20; Mark 16:9–18; Luke 24:13–49; John 20:11–21:25
- The ascension: Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:50–53

For 1.3, candidates should be able to:

- consider the significance of key similarities and differences in the accounts of the final days of Jesus' life and the resurrection as recorded in the four gospels and the extent to which the special 'interests' of the evangelists might have influenced these narratives
- understand the part played by Jesus, the twelve disciples and the Jewish and Roman authorities in the events leading up to the crucifixion
- consider the significance of the resurrection narratives for the evangelists and their Christian communities.

## Paper 2 The Development of Christianity (AS Level)

This paper examines the development of Christianity as recorded in selected New Testament literature. There is no requirement to study texts other than those set for study. The content is largely restricted to the spread of Christianity as recorded in the New Testament.

### 2.1 The origins and expansion of the early church

The focus in this section is on the origins and development of Christianity and how it grew out of Judaism, as recorded in the specified texts in the Acts of the Apostles.

A knowledge of the following religious structures and practices in first-century Judaism would assist candidates' understanding of the specified texts, but it will not be examined: the temple and synagogue; the Sanhedrin, Sadducees, Pharisees, scribes; the importance of the Mosaic Law.

#### 2.1.1 The Christian community in Jerusalem

##### Content

- Pentecost
  - The birth of the church
  - Acts 2:1–13
- Proclaiming the gospel
  - Content and structure of Peter's preaching in Acts
  - Acts 2:14–40; 10:34–43
- Key features of life and worship in the community in Jerusalem
  - Sharing of wealth, e.g. Barnabas
  - Sharing of service, e.g. the appointment of the seven chosen to serve
  - Prayer and worship in temple, synagogue and house
  - Baptism as initiation into the Christian faith
  - Breaking of bread
  - Healing ministry
  - Acts 1:13–14; 2:41–47; 3:1–10; 4:32–37; 5:12–17; 6:1–7
- The beginnings of conflict between Jewish and Christian communities
  - Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (the Council)
  - Stephen's ministry and martyrdom
  - Persecution of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians
  - The involvement of Saul (Paul) in persecution and his conversion to Christianity
  - Acts 4:1–22; Acts 6:8–15; 7:54–60; 8:1–3; 9:1–19

## 2.1.2 The early expansion of Christianity

### Content

- The ministry of Philip
  - In Samaria
  - The conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian official
  - Acts 8:4–13; 8:26–40
- Peter and the conversion of Cornelius
  - Peter’s vision
  - The conversion and baptism of Cornelius and his household
  - The reaction of the Jerusalem Church
  - Acts 10:1–11:18
- The Church in Syrian Antioch
  - Establishment of ‘mixed’ community
  - Ministry of Barnabas and Saul
  - Relationships with the Church in Jerusalem
  - Acts 11:19–30; 15:1–35

## 2.1.3 Further expansion of Christianity in the Acts of the Apostles

### Content

- First missionary journey
  - Pisidian Antioch
  - Iconium
  - Lystra
  - Derbe
  - Acts 13:13–14:23
- Second missionary journey
  - Philippi
  - Thessalonica
  - Beroea
  - Athens
  - Corinth
  - Acts 16:11–18:17
- Third missionary journey
  - Ephesus
  - Acts 19:1–41

For 2.1, candidates should be able to:

- show understanding of the birth and growth of the church as a community within Judaism, as recorded in the specified texts, and of what led to the gradual emergence of Christianity as a distinctive faith
- understand reasons for the tensions within the church that arose from the conversion of gentiles to Christianity
- consider the extent to which Paul was successful in his three missionary journeys.

## 2.2 The Christian community in Corinth

The focus in this section is on the problems affecting the first-century Church in Corinth and Paul's response, as recorded in 1 Corinthians.

A knowledge of background information about life in first-century Corinth would assist candidates' understanding of the specified texts, but it will not be examined.

### 2.2.1 Division and unity

#### Content

- Divisions in the community
  - The nature of the divisions
  - Paul's response
  - 1 Corinthians 1:10–17; 3:1–4:7
- Unity: the church as the body of Christ
  - Paul's teaching on the church as one body and on the supremacy of love (*agape*)
  - 1 Corinthians 12:1–13:13
  - The collection for the Jerusalem community
  - 1 Corinthians 16:1–6

### 2.2.2 Issues relating to Christian life

#### Content

- Food offered to idols
  - The nature of the problem
  - Paul's response
  - 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 10:23–11:1
- Relationships, marriage and divorce
  - The influence of beliefs about the second coming (the *parousia*) and of gnostic beliefs that the body is worthless
  - Paul's teaching
  - 1 Corinthians 7:1–17, 21, 25–31

### 2.2.3 Worship

#### Content

- Women at worship
  - 1 Corinthians 11:2–16; 14:33b–35
- Abuses at the Lord's Supper
  - 1 Corinthians 11:17–34
- Speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) and the need for orderly worship
  - 1 Corinthians 14:26–33a, 39–40

For 2.2, candidates should be able to:

- understand the particular issues that the largely pagan past of the Corinthian Christians posed for Paul
- understand the key beliefs that formed the basis of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians
- discuss sensitively whether Paul's teaching on relationships, marriage and divorce and on women at worship in 1 Corinthians should be understood as a response to the problems in the first-century church community in Corinth or whether it should be seen as applicable to all Christians.

## 2.3 The Christian church in the Roman world

This section is concerned with political and social influences on the lives of Christians in the first and early second centuries AD. It focuses particularly on two aspects: hostility and persecution, to which all Christians, regardless of social and economic status, were increasingly vulnerable; the particular difficulties faced by Christians considered to be of lower status, e.g. Christian slaves and Christian women – especially those under the authority of a non-Christian master or husband.

### 2.3.1 Tensions between Christians and non-Christians

#### Content

- Warning by Jesus of persecution
  - Luke 21:12–19
- Philippi
  - Paul and Silas in prison
  - Acts 16:16–40
- Ephesus
  - The cult of Artemis
  - The riot of the silversmiths
  - Acts 19:23–41
- 1 Peter
  - Evidence for hostility
  - Teaching on the Christian response to persecution
  - The significance for Christians of being God's chosen people
  - 1 Peter 1:3–9, 13–16; 2:1–3, 9–17; 3:8–17; 4:1–19; 5:6–11
- Tacitus' account of the Neronian persecution in *Annals* 15:44
- The correspondence between Pliny the Younger and the emperor Trajan relating to treatment of Christians in Pliny's *Letters* 10:96–97

### 2.3.2 The social status of many early Christians

#### Content

- The low social status of many first-century Christians, with particular reference to Onesimus in Colossians 4:7–9 and Paul’s letter to Philemon
- The more enlightened attitude of some first-century slave-owners, as seen in the healing of the centurion’s servant: Luke 7:1–10
- Paul’s views on slavery in first-century Roman society as seen in Acts 16:16–18; 1 Corinthians 7:21–24; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11, 22–25; 4:1, 7–9; Philemon 1–25
- Teaching in 1 Peter relating to those considered to be of lower status (such as slaves and women) in Roman society
  - Advice to slaves under Roman law in the first century
  - Advice to women married to non-Christians
  - Instructions to Christian husbands on how to treat their wives
  - 1 Peter 2:13–25; 3:1–7, 8–9

#### For 2.3, candidates should be able to:

- understand the following reasons for the hostility of Roman authorities and of local communities to Christianity: Christians’ refusal to accept the divinity of the Roman Emperor, misinterpretation of Christian practices, the threat to people’s income, perceived exclusivism and concerns about the potential for social unrest resulting from Christianity’s message being for all people
- show understanding of the situation faced by those to whom 1 Peter was written and of the teaching given in that letter
- consider the extent to which the teaching of Paul and the author of 1 Peter about slaves in first-century Roman society was influenced by the outlook of the time and whether the specified texts show some lack of clarity in Paul’s views on slavery.

## Paper 3 Prophets of the Old Testament (A Level)

This paper examines the nature and development of prophecy as recorded in selected Old Testament literature. This should be studied in its Jewish context, so no attempt should be made to Christianise any of the texts specified for study. It would sometimes be appropriate, however, to comment on their later influence on Christianity.

The texts specified for study for Prophets of the Old Testament are a selection from the much wider available material. There is no requirement to read texts other than those specified, although students should be encouraged to work across topics where appropriate, e.g. the call of Jeremiah, used in section 3.3.2, could also be used in 3.1.3 on attempts to distinguish between true and false prophets.

### 3.1 The nature of Israelite Prophecy

This section is concerned with the origins of Old Testament prophecy and the phenomena associated with prophecy:

- the question of the origins of Israelite prophecy
- the techniques used by prophets to convey their messages
- the problem of false prophecy.

### 3.1.1 Prophecy in the ancient world

#### Content

- The relationship between prophecy in the Ancient Near East, for example in the Kingdom of Mari in northern Mesopotamia, and prophecy in Israel
- The question of whether or not prophecy in Israel was in any way unique
- The terms used to describe prophets, and when they are used:
  - seer (*roeh*), for example as applied to Samuel's visionary abilities: 1 Samuel 9:9, 11, 18, 19
  - seer (*hozeh*), for example as applied to the visionary abilities of Gad and Amos: 2 Samuel 24:11 (Gad) where seer (*hozeh*) is used alongside prophet (*nabi*) in the same verse; also Amos 7:12–13 (Amos), where Amaziah calls Amos a *hozeh* and tells him never again to act as a *nabi* in Bethel
  - prophet (*nabi*), the common word for prophet which is used in 1 Samuel 9:9 in relation to seer (*roeh*) in the same verse ('the one who is now called a prophet [*nabi*] was formerly called a seer [*roeh*]'). Also, prophets plural (*nebiim*), for example the prophets in the court of King Ahab: 1 Kings 22:6, 10, 12, 13, 22, 23
- sons of the prophets (*bene hanebiim*), for example bands/guilds of prophets led by a guild 'father' or 'master', such as the prophets of Bethel and Jericho led by Elijah and Elisha: 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15–18; 6:1–2
- Prophets as inspired by the spirit (*ruach*) of God, for example as applied to Saul in the company of a band of prophets: 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 19:20
- Prophetic ecstasy, looking at the mental state in which prophets prophesied. Prophetic ecstasy as contagious: Numbers 11:1–30

**Note:** The specified texts above for terms used to describe prophets should be looked at also in the broad contexts from which they come. These include: Numbers 11:1–30; 1 Samuel 9–10; 19:18–24; 2 Samuel 24:10–14; 1 Kings 22:1–23; 2 Kings 2:1–15; Amos 7:10–17. Candidates should be able recognise the Hebrew terms for prophets and know when they are used in the specified texts, but are not expected to study the distinctions between the Hebrew terms.

### 3.1.2 Prophetic identity and actions

**Note:** This section gives examples of various experiences, roles and actions that were characteristic of prophets. In time, some of these characteristics were attributed also to Moses, liberator and lawgiver of the Israelites. Some references to him are included in this section.

#### Content

- Called by God
  - Exodus 2:23–4:17 (Moses); 1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a (Samuel); Isaiah 6:1–13 (Isaiah); Jeremiah 1:1–19 (Jeremiah)
- Unusual or miraculous birth or death
  - Exodus 2:1–10 (birth of Moses); Deuteronomy 34:1–8 (death of Moses); 1 Samuel 1:1–20 (birth of Samuel); 2 Kings 2:1–12 (Elijah ascends to heaven)
- Oracles of judgement, where the prophet uses a particular form of speech (an oracular formula) to announce judgement and doom
  - Amos 2:1–8; 7:10–17; Amos 5:18–27; Isaiah 31:1–3; Jeremiah 4:5–8; 23:9–32
- Oracles of salvation, where the prophet announces a time of restoration after judgement
  - Amos 9:11–15; Isaiah 2:1–4; 9:2–7; 11:1–9; see also the content of section 3.3.3



### 3.1.2 Prophetic identity and actions (continued)

#### Content

- Reporting of visionary experiences, where the prophet is shown, for example, a vision of judgement
  - Amos 8:1–3
- Performing symbolic acts and signs, where the prophet offers or becomes a visual symbol or sign from which the audience clearly understands God's message
  - Jeremiah 13:1–11 (the story of the waistcloth); 19:1–15 (the purchase and breaking of the potter's jug); 27:1–11 (the yoke of the King of Babylon)
  - Isaiah 7:10–17 (the sign of Immanuel); 8:1–4 (the sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz); 20:1–6 (the prophet walking naked and barefoot)
- Performing miracles, where through the prophet there is a show of divine power, for example to help the distressed
  - Exodus 17:1–17 (Moses); 1 Kings 17:8–24; 18:1–15 (Elijah); see also content of section 3.2.2
- Telling parables, where the prophet uses a story to teach an important moral and spiritual lesson
  - 2 Samuel 12:1–4, 5–25 (Nathan's parable and its application)
- Interceding between people and God in the hope that punishment and disaster will be revoked or mitigated
  - Exodus 32:7–14 (Moses); 1 Samuel 12:19–25 (Samuel); Jeremiah 42:1–6 (Jeremiah); Amos 7:1–6 (Amos)

### 3.1.3 Attempts to distinguish between true and false prophets

#### Content

- The problem of false prophecy, where people find it difficult to distinguish between 'true' and 'false' prophets
- Warnings against false prophets who practise divination and sorcery in contrast to the true prophet as one whose word comes to pass
  - Deuteronomy 18:9–22
- The confrontation between Micaiah and the court prophets of King Ahab; Yahweh's sending of a 'lying spirit' into the mouths of the court prophets; the implication that Yahweh controls both true and false prophets
  - 1 Kings 22:1–38
- Jeremiah's description of false prophets, i.e. that they have not had a vision of standing in Yahweh's council to hear his word, but instead prophesy lying dreams
  - Jeremiah 23:9–32

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#### For 3.1, candidates should be able to:

- show understanding of the nature of Old Testament prophecy, particularly in the context of prophecy in the Ancient Near East
  - understand different ways in which prophets delivered their messages as recorded in the texts set for study
  - consider the issues raised by the concern to distinguish between true and false prophets.
-

## 3.2 Early prophets: Samuel, Nathan, Gad and Elijah

This section examines and assesses:

- Samuel as the prophet who anoints the first two kings, Saul and David
- Nathan and Gad as court prophets acting as a check on the power of King David
- Elijah as the preserver of Yahweh worship against King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

### 3.2.1 The place of Samuel in the prophetic tradition: prophetic involvement with kings and court

Content

- Samuel as a local seer based at Ramah; a man of God associated with a band of prophets in the high places; Samuel's encounter with Saul
  - 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16
- Samuel's role in the election of Saul as king, the rejection of Saul and the anointing of David
  - 1 Samuel 10:17–11:15; 15:10–35 (and also 28:3–19); 16:1–13
- Samuel as military and political leader and judge
  - 1 Samuel 7:3–17
- The question of how far the portrait of Samuel as a prophet may be considered historically reliable or idealised

### 3.2.2 The continued involvement of prophets with kings: Nathan and Gad as court prophets

Content

- Nathan as David's court prophet consulted by David concerning David's wish to build a temple for the Ark of the Covenant
  - 2 Samuel 7:1–29
- Nathan's criticism of David over the death of Uriah the Hittite and his wrongdoing with Bathsheba
  - 2 Samuel 11:2–12:25
- Gad as David's seer. Further prophetic control over the king: David's census of the people and Gad's message to David giving a choice of punishment
  - 2 Samuel 24:1–2, 10–17

### 3.2.3 Elijah as the preserver of Yahweh worship in confrontation with the monarchy

Content

- Elijah as the preserver of Yahweh worship against King Ahab and Queen Jezebel
- Elijah's use of miracles to show prophetic power and that Yahweh is the true king:
  - God feeds the hungry: multiplying meal and oil, 1 Kings 17:8–16
  - God has power over life and death: raising a child from death, 1 Kings 17:17–24
  - The contest on Mount Carmel: Ahab's false prophets have no power, 1 Kings 18:17–40
  - God (not Baal) brings the rain: ending the drought, 1 Kings 18:41–46
  - God gives his prophet power to divide the waters of the Jordan, 2 Kings 2:1–10
  - God anoints true prophets: Elijah taken up to heaven; his spirit falls on Elisha, 2 Kings 2:11–14

### 3.2.3 Elijah as the preserver of Yahweh worship in confrontation with the monarchy (continued)

- Elijah's concern with social justice: his confrontation with Ahab concerning Naboth's vineyard
  - 1 Kings 21:1–29
- The question of how far the portrait of Elijah as a prophet may be considered historically reliable or idealised

For 3.2, candidates should be able to:

- consider the place of Samuel within the prophetic tradition, with particular regard to the development of the Israelite monarchy
- understand and analyse the involvement of the prophets Nathan and Gad in the king's court
- consider the importance of Elijah in the prophetic tradition, particularly the miracle stories and the confrontation with the monarchy
- discuss how far Samuel and Elijah as prophets may be considered historically reliable or idealised portraits.

## 3.3 The involvement of prophecy in times of national destruction and reconstruction

This section is concerned with the work of prophets who warned of coming destruction as God's punishment for sin, and those who worked for national reconstruction during and after the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BC. It examines and assesses:

- the work of Amos in predicting the fall of the Northern Kingdom
- the work of Jeremiah before the destruction of the Southern Kingdom
- the oracles of salvation and return from exile in the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah.

### 3.3.1 Amos and the destruction of Samaria

Content

- Amos' condemnation of the social and religious sins of Israel
  - Amos 2:4–8; 4:1–3; 5:21–24; 8:4–6
- Amos' confrontation with Amaziah, priest of Bethel, and prediction of disaster and exile for Amaziah and his family
  - Amos 7:10–17
- Amos' prophecies of disaster for the Northern Kingdom
  - Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–3
- A final oracle of salvation: a later editor or Amos' offering of hope?
  - Amos 9:11–15

### 3.3.2 Jeremiah and the Babylonian destruction of Judah; exile and return

#### Content

- Jeremiah's call: set over nations and kingdoms to pluck up and break down, destroy and overthrow, build and plant
  - Jeremiah 1:1–19
- Jeremiah's life as a symbol of approaching doom
  - Jeremiah 16:1–9
- Oracle against King Zedekiah and Jerusalem
  - Jeremiah 21:1–10
- The role of false prophets in the approaching destruction
  - Jeremiah 23:9–32
- Jeremiah's vision of the good and bad figs
  - Jeremiah 24:1–10
- Confrontation with Hananiah over the length of the exile
  - Jeremiah 28:1–17
- Advice about living in exile; the promise of return
  - Jeremiah 29:1–32; 32:6–15

### 3.3.3 Deutero-Isaiah, prophet of a return from exile through God's agent, Cyrus, King of Persia

#### Content

- The prophet is called to announce the coming of God: the exile is nearly over
  - Isaiah 40:1–2
- The first Servant Song: the servant here is perhaps Israel, who will now establish justice
  - Isaiah 42:1–4
- God is the Holy One who redeems and restores Israel and will bring about the return to Palestine
  - Isaiah 43:14–44:5
- King Cyrus of Persia, God's anointed (Messiah), who will allow the return of Israel to the homeland; Babylon will be stripped of power
  - Isaiah 44:24–45:13; 47:1–4
- The second Servant Song: the servant is Israel through whom God will now be glorified
  - Isaiah 49:1–6
- The third Servant Song: the servant (perhaps here the prophet) brings comfort to Israel (the weary)
  - Isaiah 50:4–7
- The fourth Servant Song: the suffering servant (Israel) will be exalted
  - Isaiah 52:13–53:12

For 3.3, candidates should be able to:

- understand and analyse Amos' prophecies of the destruction of Israel for social and religious sins
- understand and analyse the prophecies of exile and restoration in the Book of Jeremiah as recorded in the specified texts for study
- consider the 'Servant Songs' in Deutero-Isaiah (in the specified texts) in terms of the identity of the servant and the servant's importance for Israel.

## Paper 4 Christian Understandings of God, Life and the Universe (A Level)

This paper examines some of the ways Christians have understood, and continue to understand, questions of meaning and the nature of life, through reference to the Bible. A number of the texts set for study in this paper will have been encountered by candidates in the other three papers. In this paper, the main focus of the study is on how the texts have influenced Christian thought in key areas. Candidates are encouraged to make links from across the breadth of the course, where possible. The biblical texts listed are set for study of how they can be applied to the big questions raised.

### 4.1 Origins and responsibilities

This section is concerned with studying beliefs about how the world and the universe came to be, and looking at how these beliefs form part of Christianity.

#### 4.1.1 The origins of the universe

Content

- Exploring how God is depicted as the creator in the Bible, including:
  - The idea of God creating from nothing (*ex nihilo*), bringing matter into existence by the spoken word
  - The idea of God as a craftsman, shaping pre-existent matter into other, greater forms
  - Exploring whether these two ideas are contradictory or complementary
- Examining the creation narratives present in the Bible, including:
  - A detailed study of the creation narrative in Genesis 1:1–2:3 and its significance in Christian thought
  - A detailed study of the creation narrative in Genesis 2:4–19 and its significance in Christian thought
  - Other instances where God's role as creator is referenced in the Bible: Psalm 104; John 1:1–4; Acts 17:22–28
  - Exploring the debate around how the creation narratives should be interpreted, e.g. as literal accounts, mythical poetry or metaphorical works of theology and philosophy
- Appraising the challenge posed to the biblical view of God as creator by:
  - Similarities between Genesis and other ancient sources, specifically the Babylonian creation epic (Enuma Elish) or the Epic of Gilgamesh, and whether they support or question the authenticity of the Genesis account
  - The Big Bang theory as an alternative explanation for the existence of the world, and whether this is compatible with creation as described in the Bible
  - How geological and archaeological developments have challenged traditional interpretations of the Genesis accounts
  - How Christians have responded to these issues, such as old Earth and young Earth creationists; and those who integrate religion and science

### 4.1.2 Animals and the environment

#### Content

- Biblical teachings on stewardship: Genesis 2:15; Leviticus 25:1–7, 18–24; Psalm 24
- Biblical teachings on dominion: Genesis 1:26–30; 9:1–7; Psalm 8
- The conflict between stewardship and dominion among Christians, whether their first priority should be to exercise dominion over the Earth, or exercise stewardship of the Earth
- Biblical teachings on the treatment of animals:
  - The role of animals in sacrifices under the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants: Genesis 15:6–11; Leviticus 9; Micah 6:6–8
  - Teachings which suggest that animals can be eaten as humans wish: Genesis 9:1–3; Mark 7:14–19; Acts 10:9–23
  - Biblical arguments for vegetarianism: Genesis 1:29–30; Isaiah 11:6–9; Daniel 1:11–16
  - The argument put forward in Romans 14 that debate on what can be eaten, among other things, should not become a stumbling block to Christians

#### For 4.1, candidates should be able to:

- become familiar with biblical teachings on creation, and views which challenge those teachings
- demonstrate understanding of the role played by beliefs about creation in how people interpret scripture, particularly in how animals and the environment should be treated
- consider the significance of argument about how animals should or should not be used
- demonstrate understanding of similarity, difference, compatibility and disagreement between different texts and interpretations.

## 4.2 Death and salvation

This section is concerned with studying beliefs about what, if anything, happens after death, and the influences these beliefs have on Christians' lives and faith.

### 4.2.1 The possibility of life after death

#### Content

- Exploring the biblical evidence for life after death, and the different ways in which God is shown to go beyond the normal physical laws of life and death:
  - The shade of Samuel: 1 Samuel 28:3–23
  - Elijah ascends to heaven: 2 Kings 2:1–12
  - The transfiguration: Mark 9:2–8
  - The rich man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19–31
  - Jesus' resurrection
  - Jesus' ascension
- Examining biblical teachings on the resurrection of the body and of the immortality of the soul:
  - 1 Corinthians 15
  - 2 Corinthians 4:7–5:10
  - 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:3

### 4.2.1 The possibility of life after death (continued)

#### Content

- Exploring different biblical and Christian conceptions of life after death, including a study of the precise meaning of the following terms used in scripture to refer to concepts around life after death:
  - Sheol: the Hebrew term referring to a place of darkness where the dead go, often referred to as the pit. Job 7:7–10; Psalm 88:3–12
  - Gehenna: a valley in Jerusalem that was the site of child sacrifice and later a rubbish dump and place where the unclaimed dead were placed; used as a counterpoint to the kingdom in the New Testament. Jeremiah 19:1–6; Matthew 5:21–30; Mark 9:42–49
  - Hades: the Greek term for the underworld; used in the New Testament as a place of forgetfulness and abandonment. Luke 10:13–15; 16:22–26; Acts 2:22–32
  - Heaven
  - Hell

### 4.2.2 How the belief in life after death influences Christians

#### Content

- Explore the different ideas presented in the New Testament on how salvation (leading to eternal life) is believed to be achieved, and how these ideas have influenced Christians
  - Law: that strict adherence to the Mosaic Law was still required, as put forward by some in the early church
  - Works: that Christians are required to do good works, in order to earn salvation
  - Faith: that absolute faith in Jesus is required from Christians, in order to guarantee salvation
  - Grace: that Christians can do nothing to earn or guarantee salvation, and are instead dependent on God's grace through Jesus to obtain salvation
- How each of the four ideas above are addressed in the following passages: Acts 15:1–19; Romans 2–5; Galatians 2:11–21; 3:1–25; Ephesians 2:1–18; James 2; 1 John 2:3–11
- How each of the four ideas interact with each other, and whether they are complementary or contradictory

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#### For 4.2, candidates should be able to:

- become familiar with the specific meanings of terms relating to life after death and salvation in the Bible
  - consider different depictions of what form life after death may take according to the Bible
  - demonstrate understanding of how different teachings on salvation have influenced Christians
  - demonstrate understanding of similarity, difference, compatibility and disagreement between different texts and interpretations.
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### 4.3 Responses to evil and suffering

This section is concerned with studying beliefs about why evil actions happen when God is believed to be in control of all things, and how Christians are taught to respond to suffering, through a biblical example. Two key thinkers' theodicies (answers to the question of why God permits evil) are also set for study; summaries of their views are readily available on the internet.

#### 4.3.1 The nature of God and the problem of evil

##### Content

Exploring three key Christian beliefs on the nature of God and the significance of these qualities in their faith:

- How the concept of God being omnipotent (all-powerful) is shown in the Bible including critical study of:
  - Psalm 33
  - Job 42:1–3
  - Daniel 4:34–35
- How the concept of God being omnibenevolent (all-loving) is shown in the Bible including critical study of:
  - Psalm 33
  - John 3:16–17
  - 1 John 4:7–12
- How the concept of God being omniscient (all-knowing) is shown in the Bible including critical study of:
  - Psalm 33
  - Psalm 139:1–18
  - Matthew 10:29–30

Appraising how Christians have formulated attempts to reconcile the belief in a loving, powerful and knowing God with the existence of evil and suffering in the world.

- The significance of the problem of evil – such as expressed in the concept of J L Mackie's inconsistent triad
- Exploring solutions to the problem of evil (theodicies), and appraising their impact and effectiveness:
  - The theodicy put forward by Augustine of Hippo
  - Criticism of the Augustinian theodicy
  - The theodicy put forward by Irenaeus/John Hick
  - Criticism of the Irenaean theodicy

Candidates are only required to be familiar with one scholarly criticism of each theodicy. Centres may wish to consider studying John Hick's criticism of the Augustinian theodicy; and Dewi Zephaniah Phillips' criticism of the Irenaean theodicy, but are free to select other scholars of their choice.



### 4.3.2 Job and the problem of suffering

#### Content

- The character of Job
  - How the introduction to the Book of Job establishes the righteousness of Job and the unjustified nature of his subsequent suffering: Job 1:1–2:10
  - The significance of the dialogues between Yahweh and Satan (the accuser) regarding Job
  - How Job responds to both his physical suffering and inner turmoil: Job 3
- How Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar attempt to rationalise Job’s suffering
  - The themes of the arguments put to Job by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar
  - How Job responds to the arguments put forward by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar
  - What the dialogues tell us about different ideas on the cause and purpose of suffering
- How Job comes to understand the limits of human understanding
  - Elihu’s rebuke of Job and his friends: Job 35–37
  - Yahweh’s rebuke of Job: Job 38:1–40:14
  - Job’s acceptance of the argument put forward by Elihu and Yahweh, and how this can be interpreted as a biblical theodicy: Job 42

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#### For 4.3, candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies
  - demonstrate understanding of the ancient philosophical question of how one can reconcile belief in a loving God and the presence of suffering
  - consider how the character of Job can be seen as a study of the problem of suffering
  - analyse the conclusions drawn by the theodicies and Job
  - demonstrate understanding of similarity, difference, compatibility and disagreement between different texts and interpretations.
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## 4 Details of the assessment

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### Bible passages

The Bible passages printed on the question papers will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA) of the specified texts listed in the subject content of this syllabus.

Candidates evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and implications of concepts and ideas in the specified texts. Candidates should be made aware that in evaluating a concept or idea we do not expect them to set aside personal opinion or belief, however we do expect them to demonstrate understanding of a range of different views and justify their arguments.

### Paper 1 – The Four Gospels

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the AS Level subject content and specified Bible texts for Paper 1 (topics 1.1–1.3).

Questions may cover more than one topic or ask candidates to make comparisons between topic areas. Bible passages used in questions are from the specified texts for study for Paper 1.

Candidates answer **five** questions in total:

Section A: answer **three** questions.

Section B: answer Question 5.

Section C: answer **one** question.

#### Section A

Candidates choose to answer **three** questions from a choice of four.

Section A questions focus on a short Bible passage from which candidates outline points of interest or difficulty. Candidates should refer to the passage and its context but should not retell the story from which the passage is taken.

Each question in Section A is 5 marks and assesses AO1 Knowledge and understanding.

#### Section B

Candidates answer one compulsory question in Section B which focuses on a longer Bible passage that is linked to the question. Candidates must refer to the text passage in their answer.

The Section B question is 10 marks and assesses AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

## Section C

Candidates answer **one** structured question from a choice of two in Section C.

Each question in Section C has two parts:

Part (a) is 10 marks and assesses AO1 Knowledge and understanding.

Part (b) is 15 marks and assesses AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

Candidates must answer **all** parts of the question they have chosen.

## Paper 2 – The Development of Christianity

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the AS Level subject content and specified Bible texts for Paper 2 (topics 2.1–2.3).

Questions may cover more than one topic or ask candidates to make comparisons between topic areas. Texts referred to in questions are from the specified texts for study.

Candidates answer **two** questions in total:

Section A: answer **one** question.

Section B: answer **one** question.

### Section A

Candidates answer **one** structured question from a choice of two in Section A.

Each question has three parts, (a), (b), and (c) which are linked by a theme:

- Part (a) is 5 marks and assesses AO1 Knowledge and understanding
- Part (b) is 10 marks and assesses AO1 Knowledge and understanding
- Part (c) is 10 marks and assesses AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

Candidates must answer **all** parts of the question they have chosen.

### Section B

Candidates answer **one** structured question from a choice of two in Section B.

Each question in Section B has two parts:

Part (a) is 10 marks and assesses AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Part (b) is 15 marks and assesses AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

Candidates must answer **all** parts of the question they have chosen.

## Paper 3 – Prophets of the Old Testament

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the A Level subject content and specified Bible texts for Paper 3 (topics 3.1-3.3).

Questions may cover more than one topic or ask candidates to make comparisons between the content areas. Bible passages used in questions are from the specified texts for study.

Candidates answer **four** questions in total:

Section A: answer **two** questions.

Section B: answer Question 4.

Section C: answer **one** question.

### Section A

Candidates choose to answer **two** questions from a choice of three.

Section A questions focus on a short Bible passage from which candidates outline points of interest or difficulty. Candidates should refer to the passage and its context but should not retell the story from which the passage is taken.

Each question in Section A is 5 marks and assesses AO1 Knowledge and understanding.

### Section B

Candidates answer one compulsory question in Section B which focuses on a longer Bible passage that is linked to the question. Candidates must refer to the text passage in their answer.

The Section B question is 15 marks and assesses AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

### Section C

Candidates answer **one** essay question from a choice of two in Section C.

Each essay question is 25 marks:

- 10 marks AO1 Knowledge and understanding
- 15 marks AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

## Paper 4 – Christian Understandings of God, Life and the Universe

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the A Level subject content and specified Bible texts for Paper 4 (topics 4.1–4.3).

Questions may cover more than one topic or ask candidates to make comparisons between the content areas. Texts referred to in questions are from the specified texts for study.

Candidates answer **two** questions in total. This paper is not divided into sections.

Candidates answer two essay question from a choice of three.

Each essay question is 25 marks:

- 10 marks AO1 Knowledge and understanding
- 15 marks AO2 Analysis and evaluation, so candidates are required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

## Command words

Command words and their meanings help candidates know what is expected from them in the exam. The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
<b>Analyse</b>	examine in detail to show meaning, identify elements and the relationship between them
<b>Assess</b>	make an informed judgement
<b>Comment</b>	give an informed opinion
<b>Compare</b>	identify/comment on similarities and/or differences
<b>Consider</b>	review and respond to given information
<b>Contrast</b>	identify/comment on differences
<b>Describe</b>	state the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
<b>Discuss</b>	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
<b>Evaluate</b>	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount, or value of something
<b>Examine</b>	investigate closely, in detail
<b>Explain</b>	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things evident / provide why and/or how and support with relevant evidence
<b>Outline</b>	set out main points
<b>State</b>	express in clear terms

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## 5 What else you need to know

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This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

### Before you start

#### Previous study

We do not expect learners starting this course to have previously studied biblical studies or religious studies.

#### Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge International AS & A Level syllabuses based on learners having about 180 guided learning hours for each Cambridge International AS Level and about 360 guided learning hours for a Cambridge International A Level. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to local practice and their previous experience of the subject.

#### Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable.

You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables)

You can enter candidates in the November exam series.

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus. For more information, please refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

#### Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

#### Group awards: Cambridge AICE

Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge International AS & A Level. It allows schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass exams in a range of different subjects.

Learn more about Cambridge AICE at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice)

## Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has a copy of this guide.

## Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to one administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable. Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

## Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make your entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

## Retakes and carry forward

Candidates can retake Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level as many times as they want to. Information on retake entries is at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/entries](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/entries). To confirm what entry options are available for this syllabus, refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries* for the relevant series.

Candidates can carry forward the result of their Cambridge International AS Level assessment from one series to complete the Cambridge International A Level in a following series, subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Regulations for carrying forward entries for staged assessment (Cambridge International AS & A Level) can be found in the *Cambridge Handbook* for the relevant year of assessment at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

## Language

This syllabus and the related assessment materials are available in English only.



## Accessibility and equality

### Syllabus and assessment design

Cambridge International works to avoid direct or indirect discrimination in our syllabuses and assessment materials. We aim to maximise inclusivity for candidates of all national, cultural or social backgrounds and with other protected characteristics. In addition, the language and layout used are designed to make our materials as accessible as possible. This gives all learners the opportunity, as fairly as possible, to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and helps to minimise the requirement to make reasonable adjustments during the assessment process.

### Access arrangements

Access arrangements (including modified papers) are the principal way in which Cambridge International complies with our duty, as guided by the UK Equality Act (2010), to make 'reasonable adjustments' for candidates with special educational needs (SEN), disability, illness or injury. Where a candidate would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate with no SEN, disability, illness or injury, we may be able to agree pre-examination access arrangements. These arrangements help a candidate by minimising accessibility barriers and maximising their opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in an assessment.

#### Important:

- Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate's barrier to assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working at school; this is in line with *The Cambridge Handbook* [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)
- For Cambridge International to approve an access arrangement, we will need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment, involves reasonable cost and timeframe and does not affect the security and integrity of the assessment.
- Availability of access arrangements should be checked by centres at the start of the course. Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in *The Cambridge Handbook* [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)
- Please contact us at the start of the course to find out if we are able to approve an arrangement that is not included in the list of standard access arrangements.
- Candidates who cannot access parts of the assessment may be able to receive an award based on the parts they have completed.

## After the exam

### Grading and reporting

Grades A\*, A, B, C, D or E indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International A Level. A\* is the highest and E is the lowest grade.

Grades a, b, c, d or e indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International AS Level. 'a' is the highest and 'e' is the lowest grade.

'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for the lowest grade (E or e). 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (PENDING).
- X (NO RESULT).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

If a candidate takes a Cambridge International A Level and fails to achieve grade E or higher, a Cambridge International AS Level grade will be awarded if both of the following apply:

- the components taken for the Cambridge International A Level by the candidate in that series included all the components making up a Cambridge International AS Level
- the candidate's performance on the AS Level components was sufficient to merit the award of a Cambridge International AS Level grade.

On the statement of results and certificates, Cambridge International AS & A Levels are shown as General Certificates of Education, GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (GCE AS Level) and GCE Advanced Level (GCE A Level).

**School feedback:** 'Cambridge International A Levels are the 'gold standard' qualification. They are based on rigorous, academic syllabuses that are accessible to students from a wide range of abilities yet have the capacity to stretch our most able.'

**Feedback from:** Director of Studies, Auckland Grammar School, New Zealand

## How students, teachers and higher education can use the grades

### Cambridge International A Level

Assessment at Cambridge International A Level has two purposes:

- to measure learning and achievement  
The assessment:
  - confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.
- to show likely future success  
The outcomes:
  - help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
  - help students choose the most suitable course or career.

### Cambridge International AS Level

Assessment at Cambridge International AS Level has two purposes:

- to measure learning and achievement  
The assessment:
  - confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.
- to show likely future success  
The outcomes:
  - help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
  - help students choose the most suitable course or career
  - help decide whether students part way through a Cambridge International A Level course are making enough progress to continue
  - guide teaching and learning in the next stages of the Cambridge International A Level course.

## Grade descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give an indication of the standards of achievement candidates awarded particular grades are likely to show. Weakness in one aspect of the examination may be balanced by a better performance in some other aspect.

Grade descriptions for Cambridge International A Level Biblical Studies will be published after the first assessment of the A Level in 2023. Find more information at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/alevel](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/alevel)

## Changes to this syllabus for 2024, 2025 and 2026

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2021.

**You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.**

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### **Changes to availability**

- This syllabus is now available for exams in the June and November series.
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**School feedback:** ‘While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.’

**Feedback from:** Zhai Xiaoning, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We're always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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