

## PART FOUR: BIBLICAL TEXTS

<b>Syllabus Objectives</b>	<p><i>Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a knowledge of how the Bible came to be written</li> <li>• Be familiar with the variety of literary genres found in the Bible</li> <li>• Be aware of the intrinsic links between the formation of the Bible and the formation of the Jewish and Christian communities</li> <li>• Have a detailed knowledge of certain key texts</li> </ul> <p><i>Understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an understanding that the Bible is, and continues to be, a classic text for Western civilisation</li> <li>• Recognise that for the Christian traditions, this text is respected as the Word of God</li> </ul> <p><i>Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navigate the format and structure of the Bible</li> <li>• Identify and differentiate some of the literary genres found in the Bible</li> <li>• Compare and contrast certain key texts</li> </ul> <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for the Bible as living, classic, and sacred text</li> <li>• Appreciation of and respect for the sacred writings of the other major religious traditions</li> <li>• Appreciation of the central place of the Bible in the Judaeo-Christian traditions</li> </ul>
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### Procedure

#### Topic: 4.1 The Hebrew scriptures

<i>Ex 20:1-21</i>	<i>The Ten Commandments</i>
<i>1 Sam 2:1-10</i>	<i>Hannah's Song of Thanks</i>
<i>Is 52:13-53:12</i>	<i>Israel Restored</i>

Ordinary Level study any one, higher-level any two of the following texts.

Read the chosen text and research its background and significance under the following headings:

#### Ex 20:1-21: The Ten Commandments

<i>Original background / context</i>	The 'Ten Words' (Decalogue) tied to God's revelation at Sinai are the most general and comprehensive series of laws in the Old Testament (Ex 34; Lev 19) and are set apart from the laws that follow in Ex 21-23.
<i>Authorship / source</i>	The Ten Commandments are presented as divine words spoken to Moses (Ex 20:1)
<i>Genre / type</i>	They are couched in unconditional form and contain no explicit sanctions unlike those couched in conditional form such as the laws found in Ex 21-23 or the ancient <i>Code of Hammurabi</i> 209. The length of the commandments in Ex 20:1-17 varies greatly. The original form was probably much shorter (vv.6, 7, 8, 9). Eight are in negative form, two in positive. The number ten was probably a teaching aid. The prologue to the commandments with its reference to God's liberating act provides the motivation (Ex 20:2). The commandments had a long historical development in both oral and written stages as can be seen, for example, in the differences between the versions recorded in Ex 20:1-17 and Dt 5:6-21. They are numbered differently in Jewish writings and in the Christian churches. For some the prohibition against false worship in Ex 20:3-6 constitutes two commandments while Ex 20:17 is taken as one. For others Ex 20:3-6 is seen as one commandment while the commandment against coveting of Ex 20:17 is divided in two.
<i>Meaning and significance</i>	The Ten Commandments function as the obligations of the people of Israel in Yahweh's covenant with them. The covenant context provides the sanction. Breaking these commandments sets one outside this covenant relationship.
<i>What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people</i>	The 'Ten Words' are sometimes divided into commandments that refer to humanity's duty to God (1-3) and to one another (4-10).
<i>Contemporary significance for worship</i>	The Ten Commandments touch areas of great importance in the life of the community e.g. worship of Yahweh, killing, kidnapping, swearing falsely.

## 1 Sam 2:1-10: The Song of Hannah

<i>Original background / context</i>	The story of the birth of Samuel (1 Sam 1-2) is the context for the Song of Hannah his mother (1 Sam 2:1-10).
<i>Authorship / source</i>	The Song was originally composed in a different context and was adapted to its present context on the lips of a once barren woman who is celebrating God's intervention on her behalf. It may date from the 9 <sup>th</sup> or 10 <sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Song of Deborah, Jdgs 5; Song of Moses, Ex 15).
<i>Genre / type</i>	An ancient poem.
<i>Meaning and significance</i>	Hannah, a wife of Elkanah, was childless and an object of derision. She went to the sanctuary at Shiloh to pray for a son and promised him to the Lord (1 Sam 1:11). Assured that her prayer would be heard (1 Sam 1:17) she returned home. In due course she conceived and bore a son whom she called Samuel. Samuel was to become one of the great figures in Israel's history, a priestly and a prophetic figure who would preside over the introduction of the monarchy to Israel. When the child was weaned Hannah brought him to the sanctuary at Shiloh to present him to the Lord and to offer sacrifice. She also offered a prayer to the lord (1 Sam 2:1). Her prayer is the Song of Hannah, a song of praise and thanksgiving for Yahweh's intervention on her behalf.
<i>What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people</i>	The song celebrates Yahweh's victories, his knowledge and strength, his interventions on behalf of the poor and the faithful, his triumph over his adversaries. The reference to the anointed king in v.10 foreshadows the institution of the monarchy with which Samuel will be closely connected.
<i>Contemporary significance for worship</i>	The hymn is recalled in Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1).

## Is 52:13-53:12: Suffering Servant

<i>Original background / context</i>	This is the fourth of a series of servant songs (Is 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9) found in Deutero-Isaiah (Is 40-55), written to give hope and consolation to the Jewish exiles in Babylon and assure them of their imminent liberation.
<i>Authorship / source</i>	This was written by a disciple of Isaiah
<i>Genre / type</i>	A Poem which consists of a report (53:1-11a) which is framed by utterances of God (52:13-15; 53:11b-12). There are echoes of a suffering Jeremiah (Jer 15:17) and Job (19:13-19) in the song, and its language and imagery recall the psalms of lament.
<i>Meaning and significance</i>	The poem speaks of the servant's humiliation and exaltation. It suggest more clearly than anywhere in the Old Testament the atoning power of an individual's suffering. The identity of the servant is not clear. It is taken by some to refer to an individual, by others to refer to Israel.
<i>What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people</i>	The song begins with God speaking of the exaltation of the utterly humiliated servant to the amazement of many nations and kings (52:13-15). It continues with a report on the servant's suffering (53:1-10) and exaltation (53:10-11a). Despised and reckoned as nothing (v.3), he bears the sufferings of others (v.4). His fate, thought to be God's doing, is in reality caused by others (4-6), not only that but he carries their burdens – their illness, rebellion, iniquities. They are reconciled through his vicarious suffering. Throughout his sufferings he remains silent. Ultimately he dies and receives a shameful burial (vv.8-9). But paradoxically he is restored to 'life' as God turns to him and intervenes on his behalf (vv.10-11a). The song concludes with God's assurance of the servant's rehabilitation. It was he who bore the sin of many; it is he who intercedes for them (53:11b-12). He will be rewarded. God acted through him to bring salvation to many.
<i>Contemporary significance for worship</i>	The image of the suffering servant is taken up again in the New Testament (Mk 10:45 and Is 53:10; Lk 22:37 and 53:12; Acts 8:32-35 and Is 53:7-8).

### Written Questions

Choose **one** of the following texts and write a paragraph on the origin, genre/type and meaning of this passage.

- Ex 20:1-21 The Ten Commandments
- 1Sam 2: 1-10 Hannah's Song of Thanks
- Is 52: 13-53:12 Israel Restored

**Outcomes:** As a result of studying this section, students should be able to

- explore and analyse these texts under the following headings:
  - the original background/context – authorship/source – the genre/type; meaning and significance
  - what it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people
  - contemporary significance for worship.

## Topic: 4.2 The New Testament

Mk 9:2-13 The Transfiguration

Lk 6:20-49 The Sermon on the Plain

Jn 1:1-18 The Prologue.

Ordinary Level covers any one higher-level covers any two of the following texts:

### MK 9:2-13:Transfiguration

<i>Original background / context</i>	The transfiguration story is preceded by Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah (8:27-30), Jesus' prediction of his passion, death and resurrection (8:31), Peter's protest and Jesus' rebuke (8:32-33) and Jesus' insistence that suffering is part of being his disciple (8:34). It is followed by the cure of the epileptic and another prediction of his passion, death and resurrection (9:31-32). The disciples' lack of understanding of Jesus' identity is also highlighted (8:32; 9:19, 32). The story recalls the scene in Gethsemane and is linked to it by the presence of the same three witnesses (cf. 9:2; 14:33).
<i>Authorship / source</i>	Mark's gospel
<i>Genre / type</i>	The story is full of the language of symbol
<i>Meaning and significance</i>	The story tells how Jesus brought three disciples with him up the mountain, recalling Mt Sinai the place of God's revelation to Moses. There he is 'transfigured' and his clothes become dazzling white (a reference to divine glory). Elijah and Moses who appear with him are seen as representative of the law and the prophets, faithful servants of God who suffered because of their obedience to his word, figures who also point towards Jesus' ultimate glorification. Peter still groping for the truth (cf. 8:32) addresses Jesus as rabbi and speaks of making three booths (huts of plaited branches) as a way of honouring them or of prolonging their presence. The cloud which envelops the three figures symbolizes the presence of God. From it comes the voice of God identifying Jesus as his beloved son and calling for him to be listened to. The story concludes with Jesus and the disciples on their own. On the way down the mountain the three disciples are bound to secrecy until after Jesus' resurrection.
<i>What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people</i>	The command for secrecy helps to explain the tension between the lack of understanding among his contemporaries of Jesus' identity and their later faith. Mark's community is thus assured of the truth of what they believe. Jewish expectation of the return of Elijah is raised by the disciples. Jesus' reply is that Elijah has indeed come in the person of John the Baptist. And as John was treated so the Son of man would be. John is not the Messiah but his death foreshadows that of Jesus himself (9:12).
<i>Contemporary significance for worship</i>	The Transfiguration story provides a heavenly confirmation of Jesus' identity and his teaching about his suffering, death and resurrection. It calls on the disciples (and readers) to heed his words.

### LK 6:20-49: The Sermon on the Plain

<i>Original background / context</i>	Luke's Sermon on the Plain (6:20-49) is parallel to the Sermon on the Mount of Mt 5:1-7:27 but is less than a third of its length. It too is linked to a mountain, being delivered on the plain below the mountain where Jesus had spent the night in prayer (6:12, 17) before choosing the twelve apostles (6:13-16). It is followed, as in Matthew's gospel, by the healing of the centurion's son. Addressed directly to the disciples (6:20), it is delivered in the hearing of the crowds who had brought their sick to him to be healed (see 6:17-19; 7:1). The audience is representative of 'all Israel'.
<i>Authorship / source</i>	The gospel of Luke
<i>Genre / type</i>	Sermon
<i>Meaning and significance</i>	The Sermon opens, as does Mt 5:1-7:27, with beatitudes (Lk 6:20-23) and closes with the parable of the house and the storm (6:46-49). Both sermons are placed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry as inaugural discourses and the material in them is assigned for the most part to Q. The 'woes' of Lk 6:24-26 are not paralleled in Matthew's Sermon. The similarities and differences between the two 'Sermons', both in the order of events and in the content of the material, supports the theory of a written source for the sermon.
<i>What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people</i>	The Sermon is rich in content opening with four beatitudes, declarations of a person's 'blessedness' in the present in view of a future intervention of God. Jesus declares blessed the poor, that is, those who are needy, dependent on others. He also declares blessed those who are hungry and mourning 'now' – both of which represent different kinds of poverty – and assures them of future consolation. The fourth beatitude declares blessed the disciples who are facing persecution of various kinds 'on account of the Son of Man; they too are assured of a reward at the end of time. The beatitudes are followed by four corresponding woes (6:24-26), threatening in nature and referring to a reversal of fortune at the end of time. These are pronounced against the rich, the satisfied, those who laugh now and those well-spoken of. Their present 'blissful' situations will be reversed (Luke warnings against the dangers of wealth in 12:16-21;16:19-31). The woes lead directly to the next part of Jesus' sermon that begins with his teaching on loving one's enemy (6:27-35). Here he radicalises the law of Lev 19:18, redefining 'neighbour' in the broadest terms possible, so that it covers friend and 'foe' alike. It is such a love that must dominate the life of the disciple. The disciple must also imitate the mercy of the Father (v.36), a quality referred to repeatedly in the Old Testament. One imitates God's mercy through not judging, or criticizing but being forgiving and

	generous. The disciple should be a good guide, who is self-critical, aware of his or her own faults, and capable of producing good. The parable of the house and the storm brings the sermon to a close with a call to put the word of God into action (6:46-49).
<i>Contemporary significance for worship</i>	The disciple should be a good guide, who is self-critical, aware of his or her own faults, and capable of producing good.

### Jn 1:1-18: The Prologue

<i>Original background / context</i>	Themes which are prominent in the gospel are introduced here (e.g. the word, life, light, darkness, glory, witness, truth, faith). The prologue is united around one basic theme - the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate word. The hymn is the fruit of a profound theological reflection on Jesus which highlights his mission as revealer. Having presented him as such in the prologue the evangelist goes on to deal with the content of Jesus' revelation in the gospel. The influence of songs in praise of wisdom is evident (Prov. 8:22-31, Sir 1:1-10; Sir 24:1-3) both in theme and in vocabulary. Inspired by these songs the author composed a hymn praising the person and the revealing saving work of the Word of God.
<i>Authorship / source</i>	The Gospel of John
<i>Genre / type</i>	Hymn
<i>Meaning and significance</i>	The prologue may be divided into three parts, 1-5, 6-14 and 15-18. In the first part the Word ( <i>Logos</i> ) is the pre-existent, eternal divine Word, in a close dynamic relationship with God. He is God's agent in creation, the source of light and life for humanity, a light that was not accepted but that darkness could not overcome.
<i>What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people</i>	The second part begins with the witness of John the Baptist (vv.6-8). It is he who prepares the way, who bears witness to the light (vv.7b, 8b) so that all might believe. But the world did not accept or acknowledge the light. His own people did not accept him (Jn 3:11, 32; 5:43; 12:37-43). But to those who did accept him he gave the gift of divine sonship (vv.12-13). The Word became flesh (v.14) – took on human form - and his 'flesh' becomes the locus of revelation, the place where the word of God has made itself visible so that humankind may contemplate his glory full of the grace of truth. The third part begins again with John's witness to the Word, to his pre-existence, to the gift of truth that came through him. In Jesus Christ the revelation of last things is complete and definitive.
<i>Contemporary significance for worship</i>	Jesus, the only begotten Son, reveals the mysteries of divine life because he lives in continual relationship with the Father

### Written Questions

Chose one of the following New Testament texts:

- Mk 9: 2-13 The Transfiguration
- Lk 6: 20-49 The Sermon on the Mount
- Jn 1: 1-18 The Prologue

Analyse this text referring to the following headings:

- (a) Origin
- (b) Authorship/source
- (c) Genre
- (d) Meaning
- (e) What it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people

*Outcomes:* As a result of studying this section, students should be able to

- explore and analyse these texts under the following headings:
  - the original background/context
  - the genre/type; meaning and significance
  - what it says about God and the relationship between God and God's people
  - authorship /source
  - contemporary significance for worship