



## How to Comment on a Context...

In all the biblical studies and doctrine exams you will be asked to comment on the context of various verses. In particular, you may be asked to comment on the literary, historical and biblical context. But what do these terms mean? How can you ensure that you cover all the necessary ground?

Here are some handy hints to help you understand what is meant by each of these terms. (For a fuller explanation, you can see your Introduction to the Bible book, study 2).



### Literary Context

- Reflect on what form the verse is in. Is it prophetic, narrative, poetic, historic, direct speech or part of a theological argument?
- Try to pinpoint where the verse comes. Can you identify which book of the Bible, the chapter ... maybe even the verse?
- Show that you know what is happening around the verse. If it is part of a narrative passage, sketch in the story ... if it's part of a letter, sketch in the argument ... if it's part of a prophecy, outline what the whole prophecy is about.
- Comment on how the verse fits into the structure of the book. E.g. if the verse comes from the first section of Mark's gospel, then show how the verse helps illustrate Mark's goal of explaining Jesus' identity.
- Define key theological words. Terms like 'atonement, sin, justify, Spirit' can all be defined helpfully.

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## ◀ Historical Context

- When was the verse written?
- Who wrote it?
- What was the context of the writer and the first readers ... was this written to encourage people who were being persecuted / rebuke those falling into a specific heresy / teach people who were unaware of some truth?
- Are there any relevant historical facts that help us understand the verse better? Will a few words about Roman occupation or the politics of the era make things clearer? You may also like to comment on the geography of the situation.

## Biblical Context

- Have a think about what other passages shed light on the verse on which you are commenting. Is your verse a fulfilment of a prophecy or a prophecy that is fulfilled in Jesus?
- How does the verse fit into the big picture of the Bible? Does it help show the promises to Abraham being progressed? Does it point to a Messiah to come or the problem of sin? Does it help build a picture of a doctrine?

It won't be possible to comment on every point for every verse but if you can get into the habit of commenting on as many of these areas as possible, then you should do fine in this section of the exam. Do read the question carefully though – sometimes you will be asked to comment on the meaning / significance / application of these verses as well as the context. More of that in our 'how to write gobbets' student support leaflet.

