

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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

Key messages

In **(b)** and **(c)** questions, candidates need to ensure that they have carefully read the question. In **(b)** questions, candidates need to ensure that they are explaining what they are asked, rather than simply describing or stating points.

General comments

Although much improved on previous sessions, candidates often held themselves back in **(c)** questions by not giving a clear personal opinion. There were some very good, clear descriptions of passages and only a minority of responses went beyond the passages being tested.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** The vast majority of responses showed excellent knowledge of the question, although some were too general in the material they covered or only knew that Jesus had been lost in Jerusalem, rather than the details of the search to find him or what was said when he was found.
- (b)** There were some good answers to this question that both focused on the passage in **(a)** and also took it wider to consider other material in Luke 2. Some excellent responses identified the likelihood of this passage referring to Jesus' Bar Mitzvah and the consequences of him becoming an adult.
- (c)** This was generally well-answered, although some candidates focused too much on the idea that the stories of Jesus as a child are irrelevant because parents nowadays would not have lost him. Good answers tended to discuss the idea that Jesus' adult ministry could be deemed to be more significant by way of comparison, although this was not required to attain the highest marks.

Question 2

- (a)** While there were some very good answers to this question, clarifying key aspects of the passage, some sought to demonstrate the faith of the widow, where compassion was the key driver in the miracle, rather than faith.
- (b)** This question produced some good answers that focused on Jesus' compassion and power and ministry. Some candidates wrote more generally about Jesus' miracles and so did not attain the highest marks, perhaps missing the phrase 'this miracle' in the question.
- (c)** Responses to this question were generally more successful than **(b)** because it allowed candidates to talk more generally about miracles. A good range of discussion was often seen and there was some good comparison (required by the word 'best') with other aspects of his ministry, most commonly his parables. Some responses did not show a personal opinion clearly enough to progress through the levels.

Question 3

- (a) Although a number of responses were accurate, some candidates conflated this passage with Sabbath controversy in general. A number of candidates missed some of the detail, such as the fact that the woman had been crippled for 18 years.
- (b) Some candidates did not focus sufficiently on the 'why' of the question and so simply narrated other aspects of Sabbath controversy.
- (c) This question was generally well-answered. Candidates often gave examples such as people being too busy with work, needing to support a family or the context of particular professions or twenty-first century society as a whole.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates wasted valuable time by narrating the whole parable, rather than the areas prescribed for assessment. Some candidates did not remember that the father re-clothed the son as part of his restoration with sandals and a ring.
- (b) Most candidates identified the centrality of forgiveness in the passage and some better responses explored the nature of reconciliation and restoration. The best responses clearly linked aspects of the passage with the nature of God at each stage of their answer.
- (c) This question posed few difficulties for candidates, who often discussed the Lord's Prayer, Jesus on the cross and the Christian duty to forgive. Against the statement, candidates discussed some difficult situations with success, and some noted that sins against the Holy Spirit may not be forgiven.

Question 5

- (a) Generally, candidates described successfully the main elements of the story, although in a small number of cases the wrong story was explored (that of the rich fool).
- (b) This question often produced quite sparse responses. Many candidates described Christians as too attached to their wealth, and therefore to be greedy, but did not explore the idea that a practising Christian would not be attached to their wealth and would try to do the right things with it.
- (c) The best responses to this question focused on the opening phrase, 'According to Luke's Gospel' and were able to show good knowledge, although some became too focused on narration, rather than argument.

Question 6

- (a) There were some good accounts of the passage, exploring the time when the women came to the tomb with spices, found it empty and met two men in glowing white. Some conflated this passage with accounts from other gospels.
- (b) Some responses were a little vague, mentioning that the disciples would be shocked without fully explaining why. Better responses explored the idea that the shock would have come from the disciples having known of Jesus' death and burial, the Roman expertise in crucifixion and so on. Very good responses explored the idea that women may not have been counted as credible witnesses.
- (c) Candidates generally were able to use a range of stories to show women as the strongest believers and better responses used these stories as part of an argument, rather than simply in narration. Some responses simply narrated stories about men to disagree with the statement, rather than arguing that Luke could be said to have shown men to be stronger, for example, through his portrayal of the disciples.

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Key messages

Generally excellent responses in this paper, showing a sound understanding of the passages tested.

General comments

In some part (c) questions, it seemed that candidates were simply listing points. It was not always clear what a candidate's personal response actually was and on which side of the argument they come down. For example, a justified personal opinion is not simply, 'In conclusion, I agree'.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates knew this passage and gave an accurate account of it, although some missed out the occasional minor detail.
- (b) Some responses tended to vagueness; better responses were able to imagine themselves at the scene and explore therefore why people might have been afraid of Jesus.
- (c) There were some good, balanced responses to this question, sometimes using personal experience to approach the idea that evil spirits are still prevalent today.

Question 2

- (a) Most responses were very accurate although some condensed what Peter said too much.
- (b) Although there were some very good responses to this question, a noticeable minority did not draw out the link between the passage and the nature of Jesus as Messiah. Most referred to Jesus' divinity.
- (c) Compared with other part (c) responses, focus on the wording of the question was more limited from candidates. Some simply narrated events from the ministry of Jesus.

Question 3

- (a) This question was very well answered. Candidates knew the passage in some detail.
- (b) Candidates' knowledge of the passage was successfully translated into their understanding and this question was also very well answered.
- (c) There were some excellent responses to this question. A minority of candidates simply narrated some of Jesus' parables.

Question 4

- (a) Many candidates narrated the passage accurately, although some summarised it too briefly.
- (b) Most responses successfully understood the importance of the passage in the ministry of Jesus to outcasts.
- (c) Candidates tended to point out that only God knows who is truly sorry while coming to a reasoned, personal opinion. There was some extensive discussion of sinfulness and forgiveness.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates gave an appropriate amount of detail, although some confused the shouts of the crowd with the praising of the angels to the shepherds.
- (b) Most candidates were able to link the events of the triumphal entry to the arrest and death of Jesus. Some candidates talked more generally about reasons why Jesus was crucified.
- (c) Most candidates were able to give two sides to this argument and reach a conclusion in a three paragraph answer. Some responses were shorter, perhaps due to timing issues.

Question 6

- (a) Few responses to this question were seen. Those that did respond were able to describe some of the actions of the Roman soldiers in some detail, although some did not mention the centurion.
- (b) There were some good responses that showed a broad contextual understanding of the gospel.
- (c) Most responses were able to balance the arguments for Roman responsibility with Jewish responsibility and reach a personal conclusion.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 2048/22

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

Key messages

There was a real improvement in approach to (c) questions, although some candidates still need to show a clear personal response. The best scripts showed a focus on the question and what it is asking.

General comments

Recall of the passages was generally successful, although (b) questions sometimes were too descriptive and not true explanations of the issue being explored. The key focus needed to be on the 'why' of the question, rather than simply seeing it as an opportunity to narrate other passages.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates generally knew the passage in sufficient detail and were able to explore the material in their own words successfully. Some left out the 'wind' or 'tongues' or missed the fact that the passage says that it was 'something like wind/tongues of fire' because of the ineffability of God.
- (b) Some good points were made, however, there were responses that did not focus on the importance of the address, looking, for example, at the fulfilment of prophecy or the increase in believers.
- (c) This was a well-answered evaluation question with candidates exploring ideas both for and against the statement and reaching a judgement.

Question 2

- (a) The few candidates who attempted this question produced vague answers and only mentioned one or two points made by Stephen.
- (b) Many candidates missed the point of this passage: the speech was necessary to show that Stephen was explaining that history was repeating itself.
- (c) Candidates seemed confident in answering this question. The comparison required by 'most effective' was generally made with miracles and generally candidates avoided further narration of passages.

Question 3

- (a) This was a popular question with good responses, although some candidates did not know the detail of the exchange between Jesus and Saul/Paul.
- (b) Many candidates did not seem to know the difference between the Christian Council of Jerusalem and the Jewish Sanhedrin. However, those who did understand the significance of the Council were able to show its importance in that very early stage of the development of the church.
- (c) Most candidates successfully explored both sides of the argument. Some candidates, however, confused Paul's authority as a Jew before his conversion with that within the church.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates simply skirted over the detail of this passage but most were able to explore the detail of the passage. The best responses showed a good attention to key detail, such as the fact that the vision included a three-fold repetition.
- (b) Some candidates suggested that Peter himself was uncircumcised, which led to weaker responses. However, successful responses noted that Peter would have been said to have incurred uncleanness himself by eating with Cornelius.
- (c) The majority of candidates seemed confident in answering this question. There were good examples from the text to support the idea of visions both in the past and today. Stronger candidates engaged in evaluation rather than just stating arguments for and against.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates outlined the two major passages noted in the mark scheme, although some wrongly ascribed other accounts to the presence of evil spirits.
- (b) Some candidates gave one or two reasons why healings were important in Paul's work. Some did not focus specifically on Paul himself, talking about Acts in general. The best responses noted that the healings further demonstrate the continuity between Jesus, the Twelve and Paul's ministries.
- (c) Candidates seemed confident in answering this question and the best responses illustrated their arguments with examples, rather than starting with a passage and attempting to explain from the narration.

Question 6

- (a) Generally, this event was not as well-known as other passages tested in this paper. The best responses gave good accounts of the speech, referring to both the loss of income and the discrediting of the temple of Artemis and the charge of robbing her of divine majesty. Some candidates seemed to think that because it was a speech, it must have been part of Christian evangelisation.
- (b) It seemed that many candidates could answer one or other aspects of the question but less often both. As the question begins 'explain why' the best responses used their own words to explain the reaction, rather than simply attempting to narrate aspects of the text.
- (c) This question was very well-answered and candidates gave some very good examples both in terms of the early church and in more general terms. The best responses, as always, engaged in discussion of both sides and gave a clear personal opinion.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 2048/23

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

Key messages

Generally excellent responses in this paper. A significant improvement in approach to **(c)** questions was seen, although some candidates did not leave examiners clear on what their specific personal opinion was.

General comments

Recall of the passages was very good and the transference to explanation for **(b)** questions very successful in the majority of scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates were generally able to give a range of arguments to support Luke's authorship of Acts. Some responses needed to go further than simplistic statements and to give specific arguments, as required by the question.
- (b) There were generally successful responses to this question, demonstrating a clear understanding of the usefulness of the 'we' passages for the reliability of Acts.
- (c) There were a number of very good responses to this question. The best candidates showed a good, broad understanding of Acts and generally concluded that the book would be best referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit, although all relevant conclusions were credited.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates were able to set the receiving of the Holy Spirit in the context of Peter's presence at Cornelius' house, although some simply focused on the actual moment of the receipt of the Holy Spirit. The best candidates moved on to show the link between this moment and the baptism that followed.
- (b) Most responses to this question were excellent, showing an ability to explain a number of passages without simply narrating or describing them.
- (c) There were some good responses to this question that showed a useful contextual knowledge of Christianity today. Some candidates focused too much on the possibility that some Christians reject any belief in the Holy Spirit at all.

Question 3

- (a) The majority of candidates produced excellent responses to this question. A few omitted the detail that the angel told Peter to put on his clothes and sandals.
- (b) Candidates showed a good understanding of the role of Herod in the Church's persecution and subsequent demise. Most were able to transfer knowledge into explanation.
- (c) Although some candidates limited themselves by suggesting that because God exists, angels must exist, the majority produced balanced responses to this question and arrived at a clear, personal conclusion.

Question 4

- (a) There were some clear responses to this question, showing excellent knowledge. Some candidates simply focused on the content of the letter, rather than the speech as a whole.
- (b) The majority of responses were clear and detailed, showing excellent understanding of the role of James as seen in Acts.
- (c) Candidates tended to contrast the sharing of possessions and the community life of the church with the divisions seen in Acts. Most concluded that the divisions were all resolved and so the church should be seen as united.

Question 5

- (a) Although some candidates did not give sufficient detail, most gave a good account of this passage.
- (b) Again, good understanding of Acts was demonstrated in candidates' development of a valid explanation to answer this question.
- (c) There were some excellent, thoughtful responses to this question and consideration of the role of missionaries in the church today. Many candidates recognised the changing needs of the world and the role that missionaries can still play in the development and spread of Christianity.

Question 6

- (a) Candidates knew accurately the two mentions of Agabus in Acts and responded with precision.
- (b) Some candidates simply recounted the passage, but most were able to convert this narration into explanation that answered the question directly.
- (c) There were some insightful responses to this question that explored in great detail the idea of prophecy in the modern church. Other candidates focused on prophecy as seen in Acts. Both approaches were credited.