

Will We Know One Another In Heaven?

Matthew 22, 1 Thessalonians 4

Slide 1

Uncertainty about whether or not we'll know one another in heaven has robbed many a believer of the joy of the anticipation of heaven.

And some people reason that we should be just be glad to be with our Lord and Savior.

But, I believe it's God's intention, within the revelation of Scripture, that we'll know one another in heaven, and we'll relate to one another because God created us as social creatures.

Before man fell into sin, Genesis 2:18 tells us, "*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*"

God not only made woman, but he made mankind in His own image. Genesis 1:26, "*Then God said,*" and note the plurality of God, speaking of Himself, "*Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.*"

Therefore, God's original intention was for mankind to be sociable and have a relationship with.

So, let's get back to the original question: Will We Know One Another In Heaven?

Slide 2

First let's consider the question of recognition. Will we recognize one another?

J. H. Bavinck, a Dutch missiologist said, “*The hope to see one another in heaven is entirely natural, genuinely human, and in harmony with Scripture. That ought to enhance our anticipation of heaven, because we know we'll meet others who have gone before us.*”

Richard Baxter, who wrote an essay titled, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, said: “*I know that Christ is all in all, and that it is the presence of God that makes heaven to be heaven, but yet it much sweetens the thought of that place to me that there are a multitude of my most dear and precious friends in Christ.*”

Ignorance about heaven, in general, comes because there is ignorance concerning the Scriptures.

So, let's call on some biblical witnesses to submit their testimonial evidence regarding as to whether or not we'll know one another in heaven.

First, we'll call on Jesus Himself. In Matthew 17, when Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, the record states that Moses and Elijah appeared beside Him.

Moses and Elijah, or at least Moses, died centuries before, and Elijah was translated to heaven without death in his physical body. But, when the disciples saw them, they recognized who they were.

How could they? It's because both Moses and Elijah maintained their physical, human identity. Then there's the teaching of Jesus in Luke 16.

In this account the rich man looked up and saw Lazarus in heaven with the patriarch Abraham.

The rich man recognized Lazarus, the beggar who used to lie at his gate. He also recognized Abraham. Recognition!

When we look at Jesus at His resurrection, we see that He was also recognizable as who He was. In Luke 24:39, He says, "*It is I myself,*" implying that they should recognize Him.

In fact, the disciples recognized Him countless times after His resurrection. They recognized Him on the shore as He cooked breakfast for them in John 21

When He appeared to a skeptical, doubting Thomas in John 20; and then, as 1 Corinthians 15 records, when He appeared to over 500 disciples at one time.

But some, who refute that he was recognizable, cite John 20, where Mary, when she went to the tomb after Jesus was buried, didn't realize that the One who spoke to her was Jesus.

One thing is certain: when the One she thought was the gardener spoke her name, she replied to Him in Aramaic: 'Rabboni', realizing in the tone of His voice, and the way He spoke her name, that it was Jesus.

Likewise, people often cite the fact that the two on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 didn't recognize Jesus, therefore He was unrecognizable.

But if you look at Luke 24:15-16, you'll see that Luke tells us why they didn't recognize Him: "*As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.*"

When their eyes were opened to see, they recognized who He was because He was recognizable.

So, if you say that we'll not recognize one another in heaven, then, if that's the case, we'll not recognize Jesus either.

Now let's bring Paul to the witness stand and ask him: Will we know one another in heaven?

Paul answers this in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, "*For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?*"

And, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*"

To be "*caught up together,*" and for us to be "*with the Lord forever,*" this implies the knowledge of being with one another in heaven.

The Thessalonians were perplexed and distressed because they were concerned about their dead loved ones, and worried about what would happen to them if they died before Christ came again.

Paul tells them: "*No, it's not the end, for when Christ comes the dead shall rise first, and then we that are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.*"

Now let me ask you: What comfort would that truth be if these words didn't mean that these troubled believers would recognize their loved ones who had died in Christ?

Paul's point is not: "*Don't sorrow hopelessly because your loved ones are at rest,*" or "*Your loved ones are free from pain,*" or "*Your loved ones are in glory with Christ.*"

His point is: “*Don’t sorrow hopelessly because you’re not parted forever, you’ll see them again when Christ brings them with Him at His return.*”

That's why he says in verse 18, “*Therefore encourage one another with these words.*” Comfort comes from the prospect of reunion.

So, the truth that's found in both Christ and Paul is that when we meet our loved ones, who have gone to glory before us, we'll know them immediately, and they'll know us.

Now this ought to increase our anticipation of heaven! And, it's not wrong to look forward to meeting our loved ones in glory since God made us relational creatures.

That's why God has given us, in His Word, the hope of reunion and recognition of our loved ones. This is what puts heaven in our hearts.

Graham Scroggie put it well when he said: “*If I knew that never again would I recognize that beloved one with whom I spent more than 39 years on the earth, my anticipation of heaven would much abate. To say that we shall be with Christ and that that will be enough is to claim that there we shall be without social instincts and affections which mean so much to us here. Life beyond cannot mean impoverishment, but the enhancement and enrichment of life as we have known it here at its best.*”

Slide 3

Now that leads to our second question: How will we know one another in heaven? In other words: What relationship will we have with those we recognize from this earth?

We've learned that God has prepared for us a new heaven and a new earth that won't be realized until Jesus returns. This is detailed in Revelation 21 and 22.

But remember, when God brings the new heaven and the new earth to reality, He doesn't erase history as we've known it. He doesn't wipe the slate clean and destroy His old creation.

God is redeeming the old since it has already been bought by shed blood of Christ.

The Word of God says the old is made new, it's redeemed. Heaven isn't a place of unfamiliar things, but a place of familiar things made new.

Which brings up several questions concerning what kind of relationship we'll have with those we recognize from this earth.

Slide 4

The first question is: What happens to marriage and the marriage relationship that we've known on earth?

If we say that we'll recognize our loved ones in heaven, then we'll recognize those with whom we were married here on earth.

Now, that may cause problems in many minds, and it certainly did in the minds of the Sadducees because in Matthew 22:23 and following they cite a principle that Moses spoke of in Deuteronomy 25.

Which is: "If your brother died and was married, you had to marry your brother's wife so his family could continue."

That's what's called the Levirate marriage. The Sadducees presented this in a hypothetical scenario to Jesus of a woman who had been married many times.

They asked in verse 28, "*Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?*"

And He answers them in verse 30, “*At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.*”

So, why is there no marriage in heaven? Jesus tells us that we’ll be like the angels, as they were at creation. They didn’t procreate, and they didn’t give and take in marriage.

Now, if there’s continuity between the old earth and the new earth, the old heaven and the new heaven.

God isn’t going to bring unfamiliar things to bear in heaven that we haven’t known on earth. So, why is there no marriage in heaven?

Because, there’s no need for it! Now bear with me: remember previously we pointed out that earth is the shadow of heaven, not vice versa.

So, the plans for the Tabernacle and the Temple that God gave to mankind were based on heaven. It’s the same with the family relationship of father and son.

It's not given to the Godhead after creation so that we can understand something of how they relate to one another. They were Father and Son first, and we derive our family relationship from that image of the Godhead.

We're made in God's image. Our understanding of God doesn't come from how we are here.

Many of the things around us like trees and rivers and meadows, will be in heaven. But, this is only a shadow. The real will be in the new heaven and the new earth.

Why is that important? In Ephesians 5, we find that marriage falls into the same category as shadows and figures of the true.

Ephesians 5:31-32, “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*” *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”*

Paul is telling us that God's purpose in instituting the marriage relationship, at the very beginning of creation, was so we would understand the relationship between Christ and His redeemed church.

In other words, marriage is a shadow, or a signpost, relating to a greater relationship which is the relationship of the Christian, the church, with their Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

But, a signpost becomes unnecessary when we reach our destination.

Marriage, as we know it here on earth is an echo of the true, ultimate marriage that will take place at the marriage supper of the Lamb when Christ, the Bridegroom, is wed to His bride, the church.

The purpose of earthly, human marriage is to point us to that day. Now, don't misunderstand what I'm saying and think that we'll be more distant in heaven than we were on earth with our loved ones.

There's nothing in Scripture that infers such a thing, in fact the opposite is taught. We'll be closer to one another in glory!

There's nothing that takes away from the fact that in this lifetime, here on this earth, you and your spouse were married, and you invested much of your lives in each other.

Just because Jesus says the institution of marriage will end doesn't mean that you'll lose that deep relationship in glory.

Far from it: Neither Christ, nor the Apostles, nor any New Testament Scripture ever says or hints that the relationships between married people on the earth will end.

Marriage might end, but the deep relationships don't. In fact, we'll gain a fuller, more meaningful relationship in heaven.

When God replaces something from His original creation, He always replaces it with something far better! Always!

Slide 5

When you're seeking to find answers from the scriptures regarding heaven remember what David said in Psalm 17:15, "*As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.*"

We'll be satisfied with how we relate to our husband or wife in heaven, even though marriage as an institution will be dissolved. In other words, there's no reason to worry.

Don't let the devil, or stupid Christians who don't know the scriptures, cast doubt in your mind. Hang on to that verse: "*I will be satisfied.*"

But, what about someone who had several spouses. Remember, Matthew 22? Jesus said we won't have several spouses in heaven, but even though the marriages don't continue, the relationship that we had with each one will.

That means that our relationships will be retained in eternity. But, we'll be perfect in how we relate to one another; whether they were a spouse, or spouses.

The implication of heaven is we'll relate with an ever-deepening relationship to everybody in heaven.

Listen to what I'm saying: that doesn't erase everything that you've known in your lifetime with your loved one - far from it, it just makes it deeper and more meaningful.

Now, I'm not so naïve to think that everybody wants to relate as they did on earth to those who are in heaven.

So, what about difficult relationships on earth? What about broken hearts, or lifetimes of twisted family relationships.

In heaven, neither we nor our family members will ever cause us any pain, ever! Our relationships will be harmonious!

What about family then? Will it continue? Turn to Ephesians 3:14-15 where Paul says, *"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."*

Christians in this verse are called a family, the reason being that God is their Father, and they relate to one another as brothers and sisters. True believers in Christ are the children of God. That's why we pray: '*Our Father, who art in heaven.*'

Now, we've already learned that earth is the shadow, heaven is the substance, therefore the family that we know down here is a shadow of the great family of God that we're going to know in glory.

We'll know our families, and we will relate to them as we've related to them down here, but it will be in a fulfilment that's far greater. We're not losing anything, but we're gaining everything!

Now, in saying that, when we die, one of the few things that we can carry into heaven is our friendships and our relationships with people we've known here on earth.

I don't know whether it's good news or bad news, but your relatives are always going to be there - but the blessing is: we're all going to be one family.

We're all going to be perfect, and we're going to be satisfied, and it's going to be better!

But, what about the loved ones who won't be there? I haven't got time to go into that one, but one thing is sure - if you have loved ones without Christ - hell will never have power over heaven.

None of hell's miseries will ever veto any of heaven's joys.

Slide 6

The enjoyment of heaven is having company with whom to enjoy it! We want company when we have a wonderful experience because it's enhanced when it's shared with another!

That's what heaven will be like! In Matthew 8:11, Jesus says, "*I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*"

Have you ever wondered why people gather for dinner? Well, in the Middle Eastern culture, dinner wasn't only about good food and good drink, but it was a time to build relationships. It was a time to talk together, to tell stories with one another.

Who will we be talking with and relating with in heaven?
Abraham! Isaac! Jacob! The great patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the great saints of the ages, the martyrs, the reformers – we'll relate to them! But, what else?

We'll develop relationships that were underdeveloped. Remember David's child that he conceived with Bathsheba in adultery.

When that child became very ill, David prayed and fasted, but when the child died, David said in 2 Samuel 12:23, "*But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.*"

Some people say he was talking about the grave, but I beg to differ because whatever this hope was that David had of going to this child, it made him happy! It dried his tears! It caused him to stop fasting! Because he knew he would meet him again!

Some have had infants who have died, and I believe the Bible indicates that they're in glory - not because they were innocent, but because of the mercy and grace towards children that we find in the Bible and in the ministry and life of Jesus.

I don't know what age they will be, but think of what it will be like when we get to glory and the children we've never known take us by the hand and show us around the premises?

In fact, we'll develop new relationships in heaven that we never had, and old relationships, that were undeveloped, will be built. What am I talking about?

Imagine how glorious it will be for grandchildren and grandparents, or great-grandchildren and great-grandparents, who never knew each other, to develop friendships never before possible.

Maybe you were robbed of a parent early in your childhood. If you're saved, and they've gone to sleep in Jesus, you'll have all eternity to catch up! That's how it will be!

I don't know how God's going to do it, but whatever cravings you had for parental care will be healed. That's what the Bible says. The deepest heartache, the deepest pain will be mended.

Maybe you never had a parent that you could trust here on earth, well there'll be plenty of trustworthy parents all around heaven that you can look up to.

Slide 7

Conclusion

A young visiting missionary in Eastern Europe was asked the question: *“Isn’t it hard being so far away from your children? Aren’t you missing important events in their life?”*

The missionary said: “*Sure, but in heaven we’ll have all the time we want together.*” That’s how we should think!

Heaven is many things, but mainly it's a bundle of eternal compensation.

It's a time for things to be made up, lost time restored, lost relationships restored, lost desires and fulfilments and satisfactions restored.

That's why Jesus said in Luke 6:23-26, *“Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.”*

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.”

Compensation is ahead. That's what Paul meant in Romans 8:18, "*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*"

This is how Martin Luther put this compensation: "*I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.*"

So, it's not true that there'll be no family in heaven. It's not true that we won't recognize them in heaven. It's not true that we won't relate to them in heaven with the same depth of relationship, even though marriage won't be there.

On the contrary, there'll be one great family, and the blessing of it is this: none of us will ever be left out, every one of us will feel at home, and every time we see someone in heaven it'll be a family reunion.

Never again should we wonder if we'll ever see our saved loved ones again.