

# Questions/answers About God

by James Blaine Chapman

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*God's presence is everywhere, but He is also in a certain place in the essence of His being, and we must trust in His sovereignty and goodness.*

**Scripture:** Jonah 1:3

**Topics:** "God's Sovereignty", "Divine Nature"

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## Description

James Blaine Chapman delves into deep theological questions about the nature of God's presence, the fear of falling into the hands of the living God, the concept of seeing God, the immutability of God's promises, and the idea of predestination. He emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's wisdom and sovereignty, even when faced with difficult circumstances or unanswered questions.

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## Transcript

QUESTION #85 -- How can God have form and place if He is in every place in just the same sense He is in any place?

ANSWER #85 -- God is not in every place in just the same sense He is in a certain place. He is everywhere in the perfection of His attributes, but He is in a certain place in the essence of His being. This may not be a very clear statement, and illustrations do not help a great deal in a theme so profound. But this illustration might at least suggest the distinction. I sit here in this room working at the typewriter. In essence I am right here, within the form and qualities of my body, mind and spirit, and I am nowhere else in this sense at all. But just now two boys met on the street a hundred feet away and I was "present" and saw them play at boxing. An insect on the window sill was in essence nearer to the boys than I. But its attributes are so limited that it was not "present" at the meeting of the boys at all. But now if you expand my attributes (intellect, sensibility and will) sufficiently, you could make me "present" a mile away, and on indefinitely, until as in the case of God, He is everywhere present in that He knows and feels and exercises His power without any limit. Still He is in a certain place in essence, and it is there the angels and redeemed saints see His face and worship Him day and night forever and forever.

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QUESTION #86 -- If the Lord is omnipresent, as the Scriptures seem to teach, how could Cain, Jonah and others get away from the presence of the Lord? (Genesis 4:16; Jonah 1:3).

ANSWER #86 -- The term "presence of the Lord" is used in the Scriptures with at least three different meanings. But the meaning is always clear from the consideration of the context. (1) God is in heaven in personal essence. (2) God is everywhere in the perfection of His attributes.

(3) God is present in His favor where two or three are met in His name and wherever anyone's life is pleasing in His sight. The men you mention and others in their class went away from the favor of the Lord only.

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QUESTION #87 -- When is it, in life or in death, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"?

ANSWER #87 -- It is any time, in this life or in the one to come, when mercy gives way to judgment, the offender having neglected the refuge offered by the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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QUESTION #88 -- How do you explain the apparent contradiction in the following scriptures: John 1:18; Exodus 33:11; Exodus 24:10, 11; I Samuel 31:4-6, and 2 Samuel 1:6-10. Some of these scriptures, as you see, say that no man has seen God, and the others give instances where they did see Him.

ANSWER #88 -- Dr. Scofield's explanation is, I think, quite well stated. He says, "The divine essence, God, in His own triune Person, no human being in the flesh has seen. But God, veiled in angelic form, and especially as incarnate in Jesus Christ, has been seen of men." (See Genesis 18:2, 22 and John 14:8, 9.)

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QUESTION #89 -- What are the two "immutable things" mentioned in Hebrews 6:18?

ANSWER #89 -- The promise of God and the oath by which He confirmed it.

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QUESTION #90 -- Our Sunday school class wants to ask who it is we are to fear, as mentioned in Matthew 10:28: is it God or the devil?

ANSWER #90 -- It is God.

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QUESTION #91 -- Is God's program so rigidly planned that the disciples, for example, had to tarry in the upper room for the Holy Ghost? or could they have failed to carry out the divine plan, and thus have left the world without salvation?

ANSWER #91 -- Compulsion, even divine compulsion, can apply only to inanimate objects, like stocks and stones, and to creatures not endowed with the power of moral choice. I would not say that God could not and would not have found some other way, even if that one hundred and twenty had failed to tarry in the upper room for the coming of the Holy Spirit, but the only compulsion that these men and women had, according to my judgment, was their love for Christ. If they could not have done other than they did, then they are not to be thanked for doing what they did, and they were not, after all, made holy by the Spirit, but

were simply made His tools. Even heaven itself, you know, does not close its gates either day or night, for it is blessed improbability that holds saints and angels in, and not sordid impossibility.

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QUESTION #92 -- Do you believe there is a time when sickness will be unto death and that our days are numbered and will end at a given time, except it be by special divine interposition, or does just exposure or wrong treatment of disease lead to death? Please explain John 11:4.

ANSWER #92 -- We may not be able to explain it, but there seems to me to be no doubt that God's choices for us are contingent upon secondary considerations. For instance, I would say it was God's will that the poet, Edgar Allan Poe, should live to bless the world. But Poe gave himself to dissipation and died an untimely death. Only this much is essential in my creed about the length of life: I believe that the life of anyone who is fully obedient to God is immortal until his work is done. This affects me in the pursuit of my calling sometimes in the midst of "dangers seen and unseen." I do not believe disease or accident will lay me low until God is through with me here. But I am not arrogant I do not know at what time God may get through with me. So if you hear that I have died of lingering disease or of sudden accident do not account it a calamity; for my faith is that that can come to me only by the will of God, and that it is notice to the world that my work was finished.

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QUESTION #93 -- Does God know how each human will decide concerning salvation? If you answer, No, do you not then limit God's omniscience? If you answer, Yes, then are not some by this foreknowledge predestined to be lost?

ANSWER #93 -- Well, the answer is yes, so that gets us by without reflection upon God's omniscience. God knows all things, past, present and future. But He knows past as past, present as present and future as future. He also knows things that are decreed as being decreed and things that are contingent as being contingent. And His foreknowledge of contingent future things does not predestinate those future things. It is difficult for us to discuss absolute qualities, since we know only relative and limited qualities. But it might help some for us to recall that our knowledge of the past -- say of the death of a precious loved one -- may have nothing whatever to do with the occurrence which we know. Likewise, if we could know the future, as we may in some limited instances, we are not necessarily exercising any influence or power to bring it about. May we not, therefore, conceive of God's knowing that a given sinner will reject all the agencies engaged for his salvation without His willing that it shall be so? For remember that God does not bind the will of man, but allows the power and will to choose as a heritage to the weakest responsible soul on earth.

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QUESTION #94 -- Why does God call a man home when he is far from being old, and is being used to win thousands to the Lord each year?

ANSWER #94 -- God knows the future as we cannot know it, and some time in the future we shall doubtless see that "all His ways are best." For the present we must trust where we cannot trace, and rest on the confidence that there is a reason, although we cannot see it yet.

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QUESTION #95 -- Is God in the wind and the storm? We have just had a terrible storm. Do you think this a special judgment? Does God still send judgments on people for their wickedness?

ANSWER #95 -- The moral and spiritual ends of God's government are not always discernible, and we should be slow to pass judgment upon the meaning of His general and particular providences. The Scriptures ask us to consider that when the righteous die they escape many evils that would otherwise come upon them. One of the best men I ever knew perished in the California earthquake, while thousands of wicked people in the quake area suffered not at all. But, come to think of it, we should not want it otherwise; for if the righteous were immune to all the physical ills of the present life, commendable motive would be all but impossible. It is better that our immunities and principal joys shall await the close of our probationary period and state. In the meantime, let us look for the revelation of God's love and mercy in His written Word and in His vital grace, rather than in His book of nature. People who claim they can see God in nature and do not need the Bible usually really mean that they think of God in the springtime; for nature worshippers do not know what to do when winter comes, as it will come to us all.

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QUESTION #96 -- I have been told that God sometimes turns His face away from the sanctified Christian, as He turned His face from Christ upon the cross. If this is true, what is the meaning of the promise that He will be with us always?

ANSWER #96 -- I do not think the comparison between the experience of Christ on the cross and our experience in times of trial is altogether valid. The forsaking of Christ by the Father was a symbol of the Father's acceptance of the soul of the Son as an offering for sin, and it has no full analogy in all the universe. But there are times in the Christian experience when we must walk by faith and not by feeling, and when we must stand on confidence in lieu of the consciousness which we would very much love to have. Take a time of deep bereavement: there is much there that speaks of temporary withdrawal of divine favor, so deep and so real is the sense of aloneness. But in such times God is not really gone and we are challenged to trust when we cannot trace, and to rest when we cannot see, so that in the real sense God does not turn away His face from us -only the clouds arise to hide His face and we must rise above the clouds in faith to be assured that "He abideth faithful."

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QUESTION #97 -- God says He is no respecter of persons, how then can He make the difference mentioned in Luke. 12:47, 48, and what is the meaning of stripes in connection with the judgment of the last day?

ANSWER #97 -- God is no respecter of persons in that He will do for one what He will do for anyone who meets the same conditions. But God does respect conditions -- otherwise He would have to respect persons. You no doubt know that the lord in the parable before us is but an earthly householder, and not the Lord Jesus. This is as far as the idea of stripes should be taken as to the literal application. But in the final awards of God to men, ability and opportunity will be taken into consideration, and it will be easier for the man who comes from a life of small opportunity than for one who had large ability and opportunity, for the latter has the larger responsibility. It is impossible in this world or at the judgment bar of God to separate privilege and duty, or opportunity and responsibility.

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