



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (1061)

RSS07 New Testament

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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RSS07 *New Testament*

General comments

There seems to be good evidence that this new unit on the New Testament has enabled candidates to produce work of a much higher quality than had been evident in the equivalent legacy unit.

It appears that the division of questions into two clear parts – the first part addressing AO1, and the second part addressing AO2 – has supported candidates to marshal their responses in a more focussed way.

Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular questions on the examination paper, but often candidates from within the same centre answered different combinations of questions from across the four topics on the Specification. This was encouraging, as it indicated that centres are teaching all four topics and so enabling the candidates to have a wide choice of questions in the examination and benefit from the breadth of study offered by the Specification.

Question 1 (Topic 1 *How the synoptic gospels came into being*)

Question 01

Most candidates discussed briefly the idea of ‘relationship’ through the term ‘synoptic’ and then developed their answers by detailed reference to the two-source theory. The answers which accessed the higher levels of the mark scheme were those that illustrated, from the text, the similarities and differences between the synoptic gospels. Candidates then went on to explain what the relationship might be that would account for these similarities and differences, for example the two-source theory. Many candidates found source ‘Q’ challenging to explain. Different theories about the relationship between the synoptic gospels had clearly been studied by some centres and these were credited. However, it is important to underline that full marks can be gained if candidates have studied only the material listed in the Specification; it is not necessary to go beyond this material.

Some candidates interpreted the issue of ‘relationship’ in terms of emphasis and readership of the three synoptic gospels, and discussed their differences in terms of possible redactional findings. This approach was creditworthy.

Overall, this question produced some excellent answers that reflected good use of the text.

Question 02

Many candidates appeared to have prepared to answer a question about the historicity and the accuracy of the gospels. Although this was an aspect of the answer anticipated, it was not the focus. As a result of this narrow approach, some candidates could not gain access to the higher levels of the mark scheme. It is important that candidates identify the focus of the question set and address it.

More able candidates made some reference to ‘more advantage’; these candidates clearly assessed the claim and thus accessed the highest levels of the mark scheme.

It is important that candidates understand that the AO2 skill requires them to present a reasoned and sustained argument. At the highest levels it also involves critical analysis. These demands cannot be met by merely listing points for, and points against, an issue.

Question 2 (Topic 2 *Aspects of Jesus' teaching and action, parables and healings*)

Question 03

It was encouraging to note that hardly any candidates answered the question by merely narrating a miracle account. However, some candidates did neglect the reference to using only **one** healing miracle. A common weakness was that candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time preparing an introduction to their answers. This often involved listing the four types of miracles or discussing the different philosophical definitions of 'miracle'. In the short time available, candidates need to start addressing the focus of the question from the first paragraph onwards.

Although some candidates limited their answer to some rather basic purposes, such as Jesus showing compassion and care, most candidates discussed areas such as faith and Jesus' divinity. The best answers widened their discussion and showed how the miracle selected showed aspects of the Kingdom of God. Good use was made of the text to support the various purposes.

Some candidates used a miracle that was not one of those listed in the Specification; even so, full credit could be gained. Other candidates used a miracle that was not a healing miracle and were, therefore, limited in the credit they could achieve.

Question 04

As in Question 02, the focus of the claim was often neglected. In such cases, candidates tended to discuss whether the miracles happened or not. Although some credit was given for this approach, it was not the main focus. Healing miracles could be claimed to have meaning because of their symbolism or because they show the nature and person of Jesus.

As in Question 03, some candidates selected a miracle that was not a healing miracle and thus the credit that could be awarded was limited to the lower levels of the mark scheme.

Question 3 (Topic 3 *The arrest, trial and death of Jesus*)

Question 05

A disappointing number of candidates discussed the death or resurrection of Jesus rather than the trials. The question focussed on the differences between two gospel accounts. The command word 'examine' requires more than a mere list of differences. It was anticipated that candidates might discuss why these particular differences exist, including redactional insights or source criticism. There were some very good answers demonstrating excellent use of the text.

Question 06

This question was generally answered well and there were some interesting discussions about Pilate. However, most candidates tended to limit their answers to discussions about Pilate, such as that he was / was not a threat. Few candidates went on to argue for alternative explanations as to why Jesus was crucified, such as that it was God's plan or that it was the Sanhedrin who saw Jesus as a threat. These alternatives would have strengthened the argument that Jesus was not a threat to Pilate.

Again, candidates often tended to list points for and against the claim rather than to engage in any reasoned argument. Listing data is an AO1 skill rather than an AO2 skill. AO2 skills demand that information is used to answer the question, and that it is assembled in such a way as to present an appropriate evaluation supported by reasoned argument.

Question 4 (Topic 4 *The resurrection of Jesus*)

Question 07

The focus of this question was on the person of Jesus. Most candidates exemplified Jesus' power and authority from the text, whilst others focussed on his divinity and humanity. Again, there was good use made of the text to support and illustrate the teaching. The Specification does cite Mark 16¹⁻²⁰ (including the variant readings of the text) as the material to study for Mark's resurrection account. Many candidates referred only to the material up to verse 8.

Question 08

Some candidates clearly found this to be a challenging question since they did not seem to have studied the debate about the authenticity of the longer ending of Mark's Gospel. It is identified for study in the Specification as one of the issues arising. Weak answers to this part of the question indicated that some candidates had answered Question 07 without checking to see whether they could answer the related Question 08.

As a result, the discussion was limited and many answers lacked clear knowledge and awareness of the debate. Indeed, many answers gave lengthy discussions about possible reasons why the ending was lost. The debate was often very one-sided and lacked substance.