

DIVINITY

<p>Paper 8041/21 The Four Gospels</p>

General comments

This was a popular paper which allowed candidates to choose four questions out of fourteen and write essays which clearly reflected their level of understanding, their research, their level of scholarly reading and their individual access to resources within their own centre. Overall, the standard of marks for this paper was satisfactory but the number of candidates taking this examination was lower than in previous years.

Key messages

To do well when answering these questions, candidates must stick closely to the content of the question and identify what the main thrust of the question is. A question will never be about merely retelling information; 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. While access to further reading material may vary according to different centres, it is necessary to show that candidates have a good grasp of any relevant scholarly trends and developments available to them and that they know how to use this information within their answers. Marks are awarded for what the candidate produces in their answer and the quality of their response.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The Gobbets

As always, this was a popular question with most candidates opting for it. A few attempted more than four gobbets. Most were reasonably well done, although some lacked contextual detail, i.e. the gobbet's chronology and context in a particular Gospel, and other features of the text such as place detail or its relation to other significant events. A number of responses confused the context.

- (a) Context: This happened at the start of Jesus' ministry, following the temptations. It is part of the call of the first disciples. Jesus had just called Simon and Andrew to follow him as he was walking by the Sea of Galilee. It was popular and correctly identified.
- (b) Context: This comes after Jesus had taught a large crowd from a boat. It follows the teaching of the parable of the Sower. It comes in immediate response to the disciples' question asking why Jesus speaks to the people in parables. This question was not popular, and candidates found difficulty identifying the context correctly. A lot of material was available but little was given.
- (c) Context: Following the calming of the storm incident on the lake, Jesus and the disciples encounter a 'demon possessed' man in the Gerasene region. He has a conversation with the demons who refer to themselves as Legion. There were many good comments on this gobbet, and it was correctly identified.
- (d) Context: Following the burial of Jesus. The women visit the tomb of Jesus, and he is not there. The start of the resurrection account in Mark. This was well answered by those who chose this gobbet.
- (e) Context: Jesus visits the town of Nazareth where he was brought up and goes into the synagogue. He stood up and read from the scroll of Isaiah. This text proved inflammatory so that Jesus was

nearly stoned. This was not correctly identified by candidates, and some of the answers were muddled.

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- (g) Context: Jesus was travelling through Samaria when he stopped at Jacob's Well. He met a Samaritan woman drawing water there. This verse comes after Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. Some good answers were given.
- (h) Context: The arrest of Jesus following the betrayal by Judas Iscariot. Simon Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant to defend Jesus. This was not a popular question.

Question 2

'... store up for yourself treasure in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' (Matthew 6:20a–21) **How far does Matthew's Gospel provide guidance for this command? (25)**

This was not a popular choice of questions. Few candidates chose this one and it was not developed to its full potential.

Question 3

Discuss the date, authorship, context, and purpose of Matthew's Gospel. (25)

Although the content of this question is straightforward, very few candidates chose to answer it which suggests there was not enough familiarity with the background to the origins of the gospels.

Question 4

Examine Mark's use of sources in the writing of his gospel. (25)

This is another question regarding the background to the gospels, but it was not selected as a question to answer. This is a familiar topic on this paper; therefore it was surprising that candidates did not choose it.

Question 5

Examine how Mark's Gospel portrays Jesus as one who serves rather than one who rules. (25)

This was not a popular question and few candidates answered it.

Question 6

'There is more history than theology in Luke's Gospel.' Discuss. (25)

Few candidates selected this question. It demands a good understanding of the purpose and writing of Luke.

Question 7

'In Luke's Gospel Jesus' teachings are for everyone.' How far do you agree? (25)

This is a question about the universal nature of the gospel. There was a lot of evidence in the material peculiar to Luke, and for those who answered this question it was mainly well done.

Question 8

‘John’s Gospel portrays women as active participants in the ministry of Jesus.’ Evaluate this claim. (25)

Several candidates selected this question and wrote about a number of stories relating to women, but answers lacked detail and were very general in approach rather than story specific.

Question 9

Consider the arguments for and against the theory that the author of the Gospel of John was an apostle. (25)

This was not a popular question and very few candidates attempted it.

Question 10

Assess the role of John the Baptist in the gospel traditions. (25)

This is a good question with a lot of material available. The better candidates handled the material well and identified its origins. Many candidates merely wrote everything they knew about John the Baptist without identifying its source.

Question 11

‘The Jewish title ‘Rabbi’ adequately reflects the role of Jesus.’ Discuss. (25)

Very few candidates chose this question and those who did answered it briefly and without depth.

Question 12

Examine the significance of Peter, James and John being set apart from the other disciples. (25)

This was a popular question and was well answered. Most candidates were well equipped to answer a question about the disciples but for some, the answers were very superficial and lacked detail.

Question 13

‘The Roman authorities were solely responsible for the death of Jesus.’ Discuss. (25)

This question was not popular, and the answers given lacked detail and substance.

Question 14

‘The mission of Jesus was to the Jewish people only.’ In response to this, consider the teaching found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. (25)

Generally, this was answered with a good choice of material and was well handled.

Rubric Errors

There were several rubric errors this year, but the main one was a misunderstanding when answering the Gobbet questions. Four passages need to be commented on and these four passages form ONE question. If a candidate chooses to answer the gobbets, then they must also select THREE other essay questions as well. This was not always the case.

Candidates did not appear to time their examination well and did not manage to answer four questions in total. This needs careful practice as it is an important part of examination technique to be able to complete the paper in its entirety.

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<p>Paper 8041/22 The Four Gospels</p>

General comments

This was a popular paper which allowed candidates to choose four questions out of fourteen and write essays which clearly reflected their level of understanding, their research, their level of scholarly reading and their individual access to resources within their own centre. Overall, the standard of marks for this paper was very good with many candidates scoring the higher end of the mark range.

Key messages

To do well when answering these questions, candidates must stick closely to the content of the question and identify what the main thrust of the question is. A question will never be about merely retelling information; 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. While access to further reading material may vary according to different centres, it is necessary to show that candidates have a good grasp of any relevant scholarly trends and developments available to them and that they know how to use this information within their answers. Marks are awarded for what the candidate produces in their answer and the quality of their response.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The Gobbets

As always, this was a popular question with approximately 75 per cent of candidates opting for it. Almost all those that did, answered the correct number of questions; a few attempted more than four. Most were reasonably well done, although some lacked contextual detail, i.e. the gobbet's chronology and context in a particular Gospel, and other features of the text such as place detail or its relation to other significant events. A number of responses confused the context of **(a)** and **(h)**.

- (a)** Context: Jesus had travelled by boat to his hometown. He had a paralytic brought to him on a mat and Jesus pronounced that his sins were forgiven, and the man was healed. Not all candidates recognised this was the healing of the paralytic, but did recognise a healing took place.
- (b)** Context: Jesus and his disciples were in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asks his disciples the question, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" This is part of the answer the disciples give before Jesus asks them who they think he is. It occurs before the Transfiguration story. This was generally correctly identified with plenty of comment surrounding Peter.
- (c)** Context: Jesus and his disciples had crossed the lake to the Gerasene region and met a demon-possessed man. He was an outcast, indicated by the fact that he was living among the tombs. The man comes to Jesus and Jesus seeks to exorcise the evil spirits by casting them out of the man. There was much good comment on this gobbet and it was correctly identified.
- (d)** Context: Jesus had been arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken before the Sanhedrin. All Jesus' followers deserted him, but Peter followed at a distance. This was very well written about and good answers were given to this gobbet.

- (e) Context: Jesus is twelve years old and with his parents visiting Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. This incident comes after the birth narrative in Luke and is the only story concerning the boyhood of Jesus. Jesus disappears for three days and is found in the temple speaking with the teachers. This gobbet was correctly identified as part of Jesus' childhood except for a few who muddled it with later in his ministry.
- (f) Context: Jesus had been invited for a meal at Simon the Pharisee's house. While there, a sinful woman washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. Jesus was challenged about this action and told the parable of the two debtors in response to the challenge. This was well done by most candidates.
- (g) Context: This was at the start of Jesus' ministry in John. Jesus had done signs including the changing of water into wine. He was in Jerusalem when Nicodemus came to verify who he was and his mission. It was correctly commented on by most candidates.
- (h) Context: Part of John's Farewell Discourse. Jesus has been speaking with the disciples and preparing them for what is to come. It is following Jesus' prediction of his death, when he tells the disciples they will leave him, but to take heart as he has overcome the world. Not all candidates identified this as part of the Farewell Discourse. There were some confused comments on this gobbet.

Question 2

Discuss the difference between the Pharisees' understanding of righteousness and that of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. (25)

This was a popular question. Some did it very well, not only making good textual references to illustrate the differences in theology and approach between Jesus and the Pharisees, but also exploring the broader historical, political, and social context that may have influenced Matthew's portrayal of this conflicting approach.

Question 3

Examine the understanding of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew's Gospel. (25)

This was a very popular question and was mostly well answered, with appropriate textual references. Responses referred to several relevant texts, including from the Sermon on the Mount. However, sometimes this was simply descriptive, with insufficient reference to how the themes were developed into an understanding of the kingdom of heaven. A few responses did this very well, however, and gave a detailed explanation of the nature of the kingdom, including its future and spiritual dimensions.

Question 4

'There are more miracles than messages in Mark's Gospel.' Discuss. (25)

A popular question and reasonably well answered for the most part, with appropriate textual references. Some responses merely listed a series of miracles in illustration of the question and then commented that the teachings were also important in Mark. Better responses referred to the context and literary features of Mark, such as its immediacy and brevity and the desire to get across a message through action/miracle, rather than through detailed teaching. Some considered scholarly views of the intended readership of the Gospels to support this.

Question 5

'Mark's Gospel shows Jesus as a man of action.' Assess this claim. (25)

The scope of this question allowed for much of the same material applied to **Question 4** to be utilised in this question as well, and some responses answered both **Question 4** and **Question 5** with varying degrees of success. Better responses were able to select and deploy textual examples of healing, exorcism and nature miracles, as well as other examples of action by Jesus, such as clearing out the Temple, as well as conveying the sense of limited time and urgency in Mark's Gospel as pointing to 'action'. Some responses referred to the theme of the Suffering Servant/Messiah as possible evidence of inaction.

Question 6

Examine what the parables in Luke teach about the nature of God. (25)

This question, which was popular and mostly well answered, prompted many straightforward, thorough responses which made good use of textual examples to illustrate many aspects of God's nature – compassion for the poor and suffering, judgement, mercy and forgiveness, recovering the 'lost', uplifting the humble, etc..

Question 7

Rejection is the key theme in Luke's Gospel. Discuss. (25)

Some responses were able to explore this theme in detail with appropriate textual evidence, citing rejection of Jesus in Nazareth, by religious authorities, in his trial and crucifixion, as well as examples of the rejection of others in society – poor, women, sick people – and successfully argued that it was an important theme in Luke. Many made reference to other Lukan themes, such as the preference for the poor, outcasts, and women, thus attempting to address the question of whether rejection was really *key* or merely one among a number of important themes.

Question 8

Consider how the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus reflects themes which appear elsewhere in John's Gospel. (25)

Question 8 (and **Question 9**) were less popular, with few candidates attempting them. Responses tended either to be very good and able to draw out themes such as re-birth, water, holy spirit, light and darkness, etc., linking these themes of the encounter with Nicodemus to signs and teachings in John's Gospel quite effectively. Others could refer to the encounter itself, but not get much beyond that.

Question 9

Examine the role of John the Baptist in John's Gospel. (25)

A slightly more popular question than **Question 8**, however, not generally very well done. Some conflation with the portrayal of John the Baptist in the Synoptic Gospels was evident in many responses. However, better responses were able explain the distinct features of the Johannine presentation of John – his role mentioned in the Prologue, the absence of familial connection, John's role as a witness to Jesus, his use of the title Lamb of God for Jesus, baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Question 10

Assess the importance of the Jewish authorities at the time of Jesus. (25)

Some analysed the historical context, i.e. the status and role of the Pharisees, Sadducees, High Priest, the Sanhedrin, and the ruling Herods in Jewish culture and society in the Roman period. They were then able to build on this and point to the significance of some of the actions of these groups, from the opposition to Jesus by many of the Pharisees and the procurement of Jesus' death by the chief priests. Weaker responses were mostly confined to a generalised descriptive list of the deeds of 'the Jewish authorities' in the Gospels, with insufficient attempt to distinguish the groups or their specific actions.

Question 11

Compare the account of Jesus' trial in John's Gospel with those in the Synoptic Gospels. (25)

Very few answered this question. One excellent response was seen which really knew the accounts in detail and was able to describe accurately differences and distinctive features of the Synoptic accounts in contrast with John. Others, however, answered the question either as a last resort, or attempted it before realising the potential difficulty of accurately separating and relating the information required. One or two were determined to give their pre-prepared answer to the Synoptic Problem.

Question 12

Discuss how Judas is portrayed in the gospels.

(25)

Responses approached this in several ways. Some cited instances of Judas' behaviour and his association with greed, as the keeper of the money, as well as other possible motives, such as jealousy and disappointment. Some focused on his state of mind and subsequent regret and suicide, while others reflected on how Judas' actions fulfil a purpose within the story of Jesus, that his betrayal is the mechanism by which God's will is achieved.

Question 13

Consider why Jesus was called 'the King of the Jews'.

(25)

There were many responses to this question. Some linked it to the background, aims of and intended readership of the authors. For example, many considered the Jewish cultural background references of Matthew, linking Jesus to Jewish history and King David and the fulfilment of prophecy. Some referred to the mocking way in which it was used to describe Jesus at the Crucifixion.

Question 14

Explain how Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi and the Transfiguration are significant in the gospels.

(25)

A number of candidates attempted this question. Those who did were generally able to handle it reasonably well, bringing out key themes of these events marking turning points in the Gospels, the emergence of Peter as leader as a key figure, and both his lack of understanding and his confession. Explanation was also given of the significance of the mention of Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration.

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Generally, most candidates timed their examination well and managed to answer four questions, but a minority of candidates misjudged their timings and did not answer enough questions.

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