

DIVINITY

<p>Paper 8041/21 The Four Gospels</p>

General comments

The overall performance of candidates was good with very little evidence of time mismanagement. The majority of candidates answered four questions.

It is imperative for candidates to confine their essays to answer the specific question. Very few candidates included evidence of essay planning but their concise answers, for those who did, evidenced this time was well spent. It might be helpful for candidates to highlight the specific command within the question e.g. assess, evaluate, explain, critically examine etc. and focus their responses to address this command.

Access to wider reading and scholarly opinion were evident within some candidates' work, this helped identify better responses and thus achieve higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was very popular and was generally answered very well. Most candidates showed knowledge of the context of the gobbet and commented on points of interest.

- (a) This brought a good response with candidates correctly identifying the context and able to give adequate comment on the Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel.
- (b) Another popular gobbet which was generally correctly identified and well discussed.
- (c) Any gobbet referring to John the Baptist is popular. A lot of points made about the person and work of John.
- (d) Correctly identified with a lot of good comment on the uniqueness of this event and its wider significance.
- (e) Another popular choice but the danger was for candidates to comment on something other than what is written in the gobbet. Some candidates strayed away from the question asked.
- (f) Not such a popular choice as the context was not easily recognisable without knowing the passage in Luke. For those who did correctly identify it they were able to give clear, relevant comment about the Galilean ministry of Jesus.
- (g) This was a popular choice and it was well answered. A lot of material was written about the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus by night.
- (h) Not such a popular choice but those who did attempt it clearly knew a little about its context and significance. Few wrote about the significance of 'the day of Preparation' and its part played in setting the timing of the crucifixion in John. Good comments made about the person and authority of Pilate.

Question 2

Although this essay question was attractive to a number of candidates it was not answered as well as anticipated. Many candidates did not assess the importance of forgiveness and compassion but merely wrote about them. Not all the material selected was from Matthew. Material was drawn from both the Sermon on the Mount and the parable stories in the best answers.

Question 3

In Matthew, Jesus' life is depicted as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets and this was at the heart of the question. Although several candidates did attempt this question, their answers did not fully reflect the use of fulfilled prophecy as hoped. Some candidates touched on Matthew's use of Old Testament passages but they failed to show their significance in relation to the question. There needs to be an explanation given when referring to the different Old Testament passages quoted.

Question 4

Mark's Gospel is often seen as the Gospel of the Passion with a large portion of the gospel given over to recording Jesus' last week of His life. Again candidates did not fully make this connection but wrote more about what happened at the crucifixion. A lot of marks were missed because of the lack of assessment in the written answers. It is important to address the question asked and fully attempt to answer it.

Question 5

There was a lot of scope for answers to this question. Those who did it well covered the two main views of the kingdom: the present reality of the kingdom as shown by Jesus' miracles and ministry, and the future kingdom as referred to through the parables. There were some very good answers to this question. A popular choice with a good use of parable material.

Question 6

This question gave candidates the opportunity to look at the main themes of Luke as revealed in these songs. Very few candidates chose this question which suggests that many failed to identify what it was actually about or they were not familiar enough with the material. A good answer would have included the themes of women, the poor, the rich, joy, universalism and salvation.

Question 7

This was a popular choice of question and it brought about some very good answers. The best answers clearly identified Lukan material and did not get muddled with other gospel accounts. A lot was included about Jesus' post resurrection visits which provided the basis for a well-balanced answer. It was necessary to be specific when referring to the resurrection story and not over generalise.

Question 8

This presupposes an awareness of the 'I am' sayings and signs in John and the best answers to this question made this connection. Some answers merely retold the incident of the raising of Lazarus and therefore did not achieve the higher marks. It was necessary for the answer to address the idea of why this story is central to John's Gospel. This question was a popular choice.

Question 9

This question was only attempted by a few of candidates, but those who did choose it made good use of all three 'I am' sayings. The answers were well balanced and contained a lot of relevant material giving a detailed discussion of each saying.

Question 10

Material for answers was drawn from all of the different gospels. The best answers clearly identified the gospel source of the material used and linked it to specific themes displayed by the gospels. Answers included discussions of the cost of discipleship and of their mission and obedience in following Jesus. This was a popular choice and brought about some high scoring answers.

Question 11

This is a classic question asking candidates to write about the Synoptic Problem. Those who had prepared the material and who chose to answer this scored highly. A lot was written about the four source theory and evidence of scholarly knowledge was displayed. This was very well answered in the main.

Question 12

This was a popular question which allowed candidates to write about the teaching on wealth and possessions from all the different Gospels. The better answers knew what material came from each gospel and again they linked this in to the individual writers' themes. A lot of material was given and answers tended to be well organised and clearly structured.

Question 13

This was not a popular question. It was necessary to be able to identify material which covers different ethical issues. Some candidates were unclear in their understanding of what 'ethical' means therefore their answers were not fully relevant. For those who were clear on the understanding of Jesus' ethical teaching there was a lot of material to draw from in the accounts of the sermons on the mount and the plain as well as the parables Jesus told. Best answers also considered Jesus' teaching and the Jewish Law.

Question 14

To answer this question it was necessary to know the trial story in some detail and be aware of the different gospel accounts. Best answers included information surrounding who Pilate was and his relationship with the Jewish authorities. It was important that candidates made a genuine attempt to write about the areas of similarities between the gospels and to comment upon them. It was also important to comment upon the differences as well. There were some very well balanced responses to the question which achieved good marks. Those candidates who merely retold the story of Jesus' trial achieved lower marks.

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The overall performance of candidates was good with very little evidence of time mismanagement. The majority of candidates answered four questions.

It is imperative for candidates to confine their essays to answer the specific question. Very few candidates included evidence of essay planning but their concise answers, for those who did, evidenced this time was well spent. It might be helpful for candidates to highlight the specific command within the question e.g. assess, evaluate, explain, critically examine etc. and focus their responses to address this command.

Access to wider reading and scholarly opinion were evident within some candidates' work, this helped identify better responses and thus achieve higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was very popular and was generally answered very well. Most candidates showed knowledge of the context of the gobbet and commented on points of interest.

- (a) A popular choice with candidates correctly identifying its context as part of the Sermon on the Mount. Good written answers with a lot of relevant comment on prayer and the Jewishness of Matthew's audience.
- (b) Again a popular choice of gobbet which brought good comments on the parable of the kingdom of heaven and Jesus' use of parables and His references to the kingdom of heaven.
- (c) This drew a lot of comment around Jesus and His family – for those who chose it, they demonstrated enough knowledge to recognise the context and comment upon the main points of interest.
- (d) Several candidates were confused with the request made by the disciples, James and John, and the one which the disciples' mother made on their behalf, which is from a different gospel. The points of interest were credited with marks if they were specific to the Markan gobbet as asked. A lot of good comment regarding discipleship and misunderstanding of Jesus' mission.
- (e) This gobbet was a less popular choice but for those who chose it there were some very good answers. Good commentary was seen on the material wealth and Luke's focus on the poor.
- (f) Part of the trial of Jesus was correctly identified and commented upon. Much could be said about who Pontius Pilate was and who Herod was. Candidates tended to answer this very well. A popular choice.
- (g) This was the least well answered gobbet with candidates mistaking the context.
- (h) Correctly identified as one of the 'I am' sayings, comments on this gobbet were well developed and sound.

Question 2

This was a popular question with candidates taking two key passages from Matthew and commenting at length on them. It produced some very pleasing essays which gave balanced answers covering both incidents. Better candidates gave a good background to the person and call of Peter as a disciple, including other stories in reference to his significance.

Question 3

This produced some surprising answers as candidates did not naturally respond by writing about the obvious ethical teaching of Jesus in the sermon but widened it out and included a lot of material which was equally as relevant. There was much to choose from and therefore essays varied and were very individual in their answers. It was well done with a lot of material on adultery, divorce, wealth and possessions etc. being used. The better answers were those which covered a variety of topics and were specific in reference to what Jesus said about them. Lesser answers were too general in their approach without reference to biblical content.

Question 4

Some candidates did not keep their answers specifically referring to parables in Mark's Gospel but tended to put down parables as they thought of them regardless of their gospel context. It was a popular question and a lot of essays were well structured and relevant. There was a lot of material referred to, the most popular parable being The Sower. Good answers grouped parables into different related topics e.g. parables of the kingdom, parables of warning. The danger was for some candidates to retell parables without providing adequate comment to explain their purpose and message. This was a popular question.

Question 5

This was another popular question and the standard of answers was very good. A lot was written about the emotions Jesus displayed throughout Mark and good candidates debated the humanity of Jesus with reference to His divine nature. Many wrote about Mark reflecting his audience of that time and the persecutions they were going through therefore the reason why there was a need to depict Jesus as displaying human qualities. This question generally achieved high marks when fully answered.

Question 6

For those who chose to answer this question there was a lot of scope for discussing the authorship and purpose of Luke. Many candidates learn the arguments and reasoning behind the individual gospel writers therefore these questions are generally well answered and this was no exception. This question brought some good references to scholar's opinions and encouraged candidates to show their wider reading. The best answers were more than just a list of Lukan themes but went with some depth into the purposes of Luke's writings.

Question 7

This question needed answers which displayed a good structured response which went through each parable carefully. It needed to be more than a mere retelling of the three stories but the recurring themes needed to be highlighted. Some candidates gave very involved and confused answers because they did not tackle the question in an organised manner. Most candidates were able to write about the joy of finding 'the lost' but this needed to be likened to the joy of heaven on a person's repentance. Better essays dealt with all major themes of forgiveness, repentance, joy, love, patience etc. and made the link with the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God.

Question 8

This was the least popular question on the paper but, for those who were confident enough to tackle it, the answers were interesting. Some candidates made good reference to the promise of the Spirit by Jesus when He departs and the role of the Spirit as a comforter and a counsellor. Links were made with Jesus being baptised in water and the promise of the giving and receiving of the Spirit. There was a lot of material in John which could have been drawn upon but those who did answer this were limited in their knowledge about the topic.

Question 9

The danger with this question was that some candidates just wrote everything they knew about the role of John the Baptist regardless of whether the material was from John or any of the other gospels. This produced a lot of muddled answers because of the lack of identification of Johannine material. Some candidates were well prepared from a detailed study of John's Gospel therefore their essays stood out and received high marks. It is important that the question is thoroughly adhered to when answered.

Question 10

The key word here was 'model'. Few candidates wrote their essays in answer to this question in a way that made reference to Jesus providing a 'model' of prayer for others to use. A lot was written about teaching on prayer and its importance but the link was missing which would have demonstrated a good answer to this question. Again this was a less popular question and the essays were of a mixed quality.

Question 11

This question demanded a knowledge and understanding of the role of Judas and the need for Jesus to follow His destined path. It appeared attractive to some candidates who saw an opportunity to write about Judas, the disciple. There needed to be an understanding of the religious background at that time and the power of religious pressure which the public were aware of. Some good answers but the majority needed further development.

Question 12

This allowed candidates who had prepared this topic to flourish in their essay as there is a lot of material to choose from and several centres had adequately prepared their candidates for this topic. There were some excellent detailed answers which balanced realised eschatology with future eschatology. High marks were achieved and there was a good opportunity for those to demonstrate wider reading around the topic.

Question 13

Essays to this question covered the whole spectrum of marks. For those who had prepared this topic there was excellent material used which gave reference to scholarly information and opinions. This type of question tends to appeal to those who feel that they cannot attempt any Gospel specific essay. As a result some attempted to write everything they knew about Palestine at that time. This resulted in flimsy essays which were far too general to show that the candidate had a good understanding of the topic. This question needs clear planning so the candidate can approach it from a social, religious, economic and political perspective.

Question 14

This was a popular question. A good candidate clearly identified the two gospels they were making reference to and did a detailed analysis of the similarities and the differences between the two accounts. The danger with this question was that those who felt they knew about the resurrection chose this to answer, but they were unable to compare two accounts as they tended to infuse the material from all the gospel accounts into one story. It is important that if a candidate chooses to do a comparison of two gospel accounts on any topic that they keep the two accounts distinct within their essay.

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