

DIVINITY

Paper 8041/21
The Four Gospels

Key messages

Candidates must stick closely to the content of questions and identify what the main thrust is. A question will never be about merely retelling information and there will always be a need make an assessment, analysis, evaluation or comparison etc. Whilst access to further reading material may vary according to different centres it is necessary for candidates to show that they have a good grasp of any relevant scholarly trends and developments available to them and that they know how to use this information within their answers.

General comments

Candidate responses clearly reflected their level of understanding, research, scholarly reading and individual access to resources within their own centres.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was a popular choice. There were a small minority of candidates who did not follow the instructions and only selected two or three gobbets to write about. Also a few candidates mistook **Question 1**, with its four parts, as being an alternative to answering four essays from the entire paper.

- (a) A very popular gobbet to comment on: candidates wrote clear answers which identified this passage and the key points contained within it. There was a lot of good commentary on the beatitudes found in the Sermon on the Mount.
- (b) This was a popular gobbet. Relevant comments were made about the significance of this passage prior to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem at the start of His last week. Candidates commented on this being a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.
- (c) Most candidates wrote about the ministry of John the Baptist and gave very good, detailed answers. There is a lot of material available and it was clear that candidates had prepared well for writing about John's ministry.
- (d) This gobbet was clearly answered as the start of the discourse between Jesus and the rich young man. All comments that followed were relevant to the gobbet.
- (e) This was a popular gobbet. Responses correctly identified the context of this gobbet as part of the birth narrative from Luke. This allowed candidates to write about the significance of the shepherds and the universal message of Jesus.
- (f) A popular gobbet, but some candidates confused the story with one of the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Many placed it at the start of Jesus' ministry in Luke and were able to comment on the key role of Peter within the disciples.

- (g) Another popular gobbet which was correctly identified by most candidates. Responses included good commentary about the context being Jesus' first miracle in John: water into wine. Most of the answers did confine themselves to writing about the passage here and the significance of Mary, and not the miracle in general.
- (h) This was the least popular of the gobbet passages and many responses did not correctly identify it as part of the trial of Jesus by Pilate.

Question 2

This question was less popular than others. It gave candidates the opportunity to present their knowledge of the teaching (didache) material in the gospel about Matthew's Christology, but it was clear that this question was only attempted by those who had completed detailed preparation on this topic.

Question 3

This was a popular question. It was evident that those who chose this question did so because they had spent time preparing answers around the Sermon on the Mount. A high standard of response was given by most.

Question 4

Candidates wrote about the suffering and persecution of Jesus being parallel to that of the Early Church. Responses included a lot of relevant detail and candidate commentary.

Question 5

Many responses showed clear evidence that the parables in Mark and the concept of the kingdom of God had been studied. Some responses were more general on parables and not Markan specific. Weaker responses could not clearly relate the material from this gospel.

Question 6

This was a popular question. It required knowledge of the key texts in Luke regarding the life and ministry of John the Baptist. Some responses were confined to the baptism of Jesus by John and not to the wider accounts of his birth and ministry. Stronger responses were able to assess John's importance in Luke's Gospel and comment in detail on his significance as the 'final prophet' who brought the end of the Old Testament era and heralded the beginning of the new.

Question 7

This was a popular question which gave candidates the opportunity to show understanding of Luke's purposes for writing. It was necessary for responses to define the 'gentile community' and show that they understood who was included in this term.

Question 8

Responses needed to include more evidence of wider reading to show they had more than one alternative view to offer. Overall the responses were not detailed enough and limited in the discussion put forward by scholars.

Question 9

This question required responses to identify Johannine material surrounding the Passion of Jesus. Some responses were unsure of the material therefore gave a general view of the passion material, retelling a version which took information from all the gospel accounts. Answers needed to be more relevant and specific.

Question 10

This was a very popular question which was generally well answered. Candidates were able to show their wide knowledge and understanding around the role of women in Jewish society at that time. There was a lot of material in the gospels to choose from. Stronger responses commented on how Jesus' association with women directly challenged their role/status in society at that time.

Question 11

This question brought a variety of detailed answers and candidates were able to discuss the various texts which relate to this topic. It was important to remember that material could be used from across all gospels and a lot of candidates made a good use of this. Responses needed to reflect the role of Pontius Pilate as depicted by the different gospel writers rather than a general overview of the character himself.

Question 12

There were some strong responses, but others failed to organise their material to address the question. A lot of candidates latched on to the use of 'Q' from the question and then proceeded to write about the Synoptic problem and the different hypotheses.

Question 13

There was evidence in a few stronger responses that the Christological titles of Jesus had been studied in detail.

Question 14

For many candidates this question was an opportunity to write a lot about the miracles and parables of Jesus; however several of these responses did not provide the necessary link to show how they are relevant to their answer.

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- (a) A very popular gobbet to comment on: candidates wrote clear answers which identified this passage and the key points contained within it. There were some good comments on the work of John the Baptist, but a few candidates did not identify the context and comment on John being in prison which is an important part to this gobbet.
- (b) A lot of candidates attempted this gobbet but not all managed to identify its context. Some candidates placed this within the setting of a resurrection appearance rather than identifying it correctly as being said following the Last Supper. There were good comments on the prophecy regarding the shepherd and the sheep imagery.
- (c) This was a very popular choice of gobbet and most candidates answered this very well. Most recognised the setting as Jesus calming the storm while the disciples were amazed. There was a lot of relevant and detailed commentary. Candidates seemed to resist the temptation to merely retell the incident but comments were confined to the significance of this passage for showing Jesus' humanity and divinity as well as the disciples' lack of understanding.
- (d) This was clearly identified by most as a passage from the Garden of Gethsemane. Many correctly identified this and the comments that followed were relevant to the gobbet. Candidates wrote about the inner struggle Jesus displayed and about his surrender to the will of God. Very good answers were produced for this question.
- (e) Again, this was a gobbet which, if clearly identified by the candidate, brought with it a very relevant and detailed explanation. Most candidates resisted the temptation to retell this miracle story and they concentrated on the nature of authority displayed and the role of a centurion within society.

- (f) Some candidates mistook this for an incident which they thought occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane. If the candidate was unable to identify the parable then their comments were limited to who these religious groups were and why they sought to lay hands on Jesus. Less popular as a choice but nevertheless, for those who were able to recognise the context, their answers were detailed and relevant.
- (g) Many responses wrote about the use of the 'I Am' phrase and correctly linked it back to the time of Moses. A lot of very good comments were made.
- (h) This was a popular gobbet with a lot of very good comments about the role of Peter and the significance of the question being asked three times. A few candidates mistook it for taking place at the last supper rather than identifying this as a resurrection encounter.

Question 2

This was a popular choice with many full and detailed answers. It gave candidates the opportunity to present their knowledge of the teaching (didache) material in the gospel within the context of Jesus as Messiah who came as the fulfilment of prophecy. Many candidates showed their knowledge of the frequent Old Testament citations which Matthew used to make the link between Old Testament prophecy and Jesus. The birth narratives provided a lot of information but, for good answers, it was important that candidates continued to show evidence from further parts of the gospel.

Question 3

Some answers displayed sound understanding of the term 'ethics' and used the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount to evidence their answers. It was important to refer to Matthew's material only, but a few candidates selected parables which were from Luke and this was not credited. Many candidates were able to show that Jesus' actions were underpinned by love, but fewer candidates managed to make comment on the key passages surrounding love found in Matthew.

Question 4

This question was a popular choice. Candidates wrote about the pace of Mark and the sense of immediacy which it contains as well as choosing relevant parables to back up their arguments. It was important to show the flip side of the argument and therefore candidates needed to discuss other reasons for Mark writing in the style he did.

Question 5

This was a popular question and many responses were able to back up their views with reference to scholarly ideas.

Question 6

This was a popular question. Only a few candidates referred to the names and dates contained in Luke's Gospel and the background information which evidences its historicity. There was a lot of material to draw from, but this was not used. Candidates also needed to look at both sides of the discussion to show they understood the main issues.

Question 7

There were several very knowledgeable answers with good references made to relevant passages regarding discipleship. There was a lot of material in the gospel and most of responses were able to select the relevant passages.

Question 8

It was evident that candidates were prepared to answer questions on the 'I Am' sayings and the 'signs' in John. This was a popular question. Most candidates stuck to the material requested in the question and concentrated the bulk of their essays on the wedding in Cana and the feeding of the 5000. Stronger responses went a little further, referring to other signs to show their general nature and why the author chose to use them in his gospel.

Question 9

Candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the passion narrative in John's Gospel and how it is or is not based on historical fact. Few candidates chose this question and, although they wrote at length about the passion of Jesus, it needed to be handled in a way which clearly attempted to answer the question.

Question 10

Candidates were able to show their wide knowledge and understanding around the society at the time of Jesus. This was a popular question with a lot of material to draw from. Most candidates handled it very well and discussed whether Jesus' actions can be described as revolutionary or not. Many included the use of parables, miracles and the general encounters Jesus had with different individuals.

Question 11

Some responses were a mere retelling of the gospel accounts with no clear identification as to which gospel the material came from. This type of comparison question demands that the response demonstrates a very clear knowledge of the similarities and differences of specific accounts.

Question 12

This was a popular question. Many candidates wrote about the other incidents in Jesus' life which may be described as important such as the transfiguration, the resurrection and the Sermon on the Mount etc. This question brought about a variety of very well-constructed answers which addressed the main thrust of the question.

Question 13

This was a general question on the nature of forgiveness through the teaching of Jesus in the different gospels. It allowed candidates to show their knowledge and grasp of the different teaching material in the gospels. Although this was not as popular as expected, those who did answer it did so very competently.

Question 14

Some candidates mainly centred on the Temptations of Christ and did not apply their answers to other parts of Jesus' life. Stronger responses were produced with many showing their understanding of the nature of temptations.

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- (a) A popular gobbet to comment on. It was easily identifiable and therefore candidates were able to set this in the correct context, after the Sermon on the Mount, and make significant comment.
- (b) This was answered well with relevant comments made about the Pharisees in Jewish society. This was a popular choice of gobbet and was well answered. Not every answer identified the correct context within the gospel setting, but it was clear to most that it was part of the conflict stories in Matthew.
- (c) A popular choice of gobbet with a lot written about the ministry of John the Baptist. More could have been said about the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy through John's work.
- (d) Candidates clearly identified this as Jesus healing a leper and wrote answers accordingly. Many candidates concentrated solely on the words within the gobbet and did not stray into long writings about the miracle itself.
- (e) This was not as popular as other passages but those candidates who identified the gobbet correctly gave good relevant answers putting plenty of information about the widow of Nain and the compassion Jesus showed for her plight.
- (f) This was not a popular gobbet and some candidates were not sure of the thrust of the parable to which this refers therefore commentary was irrelevant in some cases.
- (g) Few candidates chose this gobbet but those who did were well acquainted with the incident to which this is referring, and comments were relevant.
- (h) Another popular gobbet. Answers were detailed, and a lot was written about Jesus' ministry to women as well as the objection made by Judas at the waste of money. Very good comments were made about the role of the poor in society at that time.

Question 2

This question was well answered and allowed candidates to show clear knowledge of the role of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. Many candidates showed a good knowledge of the significance of 'righteousness' and 'the Law' in this gospel. Candidates showed that they had a good grasp of why Matthew wrote his gospel and who his audience was.

Question 3

This question gave candidates the opportunity to select the relevant information which shows Jesus' humanity. It allowed subjectivity of answer and therefore there were a lot of very individual responses. It was well done by those who chose it. Weaker responses did not restrict their use of material to the Gospel of Matthew and therefore some answers contained irrelevant material.

Question 4

This question was less popular. Candidates who attempted this question needed to discuss how Mark's main thrust of his Gospel is the passion narrative. Some candidates picked up on the speed of the Gospel and commented on its sense of 'immediacy'. It was well done by those who attempted it.

Question 5

This question was less popular. Stronger responses demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the role of Peter in the ministry on Jesus.

Question 6

Few candidates chose this question which focused on the universalism of Luke's Gospel.

Question 7

This was a popular question which was well answered. Candidates drew relevant diagrams depicting the synoptic problem and responses demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding.

Question 8

This was a popular question. Candidates identified a lot of the main themes found in the first chapter and they were able to draw out relevant gospel material to confirm this theme throughout the gospel.

Question 9

This was a less popular question. The general gospel story is similar within all the gospels but John's aim and reason for writing needed to be addressed in depth. Weaker answers needed to show more understanding of the issues.

Question 10

Many candidates answered this question with detail and understanding, but a few wrote mainly about different parables without tackling this issue of the why they were designed to be misunderstood by some.

Question 11

A few stronger responses were able to get behind the miracle and unpack what it tells about society at that time.

Question 12

This was a popular choice which allowed candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding of the religious and political tensions of the time. Stronger responses were able to recount a lot of relevant material.

Question 13

Responses demonstrated confidence in discussing the audiences of Mark and John. There was some good evidence showing that this had been covered by a few centres.

Question 14

This was a popular question which covered the birth narratives found in Matthew and Luke. There were clearly centres which covered this in detail and many students did well on this topic. It was necessary for candidates to identify material belonging to each of the gospels without getting confused. Some very good answers were given.