

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/12
The Portrayal of the Life and Teaching of Jesus

Key messages

There was a super improvement in the approach to (c) questions seen. Sometimes the opinions were not always clear and that limited responses. For example, a two paragraph answer that says, 'I agree' and then 'I disagree' needed to come to a definite answer of whether the candidate agrees or disagrees with the statement in the question.

General comments

Candidates engaged well with the passages in this question paper. They showed a good knowledge and understanding of the text of Matthew and the life of Jesus. As in previous years, questions about the birth or passion, death and resurrection of Jesus in Matthew suffered from being confused with the other three Gospel accounts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) While some responses gave excellent accounts of Luke's birth story, most were able to talk about some elements of Matthew's account. There were fewer candidates who knew the detail of the message of the angel or the mention of the fulfilment of prophecy. Some recounted the visit of the Magi.
- (b) Some responses simply focused on the nature of Jesus' conception, but others were able to draw on the significance of angels, the fulfilment of prophecy and the meaning of the names and titles of Jesus.
- (c) While some candidates thought that Jewish Christians were Jews, most were able to discuss the clues in the Gospel that it was written for different audiences and come to a range of suitable and interesting conclusions.

Question 2

- (a) Most responses successfully described the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount on divorce and adultery. Some omitted the teachings about cutting off a limb rather than one's whole body being sent to hell. Some responses confused these teachings with those in Chapter 17 or confused the specific statements on adultery and divorce.
- (b) Although some candidates made the mistake of simply repeating their **part (a)** answer, most wrote in their own words and focused on the key word in the question, 'surprised'. Their explanations showed a good understanding of the context of Matthew's Gospel and of the idea of Jesus interpreting the Mosaic Law.
- (c) Candidates were able to draw on a number of points to respond to this question, with high marks being awarded to those who were able to explore two (or more) points of view and to give a clear judgement. Most candidates felt that there are too many temptations in the modern world to make it

possible to be faithful. Some took the teaching on adultery very literally. Weaker responses did not focus on the phrase 'these teachings' and instead spoke more generally about the teachings of Jesus.

Question 3

- (a) Responses tended to be stronger on the blind men than on the man who could not speak where they often missed the man being demon possessed or tried to guess at the story. Better answers usually covered the blind men calling out, their faith and the healing itself before moving on to the man who could not speak.
- (b) Some responses gave general comments in answer to this question. The best responses explored some of the aspects of the passage that make these healings different to others.
- (c) Candidates were often quite dismissive of the statement because they felt that if a Christian has true faith and believes in the resurrection, miracles are hardly difficult to believe in. Some explored science or witnesses in their responses. There were some interesting answers to this question.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates generally knew the mustard seed and treasure parables well, often skimming over or omitting the yeast and the pearl. From the nature of the accounts, the yeast (leaven) seemed to be less well-understood than the other three. Some overcomplicated their answers by adding an explanation that was not requested.
- (b) There were some excellent responses to this question. Candidates generally were able to offer sufficient ideas to attain some of the marks. Many achieved high level responses to this question.
- (c) Generally, candidates were able to explore the nature of the parables and whether as images of life, they are relevant to Christians today. Many observed that with a bit of support interpreting them, they are still easier to remember than a list of rules.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates generally knew a lot about this passage, although some missed some of the finer details (e.g. there being both a donkey and a colt or the exact response of the crowds).
- (b) Response usually explored the peaceful nature of Jesus' kingship and the surprise that this approach would have been. The best responses gave good explanations of the text and nature of this part of Jesus' life.
- (c) Responses often explored the purpose of the titles of Jesus, drawing on the full range of titles. Some simply went through each title and said what it tells us about Jesus, but the best answers talked about whether or not titles are useful, sometimes comparing it with studying Jesus' work.

Question 6

- (a) While some responses focused too much on the events prior to Judas arriving and therefore the arrest passage, most were able to examine the kiss, the words of Jesus, the interaction with the sword up until the fleeing of the disciples. Some candidates conflated the drawing of the sword with the accounts in the other gospels.
- (b) Some responses missed the word 'why' in the question, but most were able to draw on a good range of the possible points and respond well to the question. Most responses gave a range of points in order for their understanding to be deemed clear. Generally, answers discussed Pilate knowing that Jesus was not guilty, his wife's dream and the lack of evidence against Jesus. Some also discussed the feelings of jealousy of the Jewish leaders towards Jesus.
- (c) There were some excellent answers to this question with exploration of important Christian theology. While most concluded that the two events cannot really be separated, there was good discussion of a range of points, such as the implications on the church or exclaiming the importance of the temple curtain being torn in two.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/22

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

Key messages

It is vital for candidates to know the whole text so that they can properly answer the different **part (a)** questions.

It is important when answering **part (c)** questions that responses offer a balanced argument rather than being too one sided in order to engage in proper discussion of the topic or statement.

General comments

The **part (a)** questions were more weakly answered this year. Candidates seemed to be expecting particular questions and were thrown when other parts of the syllabus were tested. It is important to know the text as a whole. There were also more lists than in previous sessions seen – bullet point for **part (b)** questions (making it difficult to ‘explain’ and either bullet points or tables for **part (c)** questions, which does not create the level of discussion required. Overall, the approach to **part (c)** questions was much stronger and so many more answers received Level 4 marks. Those responses that had showed a good structure for **part (c)** questions could have produced more balanced arguments. Some paragraphs beginning ‘on the other hand’ or ‘however’ were too short to receive 7 or 8 marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) While some candidates did not understand the phrase ‘Day of Pentecost’ and so misrepresented the speech, many identified the speech and gave a good outline of the points. Some responses were limited by simply looking at the beginning and end of the speech. A noticeable number of candidates mistook Peter’s words at the selection of Matthias for his speech on the Day of Pentecost.
- (b) Candidates seemed able to access this question. They were able to distinguish between the superficial reasons (e.g. proving that the apostles were not drunk) and more sophisticated ones (e.g. the start of the work of the Spirit).
- (c) Responses gave a good range of points here. They understood that Peter’s role was to begin the spread of the church before ‘handing over’ to Paul but that this is an over-simplified view. They understood also that the traditional division between Peter working with Jews and Paul with Gentiles was also simplistic. Most responses that offered a view against the statement talked about the range of other characters in Acts as well as the power of the Spirit who blows where he wills.

Question 2

- (a) Some candidates chose the wrong prison passage in response to this question, not picking up on the clues in the question. Those that answered correctly usually achieved high marks. Some did not state that the apostles were returned to the Sanhedrin the next morning with no force for fear of the people.

- (b) Some candidates limited themselves to superficial responses where they talked about spreading the gospel. Most, however, were aware of the rapid increase in spread and popularity described in the verses prior to this account. The best explanations explained the situation in the candidate's own words.
- (c) There were some excellent, thoughtful responses to this question, drawing on the candidate's local situation as much as the text. Some responses focused on Acts to inspire their answer: this was equally valid. Weaker responses did not structure their answers in such a way that they presented more than one point of view and a clear judgement.

Question 3

- (a) Some candidates narrated the choosing of the Seven passage for **part (i)** without necessarily focusing on the word 'how'. However, most responses recounted this part of Acts accurately. **Part (ii)** was less successful with some simply narrating the encounter with Simon the sorcerer. The best responses outlined the key elements of Philip's work in Samaria.
- (b) There were some excellent, theological responses to this question. Candidates clearly knew the significance of Samaria at the time of Acts as well as the significance of Philip's ministry. They also distinguished between the need to flee Jerusalem and the need to carry out the Spirit's work.
- (c) Again, there was some excellent understanding of Acts. Whether or not Philip was an apostle, his ministry in Samaria was a crucial stage in the spread of Christianity. A small minority made the point that the title of the book was not Luke's and so it is a modern assumption that the book should only contain stories about the apostles.

Question 4

- (a) While the best responses talked about the section of Saul's conversion being tested, some recounted the whole passage and wasted valuable examination time or through summary left out the details of the section of the passage being tested. Weaker responses did not give enough detail about the story to access the highest marks.
- (b) This question was well answered with most responses focused on Saul's need or desire to persecute as many Christians as possible. Weaker responses simply stated that Saul was going to Damascus to persecute Christians and did not make much effort to explain in their own words.
- (c) Some responses did not focus fully on the phrase 'as recorded' and so did not answer the question sufficiently. Responses needed to talk about the literal wording of the conversion story and whether it had to be as recorded. Those that simply explored whether or not it was important Saul converted missed the focus too much. Many responses confused the Acts 9 account of the conversion with one or both of the later (differing) versions neither of which are on the syllabus.

Question 5

- (a) A number of responses were not able to pinpoint this passage directly and so gave general comments about Paul's movements, sometimes relating to Corinth. Better responses explored these verses in greater detail.
- (b) Candidates offered a range of possible reasons why Acts is deemed to be an accurate history book. Most talked about the we passages, or Luke's stated intentions in chapter 1.
- (c) There were some excellent and thoughtful responses to this question that explored the use of Acts for life today. Some saw it as an excellent guide for modern Christians who have lost sight of the reality of the Christian message and lifestyle. Others saw it as a product of its time.

Question 6

- (a) Some responses did not fully outline the Ephesian Elders and so misplaced this passage. Others explored the visit to Philip and the encounter with Agabus successfully. Weaker responses simply recounted any chosen aspect of Paul's movements.

- (b) There were some excellent responses to this question, exploring Paul's missionary work and journeys. Weaker responses mistook the meaning of the word 'journey' in this context and talked about modes of transportation. Some missed the link between Paul's journeys and the spreading of the gospel.
- (c) This was well-answered, and responses explored the balance between Paul being able to inspire more and more people through living longer with his need to pay the ultimate price as part of God's plan for him or as the ultimate proof of the genuineness of his conversion.