

Final Exam Study Questions Theology of Heaven and Hell

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A word about the final exam:

Although the Course Description states that the final exam will be objective, I have decided to make the exam consist of short answer and essay questions. I have made this change because I believe that with the large amount of material I covered in my lectures, and without a highly detailed outline to go with those lectures, it was likely difficult for you to know all of the details to record in your own note taking. I therefore think that a multiple choice test would prove to be difficult to study for and ultimately to your disadvantage--though an objective test would be much easier for me to grade!

Therefore, I felt that with a short answer and essay exam, I could provide you with more synthetic questions that would not require you to have taken highly detailed notes. Rather, it will test if you were tracking more with the broad sense of the concepts, but also can support your understanding using Scripture at key points. I am satisfied that it will test you on our discussions in a meaningful way.

So here are some details about the final:

- (A) I will draw the questions on the exam from the ones below, verbatim. Note that in constructing an essay question, I may combine more than one study question on this sheet to form an essay question. Nevertheless, there will be nothing on the exam that you will not have already seen here.
- (B) I will give you a pool of questions and let you pick from them. So, for example, if I decide to give you three essay questions, I may put a dozen questions on the exam sheet and let you pick the three you like best.
- (C) You may use an open, unmarked Bible.
- (D) Since this will be short answer/essay, you may write the exam using your laptop. In fact, I would encourage you to do it that way. You would then e-mail me your exam in Microsoft Word format before you leave class. This will allow me to comment directly in the file and then return it to you by e-mail.
- (E) If you do not have a laptop you may handwrite your answers. In that case, purchase a Blue Book from the Bookstore and have it with you on the day of the final.

Potential Exam Questions

1. Why do you suppose people continue to retain a belief in the afterlife even as they abandon other traditional religious beliefs? State one option offered in class but also give your own view if it differs.

2. Reflect on memorial or funeral services that you may have attended recently. What sort of picture of the afterlife did these services present?
3. In what sense is God “in” heaven? Explain your answer according to a proper view of God’s omnipresence. Use Scripture.
4. In what sense is Satan in “heaven” (or, rather, “in the heavenly places”)? Does this mean that Satan enjoys God’s direct presence? If not, what does it mean?
5. Is heaven an actual “place” or simply a “condition”? Give reasons for your view.
6. A Jehovah’s Witness comes to your door and you have a discussion. At one point the JW states, “Although Christ Jesus was resurrected as an invisible spirit creature, we believe that we will have resurrected bodies and live on a paradise earth.” Based on what we discussed in class, how would you respond to this statement? Use Scripture.
7. You attend the funeral for your uncle Fred and the preacher at the graveside service says, “Today we are laying Fred’s earthly body into the ground. But even though his body of flesh will soon be no more, we know that his spirit will live forever in heaven.” Evaluate these statements based on what we discussed in class. Use Scripture.
8. How do you feel about the thought of having a literal body of literal flesh and bones for all eternity? Does this make the eternal state seem more or less inviting to you?
9. What does the resurrection of the body of flesh tell us about the value that God places on our physical bodies? Do you think that Christians sometimes tend to elevate the importance of the spirit and ignore or denigrate the body? Discuss the ways in which you may have observed this tendency and consider how the material presented in class might promote a more balanced view.
10. As you think about the resurrection body as a glorified body of flesh, does this increase your desire to have one? Describe the characteristics of this body. Which do you find the most attractive?
11. Why do you think that God raises the same body that died instead of simply creating a new, unrelated one for us from scratch? Answer based on what we discussed in class.
12. Deal with the following objection based on what you learned in class: “There is no way that God can raise the same body that died. After all: the body eventually decays, is eaten by worms that are in turn eaten by other animals, and some of these animals are then eaten by other people, etc.”
13. Respond to this statement: “In order for the body that is raised to be the same as the one that died, the new body must contain all of the same particles and molecules as the old one.”
14. What is the relationship between our own spirits and the Holy Spirit in the resurrection body? Does the Holy Spirit replace our spirit? If not, then what is the connection between them?
15. How does our creation as physical beings relate to the biblical teaching of the New Heavens and New Earth (NHNE)?
16. Do you find the prospect of a NHNE more inviting and attractive than remaining in “heaven” for all eternity? Why?
17. In what ways will God’s “presence” in the NHNE differ from the way in which we experience it now?
18. Do you believe that it is fair for God to judge the works of those who have never heard the gospel? Reflect on the brief discussion given in class in formulating your answer.

19. How is a FJ based on works consistent with the teaching that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?
20. Does James 2:14–26 contradict the teaching that we are saved by faith alone? Harmonize James’s teaching with Paul’s.
21. Discuss whether we can have assurance in this life that we will not be condemned at the FJ. If such assurance is possible, on what do we base it?
22. In what sense do we “earn” reward? How does this fit with God giving us salvation by grace?
23. What is there about modern English translations of the Bible that has resulted in confusion about the doctrine of hell?
24. What are the different meanings of the Hebrew word “sheol” that scholars have suggested? What meanings does your instructor believe are valid? In the various Old Testament passages considered in class, how can we tell which meaning is intended?
25. How does the Greek word “hades” compare to the Hebrew word “sheol”? What are the key New Testament passages that point to “hades” as a place of disembodied punishment after death?
26. How does gehenna differ from either hades or sheol, i.e., when these latter terms are used to refer to a place of punishment after death?
27. To what does the term “Tartarus” refer? Who or what inhabits Tartarus?
28. Regardless of whether one should take the fires of hell literally or figuratively, what is the key idea expressed by hell as a place of “eternal fire”?
29. Does God cut off his presence from sinners in hell, or do they experience his presence? Reconcile these two concepts in light of this chapter.
30. What can we conclude about the nature of eternal punishment from Matthew 25, and Revelation 14 and 20?
31. How does the Devil’s punishment in hell compare or contrast to that of unrepentant human beings? In what way is correlating the Devil’s punishment with that of human beings significant when it comes to the interpretation of certain key biblical texts?
32. Do you think that we should understand the “fires” of hell literally or figuratively? What are the strongest arguments for each position?
33. Do you believe that those who take the flames of hell as figurative necessarily undermine biblical authority (whether they realize it or not)? Why or why not?
34. In what way does the fact that the Devil and his angels (demons) will be cast into the “lake of fire” suggest that the fires of hell might be metaphorical?
35. Assuming that the language of eternal fire is figurative, why might Jesus have spoken figuratively rather than literally?
36. In what sense do the fires of hell involve physical suffering, even on the metaphorical view?
37. Since the Hebrew word *olam* can mean either “eternity” or an indefinite period of limited duration, how can we know whether a passage such as Daniel 12:2 teaches a limited or an unlimited period of punishment for the wicked? Likewise, address this same issue for the Greek word *aiōnion*, used in Matthew 25:41, 46.
38. How would the metaphors of worms and fire, as used by Jesus, lead one to conclude that hell is of unlimited duration?

39. How does the original language of Revelation 14:9-11 and 20:10 strongly point to the eternity of hell?
40. Some have argued that one cannot cite Revelation 20 to argue for the eternal conscious punishment of human beings because this passage speaks only of the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. Evaluate this argument.
41. Some have said that the doctrine of hell is immoral because sins committed in time cannot possibly deserve eternal punishment. What is the key fallacy underlying this argument?
42. How does the nature of the person against whom one sins relate to the punishment that is due for the offense? What are some examples that would clearly illustrate this?
43. If sinners in hell are paying for their sins, why would there not come a time when they have paid the debt in full and therefore be entitled to release?
44. Will sinners in hell acknowledge that God is right in punishing them in this way? What evidence is there for this, biblically speaking?
45. Do you find some of God's attributes more attractive or personally appealing than others? Has anything in class challenged your thinking on this?
46. What does the Bible mean when it says that God is holy? What are the implications of God's holiness in relation to hell?
47. How does Christ's atonement demonstrate the harmony of God's justice with his love?
48. Does God send people to hell? In what ways is this true or not true?
49. How does the truth of the atonement answer the question of whether a God of love can send people to hell?
50. I will ask you to report on the percentage of the reading that you actually completed for the readings in Wright and Shedd.