



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**Religious Studies A (4050)**

**Unit 5: St Mark's Gospel**

**405005**

***Report on the Examination***

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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## Unit 5: St Mark's Gospel

### General Comments

This paper remains a popular option, and the performance of the candidates overall this year was very pleasing. As always, those candidates who had a very good knowledge of the text were able to tackle the questions with confidence. It is not just the texts in the specification that help to gain marks. Examiners are able to credit anything from St Mark's Gospel. They do not expect any knowledge of other gospels or of texts from the New Testament, and this can sometimes be a problem if a candidate refers specifically to Johannine material (as some did on A2(c) whilst discussing Jesus' miracles). Overall, the standard of presentation was good; candidates who write clearly in black ink make the examiners' task much easier. Some less able candidates did not attempt B5 or B6, which clearly affected their overall marks.

### Part A

#### Question A1 The Nature and Purpose of St Mark's Gospel

Part (a) was generally well done. Some candidates simply repeated the stimulus, but most were able to define 'gospel' with some explanation of the meaning.

Part (b) elicited a wide range of responses. Most candidates wrote about the people at the time of Jesus, but some used modern contexts. Some candidates used this question to explain Mark's sources and some of this was creditable, but this was not actually what the question was about. Nor was the question about the reliability of Mark. A few candidates did not give a second viewpoint; this meant they could not be awarded the higher level marks. The best answers drew from the whole of the gospel and mentioned a wide range of Jesus' activities without going into too much detail on any of them.

Part (c), a straightforward recall question, posed few problems for candidates. Many gave the context, which was not strictly required but nevertheless added to the quality of the answers. There was some evidence that some centres had used over-modernised versions of the narrative.

#### Question A2 The Person of Jesus

Most candidates were able to score full marks in part (a). Examiners were able to credit a wide range of answers. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the warrior Messiah, but others referred to the disciples' view of the Messiah. References were made here to Caesarea Philippi and to Peter's role in identifying Jesus as the Christ. Examiners also gave credit to those who recognised that Jesus did not fit the normal pattern of understanding of the Messiah assumed at that time. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of messianic expectation.

Very few candidates were unable to gain marks in part (b). Son of Man had clearly been well taught, and most candidates recognised that it was not a specific messianic title. There were references to Daniel and Ezekiel and the importance of the use of Son of Man to preserve the messianic secret was noted, and candidates were therefore able to argue that the disciples did not recognise Jesus as Messiah at first. Some took the contrast between Son of Man and Messiah to show that the disciples did not understand at first. Overall, candidates' responses were very pleasing here.

Few candidates just retold the story in part (c), which was very encouraging. As in A1(b), some candidates did not give a second viewpoint on whether the miracle demonstrated that

Jesus was the Messiah or not. Many were able to make links between the messianic banquet, the Eucharist and manna in the wilderness. The role of Jesus as shepherd and the teaching importance of the miracle were noted. Very few candidates just outlined what happened, which was encouraging because it demonstrated careful reading of the question.

### **Question A3 Discipleship**

Despite some muddling of the names and the order of the calling, many candidates were able to gain full marks in part (a). A few confused this call with the miraculous draft of fish. The command word here was 'describe', so there was no need for candidates to discuss the meaning of discipleship. Only a few candidates did this.

Generally part (b) was well answered. Candidates knew the elements of the parable. Some did not link them to Christian discipleship but just gave an allegorical meaning for the elements. Those who were able to link the parable with any form of discipleship or persecution were able to gain full credit.

Most candidates named a suitable person in part (c)(i). Some, though, used Old Testament characters or people not heard of outside their own community. Few were unable to gain any credit in part (c)(ii). Some candidates, however, concentrated too much on the biography of the chosen person chosen rather than on his or her self-sacrifice. Reading the question carefully is a key skill.

In part (d) there was some reference to slavery per se being wrong. Many candidates recognised the importance of service within the Christian tradition. Candidates were able to quote the idea of Jesus serving. There was some reference to foot washing from John; this Johannine material could be given credit where it was used to support the idea of Jesus serving others. A few candidates did not attempt this question and so gained no marks.

### **Question A4 Jesus' Relationship with Others**

The majority of candidates had no problem with part (a). Many referred to the woman as Syrophenician, despite this term not being included in the specification but this was not an issue. The main problem in this question arose for those candidates who confused this incident with Jairus' daughter. The stimulus was well used by many as it gave the clue about the dogs eating the crumbs from under the table.

Many candidates continued on from the Greek Woman incident and built up creditable arguments referring to other incidents in the gospel where Jesus showed that he was not prejudiced in part (b). Candidates sometimes offered a definition of prejudice in their answers. However, this was not a question about prejudice as such, so no marks were awarded for the definition. There were some who struggled to give two viewpoints. Others unfortunately did not read the question carefully and wrote about people being prejudiced against Jesus, for example, the High Priests.

## **Part B**

### **Question B5 Jesus' Ministry**

Very few candidates just related the text in part (a). They were credited up to Level 3 if they did. There were many answers which demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of the significance, and the question gave candidates an opportunity to explain as well as describe. Candidates need to distinguish between recall questions, often introduced by 'describe', and questions like this one requiring interpretation, introduced by 'explain'. Most candidates did explain and interpret here. Candidates used the word 'watershed' but a few could not develop this.

Almost all candidates who tackled part (b) were able to gain credit for agreeing with the statement and giving some examples. The balancing argument that Jesus did other things than suffer was noted in many cases. However, once again, some candidates failed to put forward another viewpoint.

The incident in part (c) was well recalled by many candidates. There was some confusion between the baptism voice from heaven and the dove, but overall this was very well answered.

In part (d) candidates were able to note the two voices from heaven in the gospel narrative, which gained them credit. They were, in many cases, able to point out that other aspects of Jesus' life, for example, the miracles and the Resurrection, also confirmed that he was sent from God.

### **Question B6 Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection**

A very few candidates muddled the incident in part (a) with either the entry into Jerusalem or the Resurrection. This was not a well recalled passage overall.

Part (b) enabled candidates to produce some exceptionally fine answers, well balanced and sometimes full of passion about the relative importance of the ways in which Judas or Peter appeared to let Jesus down. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the text, referring not only to Peter's denials but also to him falling asleep in Gethsemane and cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant at the arrest.

Far too many candidates in part (c) answered from Mark 16<sup>1-8</sup>, the empty tomb and the Resurrection itself. The appearances are in the specification and need to be taught even though scholars debate their authenticity.

Part (d) was answered very well. Candidates noted that Christians are not all the Son of God, so there are some things that not everyone can do. Most were able to gain marks by developing the argument that Jesus is a role model. Some even used that phrase. Again, some candidates lost marks by not including a second viewpoint.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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