

DIVINITY

Paper 8041/21
The Four Gospels

Key messages

When answering these questions, candidates should adhere closely to the content of the question and identify what the main thrust of the question is. A question will not just ask candidates to recall information but there will always be a need to either make an assessment, an analysis, an evaluation, or a comparison. Candidates need to identify this and then arrange their answer around this task, so the question is clearly addressed. Whilst access to further reading material may vary, it is necessary to show a good grasp of any relevant scholarly trends and developments available and candidates should know how to use this information within their answers.

General comments

Candidates were able to 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 for this paper was good. The standard of vocabulary and written work was also very good.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was a popular choice amongst the candidates and those who did attempt this generally did so well. Most candidates clearly set out the context of each gobbet and followed it with relevant comment on the points of interest.

- (a) This was a popular gobbet to comment on. It was easily identifiable and therefore candidates were able to set this in the correct context. There was a lot of comment on the significance of Herod and his role within the birth narratives.
- (b) This was answered well with relevant comments made about the Pharisees in Jewish society. Candidates made note of the different conflict stories between Jesus and the religious authorities. It was a popular choice of gobbet.
- (c) This was another popular choice of gobbet with a lot written about the ministry of John the Baptist. Also, relevant comment was made about the Kingdom of God and its requirements.
- (d) A gobbet about the cost of discipleship. Candidates wrote about the call and role of the disciples and showed a lot of knowledge around this topic.
- (e) This was not as popular as other passages but those candidates who identified the gobbet correctly gave good relevant answers about the role of Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, on hearing the announcement of his wife's pregnancy.
- (f) This was a question about paying taxes to Caesar which was an attempt by the Pharisees to trap Jesus into speaking against the state. Candidates were able to talk about the last week of Jesus' life and the conflicts which arose with the authorities.
- (g) Few candidates chose this gobbet but those who did were well acquainted with the opening chapter of John's Gospel and the references made to John the Baptist. Candidates wrote about the prophecy from Isaiah, this was very well addressed.

- (h) This was another popular gobbet. Answers were detailed, and a lot was written about Judas as the one who would betray Jesus. There was a lot of comment on the Last Supper and speculation surrounding Satan.

Question 2

This question was a popular choice and allowed candidates to show their clear knowledge of the role of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. They clearly addressed the whole idea of Matthew being a gospel designed to show Jesus as the expected Messiah. Links were made to the genealogy and the references used by the author to the Old Testament. It allowed candidates to show that they had a good grasp of why Matthew wrote his gospel and who his target audience was.

Question 3

This question gave candidates the opportunity to write about the parables found in Matthew. Some candidates did not confine their material to Matthew but used parables from Luke (the parables of the lost coin, son and sheep from Luke 15). Candidates needed to write about how their chosen parables show the different characteristic.

Question 4

Many candidates wrote very detailed answers on the theme of suffering in Mark's Gospel. Many wrote about the context in which the Gospel was written i.e. during the Roman persecutions. There were a lot of good references to the different types of suffering Jesus went through; physical, mental and emotional.

Question 5

This question was not popular with the candidates. It is a question about the sense of urgency created by Mark in his Gospel with the use of language like 'immediately', and the emphasis the author places on the need to follow Jesus now. There is a lot of material which could be used but few candidates were confident in their choice.

Question 6

This was another question which was not as popular as others. It was looking at the divinity of Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

Question 7

A few candidates attempted this question. There are a lot of references to prayer in Luke's Gospel, and there are many prominent people in Luke who use prayer: Mary, Zechariah, Anna during the birth narrative; Jesus, at varying times of his ministry.

Question 8

A few candidates selected this question to answer. The question asked candidates to look at the concept of 'betrayal' in John's Gospel as there are many examples of incidents of this. Not only is there a lot of material around Judas' actions but there are examples of Jesus' feelings of betrayal through rejection and misunderstanding.

Question 9

This was not a popular choice of question with few candidates attempting it. Truth is a popular theme within John's Gospel and it can be traced through from chapter 1 to the end, but this idea was not developed adequately by candidates in their answers.

Question 10

Many candidates answered this question with detail and understanding about the Kingdom of God. Good answers looked at the present/future aspects of the Kingdom and they selected relevant passages and parables to substantiate their answers.

Question 11

This was a popular question. Candidates who chose this one generally gave good, detailed answers about the work and support, or lack of it, which the disciples gave to Jesus. A lot of material was available which meant that their essays were detailed and varied.

Question 12

This was a popular choice, which allowed candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding of the religious tensions of the time. It was very well done with candidates recounting a lot of relevant material.

Question 13

This question was not chosen by many candidates. Jesus' teaching on material things is a common theme within the Gospels. The question asked for a comparison between the Gospels which does demand gospel-specific knowledge on this topic. When this has appeared as a Lukan question only it has been very popular.

Question 14

John the Baptist is always a popular figure for candidates to write about and this was no exception. A popular question which covered the life and ministry of John the Baptist and, overall, answers were detailed and relevant.

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General comments

Candidates were able to 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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was a popular choice amongst the candidates and those who did attempt this generally did so well. There were a small minority of candidates who did not follow the instructions and so did not fully answer the question. They chose to write about only two or three of the gobbets. A few candidates mistook **Question 1**, with its four parts, as being an alternative to answering 4 essays from the entire paper.

- (a) This was a very popular gobbet to comment on: candidates wrote clear answers which identified this passage and the key points contained within it. There were good comments on the person of Herod and his role within the birth narrative and on the situation in Jerusalem at the time.
- (b) A lot of candidates commented on this gobbet. It was correctly identified by most and brought good comments on the tension between Jesus and the religious authorities. Many wrote about Jesus' radical view of the Sabbath and linked the incident to the Old Testament mention of David eating the consecrated bread.
- (c) This was a very popular choice of gobbet and most candidates answered this very well. The role of John the Baptist was commented on, as was his life style and ministry.
- (d) This was clearly identified by most as a passage from Jesus' preaching ministry in Judea. There were a lot of good comments on the humanity of Jesus, displaying his feeling of indignation. There was also comment on the lack of understanding of the disciples and the place of humility and innocence in the Kingdom of God as shown by the children. This gobbet was very well answered by most candidates.
- (e) This was a less popular choice of gobbet. Some candidates knew who this passage referred to and gave some very good answers. It was important to know that the passage was referring to the parents of John the Baptist.
- (f) This was a less popular choice but those who were able to recognise the context, gave detailed and relevant answers. It was set after the cleansing of the Temple therefore candidates spoke about the last week of Jesus' life and his foretelling of his pending rejection.

- (g) This gobbet was confused with the incident when Jesus asked his disciples to say who he was, leading up to Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. If candidates had taken note of where this gobbet came from, they would have seen its context was relating to John the Baptist. Some more observant candidates placed it accurately and made very relevant and detailed comments.
- (h) This passage is found in John's Gospel and takes place at the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Some candidates mistakenly identified this passage as the one when the sinful woman came to Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke's Gospel). Candidates need to take note of the Gospel reference as opposed to just looking at the incident revealed.

Question 2

This was a popular choice of question, with many candidates giving full and detailed answers. It gave candidates the opportunity to present their knowledge of the didactic nature of Jesus in Matthew. Good candidates drew on their understanding of the situation for the early church after Jesus' death and resurrection. Most candidates concentrated their comments on the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, but there was plenty more material available, for example, through the parables.

Question 3

This was another popular question with a lot of candidates commenting upon Jesus as the new Moses. The good answers included more information regarding Jesus' application of the Mosaic Law. Again, there was plenty of information to be gained from the Sermon on the Mount but also through Jesus' own actions and example. Good discussion around Jesus' claim to be 'perfecting the law' was included in the better answers.

Question 4

For those candidates who had studied Mark in detail this was a popular choice. Many candidates, who chose this question, knew which miracles were necessary to draw from. There needed to be some discussion of other themes in Mark for the question to be considered regarding the prominence of the Messianic secret. Many candidates were able to refer to the work of scholars in this field.

Question 5

Some candidates used this question as an opportunity to write solely about the role of Peter within Mark's Gospel and this limited their answers. Some information about the role and character of Peter is necessary but this needs to be linked to the need to have had an eyewitness account for the author to use. There are also references to external sources which would add to the discussion of this question.

Question 6

Although Luke's Gospel is always a popular choice, this question could have been answered better. Candidates needed to develop the idea of historical accuracy. 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

A few candidates attempted this question. There was a lot of material to draw from the parables, miracles and Jesus' actions. Many used the parable of the Prodigal Son as the basis for their essay. Answers needed to give a more detailed discussion of the many references from the Gospel surrounding forgiveness.

Question 8

Few candidates answered this question. Eternal life, in John, is a spiritual life which begins on earth and continues through into death. It is not just life after death. The Synoptics do not use this idea but speak of the kingdom instead. Candidates needed to grasp this idea within their essays.

Question 9

This was not a popular choice of question. Candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the passion narrative in John's Gospel and how John links this all in with the Passover and the shedding of the blood of the Paschal lamb. The title 'Lamb of God' is used early on by John the Baptist and then developed throughout the Gospel.

Question 10

Candidates were able to show their wider knowledge and understanding around the Jewish expectation of messiahship. Most candidates discussed whether Jesus' actions can be described as being in line with this expectation or not. An overview of Jesus' ministry was necessary to make the comparison with the popular idea of the time.

Question 11

This question gave a lot of scope for candidates to write about the role of the different women mentioned in any or all of the Gospels. There is a lot of material to use with the various encounters Jesus had: foreign women, 'unclean' women, widows, prostitutes, for example. Many spent a lot of their essays writing about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, from the birth narratives therefore their answers were narrower in scope. Their role was of huge significance for the time, but little was written about this.

Question 12

The question asked for the candidate to show how the various parables reflected the various interests and purpose of the individual gospel writers. It did not ask for a list of the different parables and their retelling. There needed to be a balance in candidates' answers between the message of the parable and why it was selected by the author. A link between the parable and the various themes needed to be shown. Although this was a popular question, many answers did not make this link.

Question 13

This was a very popular question and overall, it was very well answered. Candidates wrote about the other possible people or groups who played their part in the betrayal, trial and eventual death of Jesus. A lot was written about Judas, Herod, the Jews and religious authorities. Pilate was portrayed as a reluctant participant in the event with mention of his wife's dream and the washing of his hands in public. Essays seemed to be well argued, detailed and concluded.

Question 14

This was a popular question and those who answered it did so very well. The two and four source hypotheses were discussed and illustrated, and mention was made of the relevant scholars behind these ideas. This is always a popular topic to write about and candidates produce very capable answers in response to it.

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