

DIVINITY

Paper 8041/02 The Four Gospels

General comments

The overall performance of candidates was satisfactory. The standard of answers given this year was slightly lower than the previous year. The standard of written English was very good, no scripts were illegible and many were very well written indeed. Unfortunately the amount of rubric errors increased this year and it highlighted the need to read the questions carefully and answer all parts of four complete questions. A lot of candidates recognised the content matter of a question and then proceeded to write everything they knew about the topic without giving enough thought to handling the material in a way that will answer the specific questions. There was evidence of candidates having access to the wider reading of scholars' views, this distinguished the better candidates' response to a question.

A number of candidates failed to answer four questions. Some mistook the gobbets – **Question 1** – as four questions as it has four parts. A few did not use their time wisely and answered 3 questions instead of 4.

There is still the temptation by some candidates to see the question they want to answer and not the one which is actually asked. Candidates must unpack the question and get to the reason for it being asked – to explain, to demonstrate understanding of relevant issues and relevant material.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Several candidates did not read the instructions and mistakes occurred in the amount of gobbets they attempted

(a) Matthew 23:23

A popular choice of question and most candidates were able to recognise the context but comment was around the role of the Scribes and Pharisees. Answers lacked the explanation of the meaning of the saying.

(b) Matthew 27:24

A popular choice of question, well answered and detailed comment given.

(c) Mark 6:3

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 the main points to comment on.

(d) Mark 10:45

Many made the link between the gobbet and the suffering of Jesus – good answers.

(e) Luke 4:12-13

A popular choice with candidates giving a full account of the temptations of Jesus, but not enough around the understanding of the role of the Devil.

(f) Luke 7:24

This was not a popular choice but those who did attempt it did so with competence.

(g) John 2:4

A popular gobbet with good comment on context and main points of interest.

(h) John 16:8

Not a popular choice – few good answers which referred to its context correctly.

Question 2

To what extent and for what reasons did Matthew write his gospel around passages from the Old Testament?

This was a popular choice with candidates demonstrating the expected knowledge of the Old Testament interest of the Gospel writer. A lot of material from the Birth stories but few candidates extended this to comment on instances throughout the whole of the Gospel.

Question 3

'Matthew presents Jesus as a teaching Messiah.' Discuss.

A slightly different Matthean question but one which covers familiar territory. For those who demonstrated the awareness of the Five Matthean discourse this was well answered. Many made the link with Moses and commented upon Matthew's interest in writing for the Church.

Question 4

Explain why the Gospel of Mark is sometimes called the 'Gospel of Peter'.

For those who answered this, the standard was poor. A high standard of knowledge was expected and reference to the relevant text. Many made use of the key passages outlining stories around Peter but discussion on Papias and the wider Patristic tradition, together with a genuine attempt to explain rather than simply list and narrate was not as evident.

Question 5

Examine the teaching in the Gospel of Mark about the kingdom of God.

This appears a straight forward question with a lot of material to draw on. For many this was a good question and it was well answered. The Kingdom of God parables were commented on and the concept of Present and Future Kingdom was explained. Some enjoyable answers to read through.

Question 6

'The song of Mary, the song of Zechariah and the song of Simeon all set the scene for what is to follow later in Luke's gospel.' Discuss.

This was a totally new question and it was well received. Only candidates who knew the 3 relevant 'Songs' attempted this therefore it was well done. Good candidates demonstrated that these songs show the strong initial connection with the Jewish world from which the Gentile mission begins.

Question 7

Explain the important features of Luke's account of the resurrection and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

This was not a popular question and some candidates saw it as an opportunity to write about the resurrection in general and not relay comment on the Lukan accounts. More specific and relevant comment was called for. Having said this, there were some candidates who demonstrated clear knowledge of the relevant matter.

Question 8

Examine the significance of the first chapter of John, for the way he presents Jesus in the rest of his gospel.

Some very good answers, but not a popular choice of question. Some showed clearly that the first chapter of John can be seen as an introduction to the rest of the gospel and they charted this well demonstrating the link. A few candidates did not comment wider than the meaning of the Prologue.

Question 9

Discuss the teaching of the so-called 'Farewell Discourses' found in John 14-17.

Not a popular choice. For those who knew the Farewell discourses there was a lot to comment on but answers were very restricted in their choice of material. A wider knowledge and understanding needed to be demonstrated.

Question 10

Discuss the teaching of Jesus on repentance and forgiveness.

A new question which was a popular choice and was well answered. Baptism, parables, the Eucharist and healing stories were all commented on.

Question 11

Describe and analyse the teaching of Jesus on discipleship and commitment.

Again there is a lot of material to comment upon and this was demonstrated well by those who attempted this.

Question 12

Why did Jesus use parables?

Some candidates gave detailed accounts of specific parables with little comment upon why Jesus used parables. The balance of material needed to be better. For those who addressed the issue of 'why?', their answers were very good and informed.

Question 13

Explain the difficulties of interpreting the ethical teaching of Jesus.

A difficult question to answer and yet it was attractive to some candidates. A good answer needed to demonstrate an understanding of 'ethical' teaching and be able to define what is meant by 'ethics'. The danger was the 'kitchen sink' approach which some answers showed.

Question 14

Assess the proposed solutions to the synoptic problem.

The most popular question and usually only attempted if the candidate had covered all the relevant material therefore the standard of answers was very pleasing. Again it gave candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge of wider reading and useful diagrams.