

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

## Key messages

Where candidates were expected to show and apply their own understanding, there were some weaknesses shown. For example: **part (b)** questions were shorter this session than previously and there were some issues in contextual understanding (e.g. what a centurion is, what period in history was Jesus alive in).

## General comments

Most of the passages were accurately identified and well described. As is often the case with questions on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, **Question 6** attracted inaccuracies because the accounts given were those from other gospels or a conflation of all gospels. Evaluation questions showed a good structure, although the comments above apply to **part (c)** questions as well. Some candidates would have benefitted from making their personal response clearer.

There seemed to be a greater number of candidates this year using bullet points; writing in prose is preferable and more conducive to meeting the requirements of the generic mark scheme (levels of response).

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

#### Question 1

- (a) A number of candidates did not successfully identify the clothes that John wore and the food that he ate but most successfully recounted the baptism of Jesus.
- (b) This was generally well-answered. Candidates tended to focus on the indication of Jesus as Son of God, his Messiahship and his humility (or humanity as Son of man). Some candidates spent too long on one aspect, often ending up repeating themselves and denying themselves access to the higher levels.
- (c) Many candidates drew a comparison between the Davidic Messianic expectations and the reality that Jesus presented to them and compared this to Jesus' fulfilment of prophecy. The contrast between the Jewish understanding of the Messiah (as royalty) and Jesus' own (as servanthood) was clearly well-understood. Some candidates interpreted the question as a comparison between how Jesus and the Jews viewed Jesus' ministry, and this was given credit where possible.

#### Question 2

- (a) Some candidates struggled to cover the breadth of the passage and tended to focus on one aspect. Some picked the wrong aspect of the Sermon on the Mount or attempted to use other material from the Sermon to link in some way to anxiety.
- (b) Many candidates described what Christians today did not need to worry about, rather than focusing on the idea of how Christians might be influenced. Candidates did well when their answers used

these examples to illustrate their answers. The focus was often on financial worries with some on spiritual worries.

- (c) In support of the statement, many students were able to consider the range of teachings that the Sermon on the Mount offers, although some retained a focus on **part (a)**, which tended to limit their responses. Against the statement, candidates usually mentioned parables as parts of the gospel that Christians also could learn from today.

### Question 3

- (a) This was generally answered very well and only a small minority of candidates confused the healing with another one. Some did not quite understand the idea that the centurion used his own experience of authority as an analogy for that of Jesus. Some did not mention the idea that the gentile centurion showed greater faith than many Jews at the time of Jesus.
- (b) Many learners discussed the need of faith for miracles to occur and some struggled to go beyond this point. Some were able to explore the idea of the gentiles having faith, even though Jesus mainly worked among Jews. Some candidates were able to go beyond the idea of 'faith can do anything' through recognising the distinctive characteristics of this passage.
- (c) While a number of candidates simply listed miracles where people demonstrated faith (and miracles without a direct link to faith), others were able to talk about whether the primary purpose of miracles was linked to faith or to other reasons, such as demonstrations of the power of God or fulfilment of his kingdom.

### Question 4

- (a) Some candidates told a different story about vineyards but most successfully identified the passage and were able to give a good overview of the parable and gave the sense of workers being invited to work at different times of day. Most of these candidates then went on to identify payment as being the same for all. Few were able to give a clear summary of the owner's response to the workers' grumbling.
- (b) There were some excellent answers to this question, exploring the idea of entry to the kingdom being equal as well as the idea of reversal found in the tenet that the last shall be first and the first shall be last. Some focused on the idea of equal wages, however much one works. Less successful responses simply made one point and candidates did not always explain that point in their own words.
- (c) This was generally well-answered, although some candidates simply resorted to describing parables. The focus on today was also sometimes missed by candidates. However, successful responses were able to produce balanced discussions, focusing on the timelessness of the Bible compared with the use of examples relevant to the communities of the early first century.

### Question 5

- (a) This was a less-popular question but those who chose it did so successfully. Occasionally, the level of detail was sparse, and some conflated the story with others from the gospels.
- (b) Most candidates were able to explain why this event was a warning to them but some simply repeated material from **part (a)** without explanation. The best responses looked at the indication of death, the significance of Jesus' death and the role of the disciples surrounding his death and following it.
- (c) This was well-answered with candidates often supporting the statement because of Jesus' emphasis on helping the poor and because the disciples often misunderstand the true identity of Jesus and are therefore not prepared for his death. In disagreement, many pointed out that as they were the closest to Jesus, they should have understood his words, known and/or had more faith.

**Question 6**

- (a) This was the weakest **part (a)** question, with candidates often unable to pinpoint the events to those in Matthew's Gospel. Few managed to identify all the detail in the passage. Often missed out were the declaration of Jesus being the Son of God or the words of Jesus from the cross. Some candidates attempted to recount the trials of Jesus onwards.
- (b) This was well-answered where candidates had answered **part (a)** correctly. Most focused on the significance of the torn curtain in the temple and the darkness from noon to 3 pm. There were a few excellent responses that identified the dead walking about as the salvation of those dead before Christ and others that explore the gentile soldier response as the first stage in the spread of the gospel.
- (c) This was generally well-answered with candidates identifying the resurrection or Jesus' birth as a possible alternative 'most important event'. A few candidates simply listed other events in the life of Jesus.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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Paper 2048/22  
The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

## Key messages

Some candidates seem to have been unable to identify the sections of Acts being tested due to having studied different translations than the ones prescribed in the syllabus.

## General comments

The responses to this paper were noticeably weaker than in the Matthew paper but they seemed weaker due to a poorer knowledge of Acts than the Gospel. For example, the roles played by Barnabas and Philip was not as always understood and where questions departed from a high-profile passage, candidates struggled to answer accurately.

Candidates would also benefit from writing in prose, rather than presenting answers in table or bullet point form.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Candidates appeared to struggle with this question, often identifying Acts as necessarily taking place after the death of Jesus but trying to suggest that it could have been written before. Some had clearly studied this section of the syllabus and were able to reproduce the standard arguments accurately.
- (b) Candidates seemed unsure why it might be important to know when Acts was written. Some tried to suggest that it added to the reliability of the text, but they were not sure why. Others simply talked about who wrote the book.
- (c) This was generally well-answered with candidates sometimes referencing Jesus' teachings as necessary for the birth of the early church. Others were able to explore reasons for needing both and the various merits of each.

### Question 2

- (a) Most candidates referenced Philip's work as one of the seven, his work in Samaria and the encounters with Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian eunuch. Some focused almost entirely on the eunuch and so were not able to demonstrate the breadth of Philip's work.
- (b) Some candidates tried to repeat material from **part (a)** as description, rather than explanation. Most successful responses made a comment about the importance of each of the jobs/incidents covered in **part (a)**. Some excellent responses located Philip as the start of the spread 'to the ends of the earth'.
- (c) Candidates generally offered a balanced argument and either concluded in favour of Peter or that both roles were complementary. Occasionally, the structure to **part (c)** questions did not clearly identify a personal viewpoint, which restricted access to the highest levels.

### Question 3

- (a) Some candidates struggled with the **part (a)** question, which pinpoints a significant passage in the journey of the early church and fits a lot in to the five verses. A very small number of candidates mentioned Agabus.
- (b) This was more successful than **part (a)** with Barnabas's mentorship of Paul central to successful responses, as well as the meaning of his name. Some mentioned the selling of land as the starting point to a lifetime of service. Some misidentified Barnabas as one of the seven.
- (c) This was generally well-answered with candidates giving weight to the role Barnabas played in Paul's success, although many argued that the Holy Spirit would have ensured the spread of the church without Barnabas.

### Question 4

- (a) This was not a popular question and very few were able to identify the teaching in this key speech about the history of the Jews before Jesus. To answer this question candidates needed to be aware that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and so write about the Old Testament section of Paul's teaching.
- (b) Many recounted Paul's conversion as a way of convincing people that Jesus was the Saviour, and few were able to connect to prophecies about the Messiah or use the remainder of the speech as a way to begin the explanation required.
- (c) This was generally well-answered, with candidates giving examples of both successful speeches from Paul and how his speeches were tailored for particular audiences as well as important events such as his journeys, conversion experience and significant interactions with others.

### Question 5

- (a) This passage was confused with other examples of Paul coming into conflict with authorities. Those who identified the correct passage were able to describe the words of Gallio accurately. A few also noted the beating of Sosthenes.
- (b) Where answers were successful, they identified Paul as threatening the Jews because of the popularity of his teaching. Generally, success in **part (a)** led to success in **part (b)**.
- (c) This was generally well-answered. Candidates who moved beyond simply giving examples of Paul escaping death and those who went beyond crediting the Holy Spirit with the rescues tended to be more successful because they showed a greater understanding of Paul's missionary work.

### Question 6

- (a) This was a popular question, but the specifics of the passage were often missed, especially in terms of how the miracle was performed and the reaction to it. The most successful responses demonstrated the speed with which the community went back to normal and broke bread.
- (b) This was well-answered with candidates focusing on the power to heal, the breaking of bread as important in community worship and the significance and example of Paul's faith. A number identified the main message as being about preachers not being too boring or speaking for too long.
- (c) This was generally well-answered with most giving examples of passages about each aspect; the most successful candidates using these examples to illustrate an argument, rather than simply describing or listing passages. The most common conclusion from candidates who gave a conclusion (and therefore who accessed the highest marks) was that Acts is about both.