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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 3: New Testament Studies

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Introduction

This year was the third sitting of 8RS0 03 and centres and candidates across the country appeared to be better prepared and more able to tackle a range of questions based on the specification material. Candidates were expected to answer all questions on the paper and this year most candidates attempted all the questions on the paper. Successful candidates managed their time carefully and used a range of scholarship in their answers. There is evidence of some very good work on the New Testament and candidates in this session demonstrated very good knowledge of more modern scholarship in their work alongside the traditional sources. The best answers paid clear attention to the demands and wording of the question and wrote full and detailed responses carefully noting the demands of the questions.

It is important to note that candidates who gave general responses to a topic rather than addressing the particular question tended to be less successful as they could not answer the question fully. It remains the case that candidates invariably perform better when they are able to apply information they have carefully learnt to the specific demands of a question. Key lessons could be learned and applied in terms of improving performance and, although it was good to see less blank responses for questions that were not revised, there are a few pointers that will help candidates to prepare themselves for this paper.

The easiest way for candidates to improve is to remember to answer the question; responses that failed to achieve the highest levels often focussed their attention on the question **they wanted** rather than the question **that was there**. Some candidates may have misread the question but simple tips such as underlining or circling key words should help them engage with what exactly is being asked.

Another issue that can be improved is timing. Some candidates appear to have struggled with their timing and responses to Q01 (8 mark) were often long. This ultimately impacted on the final (20 mark) question Q04(b) which was often rushed and possibly cut short. Candidates who spent far too

much time on Q01 would be better advised to answer the two-part essay question in 4a and 4b first whilst keeping an eye on timings. Candidates cannot afford to spend too long on questions Q01-Q04(a) and there was evidence in this sitting of time management issues.

The trigger words for each question should remind candidates of the weighting of AO1 and AO2 marks and successful candidates apply this to their answers. The 8 mark Explore questions in Q01 and Q04(a) should be answered succinctly without discussion or analysis. Full marks can be obtained by focusing solely on the factual information required to answer the question. The two 9 mark assess questions can only gain full marks if there is evidence of analysis or evaluation. A narrative response that omits to analyse and evaluate aspects of the A01 material will inevitably reach a ceiling of marks.

Overall, candidates were very well taught by centres and the most successful candidates produced impressive responses that evidenced sound learning, engagement with the subject matter, and accurate knowledge of not only the textual content but also of relevant scholarship.

Question 1

There was a clear distinction between those candidates who had gained a thorough understanding of the course content and those who had not.

On the whole, the most accomplished responses to the question were impressive and approached the topic with thoroughness and flair. Candidates were able to outline a wide range of key ideas about the messianic secret. The best responses showed a very detailed understanding of the messianic secret and referred accurately to Wrede's work and Mark's gospel. There was a good understanding of Jesus' command to keep his works and mission secret and how Mark exaggerated Jesus' status as the Messiah.

Candidates who performed within the lower range demonstrated a limited working knowledge of key ideas and relevant scholarship. Responses were

unclear regarding the reasons why Jesus asked followers not to speak of his Messiahship. Some answers summarised types of Messiah followed by some material on the messianic secret, if they knew anything about the topic but sadly in some cases the candidates had no idea.

Overall, across the range of achievement candidates can be tempted to spend too long on Q01 and are best advised to keep an eye on timings to avoid issues in Q04b which carries more available marks.

SECTION A

Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

1 Explore key ideas about the messianic secret.

(8)

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' messiahship is kept secret especially in Mark's gospel. Morner Hooker believes that if the Messiah is what Jesus believed himself to be, he would never have claimed the title for his own. Jesus let people think what they wanted for example some believed him to be a prophet, others John the baptist. In Mark's gospel Jesus asks his disciples who do you say I am? and Peter replies the Messiah, Jesus then tells them to keep this fact a secret. In the time of Jesus' ministry the Roman occupation made the different Jewish sects unstable, and it is believed that the messiahship was kept secret because if the Pharisees and Sadducees heard of someone claiming to be messiah they would have killed him early, however Jesus had to finish his ministry before that could happen. There are other examples of him telling people to stay quiet, for example when he healed the 10 lepers he told them not to tell anyone. Jesus wanted people to come to the belief that he was messiah in their own time, therefore he did not proclaim it.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)

2



This is a good example of a script that answered the question succinctly without discussion or analysis. Full marks can be obtained by focusing solely on the factual information required to answer the question.

It is worth practising 8 mark answers on all the specification topics so they are ready to roll out in the examination. Time is of the essence and it is

unwise to throw away a single mark of an 8 mark question by failure to have an organised response at your fingertips. The trigger word 'explore' makes clear that you do not have to evaluate.

Question 2

The most successful response demonstrated accurate and detailed knowledge of the view that the purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to reveal the identity of Jesus. There was good use of scholarship and detailed assessment of the view with some responses offering a verdict from both sides. Good use was made of Hooker's view that the Prologue is the 'key to unlocking the gospel' with intelligent reference to the identity of Jesus. Candidates who knew the topic engaged very well in a discussion of how the writer selected material that would best reveal the identity of Jesus.

Overall, secure knowledge of the Fourth Gospel with evidence drawn from the text to discuss the question exemplified the most competent responses.

At the lower range of achievement answers were generalized about the purpose of the Fourth Gospel with little or no focus on Jesus' identity. Weaker responses possessed insecure knowledge of material which identifies the purpose of the Fourth Gospel with little knowledge of relevant scholarship. Some answers identified one or two contextual ideas at a superficial level but were not able to suggest specifically why the view in the question exists. Lack of scholarship generally characterises this level as also lack of textual reference. Achievement was flattened by little or no real assessment.

2 Assess the view that the purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to reveal the identity of Jesus.

(9)

The Fourth Gospel's purpose is a subject greatly disputed by scholars. Due to the theological importance of the Fourth Gospel and its removal from the Synoptic, the main purpose is not necessarily immediately clear. Many scholars do believe that it is to reveal the identity of Jesus due to the divinity highlighted within the prologue, the signs, the titles of Jesus and the 'I Am' statements all present in the Gospel, which together indicate Jesus as the Son of God. The obvious replacement of the theology is shown by the author of the Gospel further the notion that the purpose is to reveal the identity of Jesus. The way the author blatantly makes comparisons between Old Testament, Jewish notions of God and the Messiah and Jesus within his Gospel highlight Jesus as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and - therefore - an identity as the Messiah, the Logos, the embodiment of God. This openness to every community's description of the Johannine Community shows that the Fourth Gospel was written with the distinct purpose of revealing the identity of Jesus (with no Synoptic 'Messianic Secret' or discrepancies present) to everybody who wished to hear it. ~~After which of~~

PTO -

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3

Turn over ▶

This excellent answer assesses very fully the view that the purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to reveal the identity of Jesus two. The response obviously

covers sufficient detail to warrant full marks but there is evidence that candidates can get the job done within the space allowed. This response does show clear control over the material plus the ability to construct coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question. It is always a pleasure to mark such impressive work.

Question 3

Answers at the highest level focussed on the *significance of* the changing of water into wine and the walking on the water for understanding Jesus' ministry in the Fourth Gospel. Whilst there is no requirement to allocate the same amount of assessment to both signs, the best answers did attempt a full assessment of both. Candidates were able to use their knowledge of the Fourth Gospel and understanding of replacement theology to discuss the changing of water into wine. Candidates could also discuss Jesus' power over nature and what this meant for understanding Jesus' ministry. Candidates with sufficient detailed knowledge of the Fourth Gospel, essential to establish the significance of these signs for understanding Jesus' ministry, were able to assess fluently with accurate use of terminology, and precise scholarship.

Weaker responses amounted to a simple outline of one or both events and what that means for understanding Jesus' ministry. General knowledge of the topic came across in responses that lacked detail alongside imprecise knowledge of the Fourth Gospel inclusive of some irrelevant material. Such responses exhibited little or no real assessment of the significance of either event. The lesson to learn here is that everything should be revised because a question can be asked from any part of the specification.

3 Assess the significance of the changing of water into wine and the walking on the water for understanding Jesus' ministry in the Fourth Gospel.

(9)

The signs present in the Fourth Gospel all help to understand Jesus' ministry in various ways. The changing of water into wine and the walking on water specifically highlight the nature of Jesus' ministry as being driven by the necessity to help others and offer an understanding of his divine nature. The Changing of Water into Wine, being the first sign, is the first example of Jesus' divinity and the first notion of replacement theology. His power to change the water into wine and the prevalence of such a power over the rest of the distinctly Jewish community highlights how Jesus' ministry is understood to be driven by change. As the 'new wine', Jesus' divinity is replacing old beliefs and creating beginning afresh - removed from the 'old wine' of Jewish beliefs and practices. Thus, the changing of Water into Wine is significant as it helps to understand Jesus' ministry as a 'new age', and acts as the first establishment of his powerful nature. The Walking On Water follows a similar theme, by highlighting Jesus' immense power over nature as well as man made creations such as wine, his sign is significant because it creates an understanding of Jesus' ministry as a demonstration of his ultimate control over the Earth - revealing

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5

Turn over ▶

This is a very good example of an answer which makes great use of the topic content to focus on the question. The candidate was able to assess the

significance of the two signs and fully supported a comprehensive answer with a wide range of knowledge. There is no substitute for either depth or breadth in a response and fluency in the topic really does achieve high marks. The candidate knew the material very well and the answer focused nicely on the question throughout. Overall, this response was very deserving of full marks.

Question Q04(a)

Candidates demonstrated clear knowledge of Jewish expectations for an eschatological Messiah and how the title Son of God expressed the unique relationship of Jesus, the Son, with God the Father. High level responses offered at least *some* scholarship surrounding the topic. Typically, good answers were focused, precise, and detailed and answered the question without unnecessary exploration into material required in part b), or additional assessment and analysis that is not required by the question.

Weak responses presented a short or inaccurate outline of the titles and such responses were typified by a narrow range of knowledge of one or both titles in the synoptic gospels. Slightly better responses could explain the background of the titles of Jesus with some inaccuracy and other responses were closer to a shopping list of ideas about Jesus rather than an exploration of two distinct titles.

Question Q04(b)

The best answers demonstrated clear essay structure and a balanced analysis of the importance of the title 'Son of Man' for interpreting the synoptic gospels. The best responses at this level set out how the title 'Son of Man' was used in Judaism before the life of Jesus with reference to Daniel 7:13-14 and how Jesus used this term when he talked about his Messiahship, with close reference to the text and relevant scholarship. The level of accurate detail and apt scholarship is typical of the highest-level response. Candidates tend to reach a clear and justified conclusion with reference to the demands of the question with obvious engagement with the topic.

At the lower end candidates presented a short or inaccurate analysis of the title 'Son of Man'. Candidates typically demonstrated a narrow range of knowledge about the title 'Son of Man' and were unable to analyse the *'importance of'* aspect within the question. Some weak responses explained the background of the synoptic gospels and digressed into the synoptic problem without establishing the importance of the title 'Son of Man'. In some cases, lack of knowledge of the title 'Son of Man' was covered by repetition of content related to the other two titles in Part a). Answers were typically very short and suggest the candidate has not managed their timing successfully or revised the topic to good effect.

Whilst this question was mostly done very well by candidates who had clearly prepared the topic, this question revealed the time pressure of the paper, with many responses starting well but stopping abruptly. The lesson to be learned here is that of time management and some good candidates might have fared better if they tackled the two-part essay question first. One hour goes by quickly under pressure and there is no need to write three pages on Q01 if this means that time will run out on the questions that carry most marks.

SECTION B

Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- 4 (a) Explore the use of the titles 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' in the synoptic gospels.

(8)

A Messiah was referred to as ~~4~~ ~~the~~ few different kinds of Messiah. A Royal Messiah would have been someone from the line of King David. A Priestly Messiah would have been someone ~~to~~ ^{who} would restore leadership in Israel again and return it to the Golden Age. A ~~the~~ Prophetic Messiah was said to be someone chosen by God to be God's spokesperson. At the time of Jesus, the Jews might have even wanted a political messiah, who was warrior like and could fight off the Romans. Therefore the title of messiah was important to the Jews as it evoked hope of salvation as a possible return of the Golden Age as prophesied in Isaiah. The title 'Son of God' would've been interpreted by Jews as someone who would bring salvation and ~~for~~ judgement, often used as a title for the King of Israel. The Greeks interpreted the title as a heroic figure. The Romans may have seen it as a challenge to their power and therefore rejected the idea of a 'son of God'. ~~The~~ However, the theme of salvation and a divine being was still linked by evangelists and Christians in the Gospels.

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7

Turn over ►

In this exemplar, there is clear coverage of the use of the titles 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' in the synoptic gospels in Part a) and the response in

4b) has a close focus on the importance of the title 'Son of Man' for interpreting the synoptic gospels. The candidate deploys wide subject knowledge and use of appropriate scholarship. This response represents very well what can be expected in a full mark response. The candidate clearly knew the topic and managed to write a well organised answer in the time available. Assuming that all other questions have been answered similarly there are signs here of good time management and the reward for full, accurate on target work is access to the highest levels because hard work pays off. The candidate approached this question as a two-part essay and was able to exploit the natural progression of thought from Part a) to build up the analysis of the topic in Part b). Indeed, competent responses at this level show very clearly what candidates are capable of.

Paper summary

A very good year's work has been done by centres and candidates in general, equipping candidates to respond well to the demands of this paper. Candidates appear to enjoy the material they study and are able to respond with enthusiasm.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Respond to the specific demands of the question and tailor information learnt to answer that particular question.
- Practice writing to timed practise questions using the exam timing.
- Use the answer booklet correctly and avoid unnecessary attachments.
- Support points made with examples and relevant detail to explain the point.
- Express your viewpoint clearly where A02 is required.
- Continue to develop a good range of scholarship in your answers.
- Take care with subject specific spellings (terminology and scholars).