

# Questions/answers on Heaven

by James Blaine Chapman

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*The sermon addresses key questions about the nature of heaven, the afterlife, and the experiences of the glorified state of believers.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:7

**Topics:** "Heavenly Rewards", "Eternal Life"

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## Description

James Blaine Chapman delves into various questions about heaven, the afterlife, and the eternal abode of the saints, providing insightful answers based on biblical references. He discusses topics such as the glorified state, the descent of Jesus into hell, the understanding of languages in heaven, the immediate presence of the saints in heaven upon death, the eternal value of culture, the recollection of sin in heaven, degrees of reward in heaven, and historical events related to figures like John Calvin and Michael Servetus.

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## Transcript

QUESTION #98 -- Is the city which John saw in Revelation 21 the eternal abiding place of the saints or is that just a type of the Church?

ANSWER #98 -- It was a vision of heaven the abiding place of the saints. There are of course analogies between the various points in this description of the eternal city and the completed Church, but "the city which hath foundations" is a reality just the same. There are those who lightly say that heaven is a condition and not a place, and that hell is a condition and not a place. And of course a condition is involved in both cases. But condition involves place also. It is a lot like the ancient philosophers who used to seek for "pure beauty" disconnected from beautiful things -- there is no such thing. Likewise a condition without a place is a figment of the imagination.

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QUESTION #99 -- Revelation 22:2 says the tree of life will have fruit. Now if we have glorified bodies what will we need of fruit?

ANSWER #99 -- The most of what we know about the glorified state we gather from the days Jesus remained on earth after His resurrection. And you know that more than once during those days He ate with His disciples. We cannot think that His glorified body demanded food as a necessity, but we find that

He could take food when He so desired. It may be like that in heaven. Anyway, I know that however it is in heaven, it is right.

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QUESTION #100 -- Did Jesus descend into hell before He ascended into heaven? Where does the soul go after death and until the judgment day? Where in the Bible can references be found OIL these questions?

ANSWER #100 -- After His death Jesus descended into the abode of spirits -- hades -- and made proclamation of His high priestly work in redemption (Read I Peter 3:18-22 and Ephesians 4:7-11), and then ascended into heaven. Now, since the resurrection of Christ, the spirits of the saints who die go immediately into the presence of God (2 Corinthians 5:1-9). Judgment is to determine reward and punishment, not destiny, for destiny is settled by the choices made here in this life.

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QUESTION #101 -- How will the people of different earthly languages understand one another in heaven?

ANSWER #101 -- I do not have any particular idea about the method, but I believe the confusion of tongues is part of the effects of the sinful state of man, and that in heaven all the effects of sin will be removed. Perhaps we will understand thought there without even the necessity of words. Anyway I feel confident heaven has a common language for holy angels and redeemed and glorified men.

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QUESTION #102 -- Do you believe that those who die in the Lord go straight to heaven as soon as they die? Please explain I Thessalonians 4:13-16. Do you believe the holy dead sleep until the Second Coming of Jesus? Paul speaks of being absent from the body and present with the Lord. If they are already in heaven in new bodies, why will they be raised from the dead?

ANSWER #102 -- Yes, I believe those who die in Christ go immediately into the presence of the Lord in heaven, and I believe the scripture you mention is proof of it. To be absent from the body, for the saint, is to be present with the Lord. There cannot in the very nature of things be any such thing as a sleep of the soul until the resurrection of the body. The body sleeps, but not the soul. The body sleeps because the soul is absent, but the soul could sleep only if it were separated from the Lord, and to be absent from the body and absent from the Lord would be to be lost. I Thessalonians 4:13-16 means just that. That is, it means that when the saints die their bodies sleep, their souls go on into the presence of God in heaven. Then when Jesus comes the second time, their bodies shall arise from the grave glorified and deathless, and their spirits will be reunited with their glorified bodies and both soul and body shall be glorified and deathless. Those who are dead and in heaven now are not in their glorified bodies, but are disembodied spirits in His presence. That is why they will have part in the resurrection, as mentioned above. All this, I believe, is the clear teaching of the Word of God, and as over against them, the guesses and speculations of cultists do not interest me. The teachings of the Bible, and the orthodox faith of the Church completely satisfy my mind and heart, and for those who have gone on before, I "sorrow not as those who have no hope." I do not even sorrow as those must do who think their loved ones are asleep and inactive and are missing something while we yet go along. I believe our loved ones in heaven are living more fully than ever they did before -- much more fully than we ourselves are living. We are lonely here without them, but

they await our coming in gladness; not in sorrow. It is well with our sainted loved ones. It is even better than we think or can imagine. May God grant us grace to be always prepared to meet them there!

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QUESTION #103 -- What is the eternal value of culture? I know Solomon said, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom," and Paul said, "Whatsoever things are true . . . lovely . . . of good report," etc., but shall we not feel when we get to heaven, that much of the time we spent here studying things which pertain only to this world (secular literature, music, history, travel, etiquette, etc.) is time wasted? Or shall we enjoy heaven more for having developed our minds here? Our young people are interested in this question, please answer soon.

ANSWER #103 -- Well, I am interested in this question too, but I don't know anything more about it than you have suggested. Personally, I believe that we shall enjoy heaven better if we develop our minds here, and I have heard of a man who was refused admission to heaven because he had shown no interest in the world God gave him here. So I plan to learn all I can about every legitimate subject, and I believe I shall be glad forever that I did so. If any should say, "God has no use for our education," the answer is, "He has still less use for our ignorance." And I think there is evidence that my thought is correct in this matter in the fact that the development of the mind increases capacity for enjoyment in this world. Education has suffered much from being secularized and commercialized. But the true idea of education is the building of a life, not preparation for making money or securing position. But if anyone calls for absolute proof that there is eternal value in culture, I shall have to pass the question on to someone else. My creed is strong enough to keep me stirred up to study and think, but it is not strong enough to make me dogmatic as to what others shall do. I know that eternal salvation is by grace.

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QUESTION #104 -- In the Sunday school lesson for January 10, we find this scripture, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). How would you harmonize this statement with the fact that Enoch and Elijah were translated and went up to heaven?

ANSWER #104 -- I understand that Jesus was speaking of the authority of His message, and that He was showing that no one has ever gone up to heaven and come back again with the message of God. But He himself had come down from heaven with the message, and yet continued His standing and authority in heaven. This was the supreme claim of Christ as the "teacher come from God."

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QUESTION #105 -- I heard a prominent minister say, "My happiness in heaven will not be complete unless I find my wife and child there." Do you think this represents a proper view of heaven?

ANSWER #105 -- I think this represents a very human and earthly view of heaven. It is impossible for us to form any adequate idea of what heaven will be like, but one thing the Bible makes plain, and that is that all who dwell there will be supremely happy and blessed. And this must be regardless of those who fail to get there, else no one could qualify, for all have loved ones who fail to take the way.

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QUESTION #106 -- Please explain the meaning of "third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2.

ANSWER #106 -- According to the Hebrew method of calculating, the first heaven is the heaven where the clouds are. The second is the heaven where the stars are. The third is the true heaven, the dwelling place of God.

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QUESTION #107 -- An evangelist expressed the opinion that we will carry the recollection of sin to heaven, but will see it only through the blood of Jesus. I believe even the memory of sin will be eradicated, since the remembrance of sin would mar the enjoyment of heaven. What do you think?

ANSWER #107 -- Well, the "new song" is a song of redemption (Revelation 5:9), and it seems to me the recollection of our former state will rather add to the joy of heaven than detract from it. Yes, I think I must agree with the evangelist whom you quote.

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QUESTION #108 -- Are there degrees of reward in heaven? Will a young convert share the same glory as a faithful minister and soul winner?

ANSWER #108 -- I am sure we shall all know more about heaven when we have been there five minutes than we have been able to find out during a whole lifetime here. But I think it is clearly taught in the Scriptures that there are, in a sense, "degrees of reward in heaven" -- like the stars differ from one another in glory, as Paul mentions in I Corinthians 15. But I cannot think this distinction can very well be described in terms of attached possession or geographical position. Rather, the riches of heaven like the true riches of earth, are in mind and spirit, and not in the abundance of the things which any possess. Undoubtedly everyone in heaven will be sublimely satisfied, and in that sense none will share any less than others, and there will be absolutely no sorrow and no occasion for envy there. Perhaps the illustration is not fitting, but I think of it as being like the satisfaction of a small child and a profound philosopher. Both may be equally happy and satisfied, but who would say that their contentment is of equal rank? And so with the saved maniac from Gadara and Paul of Nero's judgment hall. Or of the penitent thief from the cross and John Wesley from Oxford University. And so with any one "saved as by fire" and another who has been long in the Master's school.

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QUESTION #109 -- Did John Calvin send soldiers to bring back a man who had preached contrary to what Calvin believed? and did Calvin have this man burned at the stake? If so, where can we find proof that he took such action?

ANSWER #109 -- Michael Servetus, an opponent of Calvin, was burned at the stake in Geneva on October 27, 1553, for the crime of heresy, and there can be no doubt that Calvin was chiefly instrumental in bringing the tragedy about. But it is a little alleviating to find that when Servetus intimated his intention to visit Geneva, Calvin gave him fair warning that if he did so he would "prosecute him to the death"; and, further, Calvin did not approve the method of execution and insisted on beheading. But the incident must ever remain as a blot upon the character of Calvin, and we can only mourn the error and take whatever consolation we can from the fact that Calvin's was a persecuting age. Any biography of Calvin will give you at least a brief account of this sad affair, for it has never been the plan of even the friends of Calvin to

ignore the matter, and any Encyclopedia, especially the New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, will give something on the subject under the name of Calvin.

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QUESTION #110 -- How much is the fourth part of a shekel (1 Samuel 9:8)?

ANSWER #110 -- The shekel was originally a certain weight, and later a coin of the same weight. It is difficult to compute values in modern terms, but some authorities think the shekel of gold was about \$5.50 and the shekel of silver about seventy-five cents, although some think this too high for the silver shekel and would make it nearly fifty cents. Sometimes the smaller coins were of copper, but of sufficient weight to compare with the silver. So I would say the fourth shekel mentioned was likely a copper or silver portion in value somewhere between twelve and twenty cents.

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QUESTION #111 -- Did the Dead Sea make its appearance after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

ANSWER #111 -- I think it has been conclusively shown by Dr. Robinson and others that there was a basin in the region of the Dead Sea which received the waters of the Jordan before the destruction of the Cities of the Plain. But the sea was in those days of less extent than now. And from all indications the vale in which Sodom and Gomorrah were located was in the place now occupied by the southern part of the Dead Sea. The volcanic action which took place in connection with the destruction of the wicked cities of Lot's time lifted the bottom of the former basin and caused the waters to extend over a larger surface than formerly.

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