

Can the Saints in Heaven Look Down On Us?

(Hebrews 12:1 and Other Related Texts)

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There seems to be a difference of opinion in the Christian community about whether Christians in Heaven can see earthly Christians living out their lives here on earth. Based upon sentiment and not Scripture, many well-meaning Christians believe their loved ones in Heaven can see them and are in some sense cheering them on as they run the Christian race in this life. However, a closer look at the Bible texts that supposedly teach “heavenly observation” prove to not support the notion that the heavenly saints can actually witness or see the earthly saints living out their days here on earth. Most of the confusion comes from a misunderstanding of several texts in Scripture and reading more into the Biblical scenes and teachings of Jesus than they are intended to convey. One such passage is Hebrews chapter one.

Hebrews 12:1-2 declares:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed (*surrounded*) about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author (*originator*) and finisher (*completer*) of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”



The words “compassed about” (Greek - *perikeimai*) speaks of being surrounded by a large crowd in an amphitheater or sports arena. For this reason, some have taken Hebrews 12:1 to mean that the heavenly saints are sitting in the arena of Heaven watching the earthly saints live out their lives here on earth.

Many over the years have interpreted verse one to mean that while God’s children are living down here on earth, they are in some sense surrounded by the heavenly saints, who are sitting in the celestial grandstands of Heaven, watching the saints run the earthly race of their Christian lives. In other words, many believe that the saints in Heaven are like spectators in a stadium (like the fans sitting in the stands at the Super Bowl) witnessing our every move and cheering us on.

While this may seem comforting to contemplate, the Bible does not teach that the saints in Heaven are watching us. It must be acknowledged that this interpretation does not align with the context and flow of thought from Hebrews chapter eleven where the Old Testament saints are portrayed as a witness and legacy to us on how to live by faith. A book could be written on the “Myths About Heaven” which would explain the misunderstood texts of Scripture about Heaven. Don’t misunderstand me. Heaven is not a myth, but what people sometimes understand about Heaven and what occurs in Heaven is not an accurate reflection of Scripture.

Someone shared this moving story but it’s a story that lacks Biblical credibility and truth. “The conductor raised his baton, then nodded toward the orchestra. As the melodies of Bach’s Oratorio filled the cathedral, I waited for our cue. In the soprano section, we stood in matching black concert dresses, voices raised with joy. As we sang, I thought about my dad. How he would have enjoyed hearing such a beautiful production! One year before, he had stepped into eternity. At 85, he had lived a full life; yet I still missed him and the musical connection we shared. Then the still small voice whispered, ‘He’s here, up in the balcony, on the left.’ I could not see him. But as tears filled my eyes and the music swelled to its crescendo, I knew Dad heard me, sitting in that empty chair, balcony left.” Can our loved ones look down on us and occasionally visit? I believe the answer is yes. “

In this study I want to address the question which many have asked over the years: Can our loved ones in Heaven see us on earth? Can the saints in Heaven look down on us? Can the saints in Heaven see us living on earth and do they know what is transpiring in relation to the specific details of our lives? Well-meaning people continue to ask this question. It’s a



question that every believer has probably contemplated at one time or another. The Biblical answer to this question is that the saints in Heaven cannot look down and see events occurring on earth nor do they see and know the intricate details of our lives. One of the main reasons for this is because the heavenly saints are not omniscient like God (Prov. 15:3). We will talk about this later.

There are two trains of thought on this topic. For some it would seem like that once we're in Heaven we will be so preoccupied with worshipping God that the last thing in our mind would be what's happening on earth. This is not necessarily true. The other train of thought is that people think that folks up in Heaven are sitting and watching our every move almost like it's a form of entertainment for them. In fact, sometimes people think that those in Heaven might be intervening in their lives and directing their steps and helping them to know what to do through specific signs that are sent to them. This type of thing becomes dangerously close to necromancy (contacting the dead) which is strictly forbidden in the Bible (Deut.18:9-12).

There is a lot of hocus pocus on the internet about the deceased communicating with their loved ones. They claim there are various signs that come from Heaven that indicate a deceased loved one is with you. Such things as feathers on the ground, butterflies flying around you, finding pennies and dimes, visits from birds, seeing a dragonfly, discovering smooth, odd, or unique stones, smelling a familiar scent, experiencing ringing in the ears, lights flickering randomly, and finding personal items in strange places, and seeing repeating numbers or unique number sequences are all signs that a loved one is trying to contact you. The Bible clearly reveals that the dead saints cannot contact us for they are not omniscient like God, knowing where we are and what we are passing through on earth, nor can they see us from Heaven with telescopic eyes (Ps. 33:13; Prov. 15:3; Eccl. 9:5; Phil. 1:21).

I was talking to a lady one time, and she began to share with me about a reoccurring fly that kept landing on her and visiting her. It would come back every day and continue to land on the same spot. After a while she said that there was a specific message that God was sending to her about her husband through this fly! I thought God spoke to us through His Word and not through flies!

This is nothing more than mysticism which the Bible categorically condemns. Mysticism is when people attempt to pass through experiences by “intruding into

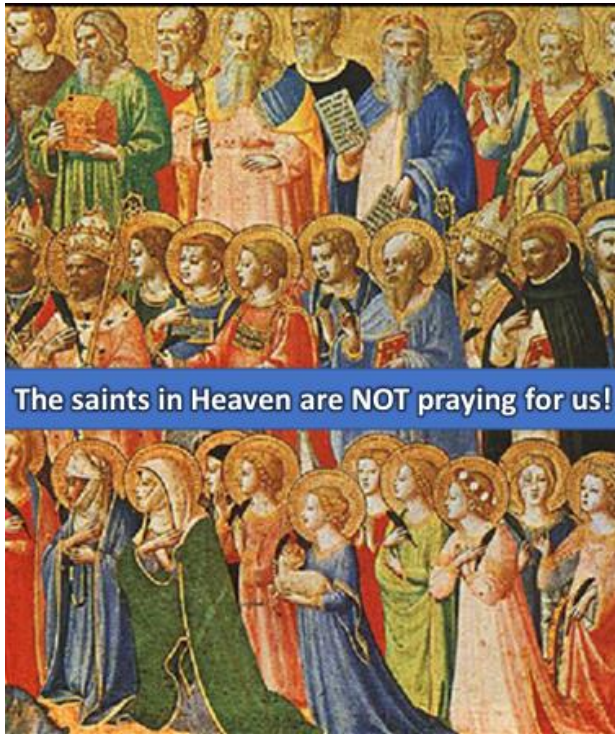
those things he hath not seen” (Colossians 2:18-19). Mysticism and so-called Christian mystics tend to seek out extra-Scriptural experiences other than walking with God and experiencing Christ’s sufficiency in their daily lives (2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 3:10). We need to return to Biblical authority or else we can be overcome with mystical and subjective experiences which can sometimes be demonically deceiving in nature.

I also recall talking to another lady about the death of her husband. She said that God wanted to give her a specific sign that her husband was okay, and she was looking for a certain sign from Heaven. She then told me that one night her clock which was not wound began to strike on the hour her husband died. She went to see her pastor about this, and he wisely told her to stop looking for signs. He reminded her that demons will sometimes seek to lead us astray emotionally and from Biblical truth. Remember the Devil and his “wiles” (Eph. 6:11), his methods or tricks, which can be used to deceive us when we are emotionally weak and vulnerable, and this is why we must carry “the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

The environment of the human imagination is dangerous enough but when it gets tangled up with the demonic forces of the other world, it's even more dangerous and frightening. Beloved, don’t fall for the esoteric, mystical, and sensational experiences of today. We don’t need signs and mystical experiences; we need Scripture to guide us in the truth, and this will keep us thinking accurately and on the right course.

Losing those we love is indescribably difficult. But we can take comfort in knowing that our believing loved ones in Christ are safe, at peace, and in the presence of God (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 14:13), no longer concerned by all of the many problems that we experience in this world. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says “we sorrow not as those which have no hope” which means that as believers we do not grieve like the rest of the unsaved world which has no hope of ever seeing their loved ones again. We don’t have to look for signs to reassure us and give us hope that our loved ones who have been saved by Christ are okay. Based upon Scripture, we can know without a doubt that they have happily escaped from a world of great sorrow and pain, and we can find consolation, knowing that they would not wish to be privy anymore or aware of the sadness and troubles of this life.

Of course, other branches of Christianity take things even further and suggest that dead saints in Heaven can actually pray for them while they are living here on earth. But there is no Biblical evidence that any created being in Heaven can pray or intercede for humans on earth. This includes Mary, church fathers, apostles, saints, and angels. The Bible teaches that Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:16; 7:25) and we are to specifically pray to God the Father (Luke 11:13).



The Bible never tells us to pray to God via another human being in Heaven “For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:6). Jesus Christ is not one of many mediators but the only mediator. There are not many mediators but only one and that One is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is almost unthinkable that anyone might desire a human (or an angel) in Heaven to intercede for him, especially when he can go to God directly. This is a false pagan doctrine propagated by men and not God’s Word.

So, none of these conclusions stated above are Biblically accurate. They all have doctrinal flaws. In this study we want to address the idea that the redeemed saints in Heaven can look down, watch us live out our lives on earth, and know and feel what we are passing through in relation to our earthly lives.

Hebrews 12:1 is a well-known “proof text” that some have used to teach that the heavenly saints are in the celestial grandstands watching us run the Christian race and cheering us on. Let me give you some deep theology as we begin to look at this subject. Put on your thinking caps. Here it comes. Hebrews chapter 12 follows Hebrews chapter 11. I know that this is a brilliant deduction! But seriously, the two chapters are connected together for a reason, and the writer is not introducing something unrelated to chapter 11 such as the saints in Heaven watching us.

The Bible is teaching that the “witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1 are not our modern-day loved ones who have departed and are now in Heaven looking down on us, but the faithful saints in Hebrews 11 who lived victorious lives by trusting in God. The Old Testament saints like Noah, Moses, Abraham, Rahab and all the rest mentioned in Hebrews 11 (the heroes of faith) in a figurative sense become a witness and example to us (like a martyr) on how to live by faith today when the world around is against us.



The word “witnesses” in this context does not mean “spectators.” Our English word “martyr” comes directly from the Greek word *martoos* which is translated here as “witness.” Therefore, the people of Hebrews 11 are not witnessing what we are doing as spectators in Heaven; rather, like a martyr as this word suggests, they are bearing witness to us by their own exemplary living how God can see us through life. So, these saints are not witnessing or watching us – we are to be looking at them, the testimony they have left behind for us on how to maintain a strong and vibrant faith in the hard and difficult trials of life. They are heroes of faith and give and authentic witness to us on how to “keep on keeping on” and remain faithful to God to the end of our days on earth. They are not looking at us; we are to be looking back to them (the Old Testament saints) and they become a witness and example to us on how to live by faith (Heb. 11:4,5,7,9, 11, 17, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31).

We all have our heroes. I thank God for many who have gone on before me and left a witness, example, and testimony behind that we can remember, and which can inspire us to follow in their footsteps. I thank God for my father and his witness and testimony which he has left behind for the family. I thank God for other mentors in my life which have left behind a legacy of faith to follow like Dr. John Miles (the president and instructor at my Bible institute) and others who have made a strong imprint and impression upon my life. Listen folks, we all need mentors who have gone on before us and we can look back and reflect upon the examples they have given to us which inspire us to do what is right and live for God.

So, these “witnesses” of Hebrews 12:1 are not heavenly saints witnessing us but earthly saints of the past who have left behind a great legacy of faith and *bear witness to us* on what it means to walk by faith in hard times. These “witnesses” are not the saints floating around on clouds in Heaven as spectators watching us. Instead, the saints of Hebrews chapter 11 are compared to a great “cloud” (an idiom or symbolic expression of many people – a great assembly, multitude, a throng) who went before us to give us an historic witness or demonstration on how to live by faith to the end of our days on earth.

William MacDonald concurs with this:

“This does not mean that they are spectators of what goes on on earth. Rather they witness to us by their lives of faith and endurance and set a high standard for us to duplicate.”

So, the Old Testament saints are not literally witnessing or watching us but rather they become witnesses to us in a figurative sense, giving us an example, testimony, and inspiration on how to walk by faith. The writer’s main point is that we have many good examples of people who faithfully trusted God in the past who are bearing witness to us by their lives and testimonies how to walk by faith in difficult times. Go back and read Hebrews chapter eleven!

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy

protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

Scripture informs us that God sees us (Ps. 22:18; 34:15; 139; Matt. 6:25-34; 1 Pet. 3:12; Heb. 4:13; Rev. 2:2, 9, 1, 19; 3:1, 8, 15) but not the heavenly saints. It is the Lord who sees and understands what we are passing through and that when we place our faith in His purpose and plan for our lives, whatever that might be, we can know that God will sustain us. We can jump by faith, live by faith, and find that God will take care of us (1 Pet. 5:7).

Well, it's the Old Testament saints that are bearing witness to us on how to live by faith – the heavenly saints are not literally watching or witnessing us. As much as we might like the notion that we're being watched by our departed loved ones in Heaven, that's not what Hebrews 12:1 is teaching. We should not be hoping for their heavenly approval or listening for the applause of those who are now in Heaven. Ultimately and primarily, we are to be "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2) – not looking for the approval of the saints in Heaven!

Let's reiterated what we have learned from Hebrews 12:1. The "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) is not referring to the saints in Heaven witnessing or watching us run the race of the Christian life on earth. The conjunction "wherefore" joins the two sections together (chapters 11-12). So, verse one does not stand alone without being related to what was previously said about the saints in Hebrews chapter eleven. Furthermore, the expression "seeing we" means that we are doing the seeing or observing – not the people living in Heaven. The seeing or observation is addressed to believers down here on earth not the saints in Heaven. And what have we seen or witnessed? It's the personal lives of the Old Testament saints mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven.

I think many Christians miss this point of Hebrews 12:1. The connection from Hebrews chapter 11 to 12 is easy to see. The "great cloud of witnesses" are the saints that were just mentioned in the previous chapter. They are not the saints in Heaven who are sitting on clouds and playing their harps! The saints in Hebrews chapter eleven are referenced as "witnesses" because these people are actually bearing witness or testimony to us how we should live by faith today!

This means the people mentioned in chapter eleven are saying something to us, they are testifying to us, leaving behind a testimony for us, they are witnesses in this sense. Those mentioned in the Hall of Fame of Faith are giving an historical witness (testimony) to us of what it means to walk by faith through the thick or thin of life, the ups and downs of life, and through persecution and victory. We as God's people today should be stirred and motivated to live for God by looking at the winners in the past who won the race because they lived by faith. They are to be an inspiration to us. They are winners and should have an impact upon our lives. We do not get motivated by looking at the losers but by looking at the winners mentioned in Hebrews eleven.

The lives of all the saints which the writer has just written about in chapter eleven are compared to a great cloud of witnesses. Once again, a "cloud" was a common idiomatic expression or metaphor for "a large number of people." Here then is the basic teaching of Hebrews 12:1.

Hebrews 12:1: “Wherefore (looking back to chapter 11) seeing we also are compassed about (surrounded with a great throng of people by seeing and reading about them in Hebrews 11) with so great a cloud of witnesses (Old Testament saints bearing witness to us, a witness of their personal example, legacy, and testimony of walking by faith), let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (like the heroes of the Old Testament did).

In one sense, the saints mentioned in Hebrews 11 (not the saints in Heaven) are compared to a great throng of Old Testament saints in an amphitheater that we can witness or observe (“Seeing we are compassed about”) as we read about them and see their examples of inspirational faith in Hebrews 11. These same Old Testament saints are also compared to a great cloud of witnesses (bearing testimony to us) on how to walk by faith. They are the faithful who went before us,

and which leave behind a legacy of what it means to live by faith in the midst of persecution and hardships. They were faithful up to the end of their lives.

When a traveler in the early days of the west, came to the Mississippi, he discovered there was no bridge. Fortunately, it was winter and the great river was sheeted over with ice. But the traveler was afraid to walk across the frozen river, not knowing how thick it was. Finally with infinite caution, he crept on his hands and knees and managed to get halfway over. And then he heard--yes he heard singing from behind. Cautiously he turned, and there, out of the dusk, came another traveler, driving a four-horse load of coal over the ice, singing as he went!

Sometimes we walk on ice or eggshells and really do not have the kind of faith we need to pass through the difficult seasons of our lives. But if we possess great faith in God and His promises, and look at the winners who have gone before us, we can move through the trials of life singing, "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world."



There is another passage of Scripture which is also misunderstood and is misapplied to heavenly saints seeing, knowing, and interacting with the lives of people on earth. What Jesus said in the gospel of Luke about people rejoicing in Heaven is sometimes used as a proof text to prove that the saints in Heaven can see what is happening on earth.

Jesus taught when a sinner is saved there is heavenly rejoicing, He said, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). Later, Jesus confirms that this rejoicing occurs in "the presence of the angels" or before the angels in Heaven (Luke 15:10). Many have read more into these two statements than Jesus intended to convey.

For instance, Randy Alcorn wrongly asserts:

“It doesn’t speak of rejoicing by the angels but in the presence of angels. Surely this includes saints in Heaven, who would be overjoyed by human conversions, especially of those they knew and loved on Earth. To rejoice over conversions on Earth, they must be aware of what is happening on Earth—not generally, but specifically.”

This is not an accurate conclusion based on the lack of information Jesus gave. It is speculation – not revelation. Of course, there may be rejoicing that occurs in Heaven as word is spread regarding the salvation of earthly people, but even this gives no indication that the saints in Glory view us living our everyday lives down here on earth nor does the text infer that they know the specific people who are saved.

In other words, Jesus is not teaching that some kind of heavenly bell rings and specific names are then announced in Heaven who have come to faith in Christ on earth. According to what Jesus taught, there is a general knowledge in Heaven concerning the salvation of souls occurring on earth. There may be times of rejoicing and worship directed to the Lord over the salvation of souls on earth. But we must not try and invent theories about people in Heaven knowing and understanding all the details of the earthly lives of people based on this minimal information that Jesus gave. It’s pure conjecture to conclude that Heaven’s rejoicing over the salvation of sinners is equivalent to the heavenly saints knowing and seeing everything that is going on in relation to the lives of people on the earth and that they can witness the intricate events and details people are encountering during their earthly lives.

Do you really think that your fishing buddy who is now in Heaven is concerned about how many fish you caught on your fishing trip? Believe me, he is not concerned about your fish stories! Do you think your beloved husband or wife has the knowledge that you misplaced your car keys and could not find them? Do you think they are looking down and smiling at your granddaughter’s birthday party? We sometimes would like to think so, but this kind of thinking is folklore – not factual statements found in Scripture. Sometimes God’s people follow hocus-pocus theories and ideas instead of Biblical theology.

Revelation 6:9-11 is sometimes used as another proof text to teach that heavenly saints can actually view the lives of people on earth and know what they are specifically doing. “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.”



We read here about the heavenly saints who were martyred on earth during the Tribulation Period, and they are asking for righteous vengeance to fall on their evildoers. However, this does not mean they are actually watching or observing the events of the Tribulation Period unfolding before them. The passage says nothing about the martyrs seeing people on earth; it simply says that they knew their martyrdom deserved justice and desired the Lord to take action.

What this passage reveals to us is that these martyred saints are now in Heaven with the knowledge of what has previously happened to them and the general knowledge of the End Times. This is why they are asking for God’s perfect justice in

His perfect time to fall on the perpetrators. It must be understood that possessing knowledge about something is not the same as seeing or observing it take place on earth. There will be a general knowledge in Heaven concerning the events of judgment that are transpiring on earth that leads up to the Millennium.

Revelation 19:1-6 is another heavenly scene where the saints are aware of the destruction of the wicked city of Babylon on earth and the soon to come reign of Jesus Christ over the earth. “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

The saints in Heaven are not ignorant of what the future holds. Various heavenly scenes reveal that the saints have a general understanding of what is occurring and about to occur on earth such as the Tribulation Period, marriage feast, and the Millennium (Rev. 5:1-10; 19:5-9). The Bible reveals that the saints in Heaven will have a basic awareness of some of the main events that are occurring or transpiring on earth in relation to the End Times. This is not because they are looking down and observing these events but because of the knowledge that they already possessed, or which is given to them in Heaven regarding these earthly events.

These verses should not cause us to open a Pandora's box and conjecture that heavenly saints know what is occurring on earth in relation to our personal lives and all the detailed events that are taking place on earth. Again, remember there is a difference between *knowledge* and actually *witnessing* events on earth. There is a difference between what God reveals to these heavenly saints and the saints looking down to earth and seeing all the events being unfolded like a picture movie. Many do not make this distinction between *knowing* something and actually *observing* or seeing something happen.

The Scripture suggests our loved ones who are now in Heaven have some basic knowledge of God's unfolding plan on earth as it pertains to End Time events. However, none of these verses convey or give the slightest notion that the heavenly saints know all the details and events that are happening with the lives of their family members and friends on earth and that they are smiling down upon us when something good happens to us.

Randy Alcorn disagrees with this and states:

"My mom was one of the closest friends I've ever had, and she's been in Heaven for almost forty years. I can't wait (but I will) to see her again. Mom died just four months after our Angie was born. I said at both our daughters' weddings, in the summer of 2001, that I believed their two grandmothers were watching from Heaven. And since Nancy's mom had been blind her last few years here, she was seeing the wedding in a way she couldn't have even a few months earlier before she died.

"I firmly believe this is true, but even if I was wrong on that point (since of course I can't know exactly when God allows people to see events on Earth and when He doesn't), I would not be wrong in praying "Lord, please tell Mom her precious granddaughters love You with all their hearts and married young men that do too. That will mean so much to her."

"My guess is that Mom knows all that anyway, and that she is enjoying seeing God at work in the lives of our grandchildren, her great-grandchildren she hasn't yet been able to hug."

This sounds very sentimental, and it is, but we must ask if it is Scriptural. "For what saith the scripture?" (Rom. 4:3). Sentiment should not override Scripture. Writers on the subject of Heaven sometimes extrapolate things from Bible texts which are not taught nor even implied, and they do so on the basis of sentiment.

It's important to understand that our loved ones in Christ who are now in Heaven have not lost the knowledge of the personal lives they shared with us on earth for there will be a reunion day with them at the Rapture or in Heaven ("Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming" - 1 Thess. 2:19; 4:13-18). Many over the years have asked, "Will we know each other in Heaven?" Yes, we will know each other in Heaven for there is going to be a reunion with our loved

ones in Christ. Have you ever been at a reunion where you did not know anyone? In fact, when we enter Heaven, based upon the information we have concerning seeing our loved ones again, our family and friends who are in Christ will likely be among those right there with Jesus to give us a rich welcome! What a day that will be!

“Oh, the joys of that glad meeting
With the saints who for us wait!
What a blessed, happy meeting
Just inside the Eastern Gate!”

William Graham Scroggie once remarked:

“If I knew that never again would I see or recognize that beloved one with whom I spent more than thirty-nine years here on earth, my anticipation of heaven would much abate. To say that we will be with Christ and that will be enough, is to claim that there we shall be without the social instincts and affection which mean so much to us here.”

Beloved, we will see our loved ones in Christ when we get to Heaven. And when we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing it will be! The day is fast approaching when we will all be together again. Let us live with this blessed hope and anticipation in our hearts. But as true as this is none of it overrides the Biblical fact that the heavenly saints cannot see or know what is occurring with our lives here on earth.



The Catholics erroneously suggest that the saints in Heaven can actually hear our prayers and offer them up to God on our behalf. And why couldn't they if they can also see us on earth and send us reassuring messages as so many evangelical Christians seem to believe today. As is often the case,

one error often leads to another. Heavenly saints praying for earthly saints is based on several scenes in Heaven that are focusing on the Tribulation Period. The Rapture of the Church occurs in Revelation chapter 4:1; therefore, what we see occurring in Heaven in chapters 5 and 8 takes place during the Tribulation Period. They are not reoccurring scenes where earthly saints are praying to the heavenly

saints, who are allegedly interceding on behalf of these saints, taking these earthly prayers before God's throne, and getting God to answer them.

Revelation 5:7-10 records the first heavenly scene:

“And he came and took the book (*scroll*) out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book (*scroll*), the four beasts (*living creatures of cherubim and seraphim*) and four and twenty elders (*representative of the redeemed, raptured, and rewarded Church*) fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints (*prayers of vindication and judgment*). And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book (*scroll*), and to open the seals thereof (*the seal judgments of the Tribulation Period*): for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

In this future heavenly scene, we discover that those within Heaven had a harp and golden vials (bowls) full of incense, representing the prayers of these saints in Heaven. The question is what saints are in view in this heavenly scene? It's not the earthly saints but the heavenly saints (the Church) who are now in Heaven. The bowls of incense are representative of the prayers of the heavenly Church saints (not earthly saints) who are calling for justice upon earth and who are also looking forward to reigning on earth with Christ. They are awaiting their return to earth with Christ.

What kind of worshipful prayers (symbolized by incense) would the heavenly saints (the Church) send up to the Lamb? No doubt they will be prayers associated with Christ's judgment, vindication, redemption, or take-over of planet earth even as their song declares (“thou art worthy to open the seals” – vs. 9). Later we find martyred saints praying about God vindicating their martyrdom (Rev. 6:9-10; 8:2-6). These symbolic prayers are very similar. The incense prayers of the Church are seen to rise before the great throne room of Heaven signifying that the Church is longing for Christ to judge the world and bring Satan's kingdom to a halt by establishing Christ's Millennial Kingdom over the earth. The Church has been persecuted by Satan over the centuries of time and she will be symbolically expressing prayer to the Lamb in Heaven requesting that His retribution and vengeance falls upon Satan and his children. They are prayers that look forward to the redemption of the earth from Satan and his followers.

The scene envisions the scroll or title deed of the earth which Jesus Christ possesses. It will unleash the Seal Judgments of the Tribulation Period and then Jesus will return in His Second Coming (with the heavenly saints) to establish His earthly Kingdom (the Millennium). So, these are not the earthly prayers of saints but the prayers of saints in Heaven as they pray for God's righteous justice to be meted out on earth and the evildoers who have perpetrated their wicked deeds against God's saints throughout the Church centuries. They are praying for justice and looking ahead to their reign with Christ over the earth.

Although the heavenly inhabitants handled these prayers and were offering them to God, there is no indication that they had any part in getting their own prayers answered and that they became mediators between themselves and God. This is nonsensical. There are some who suggest this heavenly scene teaches we can pray to dead saints in Heaven, and they are seen taking our earthly prayers (as represented by the incense in Heaven) and interceding on our behalf, so our prayers can actually be heard and answered before God's throne. Of course, the Bible nowhere teaches this.

The idea that the prayers of God's saints on earth are continually being heard and offered up to God and helped along by the heavenly saints and angels is a pagan myth. Our prayers pass through one mediator and that mediator is Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). Ephesians 2:18 says, "For through him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." It's only through Jesus Christ we can boldly or confidently approach the throne of grace in Heaven and find God's strength and help (Heb. 4:16).

Revelation 8:2-6 is a similar heavenly scene:

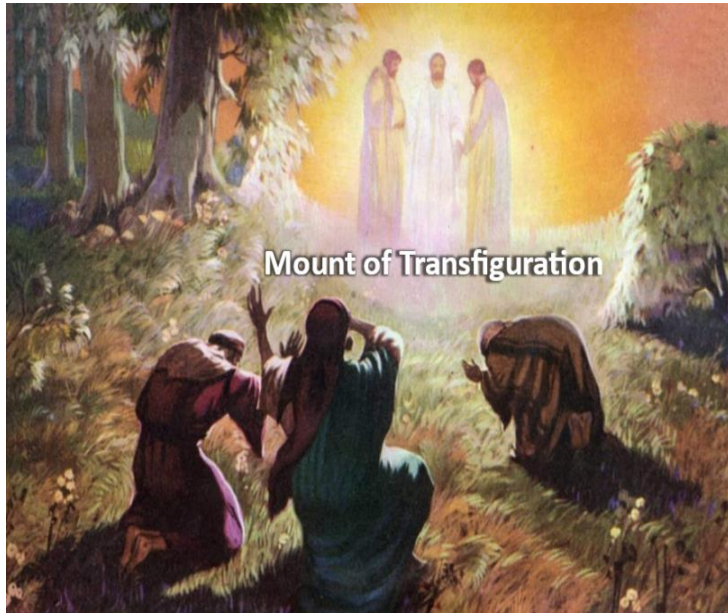
"And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."

Once again, this is a heavenly scene that occurs during the Tribulation Period. It is not a scene that keeps reoccurring in Heaven today. The prayers are again representative of the prayers of the heavenly saints (not earthly saints) who are asking for God's righteous justice and revenge on the earthly evildoers which have martyred them. The prayers would be answered with the final seven Trumpet Judgments to be unleashed on planet earth. These are likely the prayers of the martyred saints in Heaven which were previously introduced in Revelation 6:10 – not the prayers of saints living on earth. In the context, the prayers are those of Tribulation saints, who were martyred and now in Heaven, beseeching God to punish their enemies.

None of these heavenly scenes remotely or theologically teach anything about the heavenly saints and angels interceding on behalf of other saints on earth. Again, there are those who teach that a passage such as this means we (the saints on earth) can pray to the saints of Heaven and our prayers (like incense) get answered through the intercessory work of heavenly saints who join with us before God's throne. However, these are heavenly scenes with the prayers of heavenly saints. There is no implication whatsoever that earthly saints are in view and bringing their prayers before the heavenly saints so these prayers can be heard and answered before God's throne.

Despite all this Biblical evidence, a Catholic website gives this interpretation of the prayers of the saints in Heaven: "In heaven the elders and angels offer up the prayers of the saints [on earth] as incense before the throne of God. So this passage implies that the angels and elders (holy Christian leaders now in Heaven) hear the prayers of every Christian on earth, and join their prayer now with ours."

This type of interpretation is absurd and lacks a Biblical foundation. It is the imagination of people wanting to believe ancient pagan myths. Discerning and Bible believing Christians should not embrace the myths of heavenly saints and angels interceding and praying for us before God's throne nor should they imbibe the mysticism of dead saints sending messages to them from Heaven as they look down upon them and wish them encouragement. Those who teach these things are following what Paul termed as "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science (knowledge) falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).



Another passage that is sometimes used to teach that saints can look down on us and interact with our lives is Luke 9:30-31. The account of the Mount of Transfiguration is sometimes construed to mean that people in Heaven can see and know what is happening with other people living on earth. “And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

It's interesting that the experience of the Mount of Transfiguration was not given to necessarily teach about the afterlife but to give a preview of Christ's Second Coming in His Kingdom or when He returns to establish the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-7).

Just before the transfiguration happens, Luke 9:27 states:

“But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.”

So the real purpose for Christ's transfiguration was to demonstrate that someday He would return to rule the earth as the King. However, it's postulated from these verses that since Moses and Elijah were seen in what some term as a heavenly encounter, and they knew about Christ's impending death on earth in Jerusalem, that this means the saints in Heaven can observe and know what is occurring on earth in relation to the lives of other people. In other words, they seemed fully aware of what was transpiring on earth and what God was about to do. This would then mean that the saints in Heaven are aware of what is occurring with the lives of others, such as their own family and friends, who are still living on earth. But this again is a faulty interpretation of the event of Christ's transfiguration.

First, Moses and Elijah were not in Heaven at this point for Christ had not risen from the dead and emptied out paradise which was in the center of the earth (Eph.4:8). Moses and Elijah appeared with the Lord Jesus, but it does not conclude they are in Heaven with Him at this point. In fact, none of them were in Heaven. This was merely a prophetic snapshot of what would occur in the future when Jesus returns to earth at His Second Coming.

Second, the text says nothing of these deceased Old Testament saints knowing about the intricate details of people living on earth during the days of Jesus. Moses and Elijah did possess knowledge about Christ's death on the cross in Jerusalem. In some way, the specifics of this redemptive plan were relayed to them prior to the transfiguration experience.

DeWitt Talmage was once asked by a woman, who had just buried a daughter, a Christian girl, "Brother Talmage, do you really think that I shall ever look into her face again and recognize her?" Talmage replied, "What do you think of Heaven? Is Heaven a subtraction, or is it an addition?" In other words, do you really think that you will know less in Heaven than you do on earth? Of course, the answer to this question is that we will possess much more knowledge in the afterlife than we know during our present earthly existence. There is a vast reservoir of knowledge that awaits us when we reach the other side. The half has not been told!

We must remember that the saints will not know less in the afterlife but more about what the Bible already says concerning Christ, the future, and God's eternal purposes. However, this does not necessitate that they can visibly observe and possess intricate knowledge of the detailed events of their loved ones on earth. Bible knowledge is one thing but omniscience regarding what is occurring in the lives of people on earth is another thing. We must think theologically with our heads and not with our hearts!



The saints are not God. The idea that saints can see what is occurring everywhere on earth implies that they have become like God and possess omniscience in the

afterlife. This is not the case. As previously mentioned, only God is omniscient and can see people living in the world and the events of the earth unfolding before His eyes (Ps. 14:2; 22:18; 34:15; 139; Matt. 6:25-34; 1 Pet. 3:12; Heb. 4:13; Rev. 2:2, 9, 1, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). Only God can view people and earthy events from His heavenly position.

Psalm 14:2

“The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.”

Psalm 33:13-14

“The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.”

Proverbs 15:3

“The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”

Jeremiah 32:19

“Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes *are* open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

The Bible never once teaches that God’s saints can see us on earth and observe the events occurring anywhere in God’s universe. Omniscience is an attribute reserved for God alone.

Hebrews 4:13 specifically assigns omniscience to God which relates to Him seeing everyone and everything that is occurring on earth: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

Only God is omniscient and can see or observe everything that is occurring in the universe. He does not pass this incommunicable attribute on to the saints. Therefore, heavenly saints do not possess omniscience as God does regarding the events occurring on earth and throughout the universe. Only God is omniscient. Omniscience is not communicated to the saints – not even the saints in Heaven.

John 1:48

“Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.”

Jesus as God was omniscient and therefore could know everything that was occurring with Nathaniel’s life. The saints are not omniscient like God and therefore cannot know what is occurring with all the specific events and details of the lives of people.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:29

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (*without the involvement of the will of the Father*).

God’s sovereignty extends to every minute detail. Not one sparrow dies without the Father will, which would in His providence also include His special knowledge and presence as He watches over His creation. As someone has said, “God attends the funeral of every sparrow.”

Jesus is teaching that God providentially controls the timing and circumstances of such insignificant events as the death of a sparrow. Even the number of hairs on our heads is controlled by His sovereign will (“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered” - Matt. 10:30). In other words, divine providence governs even the smallest details and the most mundane matters related to our lives. These affirmations of the sovereignty of God are very powerful but they include the truth that only God knows what is occurring for He ordained it to be so.

Once again, you would have to be God to know everything that is occurring on earth but the saints in Heaven are not God even though they possess perfect knowledge about God’s ways, holiness, and righteous works. It’s not my intent to ride a hobby horse, but I need set the record straight. We are not omniscient like God today nor will we be omniscient like God when we are in Heaven. To believe that the saints above can know and view everything or even some things that are occurring on earth in relation to the lives of other people is placing them on the same level as God!

Another passage that is misinterpreted is Luke 16. It is wrongly assumed that the rich man's account in the afterlife and the knowledge he possessed of his family confirms that we can know what is occurring with the lives of family members on earth and others during the afterlife.

A Prayer From Hell (Luke 16:27-28)



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

This is rather startling. A person in hell is praying for the salvation of people who are still living on earth. We might call this "A Prayer from Hell." Hell is so

bad that this man does not want his family to end up in this awful place of torment. Listen, if people in Hell can pray for the salvation of others, cannot we engage in the intercession for those who are lost and headed toward Hell?

Yes, Luke 16 speaks of the rich man asking Abraham to send Lazarus to his family to warn them about their impending doom and judgment. However, his request is based upon his past recollection of his family's lack of spiritual life when he lived on earth with them. It was not based on him observing his family after he died. The passage never says that the rich man could see his brothers; he knew he had brothers, and he knew they were unbelievers. This is all the text says. Don't turn it into a pretext and make it say something it does not say. The old saying is true: "A text without a context is a pretext."

I create a pretext when I read something into the Scripture (eisegesis) and do not give the text its intended meaning (exegesis). In other words, a Scripture read without thought to the surrounding verses and proper interpretation is easily misconstrued. When I create a pretext, I am making the Bible say something I want it to say! We must study the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27) on a given subject and not force a meaning out of one text of Scripture which is contrary to other Scriptures.

The passage of 1 Samuel 28:15-20 is another text sometimes used to promote how the heavenly saints possess knowledge of events occurring on earth and in relation to the lives of their loved ones. “And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted (*disturbed*) 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. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? 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: 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.

“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. Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.”

Commentators disagree as to what actually happened in this Biblical narrative. Some feel that this was an apparition where an evil spirit impersonated Samuel the prophet, while others believe that God interrupted the séance unexpectedly by allowing the real Samuel to appear. It seems that in this case there was no demonic necromancy but a miracle that actually occurred by God’s divine intervention. How do we know this? First, the medium was startled by the sudden appearance of Samuel in place of the familiar spirits with whom she was used to dealing (1 Sam.

28:12). Second, the text specifies that it was Samuel (1 Sam. 28:15). Third, Samuel prophesied accurately what would happen the following day.

In other words, Samuel confirmed Saul's deepest fears. The kingdom would be taken from him and given to David, as he had been told earlier. The Philistines would defeat Israel the next day, and Saul and his sons would join Samuel in death. Of course, this does not mean that they shared the same eternal destiny. If we judge them by their fruits, it would appear that Saul was an unbeliever whereas Jonathan was a man of faith. Ultimately "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

The 1 Samuel 28 passage describes a unique and unusual occurrence where Samuel was summoned from the dead and came back to respond to Saul. On this rare occasion, God actually allowed the deceased prophet Samuel who was in the afterlife to communicate with Saul. Of course, Saul was wrong to seek the help of a medium to begin with. Scripture strictly forbids this practice of calling up the dead which is known as necromancy (Deut. 18:10-12; Lev. 19:31; 20:27).

Did Samuel who was in Paradise (the dwelling place of Old Testament saints) know what was happening on earth because he could visually see the events of the life of Saul? The answer is no. Samuel's responses to Saul do not describe the current conditions that were happening on earth in relation to Saul's life but what would happen in the near future. His knowledge was based on a message he apparently received from God that Saul and Israel would go down in defeat and Samuel was simply conveying this message to Saul. So, not even the prophet Samuel could visibly see the events of Saul's life transpiring on earth. He only relayed the message God gave to him. This unique occurrence does not in any way allow for the dead to see what is happening on earth and know the intricate events of those who are living on earth.

Another blogger wrote:

"Do dead loved ones hear us or see us? Yes. They absolutely do. The moment the thought of them enters our minds and hearts they are there, listening, loving us and responding to us as best they can within the confines of our 3D world. Sometimes we cannot interpret their message because we are so filled with loss, remorse, regret and grief or just our human stubbornness and disbelief. Sometimes we are so desperate to "see the signs" that we tend to overlook what is right in our

faces. But know this, love transcends all, even death. And the ones we love and who loves us are always with us. Take comfort in this, even if we cannot interpret their communication to us, they are always trying to reach out, to guide and console us.”

As we have seen, this is not what the Bible teaches.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 concludes:

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.”

Even though Solomon was writing from the perspective of “under the sun” and “vanity” or emptiness (Eccl. 1:2-3, 9; 2:11) he was stating an important and true observation about the dead. They don’t know what is occurring with their families and friends which are still living on earth. Of course, the cults like to use this verse to prove annihilationism, but Solomon did not believe in soul sleep or the extinction of the soul (Eccl. 12:7). He was simply conveying the reality that when a person dies, they do not know anything about the specific details that are happening in this present world.

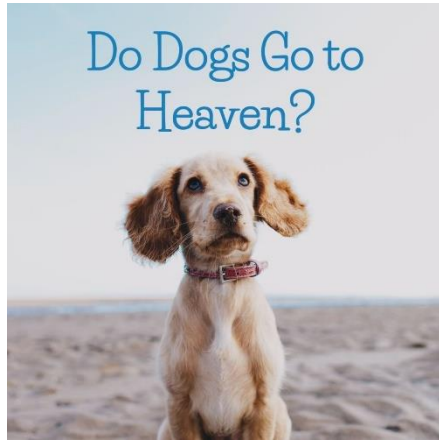
This is a statement of fact. Solomon observed that they go to another place and live in another realm and no longer possess specific knowledge of what is occurring with their family and friends. Eventually, as others continue to die and pass into the next life, the memory of the deceased is eventually forgotten. It is true, “the dead know not any thing” of what is occurring in relation to the lives of people on earth. They are missing in action and cannot see past the veil.

I’ve been studying the Bible for over 40 years and don’t know of any Scriptural evidence that directly states or even implies that the saints in Heaven know the detailed events of the lives of their loved ones who are still on earth. This type of interpretation is a figment of a person’s imagination. It’s no different than believing that we become angels in the next life or that your dog Fido goes to Heaven when he dies.

One blogger said this:

“The first time I had a cardiac arrest, I had the sensation of traveling up a tunnel of light to a chamber where I was greeted by my deceased cat, Clementine. I petted

her and asked whether my mom was there. “Meow,” Clemmie replied. Then I asked whether I was in heaven or hell. The answer was “Meow.” About that time I woke up to EMTs pounding on my chest.”



This raises another question, “Do our pets go to Heaven when they die? Many pet owners refer to “going over the rainbow bridge” when they speak of the death of a beloved pet on social media. They claim that losing a pet is losing a family member, and this saying or poem is one place some people find meaning as they grieve.

“When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge.

There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.

“All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor. Those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.

“They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent. His eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

“You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart. Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together.”

Of course, this is poppycock! It is absolute nonsense. The Bible is very clear about animals dying. They don’t go to Heaven or Hell – they go back to the dust.

Ecclesiastes 3:21

“Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast (*animal*) that goeth downward to the earth?”

Solomon again observed that although people live on or continue to exist in the next life (“the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” - Eccl. 12:7) the life principle in your animals, like your dog Fido, go back to dust (“downward to the earth”) and no longer exist. The lifespan and life principle in animals is only limited to their existence on earth. This is because the Bible only reveals that God “created man in his image” (Gen. 2:7) and part of this image or likeness involves perpetuity of life (an eternal soul). Animals were not created in God’s image and therefore lack this distinct life principle.

A little girl asked a man if her pet dog would be in Heaven. He answered her Bible question in this way, “If you think you will need him in Heaven, then He will be there.” Now, that was a sweet and soft answer but why not teach the girl the truth? Your pet goldfish is not going to ascend to Heaven when it dies and swim around as a spirit goldfish in the river of life. As Dr. Lehman Strauss used to say, “Let’s study our Bibles!”

There are many unbiblical conclusions about death and Heaven which are based upon mere conjecture and emotions – not factual statements and conclusions from the Bible. This includes the notion that our loved ones in Heaven are watching us live out every detail of our lives on earth. I don’t want to pop your bubble, but grandma and grandpa are not watching your son hit a home run in the little league. We would like to think so, but we cannot run on emotions, we must run to the Scriptures and discover what the Bible says concerning these things. Even during sad and emotional times we must learn to plug our minds into the Scriptures so we can maintain Biblical accuracy in our thinking.

The Bible says, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8) which gives the clear implication that when we leave this body we are with the Lord and no longer associate with the things of this life on earth, including our loved ones (Phil. 1:23). David declared in 2 Samuel 12:23, “But now he is dead (*his son*), wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” David concluded that his son would not return to him, which

clearly implies that there would be no communication or knowledge between the two until they meet in the afterlife.

This again confirms that the deceased do not know about the intricate details of our lives on earth. This is because there is a great veil between us and them. Paul also taught that we are to comfort one another with the future prospect of seeing our loved ones in Christ (1 Thess. 4:17-18) which again confirms that there would be no awareness, knowledge, and communication between the saints below and the saints above until we see them at the Rapture.

It's not unusual at a funeral for someone to come up to you and say, "Well, they are looking down from Heaven right now and seeing us mourn for them. I'm sure that touches their heart." Or we might hear another sentimental and sappy statement like this: "Well, they have gone into the happy hunting ground" - without any reference to God or Christ.

Again, we need to remain Biblical Christians even in times of hurt and emotional stress. In fact, we need to remember several things about Heaven.

- ✓ Heaven is not primarily centered around events on earth but the worship and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:10 is a heavenly scene:

"The four and twenty elders (the redeemed, resurrected, and rewarded Church) fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Revelation 5:11-12 reveals another heavenly scene:

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts (*living creatures – seraphim and cherubim*) and the elders (*the redeemed, raptured, and rewarded Church*): and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Our focus in Heaven will not be on earth but upon Jesus the sacrificial Lamb and our Bride and Savior! Our preoccupation will primarily revolve around heavenly – not earth matters.

- ✓ In Heaven and throughout eternity God will make all things new for His saints.

Revelation 21:4-5

“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. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

In Heaven and throughout eternity all things will be new (Greek is “kainos” which means fresh, of a new kind”). This does not mean we will become omniscient like God and visibly see and know everything that is happening on earth and in the universe. What it means is that everything will be new in comparison to what we have previously experienced on earth and in our former lives (“for the former things are passed away” – Rev. 21:4). Furthermore, all things will be new in the sense that we will rest in God’s perfect justice and purpose for all things and peoples and throughout eternity we will not question God’s sovereignty and eternal purposes.

It's apparent that our *heavenly experience* of joy, bliss, peace, no pain, no disease, and no sorrow or crying is not going to change prior to or after the Eternal State begins. Essentially, when we enter Heaven at death or when we receive our glorified bodies at the Rapture and enter Heaven (1 John 3:2), we are going to enjoy the new things mentioned in Revelation 21:4. My point is this. Since all things become new when we reach Heaven and eventually pass into the Eternal State, it certainly implies that we won't be able to see when our sons and daughters are experiencing hardships on earth nor visibly see people suffering in Hell for all eternity.

Why is this? It's because this type of thing is not conducive to our experience in Heaven and the Eternal State where there will be no more sorrow and crying. The earthly flaws and sorrows related to sinful humanity will no longer be the focus of

God's redeemed in their new heavenly and eternal state. We will not experience any sorrow ourselves nor be introduced to the sorrow of others through possessing a visual perception of our loved ones suffering on earth.

Some conclude we could see from Heaven what is happening on earth with the lives of our loved ones, but at the same time rest in God's purposes for them, since we will view everything from His perspective. Of course, even though we will view suffering and eternity from God's viewpoint, it does not mean we will visibly see what is occurring everywhere on earth and in the universe. It's interesting that nothing is said that we will share God's omniscience in Heaven or the Eternal State and be able to witness earthly and hellish scenes occurring throughout the entire universe. I don't see the saints sharing any of God's universal omniscience in the list of Revelation 21:4! Omniscience is not related to our glorification and heavenly existence.

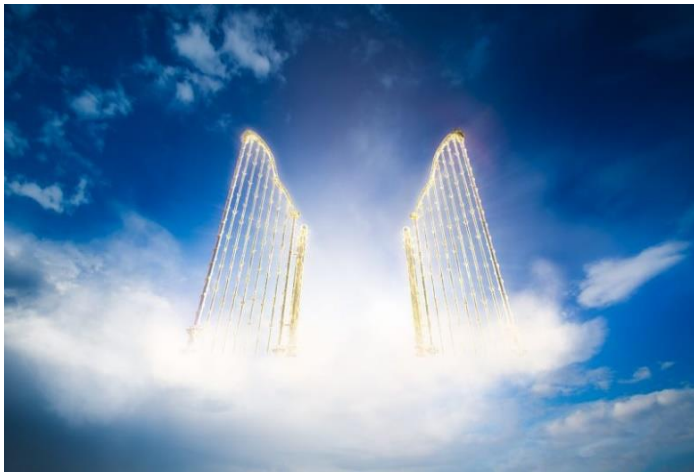
Of course, the fact that "all things are new" (Rev. 21:5) does not mean the memories of our loved ones will be obliterated from our minds. What it means is that we won't be able to look down from Heaven and be worried about the trials our loved ones are passing through. We will not be overcome with sadness concerning the illnesses and hardships our loved ones might be experiencing whom we left behind on earth. It also means we won't grieve over the fate of the unsaved or if our friend has not gotten saved who is still living on earth.

Why is this? One reason is because we are not given the privilege to peek through the veil and see our loved ones suffering and passing through hard times. Again, we "depart" from our loved ones to live with Christ as Paul teaches and are no longer present on earth (Phil. 1:23). This infers that we do not possess the same knowledge or awareness of what is occurring in relation to their lives on earth. The other reason is that we will have a new and perfect understanding and acceptance of God's purposes and view everything from His eternal perspective. We will rest in His sovereignty over all things and Christ will be our focus (Rev. 5:12).

In conclusion, we should not elevate sentiment and speculation above the revelation of the Scriptures. God's heavenly saints, though



possessing greater knowledge of God's purposes and ways are still not omniscient (all-knowing). This attribute is not communicated to the saints but is the prerogative or exclusive right of God alone (Ps. 139:1-4. Heb. 4:13). This means the saints in Heaven cannot look down on earth and observe all the events occurring in the world and with the lives of their loved ones. They must wait until they meet their loved ones again and are reunited on that great reunion day at the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:17-18) or when they meet on the heavenly shore of Glory. We can trust God on this. We can believe His word, and we can enjoy the blessed and precious memories of our loved ones until we see them again at the Rapture or in Heaven.



“On the happy, golden shore,
Where the faithful part no more,
When the storms of life are o'er,
Meet me there,
Where the night dissolves away
Into pure and perfect day,
I am going home to stay,
Meet me there.”