

Cambridge O Level

BIBLICAL STUDIES

2035/12

Paper 1 The Portrayal of God in the Bible

May/June 2025

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

<p>Published</p>

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the May/June 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.





Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Correct point
	Incorrect point
BOD	Benefit of the doubt
Highlighter	Highlighting areas of text
Off-page comment	Allows comments to be entered at the bottom of the RM marking window and then displayed when the associated question item is navigated to.
NBOD	No benefit of doubt given
	Omission mark
	Unclear
NAQ	Not answered question
EG	Example / reference
DEV	Development
SEEN	Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given.
EVAL	Evaluation

Guidance on using levels-based mark schemes

Marking of work should be positive, rewarding achievement where possible, but clearly differentiating across the whole range of marks, where appropriate.

The marker should look at the work and then make a judgement about which level statement is the best fit. In practice, work does not always match one level statement precisely so a judgement may need to be made between two or more level statements.

Once a best-fit level statement has been identified, use the following guidance to decide on a specific mark:

- If the candidate's work **convincingly** meets the level statement, award the highest mark.
- If the candidate's work **adequately** meets the level statement, award the most appropriate mark in the middle of the range (where middle marks are available).
- If the candidate's work **just** meets the level statement, award the lowest mark.

Annotation:

- Ticks have no defined meaning for levels of response marking.
- Other annotations will be used by examiners as agreed during standardisation, and the meaning will be understood by all examiners who marked that paper.

Level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate knowledge of specified texts and corresponding Christian teachings, beliefs and practices.
- Demonstrate understanding of these texts, teachings, beliefs and practices in both biblical and modern contexts, including areas where there are different views within Christianity.

These level descriptions are used for part **(a)** questions in **Questions 3, 4 and 5** and all part **(b)** questions.

Level	Description	Marks
Level 3	Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers the question, using detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates clear understanding through a well-developed and substantial response. • A well-structured format. 	5–6
Level 2	Some accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially answers the question, using some accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates some understanding through a partially developed response, covering some of the points. • Responds in a mostly structured format. 	3–4
Level 1	Limited accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to answer the question, using limited accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates limited understanding through an underdeveloped response through limited coverage of the points or a response in general terms. • Attempts to present the information in a structured format. 	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation

Use evidence and reasoned discussion of a range of points of view to make judgements about issues within Christianity arising from the texts.

These level descriptions are used for all **part (c)** questions.

Level	Description	Marks
Level 4	Clear and well-reasoned evaluation in response to the question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers more than one point of view in detail. • Fully answers the question, using relevant evidence to support a well-structured discussion. • Concludes with a clear and well-reasoned judgement. 	7–8
Level 3	Clear evaluation in response to the question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers more than one point of view. • Answers the question, using some relevant evidence to support a well-structured discussion. • Concludes with a clear judgement. 	5–6
Level 2	An evaluation in response to the question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers one point of view; any other attempts to state a point of view are descriptive. • Partially answers the question, using partially relevant evidence to support a structured discussion. • Concludes with a judgement. 	3–4
Level 1	Limited evaluation in response to the question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive response with an attempt to state a point of view, describing material linked to the question or topic. • Attempts to answer the question, using limited relevant evidence to support a discussion. • Limited or no judgement present. 	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)(i)	<p><u>Genesis 17:9–10, NRSVA</u></p> <p>God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised’.</p> <p>Give Abraham’s name before God made the covenant with him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abram <p>Award one mark for a correct response.</p>	1
1(a)(ii)	<p>State how old God said that males should be when they are circumcised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight days old <p>Award one mark for a correct response.</p>	1
1(a)(iii)	<p>Describe what God said to Abraham about Sarai.</p> <p>Any four from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her name will be Sarah / her name will no longer be Sarai • God will bless her • God will give Abraham a son by her • a son called Isaac • She will give rise to nations / be the mother of nations • Kings of people will come from her <p>Award one mark for each response up to a maximum of four marks.</p>	4

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Explain the importance of the covenant with Abraham in God's overall plan for humanity.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>In this chapter, God makes a covenant with Abram / Abraham. The main promise of this covenant is that God will make Abraham the ancestor of a multitude of nations. This is the formal start of the Jewish people, into whom Jesus was born, and so this is an important turning point in God's overall plan for humanity.</p> <p>The Jewish people were God's chosen race, and some Christians might observe that in God's plan, he started with a smaller, chosen people, and moved on to all people being chosen by God. This might be because God needed to teach truths to a smaller group first or to prove that he would uphold the covenant in a more limited setting.</p> <p>Although circumcision is not a part of Christian practice today, the commandment to do this is part of the way that Christians might say God taught his people how to obey his commandments.</p> <p>Some Christians might focus on the idea of God's promises when exploring the importance of this passage. Others might focus on the instructions for the people and others might observe that both the man and the woman play a part in this covenant, in a reversal of the part played by both man and woman in the Fall.</p>	6

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>'A God of love should not need to make covenants with his people.' Discuss.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Some candidates might agree with this statement because a covenant implies a contract that may be broken by some. A God of love should not be setting his people up to fail and would be aiming always to help his people. They might agree because a God who loves his people should be guiding them at all times, rather than waiting to see if they succeed or not.</p> <p>Other candidates might disagree with the statement and argue that the covenants, as part of God's plan, provide stepping stones and guidance that the God of love wants to use to teach his people. They might suggest that while God's love is unconditional, it can only be fully met and understood by humans exercising their free will and so humans must be placed in a position to choose. In this way, the most loving that God could be, would be to offer covenants to his people and to teach them how to obey their side of the covenant.</p> <p>Some candidates might engage with the idea of the new covenant which for many Christians offers an unconditional reward through the death of Jesus on the cross. Some Christians would observe that living the right Christian life provides the condition for the new covenant. Candidates could then engage with how easy it is to know what a 'right Christian life' looks like.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)(i)	<p><u>Jonah 3:4, NRSVA</u></p> <p>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'</p> <p>State what the people of Nineveh did when they heard this message and believed God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They proclaimed a fast • Everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth <p>Award one mark for each response.</p>	2
2(a)(ii)	<p>Describe the proclamation that the king made in Nineveh.</p> <p>Any four from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No human being or animal, no herd or flock shall taste anything • They shall not feed nor take water • Human beings and animals shall be covered in sackcloth • They shall cry mightily to God • All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands • Maybe God will relent and change his mind • God may turn from his fierce anger so that we do not perish <p>Award one mark for each correct answer up to a maximum of four marks.</p>	4
2(b)	<p>Explain possible reasons why Jonah became angry with God.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Jonah found it displeasing that God had changed his mind. Jonah might have got angry because of all that he had been through being in vain - not only the events on and after being on the ship but also the hard work he had done while in Nineveh.</p> <p>Jonah's prayer to God in chapter 4 reveals the main reason he was angry: he had said at the beginning that God, being a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, would relent from punishing the people of Nineveh. And yet, God had continued with his plan and forced Jonah into action.</p> <p>Jonah's anger may also have built up through the events of the book, including his anger at being in the belly of the fish and / or his anger at being taught a lesson through the people of Nineveh.</p>	6

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	<p>Assess the view that God will always change his mind when people pray.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Some candidates might agree with the suggestion in the question in full, arguing that why else might people pray if not to influence the future in some way. They might argue that there is little point in praying for the healing of those who are sick, for example. They might observe that the inclusion of the story of Jonah in the Bible is good evidence for it being a worthwhile approach to prayer, but they could also note how different the book of Jonah is to other books in the Old Testament.</p> <p>Many candidates are likely to engage with the word 'always' in the question and observe that there are times when God is not going to change his mind - for example, when the prayers of people are not pure or appropriate in some way. Some candidates may make reference to the idea that God never says no to a genuine prayer but only 'not yet'. The burden is on the people to know what they should and should not pray for.</p> <p>Some candidates may suggest that God, knowing the future and the best for his people, will never change his mind because this is against the nature of God. They might argue that the world needs to go about its natural ways – for example, the cycle of life and death, and so God cannot appropriately intervene. Proper prayer, these candidates might suggest, is prayer that helps to influence our reactions to situations – such as praying for strength in difficult times. They might also observe that God does not change his mind since the action is what he had intended to do in the first place.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	<p>Outline God's instructions to Moses, after he had revealed his name, <u>and</u> state what God said about how the elders of Israel would respond.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following in quotation or paraphrase, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p><u>Exodus 3:14–18</u></p> <p>Moses was instructed by God to say to the Israelites that I AM had sent him to them. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent Moses to them, and this is his name for ever and his title for all generations.</p> <p>Moses was to assemble the elders of Israel and to say that God had appeared to Moses and seen what had been done to them in Egypt and God will bring them from the misery of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey. As a result of this, the elders of Israel would listen to Moses and together they will go to the king of Egypt and say: 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews has met with us; let us now go three days' journey into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.'</p>	6
3(b)	<p>Explain the importance of Moses for Christians today.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Candidates might begin by saying that the life and work of Moses holds importance to Christians today because of the enduring nature of what he did. Candidates might refer to the revelation of the name of God for all time or the significance of the Ten Commandments / covenant.</p> <p>Candidates might explore the importance of the place of Moses in Jewish history, examining the institution of the Passover, the Mosaic covenant and the delivery of the people of Israel out of Egypt and to the promised land. They might link this to Christians today by exploring the place of Judaism in Christian history.</p> <p>Candidates might explore the symbolic links between the life of Moses and Christianity. They might explore the relationship between the Passover and the Eucharist or the links between delivering the Israelites from slavery compared with the work of Jesus, delivering all people from slavery to sin.</p>	6

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	<p>‘Christians should never use force to liberate people in need.’ Discuss.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation to mark candidates’ response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Some candidates might argue that Christianity is a religion of peace and so any form of force would never be appropriate. They might give examples from Christian practice or the life of Jesus to highlight non-violence and its positive effects. Some might argue that Christians themselves should not use force, but this is not what took place in Biblical times, when it was God who was making the decision for force to be used.</p> <p>To disagree with the statement, candidates might point to examples of just wars or holy wars that have necessitated violence and / or force for particular causes. They might argue that inequality is never acceptable and that sometimes force (or violence) might be necessary to right the wrongs of society. Candidates might point to examples from the set texts or beyond to argue that Christians are peace-loving but not necessarily pacifist.</p> <p>Some candidates might explore the distinction between different types of need in the world or explore ideas to do with the proportionate use of force.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	<p>Outline Paul’s teaching about the message of the cross in 1 Corinthians.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates’ response to this question.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following in quotation or paraphrase, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p><u>1 Corinthians 1:18–25</u></p> <p>Paul says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to those being saved, it is the power of God. It is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart’.</p> <p>Paul says that God has made the wisdom of the world foolish because the world did not know God through wisdom and so the foolish proclamation (of the cross) would be that which brings about salvation.</p> <p>Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but Christians proclaim a crucified Christ, which is a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. However, to those who are called (whether they are Jews or Gentiles / Greeks), Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God.</p> <p>God’s foolishness, Paul concludes, is wider than human wisdom; and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.</p>	6

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	<p>Explain how Paul's audience in Corinth might have understood this teaching.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Candidates might begin by explaining that Paul was writing to a church that was divided. The Corinthians had lost sight of the fact that they were all followers of Jesus and sought to follow human individuals within the church. Paul challenges this by saying firstly that following Christ is central but also that one should not be following humans but God – because even God's foolishness is greater than any human wisdom.</p> <p>The teaching on the cross shows how Christian belief stood apart from the two main approaches present in Corinth at the time. Jews looked for signs of power to 'prove' how they should act and what they should believe.</p> <p>Christianity offers as the sign of power the cross – a complete stumbling block for Jews because at face value, it is a sign of defeat. However, God's weakness is stronger than any human strength. Greeks / Gentiles sought philosophy and wisdom to understand what to believe and how to act but God offers utter foolishness (at face value) in the self-sacrifice of Jesus.</p> <p>The passage serves to highlight that it is the cross of Christ that is at the heart of the Christian message and Christians should return to this basic aspect of their faith whenever they go astray.</p>	6

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>To what extent is Paul's teaching about the message of the cross relevant to Christians today?</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Candidates might argue that the message of the cross is absolutely relevant to Christians today because it remains the central part of Christian theology for all time. The cross, the salvation of humanity and the resurrection are what people need to believe in in order to be Christians and what people need to accept into their lives in order to be saved. Some might say a weakness of this point is that all these are different aspects of the one message of the cross.</p> <p>Candidates might suggest that some will challenge this. The teaching about the cross was important to those at the time of Paul because it was what was needed for people to leave their old ways behind and to become Christians. This is now in the past and the important aspects of Christianity are about how the faith is lived in the world, how people are cared for and treated and how the moral teachings of Jesus are applied in modern-day life.</p> <p>Candidates might examine the idea that crucifixion is not something that it is easy for modern-day Christians to understand and therefore the message of self-sacrifice is important. They might suggest that God's overall plan for humanity needs to be focused on by Christians and not simply the cross.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
5(a)	<p>Describe Peter's vision when he was in Joppa.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following in quotation or paraphrase, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p><u>Acts 10:9–16</u></p> <p>It was about noon and Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In the sheet were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air.</p> <p>Then he heard a voice saying: 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' Peter replied, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.'</p> <p>The voice said to him again, a second time, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.'</p> <p>This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.</p>	6
5(b)	<p>Explain why this vision was significant to the early church.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO1 Knowledge and understanding to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Candidates are likely to focus on the importance for the early church of the decision to move away from the Jewish dietary laws and to allow the eating of food that had previously been seen as unclean (e.g. pork and shellfish). This vision gives divine authority to that decision. By extension, it is a sign that Christianity is a distinct religion from Judaism and so other aspects of the Law are likely not to be needed in the religion of the new covenant.</p> <p>Candidates might observe that the passage shows the importance of the character of Peter as a leader within Christianity. God chooses Peter, rather than any of the other apostles, to reveal this significant message to. This could have helped the early church with decisions about leadership.</p> <p>They might observe that it is significant that God appears through a dream to Peter. God reveals himself to the world in many ways but after the time of Jesus, the early church needed to understand that God would come in visions, perhaps in ways that they were not used to.</p>	6

Question	Answer	Marks
5(c)	<p>Assess the view that this vision has nothing to teach modern-day Christians.</p> <p>Use the level descriptions for AO2 Evaluation to mark candidates' response to this question.</p> <p>Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited.</p> <p>Candidates might argue that the vision of Peter is irrelevant to Christians today because Christianity today has moved on from debating whether or not the Jewish laws are relevant. Christianity needs to understand how to function in the modern world, not in a world where the faith is emerging from Judaism. They might argue that it is right for Christianity to engage with modern issues but that these issues have always changed over the centuries.</p> <p>Candidates might disagree and say that the vision of Peter is relevant to Christians today. It places Christianity in the context of a history that stretches back to Abraham and Moses, and it reminds Christians that at all significant moments, God will guide them if people allow it. It also perhaps teaches Christians who use the Old Testament as part of their devotion that the Old Testament should not be taken as literally true.</p> <p>Candidates might go on to explore subtleties in these points.</p> <p>Some candidates might argue that the passage has more to teach on an historical level than on a spiritual level.</p>	8