



GCSE

Religious Studies

8063/2B

Report on the examination

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General Comments

It was clear to see that centres had prepared their students well for the examination this year. There were some excellent responses to the AO2 evaluation questions in particular, which showed that students had the ability to apply and evaluate what they have learned. Many responses showed a good knowledge and understanding of the set texts. Handwriting was also less of an issue this year.

The paper appeared to be accessible for all students this year, reflected in the large number of students who attempted all questions. However, less successful responses showed that students did not understand the question or lacked knowledge of the set texts. Furthermore, some good responses to the five-mark questions failed to include a named source of authority thus losing out on the fifth mark. Centres need to make students aware that there has to be a named source, not just a quotation, e.g. 'St Mark tells us...' / 'the Bible says...' / 'Jesus taught us...' or put the source of the quotation in brackets e.g. 'The Kingdom of God started off small with Jesus' (Mark).

Theme D: St Mark's Gospel – The life of Jesus

1.1

Most students correctly ticked **C**.

1.2

This question was generally well answered with two correct points given e.g. it shows Jesus' power over death / it shows that death is not the end / it shows good over evil / it gives hope for eternal life. However, credit was not given for statements that instead referred to the death, as that was not the focus of this question.

1.3

This contrasting question was generally well answered with many students achieving full marks. Many responses referred to Pilate sentencing Jesus to death to please the crowd or the Jewish leaders and contrasted this with points such as Pilate sentencing Jesus to death as he had a duty to uphold Roman justice, or Jesus' death was going to happen regardless of what Pilate did as it was part of God's plan that Jesus had to die, etc. Some responses lacked development however, or demonstrated inaccurate knowledge, for example saying Pilate sentenced Jesus to death because he committed blasphemy.

1.4

This question was generally well answered with many responses achieving the full 5 marks. A common point given was that the disciples saw Jesus' appearance change. Jesus' clothes became dazzling 'white' (St Mark's Gospel). In Jewish tradition such brightness was associated with Shekinah, the presence of God. Another common point made was that the voice from above was God. God said, 'This is my Son, whom I love, listen to him' (St Mark's Gospel).

Some students did give two developed points, and whilst they showed the presence of God in the Transfiguration, they often did not include a relevant and accurate reference to St Mark's Gospel as a source, thus missing out on the fifth mark. A maximum of two marks were given for responses that simply narrated the text. Credit was not given to responses which confused the Transfiguration of Jesus with the Baptism of Jesus.

1.5

Many students gave well-argued Level 4 responses which showed consideration of different points of view, logical chains of reasoning, judgements supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information and clear references to religion throughout. For example, many students explained clearly why the conversation at Caesarea Philippi shows that 'Messiah' was not a good title for Jesus. Popular responses explained that although Jesus did not deny that he was the Messiah he sternly ordered his disciples not to tell anyone about him. He understood that many Jews thought the Messiah would be a descendant of King David with great wealth and power, demanding obedience and service. Many wanted a political saviour, a warrior king who would lead them in battle against the Romans and set them free of Roman rule. This could have been seen as a politically dangerous title by the Romans as they knew that peace in Israel was very fragile, so Pilate and his officials were constantly watching for any unrest. Many also explained that Jesus could have been in trouble with the religious leaders as it was believed that the Messiah would be sent by God and that claiming to be God was seen as blasphemy. It would have led to his arrest and therefore his mission would have ended too soon / Many explained that other titles could be better than Messiah e.g. Son of God, etc.

Arguments in support of other views tended to explain that the title Messiah was an appropriate one for Jesus but needed to be reinterpreted. Jesus saw himself as a different Messiah from that found in some of the scriptures and in popular Jewish thinking. He was not an earthly King, so he did not want people to mix up his purpose. Jesus wanted to be seen as a peaceful Messiah, his Messiahship was about service, not wealth or kingship (James and John). He came to establish the Kingdom of God which he was to achieve by suffering and dying for others not by using force. He offered freedom to all, not from the Romans but from sin. He was a suffering Messiah not a political one. He referred to himself as Son of Man in his first Passion prediction in the conversation at Caesarea Philippi rather than Messiah and many explained that this title was linked with the Old Testament suffering servant figure. Many explained that when Peter declared him to be the Messiah, Jesus did not deny it. His order not to tell anyone about him could imply that he accepted it as a valid title but that the time was not right to let others know. Also, in the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus replied, 'I am' when he was asked if he was the Messiah, etc.

The difference between Level 4 and Level 3 is the level of argument - Level 3 responses showed reasoned consideration of different points of view but lacked the development or conclusion needed to reach level 4. Many level 2 responses were either one sided or showed a recognition of different points of view supported by relevant reasons.

Maximum Level 2 was given if there was no reference to religion.

Level 1 responses showed a point of view with reason(s) stated in support.

2.1

Most students correctly ticked **C**.

2.2

This question was generally well answered with two correct names given. However, one mark was given where students named Simon and Peter as two examples.

2.3

This contrasting question was generally well answered with many responses achieving 4 marks. Popular responses explained that some people find it shocking that Jesus chose the tax collector Levi to be a disciple as he was seen as an outcast. Tax collectors were despised and shunned by Jews because they worked for the Romans. Tax collectors were considered to be dishonest as they had a reputation for charging more taxes than was necessary. They were seen as traitors to the Jewish cause, etc.

Contrasting responses often explained that some people believe that Jesus was breaking the Jewish law. By eating and associating with people who did not follow the Jewish law Jesus was making himself ritually unclean. The Pharisees were angered that Jesus was eating and mixing with tax collectors Jesus claimed to be carrying out God's work. He was not concerned that these people were not following the religious teachings of the day or observing God's law. The call of Levi shows Jesus' understanding of his mission. Jesus showed that he would engage with people that the Pharisees scorned. Jesus showed love and care for sinners by bringing forgiveness and hope. 'Those who are well don't need a doctor....', etc. Some Christians were amazed at Levi's immediate response to the call of Jesus. He left his very lucrative job to follow Jesus, a wandering preacher, etc.

Some responses lacked development and achieved only 1 or 2 marks. No credit was given for confusing the call of Levi with the call of the first four fishermen.

A contrasting view which centres are obviously teaching is that atheists don't believe in God, so the events of St Mark's Gospel did not happen, or in this case that Jesus did not call Levi, the tax collector. It is important to point out however that the relevance of such a view would depend very much on the specific question, and in this case, it was not relevant and could not be credited.

2.4

This question was generally well answered with many responses achieving 5 marks. Students often included points such as, Jesus taught that when planted the mustard seed is the smallest seed, but it grows to be the biggest shrub. Just like the mustard seed the Kingdom of God started off small with Jesus and with the help of the disciples it has grown and spread over the world. Also, the idea that the growth was not a result of human effort, but it is a gift from God working through nature. Other points included the idea that the mustard seed grew large enough for birds to nest in the branches. The birds nesting indicates that everyone is welcome in the Kingdom of God, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Some students did give two developed teachings about the Kingdom of God in the Parable of the Mustard Seed but did not include a relevant and accurate reference to St Mark's Gospel (source) thus missing out on the fifth mark.

A maximum of two marks was given for responses that simply narrated the text. No credit was given for responses that confused the Parable of the Mustard Seed with the Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly.

2.5

Many students gave well-argued Level 4 responses which showed consideration of different points of view, logical chains of reasoning, judgements supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information and clear references to religion throughout.

Many students explained clearly why Peter sets a good example of discipleship for Christians today. Arguments in support offered referred to the idea that Peter showed trust in Jesus as he responded immediately to his call and he was one of Jesus' closest disciples as he was with Jesus at key points in his ministry e.g. the healing of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration, Gethsemane etc. Many explained that Peter seems to have been the spokesman for the disciples e.g. at Caesarea Philippi he may have been answering for the group when Jesus asked them who they thought he was. He was the first to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. He questioned the need for Jesus' suffering and death. He wanted to honour Jesus at the transfiguration by offering to build three tents on the mountain for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Many explained how Peter followed Jesus after his arrest to the High Priest's courtyard when the other disciples ran away. At the Last Supper he declared that he would not desert Jesus and he suffered greatly after denying that he knew him – he broke down in tears. Many explained how Peter had been singled out to receive Jesus' message. The man at the tomb told the women to tell Peter that Jesus would meet him in Galilee, etc.

Arguments in support of other views often suggested that Peter made mistakes e.g. in Gethsemane he fell asleep when Jesus asked him to stay awake while he prayed. He demonstrated fear when he denied knowing Jesus three times in the High Priest's courtyard. He failed his friend and the greatest test of discipleship. He hid in the upper room with the other disciples. They were told off by Jesus for not believing the reports of the Resurrection. Many explained that at times Peter misunderstood Jesus' ministry e.g. at the transfiguration offering to make three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. At Caesarea Philippi he did not accept what Jesus said about the Son of Man having to suffer. Others explained that Peter was human, and humans make mistakes. He was not perfect but perhaps this helps Christians today to have a better understanding of discipleship. It is demanding and difficult but like Peter Christians can repent when they too make mistakes, etc.

The difference between Level 4 and Level 3 is the level of argument - Level 3 responses showed reasoned consideration of different points of view but lacked the development or conclusion needed to reach level 4. Many level 2 responses were either one sided or showed a recognition of different points of view supported by relevant reasons. Maximum Level 2 was given if there was no reference to religion. Level 1 responses showed a point of view with reason(s) stated in support.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.