

Will We Know Each Other in Heaven?

John M. Buttrey II

One of the most commonly asked questions concerning Heaven is: Will we know each other in that great land beyond? For many Christians this is a very emotional and important question. They believe Heaven will be a place where they can be reunited with deceased loved ones, be they a child, a sibling, a parent, or a spouse. Unfortunately, our personal beliefs do not determine truth. Truth is found in the inspired pages of Scripture (John 17:17). So, what does the Bible say about this often asked question?

It should be noted right here at the start of our study, that there are no Scriptures that emphatically state we will know each other in Heaven. However, there are some inferences that may give us some helpful clues.

When it comes to recognizing others, we rely almost solely on physical appearance. We know the color of hair, shape of body, skin tone, and voice of our loved ones. We even speak of physical resemblances from parent to child. While physical characteristics may be helpful in recognizing others in the mortal realm, they may be of no use in Heaven. The Bible tells us we will be resurrected from the dead with a spiritual body. Paul says of our mortal body:

"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."
1 Corinthians 15:44

Our earthly body will be buried and suffer decay. At the time of the resurrection, it will be raised a spiritual body. However, what will our spiritual body look like? If a person passes away advanced in years, will their spiritual body retain the same appearance as when they departed this life? Will one who sadly perished as a child, or infant, be destined to spend eternity with the body of a child or infant? It would seem unlikely that the physical characteristics of a body designed for the mortal realm, would greatly impact the body designed for the spiritual and eternal realm.

Scripture gives us little detail about our eternal spiritual bodies. The apostle John tells us:

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and **it has not appeared as yet what we will be**. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

1 John 3:2 (Emphasis Mine)

Those inspired words do not tell us a whole lot about the appearance of our spiritual body. Even the inspired apostle did not know what it will be like!

While we may not retain recognizable physical characteristics, Scripture does indicate there is an identity we continue to possess beyond this life. For example, consider the scene on the mountain at the transfiguration of Jesus.

"And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him."

Matthew 17:2-3

At the time of their appearance on the mountain, Moses had been dead for over fifteen hundred years. Elijah went up in a whirlwind approximately nine hundred years earlier. Interestingly, in whatever form they appeared, both still retained an identity. From a physically recognizable point of view, the disciples would not have been able to identify them. Yet, whether Jesus introduced them, or the Holy Spirit revealed their identities, the disciples knew they were Moses and Elijah. This is helpful support in concluding we will know each other beyond this mortal life.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the identities of Lazarus, the rich man, and Abraham are all known. This too is helpful in justifying the recognition of others in the eternal realm.

Another significant example in favor of our retaining an identity beyond this life is found in these familiar words of Jesus:

"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Matthew 22:32

Jesus says that was *still* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even though these three men had been dead for around two thousand years! They all retained an identity, even though that identity would not be necessarily determined by their mortal physical appearance.

All of these examples considered, it does seem as if we will indeed know each in Heaven. However, there is another side to the idea of knowing each other in Heaven that we sometimes fail to consider. If we will know who is in Heaven, we can conclude that we will also know who is not present.

Think about this: What is the great attraction of Heaven for you? Put another way, why do you want to go to Heaven? Obviously, no one wants to experience eternal punishment. However, based on what we most often talk about, the great attraction of Heaven for many seems to be reuniting with a deceased loved one. This is very natural. Paul spoke by way of comfort to the Thessalonians of the reunion we would have with departed loved ones (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

This is certainly an appealing part of going to Heaven. However, those hoping to be reunited with a departed spouse should keep in mind that Jesus tells us there will be no marriage in Heaven (Matt. 22:30). In other words, if the images of gold mansions were accurate, we would not be sharing them with our earthly marriage partner for all eternity.

To help you discover your real motivation for going to Heaven, let me propose the following: Suppose we did not know each other in Heaven. Suppose even further, that no one you knew on earth would be present. What if, the only One in Heaven you knew and would be with was God? Would you still want to go, or would Heaven then be disappointing to you? We all need to understand, that ultimately, Heaven will be Heaven because God is there. Having loved ones in the Lord present as well is only the icing on the cake.