

Will We Recognize Each Other in Heaven?

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When we think about eternal life and what it may be like. We can come up with a few good questions. A recent question I received was, “Will we know each other when we get to Heaven?” This is a great question and a question I have pondered myself on several occasions. I imagined myself talking once again with those great Christians I once knew and loved in this world. I even imagined talking with Peter about what it was like to preach on the Day of Pentecost. I looked forward to hugging Mary and thanking her for enduring the difficulties of being the mother of Jesus and being there for Him while He endured the shame of the cross. What would a conversation be like with Abraham, Moses, or Elijah? Also, what about those of us who recently lost a loved one? Will we ever again know one another and enjoy fellowship together? I believe these could be some of the joys awaiting us in Heaven.

“Will we know each other when we get to Heaven?” It is a great question that I cannot give a complete answer to. To what extent do we know each other if we know each other? Can we remember all the good and bad times we had together or only the good? Will our memories be wiped clean only to reveal that we know each other? I cannot say I know the answers to these questions and the implications of each answer. Also, the answer to many questions, and possibly some of these questions, is that we are not meant to know (Deut 29:29).

One implication that seems to cause trouble is that if we know each other in Heaven, then that must mean we will miss those who are not with us, resulting in sadness in Heaven. Is that the case? Is sadness the emotion we will receive if we know each other in Heaven? “For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (1 Thess 2:19). The apostle Paul seems to write of what a joy it will be to be together with Jesus. Paul could only experience that joy of heavenly companionship if he could recognize those with him. I have leaned towards thinking we may know each other in Heaven. I have not arrived at this opinion based on my own reasoning but with the help of several passages. For this study, I will focus on the communication given to the church in Thessalonica. Read Paul’s description of Christ’s return and how it seems like a reunion.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess 4:16-18)

The church in Thessalonica was struggling with losing some of their loved ones. Paul was educating them that the deceased had not missed the coming of the Lord and that they would be gathered together one day at that coming (1 Thess 4:17; 2 Thess 2:1). We are given comfort in knowing that we will be reunited with those who are “asleep” (1 Thess 4:18). What makes reunions great is knowing and loving those you are being reunited with! This can suggest that on the Day of Judgment, we will know each other and experience joy.

As for the thought of sadness accompanying us in Heaven due to lost loved ones, it is impossible to know how, but God, in His limitless abilities, could care for that problem somehow beyond our understanding. As you ponder this thought, remember that the goal of reaching our eternal reward is all thanks to Jesus Christ, and let Him be the reason and the source of your motivation to get there. You want to go to Heaven to be with Jesus, which is the most important reason. The apostle Paul is an excellent example of someone who chose to live for Jesus at all times and to remain in this life for the sake of others. However, when it came to the reason for his desire to depart, it was revealed that it was to be with Christ, which is far better (Phil 1:21-26).