

Ministers:
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley
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Sunday:
8:00 AM: WGCY
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:
6:30 PM: Bible Study

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Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofchrist.com)

This Past Week:
Worship—26
Wednesday—7
Contribution—\$

For meditation:
Ecclesiastes 7.27–29
Is it easy to find
someone who
searches and seeks
out wisdom? Why
do you think Solo-
mon could find one
man looking for
wisdom but no
women? What does
man invariably do
with his scientific
discoveries?

Radio program:
WGCY FM, 106.3
Sundays at 8 AM

Why are we told so little about heaven?

“Why should we be kept in absolute ignorance of everything that comes to the departed spirit from the moment of death when it leaves its life with us?” asked Mr. Drew, the village draper, in George MacDonald’s great trilogy, *The Curate of Glaston*. It’s a question we’ve probably all wondered about.

What follows isn’t much, but it’s the answer I would give to the question posed.

First, Paul calls “third heaven” *Paradise*, the Persian word for “garden” (2 Cor. 12.4). This might suggest heaven will be, a paradise-like setting evocative of man’s original home (Gen. 2.8, Lk. 23.43).

Second, by contrast, the patriarchs looked for a *city* whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11.10). Will heaven have both rural and urban areas?

Third, maybe heaven isn’t described because we have no words to describe something exceedingly abundantly above all we can think (Eph. 3.20). What if our immortal bodies have nine senses (or 900) instead of five; how could we begin to comprehend senses beyond the ones we now have?

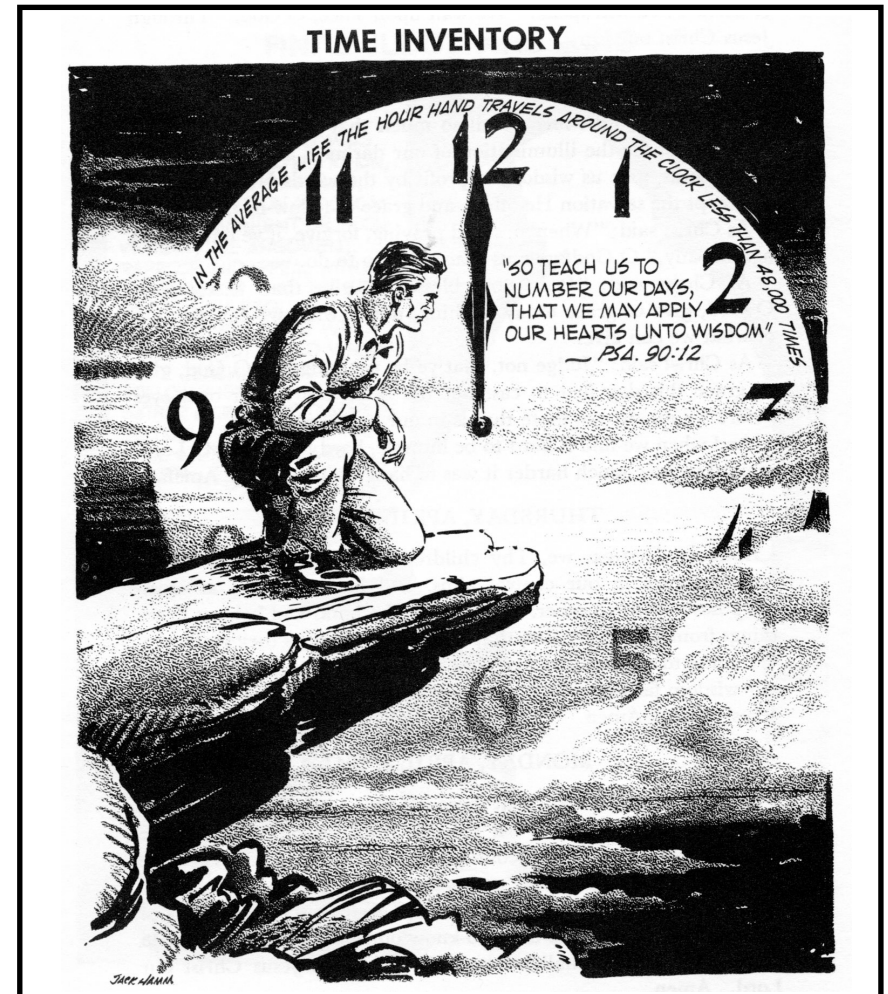
Fourth, most importantly, our thinking about heaven rests on our trust in Christ. John the Baptist didn’t work miracles to authenticate his office, but if Jesus says John was a prophet, he was (Matt. 11.9). In John 14 Christ told us all we need to know about heaven, our “Father’s house.” If there was anything to worry about, He would have told us, but He mentioned nothing.

“You believe in God, believe also in Me.”
To us who believe in Christ, we have all the information about heaven we need.

kenny

Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL



Sermon: Matthew 10.28–30

“And I will give you rest”

28 December 2025

Jesus saw Himself as the vine

I am the vine.

John 15.1

England's symbol is the rose. Scotland's is the thistle. Ireland's is the shamrock. But for Israel, it's the vine. To Israel, the grape-vine "was a picture of Israel herself. It was an epitome of her history. It was a symbol of her duty and her ideal destiny" (Ross).

The figurative significance of the vine starts in Genesis 49 with "Joseph is a fruitful bough." Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, and Hosea pick up the picture and develop it. Psalm 80 offers a concise summation of the symbolism of the vine. "You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land. . . . Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself" (vv 8–15). When the Maccabees defeated Antiochus Epiphanes between the Testaments, they stamped a vine on their coins. When Herod remodeled the Temple, he put a golden vine on one of its gates. Israel was God's vine. Let comparative religious theologians say what they want, the fact is that God dealt differently with Israel than He did with any other nation (Ps. 147.20).

The vine symbolizes Christ, in part, because a vine doesn't exist for itself. A vine bears fruit for the blessing of others, and our Lord was born, lived, and died to bless others. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8.9).

We are the branches. This implies several thoughts; I'll mention one: just as a vine or fruit tree is pruned to make it more productive, so is God's pruning/disciplining of us. Our purpose is to be fruitful; to fail in this is an absolute failure. The discipline Christ brings to our life is meant to excise all lovelessness, prejudice, and sin. To be a branch means the sap of the trunk—for a Christian, the vitality of grace—flows in us. Thus, when we're weak we pray, "Give me Your strength, Lord"; when we're irritated, "Your patience, Lord"; in our unrest, "Your peace, Lord"; and in times of temptation, "Your purity, Lord."

By having in us what characterized Christ, we reflect the meaning of one of the greatest symbols in Scripture—the vine.

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Proving a religious claim

Matthew 12.38–42

"Can you fly?" asked Peter.

"I have," said Molly.

"Prove it," said Peter . . . "Prove you can fly."

"Peter, this isn't the time or the . . ."

Peter was on his feet now. "Listen," he said. "You're asking me to believe . . . I mean, it all sounds like nonsense, really. This "starstuff," and these "others," and . . . and I don't know why I should believe any of it" (*Peter and the Starcatchers*).

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof. Religions, which claim to have the answers to the greatest problems of the human predicament, make extraordinary claims. But many (most) of the them—for instance, the fundamental claim of Hinduism that "Brahman is all"—sound like nonsense to me.

We shouldn't be naïve about believing answers involving ultimate reality. Rather, like the Queen of Sheba, we should test things hard to believe with hard questions (1 Kgs. 10.1).

Matthew 12.38–42 offers three thoughts on this subject.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ASKING FOR PROOF

12.38: "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you. To demand evidence to back up a proposition is logical and rational. To Request a *sign*, that is, to require supernatural proof for a supernatural claim, is a reasonable thing to do.

CHRIST PROVIDED PROOF

12.39: "No sign will be given except the sign of the prophet Jonah." Christ recognized the legitimacy of the Jewish request (Jn. 10.37–38, Mk. 16.17–20, Heb. 2.1–4) and pointed them to the resurrection as ultimate proof of His claims. The problem with the Jews was not that they asked for proof, but that they ignored the proof Christ provided (Matt. 12.22–24). They refused to believe even when Jesus gave them abundant reasons for doing so.

REVELATION DEMANDS A RESPONSE

12.41,42: "The men of Nineveh [and] the Queen of Sheba will rise up in judgment." Confronted with the "sign of Jonah," Nineveh repented; the Queen of Sheba went to great time and expense to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But today it's hard to get folks to drive in a climate-controlled car to sit for an hour in a climate-controlled building to hear one greater than Solomon.

To possess such indifference—to be a Capernaumite—is worse than being a Sodomite (12.23–24). That ought to scare us.

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