

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/12
The Four Gospels

Key messages

The set texts are taken from all four gospels. There is no requirement to read texts other than those set for study, though candidates benefit from having read all four gospels and then understand the distinctive characteristics of the gospels. Candidates are encouraged to work across topics where appropriate and to understand the influence of the Old Testament on the material.

General comments

To do well when answering these questions candidates must stick closely to the content of the question and identify what the main thrust of it is. Answers to questions should not just retell stories, there will always be a need to either assess, analyse, evaluate, or compare. Candidates need to identify this and then arrange their answer around this task, so that the question is clearly addressed. Whilst access to further reading material may vary, it is necessary for candidates to show that they have a good grasp of the set texts.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular question with the passage taken from the Matthean account of Jesus' baptism. Some candidates chose to answer this and the majority scored highly. The baptism stories are ones which candidates are familiar with as they are a key part of the story of Jesus. Here the focus was on John's reluctance to baptise Jesus and comment was around this point.

Question 2

This was another popular question about the disciples plucking the ears of corn from the field on the sabbath. Candidates commented on the reaction of the Pharisees and the question they asked. A few candidates retold the event with little comment on the challenge which was being made. Jesus was brought up with the knowledge of the sabbath laws therefore this aspect of the situation should be commented on in detail. Most candidates achieved a higher level for their answer.

Question 3

This question dealt with the purification service which followed Jesus' birth. For those who correctly identified the passage their answers were well written. Comment was made on the time lapse between birth and the need to present in the Temple and mention was made of the significance of the sacrifice needed. All candidates stuck to relevant comments around this excerpt.

Question 4

This was the least popular question within the first section. For those who chose it they correctly wrote about Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem at the start of the last few days of his life. Answers included mention of around the event but not much about the detail. More could have been mentioned about the central nature of Jerusalem and how the crowd's opinion of Jesus changed as events went on. The event was full of messianic symbolism which needed unpacking. However, those who chose to comment on this provided sound answers.

Section B

Question 5

All candidates answered this question which is designed to allow them to demonstrate their analytical and evaluative skills as well as their knowledge and understanding.

Good candidates balanced their answers with reference to the passage and additional material which they brought to their answers. Most candidates selected relevant passages to comment on. The better answers were not dependent on lots of other examples but on one or two other relevant passages they had studied, and the quality of response showed they understood the evaluative nature of the question. All candidates correctly identified and wrote about the transfiguration and compared it to the baptism story. Those answers which achieved a high level also included less obvious comparisons of stories. This question was well answered by most.

Section C

Question 6

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced for this question.

Question 7

- (a)** This was the most popular question in **Section C**. Candidates showed they were aware of the miracles of Jesus and were able to refer to many examples. Those who achieved the high levels referred to the part played by miracles and did not just tell the miracle story. Some mentioned them as fulfilment of prophecy and messianic indicators as well as explaining their role as demonstrating the divinity of Jesus. They were also referred to as being vehicles of faith and bringing glory to God.
- (b)** This question was very well answered by those who attempted it. Candidates referred to the miracles which recorded mention of the faith of those present. To get a high level of marks there needed to be a balance between those who thought the miracles showed the importance of faith and those miracles which highlighted another aspect other than faith, e.g. compassion or defeat of evil forces. Some referred to the signs in John's Gospel when the miracle is there to illustrate an 'I am' characteristic of Jesus. If answers did not demonstrate the evaluative element of the question, they could not achieve the highest level of marks.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/22
The Development of Christianity

Key messages

It is essential that candidates know which Assessment Objective (Knowledge and understanding (AO1) or Evaluation (AO2)) is being assessed in each part of the questions and answer appropriately. It is also essential that candidates study the set texts in detail.

General comments

In Section A, Questions 1a and 2a test recall and so require detailed knowledge to be shown. It was clear that some candidates did not have sound textual knowledge. Candidates were more confident with questions in Section B.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Successful responses kept to the set text (Acts 8:4–13) and did not go beyond the ‘describe’ command word.
- (b) Stronger responses discussed more than just an account of Philip’s meeting in Acts 8:26–40, and drew wider conclusions about the significance of the event, either historically or theologically.
- (c) Candidates offered different responses to this question and all relevant discussion was credited. Stronger responses used their knowledge of the text to compare and contrast the two figures. Weaker responses simply described the contribution of Stephen and Philip.

Question 2

- (a) Too few candidates attempted this question for comments. Successful responses would have focused on the events of Acts 17:10–15.
- (b) Too few candidates attempted this question for comments. Successful responses would have understood that the ‘explain’ command word required more than just a description of the events and offered a commentary on why they took place.
- (c) Stronger responses were able to hypothesise a different model of early church development, based on material from the set texts. As Paul taught both within and outside synagogues, there was sufficient material to build an argument. Few candidates attempted this question.

Question 3

- (a) Successful candidates had a clear knowledge of Paul’s teachings in the two texts cited and offered a commentary on the points made by Paul. As this question asked candidates to examine the teaching, judgement was not required. The strongest responses limited their scope to the specific texts cited in the question.
- (b) Successful candidates offered evaluation that contrasted the church of St Paul with a church where his rules were not delivered or were not strictly adhered to. Stronger responses drew on the set texts mentioned in the previous question but expanded their scope to include Paul’s other pronouncements about the conduct of worship in both 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Question 4

- (a) Too few candidates attempted this question for comments. Successful responses would have been limited to the cited text, identifying points of contrast between Peter and Paul.
- (b) Few candidates attempted this question for comments. Successful responses would have seen the opportunity in the scope of the question and offered a discussion that was based on a variety of sources from the A-level specification. From those candidates who did attempt the question, there were some stronger responses which showed understanding that despite slavery being a given for the writers of the New Testament, different authors portrayed it in different ways and used it as a basis for theological analysis.

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Paper 9484/32
Prophets of the Old Testament

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/42

**Christian Understandings of God, Life
and the Universe**

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.