

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

## Key messages

As seems to be a pattern across a number of examination sessions, candidates struggled disproportionately with a question that comes from the final chapters of the Gospel.

## General comments

The full range of responses was seen. This included the full range of responses to **part (c)** questions, where responses ranged from description of a passage to two points of view, carefully considered and a clear personal stance. With the number of marks available for these questions, candidates who had a good and consistent technique for them tended to perform better.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Some candidates did not understand the word (from the syllabus) 'characteristics', which made accessing the question difficult. Some had noticed the **part (c)** question and wrote about aspects that made the account of Jesus' life in Matthew accurate. There were some good answers that covered a good range of aspects of the Gospel, given the time available.
- (b) This part was less-well answered. Some responses contained excellent knowledge about possible sources of the Gospel. Some candidates got confused with Acts and talked about 'we passages' in rather too much detail.
- (c) Some candidates discussed whether or not Matthew was accurate at all and some discussed the purpose of the Gospel. Either was a valid approach. Candidates performed as well as their technique for **part (c)** questions allowed.

### Question 2

- (a) The full range of responses was seen to this question. Some candidates knew the passage in detail; others tried to explain the meaning of the gifts; others conflated the Lucan accounts with the birth stories in Matthew.
- (b) While most candidates explained the symbolism behind gold, frankincense and myrrh, some candidates were able to think more generally about the significance of the visit; for example, the implication for universality or for Jesus' kingship.
- (c) Most candidates seemed to have considered this question as part of their studies and therefore had clear answers to express. Most were able to offer these answers as two points of view and therefore access the higher marks. Those candidates who gave a clear (and unambiguous) personal opinion were able to access the top level.

### Question 3

- (a) Candidates either seemed to know this material in full or not at all. Some saw mention of the Sermon on the Mount and described the Beatitudes. Others confused the Mount with the Transfiguration passage. Those who knew the passage summarised it well. It was not necessarily required to write out the whole of the Lord's Prayer, which meant that depth of response was clearly seen.
- (b) Although some candidates talked about prayer in the context of the Transfiguration (which is tenuous itself), most identified this question as asking about the events just before Jesus' arrest.
- (c) Candidates were usually able to offer sensible arguments both for and against this statement. There were some excellent and nuanced considerations of the purpose of prayer and the idea of prayer as the building of a personal relationship with God.

### Question 4

- (a) This question was well-answered when selected. Candidates seemed to know the passage in detail and were able to give an account of it successfully.
- (b) This part was also well-answered. Candidates could identify aspects of Jesus' humanity and divinity to comment on. Where candidates were less successful, they focused too much on one aspect (e.g. compassion or divine power) and ended up being repetitive.
- (c) There were some excellent and interesting arguments offered in response to this statement. As usual, these arguments gained more marks where they were considered against opposing views and when evaluated with a personal judgement.

### Question 5

- (a) Most candidates who selected this question clearly did so because they knew the parable in detail. There was some confusion over the number of virgins who were or were not prepared.
- (b) Most candidates picked up on the idea of being prepared and being aware, although some responses required careful re-reading. Some candidates limited themselves to general comments about parables, which received few, if any, marks.
- (c) Candidates were usually able to discuss this in depth, in line with their style of writing for **part (c)** questions. There were interesting, individual directions taken by some candidates which received credit as much as the standard answers.

### Question 6

- (a) While **part (i)** usually directed candidates to the Matthean account of the burial of Jesus, some candidates conflated the different Gospels. **Part (ii)** was very poorly answered. Candidates often tried to describe the story of the empty tomb, rather than the end of chapter 27.
- (b) This question was also poorly answered. Some candidates tried to describe mentions of the guards either before or after the resurrection (in an explain question). Other candidates did not seem to have considered fully the report of the guards found after the empty tomb. Matthew's Gospel does not look so much at resurrection appearances as the historicity of the resurrection – the *Sitz im Leben* of the author is seen in his selection of passages, especially in his comment in 28:15.
- (c) Candidates were usually able to consider this question in good detail. There were sensible suggestions offered both for and against, often using excellent knowledge from throughout the Gospels. Candidates who offered arguments based on other Gospels (e.g. Doubting Thomas) were able to receive credit for this in this question.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

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

## General comments

Performance in this paper was significantly weaker than in the gospel paper. Candidates struggled either on questions that tested the later parts of the set text or that explored general themes from Acts, suggesting that they had little to draw on to enhance **part (c)** answers, for example. A significant number of questions or part questions were omitted.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Some candidates identified the section of Acts that was being tested but most made general reference to activities or events from the early chapters of Acts.
- (b) Many candidates were unable to reflect on the role of the apostles. Some did not know who the apostles as a group were, suggesting Stephen or Philip as members, for example. Most were able to reflect on the general role of the apostles but only some candidates explored the role of the apostles as leaders.
- (c) Many candidates compared the apostles with contemporary church leaders and were able to build arguments in their standard style of writing for **part (c)** questions. Some also explored the lasting influence of those who essentially built the church.

### Question 2

- (a) Few candidates accurately answered this question. Some tried to answer it but did not know who Stephen was. Some knew enough general knowledge about Moses to guess at the content of the speech.
- (b) Although there were candidates who expressed the view that Stephen's speech made people angry because Jesus was still around on earth, most had studied the stoning of Stephen and so were able to mention blasphemy or controversy with the Jewish leadership at the very least.
- (c) There were some interesting responses to this question that explored the nature of Old Testament prophecies and the importance of Christians today understanding where the Jesus story came from.

### Question 3

- (a) Many candidates scored full marks in this question, but some attributed other disagreements found in Acts (e.g. over circumcision or whether Paul had actually converted) to the Paul and Barnabas dispute.
- (b) Credit was given to candidates who talked about companions either in general terms or specifically, although candidates did need to explain (in their own words) rather than outlining or describing the activities of some of the companions.
- (c) Most candidates took the view that Christians are humans and disputes will happen. Many interesting answers explored the idea that what happens as a result of the disputes is more telling about how Christian a person is.

### Question 4

- (a) Credit was given to candidates who omitted the section on Blastus as it was a valid interpretation of the question to begin with Herod presenting himself to the people. As such, there were a good number of candidates who achieved full marks. Some spent time looking at other mentions of Herod in Acts, to less-good effect.
- (b) Most candidates were able to give some general points about the church and its relationship with the Jews to useful effect. However, few candidates were able to do so in the amount of detail or depth needed to achieve the higher levels.
- (c) There were some good answers to this question that explored the effects of persecution as seen in Acts – or generally in early church history. Where candidates considered two points of view, this balance led to a good discussion. Some candidates mistook persecution for prosecution.

### Question 5

- (a) Of the candidates who attempted this question, some knew what happened in Berea and Thessalonica, but most did not.
- (b) If candidates were unfamiliar with this part of Acts, it was difficult to attain many marks.
- (c) There were some general responses to this question. The best were able to give examples to illustrate their arguments. Candidates who gave conclusions came down both ways in the end.

### Question 6

- (a) Few candidates successfully identified this passage, although many more attempted the question. Most suggested that Paul was trying to convert the Ephesian elders. Those who knew the passage were able to give a good outline of it.
- (b) Success in this question again came from correctly identifying the passage. Those who gained marks were able to explore the nature of the final farewell with Paul as well as, sometimes, of the fear of the internal strife ahead.
- (c) Candidates were able to draw on a range of parts of knowledge about Paul. Many looked at his conversion and the idea that he came back from such an extreme mistake, there is hope for anyone now. Some looked at his leadership qualities, but this was not regularly seen.