

## B. Christianity | Sample Answer

### i. Explain two reasons why the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth would have posed a threat for the Roman rulers in Palestine (2019 Section B [a])

There are many reasons why the Roman Political Authorities in Palestine at the time of Jesus were threatened by his teachings. At the time of Jesus, the Sanhedrin was made up of two rival groups the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees accepted Roman rule, they were wealthy and dominated the Sanhedrin, they adopted a non-Jewish lifestyle and they lived out the Torah literally. The Pharisees rejected Roman rule, they were in charge of the local synagogues, and they were awaiting the Messiah to come to free them from Roman rule and to establish a new Kingdom. They lived out the 10 commandments.

On Palm Sunday Jesus arrived in Jerusalem greeted by his devout followers. They were waving branches and singing Hosanna. This gained the attention of the authorities as Jesus had a large enough band of followers to challenge their authority and upset the status quo. They were first threatened by Jesus on Monday of Holy Week when Jesus went into the temple and upturned all the tables telling the people that the temple was a place of worship and not a place for trading. What Jesus did in the temple really infuriated the authorities as he had overruled their judgement in allowing traders to occupy the temple in exchange for a percentage of the profit made. Another reason Jesus' teachings threatened the Sanhedrin was on Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus returned to the temple to preach the renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and his people, he gained the attention of quite a crowd, amongst them were the Sanhedrin, who fearing his words sought to catch him out either for blasphemy or treason and so asked Jesus; "who do you pay your taxes to" to which Jesus replied "pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and pay God what belongs to God". His reply showed that he was ready for any attack aimed at him and further proved to the Sanhedrin that he had to be removed before he could cause any more damage. On the Wednesday of Holy Week, Judas, the betrayer, met in secret with the Sanhedrin, claiming he would sell Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver, a deal the authorities took. On Holy Thursday at the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was arrested, put on trial and condemned to death by crucifixion. Jesus was sentenced to death because the authorities were ignorant and

feared his message. Jesus threatened Roman Power as he proclaimed the Kingdom of God. He was perceived by Romans as challenging the rule of Caesar. In the reign of God everything would be different, the first would come last and the last would come first, the poor blessed and the suffering would rejoice, the Kingdom of God would bring radical changes for those who embraced it. Jesus' claim to be Messiah was further evidence of the threat he posed to Rome. His Jewish enemies were quick to point out: that saying he himself is the Messiah, a king and accused him of blasphemy.

In conclusion, it's easy to see why the Romans feared Jesus Christ who was spreading messages of peace and freedom. They would act simply and decisively to end any attempt to revolt whether it was peaceful or otherwise.

## **ii. Examine why the Jewish authorities in Palestine were challenged by the actions of Jesus of Nazareth.**

There are many reasons why the Roman Political Authorities in Palestine at the time of Jesus were challenged by his actions.

The Law of Moses or the Ten Commandments was the concept on which Judaism was founded. For the chosen people, the Torah was the final word on how they should live their lives according to the will of God. The Sanhedrin was the governing body of the Temple. Therefore, when Jesus seemingly began to question the law, he posed a serious threat to the Jewish religious establishment and the leaders of the Temple. Jesus' claims about and attitudes to the Law seemed to question the Law and caused a great deal of suspicion and anger. Jesus' intentions were misunderstood. Rather than questioning the Law, he was challenging people to think about these laws in a new way. Jesus spoke about destroying and renewing the Temple at one point. This was misunderstood by the authorities as a rebellious act.

Jesus was accused by the Jewish authorities of blasphemy when he claimed to forgive sins. Blasphemy is a speech that is deemed abusive or derogatory towards God - any action or statement that shows disrespect towards God. This was such a serious offence, that it was

punishable by death. The men of the temple could not believe that Jesus was first and foremost calling himself the son of God and presuming to act on his behalf. Jesus was accused of treason by the political authorities and he was accused of blasphemy by the religious authorities.

Jesus came into conflict with the Jewish authorities over his moral teachings. Jesus' morality was a new departure from the moral teachings contained in the Tenakh. Jesus' message was one of love and forgiveness not punishment and condemnation. Jesus associated freely with sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors. This was something that would have been heavily frowned upon. He preached that we all were welcome in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus had provoked consternation in claiming to be the Son of God, the Messiah. The Messiah was understood to be the one who would bring about the message of the Kingdom of God. Jesus never claimed these titles of the "Son of God" or the "Messiah". Rather, he was regarded as such by many of those who heard and saw him, they proclaimed him as their Messiah and their Saviour. When Jesus entered Jerusalem during Passover week, he entered into the Temple and spoke with God's authority and an apparent superiority to Moses. It was frowned upon that he regarded himself as God's equal and announced he had the same omnipotent presence of God. At the meeting of the Sanhedrin, it was noted that Jesus worked 'signs' or 'miracles' that drew the attention of the people away from the Scribes and the Pharisees. The Romans were nervous about the amount of authority and popularity Jesus was receiving.