

# BIBLICAL STUDIES

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**Paper 9484/12**  
**The Four Gospels**

## **Key messages**

The syllabus is designed to allow centres to produce focused study. 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 distinct characteristics of the gospels. Candidates were encouraged to work across topics where appropriate and to understand the influence of Old Testament on the material when they used it in their answers.

## **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. A question will never be merely retelling information. Whilst demonstrating their knowledge and understanding there will always be a need to either make an assessment, an analysis, an evaluation, a comparison etc. Candidates need to identify this and then arrange their answer around this task, so the question is clearly addressed. Whilst access to further reading material may vary it is necessary to show that candidates have a good grasp of the set texts. Marks are awarded for what the candidate produces in their answer and the quality of their response.

Overall, the responses from candidates this year were relevant and reflected a good understanding and knowledge of the text. Few candidates struggled to answer what was asked in the time given.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

The gobbet questions were well answered, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the passages chosen.

#### **Question 1**

All candidates were able to identify this passage as part of the birth narrative and were able to link it with the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. Good candidates mentioned the significance of Joseph being the central figure and the importance of dreams and angels within Jewish history. A link with Moses and Egypt was referred to by some.

#### **Question 2**

This passage is about Jesus' healing of the blind man. This healing is unusual as it was carried out in stages and a good candidate would highlight this. Few candidates made this point but concentrated more on telling the story. Few wrote about the peculiar characteristics of this miracle when compared with other healings. More could have been written about Jesus using saliva and the sense of touch showing Jesus' humanity. Some satisfactory answers were given.

### Question 3

This was the least popular of the four gobblets. Not all candidates wrote about this being part of a dialogue between Jesus and a rich young ruler. There were obvious links with Jewish Law and Jesus' observance of it which were made by candidates. Candidates did write about the ideal of loving one's neighbour and what this means.

### Question 4

This was the most popular of the gobblets. All candidates identified this as being the first miracle Jesus did, turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana. There were some very detailed answers about the role of Jesus' mother in this story and how Jesus talked about how his hour had not yet come.

### Section B

#### Question 5

There were several very good answers to this question from candidates who were able to not only write about the given passage but about other significant events which reveal Jesus' identity such as his baptism and transfiguration. Some candidates did not provide alternative examples and therefore could not be awarded higher than Level 2. It is important that the question is answered in full and if it is necessary for alternative passages to be identified. This is what is expected to get the higher levels.

### Section C

**Question 7** appears to have been most popular.

#### Question 6

- (a) There was plenty of material to use when answering this question. Some candidates knew the content and listed the different beatitudes in turn. Several gave a general approach to the whole of the sermon Jesus gave without referring to his specific statements. Either way of addressing the question was equally acceptable. The content and understanding are important in this and therefore it was essential for candidates to show their knowledge and demonstrate that they were aware of its significance.
- (b) For a high level to be achieved it was necessary for the candidate to show that they had analysed several points of view and made informed comments around these views. There also needed to be an effective conclusion to the question. This was attempted by candidates, but it was not always achieved. Candidates tended to concentrate more on getting the content from the sermon written down and not on demonstrating that they understood the significance of the material. There were a few good answers but overall, more analysis was needed.

#### Question 7

- (a) This was a popular choice, and candidates concentrated on different teaching Jesus gave on prayer. Good candidates wrote about teaching found in both the parables and the Sermon on the Mount. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector was most referred to as teaching key elements of prayer. The prayer Jesus taught was also given as a good example therefore most candidates were able to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding. Overall, this question was well answered.
- (b) This was popular with a lot of candidates choosing to write about Jesus in Gethsemane. The focus of the question was the humanity of Jesus and to what degree this was demonstrated when Jesus was in Gethsemane. It was necessary to give alternative examples to achieve the higher levels therefore few candidates achieved these as they failed to give alternatives. Mention could have been made of Jesus' birth, baptism, transfiguration or crucifixion to provide the alternative events. Some candidates concentrated largely on the grief and isolation Jesus experienced in Gethsemane therefore were unable to achieve higher than Level 2.

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**Paper 9484/22**  
**The Development of Christianity**

## Key messages

Marks were awarded across the range of the mark scheme; higher marks were awarded in accordance with the higher levels, which ask for analysis and evaluation rather than just description. Lower marks were awarded to papers which either offered description without analysis or did not have specific knowledge of the passages mentioned.

## General comments

Detailed knowledge of the passages provided a secure foundation for all the questions. The best answers used the set texts as a basis for more detailed discussion and evaluation of the relevant wider issues facing the early church and themes of the development of Christianity.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Candidates scored highly when they correctly recalled the details of the passage in the question, which many did not. Answers featured details from other parts of the epistle, which were not creditable.
- (b) This question was not popular, and many answers repeated material from **part (a)**. Candidates needed to engage with the word 'examine' in the question to score highly.
- (c) This question was not popular, and many candidates just repeated material that they had used in the **parts (a) and (b)**. The best answers considered Paul's motivation for his teaching on food sacrificed to idols in evaluative comparison with other motivations of the epistle.

#### **Question 2**

- (a) This was a popular question. Candidates scored highly when they correctly recalled the specific details of the day of Pentecost, rather than general points.
- (b) This was also a popular question but was less well answered than **part (a)**. Candidates who knew the details of the speech were in a strong position to 'examine' the key points Peter made, but many answers either did not know the detail of the passage, or if they did, presented a narrative rather than an examination of it.
- (c) This was a popular question, and candidates offered a range of interesting responses. The very best responses compared preaching as a tool for the spread of Christianity and could give examples to back up their points, which they then used in meaningful comparison with other methods of gaining converts, such as miracles or the strength of the community.

**Section B**

**Question 3**

- (a) This was not a popular question and very few candidates attempted it. Any answer that knew what the significance for Christians was of being God's chosen presented in 1 Peter was worthy of more credit.
- (b) This was not a popular question and very few candidates attempted it. For a candidate to access the higher levels a detailed knowledge of 1 Peter was necessary, in order to compare the relative importance of different aspects of his teaching.

**Question 4**

- (a) There was generally accurate knowledge of the events surrounding the account of Saul's conversion in Acts 9. Successful candidates who accessed the higher bands of the mark scheme noted that the question required comment on the 'significant aspects' of the account, rather than just relaying a narrative.
- (b) Candidates who achieved the marks in the higher bands for this question made a meaningful comparison between Saul's conversion and other events that were important for the development of Christianity. The highest marks awarded, were for answers that did not just juxtapose two positions but evaluated which was more important in the light of the other.

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Paper 9484/32  
Prophets of the Old Testament

## Key messages

Candidates should be aware that they do not need to write out the question. Candidates should also be aware of the rubric, and attempt the correct number of questions for each section; 2 from **Section A**, 1 from **Section B** and 1 from **Section C**.

## General comments

The general standard of responses was of a similar standard to previous series, with many candidates displaying a sound knowledge of the required content relating to the Old Testament prophets. Candidates performed generally more strongly in **Section C** than in other recent series. Some rubric errors were encountered, with the most common being candidates who attempted all three questions in **Section A**. The second most common rubric error was from candidates attempting both questions in **Section C**. In answering **Section A**, candidates should endeavour to focus on points of interest or difficulty related to the passage set, rather than the general narrative the passage is part of.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

This was the least popular question in **Section A**. Most candidates were able to identify that the text was referring to the prophecy of a messianic king. The better responses explained the significance of this for the context, why the people needed a messiah, or discussed the imagery of an ideal king. Some discussed potential candidates for the identity of the messianic king, sometimes successfully, though some responses drifted too far away from the question and gave lengthy discussions as to how it can be said that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies contained in the passage, that were only partially relevant to answering the question.

#### **Question 2**

Most candidates were able to identify this passage as the beginning of the narrative of Samuel's anointing of Saul as king. Some candidates were able to talk about the significance of Saul being the tallest man, drawn from the smallest tribe, and were able to discuss that he had many of the physical and social qualities of an ideal king, and how this relates to his later kingship. The weakest responses tended to drift away into comparisons between Saul and David's call, which were only tangentially relevant.

#### **Question 3**

The most popular question in **Section A** by a significant margin. Candidates were able to identify this as part of the wider narrative of the contest at Mount Carmel. The better responses were able to draw out the significance of the 850 prophets of Asherah and Baal appearing to have a position in the court, whereas Elijah, the prophet of Yahweh, appears to have been an outsider. Weaker responses tended to repeat the narrative of the entire contest at Mount Carmel.

## **Section B**

### **Question 4**

The better responses were able to use the passage and their wider reading to discuss reasons from multiple perspectives around whether the claim that Isaiah's prophetic call narrative was literally true or not. Some candidates included scholarly opinions to make the point. The better responses grappled with what it means for a vision to be true, whether these were real things that became physical for Isaiah to see, or whether the vision was only in Isaiah's mind, but was God given and therefore true. The very best responses addressed the question of whether the narrative present in the Book of Isaiah should be considered a true account of what the prophet Isaiah saw. Weaker responses tended to present general points against visions and miracles being true, without really linking specifically to Isaiah's call as in the passage.

## **Section C**

### **Question 5**

Significantly fewer candidates selected this question than the other option in **Section C**. Candidates generally had a good understanding of the events surrounding Nathan's recorded interactions with David; both around the building of the temple and the Bathsheba affair. The responses which attained lower marks for AO2 tended to be quite narrative, and tended to narrate Nathan's instances of hostility, with little development and without showing due consideration for other arguments. Other responses engaged more with the material, and discussed more nuanced positions, such as that Nathan's criticisms of David were not hostility, but honest rebukes. The best responses engaged with how much Nathan's criticisms should be seen as his own personal actions, and to what extent they instead should be seen as Yahweh's rebuke of David, with Nathan merely a mouthpiece for divine judgement.

### **Question 6**

Significantly more candidates selected this question than the other option in **Section C**. Most candidates were able to present very coherent reasoning for why Elijah was important as a miracle worker and were able to reference numerous miracles he is recorded as having performed, and why each instance was important. The weaker responses did not engage with the 'only' in the question and presented a largely one-sided response. The better responses compared his significance as a miracle worker with other ways in which Elijah was significant, for example as a prophet of social justice or his role in reviving Yahweh worship. Some responses took a different approach, exploring whether his significance as a miracle worker is linked to whether his miracles should be seen as literally true or metaphors; this approach tended to drift away from the question, but sometimes was partially effective.

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**Paper 9484/42**  
**Christian Understandings of God, Life  
and the Universe**

## **Key messages**

There is a significantly reduced entry for this unit in comparison to the November session, so it is difficult to make generalisations. As ever, candidates who gain higher marks are those who focus on the precise wording of the question rather than writing more generally about the topic that the question is associated with.

## **General comments**

Although it is difficult to draw overall conclusions given the smaller entry, the standard seen in this session was good overall with most candidates producing good answers to each question attempted. There were several excellent scripts.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

This question typically produced good responses. Some candidates addressed this as a stewardship vs dominion question. This was a valid approach and gained credit but on occasions this veered slightly away from the question. Material from the Genesis accounts as well as other texts such as Psalm 24 were used well. Other candidates took a wider perspective and considered whether belief/faith in Christ or keeping the commandments to love God and love neighbours was more or less important than stewardship.

### **Question 2**

This question was the most popular and was answered well overall. Candidates seemed to understand the issues that were at stake and contrasted salvation by faith with other ideas such as law, grace, and works. On occasions this made some answers a little generic, but most candidates were able to show some focus on the idea of faith. There was good use of the story of Abraham as well as Paul's account of the importance of faith as seen in Romans and Galatians. Although most candidates were able to offer a reasonable discussion, conclusions varied. Better responses gave a well-supported judgement whereas weaker answers tended to summarise or offer little in the way of a judgement.

### **Question 3**

This question was slightly less popular than the other two questions on the paper. Candidates who gained lower marks on this question tended to retell or describe the story of Job rather than engaging with the question. Those who produced stronger responses considered some of the themes in the book including the sovereignty or mystery of God and considered whether the restoration of Job justified the suffering he went through. Some candidates made skilful use of the Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies as part of their response.