

Final Exam

What was really difficult about taking the theology course taught by Dr. John Walvoord at Dallas were his quizzes and exams. He asked only exceedingly hard questions. Students had to really know thoroughly what he taught and be able to think theologically, or else flunk. Let's do a quiz on the Sunday School material we've covered, just for fun. I don't think my questions are as hard as those by Dr. Walvoord, but if you haven't been paying attention, you may find them impossible. Here goes, ten questions on this side of the page, and answers on the other side. If you get them all correct, you should be teaching Sunday School. If you get even one wrong, you need to go back and review our lessons.

1. Who was the prophet whose wife died the very day that invading Babylonians seized and destroyed Jerusalem?
a. Isaiah b. Daniel c. Zechariah d. Ezekiel e. Hosea
2. Charles Finney, the renowned evangelist of 19th century America who also was a skilled lawyer, wrote in his theology book that humans have been given a totally free will by which to decide to repent and live a holy life, and we do that unaided by God, because if God had to give grace of any kind to people to aid them to decide to follow Christ that would be not only unjust but a violation of our moral freedom. Is what Finney wrote true or false?
a. True b. False
3. Jesus' command for us to be salt and light (Matthew 5) are why the Church needs to be involved in politics, engage current cultural issues, and live righteously before our friends and neighbors.
a. True b. False
4. The three members of the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all exhibit personhood, which means that they each have a mind, a will, and emotions.
a. True b. False
5. Our worship on Sunday mornings in church, giving praise to Christ and to the Father, glorifies God, which means that we add to God's glory, that is, we make Him increasingly more glorious, which is why we worship God.
a. True b. False
6. The New Covenant text of Jeremiah 31 is written into the Book of Hebrews (Ch. 8) because that New Covenant is fulfilled in the Church. It's because the New Covenant has been fulfilled in the Church that believers in Christ have forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit.
a. True b. False
7. To know what the Gospel is that the Church proclaims, we go to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."
a. True b. False
8. Acts 16:31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved," is all that's necessary for a person to do in this life.
a. True b. False
9. Because the people of the Nation of Israel rejected their promised Messiah, God has permanently abandoned them and the Church has replaced Israel as the people of God. However, individual Jews may still come into relationship with God by believing in Christ and becoming part of the Church. Because Israel rejected Jesus, all the promises in the Old Testament that God made to Israel are necessarily fulfilled in the Church.
a. True b. False
10. In which epistle does Paul not only boast of his weakness, but he presents a theology of weakness as what should characterize the life of all believers?
a. Philippians b. Romans c. Titus d. 2 Timothy e. none of these

Answers

1. Isaiah prophesied to Judah long before Babylon threatened the Southern Kingdom, more than 100 years before, when Assyria was Judah's threat. He foresaw Babylon as coming in the future, though. (A contemporary of Isaiah was Micah.) Daniel was already in exile in Babylon when he wrote, so Daniel was later in time. It couldn't be Zechariah either, because he was one of the post-Exilic prophets (along with Haggai and Malachi), encouraging the rebuilding of the Temple by the Jews who returned to a destroyed Jerusalem. The answer is, it was (d) **Ezekiel**. His ministry was to explain to the Jews back in Judea there was no hope of deliverance from Nebuchadnezzar because of Judah's grievous sins. In Ch 24, Ezekiel's wife died, symbolic also of the end to Jerusalem. After Ch 24, the prophet turns to judgments on surrounding Gentile nations, then the final chapters deal with the future restoration of Israel. Hosea was prophet to the Northern Kingdom. (So was Amos.) The Northern Kingdom had already been taken into Captivity when Jerusalem fell. Jeremiah also ministered to Judah during the Babylonian invasion, but he was in the land, Ezekiel was already in exile. All the prophets need first to be understood in their historical context before trying to apply their texts to the church or us. The circumstances of life – even that long ago – have profound theological significance. God sovereignly rules all history.
2. **False**. God has not given humanity absolute freedom, but a measure of moral freedom, sufficient to choose the ways and will of God. But due to the Fall, our sin nature always prevents us from choosing anything that honors God. Our "free will" is corrupt, so thoroughly corrupt that we cannot choose to repent and to seek to please God unless God first, by an act of grace, inclines us to do that. God must draw us to Himself (John 6:44) or no one can ever be saved. Early in the Church Age, Pelagius denied that sin prevents us from freely choosing to follow God, but pelagianism was easily recognized by the early church as heretical. Finney was a thorough-going pelagian. His understanding of justice was secular, not derived from Scripture (in particular, not from Paul's Romans). Finney may not even have been saved.
3. **False**. There are at least a dozen interpretations of "salt" in the various commentaries, but none of these attempt to understand it as it's used in the Bible. In O.T. times, and as it's used in the Scriptures, salt was a symbol of a covenant. That's because salt is permanent. And God's covenants are permanent. See Numbers 18:19. Salt had to be placed on every sacrifice made in the Tabernacle and Temple (see Leviticus 2:13). Salt represented more specifically the Abrahamic covenant. In Isaiah 42, both covenant and "light" come together (see v. 6) prophesying the role the Servant of Israel would have fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus commissions us, His followers, to be God's servants fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant of taking the knowledge of God and His Messiah to the Gentile nations. There is no biblical text instructing (or even suggesting) that the Church is to be engaged in politics.
4. **False**. The concept of a Trinity is difficult to grasp. But we do know that God is one. That means the Persons of the Godhead have one will. If each Person had his own will, each Person would be autonomous and we wouldn't have a Trinity but Tri-theism, three gods. Our theology must be anchored to the revelation that God has given us, and He is revealed in Scripture as one, a unity. All Scripture is coherent and consistent, and the *shema* (Deut. 6:4) is fundamental to understanding – as best we can! – the nature of God. Because the Persons of the Godhead share one will, the Persons are bonded in mutual love, and they interact with creation and human creatures *inseparably*. It is heresy to say that the Father willed to send the Son, and the Son acquiesced obediently to the will of the Father. Yes, in his humanity, during the Incarnation, Jesus could say, "Not my will but Thine" (Matt 26:39), but that highlights the subordinate role that the Messiah-King of Israel had to God. The Person of Jesus is unique, having two natures, and we dare not try to understand his Person from our understanding of ourselves.
5. **False**. Nothing we do can in any way add to God. He is an infinitely Perfect Being. Our worship doesn't add to Him in any way nor can it. In theology, this is called *aseity*. God is complete and perfect, self-satisfied, independent and self-existent in every possible way. God is not *becoming* anything. He does not need anything. He doesn't need our fellowship, nor a relationship with humans, nor our praises, nor *anything*, to make Him happy or fulfilled. He is already infinitely glorious. To glorify God is to reflect His glory, as a mirror reflects an image. God is a transcendent Being, totally different from anything we experience or can imagine. Does that mean we are meaningless and all that we do is meaningless? Not at all, because God has determined that we are meaningful or significant to Him, and that is the most ultimate meaningfulness imaginable. In infinitely great and holy goodness, God's purpose is to bless us. We don't and can't bless Him.
6. **False**. The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31 is for Israel. It states that explicitly and repeatedly (vv. 31, 33, 36, 37). The author of Hebrews references it to explain to those Jewish believers, his immediate readers, that it was always God's plan to obsolete the Sinaitic covenant because another one, that in Jeremiah (also in Ezekiel 36), was intended. The New

Covenant will be fulfilled in the future, when Israel is rescued from imminent annihilation and restored, at the Return of Christ. But aspects of that New Covenant proleptically are in effect now, viz, forgiveness of sins, because the atonement necessary to ratify the covenant has already been made (at the cross). The believer receives a *gift* of the Spirit (Acts 2:38); it is not the fulfillment of what's promised in Jeremiah.

7. **False.** What Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 15 is a greatly abbreviated version of the Gospel because he's arguing for resurrection. He is not attempting to make a full presentation of the Gospel. We go there because we always try to keep things simple and easily remembered. But it's at the beginning of the Book of Acts that we find the Gospel fully presented. After all, Acts narrates the spread of the Gospel, so it makes sense that at the outset, what the Gospel is should be clearly and fully stated. The Gospel is first of all, who Jesus is. That is absolutely essential. Second, the Gospel is what Jesus did. He died for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven where He is exalted. Third is what we must do. And then the Gospel is what results, namely, forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that gift is also essential because it's the Spirit who regenerates and empowers us, who gives us life and holiness and more.

8. **False.** To believe in Jesus is simply the beginning of a life of knowing and loving God, of serving Him, and of pursuing holiness. Believing the Gospel is the entry into a new life spent in glorifying God in all we think, say and do. It is God's will that we be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3), and the Spirit is given to us to enable us to that if we're so inclined to live out Christ's will, His commands and teachings. To believe in Jesus is to want to be like Him, and it takes a life-time to express that. Paul's command to the Church to be transformed, to put on the new man, is not an option, nor is it something only for professionals. It's for every follower of Christ. We are to live this life anticipating the glorified existence we'll have in the future, when we're taken to heaven. This existence is proleptic of the one to come. Believing in Jesus is how it all gets started. The notion that all we have to do is trust Christ at some point in our life and then live the rest of our lives as we please is bizarre!

9. **False.** The Church has not replaced ethnic Israel. Indeed, during this Church Age, Jews need to trust Christ just as Gentiles do. But there is a glorious future awaiting the Nation of Israel when God's promises of restoration will be fulfilled. Zechariah 8-14 (and many other O.T. passages) must be fulfilled, or God has lied to us. Paul's Romans Chapters 9-11 (especially 11:25-32) forcefully affirm the future restoration of Israel. The promises in the O.T. to restore a failed Israel must be literally fulfilled. No one has the right to "spiritualize" them and say that they are really for the Church. The Church is simply the continuation of the mission of Christ during this interval between the 1st Advent and the Return. It's role is, in purity, to fulfill the work assigned to Israel of taking the knowledge of God in the Gospel to the Gentile nations of the world. As Jesus rose from the dead, one future day so will we and so will ethnic Israel experience a resurrection, as Ezekiel prefigured in his Ch 37. (Exile is a figure of death, and Jesus is the embodiment of Israel). If God is so arbitrary as to reject His chosen and beloved people because of their failure, there's no hope for any of us.

10. We spent a year (2019-2020) in Sunday School studying 2 Corinthians, discussing the theology of weakness. So the correct answer is (e), **none of these**. Yes, in Philippians Paul presents Christ as a slave, having emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives. And although 2 Timothy is Paul's last Letter before he was put to death, he doesn't discuss weakness there. Nor in Romans or Titus. It's in **2 Corinthians** that weakness is developed as the ideal character trait of a believer. The unique theology of 2 Corinthians is Paul's exposition of voluntary weakness so that the power of Christ may be manifest. It was in weakness that Jesus allowed Himself to be humiliated, flogged, and hung on a cross. Jesus trusted in and depended on the Father to vindicate Him and to raise Him from the dead. Paul likewise lived a life of trust and dependence on God. Just as Paul imitated Christ by living a life of weakness, so we are to do that as well. People in the world follow Satan in lusting for power, for dominance over others, and pursuing a life of independence and self-expression. But we're not of the world. If we're a follower of Christ, we're to be like Him.

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Dear Reader/Test-taker/Follower of Jesus: Of all people on earth, we should be thrilled at the greatest privilege there is, knowing truth. Most of humanity simply muddles thru life, pathetically wallowing in mundane things, vainly seeking happiness. God invites us, believers in Jesus, to know Him, and His will and His cosmic and eternal truths. And there's no greater joy anyone can experience than to know and to love God's truths. We therefore need to jettison from our minds and lives all that's profane so that we can wholeheartedly pursue that which is holy, the majestic truths written in God's Word. The Bible is a love letter to us, from the great, living and eternal Lover. We need to know it and cherish it and reflect on it and live it. And by doing that, we will get to know better and to love more its Author, our Creator, Savior and Judge. It's the ultimate blessing.