

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/12
Paper 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 would benefit from having read all four Gospels. This helps to understand the distinctive characteristics each. Candidates are encouraged to work across topics where appropriate and to understand the influence of the Old Testament on the material when they use it in their answers.

General comments

To do well when answering these questions candidates must read the questions carefully and identify what they are asking. There will always be a need to make either an assessment, an analysis, an evaluation, or a comparison. 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. The quality of response this series was satisfactory to good with candidates writing about the texts.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was a very popular one and was well done, with candidates giving much relevant information. Most had the context correct and were able to explain the respective roles of the Sanhedrin and Pilate. Some however wrote more about the trial before Pilate rather than making most of their comment on the trial before the Sanhedrin. Many referred to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy which is an important theme of Matthew's Gospel.

Question 2

A popular question but there was some confusion with the Lukan version of this account. Candidates sometimes conflated the two stories or wrote about the Lukan version and context. Some did not connect this with Jesus preaching in his hometown of Nazareth, thus missing the point about familiarity, or 'a prophet not being welcome in his hometown'. There were many who scored highly on this because the level of their answer covered a lot of what was expected. It is important that candidates try to identify which account is being used if the story does appear in more than one Gospel.

Question 3

This was the least popular gobblet question and frequently mistaken for the Matthean account of the escape from Herod. A few responses picked up that the passage refers to the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the obligatory sacrifice/offering upon the birth of a child and the role of Simeon and Anna in the broader context. For those who did correctly identify the context it was evident from the answers that they were familiar with this story.

Question 4

The question on the resurrection story was popular with responses of mixed quality. Some wrote at length and accurately selected the Lukan themes, for example the place and enhanced profile given to women. They were able to discuss the context both before and after this passage. Some responses became

narrative, with little critical comment or analysis. Candidates need to look closely at the text given, not just assume they know the story. It is important to stick to the set passage, adding additional material only where relevant.

Section B

Question 5

The format of this question is new to this syllabus and therefore it is important that candidates read the instruction given carefully. The question asks for the passage given and others of the candidates own choosing to be used in answers. The selection of material is significant as this indicates candidates' understanding of the question. Most responses discussed the 'how' element of this question, citing a few textual examples, such as the Syrophenician woman's daughter, Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus. Some grasped the nuance of 'included' and thus discussed how Jesus' ministry also dealt with those who were wealthy or had a prominent position in society. These responses were more effective in linking this to the broader 'why' element of the question and sought to explain the universal nature of Jesus' ministry and the focus on sin and redemption, forgiveness, and salvation. Overall, this question was answered well.

Section C

Question 6

- (a) This question was chosen more frequently than **Question 7**. Many responses distinguished accurately between Matthew's and Luke's account and answered using Matthew. They covered the themes of patriarchy (the account from Joseph's perspective), ancestry, fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, kingship and conflict (Herod) quite effectively. Candidates were well prepared for stories around the birth of Jesus and have learnt the accounts in detail.
- (b) Again, this was quite well attempted, with many responses including discussion of key themes such as political versus spiritual, exclusive versus inclusive, differences in interpretation of messianic Old Testament texts and triumphant versus humility. Some explored the themes of the messianic secret and the suffering servant to highlight the distance between Jesus' words and actions and how they were received by Jewish leaders at the time. Some candidates wrote about the difference between the expectation of a political messiah and the reality of Jesus being a spiritual messiah. This question was well answered with candidates achieving high levels with their responses.

Question 7

- (a) There were few responses to this question. Overall, candidates were more comfortable and successful at examining the similarities rather than the differences, some of which were muddled or glossed over. Some were able to set the context and positioning of the baptism texts in Mark and Matthew and highlighted the more public scene in Matthew. Several mixed the accounts together with the other Gospel accounts included.
- (b) A few responses answered this well, discussing how the temptations revealed both the humanity and divinity of Jesus, and explored aspects of psychology as well. Some gave a descriptive account, others deduced that the physical and emotional hardship endured during these temptations showed Jesus' humanity, strengths and weaknesses. Only a very few responses linked the question to the wider context of Jesus' life and ministry.

Rubric Errors

There were no rubric errors.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

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

Key messages

This examination is in the first year of the new syllabus and the structure of the paper has changed considerably. Knowledge and understanding (AO1) and evaluation (AO2) are assessed discretely. It is essential that candidates know which Assessment Objective is being assessed in each part of the structured 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 many candidates did not have sound textual knowledge. Candidates were more confident with questions in **Section B**. The marks gained were often higher in this section, though in both **3a** and **4a**, weak textual knowledge resulted in inaccurate and muddled answers.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Most candidates answered **Question 2**.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates who opted for **Question 1** showed very limited knowledge of Luke 21:12 – 19. Often the only creditable information was that Jesus warned his disciples that they would suffer persecution. Only a few referred to persecution being at the hands of Jewish and Roman authorities, and its nature, such as trials, imprisonment, death and universal hatred were rarely mentioned. Credit was given for statements that persecution was for being Christian.
- (b) As in the previous examination, most answers to this question on 1 Peter showed no knowledge of the text. Some wrote about the Neronian persecutions or about the experiences of Peter himself as recorded in Acts. Many thought that the hostility came from the Jews, who regarded Christian beliefs as blasphemous, and many also thought that the letter was written for Christians in Rome. The few who did answer this well explained why those Christians to whom this letter was written aroused hostility from the authorities and from their fellow-citizens. Some referred to the advice given to those who were slaves.
- (c) Those who knew the texts answered this quite well, pointing out that while Jesus was warning of persecution as in the future, 1 Peter was addressed to those actually experiencing it. They considered both similarities and differences. Most candidates lacked textual knowledge though.

Question 2

- (a) Some knowledge of the text was shown by most candidates. Many referred to Paul's advice to marry to avoid immorality. Reference was also made to his advice to those whose spouses were pagan, though sometimes this was muddled. Paul's advice on divorce was not well known. Most thought that Paul approved of divorce on the grounds of adultery or that he encouraged remarriage after divorce.

- (b) Many of the responses to this question were very vague. Credit generally came from considering Paul's concern for unity and harmony in the Christian community and for understanding why he discouraged divorce from pagan spouses. Some stated that Paul's advice was in response to questions raised in a letter, and some understanding was shown of the problems caused by gnostic influences and of pagan lifestyles in Corinth. Only a few candidates pointed to Paul's emphasis on Jesus' teaching. Many candidates showed textual knowledge that would have been creditable, had it been given in **part (a)**.
- (c) This was answered more successfully. Most candidates referred to Paul's own status and suggested reasons for this. The better answers linked his encouragement of celibacy to his belief in the imminence of the *parousia*. Most candidates argued against the statement, and here references to teaching from other letters, e.g. Colossians, was creditable.

Section B

Most candidates answered **Question 3**.

Question 3

- (a) This was answered with varying degrees of success. Some candidates showed little knowledge of Barnabas' ministry other than that he gave money for the poor through selling land and that he accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. There was much confusion of Syrian Antioch with Pisidian Antioch, and some referred to incidents that occurred on Paul's later missionary journeys. Better responses considered the significance of his bringing Paul to help with the community in Syrian Antioch and the nature of that community. A few also referred to him taking famine relief to Jerusalem and explained Barnabas' part in the Jerusalem Council.
- (b) There were some very thoughtful responses to this question, though muddled knowledge about Barnabas' ministry sometimes restricted the credit that could be given. It was also wrongly assumed by some candidates that giving to charity was distinctively Christian. Many candidates, however, made effective comments on the part played by Philip, Peter and Paul in taking the gospel to the gentiles, and some referred to the way in which Stephen's martyrdom led to the spread of Christianity. Comment on the significance of the role of the Holy Spirit was also creditable.

Question 4

- (a) Success in answering this question depended on how well candidates knew the relevant texts. There was considerable muddling of Paul's visit to Athens with his time in Ephesus and the conflict with the silversmiths. Better answers contrasted the contexts in which the two speeches were set and gave some detail of what Paul said on each occasion, though the speech at Pisidian Antioch tended to be better known than that at Athens. The differing reactions to the speeches, where accurately given, were also credited.
- (b) This part was answered more successfully overall than **part (a)**, though many candidates considered incidents from Paul's later missionary journeys. Most, however, knew something of the challenges faced by Paul in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, though the healing of the crippled man was sometimes confused with the healing by Peter of the man at the Beautiful Gate. There were a few perceptive comments on the misunderstanding at Lystra and the reasons for this. The arguments given to support the view that the journey had some success tended to be weaker. Better answers pointed out that Paul returned to the towns where he had faced hostility, in order to set the newly founded Christian communities on a secure footing.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/32
Paper 32 Prophets of the Old
Testament

Key messages

Candidates should be aware that they do not need to write out the question, which is particularly relevant to **Questions 1, 2 and 3**. Candidates should be aware which Assessment Objective is being assessed for which question, and that there are no marks for AO2 (analysis and evaluation) in **Questions 1, 2 and 3**, and conversely that there are no marks for AO1 (knowledge and understanding) in **Question 4**.

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. Higher marks could have been achieved by focusing on critical analysis of the question set, as opposed to the narrative approach which some candidates took. Few rubric errors were encountered, with the most common being candidates who attempted all three questions in **section A**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Candidates were able to identify that the text was referring to David and were able to draw out a number of nuanced points. Some of the better responses focused on the significance of the phrase 'giving him rest from all his enemies,' and were able to contextualise the passage in the particular period of David's kingship. The best responses picked out the wider narrative of David not actually building the temple that Nathan had here told him to 'Go, do...' but instead preparing the way for Solomon to build the temple. Some weaker responses were confused with both the chronology of the passage, and David's role.

Question 2

This was the most popular question. Most candidates were able to identify that the 'him' in the passage refers to Elijah. Many candidates were able to recount the narrative around the miraculous longevity of the widow's flour and oil. Some of the better responses were able to link it to the drought being used to demonstrate Yahweh's superiority over Baal, culminating in the contest at Mount Carmel.

Question 3

This was the least popular question, though candidates who attempted it generally performed well. Most candidates who attempted this question showed a very good handling of the material, showing an awareness of the arguments around the significance of this being one of the servant songs, and were able to place it within the wider narrative of Deutero-Isaiah. Some candidates focused their response on trying to identify the servant here being prophesied, which often meant that their response drifted away from addressing the question sufficiently in regard to the passage itself.

Section B

Question 4

The better responses were able to use the passage and their wider reading to identify instances of Amos' condemnation of the sins of Israel and utilise them to evaluate to what extent they may or may not have been deemed to have been too strong; the best were able to take it a step further and incorporate into their analysis whether the strength or not of Amos' argument inhibited his effectiveness. Weaker responses tended to be narrative in nature, giving them very little access to the levels of response in the mark scheme for this question, which award marks only for AO2.

Section C

Question 5

This question was attempted by slightly more candidates than the other option in **Section C**. Most candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the events surrounding David's affair and Nathan's criticism thereof, with the better responses moving beyond a narrative retelling of the events and instead demonstrating greater understanding of them. Weaker responses tended to take a one-sided view of whether Nathan's criticisms were justified, and often stated arguments, rather than making them. Better responses were able to evaluate different perspectives of whether Nathan was justified or not, competently.

Question 6

A number of candidates presented quite confused responses to this question and seemed to write a generic response around Jeremiah and false prophets, rather than one specifically addressing the question as set, which limited their ability to access the higher levels of response. The better responses explored in depth to what extent people had reason to believe Jeremiah, and some of the very best discussed the nature of prophecy and oracular formulae, and the extent to which Jeremiah fit the established norms of the criteria. A few responses approached the question by considering the idea that the Book of Jeremiah was composed after the events, possibly by a century or more, and the difficulties this presented in establishing whether Jeremiah was believed at the time of his prophesying; whilst an unexpected approach, it was a valid interpretation of the question.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

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

Key messages

Candidates should be aware that they do not need to write out the question. Candidates should be aware that the Assessment Objectives are not balanced equally, there are more marks available for AO2 (analysis and evaluation) than for AO1 (knowledge and understanding) and that therefore their responses should be weighted accordingly.

General comments

The general standard of responses was of a similar standard to previous series, with many candidates displaying a sound knowledge of the relevant teachings. Some candidates could have gained higher marks by focusing on critical analysis of the question set, as opposed to the narrative approach some candidates took. There were very few rubric errors encountered.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was the most popular question. Many candidates were able to engage well with issues around the use of animals. Some of the better responses explored the distinction between whether Christians could or should use animals in multiple circumstances. Some of the weaker responses seemed to repeat a generic response around stewardship and dominion without focussing enough on the question set.

Question 2

This was the least popular question, though those who attempted it generally did well. The better responses had a clear understanding of what 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians actually say about the immortality of the soul, whereas weaker responses tended to be more general in nature. A few candidates seemed to focus their response on life after death in general, with little reference to either Corinthian letter, which limited their ability to successfully address the question.

Question 3

Most candidates who attempted this question had a very good handling of the material, showing an awareness of the arguments around salvation. Weaker responses presented general points about different modes of salvation, whereas the better responses evaluated specifically the idea that salvation was obtained by grace. A few candidates demonstrated an unclear idea of salvation and seemed not to understand any definition of the term.