

BIBLICAL STUDIES

<p>Paper 9484/12 The Four Gospels</p>

Key message

The syllabus is designed to allow centres to produce focused study. The set texts are taken from all four Gospels. There is no requirement to read texts other than those set for study, though candidates benefit from having read all four Gospels and then understand the distinctive characteristics of the Gospels. Candidates were encouraged to work across topics where appropriate and to understand the influence of the Old Testament on the material when they used it in their answers. They are asked to answer five questions in total: three from **Section A**; **Question 5** in **Section B** and one question only from **Section C**. The total mark for the paper is 50. The instructions are clearly set out, so it is hoped that there are few, if any, misunderstandings of the exam expectations. Overall, rubric error was down.

General comments

To do well when answering these questions candidates must stick closely to the content of the question and identify what the main thrust of it is. A question will never be merely retelling information but there will always be a need to either make an assessment, an analysis, an evaluation, a comparison etc. Candidates need to identify this and then arrange their answer around this task, so the question is clearly addressed. Whilst access to further reading material may vary, it is necessary to show that candidates have a good grasp of the set texts. Marks are awarded for what the candidate produces in their answer and the quality of their response.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular question with the excerpt taken from the Matthean birth narratives. Most candidates chose to answer this and the majority scored highly on this question. The birth narrative formed a sound part of the teaching of this syllabus and the candidates understanding and knowledge of events was very good. Candidates were able to write about both context and content.

Question 2

Another popular question about the call of a disciple. Many candidates wrote about the position of the tax collector in Palestine at that time and took the opportunity to mention the marginalized in society then. Others wrote about the immediacy of Levi to follow Jesus. Again, both the content and context were appropriately covered by the candidates.

Question 3

This question dealt with the disciple Peter, and how he denied knowing Jesus, as was earlier predicted. A lot of candidates wrote about the act of denial and referred to the Last Supper, when Jesus first mentioned this. Some candidates wrote about the immediate incident when Peter was in the courtyard waiting to find out about Jesus' fate and described accurately what was occurring at that time and where Jesus was. All candidates displayed a good knowledge and understanding of this event.

Question 4

A popular question which was answered satisfactorily by those who chose it. The danger here was that candidates would give detail about the Last Supper and the incident without commenting on the actual excerpt given, which is largely about the words Jesus said to his disciples. Good answers wrote about Jesus using the titles, 'Teacher' and 'Lord' about himself and the question he asked his disciples about their understanding of the act of washing that Jesus had performed. It was important to discuss Jesus' words telling them they ought to wash one another's feet.

Section B

Question 5

All candidates answered this question which is designed to allow them to demonstrate their analytical and evaluative skills as well as their knowledge and understanding.

This question provides a passage from one of the Gospels for candidates to use when answering the question set. The question also requires candidates to use other passages that they have studied.

Good candidates balanced their answers with reference to the passage given and then additional material which they brought to their answers. Most candidates selected relevant passages to comment on. The better answers were not dependent on lots of other examples given but on one or two other relevant passages they had studied, and their quality of response showed they understood the evaluative nature of the question. Candidates resisted the temptation to merely list or retell other miracles, and they made a clear attempt to discuss whether compassion was the only or main reason for Jesus performing miracles. There were some very good answers to this question.

Section C

Question 6

- (a) **Question 6** was less popular than **Question 7** on this paper. Candidates need to be able to answer questions which ask for the comparison of passages and to look at the similarities and differences around events recorded by different gospel writers. Those who did this question made a reasonable attempt, but the comparisons were not clearly written into their answer. Different events were recorded and retold but that was the extent of their examination of the content. There was a lot of material to draw from, but this was not used to its full capacity.
- (b) This question was satisfactorily addressed by those who chose it but as stated above, this was less popular than **Question 7**. The main thrust of candidates' answers was to explore the idea that Jesus' appearances after death served to prove his resurrection. Little if any alternative ideas were put forward. There was danger of retelling resurrection appearances without evaluation of the question therefore marks could have been improved if candidates offered analysis of other alternative purposes. Alternative purposes could have included the resurrection being part of the whole purpose which was to see Jesus ascend back to heaven and to send the Holy Spirit, or the resurrection appearances offered verification of Jesus' messiahship.

Question 7

- (a) This was a more popular question. Candidates showed they were aware of the rejection in Nazareth incident. Several were able to retell the account but unable to distinguish which Gospel the different bits came from. Candidates need to be able to emphasise the importance of the specific set texts and not just write about the sequence of incidents in Jesus' life as an overview. Overall, there were some very good answers to this question.
- (b) This question was very well answered by those who attempted it. Candidates were able to refer to other bodies who may have been responsible for the death of Jesus, not just the religious authorities. Many put forward a strong case in favour of the religious authorities citing the incidents throughout Jesus' life when the Pharisees (and others) actively wanted him dead. The alternative views of the role of the Jews, of Judas, of Jesus' own destiny being set from the start and his refusal to defend himself were all analysed and evaluated. Marks were high for this question.

Rubric Errors

There were very few rubric errors this year but the main one was candidates choosing to answer part of **Question 6** and part of **Question 7** which is not acceptable.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

<p>Paper 9484/22 The Development of Christianity</p>
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Key messages

This was the first examination series for the new syllabus and the structure of the paper has changed considerably. Knowledge and understanding (AO1) and analysis and evaluation (AO2) are assessed discretely. It is essential that candidates know which assessment objective is being assessed in each part of the structured questions and answer appropriately.

General comments

In **Section A, Questions 1(a) and 2(a)** test recall and so require detailed knowledge to be shown. This is a new type of question, and although answering it should have been straightforward, it was clear that most candidates did not understand what was required. A number did not attempt **Question 1(a)**, and those who did often gave information that belonged in **Question 1(b)**. The text required for **Question 2(a)** was an extra-biblical text that was not set in the previous syllabus, but it was clear that some candidates knew it well. Candidates were more confident with the style of question in **Section B**. The marks gained were often higher in this section, though a few candidates attempted **Question 4(a)** without appearing to have studied 1 Peter.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This question required candidates to describe Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, i.e. his account of what Jesus said and did at the Last Supper on the night before he died. A few candidates attempted to do this, though without showing any detailed knowledge of the text. Most did not seem to understand the question. One or two gained a mark for reference to the bread being or representing Jesus' body. Others either did not attempt it or explained what the problem was in the Corinthian Church's celebrations of the Lord's Supper, and then repeated this in **part (b)**.
- (b) This part of the question was answered more successfully, though some of the candidates did not know that the Lord's Supper took place within the context of a community meal. The bringing of food and drink to the meal was not an abuse in itself. Most candidates referred to the social divisions between rich and poor that were being created and the excessive eating and drinking on the part of some. Some candidates suggested that the divisions referred to earlier in 1 Corinthians were present at the Lord's Supper. They were given credit for their understanding of the different factions in the community. Points made about the eating of meat sacrificed to idols and about women playing an active role in worship were not relevant to this question, which was about the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- (c) Candidates were able to argue in support of the statement, linking Paul's denunciation of the disregard shown to the poor to the concern for unity that he showed throughout 1 Corinthians. Other views centred on Paul's criticism of the drunkenness and greed, but development of this argument was limited. Candidates might have pointed out that such behaviour revealed a failure to appreciate the sacred nature of the Lord's Supper, which was proclaiming Jesus' sacrificial death in readiness for the Second Coming. They might have referred to Paul's concern that the Christians in Corinth were bringing divine judgement upon themselves and to his exhortation to come to the Lord's Supper in the right frame of mind.

Question 2

- (a) Tacitus' account of and comment on the persecution of Christians by Nero is a new set text, and there was one detailed description that showed good recall of the text. Most candidates, however, showed very limited knowledge of Tacitus' account.
- (b) Answers to this question might have considered Tacitus' belief that Christians were guilty of hatred of the human race, which perhaps arose out of their refusal to take part in civic and other ceremonies. They might also have explained the charge of atheism which was brought against Christians. Candidates did not make these points, but there were nevertheless some well-developed responses. The perceived challenge to the authority of Rome was made clear, with one candidate referring to the status of Christianity as a *religio illicita*, and the threat to the economic interests of communities, e.g. in Philippi and Ephesus, were explained.
- (c) Both sides to the argument were presented by candidates, though with varying degrees of success. Arguing for ordinary people as the main cause of hostility, reference was made to the slave owners in Philippi and Demetrius in Ephesus though the latter was accepted as an example of an official response. The part played by officials in each of these incidents was commented on. There was occasional reference to the unrest in Thessalonica and to Gallio's dismissal of the charges brought against Paul in Corinth.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Some detailed accounts were given of Peter's vision at Joppa and its significance was understood. Links were made to Cornelius' own vision and to Peter's later defence of his action when challenged by the conservative Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
- (b) Most responses pointed successfully to ways in which it could be argued that the conversion of Cornelius was a second Pentecost. One candidate compared the gathering of the apostles for worship and fellowship with a similar gathering in Cornelius' household. Reference was made to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the gift of *glossolalia*. Candidates might also have compared the structure and content of Peter's speeches on both occasions and to converts being baptised. Against the statement, it was pointed out that the coming of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius lacked the physical elements that were present at Pentecost. One unexpected but valid comment was that strictly speaking, it was the event described in Acts 2 that was the second Pentecost, since the first occurred on Sinai in the time of Moses. Another response argued that Pentecost was essentially a Jewish event, so it was inappropriate to use the term for what happened in a gentile household.

Question 4

- (a) Very few answered this question, those who did attempt it did not appear to have studied 1 Peter, despite it being a set text. Instead, they relied on their knowledge of Paul's teaching on wives and husbands, so very little credit could be given. Nothing was known about the teaching in 1 Peter 3:1 – 7 for which there is no parallel in Paul's writings, other than instructing wives to accept the authority of their husbands. The author of 1 Peter stated that women should cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit, which would be reflected in modest attire. In accepting the authority of their husbands, they should reflect the submissiveness of Sarah. At the same time, husbands were to be considerate towards their wives.
- (b) One response gained some credit from arguing that New Testament attitudes to women reflected those found in wider society. Apart from this point, however, no credit could be given as what was written showed no awareness of the teaching found in 1 Peter.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/32
Prophets of the Old Testament

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Paper 9484/42
Christian Understandings of God, Life
and the Universe

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.