

Contents

Preface	9
Section One: Hymns of Heaven and Our Pilgrimage	13
“Earth and Heaven” from <i>The Valley of Vision</i>	15
1. Day by Day	16
2. Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah	18
3. My Jesus, I Love Thee	20
4. Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken	22
5. When Trials Come	24
6. He Hideth My Soul	26
7. All the Way My Savior Leads Me	28
8. There Is a Hope	30
9. O My Soul, Arise and Bless Your Maker	32
10. My Faith Looks Up to Thee	34
11. Jesus Lives, and So Shall I	36
12. Be Still, My Soul	38
13. Come, Ye Disconsolate	40
14. Wayfaring Stranger	42
15. He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought	44
16. O Let Your Soul Now Be Filled with Gladness	46
17. He the Pearly Gates Will Open	48
18. Come, Come, Ye Saints	50
19. For All the Saints	52
Section Two: Slave Hymns of Our Freedom in Heaven	55
“O Black and Unknown Bards” by James Weldon Johnson	56
20. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot	58
21. We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace	60
22. Deep River	62
23. Soon-a Will Be Done	64
24. Ain’t-a That Good News	66

25. I Wanna Be Ready	68
26. Do Lord, Oh, Do Lord	70
27. Down by the Riverside	72
28. Oh! What a Beautiful City	74

Section Three: Hymns of Our Forever in Heaven 77

29. Hope of Heaven	80
30. When We All Get to Heaven	82
31. I'm But a Stranger Here	84
32. When Jesus Comes in Glory	86
33. Oh, for the Robes of Whiteness	88
34. Pilgrim Song	90
35. There Is a Happy Land	92
36. It Is Not Death to Die	94
37. Safe in the Arms of Jesus	96
38. Down to the River to Pray	98
39. What Must It Be to Be There?	100
40. Gloryland	102
41. Face to Face	104
42. Jerusalem the Golden	106
43. Forever with the Lord	108
44. The Sands of Time Are Sinking	110
45. The Lord Almighty Reigns	112
46. On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand	114
47. Shall We Gather at the River?	116
48. When I Can Read My Title Clear	118
49. Hark! I Hear the Harps Eternal	120
50. There Is a Higher Throne	122
51. When This Passing World Is Done	124
52. A Few More Years Shall Roll	126
Bibliography	129
Acknowledgments	131
Alphabetical Index of Hymn Titles	133
Notes	135
About the Authors	141

Preface

Oh, the wonder and glories of Heaven! Do you long to go there? The Bible often speaks of the place where God dwells. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to prepare a “place” for them (John 14:3). We know as Christians that we are promised an eternity dwelling with God in Heaven. Throughout the history of the church, Christians have written and sung about this glorious hope.

While themes of Christian hymnody today cover a broad range of doctrinal and theological topics, surprisingly one of the least covered truths today is Heaven. This is particularly true of songs written in the past twenty to thirty years. Having attended church since infancy, we sang many songs about Heaven as children, but in the last half-century, few songs about Heaven have been written and even fewer sung in many evangelical churches.

Dr. Matthew Westerholm of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary researched the most sung congregational songs in the United States from 2000–2015 and the most frequently published songs in the US from 1737–1960. His research reveals that Christians often sang about Heaven formerly, but it has almost disappeared in the last generation. Churches use hymnals less and less, and the ones printed in the last decade have very few hymns about Heaven. A recently published Reformed denominational hymnal doesn’t even list Heaven in its subject index of hymns.

Westerholm explains that modern hymns refer to God’s presence as a near and current experience. Modern songs celebrate the presence of God in rich terms but almost exclusively in the present. If you give a bit of thought to the songs and hymns you regularly sing at your church, can you think of any that sing of Heaven? Some may speak of Heaven in a final stanza, but few are all about Heaven. How does that fit with the instruction from the apostle Paul to “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2 KJV)?

Why has this evolution taken place? Christians agree that we will ultimately dwell with God in Heaven, so why don’t we sing about it more often? Could it be that in these days of relative prosperity and ease of life, we don’t feel the need for anything better? Our songs focus on what we see and experience today.

Westerholm also addresses what he calls the “juvenilization” of contemporary music. Music “aims at younger people and, by that token, caters to their life experiences, desires, and emotional maturity levels.”¹ He continues, “I’m grateful for the many young, talented songwriters with promising careers and growing ministries. But the joys of Heaven would more likely preoccupy the minds of older saints who have suffered loss, those whose best years lie far behind and not ahead.”²

In a book of hymns Charles Spurgeon collected for his congregation at the

Metropolitan Temple in London in 1866, there is a total of 1,060 hymn texts. Of those, thirty-eight focus entirely on Heaven, with hundreds of others having at least one stanza about Heaven. But in hymnals from the late twentieth or the twenty-first centuries you can count the number of hymns about Heaven on one or two hands. This dearth motivated us to create a hymnal attempting to find the best hymns that either reference or are all about Heaven. In the end we could have used far more Heaven hymns than are here.

Taking from different eras, denominations, countries, and ethnic resources, we narrowed it down to fifty-two hymns—one for each week of the year. Most hymns are from past centuries, but there are also rich hymns from the twenty-first century.

The hymnal is organized into three sections. It begins with hymns that sing of the pilgrimage of the Christian's life to Heaven. They speak of the journey of life, culminating in a final stanza looking forward to Heaven, leaning on the promise: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2–3). In the second section are hymns that enslaved African Americans wrote about Heaven as their only deliverance and freedom. The third section contains hymns about Heaven in all stanzas.

Using the same pattern as our other books, *Hosanna in Excelsis* and *Our Hymns, Our Heritage*, we offer brief biographies about the text author and the tune composer. Understanding a little of their personal stories will encourage you to a deeper understanding of their hymns.

Following the phrase *As you sing this hymn . . .* we offer brief devotional thoughts and applications on the text. Because we are musicians and not theologians, we depended heavily on books from theologians, employing a generous number of quotations. A list of these books at the end as a bibliography will enable you to do further study regarding this immense and wonderful topic of Heaven.

The hymn melody provided on the right-hand page includes chord names above the melody for guitarists and pianists who can read or improvise from the chord structure. Guitarists may want to ignore some of the information of a more complex nature on the chord structures. Pianists should use the bass notes for chords with a letter on the right side of the slash mark.

A written piano accompaniment for each hymn is available for purchase from our website, www.HosannaHymnals.com. Additionally, MP3 recordings of all the hymns can be purchased and downloaded to your computer or other devices. These recordings are designed for singing along with the piano recording—all stanzas.

Hosannas Forever can make a lovely gift and be especially meaningful to those suffering difficulties in this present life, facing serious illness, or grappling with loss. Your church leaders would find this book helpful in their hospital visitations. Whether they are senior or young friends, this book will bring encouraging words of praise, thanksgiving, and prayer regarding their future.

Our design and wish is that readers of this book will integrate it into their devotional life one day each week for fifty-two weeks. During the six days that follow, review by reading or singing the hymn. We hope you will see Heaven with joyful

anticipation because you have read, meditated, prayed, and sung about it for a year, causing you to “set your affection on things above.” Jonathan Leeman challenges us:

Unless the saints continually focus the eyes of their hearts on the eternal, we will wrongly prioritize the temporal over the eternal, what we can see over what we cannot see—our present cities over the city whose architect and builder is God. . . . Maturity, you might say, can be measured in time horizons. Toddlers see a couple seconds into the future, children to the weekend, teenagers to their college years, young adults to their retirement. Saints, however, are the ones whose gaze should stretch into eternity. The world yanks our eyes to focus only on right now. But we must always fight to look toward eternity. Only then will politics and pandemics, work and play, the world or life or death or the present or the future, assume their right places (1 Cor. 3:22).³

It is our prayer that this book will assist us all in that endeavor.

Charles Spurgeon cheers us on:

Let us press forward to that which is before, leaving earth and earthly matters more and more, yielding ourselves more fully to the cords which draw us towards the celestial country. . . . Let us cry, “Heavenward, ho!” Pull up the anchor, spread the sails, and let us go away to the fair country wither Jesus has gone before us!⁴

Suggestions for using this book as a devotional guide

In his book *Family Worship*, Dr. Don Whitney suggests three things that are needed in family or individual worship: read the Bible, pray, and sing. He quotes Charles Spurgeon: “They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all.”⁵ It’s easy to remember—read, pray, sing! This book enables you to do all three.

1. Begin by reading aloud the entire text of the hymn. This is important. If reading as a couple or family, exchange reading stanzas. Even if you are alone, reading the hymn aloud helps you to read it slower and hear the rhythm of the poetry. Perhaps you have sung the hymn for years, yet you will hear things you have never noticed. Words you have sung routinely in the past will come alive.
2. From your Bible, read the context of the passage listed under the hymn title. Even a few verses before or after will provide a deeper understanding of the listed verse.
3. Now, read the left-hand page. Note the birth and death dates, thinking about what history you know was taking place. Does the historical context tell you anything about the life of the author and composer?

4. Highlight or underline phrases from *As you sing this hymn . . .* that particularly help you learn or apply the truths of the hymn.
5. Pray, asking God to fix these truths in your mind this day. Pray about your particular circumstances and ask God to make the picture of Heaven become precious to you.
6. End your devotional time by singing the entire hymn. Remember that God is your audience; He delights in your singing and does not judge its quality! You can sing a cappella or download a piano accompaniment in MP3 format from our website: www.HosannaHymnals.com
7. BONUS: Read a chapter from one of these Randy Alcorn books: *50 Days in Heaven*, *Heaven for Kids*, and *We Shall See God* (from the writings of Charles Spurgeon).



HOSANNAS FOREVER





HYMNS *of* HEAVEN
and our PILGRIMAGE

SECTION ONE | HYMNS 1-19

If the book *Pilgrim's Progress* came with a soundtrack, that soundtrack might include the following nineteen hymns.

Swedish Christians use the term *Himland Verset*, “heaven verse,” to describe hymns that end with a verse about Heaven. Each of the hymns in this section could have that same label stamped on them. The early stanzas of these hymns address the trials, burdens, and anguish that the author may bear. Other stanzas speak of God’s guidance and love. The last stanza summarizes our hope in God and ultimately in the glory and rejoicing of Heaven. These final stanzas have been printed in bold typeface to catch your eye. As you read these lyrics and biographies, you may no doubt identify with the trials that led to the authors’ pilgrimage and longing for Heaven.



Is yearning for Heaven a form of escapism? No! Christ has told us to long for it. He knows the pain that a world of sin brings and desires to guide us through our trials and be our faithful Savior. We can take great comfort in the fact that ultimately He wants to provide our release from sin's horrors by taking us to Heaven in His time. Longing for Heaven fashions our hearts to love the Creator more. It also enables us to stop clutching so tightly to this world, which frees us to sacrifice ourselves for God and others as long as we remain in it. The most heavenly minded people, it turns out, are free to do the most earthly good.

But this longing is not like waiting long for graduation, a birthday party, or a vacation. Looking from the vantage point of our pilgrimage as described in the early stanzas of these hymns, we need to become heavenly minded. Paul says in Colossians 3:1–2, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” These words are not a suggestion but a command. Cameron Cole writes,

The Lord commands us to think about eternity as a daily habit. Heavenly mindedness serves as a deliberate, ongoing spiritual practice. . . . Paul's portrayal of heavenly mindedness is comprised of more than just an intellectual exercise. His exhortation included the emotions and desires of the heart. One could characterize this aspect of heavenly mindedness as heavenly longing. In Romans 8:23 Paul writes that “not only creation, but we ourselves . . . groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption *as sons, the redemption of our bodies*.”⁶

Other *Himland Verset* hymns may be found in *Our Hymns, Our Heritage*:

- 22. What Wondrous Love Is This?
- 37. Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
- 41. Rejoice the Lord Is King
- 72. The Solid Rock
- 100. Rock of Ages
- 105. All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night
- 107. Amazing Grace
- 108. It Is Well with My Soul
- 118. Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Earth and Heaven

A Prayer Upon Beginning to Sing Hymns of Heaven

O Lord,
I live here as a fish in a vessel of water,
 only enough to keep me alive,
 but in heaven I shall swim in the ocean.
Here I have a little air in me to keep me breathing,
 but there I shall have sweet and fresh gales;
Here I have a beam of sun to lighten my darkness,
 a warm ray to keep me from freezing;
 yonder I shall live in light and warmth forever.
My natural desires are corrupt and misguided,
 and it is Thy mercy to destroy them;
My spiritual longings are of Thy planting,
 and Thou wilt water and increase them;
Quicken my hunger and thirst after the realm above.
Here I can have the world,
 there I shall have Thee in Christ;
Here is a life of longing and prayer,
 there is assurance without suspicion,
 asking without refusal;
Here are gross comforts, more burden than benefit,
 there is joy without sorrow,
 comfort without suffering,
 love without inconsistency,
 rest without weariness.
Give me to know that heaven is all love,
 where the eye affects the heart,
 and the continual viewing of Thy beauty
 keeps the soul in continual transports of delight.
Give me to know that heaven is all peace,
 where error, pride, rebellion, passion raise no head.
Give me to know that heaven is all joy,
 the end of believing, fasting, praying, mourning,
 humbling, watching, fearing, repining;
And lead me to it soon.

—*The Valley of Vision*⁷

Week 1 Day by Day

TEXT: Karolina Sandell Berg

b. October 3, 1832, Fyöderyd, Sweden
d. July 27, 1903, Stockholm, Sweden

Karolina Sandell Berg was born in Sweden in the nineteenth century during a time of revivals in Europe, England, and America. During that time, several prominent women hymn writers emerged, including Charlotte Elliot, Frances Havergal, and Fanny Crosby.

Lina, as she was nicknamed, was the daughter of Jonas Sandell, the Lutheran pastor of their town. She and her father were remarkably close, due in part to her health issues in childhood that caused her to prefer her father's study to playing outside. When she was 26, the two were traveling to Gothenburg when their boat lurched forward, and he fell overboard. Lina watched him drown. She returned home to grieve and found comfort and consolation by reading her Bible and writing hymns. In the first year after her father's death, she wrote fourteen of her most loved hymns, including "Children of the Heavenly Father." Seven years later, she wrote "Day by Day," the second of her most well-known works. Erwin Lutzer says, "Far from seeing this incident as a cruel oversight on God's part, she saw in her father's death an expression of loving protection!"⁸ Karolina wrote over 650 hymns and became known as the "Fanny Crosby of Sweden."

TUNE: Oskar Ahnfelt

b. May 21, 1813, Gullarp, Skåne, Sweden
d. October 22, 1882, Karlshamn, Sweden

Oskar Ahnfelt, a famous traveling troubadour, wrote tunes for Lina's hymns and traveled around Scandinavia singing and accompanying them on his guitar. Lina said of him, "Ahnfelt has sung my songs into the hearts of the people."⁹

As you sing this hymn . . . you are reminding yourself and testifying to others that your heavenly Father is no distant God. This text is a powerful reminder that He is an ever-present help and gives continuous comfort in all our trials and troubles, no matter how severe. He is with us every day, every hour, every moment, "with a special mercy for each hour." It is a reminder of His pledge to His children: "As your days, so shall your strength be" (Deut. 33:25). Charles Spurgeon observes:

God is always thinking of us, never turns aside His mind from us, has us always before His eyes. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring to us countless benefits; hence it is a special joy to remember them. . . . These thoughts of the Lord encompass us in all our paths, and penetrate the innermost region of our being. Not a nerve or tissue, valve or vessel, of our bodily organization is uncared for; all the little of our little world are thought of by the great God.¹⁰

Day by Day

1

*So we do not lose heart.
Though our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day.*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16

1. Day by day, and with each pass - ing mom - ent, strength I
 2. Ev - 'ry day the Lord Him - self is near me, with a
 3. Help me then in ev - ery trib - u - la - tion so to

find to meet my tri - als here; trust - ing in my Fa - ther's wise be -
 spe - cial mer - cy for each hour; all my cares He fain would bear and
 trust Thy pro - mis - es, Oh, Lord, that I lose not faith's sweet con - so -

stow - ment, I've no cause for wor - ry or for fear.
 cheer me, He whose name is Coun - se - lor and Power.
 la - tion of - fered me with - in Thy ho - ly Word.

He whose heart is kind be - yond all mea - sure gives un -
 The pro - tec - tion of His child and treas - ure is a
 Help me, Lord, when toil and trou - ble meet - ing, e'er to

to each day what He deems best, lov - ing - ly, its part of pain and
 charge that on Him - self He laid, "As your days, your strength shall be in
 take, as from a fa - ther's hand, one by one, the days, the mo - ments

pleas - ure, min - gling toil with peace_ and_ rest.
 meas - ure," this the pledge to me_ He_ made.
 fleet - ing, till I reach the prom - ised_ land.

TEXT: Karolina Sandell Berg

BLOTT EN DAG

TUNE: Oskar Ahnfelt



SPIRITUALS



SLAVE HYMNS *of* *our* FREEDOM *in* HEAVEN

SECTION TWO | SPIRITUALS 20–28

Historians estimate that, between 1619 and 1860 in the United States, enslaved Africans composed over 6,000 songs. At least this many songs have been found and cataloged. They were composed in the fields where slaves worked from dawn to dark or in overcrowded cabins where they were housed. There was so little time in which slaves were not working that creating them as they worked the crops meant these came spontaneously from their souls rather than while sitting at a desk. When they began to be taught the stories of the Bible and gradually learned English, songs were created in the places they gathered to worship—often under a tree or in a barn. No doubt, many more songs were created, but never found by someone skilled enough to notate them.

Those with religious or Christian lyrics are called “spirituals” after the



Ephesians 5:19 Scripture, where Paul reminds us to speak to one another in “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” But since Paul’s writing preceded the so-called spirituals we know today by sixteen to eighteen centuries, this title is not exactly accurate. A better name may be “Slave Songs” or “Sorrow Songs.” Almost none of them have a known lyricist or composer, but they were probably one and the same. So, this section of hymns has no biographical information on the authors or composers. Where possible, we provide the contextual setting and history of how the hymns were used.

The title of the 2018 book by Dr. Mathew Knowles speaks to the power of these slave songs: *The Emancipation of Slaves Through Music*. Knowles remarks, “When you feel captive to circumstances beyond your control, does music have an effect on how you feel? . . . For people suffering in the worst of times, art and music helped set—if not their bodies—their spirit free.”⁵⁴

In this volume of fifty-two hymns, we offer nine “Slave Songs.” All of them speak of life beyond death, in Heaven where every enslaved Christian and every forgiven sinner would discover true freedom. The cruelty and atrocities committed against these people were terrible. Too often animals on the plantations were treated better. Therefore, they learned to put their hope in Heaven and in the certain promises of a good God who promises to never leave or forsake us, even in the worst circumstances this world affords.

The following poem is a remarkable expression of the wonder of slave songs. The poet writes from a posture of wonder. In the first two stanzas, he wonders when enslaved African Americans began to look upward to God and write their songs. In the ensuing stanzas, he maintains this posture as he asks about specific well-known slave songs such as “Steal Away to Jesus” and “Go Down, Moses.” In the final stanza, he answers his own question by pointing away from this world and to Christ.

O Black and Unknown Bards

*O Black and unknown bards of long ago,
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
How, in your darkness, did you come to know
The power and beauty of the minstrel’s lyre?
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?
Heart of what slave poured out such melody
As “Steal away to Jesus”? On its strains
His spirit must have nightly floated free,
Though still about his hands he felt his chains.
Who heard great “Jordan roll”? Whose starward eye
Saw chariot “swing low”? And who was he
That breathed that comforting, melodic sigh,*

“Nobody knows de trouble I see”?
What merely living clod, what captive thing,
Could up toward God through all its darkness grope,
And find within its deadened heart to sing
These songs of sorrow, love and faith, and hope?
How did it catch that subtle undertone,
That note in music heard not with the ears?
How sound the elusive reed so seldom blown,
Which stirs the soul or melts the heart to tears.
Not that great German master in his dream
Of harmonies that thundered amongst the stars
At the creation, ever heard a theme
Nobler than “Go down, Moses.” Mark its bars
How like a mighty trumpet call they stir
The blood. Such are the notes that men have sung
Going to valorous deeds; such tones there were
That helped make history when Time was young.
There is a wide, wide wonder in it all,
That from degraded rest and servile toil
The fiery spirit of the seer should call
These simple children of the sun and soil.
O Black slave singers, gone, forgot, unfamed,
You—you alone, of all the long, long line
Of those who’ve sung untaught, unknown, unnamed,
Have stretched out upward, seeking the divine.
You sang not deeds of heroes or of kings;
No chant of bloody war, no exulting paean
Of arms-won triumphs; but your humble strings
You touched in chord with music empyrean.
You sang far better than you knew; the songs
That for your listeners’ hungry hearts sufficed
Still live,—but more than this to you belongs:
You sang a race from wood and stone to Christ.
 —James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938)⁵⁵

Week 20 Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” is one of the most well-known spirituals. As a child I remember being on a swing set at school singing this song and pretending I was swinging in a chariot. What I did not know then was that the first singers and originators of this song had a life much different than mine.

In John Blassingame’s book of slave testimonies, he says,

Some people think that the slaves had no feeling—that they bore their children as animals bear their young and that there was no heartbreak when the children were torn from their parents, or the mother taken from her brood to toil for a master in another state. But that isn’t so. The slaves loved their families even as the Negroes love their own today, and the happiest time of their lives was when they could sit at the cabin doors when the day’s work was done and sing old slave songs like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” or “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen.” Children learned these songs and sang them only as a Negro child could. That was the slave’s only happiness, a happiness that for many of them would not last.⁵⁶

It was a song of hope and a cry for God to take them “home” . . . to Heaven. The first singers of this song knew the story of 2 Kings 2:11–12, describing the chariot of fire and horses of fire that carried Elijah in a whirlwind to Heaven, while Elisha watched from below in astonishment. Erwin Lutzer encapsulates the original author’s notion: “Death is the chariot our heavenly Father sends to bring us to Himself.”⁵⁷

As you sing this spiritual . . . remember its history. Various forms of slavery remain a tragic reality in the world today, yet probably very few of us reading this volume have suffered quite like this song’s original singers. That said, the song applies to every person in this way: Every one of us will encounter suffering, and ultimately every one of us will face decline and eventually death. Every person singing this hymn must have a solid grasp on these two truths: everyone suffers and dies; God’s people will be carried home. Because of the first truth, the second truth is our only hope.

The third stanza affirms, “Sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down, but still my soul feels heaven bound,” revealing the strong faith and hope God gave to these persecuted people. Do we think this way when we are down? Do we look forward to being “heaven bound”?

If you are singing as a family, try the call and response style. All sing the refrain. One or several voices sing the first and third lines of the verse. All answer: “coming for to carry me home.” Singing this way allowed enslaved people to improvise the words beyond those here. You might try that as well.

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

20

*And as they still went on and talked,
behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them.
And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

2 KINGS 2:11

Refrain G C G G D⁷

Swing low, sweet char - i - ot, com - ing for to car - ry me home.

G C G Em C D⁷ G *Fine*

Swing low sweet char - i - ot, com - ing for to car - ry me home.

G C G

1. I looked ov - er Jor - dan and what did I see?
2. If you get to heav - en be - fore I do,
3. I'm some - times up, and some - times down,

Em D⁷

Com - ing for to car - ry me home;
Com - ing for to car - ry me home;
Com - ing for to car - ry me home;

G G/B C G

A band of an - gels com - in' af - ter me,
Tell all my friends I'm com - in' too,
But still my soul feels heav - en - ly bound

Em G D⁷ G *To refrain*

com - ing for to car - ry me home.
com - ing for to car - ry me home.
com - ing for to car - ry me home.



HYMNS OF OUR FOREVER IN HEAVEN





SECTION THREE | HYMNS 29–52

Do you hear it? Do you ever hear God singing over you?

The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness;
He will quiet you by His love;
He will exult over you with loud singing. (Zeph. 3:17)

We hear it. Not as an ethereal voice out of the quiet from Heaven, but when God's people sing in worship. Sometimes we hear Him when we sing very loudly and sometimes when we sing softly. The loud singing is the strong declaration of truth in the voice of a well-written poem. The soft singing is like a mother's whisper in the ear of a crying child. Sometimes, His voice is simply a new revelation of truth that comes in the silence after.



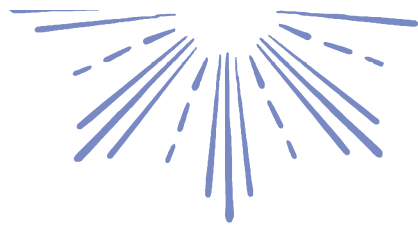
We believe God wants to give you a glimpse of Heaven in the beauty of melodies and poems that will remain in your head and heart.

Some of our own best childhood memories of church are of congregational singing. For Dave, bright memories of a one-room schoolhouse still linger. The folks in the pews did not always know how to carry a tune, but they sang with heart and vigor the songs of sins forgiven and their future in Heaven. The picture in Barbara's memory is of a large congregation, a trained choir and instrumentalists, and many songs about going to Heaven. We both have the ability to sing the Heaven songs of the 1950s from memory. But by the 1970s, these songs had largely disappeared from the church's repertoire.

Dr. Matthew Westerholm sums it up with these words:

Let me speak bluntly: churches that don't sing about heaven cripple their members with an impoverished emotional life. When a church's songs are exclusively filled with fervency, joy, commitment, and victory, they omit essential aspects of a Christian's emotional life—doubt, disappointment, and frustration due to ongoing sin. When evangelical worship services imply that believers should experience complete victory *now*, they prepare people for inevitable disappointment. When churches avoid singing about bouts of sickness, disability, and death, they imply that our current experience reflects the fullness of God's goodness. Songs about heaven and the world to come allow us to celebrate Christ's current victory while waiting and longing for the final victory to come (Heb. 2:8). . . .

So let's sing about heaven. Let's sing about heaven's Lord. When we do, we shield ourselves from unrealistic expectations about our under-shepherds and point our own hearts to the Chief Shepherd. . . . *"The Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land."*⁷⁰



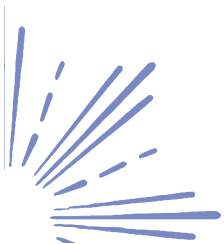
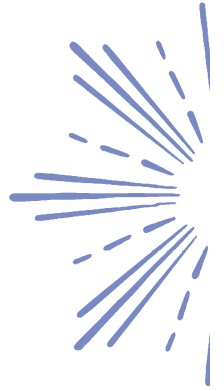
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Lift up your gates and sing
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna to your King!

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Hark! How the angels sing
Hosanna in the Highest!
Hosanna to your King!

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Sing for the night is o'er
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna for evermore!

Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna for evermore!

—Refrains from “The Holy City”
by Stephen Adams and Frederic Weatherly, 1892



Week 29 *Hope of Heaven*

TEXT AND TUNE: David Featherstone || b. January 30, 1947, Lehi, Utah

David Featherstone is a professional piano technician, choral and instrumental conductor, accomplished guitarist, and composer of many styles of music. He is a graduate of UT Arlington with degrees in music performance and composition. David taught classical guitar at several community colleges in Dallas. He founded and directed “Evening Song,” an auditioned choir in the Dallas area, producing five albums. Among his many compositions, Featherstone has written two major sacred works for choir and orchestra, and solos for both voice and classical guitar. He has ten choral anthems published and distributed by J.W. Pepper Publishers.

As our friend for many years, David wrote “Hope of Heaven” exclusively for this book. The tune’s name, KATE, is his wife’s name. She, along with two adult children, have endured serious health issues for which David’s prayers emanate in stanzas 2 and 3. A heavenward view is his confidence that God’s loving sovereignty will see them through the dark times.

As you sing this hymn . . . you sing a simple but essential admonition: “Let’s sing the hymns whose stories tell of Heaven’s holy place.” Here is our very purpose and theme for this book. There are relatively few hymns that speak of Heaven, but with this collection, you have the resources to make singing of Heaven a joyful habit.

Review the excellent definition of hope by Stuart Townend in the hymn for week 8. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul is speaking of Heaven when he writes to Titus, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13 KJV). He says to the Roman Christians, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Rom. 15:13). And to the Philippian Christians, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). This is not future citizenship but current citizenship. Not future hope, but current hope.

Dr. Richard Phillips writes in his book on Revelation,

Without this vision of the new heaven and the new earth, we will live without the hope Christ offers, without the purpose he supplies, and without the glory he promises . . . A holy city. A beautiful bride. A tearless everlasting life. A loving, Divine Savior who awaits the consummation of our love.⁷¹

Let’s not merely think about Heaven but sing about it! Singing puts the concept and truths of Heaven deeper in our minds. When you think about Heaven, let various phrases from the songs in this book dominate your mind and heart. Let us take all our sorrows, fears, and dark times and commit them to the powerful hope of Heaven.

Hope of Heaven

29

*We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul,
a hope that enters into the inner place . . .
where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.*

HEBREWS 6:19, 20

1. Hope of Hea - ven leads us to a place of per - fect love,
2. Hope of Hea - ven fills our heart when dark - ness comes our way,
3. Hea - ven whis - pers to our souls, "Your God is ev - er near,

where friends and fam - 'ly long since passed, a - wait us there a - bove.
and leaves no room where doubt - ing thought can find a place to stay.
to walk with you and make your path a jour - ney with - out fear."

Refrain
Let's sing the hymns whose sto - ries tell of
Hea - ven's ho - ly place, and bid the Spir - it
hold us firm, 'til we see Je - sus' face.

Copyright © 2023 by Featherstone Music. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

TEXT AND TUNE: David C. Featherstone

KATE

Week 30 When We All Get to Heaven

TEXT: Eliza Edmunds Hewitt

b. June 28, 1851, Philadelphia
d. April 24, 1920, Philadelphia

Miss Hewitt attended the Girls' Normal School in Philadelphia, where she graduated valedictorian. She taught school for a brief time until a spinal injury confined her to bed. She remained a shut-in for several years. As her strength returned, she was ultimately able to become a Sunday school teacher for two hundred students. She contributed to a Sunday school periodical, authored poems and stories for children, and wrote many hymn texts, including "More About Jesus" and "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?" One of her close friends was Fanny Crosby, and the two often met to discuss their writing. Another contemporary said of her, "No one feels more deeply than she the imperfections of her work, but such as it is, she lays at the Master's feet."⁷²

TUNE: Emily D. Wilson

b. May 24, 1865, Philadelphia
d. June 23, 1942, Philadelphia

Emily was the daughter of Irish and English immigrants. She married John G. Wilson, a Methodist minister. She collaborated with Eliza to create a tune for this text. It was published in 1898.

As you sing this hymn . . . it is one to sing with others. Note the plural pronoun *we*: "When *we* all get to heaven, when *we* all see Jesus, *we'll* sing and shout the victory." Joni Eareckson Tada writes:

Now picture it. You and I among great multitudes of the redeemed, pulsing with joy and infused with light. We are surrounded by the angelic host, and we happily press in line with the great procession of the saved, streaming through gates of pearl, an infinite cavalcade from earth's wide bounds and the oceans' farthest coasts, all in one joyous parade—countless generations, all lifting our diadems before God.

I was able to glimpse through a glass darkly this very moment when, at the Getty SING! 2019 Conference, I led the audience in singing, "When We All Get to Heaven." The rousing *a cappella*, four-part harmony of more than four thousand believers literally shook the floor beneath my wheelchair. Although I was supposed to be leading, I stopped at the third stanza and simply bathed in the moment. I was overwhelmed by the thought, "Just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toils of life repay."⁷³

We had the privilege of being in the audience that night. When the hymn concluded, there was loud cheering at first, followed by a long silence while we all basked in the glory of joy at the picture of Heaven we had just experienced.

We also sang this hymn with two dear friends at the bedside of our mother in the final hours before her death. Though in a coma, she had a calmness on her face that caused us to believe that she understood.

When We All Get to Heaven

30

*In Your presence there is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

PSALM 16:11



1. Sing the won-drous love_of_ Je - sus, sing His mer - cy_ and His grace.
2. While we walk the pil - grim_path-way, clouds will o - ver - spread the sky.
3. Let us then be true_and_faith - ful, trust-ing, ser - ving_ ev - ery day.
4. On - ward to the prize_be - fore us, soon His beau - ty_ we'll be - hold.



In the man-sions bright and bles - sed He'll pre - pare for us a place.
But when trav - eling days are ov - er, not a sha-dow, not a sigh.
Just one glimpse of Him in glo - ry will the toils of life re - pay.
Soon the pear - ly gates will o - pen, we shall tread the streets of gold.



When we all get to heav - en, what a day of re-joic - ing that will



bel When we all see Je - sus, we'll sing and shout the vic - to - ry.

TEXT: Eliza E. Hewitt

TUNE: Emily D. Wilson

Week 31 *I'm But a Stranger Here*

TEXT: Thomas R. Taylor

b. May 9, 1807, Ossett, Yorkshire, England

d. March 7, 1835, Bradford, Yorkshire, England

Thomas Taylor had a brief life. As a teenager he apprenticed for a merchant, then a printer, but his strong desire to serve God took him to the Airedale Independent College to become a Congregational minister. Rev. Taylor had only one church, Howard Street Chapel, Sheffield, where he served only six months. He tutored at his former college for a brief time after, but ill health prevented him from continuing. Thomas died of tuberculosis at the age of 27. His poems and hymns were published after his death by W. S. Matthews in a volume titled *Memoirs and Select Remains*, 1836. This text is Thomas' most well-known.

TUNE: Gary Fry

b. November 29, 1955, Keswick, Iowa

A tune for this hymn was originally written by Arthur S. Sullivan in the late 1800s. Believing a new tune would help express the joy and the depth of this text, we commissioned Gary Fry to write one. Gary is known as a music craftsman with a broad range of professional work as a symphony arranger, particularly of Christmas music, for the Chicago, Charlotte, Dallas, and Colorado symphonies, plus numerous recordings, films, commercials, and live performances. (He is also the father of Cody Fry, a singer-songwriter who performs symphonic pop concerts of his original music with orchestras around the country.)

The Sullivan tune was in a major key, but Gary's new one is in minor, more descriptive of a "stranger." However, notice that in the repeated phrase "heaven is my home," the word *home* switches to a major chord. The tune name, STIGEN, is an Anglicization of the German word for "rising" or "ascending," depicted in the rising melody of the last line.

As you sing this hymn . . . you may wonder if the dire descriptions of earthly life in the first two stanzas are those of a young man who knew he would not live long, particularly the line, "short is my pilgrimage." However, there is hope and even joy in the final two stanzas. When a person becomes a Christian, earth is no longer their home. They have a new one. In our age of affluence and, for many, preoccupation with creating the perfect "home," we often forget that. Joseph Stowell reminds us that it is the *people* who make the home: "[Christ] spoke of heaven as the place where He lives and where we will experience the joy of being with Him."⁷⁴ Stowell then quotes G. K. Chesterton: "Optimism is based on the fact that we are not at home in this world,"⁷⁵ and Malcolm Muggeridge: "The only ultimate tragedy we can experience on earth is to feel at home here."⁷⁶ C. S. Lewis said as well, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."⁷⁷ The young author of this hymn understood this.

I'm But a Stranger Here

31

*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised . . .
and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.
We are of good courage, and we would rather be . . . home with the Lord.*

HEBREWS 11:13, 2 CORINTHIANS 5:8

1. I'm but a stran - ger here, heav - en is my home;
 2. What though the tem - pest rage, heav - en is my home;
 3. There at my Sav - ior's side, heav - en is my home;
 4. There - fore I mur - mur not, heav - en is my home;

Earth is a des - ert drear, heav - en is my home.
 short is my pil - grim - age, heav - en is my home.
 I shall be glo - ri - fied, heav - en is my home.
 what - e'er my earth - ly lot, heav - en is my home.

Dan - ger and sor - row stand____
 Time's wild and win - try blast____
 There are the good and blest,____
 And shall I sure - ly stand____

'round me on ev - ry hand;____ heav - en is my
 soon shall be o - ver - past;____ I shall reach my
 those I love most and best;____ and with them, I,
 there at my Lord's right hand;____ heav - en is my

fa - ther - land____ heav - en is my home.
 home at last,____ heav - en is my home.
 too, shall rest,____ heav - en is my home.
 fa - ther - land____ heav - en is my home.

Copyright ©2023 Fry-By-Night Music (ASCAP)

TEXT: Thomas R. Taylor, alt.

STIGEN

TUNE: Gary Fry