

B. Christianity | Sample Answer

Imagine that you are interviewing some of the first disciples after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Outline what you think they would say about the impact of Jesus' death and resurrection on their religious beliefs and practices. (2015 Section B [b])

Jesus' death and resurrection had a massive impact on his disciples.

On the night before he died, prior to his arrest, Jesus celebrated Passover with his followers. In a symbolic act of service Jesus washed the feet of his Disciples and asked that they too would do this in his memory. He shared a meal with them and spoke of the sacrifice he was preparing to make. He asked his Disciples to remember him in word and deed and offered himself in a new covenant with the people of God. After his death, Jesus' disciples were devastated and confused. Jesus was a man whom they had given everything up for and now that he was gone, they didn't know where to turn. They were left alone without their leader; some ran away in terror and most went into hiding. So many had lost hope others were left wondering what it was all about and what they were going to do now. Throughout his life, Jesus reminded his followers that they would face difficult times and that their faith in him would be tested and he promised them his continued presence.

But something extraordinary happened, Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to some of his followers. Several accounts of Jesus' appearances after his resurrection are found in the Gospels. The Gospel of Mark speaks of Jesus revealing himself to Mary Magdalene and to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Through these appearances, the disciples were reassured and given instructions as to how to carry on. They were reminded of their mission and focus and acted together to continue the work that Jesus had begun before he died. For the Disciples, Jesus' Resurrection confirmed that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter said, 'Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah'.

The immediate impact of the Resurrection and of Pentecost was the emergence of the early Christian community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Protestant martyr, once noted that 'Jesus did not rise alone: rather he rose as a community, because he brought humankind with him'. After the resurrection, the followers of Jesus formed communities to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. In Matthew's Gospel, it tells us that Jesus told them to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations". They did this and devoted their lives to the fellowship, prayers and the breaking of bread. The book called 'The Acts of the Apostles' in the New Testament tells us that they sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to all and day by day their community grew. These early Christian communities began to use the term 'Ekklesia' to describe themselves- this word came to mean 'The true community of God'.

The disciples understood that Jesus gave up his life so that the whole human race would be saved from sin. They focused on the preaching of the resurrection of Christ and believed that the Kingdom of God had in fact arrived through his resurrection and glorification. Jesus' death and resurrection brought a renewed sense of hope and faith in the disciples which encouraged them to devote their lives to spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.