

Questions/answers About Christ

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon explores various questions about Christ's life, teachings, and significance, emphasizing His unique nature and the implications of His actions and messages.

Scripture: Matthew 1:16, Matthew 4:1, Mark 10:45, Luke 2:22, Luke 3:23, John 20:17, John 20:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Timothy 2:6

Topics: "Christology", "Christian Doctrine"

Description

James Blaine Chapman delves into various questions surrounding the life, teachings, and actions of Jesus Christ, providing insightful explanations based on biblical texts. From the timing of the visits of the shepherds and Wise Men to the genealogy of Christ, the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, and the significance of His resurrection, Chapman offers clarity on these complex topics. He addresses the nature of Christ's temptations, the purpose behind His baptism, the disciples' reception of the Holy Ghost, and the glorification of Jesus upon His resurrection, shedding light on key aspects of Christian faith and doctrine.

Transcript

QUESTION #8 -- How long was it after the shepherds came to see Jesus in the manger until the visit of the Wise Men?

ANSWER #8 -- The indications are that it was long enough that in the meantime the holy family had moved from the stable to more fitting surroundings, and yet that the forty days leading up to the presentation in the temple had not expired. That is as close as we can come to the exact time.

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QUESTION #9 -- Some are puzzled over the genealogy of Christ as it is carried out by Matthew and Luke. Is it not possible that Luke follows the genealogy of Mary and Matthew that of Joseph?

ANSWER #9 -- This is the supposition of many and the old Bagster Bibles gave the marginal reading "son-in-law" for Joseph in Luke. The other explanation is that Matthew follows the kingly line and Luke the natural line and that both give the genealogy of Joseph, although Mary was also of the tribe of Judah.

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QUESTION #10 -- Please explain Matthew 23:8-11, "But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master even Christ; and all ye be brethren. And call no man your father upon earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he, that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

ANSWER #10 -- The explanation is found, I think, in the more exact translation of the terms, and the text would then read, "Be ye not called teachers, for one is your Teacher even Christ" -- on your own part, call no man upon earth your authoritative teacher, for one is your authoritative teacher -- the Father in heaven. "Neither be ye called leaders in the full sense, for your Leader is Christ." The whole thought is that even great men are yet just men and are not entitled to honor as sources of truth. This high place belongs only to God. Leaders on the earth are at best only secondary leaders. Christ alone is the supreme exemplar and guide.

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QUESTION #11 -- Since Christ was human as well as divine, would it have been possible for Him to sin? Some in our Sunday school class believe He could have sinned, others think He could not.

ANSWER #11 -- I class with those who believe He could not have sinned. This conclusion arises from the fact that He was a unique person -- the God-man, and not God and man as is sometimes said. He was a person in whom were combined the two whole and perfect natures, and His pedigree was that of deity, as He himself said, "Before Abraham was I am." If it be asked, How then could He be tempted? The answer is that the temptations were no less real on account of the facts involved, any more than our temptations are real in spite of the fact that "We know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

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QUESTION #12 -- What was the nature of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness? Were they temptations or challenges? In what form do you think the devil appeared to Jesus?

ANSWER #12 -- The three temptations cover the whole field of temptations possible to men. The first was to the body, the second to the intellect, and the third to the spiritual nature. This was the same order on which the devil set out in the Garden of Eden, but he used only the first, because under it man fell. But on Jesus the devil exhausted his ammunition and still the Savior stood. The first temptation was to satisfy a demand of the body by the selfish use of miraculous power -- temptation to self-indulgence. The second (I follow the order given in Luke, which I think is the logical order) was to gain the end for which He was born without paying the price for it -temptation to gain the right end in the wrong way. The third was an attack upon faith, the very citadel of the spiritual nature -- temptation to substitute presumption for faith. Presumption is faith, wanting only the meeting of required conditions. Temptation is of two kinds or degrees, and if I understand your second question, I would say the temptations of the Master were challenges -- that is, there was no response in Him, even though the actual end to be accomplished in each case was proper and right. He was hungry and needed food. But He would do without food rather than use His power in a wrong way. He came to be King over the world. But He would not accept a divided crown to avoid suffering and death. He would call upon men to believe on Him. But He would not impose upon their credulity by a meaningless miracle to gain their homage. And since the devil is capable of assuming the appearance of "an angel of light," I doubt not that this was the form he took when approaching our Master in the wilderness.

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QUESTION #13 -- The message was, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." And yet in Matthew 10:34 Jesus says, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." How do you explain these two scriptures?

ANSWER #13 -- I think I could not do better than to use the words of Richard Watson. He says, "The end of Christ's coming was unquestionably to establish peace on earth: but because sharp dissensions and the alienation of friends and families have often been the result, through the violent enmity of the carnal mind to truth and holiness, He represents Himself, according to the oriental mode of speaking, as having sent not peace, but a sword, and as setting "a man at variance with his father," etc.

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QUESTION #14 -- Our Sunday school class has been discussing the forty days that Jesus fasted after His baptism. Some think the "forty days" is just a type of an extended period, and say it is physically impossible for one to actually fast for so long a period. I know that numbers are sometimes used typically in the Bible, and I am not sure about this. What do you think?

ANSWER #14 -- I think the forty days and forty nights are literal, and that Jesus went that long without food, although the record does not say He went without water. This feat is not impossible. There are instances, one very notable one in the records of the past century, in which healthy persons have gone forty days without food, but not without water. And if there is any difficulty in accepting the record, please notice that Mark says (Mark 1:13), "The angels ministered unto him." This may mean that He was assisted in His resultant weakness by direct supernatural strength.

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QUESTION #15 -- Please explain John 21:25, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

ANSWER #15 -- This is something of an apology for the fragmentary character of the gospel story. I think I might venture a paraphrase of the thought as follows: "The miracles of Jesus were so many and of such amazing character that if they were all written the world would be unable to receive them favorably. The material would be too abundant and the story would be too remarkable. But what has been written is sufficient to inspire faith, and once you believe you will have life through His name, and thus the same purpose would be served as though the fuller account should be given."

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QUESTION #16 -- In Luke 12:50, Jesus says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" What does this scripture mean? especially what does the word straitened mean in this connection?

ANSWER #16 -- He speaks of His suffering and death as a "baptism," and He is straitened -- that is strained, pressed, anxious -- until this inevitable tragedy shall take place.

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QUESTION #17 -- Why was it said of Jesus in John 4:4, "He must needs go through Samaria"?

ANSWER #17 -- Look at your map and you will see that it was a geographical necessity, unless He would take the circuit around through Perea on the east side of the Jordan. Some Pharisaical Jews, it is said, often took this longer way in their determination to have no dealings with the Samaritans, but our Lord would not follow such a lead. And there may be something to the suggestion that Jesus must "needs" go that way because He knew there was a thirsty woman waiting for him at the well. This would be an "evangelistic necessity."

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QUESTION #18 -- Our minister tells us that Jesus loved John better than the other disciples. Do you think this is true?

ANSWER #18 -- Five times in the Book of John appears such expressions as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and every time it seems to apply to John himself. If the idea seems to smack of spiritual pride, let us remember that such a description really implied, "That disciple who was the youngest and weakest and for whom the Master on that account showed special pity and love."

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QUESTION #19 -- Why did Jesus depart into Galilee after John was cast into prison (Matthew 4:12)?

ANSWER #19 -- He could carry on His work in Galilee with less interference than in Judea where persecution was now already beginning. The Scriptures show that Jesus used ordinary precautions to lengthen His life and enable Him to carry on until His day should come. In the fourth chapter of John it is evident that Jesus at another time went into Galilee to escape fame and to find the place where He would be least honored.

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QUESTION #20 -- Does John 20:22, where Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," signify the conversion of all the disciples as taking place at that time, or does it show forth the relation of Christ to Pentecost?

ANSWER #20 -- Adam Clarke, and I think Wesleyan commentators in general, thought this was in the nature of the linking together of the epochs of conversion and Pentecost. It was something more than conversion and something less than Pentecost. Rather in the nature of an assurance of the one and a prophecy of the other. It is as though the Master would bring the past to a clear epoch and settle for the disciples all doubt which they might have developed in the process of the dark days surrounding the trial and crucifixion -- squaring all accounts up to that date, and also making vital the promise that they should shortly receive the Pentecostal fullness.

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QUESTION #21 -- What did Christ mean by the words, "If they do 'these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31).

ANSWER #21 -- The meaning is, if they would persecute and crucify the sinless Christ, how much more will they persecute His followers? It was a warning that the disciples were not to expect immunity from trouble at the hands of wicked men.

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QUESTION #22 -- Please explain Matthew 16:27, 28, where Jesus spoke as if the coming of His kingdom and the rewards as they shall be at the end of the world were to come to pass within the lifetime of those to whom He spoke.

ANSWER #22 -- It is unfortunate that there is a chapter division (and you know the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is a somewhat modern invention) at the end of verse

28. This has, I think, caused many to wonder about the meaning of the Master's words as mentioned in your question. But if you ignore this chapter division and read right on into chapter 17, it will be clear, I think, that He was speaking of the occurrences on the Mount of Transfiguration which were to take place within the week. The Transfiguration was the Second Coming of Christ in miniature, and three of those who heard Him on the occasion mentioned were present to see Him in His glory. Thus the prophecy you mention was at that time fulfilled.

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QUESTION #23 -- Please explain Acts 2:31, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see. corruption." And where is the soul between the time of death and the resurrection?

ANSWER #23 -- The explanation of the scripture in question of course centers about the meaning of the word Hades (Sheol in the Hebrew of the Old Testament) which is here translated hell. This same word occurs in Matthew 11:23; Matthew 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27; and in Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14, and all these should be studied in this connection. The simple definition of this word is "the unseen world," and the text in question means that God would not leave the spirit of Jesus disembodied nor His body in the tomb. This was just a strong way of affirming His determination that His Son should be resurrected from the dead. According to Josephus and Talmudic authorities the Jews believe that "the unseen world" -- that is the world of disembodied spirits -- had two divisions: one for the saved and another for the lost. The abode of the saved was called "paradise" and "Abraham's bosom." And in His story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 our Lord adopted this view of the unseen world. But from such New Testament passages as 2 Corinthians 12:1-2 and Ephesians 4:8-10 it is clear that Paradise is now in the immediate presence of the Lord, although there is no indication that any change has taken place with reference to the place or condition of the unsaved dead. Answering your direct question, therefore, the wicked dead in Hades, and the righteous dead "at home with the Lord" await the resurrection which shall increase the sorrow of the one and multiply the joys of the other. And perhaps I should add, lest this discussion bring up the question that there are other words for describing the final abode of the unsaved, which words are also sometimes translated "hell," and for which reason in everyday language hell means the final abode of the lost. The word in Mark

9:43 and other such places is the Greek word gehenna, and the equivalent in the Book of Revelation is "lake of fire" and "bottomless pit."

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QUESTION #24 -- It is evident in both the Old and New Testaments that the Savior stayed in the earth three days and three nights. It is recorded in Luke 15:42 that the Savior was crucified and buried on the

evening of the preparation day; yet He was in the heart of the earth three days and nights, and yet arose on the first day of the week. Please explain this.

ANSWER #24 -- I cannot explain it -- it is impossible. I personally believe that Jesus was crucified on Friday, and was in the tomb part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday -until the dawn of the day. In other words he was in the tomb two whole nights, one whole day and two fractions of days. To me this is consistent with all the Scriptures say about it, but it does not make three whole days and three whole nights. I know what others say who think there must be space allowed for the three whole days and three whole nights, but I still believe what I have

already said. I think you will find in Esther 4: 1-5: I a parallel expression and an exactly corresponding length of time implied.

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QUESTION #25 -- When did Jesus become glorified? There is some difference of opinion among us here.

ANSWER #25 -- On the instant of His resurrection from the dead. He is the firstfruit of the resurrection in that He was the first to arise in glorified form (Enoch and Elijah constituting exceptional instances which we cannot explain here) . He did not come back to mortal life at all, but went on into the glorified life. This is evidenced by the fact that He did not live, after the resurrection, by the flow of His blood -- His wounds being left open.

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QUESTION #26 -- In John 20:17 Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I have not yet ascended to my Father." Did He mean to see the Father before His ascension?

ANSWER #26 -- Three views of the matter have been presented: (1) that in His office as High Priest, Jesus was now on His way to present the blood of His sacrifice in heaven, and that He did so ascend and return again between this meeting with Mary and the meeting mentioned in Matthew 28:9. (2) That it was His purpose to teach Mary that she was henceforth to know Him in spirit and be a messenger of the new joy and that she should not seek to know Him any more in the flesh. (3) That He merely meant that she was not to detain Him now, but rather was to run with the message to the disciples, and that His words were meant to assure Mary that there would yet be ample time for her to see Him before His ascension to heaven. Personally, I am inclined to the view last stated.

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QUESTION #27 -- Yesterday in the Sunday school class there was a discussion of Luke 22:45, "He found them sleeping for sorrow," and we could not determine just what is meant. Can you help us out?

ANSWER #27 -- Van Oosterzee, commenting on this verse, says, "Sorrow induces sleeplessness in its first stages, but when very great (and long continued) it may so wear down the whole outer and inner man that one, as it were, sinks into a stupor." From this we may gather that the disciples were crushed and worn by the sorrow occasioned by the shadow of the cross that had fallen across their Master's pathway until they succumbed to stupor and not to natural, refreshing sleep. And the use of the expression here is for the purpose of emphasizing their sorrow and not to bring reflection of reproach upon them.

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QUESTION #28 -- Please explain 2 Corinthians 5:21. How and when was Christ made sin for us?

ANSWER #28 -- The term sin in this and in some other such cases in the New Testament means "sin offering." Jesus was made a sin offering for us when He died upon the cross. No doubt there is a close relation between the birth and life of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion at last, but the Scriptures warrant our saying that it was the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross that made the atonement which enabled God to be just and yet to be the Justifier of the ungodly, and attempts to enlarge the scope of the redemptive act result in confusion rather than clarity.

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QUESTION #29 -- In Mark 10:45 it is said that our Lord gave His life a ransom for many: in I Timothy 2:6 it is said He gave Himself a ransom for all. Why this distinction in terms?

ANSWER #29 -- I understand that the term many was used as a comparative word to show the value of His atoning work -- His sacrifice was for others and not for Himself. As to how many were actually covered by His redemptive death, Paul tells us that there are no exceptions. Jesus died for all.

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