

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

Key messages

- It is important that candidates read each question carefully before writing their response.
- In **(b)** questions, candidates need to ensure that they are explaining what they are asked, rather than simply describing or stating points.
- In **part (c)** questions, candidates are advised to write two clear and opposing arguments, and then conclude with a personal viewpoint.

General comments

The full range of marks was awarded. Overall, candidates were able to describe the passages being tested appropriately, although some extended passages beyond what was asked. The quality of explanations for **(b)** questions was good: candidates tended to answer the question set, using their own words to explain.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** The majority of candidates knew which account to describe and did so well, while other responses were slightly too general in the dialogue between Jesus and the man with leprosy. There were also some candidates who identified the passage incorrectly.
- (b)** There were some good answers to this question. Less successful responses spoke about what the miracle shows about the identity of Jesus, rather than his work, as required by the question.
- (c)** Candidates tended to disagree with this statement, although there were some very good, balanced responses, looking at how it could be argued that Jesus' ministry to all people was an important focus, using relevant examples.

Question 2

- (a)** The majority of candidates showed good knowledge of the text here, although some chose the account of the sinful woman instead. Some showed particularly good knowledge of Jesus' words at the end of the banquet.
- (b)** Some candidates limited themselves by simply narrating the passage. Better responses were able to explain in their own words why there were problems caused by the disciples' actions, both at the time and in the longer term in the context of conflict with the authorities.
- (c)** Candidates seemed to be confident with this question, examining arguments and evaluating them. They looked at some of the ways that Jesus could be suggested to have disobeyed the Law, such as healing on the Sabbath and associating with outcasts and gentiles. The main argument given in favour of Jesus not disobeying the Law was that he was Lord of the Sabbath and so it was his place to interpret it.

Question 3

- (a) This was a popular question. A number of candidates needed to be more specific in the detail given or recounted Matthew's account, rather than Luke's, and some candidates wrote about the Prodigal Son instead.
- (b) Candidates were able to talk about forgiveness in general terms. The best responses were able to answer the question directly by examining the passage – the idea that God will go searching for the lost and will rejoice when they re-join the fold is more directly relevant than the idea of repentance of sinners.
- (c) The majority of candidates engaged well with the statement. There were some good discussions about what makes a good Christian at all and whether the use of the Bible is helpful in any way.

Question 4

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this well. Less successful answers conflated accounts of Jesus healing the blind from all the gospels, and others confused the start of the incident and did not give as much detail as might have been expected.
- (b) There was some good discussion of the link between David and Jesus and some candidates were able to discuss this in the context of the story. The Messianic inference of the title was less regularly seen.
- (c) Candidates explored this statement with reasonable success. There was good discussion of Jesus being beyond just a magician or miracle-worker and most concluded that all of Jesus' life was required to understand his identity fully.

Question 5

- (a) This question was the least popular and often not answered well. Candidates knew the question posed, but often did not have full command of Jesus' response.
- (b) There were often very general comments about eternal life or heaven, without linking specifically to the passage, as required by the question. Some responses were methodical in their approach and explained how this passage adds to an understanding of heavenly existence.
- (c) Candidates were generally able to draw on their own life experiences to answer this question with some success. They gave arguments both for and against the statement and the best responses reached an evaluative judgement at the end. Less successful responses tended to be vague about what is involved when one is thinking about teachings on eternal life, or they did not include teachings from Luke. Candidates could have benefited from exploring things that could help people consider teachings on eternal life, such as attending church, prayer and worship.

Question 6

- (a) Candidates often showed very good knowledge here, which enabled them to achieve high marks. Others conflated the trial before Pilate with the accounts in other Gospels or used other material from the passion narrative, thus losing focus on the question.
- (b) This was generally well answered with useful comments about Pilate's role as a civil governor, the evidence of the trial itself and sometimes supposition about what Pilate would have heard about Jesus, if anything.
- (c) Overall, candidates gave detailed responses to this question. The best answers did not just list arguments for and against, but considered the evidence and reached a judgement at the end. Most candidates discussed Jesus fulfilling prophecy and not fighting back when questioned by Pilate. Arguments in favour of Jesus wishing to escape death were mainly focused on his humanity, his possible wish to continue his ministry and his prayer in Gethsemane.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/13
The Portrayal of the Life and Teaching
of Jesus

Key messages

Candidates should ensure that they write two, clear, opposing arguments for **part (c)** questions and then conclude with a personal viewpoint.

General comments

Although the entry was relatively low, the full range of scripts was seen. Candidates generally were able to describe the passages being tested appropriately, although some extended passages went beyond what was asked. The quality of explanations for **(b)** questions was good. Candidates who did well were able to answer the question set and use their own words to explain.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates identified the passage correctly, and had little difficulty in describing the calling of Simon Peter as a disciple.
- (b) Generally, this was answered well, candidates making good use of stories they had studied to show the character of Peter. Some candidates could have used the details they recalled to provide more explanation but overall, responses were good.
- (c) There were some very good, balanced responses on both sides of the debate, candidates citing both the dangers and the rewards that awaited the disciples.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates showed good knowledge here and provided sound responses.
- (b) The best responses provided convincing explanations as to what this miracle might teach about faith, for example that faith will be rewarded, and that any suffering or troubles can be relieved.
- (c) Many good responses were seen in which candidates competently investigated arguments and reached valid evaluative judgements. Luke's purpose to provide a clear, factual account of the life of Jesus was balanced against other considerations such as the gospel being written as a faith document, as well as Luke's other motivations such as his interest in outcasts and the poor.

Question 3

- (a) The majority of candidates had little difficulty in giving an account of the feeding of the five thousand.
- (b) Better answers explained that this story was relevant in identifying Jesus as God incarnate, as having compassion for followers and as the feeder of the poor.

- (c) Mixed responses were seen but most candidates were able to fully engage with the question. There were some interesting debates about the miracles and whether or not they revealed the true identity of Jesus, in light of miracles performed by others at this time. Some felt that the miracles in themselves were not enough to fully identify Jesus.

Question 4

- (a) This was generally answered well, with good detail provided.
- (b) Better responses were able to provide good explanations on the meaning of the parable concerning the use and misuse of wealth and attitudes to suffering.
- (c) On the whole, reasonable responses were produced. In stronger answers, candidates investigated the hypothesis thoroughly, and with a nuanced approach, showing an awareness of the different behaviours of rich people described in Luke, from the selfish and greedy to those sowing faith and remorse.

Question 5

- (a) **Question 5** was answered by the fewest candidates but **part (a)** was done well.
- (b) Of the few responses seen, candidates struggled to fully explain why Jesus' answer silenced those who asked about paying taxes to Caesar.
- (c) Responses were mixed in quality, and generally answers could have been improved by more evidence from studied texts, as regards the words and actions of Jesus.

Question 6

- (a) Some candidates struggled with this question but others were able to provide a very detailed account of events.
- (b) Generally candidates found this question challenging. Some good detail was given on the resurrection appearance to the disciples but explanations of significance could have been improved.
- (c) The best responses were detailed and considered the evidence, reaching a judgement in the conclusion. These responses acknowledged the spiritual view of resurrection taken by some Christians today, and the contrast with the purpose of the author, whose perspective was from a world with different viewpoints and beliefs to those of today.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure that they focus simply on the passage being tested and not write more than is required.
- Evaluation questions should present two different points of view as well as a clear statement of a personal opinion.

General comments

Overall, candidates approached this paper well. Some candidates seemed to struggle with questions that required a summary of material, such as **Questions 4(a)** and **6(a)**. Responses for explanation questions varied in quality and sometimes, candidates did not answer the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The passage was generally well-known and well-recounted. Candidates knew the detail of the passage and described them accurately. Some included superfluous material from after the ascension. A few candidates gave the account from Luke, rather than Acts.
- (b) This question proved challenging for some candidates who interpreted 'organised' as the community life passages. The question needed candidates to explore leadership and overall organisation, such as the twelve apostles and the Seven.
- (c) Most candidates engaged well with this question, examining arguments for and against the statement. The best responses went on to give a personal opinion, giving access to the top marks. Most candidates suggested that the Holy Spirit was what drove the members of the early church forward, but some explored the idea that the believers existed before the Pentecost event.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates who attempted this question generally knew the key arguments and were able to outline them in good detail. As it is common with questions on the background to the text, this was the least popular question. Some candidates, perhaps seeing the (b) question, wrote about the authorship of the text.
- (b) Some candidates produced excellent answers to this question. Some less successful answers tried to evaluate as if it were a (c) question and seemed to have spent too much time giving arguments why it is not important to know who the author of Acts is.
- (c) Candidates often found it difficult to agree with the statement, but those that explored the idea that the subject matter is very different tended to go in the right direction. The best responses examined two opposing approaches to the statement and then evaluated clearly at the end.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates who were able to give a feel of the passage with good detail scored well. Some seemed to struggle with identifying the correct passage to outline and some outlines were too brief to gain much credit. There were also candidates who included Gamaliel, perhaps from seeing him mentioned in the (b) question.
- (b) Candidates generally knew what Gamaliel had said to the Sanhedrin, but the best answers explained what he had said and its implications in their own words, rather than simply narrating. Details of Theudas and Judas were sometimes overlooked.
- (c) Candidates often seemed to have misread this question and discussed whether the church feared the authorities, rather than the other way around. Candidates who approached this correctly did so with a large range of points, often well-discussed.

Question 4

- (a) This question was less well answered. Candidates did not seem aware of the material in chapter 11 and often described events that had nothing to do with Barnabas in Antioch, or gave general answers about Barnabas's work.
- (b) Some candidates simply narrated the events in Paphos and Iconium and others confused the account with other events. The best responses took the detail and wrote an explanation in candidates' own words. Some candidates seemed to be more comfortable writing about the Paphos story, rather than the Iconium one.
- (c) There were some good explorations of this question using material from the Acts of the Apostles, although some responses talked generally about evil spirits and did not fully engage with the statement. Most candidates who produced evaluations suggested that they did help the growth of the early church, but were far from definitive.

Question 5

- (a) Although some candidates wrote out the whole passage, many remained focused on the question and outlined the passage with good detail. Some candidates wrote about what happened when the jailer welcomed Paul and Silas into his home.
- (b) Some candidates saw the phrase 'with examples' and simply narrated sections of Acts. The best responses answered the question and explored why Paul had a different impact on different people through his ministry.
- (c) There were some excellent responses to this question, drawing both on contemporary life and on the Acts of the Apostles. Most candidates were able to explore both sides of the argument without simply narrating text.

Question 6

- (a) This question was less well answered. Some thought that the Sadducees and the Pharisees were one group and others did not place them in the context of Acts. Candidates who knew the content were able to produce excellent outlines, linking to the distinct theologies of each group.
- (b) This question was less well answered, perhaps due to time constraints at the end of the paper. The question invited candidates to draw on any material that concerns the Jewish leaders in Acts and to explain the possible reasons for this opposition. Some candidates carefully explored the threat posed by the church as well as the blasphemy or heresy that they would have portrayed to their contemporaries.
- (c) Candidates answered this question well with both sides of the argument considered. Many who provided a conclusion thought that the early church saw itself as having a ministry to both and that this was well-reflected in Acts.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/23

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

Key messages

Candidates should ensure that they focus simply on the passage being tested and do not try to write more than is required. Evaluation questions should present two different points of view and a clear statement of a personal opinion to reach the highest marks.

General comments

Candidates generally approached this paper well. Explanation questions varied in quality and sometimes suffered from candidates not answering the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Very few candidates attempted this question. The most successful responses were able to include a range of points relating to when Acts was written but some candidates tended to include more general detail rather than focusing on the question.
- (b) Some candidates were able to suggest some good reasons why they might disagree, such as there being no reference to the death of Paul.
- (c) Some candidates engaged well with this question, examining arguments for and against the statement. The best responses went on to give a personal opinion. Some good responses argued that although the content is more important than the date, the dating did matter as it might impact on reliability.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates who attempted this question generally knew the main events at Pentecost and were able to outline them in good detail. Candidates needed to be careful to confine their answers to what happened before Peter spoke to the crowd.
- (b) Some candidates produced excellent answers to this question and were able to highlight points such as the guiding role of the Holy Spirit. The best responses were able to cite examples from different passages to back up their points.
- (c) The best responses examined two opposing approaches to the statement and then evaluated clearly at the end. Many candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge about the role of the Holy Spirit.

Question 3

- (a) It was important that candidates included detail of both the visions of Cornelius and Peter. Most candidates were able to outline the key points of both.

- (b) Candidates generally knew the significance of Peter's vision as it related to food laws and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Some good responses also referred to the Council of Jerusalem.
- (c) There were some good answers here. Good responses were able to cite examples relating to both Peter and Paul and then come to a conclusion about their own personal view.

Question 4

- (a) Although some candidates wrote out large parts of the passage, many remained focused on the question and outlined the passage with good detail.
- (b) Some candidates tended to narrate events as opposed to explaining why. The best responses were able to reflect the different responses to Paul.
- (c) Good responses here were able to reflect both points of view drawing on specific examples, pointing out that although Jesus' death and resurrection were of central importance, Paul also talked about other things and taught, as at the Council of Jerusalem. It was important for candidates to engage with the 'too much' part of the statement.

Question 5

- (a) Although this question was not answered by very many candidates, most were able to demonstrate good knowledge of the key events here.
- (b) It was important to note the 'why' in the question rather than just citing examples of when Paul was opposed by the Jews. The best responses were able to explain points such as that Paul's teachings were seen as contrary to the law.
- (c) Some candidates showed some confusion between the different missionary journeys of Paul but many were able to argue both sides well. The best responses were able to draw on specific examples, such as when Paul was imprisoned or the split with Barnabas

Question 6

- (a) Many candidates were able to give an accurate account of the key events and there were some good descriptions of Paul's actions. Some poorer responses wrote very generally and without detail.
- (b) Some candidates struggled with this question but most were able to highlight some of the significance of 'we', such as that it suggests the author was an eye witness to events. The best responses were able to reflect the different sides to the debate about authorship.
- (c) Candidates were able to respond to this well with both sides of the argument considered. Many candidates whilst agreeing with the statement balanced this against other considerations such as the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiring Prophets.