

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

Key messages

There was an improvement in the structure of responses to **part (c)** questions, which led to a greater number of candidates achieving higher marks.

General comments

Many of the stronger responses to **part (c)** questions included personal opinion, which was explained, not just stated. Candidates need to remember that an overreliance on some formulaic structures can limit the quality of their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) There were some good responses that covered anticipated ideas, although other points, such as the sense of order in the Gospel being reflective of a tax-collector's organisation, were also seen and credited. Some candidates confused the material required for this question with material on the dating of Matthew or thought that it was a question about the Jewish origins of the book.
- (b) Most candidates showed good understanding of the place of the genealogy in the Gospel. There were some interesting reflections on the significance of the fourteen generations between stages of Jesus' family tree, although the idea of salvation history might have featured more regularly.
- (c) There were good discussions in response to this question. Some candidates agreed with the statement on the basis of the persuasive powers of the miracles. Others rejected the statement because without an understanding of the person of Jesus, the work makes little sense.

Question 2

- (a) Some candidates chose to summarise the Beatitudes and their message in this question to achieve high marks. However, most, understandably, chose to write out the Beatitudes. A number of candidates were unclear what a Beatitude is.
- (b) Some candidates tried to choose three Beatitudes and explain them together in one sentence. Others chose three different ones than they had listed (accurately) in **part (a)**. However, the majority who had been successful in **part (a)** were able to make sensible observations about why these teachings cause happiness. Not many candidates seemed to understand the nature of that happiness as being different from pleasure or immediate happiness.
- (c) Candidates who understood the Beatitudes as virtues, rather than laws, found it easier to respond to this question. They observed that the Beatitudes are fundamental attitudes that should be held by a Christian and are therefore eternal. When suggesting reasons in favour of the statement, there were some interesting responses that considered the saleability of Jesus' teachings in the twenty-first century.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates successfully recalled the passages related to this question. There were a number of candidates who mistook leprosy for paralysis with responses to **part (i)** sometimes referencing the wrong miracle story. A number of candidates conflated the calming of the storm and the walking on water.
- (b) Many candidates responded with sensible comments about the person and work of Jesus. Stronger candidates ensured that they responded about the miracle itself, rather than making generic comments about faith, God's power and compassion.
- (c) Candidates answered this question, with responses exploring the mighty power of nature miracles and contrasting this with the public nature of healing ones. Stronger responses focused on Jesus' identity.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates knew this parable very well. Some outlined it in too little detail to achieve the highest marks or tried to explain it in **part (a)** and ended up either repeating themselves in **part (b)** or trying to find new material.
- (b) Most candidates responded to the command to 'explain' with an explanation in their own words. Weaker responses simply described Jesus' explanation.
- (c) There were some excellent responses from candidates who acknowledged that their own life experiences might influence their reading of Jesus' parables, balanced with a sense of needing the Holy Spirit's help to read them. Other candidates described not understanding Jesus' parables because the images are out of date. Whichever response was chosen, the best responses generally used a range of parables as part of an argument, rather than in a narrative.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates recounted the correct passage here, although some did not fully capture the discussion after Peter's declaration (confession). Some responses were not quite specific enough, for example, attributing different titles to Jesus.
- (b) Candidates generally made useful comments about why this was a significant moment for both Jesus and Peter. The best responses tended to understand the role Peter had in the establishment of the church and the moral authority given to Peter at this moment.
- (c) Most candidates were able to engage with both sides of the argument in response to this statement. Stronger responses included examples which ranged from the everyday to persecution and martyrdom.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates successfully identified the passage, although some did not include the opening, which establishes the nature of the trap. Some candidates misidentified the passage and gave an account of another event to do with tax.
- (b) Many candidates gave excellent responses to this and explored the nature of the trap, what would have happened were Jesus to have answered in different ways and Jesus' neat solution to this.
- (c) Some candidates explored the nature of how Jesus engaged with his opponents to good effect and the best responses illustrated their comments with suitable examples from the Gospel.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

Key messages

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

General comments

There seemed to be an increase in the number of responses that answered in bullet points; this was more noticeable on the Acts paper than the Matthew paper. Candidates need to understand that responses are more likely to gain high marks if they are written in prose. Some candidates only answered three questions; candidates must remember that they are instructed to answer four questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Some candidates answered in general terms, drawing from their knowledge of Acts; others responded using the passages in chapter 2 and/or chapter 4: either was acceptable. If the first approach was taken, it was expected that the image painted of community life would be reflective of standard readings of Acts and not one of the hardship of daily life. There also needed to be reference to living as community.
- (b) Most candidates were able to reflect successfully on what Christians today might learn from the passages. Stronger responses included a range of well-explained points. Weaker responses were often too general.
- (c) This was well-answered. Some candidates felt that the ideals of the early church should be explored more in the modern world while others felt that the eternal teachings that we find in Acts are an important starting point. The contrast of approaches is reflective of the range of views within Christianity.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates selected an appropriate passage and responded successfully to this question, although some candidates tried to answer using Stephen as an apostle.
- (b) Some candidates tried to explain the story they had selected in **part (a)**, which made it difficult to answer the question. However, most responses were able to explore a range of reasons why the early church's message was controversial. There were an interesting number of answers that explored the financial ruin that was implicit for Jews and pagans in the shift of followers to Christianity.
- (c) This was generally answered well, and most candidates were able to discuss the statement in a balanced way. Most candidates reluctantly agreed that one cannot say a belief is a true conviction without a willingness to sacrifice things, or oneself, for it.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates generally represented this story accurately. Weaker responses were less precise in relation to the eunuch's request for baptism.
- (b) Some candidates were unclear what was meant by 'Scriptures', despite it being present in the passage itself. Stronger responses explored the nature of Scriptures as proof texts, the idea of Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy and the presence of the Scriptures in most speeches in Acts.
- (c) While some candidates focused on miracles, which was allowed, others understood this question to have come out of the supernatural elements of the Philip story. Some excellent answers explored the supernatural elements of a story about one of the deacons and compared it with the story-telling about the apostles.

Question 4

- (a) This question was less popular than the others. The best answers came from candidates who understood the turning point that is the Council of Jerusalem. Weaker responses found it difficult to outline the large amount of material. Candidates sometimes needed to understand that the Council was a council of Christians and not a debate or court that set Jews against Christians.
- (b) Many candidates were able to explore the significance for the early church as well as for the book of Acts. Some answers showed that some believed the Council not to be an event as much as a synonym for 'the Church gathered in Jerusalem' and some talked about the general importance of Jerusalem, rather than the Council.
- (c) Candidates were generally able to access this question, even if they had not fully understood the Council of Jerusalem because they understood there to have been a notable turning point in the focus of Acts, whether or not that was a turning point in the focus of Christianity. Peter, James and the Holy Spirit were usually offered as alternative leaders. Many said Paul could not have been the leader because he was too busy with missionary work, which usually elicited excellent discussions.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates were able to explore Paul's visit accurately, although some confused it with the time in Thessalonica or other aspects of Paul's work.
- (b) Most candidates were able to talk about at least one similarity and one difference in response to this question. Stronger responses included a greater range of points.
- (c) Most candidates explored this question with success. There was good consideration of Paul's typical strategy to preach in synagogues first and some impassioned reminders from candidates that Christianity emerged from Judaism and so they had to have the opportunity to reject the message, even if that is what they chose to do.

Question 6

- (a) Some candidates were able to explore the importance clearly attributed to the women in the emergence of the early church. Others simply told stories that mentioned women, and some were quite disparaging about how women were treated in the first century but did not draw on evidence from Acts to establish what they were suggesting.
- (b) Many candidates were able to give a useful range of points of view. Some missed the word 'not' and answered a different question; others tried to talk about women.
- (c) Candidates who understood how women were portrayed in Acts were generally more able to respond well to this question than those who thought the statement was suggesting that women today should be more subservient. However, there were some very well-balanced arguments that observed that women were still more associated with domestic labours and that this perhaps did not have the place in modern society than it did then.