

Will we recognize one another in Heaven?

Meeting old friends – remember me? The process of recognizing a face in different lights, colors, expressions, aging, facial hair, millions of calculations to determine. As little as 10 years ago it might have taken a computer 10 years or more to do what we do hundreds of times in a minute.

Will we recognize one another in Heaven?

Many times over the years we have asked and been asked this very question.

Will we meet friends in Heaven? Will we know family in Heaven? Mothers? Fathers? Grandparents? Will we meet them on the beautiful shore? Will it really be a great reunion that will last throughout eternity?

We already know the world's answer, no. Evolutionists, atheists, "educated idiots" as my parents used to say...

The Bible neither asks nor answers this question directly – Just as it never seeks to establish an argument for God.

It makes the assumption that we will, and that there is a connection between this life and the next.

Abraham

Gen 25:7-10 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. 9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10 The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

Note: He was gathered to his people.

Ishmael

Gen 25:17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

Isaac

Gen 35:28-29 And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

If they were gathered to their people, would Abraham have not been part of whom they were gathered to? Would they have recognized him?

Jacob

Gen 49:33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Aaron

Num 20:23-26 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, 24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. 25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: 26 And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there.

Moses

Deu 32:48-50 And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, 49 Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: 50 *And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:*

Further described

Deu 31:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou *shalt sleep with thy fathers*; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

Unionville cemetery contains the remains of many of my fathers. Would that be the gathering, if I were buried there? Some are the Young cemetery, some may be in Europe.

Surely wasn't a physical body gathering— many of his fathers were buried in Egypt. Abraham and his fathers were buried all over the land of the Mideast.

Jdg 2:10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Gathering (collected - brought to - gathered) to one's people is surely not a physical gathering of bodies, but a reference to something else entirely. It was the Hebrew understanding of the place of the dead, Hades.

While that may conjure dark images for some, it was a source of comfort for the righteous.

Ki 22:14-20 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. 15 And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, 16 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: 17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. 18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; 19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. 20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

The NT refers to being received into Abraham's bosom and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

It is apparent from the scriptures that when we die, we go to Hades, and are gathered to those we know and are related to either in torment or paradise. Even the rich man knew his father, Abraham.

Many other biblical examples point to awareness and a place for the dead, albeit separated in some passages, after death.

1Sa 28:3-19 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. 4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. 5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. 6 And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. 7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. 8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name

unto thee. 9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. 11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. 13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. 15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? 17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: 18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

Note how Samuel said “you will be with me.” Look how the woman reacted when she saw Samuel *1Sa 28:12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. Samuel apparently informed her who the man was that came to visit. Implying recognition after death.*

Wherever Samuel was residing, Saul would be with him in the same place.

Ideally, we will meet in paradise.

Luk 23:42-43 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Joh 14:1-4 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

If we go to be with Jesus in a special place He has prepared, why tell us now? If we do not know one another or remember life, how would we know Jesus? If we had no awareness of this life, why would a special place be preferred over another?

Transfiguration

Luk 9:28-31 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. 30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Spoke to him concerning their death

Luk 13:28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

Again Recognition

A person remains as themselves after Judgment

Mat 12:41-42 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Present us with you

2 Co 4:13-14 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Rich man remembered his brothers.

Luk 16:27-28 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham recognized by the rich man and he them. He also knew that they were Jews and had Moses and the prophets.

Burning Question

How could we be happy in heaven if we knew of loved ones that were not there?

If I do not recognize them, I would be uncertain whether they made it or not. Only way I could be happy is if there were a full remembrance of former things.

Are we not told that God will wipe all tears from our eyes?

Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Alexander Campbell said this:

“No human being ever loved another as much as God once loved the devil and his angels; and yet he has not only expelled them from heaven, but bound them fast in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day, and has prepared for them an unquenchable fire, an everlasting punishment.”

The question assumes I want to overlook the way they lived their lives. If they are lost they did not desire to be in heaven enough to stop from their sinful ways. I will not be there if I do not make the way plain to them.

If we are concerned, let us labor all the more diligently to bring them in to the fold.

The Scriptures yield many places of thought on this matter of recognition.

Remember what David said about the death of his son?

2Sa 12:15-23 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. 16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it

was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

I fully expect to

See Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Luke 13:28

See Jesus

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

See the Father

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

I believe the songs

Shall we gather at the river?

“If we never meet again this side of heaven, as we struggle through the world and its strife, there is another meeting place somewhere in heaven, by the side of the river of life.”

Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In conclusion the scriptures teach us that we will be gathered together and we will know one another.

Adapted from a lesson by Ron Scott – April, 2009