

B. Christianity | Sample Answer

Describe how any one of the above expectations of the Messiah is evident in a Gospel account of an incident from the life of Jesus (2014 Section B [a])

In Jesus' teaching, preaching and living he announced the Kingdom of God and showed his awareness of himself as the Messiah in the sense of the one who heralded this Kingdom. There were many expectations of Jesus as the Messiah. People at the time of Jesus expected the Messiah to be Davidic, Priestly and Prophetic. Jesus was aware of these expectations but did not desire a title as such as he was aware of the socio-political expectations associated with it. The Messiah means the anointed one. Jesus showed an alternative meaning to the title of the 'Messiah' beyond its expectations. He displayed this through his preaching of the kingdom of God, his crucifixion and the way in which he lived his life, as an example of God, for each of us to follow. One of the expectations of Jesus as the Messiah was 'prophetic'. The Pharisees looked forward to a future Messiah whom God would send to deliver them from Roman rule and restore the Kingdom of God among the people of Israel. This prophetic Messiah would fulfil the scriptures and liberate the people of God from oppression. Such a person was usually understood as an authoritative messenger and spokesperson of God. The people at the time referred to Jesus as a prophet and claimed: "God has visited his people, he visited them through the person of Jesus Christ".

Jesus' mission was to show an awareness of the expectation of the Messiah as Prophetic and as a Prophet, he continuously challenged the system and threatened people's security. He had no regard for popularity and, instead, repeatedly said the unpopular thing. The religious leaders despised sinners, and so, for Jesus, as prophet God, to deliberately welcome sinners was an absolute scandal. In turn they blackened his name, calling him a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Jesus showed his awareness of his expectations as Messiah through his words. In John 4:25-26, we read about Jesus and the woman in the well. In his conversation with the woman, Jesus' identity as Messiah arises. The woman says to him, 'I know that the Messiah is coming,

when he comes he will proclaim all things to us'. Jesus said to her "I am he, the one who is speaking to you".

Jesus also showed his awareness of his actions. In one particular story, Jesus heals a paralysed man, an outcast and sinner, and infuriates the Pharisees. At the time, Jesus was living and teaching in Capernaum. On one occasion, the people gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left inside the house where he was teaching, not even outside the door. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man but could not get inside, so they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and then lowered the man down. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Some of the teachers of the law interpreted this as blasphemy, since God alone can forgive sins. Jesus said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'. He says to the man "...get up, take your mat and go home". Immediately he stood up before them took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God.

As prophet, Jesus challenged, disturbed, unsettled and provoked all that he saw wrong and unjust in his society. Jesus was courageous and outspoken. He was not harmless but challenged the authorities to their core and was even branded a blasphemer. His outspokenness would have a price and he would pay for it with his life. In conclusion, Jesus showed an awareness of the expectation of the Messiah as Prophetic. Jesus was full of compassion and love for the sinner and the outcast. Yet Jesus was not afraid to challenge the comfortable worldviews of his day. There are many different titles given to Jesus, but in his own time he was best understood as a prophet.