

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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

Key messages

There was good recall of many of the passages but there was concern about the two questions that tested the end of the Gospel. Much improved approach to (c) questions – the next step is to get some deep explanations for (b) questions.

General comments

There were some excellent responses to the (a) questions, although **Questions 5 and 6** were weaker. The (c) questions demonstrated a much improved approach to evaluation, although a notable minority continued to avoid balanced evaluation. The (b) questions were the weakest aspect, with candidates narrating parts of the Gospel, rather than explaining specifically.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This question presented few difficulties and very few candidates tried to narrate three temptations. Some tried to gloss over quotations from Scripture, which meant that they could not achieve the highest marks.
- (b) Many candidates seemed to ignore the mention of the word 'Messiah' and ended up writing about what sort of person Jesus would be – inserting quite non-religious adjectives rather than looking at politics, economics and material approaches. Those candidates who perhaps had not considered the passage in this way were sometimes able to think on their feet and received due credit.
- (c) There were good answers given to this question with balanced views and a personal opinion. Some candidates did not give a personal opinion and could struggle to reach Level 3. However, there was often thoughtful consideration about whether the temptation story was too specific and therefore not relevant to an everyday believer in the twenty-first century.

Question 2

- (a) Generally, answers were very successful. Some candidates omitted the centurion's words when he said that he was not worthy for Jesus to come, which misses out a significant aspect of the passage. Others actually omitted the healing itself.
- (b) This question was often answered in a more descriptive way than it could have been. Many pointed out the faith of the centurion as the main reason for the actions of Jesus but further development was often missing. Some explored the status of the centurion as a Gentile to good effect. The notion of distance and remove from the actual beneficiary of the miracle was often not explored.
- (c) There were some good insights to this question with a range of viewpoints considered. Many agreed on the grounds of need for proof through displays such as miracles; others disagreed because of the centrality of the teaching. Not many suggested that saving the world through dying on the cross was important.

Question 3

- (a) The passage was clearly well-known and well-remembered. In some cases, the parable's explanation was omitted and simply written out in **(b)**.
- (b) Some candidates did not successfully link the parable to people's lives today. In these sorts of questions, there is no correct answer and successful responses approached the question from their own experience of Christianity, whatever that may be. Better answers challenged the Christian thinker to think about what might distract them in today's world – or what successfully bearing fruit might mean today.
- (c) Candidates generally showed no difficulty in understanding this question and gave good examples that showed parables as either easy or difficult to understand. There were many good answers but the lack of clear personal opinion limited the levels achieved. Some showed an understanding of 'the secrets of the kingdom' and produced very interesting responses but this angle was not a requirement to gain full marks.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates knew the detail of the parable, although some over-summarised it and did not attract the highest marks.
- (b) Most candidates realised the relationship of the parable to prayer. Some simply picked up their narration of the Gospel where they had left off in **(a)** – this is not explanation. Persistence was the primary learning point from the parable, although the nature of God was also explored – and the fact that we can pray whenever and about whatever.
- (c) This question was generally successfully answered, with points for and against explored (with a personal opinion for the highest marks). Some candidates simply stated that prayers should be private because someone might find out about them, which was not really a sufficient analysis to gain high credit.

Question 5

- (a) This question was not answered well. Candidates did not seem familiar with the text as in Luke's Gospel and simply recounted the communion service in the tradition they were familiar with. Very few candidates realised that there are two cups in Luke.
- (b) Some candidates struggled with this question, managing to explore the idea that it was the last time that Jesus would eat with his disciples but not always widening it to other aspects of the evening – betrayal and commissioning, for example. Some ignored the focus on Jesus and his disciples and simply wrote about why the event was significant in the history of Christianity.
- (c) Most answers gave two sides of the argument and explored a range of different possible starting points for Christianity. Few suggested either the resurrection or Pentecost. However, as long as the starting point chosen was justified, the candidate received due credit.

Question 6

- (a) The detail of this passage was not always well-known. Not all candidates understood this as a post-resurrection story. Some understood the significance of the conversation and the reference to the prophecies.
- (b) Some candidates were able to explore aspects of the story but some did not explore fully the fulfilment of prophecy (hearts burning within the disciples) nor the recognition at the breaking of the bread.
- (c) This question was either answered very well or showed little detail. Some explored the idea of how Jesus was viewed by others, rather than his own changing. Others explored the nature of his resurrection and his bodily form.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

<p>Paper 2048/13 The Portrayal of the Life and Teaching of Jesus</p>
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Key messages

Generally a successful entry with excellent knowledge of Luke's Gospel and the background shown.

General comments

The understanding of content was excellent. In terms of skills required for this assessment, **(a)** questions were answered concisely and carefully; **(b)** questions ranged from the excellent to the purely descriptive and **(c)** questions also ranged from excellent responses that were balanced to single-sided responses. A style noted this year that has not been too successful is 'I agree with this statement ... On further reflection, I disagree.' Candidates who took this approach did not show their personal response clearly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** Very clear responses showed an excellent understanding of two different groups, usually the Pharisees and Sadducees. Poorer answers simply lacked in detail.
- (b)** Candidates generally understood this clearly. A minority narrated a passage where Jesus came into conflict with the religious authorities.
- (c)** Where candidates were balanced, there was an excellent range of answers seen. Most concluded that this was Jesus' mission and purpose.

Question 2

- (a)** This was not a popular question but the passage being tested was well-known and clearly described.
- (b)** Some excellent explanations were seen here: candidates clearly understood the technique used by Jesus to let his actions speak for themselves.
- (c)** Some candidates struggled to engage with the possibility that John the Baptist would not have thought Jesus was the Messiah, despite the passage in **part (b)**. However, many candidates managed to produce balanced answers and reach a personal conclusion.

Question 3

- (a)** The passage was clearly well-known and well-remembered. Some rushed too much through the contrast between the forgiveness of sins and the performance of the miracle.
- (b)** Candidates clearly understood the relevance of the forgiveness of sins as demonstration of divine authority. Most candidates were able to consider a range of points in answer to this question.
- (c)** Candidates generally produced a range of points when exploring modern people's responses to faith or miracles. Some candidates were extremely scathing of their own generation.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates usually knew the context of Peter's declaration for **part (i)** and often knew the subsequent instructions from Jesus about discipleship, but it was often **part (ii)** that was less well-known.
- (b) Although some candidates took the opportunity to write out another passage involving a disciple, most were able to identify a range of parts of the Gospel to draw on. The best responses did so and remembered to explain, rather than describe.
- (c) There were some interesting responses to this, many observing that the Christian has essentially undertaken to follow Jesus as a role model.

Question 5

- (a) Some candidates misremembered the question Jesus was asked before he told the parable but the vast majority of candidates knew the parable itself in forensic detail.
- (b) Most candidates spotted the twin focus of the question and produced sensible responses.
- (c) Candidates were able to give a range of points of view and responded from a personal perspective to good effect.

Question 6

- (a) Candidates were able to give an account of the trial clearly. Most were able to explore the movement in the narrative from the council to Pilate and why this might be, although some omitted **part (ii)**.
- (b) Some candidates simply wrote general responses on the identity of Jesus. Better responses answered the question directly and took it in a range of directions.
- (c) Most candidates explored the obligations on Jesus imposed by prophesy and his very nature. Some reiterated Jesus' perfect example to all in choosing not to avoid death. A few recognised some interesting subtleties in terms of the nature of free will.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 2048/22

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

Key messages

The full range of responses was seen but **part (b)** questions seemed to be the least well-answered where there is often an attempt simply to narrate parts of Acts, rather than to engage with the question set. Quality of responses on this paper was weaker than on the Luke paper.

General comments

Part (a) questions were generally well-answered and **part (b)** questions were less so – the word explain invites candidates to put things into their own words and give unique examples. The **part (c)** questions were successful where candidates used a clear framework. Some still did not give a personal opinion or a contrasting side to the argument.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Some identified the word community and were able to draw on their study of the early chapters of Acts. Others simply mentioned three things that happened in Acts that were not community based. The opportunity to describe something of the feature chosen was not taken by some and others did not limit themselves to three features.
- (b) This question asked for the three features from **part (a)** to be explained in greater detail, although a valid reading of the question was to explore why community life was important to the early church. A small number of candidates successfully engaged with this question but a number did not.
- (c) Candidates generally were able to discuss points for and against this statement. Few candidates seemed to aspire to the community that was the early church.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates generally knew this passage in very good detail, although some glossed over the moment of healing.
- (b) Although candidates had generally been successful in **part (a)**, the word 'why' in the question seemed to be ignored too often here. Candidates often simply explained 'how' – i.e. narrated other passages.
- (c) There were some good responses to this question with clear and balanced argument that explored authorship and purpose as well as miracles' historicity. Candidates with clear, personal opinions as well as two sides of the argument were able to attain the top Level.

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates showed very good knowledge of Saul/Paul before his conversion, drawing on knowledge from around the book of Acts. Some simply narrated his involvement in the stoning of Stephen or the first part of the passage on the road to Damascus. A significant number of candidates thought that Saul was a Gentile Roman.

- (b) Many candidates did not understand the word 'strategy' and care should be taken that they understand all words on the syllabus. Those who did gave a broad overview of the first journey. Those who moved beyond the descriptive and explored the sorts of things Paul did were able to attain more marks.
- (c) Candidates were often able to give balanced consideration to this question. Although speeches were clearly central to Paul's strategy, most felt that there was more to Paul's evangelisation than this.

Question 4

- (a) This was a poorly-answered question. Some candidates re-told the vision and others drew on unidentifiable information to write. The detail of the speech from chapter 10:34-43 was rarely known.
- (b) Many candidates missed the significance of the Holy Spirit coming onto a Gentile household or its coming prior to baptism. It was a sign that the work of the church was changing direction, with the blessing of the Spirit.
- (c) Candidates were able to engage well with this question. Few explored the possibility that Paul was a contender to be true leader of the church but there were good explanations of James's leadership especially. The best responses analysed and explained the points being raised, rather than simply narrating passages about Peter.

Question 5

- (a) This was not a popular question and a range of possible responses was accepted, as seen on the mark scheme. Candidates tended either to know the contents of Paul's visit to Athens or not.
- (b) There were some good responses to this that understood the necessity of Paul's technique to be changed but often this was only done in a sentence or two. Candidates might have explored not only how Paul delivered his message but the differences within the message (e.g. the unknown God or lack of mention of Jesus) – but success would only have come with an explanation of *why* and not just *how*.
- (c) Candidates generally explored a number of events within the second journey to decide if it were a failure or a success. Those that did not simply retell passages tended to gain higher marks.

Question 6

- (a) Another less-popular question but one that was well-answered when candidates knew the characters well. Some missed the important detail that Apollos was initially only familiar with the baptism of John.
- (b) The importance of baptism in the church was explored well by many. Although candidates talked about the sign of becoming a Christian, some might have explored more the symbolism of becoming part of a community and all that this entails.
- (c) Candidates generally agreed with this statement but could not achieve the highest marks without a considered, opposing point of view (as well as a personal opinion, clearly stated). Those who gave one usually said that some Christians have too much to do or that their calling lies elsewhere.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 2048/23

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

Key messages

The full range of responses was seen but **part (b)** questions seemed to be the least well-answered.

General comments

The general approach to **part (a)** questions was good and showed good knowledge. **Part (b)** questions were often too brief and ignored the command word 'explain', simply providing narrations of passages from Acts. Answers to the **part (c)** questions followed two patterns – those that considered two points of view and gave their own opinion did well; those who ignored this requirement could not access the highest marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to describe what is known about Judas in Acts, including the fact that he was replaced by Matthias.
- (b) This question was generally well-answered, although some simply narrated passages about life in the early church.
- (c) Candidates were able to explore this question appropriately, engaging with the idea that conversion was important for the growth of the church as well as the fact that looking after the fledgling community was possible.

Question 2

- (a) A number of candidates misidentified the passage but those who knew it were able to describe the contents of the prayer in good detail in their own words.
- (b) Some candidates were unsuccessful here because they ignored the command to explain and simply wrote out the Ananias and Sapphira passage. Better responses suggested some useful ideas about why fear seized the church after that incident.
- (c) Candidates often engaged well with the idea that it was tough being an early Christian. However, the best responses looked at the other side of the argument as well.

Question 3

- (a) Most who answered this question correctly described both aspects of the persecution.
- (b) Some candidates simply recounted Stephen's death; others understood the need to explain and gave some useful suggestions as to why Stephen might have been stoned to death.
- (c) Some candidates agreed with the statement and talked about the idea of martyrdom inspiring the future of the church; others used the idea of martyrdom to suggest some might have been put off being a Christian. Balanced answers with a clear personal viewpoint attracted the most marks.

Question 4

- (a) The few candidates who did this question identified the passage correctly and described it in good detail.
- (b) Where the speech was known and where the need to explain was noted, there were good answers to this question.
- (c) Most candidates were able to give arguments either for or against this statement. Those that gave both sides before reaching a clearly-expressed opinion gained the most credit.

Question 5

- (a) Although some candidates did not know the passage being tested, most were able to describe both aspects in appropriate detail.
- (b) Some did not realise that these were healings of Peter but those that correctly identified the healings were able to explore their significance in terms of God's power and the power of the apostles.
- (c) Candidates were able to engage with this with good success, citing a number of women of significance in Acts. Those that went beyond simply the narration of passages attracted more credit.

Question 6

- (a) Few candidates answered this question but those that did generally identified the correct events to outline.
- (b) Many candidates did not have much to say for this question. Those candidates who could explore different ways in which the Holy Spirit affected Paul, rather than simply one way, attracted higher marks.
- (c) Most candidates who answered this were able to offer useful arguments.