

DIVINITY

<p>Paper 9011/12 Prophets of the Old Testament</p>
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Key messages

There are two key messages this year. The first is that many candidates summarised their essays with very long introductions. The summaries were then repeated (in longer form) in the body of the essay. In effect, a lot of time was wasted in saying the same thing twice. Some then went through the same comments in order to conclude the essay, producing the material a third time. Where candidates wish to remind themselves of what they could include in their answers, this is done most effectively by writing an essay plan, using short phrases of what might be included. The plan can then be crossed out after the essay has been written. Candidates do not lose marks by saying the same thing twice (or more), but they do in effect penalise themselves by not leaving enough time to answer all the required questions.

Second, the subject knowledge of many candidates was very impressive. This was particularly true of some of the 'gobbet' answers, where the knowledge of the context was sometimes outstanding. However, some candidates left insufficient time to answer a fourth question.

General comments

With the gobbet questions, there is still a marked tendency for many candidates to identify passages as having been written by the editors of J, E, D & P, but with no justification for the choice made. For the majority of such comments, most candidates could gain more marks by concentrating on the meaning and context of each passage.

There was a tendency this year towards irrelevance. For example, if a question asks about the prophetic use of symbolic acts, it is not legitimate for candidates to write about other ways in which prophets delivered their messages. See the comments on answers to **Questions 3** and **4**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Examine why Moses was such an important figure in Old Testament prophecy.

This was the most popular question, and was generally done well. The strongest answers tended to be those which grounded Moses' importance in the prophetic tradition, for example in his being the architect of the Sinai covenant on which later prophets took their stand. In the same way, some pointed out the importance of Moses' call / the call narrative as a paradigm of how later prophets were led to prophesy. Others referred to Deuteronomy 18:15–19, where Moses appears as the ideal prophet who would be the model for a later prophet to whom the people would listen. Some of the very best answers argued that whether or not the Moses narratives are true makes little difference concerning Moses' importance *in Old Testament prophecy* – the figure of Moses was created to be important in uniting the prophetic tradition over several centuries. Some could have gained more marks by answering the question and not simply telling the story of Moses from beginning to end.

Question 2

Discuss the relationship between prophets and kings with particular reference to the prophets Nathan and Elijah.

Some could have improved their answers by addressing the words 'with particular reference to the prophets Nathan and Elijah'. It is a very important part of exam technique to answer the question set; however some candidates wrote good general essays about the relationship between prophets and kings but made little mention of Nathan or Elijah. Others confused Nathan with Elijah. Most did have a reasonable working knowledge of Nathan's relationship with David and that of Elijah with Ahab and Jezebel. There were some excellent answers which brought out a parallelism between David's unjust treatment of Uriah and Bathsheba on the one hand and Naboth's unjust treatment at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel, where in both cases the monarchs clearly broke more than one commandment.

Question 3

Examine the use of miracles by the prophets.

The emphasis in this question on miracles concerns their *use*. Better answers therefore focused on the use of miracles in promoting / maintaining belief in Yahweh; in convincing people that Yahweh is the most powerful (or the only) God; in showing God's love for his people; in preserving Israel in Egypt and during the wilderness period, and so on. Some considered whether or not the prophets literally 'used' miracles at all, suggesting that Yahweh brought about miracles through the agency of the prophets: just as the prophets were the agents of speaking oracles from God, in the same way they were agents of showing divine power and love. Many responses tended simply to describe miracles without explaining what they were used for, and this was the case particularly with the miracles in the Elijah / Elisha narratives, particularly the contest on Mount Carmel, where much of what was written merely re-told the story. Some essays contained lengthy sections describing different ways in which prophets delivered their messages, for example through oracles of doom or salvation; accounts of visionary experiences; symbolic acts, etc. Since almost none of this material was relevant to the question / was not made relevant to the question, it generally gained no marks.

Question 4

Examine the use made by prophets of symbolic acts.

As with answers to **Question 3**, some candidates wrote about the different ways in which prophets delivered their messages, with symbolic acts being mentioned sometimes by nothing more than a single short paragraph and so their answers were largely irrelevant. Others described symbolic acts in some detail, but did not explain the use made of them by the prophets. Those who answered the question gave some detailed and careful analysis, particularly in connection with the symbolic acts carried out by Jeremiah. Some gave an analysis of the life of Hosea and his marriage to Gomer, explaining the prophet's message as an active symbol of the relationship between Yahweh and his people. Many referred to Isaiah 20:1–6, where Isaiah was instructed by God to walk 'naked and barefoot' to show the approaching doom of the Egyptians and Ethiopians being led captive into exile (although the text can be understood in several ways), and some made good use of these possibilities in answering the question.

Question 5

Consider the view that all pre-exilic prophets functioned within the cult.

This was the least popular question, although some answers were well written, thoughtful and analytic. Less successful answers tended to take the line that all false prophets were associated with the cult whereas all true prophets had nothing to do with it. Some argued that all cultic functionaries were immoral, and frequently quoted Amos' condemnation of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel as a proof of this, forgetting that Amos himself had prophesied in the royal cult centre of Bethel. Most pointed out some of the more obvious connections between prophets and the cult, e.g. the fact that Samuel was brought up by the priest Eli in the Shiloh sanctuary; that Isaiah appears to have received his call to prophesy when in the Temple; that Nathan was heavily involved in David's desire to build a temple; and so on. Some of the clearest answers made the point that just because some pre-exilic prophets were obviously involved with the cult, this does not prove that the same was true for all prophets.

Section B

Question 6

'Those who heard Amos' message could never have accepted it.' Do you agree?

This question was popular, and it differentiated very clearly between all the Levels of Response for this paper. Candidates were on the whole very definite about why Amos' message could never have been accepted; for example: Amos seems to have denied being a prophet, insisting that he was a herdsman / dresser of sycamore trees, so in effect he could hardly have been accepted on any level as a genuine prophet; further, he was possibly regarded as a foreigner from the South speaking threatening words to those in the North; moreover he spoke vehemently against those who made themselves wealthy by oppressing the poor, so there were many and varied reasons for non-acceptance of a message of unvaried doom. Many suggested that the salvation oracle at the end of the Book of Amos would have been acceptable to most, a few took the obvious line that the poor themselves probably listened to Amos with a great deal of sympathy. A number of the very best responses suggested that there must have been some in Israel who kept to both the letter and the spirit of the covenant with Yahweh, and these would have accepted Amos' message and the threat of punishment for disobedience, since ultimately this came from Moses himself.

Question 7

Assess the view that Hosea's relationship with Gomer explains everything about his prophecy.

Some candidates could have gained more marks by not writing down everything they knew about the Book of Hosea without referencing it to the wording of the question. Others spent most of their time discussing whether the story of Gomer is literal, allegorical, parabolic, a covenant lawsuit (etc.), without reaching a conclusion that focused on the question. Most did argue that the relationship between Hosea and Gomer illustrates the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Some explained this very well but forgot to consider whether it explains 'everything' about Hosea's prophecy. Most suggested that since the Hosea / Gomer material comprises chapters 1–3 (assuming that the woman of chapter 3 is Gomer), there must be several themes in the rest of the book that remain unexplained, such as the details of Israel's domestic and foreign policy, the facts concerning the Syro-Ephraimite War, the possibility that Hosea might have been a baker, and so on.

Question 8

In your view, what was the main influence on the prophecies of Isaiah of Jerusalem?

This was one of the least popular questions. Those who could suggest more than one influence on Isaiah's prophecies generally did well, since this allowed them to say that 'x' was a greater influence than 'y', and why that was the case. A number of candidates simply wrote about Isaiah's call, and although this allowed candidates to talk about the implications of the call taking place in the Temple, and about the vision of Yahweh's power and holiness, it did not allow discussion of another influence. Most wrote clearly about Isaiah's acceptance of the royal Davidic theology, and pointed out that the themes of God's holiness and ultimate power are present throughout much of Isaiah 1–39. The most effective essays tended to be those which dealt with Isaiah's involvement in Israel's political life, particularly during the Assyrian crisis, since this enabled some to write convincingly that Isaiah's experience of God enthroned in the Temple was important in dealing with that crisis.

Question 9

Examine whether Jeremiah was a prophet of doom or a prophet of hope.

Many candidates could have gained more marks by deciding on the criteria by which Jeremiah might be judged as a prophet of doom or a prophet of hope. Instead, the most popular way of dealing with the question was for candidates to write down everything that might associate Jeremiah with both doom and hope and then to choose one or the other with little or no reasoning. Some simply said that there is more doom than hope in the book, so Jeremiah was a prophet of doom, but this was treating doom and hope as something that might be weighed in a set of scales. The result of this approach was that many answered the question simply by giving a short concluding summary which said very little. There were, of course, much more effective strategies than this. Some argued convincingly that given the historical circumstances (e.g. the weight of Babylonian power and the inevitability of invasion), doom was unavoidable and occupied

Jeremiah's thinking more than hope. Some argued clearly that the material in the Book of Jeremiah seems to have been edited during or even after the Exile, so 'doom followed by hope' is the answer to the question. Some argued that Jeremiah was neither a prophet of doom or of hope, since he was merely relaying God's word, and God pronounced doom or hope through the medium of prophecy.

Section C

Question 10

(a) (The choosing of the seventy elders to help Moses with the leadership of the people)

This was a very popular choice, and nearly all were aware of the immediate context (the selection of the seventy elders) and the extended context (contagious ecstasy). Most referred to: the nature of the 'tent of meeting' and its association with the theophany of Yahweh; the possibility that the passage is a prototype for the behaviour of prophetic guilds; and the importance of ecstasy as a prophetic phenomenon. The strongest responses tended to discuss the possibility that this passage is in part anachronistic, referring to later practices in Israelite prophecy, grounding them in Moses as a prophetic archetype. This was not required for full marks, since all responses are examined on their own merits, and many candidates achieved full marks on this extract by discussing other points of interest and difficulty.

(b) (God's first revelation to Samuel)

Most identified this as Samuel's call narrative. Many referred to the Jewish tradition which held that Samuel was 12 years old at the time of his call: the same age as Jesus when he discoursed in the Temple (Luke 2:40–52). There was also extended comment as to why the misbehaviour of Eli's sons should have led to unending punishment for the entire house of Eli. A few referred to the Deuteronomic theme of punishment (where the sins of fathers are visited on their children). There was interesting comment on the relationship between priesthood and prophecy shown in the extract, some suggesting that prophecy emerged from priesthood, or else that prophecy and priesthood were two aspects of one phenomenon, namely God's revelation to Israel. In this connection, many emphasised the fact that the priest Eli explained to Samuel the nature and basis of his prophetic call. A few made a further connection with the prophetic call of Isaiah in the Temple (Isaiah 6), pointing out that Isaiah himself may have been a priest, which would explain his vision of Yahweh within the Jerusalem Temple.

(c) (Saul's consultation with the spirit of Samuel through the witch (medium) of Endor)

This was a popular gobbet, and produced some excellent comment. Some knew the background to Saul's consultation: that Saul was on the brink of a major battle with the Philistine army, which was encamped at Shunem, opposite Gilboa. Samuel had died, and the traditional means of inquiry concerning God's will for the battle, *Urim* and *Thummim*, had failed. Saul therefore decided to resort to necromancy – consultation of the dead. Most knew also that Saul himself had banned practices such as divination, soothsaying, augury, sorcery, mediumship, wizardry and necromancy, and that they were forbidden in the Deuteronomic law (Deuteronomy 18:9–14). Candidates used this to point out Saul's desperation, together with his sense of shame in disguising himself to meet the Witch / Medium of Endor. There was much interesting comment on the strange relationship between Samuel and Saul, for example the medium's recognition of Saul's identity at the point when Samuel came up out of the earth.

(d) (Nathan's oracle to David in connection with David's wish to build a Temple)

Some candidates were confused between Nathan and Elijah (seen also in Question 2). Some were confused also about whether it was David, Nathan or God who wanted a temple to be built. Comparatively few commented on God's 'steadfast love' (*hesed* – a technical term here, parallel to that used in Hosea, for God's covenant-love). The best answers focused particularly on the importance of the oracle for the Davidic theology based on the succession of Davidic kings and on Jerusalem and the Temple. Some explained the word-play on the different meanings of 'house', as 'palace', 'temple' and 'dynasty'. Few referred to the messianic connotations of the oracle, e.g. verse 16: '... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; and your throne shall be established for ever.' The failure of the Davidic line became the basis for later messianic expectation.

(e) (The story of Naboth's vineyard)

This was another popular choice, and answers tended to fall into one of two groups, the first group being characterised by simply telling the story. The rubric for **Question 10** asks candidates to 'Comment on points of interest or difficulty', and further suggests that answers should not simply retell the story from which the passage is taken; and some could have gained more marks by bearing this in mind. Stronger responses followed the rubric, and wrote well about: the character of Ahab and of Jezebel; Jezebel's manipulation of Ahab and others; Ahab's childishness in face of the fact that Naboth was morally in the right; the laws of inheritance that restricted Naboth's actions; stoning as a traditional means of execution, and so on.

(f) (The threat of the punishment of Israel on the grounds of sinfulness)

This was answered by comparatively few candidates, and as with gobbet **(e)**, answers tended to fall into one of two groups. One group used these verses simply as a means of summarising Amos' general prophecies of doom, paying little or no attention to the actual context of the oracle. The other group fixed the context more firmly as the follow-on from the prophet's / God's indictment of the neighbouring nations (1:1–2:16). Amos 3:1–6:14 goes on to develop the theme of Israel's sinfulness and God's punishment. Punishment is due precisely because (despite being delivered from slavery in Egypt) Israel had broken the covenant with Yahweh, and was no longer fit to be the elected nation. Election is a privilege; privilege requires greater responsibility. Israel's punishment would be witnessed by the neighbouring nations.

(g) (Hosea's prophecy that God will renew his covenant with Israel)

This was also answered by comparatively few candidates. Some could have gained more marks by focusing on the extract instead of simply summarising the whole of Hosea 1–3. In 2:2–13, Hosea / God announces that Israel's punishment is not final: after enduring the humiliation due to a harlot, God will speak tenderly to Israel and will return the nation to the state of comparative innocence experienced during the period in the wilderness. In particular, Israel will no longer call Yahweh 'Baal' (this being the proper name of the main Canaanite God, meaning 'Lord' / 'Master'). The passage goes on to use the language of creation to show the establishment of a universal covenant, and further symbolises all of this by the reversal of the children's names. Most commented briefly on *hesed* / 'steadfast love' as a technical term.

(h) (The opening section of Isaiah's prophecies to Judah and Jerusalem)

This was answered by a small number of candidates. Some gave a reasonable account of the passage in terms of the general political situation encountered by Isaiah: the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been annexed by Assyria, and Judah became an Assyrian tributary state. The opening section of the Book of Isaiah contains oracles against Judah for its rebellion against God and for relying instead on human power. The results of this policy are given in the passage, where Judah is like an isolated sales-booth in the middle of a vineyard that no longer produces anything worth selling. Judah was devastated by attacks from Tiglath-Pileser III (734–733) and Sennacherib (701), and became 'like a booth in a vineyard / like a lodge in a cucumber field'. Some commented on Sodom and Gomorrah, cities whose destruction was complete, whereas the destruction of Judah left some survivors.

(i) (Isaiah's oracle concerning the messianic king)

As with gobbet **(h)**, very few answered gobbet **(i)**. Some conflated or identified it with the similar section in Isaiah 9 (the birth of the 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' whose Davidic dynasty would never end). The characteristics listed for the figure in Isaiah 11 are those of great men and leaders, particularly wisdom and justice. Most commented on the 'stump of Jesse', Jesse being the father of David. Most understood the passage in messianic terms: a fair interpretation given that 11:10–16 goes on to describe the messianic age.

(j) (The second element of Jeremiah's call narrative in Jeremiah 1)

There were very few weak responses to this question, although it was not a popular choice. Most identified it correctly as the second part of Jeremiah's call narrative, and much of the comment that followed was insightful. The boiling pot from the North was seen as a vivid image of invaders erupting from the North to attack and destroy Judah. Most identified the invaders as the

Babylonians; a few suggested the Scythians: ferocious warriors who fought on horseback. This imagery was matched with Jeremiah's observations on the certainty of defeat and exile balanced against the equal certainty of eventual restoration.

(k) (Jeremiah's third personal lament)

This was the least-preferred gobbet. Very few were aware that the passage is part of one of Jeremiah's personal laments, despite the fact that these are generally a well-known element of Jeremiah's experience.

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Section C

Question 10

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Some candidates were confused between Nathan and Elijah (seen also in Question 2). Some were confused also about whether it was David, Nathan or God who wanted a temple to be built. Comparatively few commented on God's 'steadfast love' (*hesed* – a technical term here, parallel to that used in Hosea, for God's covenant-love). The best answers focused particularly on the importance of the oracle for the Davidic theology based on the succession of Davidic kings and on Jerusalem and the Temple. Some explained the word-play on the different meanings of 'house', as 'palace', 'temple' and 'dynasty'. Few referred to the messianic connotations of the oracle, e.g. verse 16: '... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; and your throne shall be established for ever.' The failure of the Davidic line became the basis for later messianic expectation.

(e) (The story of Naboth's vineyard)

This was another popular choice, and answers tended to fall into one of two groups, the first group being characterised by simply telling the story. The rubric for **Question 10** asks candidates to 'Comment on points of interest or difficulty', and further suggests that answers should not simply retell the story from which the passage is taken; and some could have gained more marks by bearing this in mind. Stronger responses followed the rubric, and wrote well about: the character of Ahab and of Jezebel; Jezebel's manipulation of Ahab and others; Ahab's childishness in face of the fact that Naboth was morally in the right; the laws of inheritance that restricted Naboth's actions; stoning as a traditional means of execution, and so on.

(f) (The threat of the punishment of Israel on the grounds of sinfulness)

This was answered by comparatively few candidates, and as with gobbet **(e)**, answers tended to fall into one of two groups. One group used these verses simply as a means of summarising Amos' general prophecies of doom, paying little or no attention to the actual context of the oracle. The other group fixed the context more firmly as the follow-on from the prophet's / God's indictment of the neighbouring nations (1:1–2:16). Amos 3:1–6:14 goes on to develop the theme of Israel's sinfulness and God's punishment. Punishment is due precisely because (despite being delivered from slavery in Egypt) Israel had broken the covenant with Yahweh, and was no longer fit to be the elected nation. Election is a privilege; privilege requires greater responsibility. Israel's punishment would be witnessed by the neighbouring nations.

(g) (Hosea's prophecy that God will renew his covenant with Israel)

This was also answered by comparatively few candidates. Some could have gained more marks by focusing on the extract instead of simply summarising the whole of Hosea 1–3. In 2:2–13, Hosea / God announces that Israel's punishment is not final: after enduring the humiliation due to a harlot, God will speak tenderly to Israel and will return the nation to the state of comparative innocence experienced during the period in the wilderness. In particular, Israel will no longer call Yahweh 'Baal' (this being the proper name of the main Canaanite God, meaning 'Lord' / 'Master'). The passage goes on to use the language of creation to show the establishment of a universal covenant, and further symbolises all of this by the reversal of the children's names. Most commented briefly on *hesed* / 'steadfast love' as a technical term.

(h) (The opening section of Isaiah's prophecies to Judah and Jerusalem)

This was answered by a small number of candidates. Some gave a reasonable account of the passage in terms of the general political situation encountered by Isaiah: the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been annexed by Assyria, and Judah became an Assyrian tributary state. The opening section of the Book of Isaiah contains oracles against Judah for its rebellion against God and for relying instead on human power. The results of this policy are given in the passage, where Judah is like an isolated sales-booth in the middle of a vineyard that no longer produces anything worth selling. Judah was devastated by attacks from Tiglath-Pileser III (734–733) and Sennacherib (701), and became 'like a booth in a vineyard / like a lodge in a cucumber field'. Some commented on Sodom and Gomorrah, cities whose destruction was complete, whereas the destruction of Judah left some survivors.

(i) (Isaiah's oracle concerning the messianic king)

As with gobbet **(h)**, very few answered gobbet **(i)**. Some conflated or identified it with the similar section in Isaiah 9 (the birth of the 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' whose Davidic dynasty would never end). The characteristics listed for the figure in Isaiah 11 are those of great men and leaders, particularly wisdom and justice. Most commented on the 'stump of Jesse', Jesse being the father of David. Most understood the passage in messianic terms: a fair interpretation given that 11:10–16 goes on to describe the messianic age.

(j) (The second element of Jeremiah's call narrative in Jeremiah 1)

There were very few weak responses to this question, although it was not a popular choice. Most identified it correctly as the second part of Jeremiah's call narrative, and much of the comment that followed was insightful. The boiling pot from the North was seen as a vivid image of invaders erupting from the North to attack and destroy Judah. Most identified the invaders as the

Babylonians; a few suggested the Scythians: ferocious warriors who fought on horseback. This imagery was matched with Jeremiah's observations on the certainty of defeat and exile balanced against the equal certainty of eventual restoration.

(k) (Jeremiah's third personal lament)

This was the least-preferred gobbet. Very few were aware that the passage is part of one of Jeremiah's personal laments, despite the fact that these are generally a well-known element of Jeremiah's experience.

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Paper 9011/22
The Four Gospels

Key messages

This was a popular paper which allowed candidates to choose four questions out of fourteen and write essays which clearly reflected their level of understanding, their research, their level of scholarly reading and their individual access to resources within their own centre. Overall the standard of marks for this paper was good.

General comments

Overall, candidate performance was good as they displayed a clear understanding of the subject content of the syllabus. There was evidence of a wider reading of scholarly works. More contemporary scholars were referred to than in previous years. Candidates generally stayed focused and produced essays which were largely relevant.

A question will never be about 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. Candidates need 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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question remains a popular choice amongst the candidates and those who did attempt this generally scored high marks. There were a small minority of candidates who did not follow the instructions and so did not fully answer the question and select four gobbets to write about but only two or three instead. This meant that candidates could not gain the higher levels if they did not answer the correct amount. Also a few candidates mistook **Question 1**, with its four parts, as being an alternative to answering 4 essays from the entire paper therefore, this seriously affected their final mark.

- (a) This was a very popular gobbet with most candidates clearly identifying it as from the birth narrative in Matthew and the flight to Egypt instigated by Joseph. A lot was written in answer to this gobbet about the comparison to Moses and Old Testament fulfilment of prophecy.
- (b) This gobbet was popular as it presented candidates with the opportunity to write about Peter and his importance amongst the disciples. It was correctly identified in context and answers were detailed and relevant.
- (c) There was a danger with this gobbet that candidates would see it as an opportunity to write about the call of the fishermen disciples in general, so a few answers referred to Peter's call. Some candidates did not confine their comments to James and John and so wandered off the point. For those who focused on the sons of Zebedee there were a lot of quality answers.
- (d) Some candidates used this gobbet to write solely about the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. It is necessary to comment on the content in the question, i.e. the significance of the washing of hands: cleanliness/uncleanliness.

- (e) A few candidates identified Zechariah as the person of Zacchaeus and therefore totally mistook the content and understanding of the gobbet. For those who did recognise this as part of the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist good marks were achieved. A lot of material was included in the best answers which clearly covered the main points of the gobbet.
- (f) This gobbet is about Zacchaeus the tax collector and for the candidates who answered this question there was a lot of scope. The best answers drew out the main points of the incident rather than merely retelling the story, i.e. the tax collector's role, outcasts, Roman society, Jesus' presence demanding a response.
- (g) The Prologue from John is a distinct piece of writing and so this gobbet was largely identified correctly with a lot of relevant comment. Marks were not given for merely recounting the whole of the Prologue word for word.
- (h) Some candidates confused this gobbet with the story of Mary Magdalene anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume in Luke's Gospel. The context here is from John's account of Mary the brother of Lazarus therefore comment should be around this account.

Question 2

A reasonably popular question, although many responses were quite weak, being too narrative in tone or making general comments about Joseph protecting Mary. Some responses referred to the Old Testament context (Joseph's ancestry) and the focus of Matthew on the broader Jewish and historical background. A few responses demonstrated good understanding of the social and cultural context, noting the severe danger to her life that Mary would have been in, if pregnant by anyone other than Joseph, thus accurately noting the importance of his role in saving her from probable death. There were one or two very good answers where candidates looked at the wider role of Joseph as the human father of Jesus and the trauma this may have put him through, hence needing the divine intervention through the angel's appearances to him.

Question 3

A popular question often answered in conjunction with **Question 5** and **Question 11**. Many responses answered quite well, balancing positive and negative examples within Matthew's portrait of the disciples, although only a limited number made close and accurate textual references to illustrate their answers and thus raise them to a higher level. Some candidates gave a general answer to this question and used material from other gospels apart from Matthew. The question was about Matthew's portrayal of the disciples therefore any outside references needed to be clearly acknowledged as being from another source.

Question 4

This question was not often answered, but a few responses did this very well and could make extensive and accurate reference to textual examples to support their answer. Other responses tended to be too generalised, and failed to distinguish between Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and how that related to the political context of the time. Only a very few referred to the specific Jewish ideas about purity and separation (from Gentile culture) that lay behind much of the Pharisaic criticism of Jesus. Again, answers needed to be based on Mark's text and other sources needed to be identified.

Question 5

This was a very popular question. Some responses focused solely on the Messianic Secret – providing a 'depth-not-breadth' answer, which was fine. Others argued that the Messianic Secret was a central theme, but other themes (discipleship, immediacy, persecution, suffering, etc.) were equally central. This was done well, but a number of responses failed to explain the early 20th century origin and point of the scholarly arguments for the existence of the Messianic Secret, rather just accepting it as a 'given', thus missing a crucial aspect of the question.

Question 6

This appeared a less popular question. Very few responses did this question well, most were too general in scope, when referring to the Holy Spirit in Luke, and some strayed into confessional comment about the role of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life in general. In some cases candidates saw the term 'Holy Spirit' and put down all they knew and understood by this.

Question 7

A few candidates answered this very well, taking their response right through from the birth narratives to the crucifixion, making accurate textual references to support their answer. A number of candidates did not know the meaning of the word 'humility', or confused it with 'humanity', thus producing responses that were either entirely incorrect or conflated the two terms, giving a response that focused more on Jesus' humanity.

Question 8

Several candidates produced excellent responses and clearly understood the Prologue and its relationship with the rest of John's Gospel. In some cases, however, this was a poorly executed question, lacking relevant information and clear understanding.

Question 9

This was not a popular question. Several candidates produced excellent responses which clearly understood the point of the question and could illustrate this with accurate textual reference. Others made general comments linking living water to the Holy Spirit without any textual context.

Question 10

Quite a popular question. Most candidates clearly understood what was required, but many focused much more extensively on Matthew (and answered this part of the question well), than Luke, which was overall much shorter. A few candidates were able to write extensively and accurately on both, having a clear grasp of the purposes of both Matthew and Luke.

Question 11

This was a very popular question. Some very good responses gave extensive examples of the types of miracles that Jesus performed, their context and their Christological significance, before addressing other Christological themes in the Gospels. However, some candidates only focused on all the other things that Jesus was – a preacher, teacher, leader, etc., almost completely ignoring the miracles, thus weakening their overall argument. There needed to be a clear balance in their essays.

Question 12

Some candidates answered this well, sticking to two gospel authors and examining the meaning, origins and contexts of the different titles for Christ – Messiah, Lord, Son of God and Son of Man were extensively explored. Other responses were less focused, referring to most of the titles above but without clearly linking them to a specific Gospel, thus losing the focus of the question.

Question 13

Quite a popular question, where candidates took several approaches. Some focused closely on the authors' different audiences, and many were effective responses. Quite a number broadened the question out to include an analysis of the Synoptic 'problem' or sources of the individual gospels, and where this was linked to 'audience', were executed quite well.

Question 14

There were very few good responses for this question. Some candidates were able to explain in detail the historical and political background and thus the impact of Roman rule on Palestine and link that to textual instances where it impacted on Jesus' life and ministry – most not getting beyond the birth narratives and crucifixion. In many cases Roman rule was confused or conflated with the Jewish authorities, with candidates either failing to distinguish between the two or unable to explain the relationship between Roman and Jewish authorities.

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Paper 9011/23
The Four Gospels

Key Messages

This was a popular paper which allowed candidates to choose four questions out of fourteen and write essays which clearly reflected their level of understanding, their research, their level of scholarly reading and their individual access to resources within their own centre. Overall the standard of marks for this paper was good.

General Comments

Overall candidate performance was good as they displayed a clear understanding of the subject content of the syllabus. There was evidence of a wider reading of scholarly works. More contemporary scholars were referred to than in previous years. Candidates generally stayed focused and produced essays which were largely relevant.

A question will never be about 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. Candidates need 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.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This question remains a popular choice amongst the candidates and those who did attempt this generally scored high marks. There were a small minority of candidates who did not follow the instructions and so did not fully answer the question and select four gobbets to write about but only two or three instead. This meant that candidates could not gain the higher levels if they did not answer the correct amount. Also a few candidates mistook **Question 1**, with its four parts, as being an alternative to answering 4 essays from the entire paper therefore, this seriously affected their final mark.

- (a) This was a very popular gobbet with most candidates clearly identifying it as taken from the birth narrative in Matthew and the return from Egypt following the death of King Herod. A lot was written in answer to this gobbet about the comparison to Moses and Old Testament fulfilment of prophecy.
- (b) This gobbet was popular as it presented candidates with the opportunity to write about the Transfiguration of Jesus. Answers were mainly detailed and relevant.
- (c) This was a popular choice and candidates correctly identified this as Jesus speaking in the synagogue. A lot of relevant comment.
- (d) For those who knew the context there was a lot of scope for comment about Jesus' encounters with the outcasts in Luke. Not everyone however did correctly identify the setting of this gobbet.
- (e) Most candidates correctly recognised this as part of the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist and good marks were achieved. A lot of material was included in the best answers which clearly covered the main points of the gobbet.

- (f) This gobbet is about Zacchaeus the tax collector and for the candidates who answered this question there was a lot of scope. The best answers drew out the main points of the incident rather than merely retelling the story, i.e. tax collector's role, outcasts, Roman society, Jesus' presence demanding a response.
- (g) The Prologue from John is a distinct piece of writing and so this gobbet was largely identified correctly with a lot of relevant comment. Marks were not given for merely recounting the whole of the Prologue word for word.
- (h) Taken from the story of Lazarus this drew well developed comments and relevant answers. A popular choice.

Question 2

This was a reasonably popular question which clearly demonstrated how well candidates had understood the arguments around the structure of Matthew and its close links with the Old Testament. There was a lot of relevant comment which explored the parallels with the Pentateuch and Jewish scriptures. For those candidates who gained high marks it was apparent that they had considered scholarly views and knew how to handle the material surrounding this question.

Question 3

This was not as popular as some of the other questions but for those candidates who had studied the religious groups within the Jewish society of Jesus' time there was a lot of material at hand. Higher marks were attained by those who gave a balanced answer and looked at both sides to the question. There needed to be more than just a mere retelling of the conflict stories between Jesus and the religious authorities.

Question 4

This question was popular and many scored high marks for their answers. Again, it was important to look at the disciples from both angles: their successes and their failures; and give a balanced essay which evaluated their contributions. Some candidates developed only their failures.

Question 5

This was a very popular question. There were a lot of very detailed essays surrounding the reasons why Mark wrote his Gospel. Mention was made of the political and religious difficulties of the time which may have contributed to Mark's motivation and key themes. There was also a lot of reference to scholarly ideas. Candidates displayed good knowledge and understanding of the main points surrounding this question.

Question 6

Another popular question. Candidates appeared well read and prepared for this question surrounding the theme of the outcast/poor in Luke. Answers were well written and detailed.

Question 7

This was not a popular question with few candidates attempting it. Jesus is frequently recorded as being at a meal or going to a meal within the Gospel of Luke therefore this question was to explore how significant these occasions are within Jesus' life and ministry.

Question 8

Some very strong candidates produced excellent responses which clearly understood the Prologue and the theme of light versus darkness and how it was developed throughout John.

Question 9

This was not a popular question. Some very strong candidates produced excellent responses which clearly understood the point of the question and could illustrate this with accurate textual reference and comment on the significance of the sayings, not merely retell them.

Question 10

This was quite a popular question. Most candidates clearly understood what was required and were well prepared for a question on the synoptic problem. Candidates included scholarly views and diagrams in their answers and showed evidence of wide reading around this issue.

Question 11

A very popular question about the cost of discipleship. A lot of material is available in the Gospels and it was clear that candidates understood the main purpose of the question and selected relevant texts on which to comment. The answers were well written and showed clear understanding of the main texts.

Question 12

This question was about the evidence for the existence of a Q document therefore candidates needed a clear understanding relating to this issue. Some candidates latched on to the term 'Q' and wrote a well-prepared answer to a question on the synoptic problem without arranging their material in a way that was relevant to the question. Candidates needed to focus on the question asked.

Question 13

This was not a very popular question. Candidates needed a detailed knowledge of the post-resurrection appearances and they needed to be able to show how they could be offered as proof of messiahship. Not all answers looked at this question in this way but merely spoke about the appearances as events not proofs.

Question 14

Not many candidates attempted this question. Of those that did, there was some confusion as essays were largely about the political and religious society of that time and not about the Jewish religious practices. A lot was written about the Roman occupation and the role of Pilate, etc. Answers needed to be more focused and relevant.

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Paper 9011/32
The Apostolic Age

Key messages

Candidates should be aware of the specific criteria of what is required to achieve the highest mark bands. Candidates who attempt **Question 1** are reminded that it is not a requirement to write out the gobbets as part of their response, and doing so is not a productive use of candidates time in the exam.

General comments

The standard of responses was comparable to previous years and many candidates wrote sophisticated, mature answers. **Questions 1** and **3** were by far the most popular questions amongst candidates, whilst **Question 7** was attempted by very few candidates. There was increased inclusion of scholarly views compared to previous series, but often scholars were used superficially. There were slightly more rubric errors encountered than in previous years, with some candidates answering an insufficient number of questions to fulfil the rubric, limiting their potential marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Answers for all gobbets tended to be descriptive of the passage rather than evaluative of the theological value of the text. There was often irrelevant repetition.

- (a) This proved to be a popular gobbet, and candidates were able to place it within the wider narrative of Pentecost. The best responses focused on the significance of the tongues of fire, making references to the Old Testament. Many used it as a starting point for a brief discussion on glossalia, and whether this passage is a reference to glossalia, or merely speaking in a number of ordinary languages.
- (b) Another popular gobbet, with reference drawn from the passage to the martyrdom of Stephen, and clear parallels were frequently drawn to Jesus' last words in Luke 23; the best responses using this similarity to talk about Luke-Acts. Many candidates successfully discussed the significance of the phrase 'falling asleep' when referring to Stephen's death, and linking it to beliefs on salvation and eternal life.
- (c) Not all candidates who attempted this gobbet correctly identified the significance of breaking bread being a reference to Eucharist, and instead referred unquestioningly to a regular meal. Some candidates focused their discussion on the significance of the fellowship gathering being an evening gathering, suggesting that it was a working day that they gathered together, and the likely social status of those who gathered.
- (d) Candidates largely focused on the tone of the gobbet, with a lot of attention being paid in response to the idea of astonishment and the concept of some having perverted the gospel, and the possible motivations that may have existed for their actions. Some candidates tied this into the broader idea of there being only one gospel, and what this one gospel was.
- (e) Most candidates correctly identified the idea of being hung on a tree as a reference to crucifixion; some candidates used this knowledge to discuss their knowledge of the Gospel accounts of the

crucifixion, with only limited reference to the gobbet which was the focus of the question. Better responses addressed the significance of the phrase 'curse', the idea of propitiation and the significance of Paul quoting from Deuteronomy.

- (f) Some weak responses attempted to give brief description of each and every fruit, often leading to a very superficial response to the gobbet. Candidates are reminded that they do not need to address every aspect of a gobbet, which some clearly attempted in answering this question. Some candidates chose to focus on two or three of the qualities, which was a perfectly valid approach to take. Some better answers dealt with the relationship between the fruit and the law, behaviour resulting from beliefs, rather than adherence to rules.

Question 2

This proved to be the least popular of the questions in Section A. Less successful responses simply retold the two narratives in parallel, without any direct comparison between the two accounts. Better responses picked elements to make direct comparisons between, such as comparing Paul's speeches in both accounts, and how they related to the different audiences Paul was addressing.

Question 3

The most popular question on this year's paper. The key areas of focus amongst the candidates were the status of circumcision and baptism in the Early Church. Limited answers tended to focus on just describing textual or general teachings on circumcision and baptism, better responses drew out differences thematically in Acts and Galatians, with reference to the dating of Galatians, and the internal chronology of Acts. Some responses discussed admission to the Early Church in general, without specific reference to Acts and Galatians as the question required, which limited the number of marks the response could achieve.

Question 4

A very popular question. Better responses dealt with the relationship the Galatians had with the law rather than just focussing on the content of the narratives Paul used, with limited consideration of alternative uses of the narratives by Paul than that attested by the question. The best responses focused on evaluating the claim in the question throughout their responses, whereas most candidates discussed elements discretely, with only a summative evaluation of the claim.

Question 5

An opportunity to discuss Jesus' sacrifice as a ransom for sin, which many candidates took. Many answers suffered by lack of structure and direction, and simply told everything that they had learnt on the issue, without specifically answering the question; most evident in responses that did not reference Romans at all, which limited the marks some candidates could be awarded. Similarly, some candidates grounded their answers largely in the Gospels, rather than Pauline literature, which meant they were often only tangentially answering the question.

Question 6

Candidates who attempted this question showed a very good understanding of Paul's teachings on the Holy Spirit, and were able to quote and explain a broad selection of Paul's writings. Some answers often took the form of a list, which was not necessarily a bad approach, although this limited the opportunity for assessment. The very best responses evaluated the contrasts between Paul's disparate teachings, and attempted to draw a unified assessment of Paul's teaching as a whole, rather than looking at each teaching in isolation.

Question 7

Very few candidates attempted this question. Those that did, generally compared teachings in Colossians to those in other Pauline epistles, and then drew conclusions on their similarities and differences. Some picked up on specific phrases, such as 'image of the invisible God' and their status, and that of hapax legomenon. Most responses disagreed with the claim in the question.



Question 8

Many responses discussed the different Christological discourses in Hebrews, with particular attention given to Jesus' status as high priest, his role as mediator being seen by most as the chief way he represents humanity to God in Hebrews. The best responses analysed the significance of Jesus being both the lamb who is the sin offering, and the high priest who sacrifices the sin offering. Some discussed the significance of Jesus as incarnate deity, though some candidates drifted away from answering the question set.

Question 9

Candidates were quite capable on producing a response focused on the letter of James, however there was often insufficient emphasis on teachings about the Christian community to access the higher mark bands. Many candidates gave a response on faith versus works, without really tying their discourse to the question. A few picked out the significance of the use of the word synagogue in James' passage on treating brethren with equality, to discuss the status of relationship between Christianity and Judaism in the Early Church, and what this teaches the reader about the Early Church.

Question 10

Candidates showed a very clear understanding of the role of the Eucharist in early Christian worship. The Agapē (love feast) was almost universally misunderstood by candidates, who barring a few confused it with agape (Christian love); this meant some candidates only meaningfully addressed half the question set. The answers that focused on the Eucharist were detailed and well written. The best candidates also compared the Eucharist to other types of early Church worship, with some quite detailed discussion of whether baptism and/or almsgiving could be considered to be an act of worship. Few candidates discussed prayer as an act of worship, but those who did tended to do so skilfully.

