

## **Will We Recognize Each Other in Heaven?** (Words of Hope and Comfort)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

I remember fellowshiping with various Christians one day while visiting a Bible church. They began talking about Heaven. One Christian man brought up the question, "Will we actually know each other in Heaven?" They stared at one another with blank faces and began to wonder if we really could know each other after death.

I was amazed at the interaction of some of these saints. They seemed to be in limbo regarding this matter. Some of them concluded, "We really cannot know whether or not we will recognize each other in Heaven, since the Bible is silent on this matter." So, in their opinion, we can be sure that we are going to Heaven, but we cannot be sure that we will know anyone when we get there!

Will we recognize each other in Heaven? This question has intrigued the saints down through the years. Will we actually recognize each other in Heaven and be able to fellowship with our loved ones on the other side? It's interesting that the Bible does not raise the question about knowing each other in Heaven. God's saints raise this question. The Bible suggests that it should be automatically understood and universally believed or accepted that all of God's redeemed will recognize each other in Heaven.

In fact, all of the reformers and great theologians have always accepted the truth about the recognition of others after death. Nevertheless, the Bible does give us some specific light on this subject and we must remember that there is no authority other than the Word of God on this matter. It seems very clear that we will know each other in Heaven. The Bible never teaches that God created man to be buried in a black hole without memory, intellect, and imagination. We will live on forever and we will know one another in Glory.

Someone asked George MacDonald the question, "Shall we know one another in that life?" His pertinent reply was, "Shall we be greater fools in

Paradise than we are here?" Dearly beloved, separation is the law of the earth but reunion is the law of Heaven!

The Bible teaches we will recognize one another in Heaven. There are seven lines of proof that there is recognition in the afterlife. Let me share them with you. I trust they will bring comfort, hope, assurance, and faith to the hearts of those who have lost a loved one in the Lord and who are presently grieving over this loss. Yes, we will know our loved ones on the other side!

### **Old Testament Saints and the Afterlife**

Luke 16:22 records these words:

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried."

Abraham's bosom or side apparently refers to a place of paradise for Old Testament believers. It was the place where Abraham's spirit went when he died because he expressed faith in God's revelation about salvation (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). This chamber where Abraham's spirit departed was at the center of the earth. It was the place where all of God's saints were kept until the triumphant death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ (Eph. 4:8).

This would be the time when Christ could officially declare the victory over Satan's power or authority to keep God's people in the realm of death (Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15). This inner chamber within the earth was apparently a temporary holding tank where Old Testament saints dwelt (Luke 23:43) until the victorious resurrection and ascension of Christ (Eph. 4:8). Jesus had to defeat death through His resurrection and take over the keys of hades to release people from this inner chamber (Rev. 1:18).

During the era of the Old Testament, we discover that Abraham and all saints went to the place which in the Hebrew language is called Sheol. It was their place of joyous reunion. The Old Testament repeatedly states that God's saints living during the pre-resurrection era would be "gathered unto their people" in this special place in the inner earth, where their spirits departed to, and where they experienced fellowship one with another.

Please notice that this place in the center of the earth is never called Heaven, as in the New Testament, but was actually a heaven-like paradise for God's saints to dwell before the resurrection and ascension of these saints into Heaven.

Genesis 25:8-9 gives this inspired record:

"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. 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."

All competent scholars agree that this cannot mean that Abraham was buried within his family's tomb (his ancestors) since he was buried far away from his own people on earth. His father lived in Ur of Chaldees but Abraham was buried in the famous cave of Machpelah in Hebron. Let's study our Bibles! Abraham was gathered to his people BEFORE his body was buried, for it was after he was gathered to his people (Genesis 25:8) that his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 25:9). This can only mean that the expression of being gathered unto his people has nothing to do with Abraham's burial plot with his ancestors but his reunion with his beloved people and saints in the afterlife.

The truth about being "gathered unto his people" would be meaningless if Abraham would not retain knowledge and recognition in the afterlife of his beloved people. The Bible teaches there is fellowship in the afterlife with the people we knew in this life. The point is this, the bodies of saints can be sleeping far apart from one another, but their spirits were now united in the afterlife or the spiritual realm of existence. This is Biblical evidence and proof that the saints are gathered together in the afterlife and that there will be recognition of one another. If we are gathered unto our people, it means that we will also recognize our people.

Isaac and Jacob were also said to be gathered unto their people in the afterlife.

Genesis 35:29

"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."

Again, notice that Isaac was first “gathered unto his people” and then he was buried after this fact. The gathering was a reference to the afterlife – not his burial among his relatives.

Genesis 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.”

While Jacob was still in Egypt, he spoke about being gathered to a different place than where his earthly family tomb was located (Machpelah). This would suggest that the gathering was not in some earthly tomb but with his people in the afterlife. Like other Old Testament saints, this weary pilgrim (Jacob) had gone to a place where he would meet with his loved ones, who had gone before him, and he would enjoy their presence and company in this special place prepared for God’s Old Testament saints. Both Isaac and Jacob were buried far away from their relatives and from each other and yet the Bible says they would be gathered together in the afterlife. This speaks of reunion and recognition of one another in the next life, the life beyond the grave.

Aaron and Moses were also said to be gathered unto their people.

Numbers 20:24

“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.”

Numbers 27:12-13

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.”

Again, the repeated phrase “gathered unto his people” would be meaningless if the saints did not recognize their people. The Bible could not be clearer on this point. The experience of Old Testament saints was one of

fellowship and recognition in the afterlife. There is conclusive evidence that we will meet one another in the afterlife and know one another, even as these Old Testament patriarchs and saints did.

This is why Jesus said to the repentant robber, “To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Christ would enter the center of the earth after His death on the cross and He would dwell with and recognize this man in the afterlife. This statement by Jesus would be meaningless if no reunion and recognition would take place in the afterlife! The identity of personality is perpetuated in the afterlife. This is why we sing today, on the post-side of Christ’s resurrection, of the hope we have of being gathered together with our saved friends in the place called 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.

Here our fondest hopes are vain,  
Dearest links are rent in twain,  
But in heav’n no throb of pain, meet me there,  
By the river sparkling bright  
In the city of delight,  
Where our faith is lost in sight, meet me there.

Where the songs of angels ring,  
And the blest forever sing,  
In the palace of the King, meet me there,  
Where in sweet communion blend  
Heart with heart, and friend with friend,  
In a world that ne’er shall end, meet me there.

Meet me there, meet me there,  
Where the tree of Life is blooming, meet me there,  
When the storms of life are o’er,  
On the happy, golden shore,  
Where the faithful part no more, meet me there.”

## **New Testament Saints and the Afterlife**

The happy golden shore for those of us living today is Heaven! When we come to the New Testament, there is the clear revelation that God's New Testament saints will meet one another someday, recognize each other, and dwell together in Heaven. Paul revealed that on the post-side of Christ's resurrection that paradise is now identified as Heaven where Christ is seated on the throne for Paul was "caught up into paradise" (2 Cor. 12:1-4). Paradise (the dwelling place of the saints) was moved from the center of the earth to the celestial city of Heaven after Christ's resurrection.

The Bible reveals that for New Testament saints there will be a reunion with our loved ones in Heaven. Paul reveals the comforting truth of meeting our loved ones again at the Rapture and then returning to the new heavenly paradise where we will dwell with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The Thessalonian Christians were apparently very concerned about seeing their saved loved ones who had died and gone on before them. Their point of concern was this. Would they see their loved ones again when Jesus returns? If Jesus were to return during their lifetime, would their loved ones, who had died and gone on before them, receive a new glorified body like theirs? Could they live together with them and would they experience the same redemption of their bodies?

Paul assured these living believers that they would someday meet their loved ones again when Jesus returns in the event called the Rapture. In fact, Jesus promised to bring these loved ones back with Him and a joyous reunion would occur between the living saints and those who had previously died. They would both receive a new body and meet together in the air. This truth was designed to bring hope and comfort to their hearts.

“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren.” Apparently God does not want us to be ignorant or misinformed about the afterlife and whether or not we will see our saved loved ones again someday. God has a wonderful plan of reunion for us! The Bible says that when Jesus returns in the Rapture, He is going to “bring with him” (vs. 14) those loved ones who had died in the Lord and together we will receive a glorified eternal body (“the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” – 1 Cor. 15:52). Following this instantaneous event (1 Cor. 15:52) a meeting or reunion in the air will take place that will bring great joy and happiness to all of our hearts. We will see our loved ones in Christ again!

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 records these happy words:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Caught up together with them! These are words of reassurance and hope. This Bible passage promises that there will be a grand reunion of all those believers who are redeemed and in Christ.

“There is going to be a meeting in the air  
In the sweet, sweet bye and bye.  
I am going to meet you, meet you over there  
In that home beyond the sky.  
Such singing you will hear never heard by mortal ear.  
'Twill be glorious, I do declare.  
And God's own son will be the leading one  
At the meeting in the air.”

The text would indicate that God’s saints will know each other when they meet together in the air and share in a joyous reunion of gladness (“shall be caught up together with them”). The very fact that this will be a reunion indicates that there will be recognition in the afterlife. Whoever heard of a reunion where nobody knew each other!

Paul indicates that we will see and recognize our loved ones again who have died and gone on to Heaven before us. Death breaks ties on earth but the Rapture renews them in Heaven and throughout eternity. The circle will not be broken! There will be a reunion together and we will rejoice in seeing one another again when Jesus returns and reunites us. What a glorious prospect we have! Seeing our loved ones again will bring great joy to our hearts and lives. In fact, we should comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 says:

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”

A few days before his death, Dr. F. B. Meyer wrote a very dear friend these words: "I have just heard, to my great surprise, that I have but a few days to live. It may be that before this reaches you, I shall have entered the palace. Don't trouble to write. We shall meet in the morning."

“Oh, what a meeting,  
There in the skies,  
No tears nor crying  
Shall dim our eyes;  
Loved ones united eternally,  
Oh, what a daybreak that morn will be.  
Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come;  
Some golden daybreak, battles all won,  
He'll shout the victory, break thro' the blue,  
Some golden daybreak,  
For me, for you.”

Dear friend, let these truths bring comfort and assurance to your heart today. We will meet and know our loved ones in the future. Jesus has promised to return, reunite us, and then take us back to Heaven to live with Him (John 14:1-3).

This entire passage in 1 Thessalonians teaches that believers will retain their identity and personality on the other side. If we would lose our identity or personality, there would be no recognition and no reunion. The writers of Scripture, such as Paul, assume that recognition in Heaven will be



a certainty. The reunion of the ransomed in the sky and then in Heaven throughout eternity is presented as a fact. These words about reunion would be meaningless without recognition. The Bible teaches that we will know each other in Heaven and enjoy the fellowship of renewed friendships among God's saints.

Elsewhere, Paul speaks of the Church as the family in Heaven.

Ephesians 3:15 states:

"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

God is the Father of this family who has believed on His Son. This verse is talking about the heavenly church family that we will see someday in Glory. The Church on earth is elsewhere called the household of God (Eph. 2:19) and the Church in Heaven is called the "the whole family in heaven." Hebrews 12:23 also speaks of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven..." Folks, who ever heard of a family where all the members were total strangers to one another? The very words household, home, and family denote that we will know one another in Heaven! There is a family togetherness in Heaven that God's redeemed will experience. Of course, out of this heavenly family relationship there will be the obvious ability to recognize and fellowship with those who are in the family of God. What a future we will have together as God's redeemed people!

Now, think about this. In a family, we certainly can recognize one another. We don't forget each other. It will be no different with the family of God in Heaven! Heaven is our home, and all who go there are one family with God as their Father. How sad if we had to live throughout eternity with strangers! It would not be home. Yes, we will recognize one another in Heaven. The Bible is very clear on this.

Dearly beloved, we will know each other in Heaven! May these Scriptures provide rest, comfort, peace, hope and assurance in our hearts knowing that someday we will see our loved ones who have died in the Lord (Rom. 15:4). The circle will not be broken. A great day or reunion is coming! Heaven's gates will open wide. And we will be joined with our loved ones

who in Jesus Christ have died. And we will enter the blessed city and finally be home. What a day, glorious day it will be!

“A dear one in heaven thy heart yearns to see,  
At the beautiful gate may be watching for thee;  
Then list to the note of this solemn refrain,  
Ye must be born again.”

The 18th-century English pastor, Rowland Hill, lived to a ripe old age. In fact, he outlived most of his friends. Missing them very much and anxious to join them on the other side, he grew more homesick for Heaven with each passing day. It seemed so long since some of them had gone to glory that he would often jokingly say with a wink, "Do you think they'll remember me?" It was not unusual for him to go to some other believer well along in years with this request: "If you should go before I do, give my love to everyone. Be sure to tell them that old Rowley, although staying behind a little while, is coming on as fast as he can."

“Friends will be there I have loved long ago;  
Joy like a river around me will flow;  
Yet just a smile from my Savior I know,  
Will thro’ the ages be glory for me.

Oh that will be glory for me,  
Glory for me, glory for me.  
When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory, glory for me.”

Paul also said in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20:

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.”

Paul knew he would not see his converts on earth anymore but that one day he would see them in Glory. He would meet them in the air at Christ’s coming, recognize them, and once again enjoy their presence and fellowship in the wonderful place called Heaven. Paul actually looked forward to seeing his beloved friends once again when Jesus returns. He

expected to be transported back to Heaven with them and enjoy their companionship throughout eternity (John 14:1-3).

In essence, Paul is teaching that the dear saints he loved are going to be “in the presence” of the Lord when Jesus returns and he was going to see them again! Should we not have the same expectancy? Should not this hope be ours as well? Should we not be rejoicing in this future reunion?

When Dr. Broadus was a boy in a little town he was converted to Christ. He had been attending some meetings, and he went to one of his playmates, Sandy Jones, a red-haired, awkward chap, the next day and said to him: “I wish you would be a Christian. Won’t you?” And Sandy said, “Well, I don’t know, perhaps I will.” And sure enough, after a little while, one night in the little church, Sandy Jones accepted God. Straightway he stalked across that little meeting house, held out his hand and said, “I thank you, John, I thank you, John.”

Dr. Broadus went out from that little town and became a great scholar, a great exegete, a great theological president. Every summer when he went home to that little town, and he hardly missed a season, I am told, this awkward, red-haired old farmer, in his plain clothes, with red sand on his boots, would come up, stick out his great bony hand and say: “Howdy, John. Thank you, John, thank you, John. I never forget, John.”

When Dr. Broadus was dying, his family around him, he said: “I rather think the sound sweetest to my ears in Heaven, next to the welcome of Him (Christ) Whom having not seen I have loved and tried to serve, will be the welcome of Sandy Jones, as he will thrust out his great hand and say: “Howdy, John. Thank you, John. I never forget.”

Paul knew that he would recognize those in Heaven whom he had led to Christ. Dear friend, it is true! We will someday experience great joy when Jesus returns, when we meet our departed loved ones, those that we have led to Christ, and are reunited with them once again. There is going to be a meeting in the air! Yes, we will meet our saved loved ones in the air and be able to communicate and fellowship with them throughout the eternal

ages of time. What a day, glorious day it will be, when we meet our loved ones.

“There’ll be no dark valley when Jesus comes,  
There’ll be no dark valley when Jesus comes,  
There’ll be no dark valley when Jesus comes,  
To gather His loved ones home.

There’ll be no more sorrow when Jesus comes,  
There’ll be no more sorrow when Jesus comes,  
But a glorious morrow when Jesus comes  
To gather His loved ones home.

There’ll be no more weeping when Jesus comes,  
There’ll be no more weeping when Jesus comes,  
But a blessed reaping when Jesus comes  
To gather His loved ones home.”

Yes, we will know one another in Heaven. In fact, there is going to be a reunion and renewed fellowship with our loved ones that we have never experienced on earth. This is because in Heaven and eternity, everything will be made fresh or new, including our restored relationships with the saints and our loved ones.

### **Newness and the afterlife**

The Bible teaches that in Heaven everything will be made new. This includes our knowledge of God’s purposes and people. We will not possess less knowledge in Heaven than we do today. Therefore, if we possess new and greater knowledge in Heaven about everything, this means that we will be able to recognize our loved ones in Heaven. This is because we won’t know less in Heaven than we know today.

Revelation 21:4-5 gives us two wonderful promises:

“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.”

This is a picture of the eternal state and the way Heaven will be throughout eternity. Heaven is the land of no more! There will be no more pain, sorrow, tears, or death! No wonder it is called “the sweet by and by.” Heaven is also going to be the land of new things! Everything will be new! This would include a state of perfection, new knowledge, and also new relationships with our loved ones. Let’s reflect on these new things for a moment.

Suppose you drove up to church, and as you pulled your 1963 junk-mobile into the parking lot, the usual cloud of smoke was ascending into the air behind your clattering tailpipe. At the same time, your best friend pulls up next to you in his new Mercedes. After you pried your door open with the screwdriver that you keep in the glove box, you try to act nonchalant in the process. You then greet your friends in the new Mercedes without even an evident glint of envy in your carbon monoxide filled eyes.

Now suppose that your friend offers to trade you even. That's right. An even trade between the cars. Your lemon for his limo. No cost. No strings attached. How long would you have to ponder whether or not you would take his offer? Why, you would not think twice about it. Folks, someday, we are going to get a limousine for a lemon! We are going to get everything new to replace everything that is battered, bad, and worn out in our lives!

Sadly, some have misinterpreted the meaning of this Bible passage to support the theory that we will not know each other in Heaven. I’m surprised when the promise concerning the former things passing away is misconstrued to support the idea that there will be loss of memory and the inability to recognize each other in Heaven. Of course, many other Bible texts clearly refute this interpretation. The former things in this context are talking about the absence of death, sorrow, tears, and pain – not the absence of the memory of our loved ones. The text does not say we will forget old relationships.

Also, the fact that God says “I make all things new” does not mean that we are given a blank screen of our past lives and will not have any understanding or memory of our previous friendships and marriages. This is a total misunderstanding and misrepresentation of what is being taught

here. It actually means the opposite. God will give a fresh screen that will enable us to understand His ways and purposes in a greater way as they relate to His eternal plan. He will also give us a new or fresh start with our relationships with our loved ones and all the saints.

When God says that everything will be made new, He means everything! Everything means that broken hearts will be forever healed and broken and battered lives will be mended forever. It means that disease and death will be a thing of the past. But it would also mean that our friendships and fellowships with our loved ones will also be made new. We will experience a newness in our fellowships that we did not possess previously. There will be no more fights, misunderstandings, ill-will toward one another. Instead, since we have been made morally perfect, we will experience a new communion and fellowship with our loved ones in Heaven, which we could not experience on earth.

In Heaven and throughout eternity, everything will be made new. We will experience a moral or spiritual newness, a physical newness, an emotional newness, a mental newness since we will be able to better understand God's eternal ways and purposes related to our own lives and His perfect ways throughout in the universe.

One man asked me if we will remember the bad things associated with our previous lives on earth (an adulterous relationship, a broken home, the drug overdose of someone close to us, the time we punched the boy in the schoolyard!). Will we still possess these bad memories and the dark spots associated with our past lives? The answer is that everything will be made new. We will not know less in Heaven, but neither will we dwell on the past with sorrow and regrets, since in Heaven and eternity our minds will be totally absorbed with God's redemption of our lives and the manifestation of His grace extended to us, not what we did in our past lives. So, our past lives, filled with sin and evil ways, will not impact us in Heaven. This is because all things will be made new, our focus and attention will not be on our past failure but God's amazing grace.

This new knowledge will enable us to rest in God's perfect justice for those people who are not in Heaven and who are suffering His eternal vengeance

in the Lake of Fire. We won't walk around being sad throughout eternity for those who have rejected Christ and are in hell. Instead, our new knowledge of God's perfect ways will enable us to live eternally with God's righteous standards upon our hearts.

Yes, everything will be new. We will also experience a relational newness with our loved ones in Heaven. This is because of our perfected and sinless state. This means that we will be able to have a type of fellowship on even a grandeur and greater scale than we had in this present life.

Again, everything will be new! There will be no more cancer and cataracts, no more sadness and sickness, but also no more misunderstanding and misinformation concerning God's perfect ways. There will also be no more fights and faultfinding between the saints. Everything will be changed! Everything will be new!

Reflect on this. The doorbell rings. You open the door. A man is standing there that you know to be the most trusted, most reliable man in your community. He wants to make you an offer. "I would like to take all of the furniture in your house," he says, "and trade it for brand new furniture. It is the very best. You can pick and choose anything you want. I'll make it an even trade." Ladies, how would you respond to this offer? You probably would say, "Game on!" Well, someday, we are going to experience everything new! Even our relationships which we possessed with others on earth, will be new and fresh.

When God says, "Behold, I make all things new," it means that we will in one sense be eternally refreshed in every area of our life (physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, relationally). To put it in computer language or lingo, we will experience an eternal reboot and refreshment from all our previous pains, sorrows, and relationships associated with this earthly life. In Heaven and throughout eternity, our body, knowledge, and relationships with our loved ones will even be made new and fresh.

Here is where this newness in Heaven applies to our study on heavenly recognition. If everything is new and we possess a greater knowledge in Heaven about everything, then we will surely be able to possess the ability

to recognize our loved ones when we get there! We will not know less in Heaven than we did while living here on earth with our limited knowledge.

As previously mentioned, we will also possess a state of perfection and purity in Heaven which will result in wonderful fellowship with the saints of bygone years. Even our relationships with our loved ones will be made fresh, new, and wonderful.

“Loved ones upon that shore I’ll meet,  
Casting their crowns at Jesus’ feet;  
I’ll worship and praise Him forever more,  
In my beautiful, beautiful home.

Home, sweet home,  
Home, sweet home.  
Where I’ll never roam!  
I see the light of the city so bright.  
My home, sweet home.”

### **Memory and the Afterlife**

When John Owen, the great Puritan, lay on his deathbed his secretary wrote (in his name) to a friend, "I am still in the land of the living." "Stop," said Owen. "Change that and say, I am yet in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living."

Yes, Heaven is a wonderful place. It’s the land of endless living and day, it’s the place where the roses never fade! In this point, we discover that the Bible teaches that in the afterlife we will retain the memory of our previous life and friendships. Heaven is not a blank screen of the past but a continued awareness of the events and people God has allowed to come into our lives.

The fact that we will retain our memory after death is another indicator that we will know one another in the afterlife. This is true even of those who die and enter the place of suffering that we generally call hell. When the unsaved rich man died and went to the place called Hades his memory was still intact.



Luke 16:23-28 records:

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. 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.”

The liberal and pseudo side of Christianity, which rejects a literal hell and judgment for the unsaved, tries to teach that since this is a parable, we cannot fully grasp what Jesus was teaching regarding the afterlife. He surely was not teaching about judgment in the afterlife since this does not align itself with a loving God. Of course, the problem with the liberals is that they are liberal and reject the clear revelation of the Bible.

First, we cannot be sure that this is a parable. Jesus names specific people in this parable, such as Abraham and Lazarus, which is not usual in any other parables. Second, if Jesus was speaking in a parable (telling a story), it does not mean that everything in the parable must automatically be construed as a symbolic description of something that could never literally occur.

Those who contend that Jesus' description of hell is symbolic and therefore untrue, conveniently forget that when Jesus used common illustrations in parables, He always used them to point to something that was literal. It's interesting that most things mentioned in the parables that Jesus gave were things that literally do occur, such as the singing in the presence of angels over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:1-23). Therefore, we should not possess the idea that the events in Jesus' parables could never occur in a literal fashion. Instead, they are given to portray a literal reality.

Here is the point. If this is a parable, it makes no difference regarding the afterlife. It does not change the teaching about hell or paradise. This is because the Bible elsewhere clarifies there is a literal place called hell and future judgment of the lost (Heb. 9:27; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:11-15). What Jesus teaches here just adds to the scores of other references that teach about judgment, hell, and the Lake of Fire in the next life for those who reject God's saving grace.

Once again, the fact that when Jesus spoke in parables does not eliminate the literal understanding of people and places. For instance, Jesus also used the metaphor of sheep and goats to describe literal people who are living at His Second Coming (Matt. 25:31-46). The descriptive names of sheep and goats relate to those who are saved and lost. Jesus spoke of real people who would experience a real destiny of Heaven or hell. It would be no different in the case of Luke 16, with Lazarus and the rich man, if Jesus is speaking in a parable. The description of these people and the events associated with Luke 16 are true. They are not a fairy tale.

According to a recent Gallop Poll, the number of Americans that believe in hell is up from 54% in 1965 to 73% today. The problem isn't that postmodern people don't believe in hell; it is that they don't think they will go there. In 1965, 17% thought they were headed there, today only 6% see it as their destiny. The good news is that they don't have to go there.

Now what does this passage of scripture in Luke say about the afterlife? The teaching of Jesus reveals that this rich man remembered Abraham and Lazarus for the Bible states that he "seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." This means that his memory of these people were still intact in the afterlife. Also, what Abraham said to this man indicates this rich man could remember that occurred in the previous life ("Son, remember" – vs. 25). This account indicates that our memory of others will continue to exist after death. This man also knew that he had five brothers ("five brethren" – vs. 28) on earth that needed to be warned and saved from the awful fate and judgment of God.

This teaches that our memory will remain intact after death and that recognition will be part of this memory process. The afterlife does not

change what we knew in this life. In the afterlife, our personalities will go on with the same information we have stored in our minds today. We will remember our wife, husband, son, daughter, sisters, family reunions, and Christmas gatherings.

Of course, God's saints will have their minds redeemed from the limitations that sin has imposed upon them and they will not be capable of dwelling upon sin, so as to lust after it, and be spiritually defeated and overcome by it. As we have already mentioned, "All things will be made new" (Rev. 21:5) in respect to our old way of life under the Genesis curse for Revelation 22:3 records, "And there shall be no more curse" experienced in Heaven and our eternal state. The point is that we will retain our memory of others in the life beyond the grave while at the same time rest in the perfect providence of God over our lives.

In Revelation 6:10, the martyrs in Heaven, prior to their bodily resurrection, are asking God to avenge those who are dwelling upon the earth and who have killed them. "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?" This is another indication that we will retain memory of our present earthly existence and those who we previously had contact with in this life. When we are in Heaven, there will be a general awareness of the way God is moving on earth and what has occurred on earth in connection with our lives.

All of this indicates that we will have the capacity to remember and recognize one another in the afterlife. If we can remember about certain events which we have passed through in this life and the people we have encountered on earth, this surely means that we will certainly be able to recognize them in Heaven! Scriptures that teach about retaining memory in the afterlife would lead to the conclusion that there will also be recognition of each other in the afterlife. One presupposes the other.

Here is something else to reflect on. All the songs of the redeemed and ransomed in Heaven that are recorded in the Book of Revelation also indicate that our earthly memory will be retained in Glory. God's redeemed saints will remember that they were washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 5:9

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

The greatest memory of all in Heaven will revolve around what Jesus Christ has done for each one of us to keep us out of hell and get us into Heaven. Together, the saints will remember, not only one another, but the very One who died for them and made them fit for Heaven.

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise  
Than when we’d first begun.”

The implication is this, memory will not be lost in Heaven, including the memory related to our redemption and recognition of others. Yes, we will recognize one another in Heaven. We can be sure about this. The Bible is very clear on this matter.

Cicero wrote:

“For my own part, I feel myself transported with the most ardent impatience to join the society of my two departed friends. O, glorious day! when I shall retire from this slow and sordid scene, to assemble with the divine congregation of departed spirits; and not with those only whom I have just mentioned, but with my dear Cato, that best of sons and most valuable of men! . . . If I seemed to bear his death with fortitude, it was by no means that I did not most sensibly feel the loss I had sustained: It was because I supported myself with the consoling reflection that we could not long be separated.”

Yes, we will know one another in Heaven. In fact, the Bible also states that we will be rewarded for the services that we have rendered toward others. If this is true, then it’s also true that we will remember the people we have served and reached out to in this life.

Revelation 14:13 reveals:

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

The memory of what we have done in this life and those whom we have served, while living like Jesus Christ, supports the truth that we will recognize each other in Heaven. The Bible teaches that our works or deeds of service done for the Lord will follow us into Heaven and throughout eternity in the form of eternal reward. When believers go to Heaven the record of their diligent labors will follow them in that they will reap in accordance with the way that they have sown (2 Cor. 9:6).

Since there is eternal reward in the next life for the services we have expressed unto to others in this present life on earth (Heb. 6:10; Rev. 22:12), it necessitates that we will remember those we have served. All of this indicates that our earthly memories will remain intact. We will remember how we served (2 Tim. 4:7), whom we served (Matt. 25:40), and what we have done for the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). We will remember how we reached out and served others in this life when God rewards us. Our memories will not be blanked out but we will remember HOW we have served and WHOM we have served.

Matthew 10:41

“He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.”

When Jesus says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21) we will know what Jesus is talking about! The very fact that we are rewarded for serving others informs us that our memory will be retained in the next life concerning our former existence and earthly service toward others. The whole teaching about receiving rewards for serving others becomes senseless if we do not retain our memory of others in the next life.

Think of it this way. if we are rewarded for serving others and remember the one's we have served and led to Christ, as Paul suggests in (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20), then we will also most certainly remember our own family members and friends that we have served, loved, and lived with for so many years. Dear child of God, the memory of your loved ones will not be lost and you will recognize them some day and greatly rejoice when seeing them again in Heaven.

“In the sweet by and by,  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore;  
In the sweet by and by,  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.”

### **Recognition and the Afterlife**

As mentioned previously, since we will possess memory in the next life, we will also possess the ability to recognize our loves ones who are dwelling with us in Heaven. What does the Bible actually say about recognizing people in the afterlife? The Bible gives many examples of this which should reassure us that we will recognize our loves ones in the afterlife.

We have already studied how New Testament saints will be caught up together with their loved ones and experience a wonderful reunion together (1 Thess. 4:13-18). However, there are some other specific examples found in Scripture which bring out the truth of recognition in the afterlife.

#### **1. The Recognition of Moses and Elijah**

You will remember that Peter, James and John saw Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Of course, these two men had died centuries ago. And yet both Elijah and Moses knew each other and the disciples obviously knew who Elijah and Moses were.

Mark 9:1-5 records the account:

“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. And after six days Jesus taketh *with him*

Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

This is a type of snapshot and preview of the afterlife, what it will be like at Christ’s Second Coming, the time when God’s redeemed saints, many of them in their eternal glorified bodies, will dwell together on the earth. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” What was about to happen was a preview of what it will be like at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

In this mountaintop experience, portraying saints in the afterlife, Peter, James, and John knew who Elijah and Moses were even though they never met them in this life. And dear friend, there were no introductions! There was no need for nametags! Think of this, dearly beloved. Although the spirit of Moses went to the afterlife five centuries before Elijah, they came together as old pals and fellow-workers who knew each other! Also, without any introductions, Peter, James, and John knew these great heroes of the faith. All of this means there is contact and recognition in the afterlife.

Some suggest that these Old Testament saints were resurrected but we must remember that Elijah never died like Moses, so he could not be resurrected. What is clear is that in the spirit world of the afterlife there is recognition. We learn from this mountaintop experience that in the afterlife there will obviously be an intuitive knowledge (full understanding) between the saints of all the ages.

We will be given the ability to know those saints whom we have not known previously in this life. In other words, we will be able to identify and recognize the saints of who have lived throughout the centuries, even those who we never made contact with.

Yes, we will know each other in Heaven and throughout eternity! We will know those who have gone on before us and even after us. Apparently we will possess a new knowledge (Rev. 21:5) so that we will be able to know and identify all of God's redeemed of all the ages like Elijah, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Gideon. In fact, this new knowledge would likely apply to young children and babies who have died and gone to Heaven. There will obviously be recognition of them in their heavenly and eternal state. We will know them even if we have never seen them grow up and mature in life. More on this later.

Martin Luther, the night before he died, was reasonably well, and sat with his friends at table. The matter of their discourse was, whether we shall know one another in heaven or not. Luther held it affirmatively, and this was one reason he gave: "Adam, as soon as he saw Eve, knew what she was, not by discourse, but by Divine revelation; so shall we in the life to come." What Luther said is likely to be true regarding those saints that we have never met or talked with. Think of how wonderful it will be to automatically recognize Paul the apostle and the saints of all the ages! This is why we sing:

"When we all get to Heaven  
What a day of rejoicing that will be  
When we all see Jesus  
We'll sing and shout the victory."

Knowing each other in Heaven is a wonderful and comforting truth to embrace for all of us who know the Lord. We will certainly recognize our loved ones in the afterlife and all of God's redeemed. Heaven and eternity will be a place of full recognition and full knowledge.

Someone asked G. Campbell Morgan, "Do you think we will know our loved ones in heaven? Dr. Morgan in his truly British manner answered, "I do not expect to be a bigger fool in heaven than I am here, and I know my loved ones here."

## **2. The recognition of Christ**

We also read in Scriptures how the disciples recognized Christ after His resurrection from the dead.



Luke 24:36-40

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet.”

Luke 24:51-52

“And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

Christ was clearly recognized by these people, and many more, after His resurrection. Since we will be raised from the dead someday and receive a resurrection body like Jesus (Phil. 3:20-21), we too can be sure that we will be recognized in our eternal body. We will mention this later in another point when we talk about the resurrection body and what it will be like. However, it's clear from this Bible reference that there will be recognition in the afterlife and throughout eternity.

In the case of Christ, He was the first to be raised from the dead to possess an eternal body, and God's people on earth not only recognized Him, but all of God's people in Heaven will recognize Him. We will be able to recognize Jesus even though we have never seen Him! In fact, Jesus will maintain the wounds in His hands and feet as an eternal reminder of His gracious sacrifice on our behalf.

Zechariah 13:6

“And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.”

The prints of Calvary appeared on Christ's glorified body and they are still there (Rev. 5:6, 9, 12). In 1891 Fanny Crosby wrote these words:

“I shall know Him, I shall know Him,  
And redeemed by His side I shall stand,  
I shall know Him, I shall know Him,  
By the print of the nails in His hand.”

Yes, we will know Jesus Christ! And if this is true, we will also know one another throughout eternity. We will know our earthly acquaintances and be overjoyed when recognizing and fellowshiping with them.

### **3. The recognition of Samuel**

We now need to attend a séance. Don't be alarmed. We are not going to do a séance but we are going to look at what happened one day long ago when a medium tried to contact the dead. Mediums are people who communicate with the dead, and spiritists are those who communicate with evil spirits. The Mosaic Law prescribed death for mediums and spiritists because God promised to give His people all the information He wanted them to have about the future from prophets (Deuteronomy 18). It was unwise, even dangerous and forbidden, for the people to seek more information from these other sources. However, we discover that King Saul disobeyed the law of God and went to a medium.

Publicly Saul was against these diviners (v. 3), but privately he now sought one out. This is hypocrisy.

1 Samuel 28:8-17 gives us the account:

“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. 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?

“And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 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. 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. 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.

“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. 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.”

In the Biblical account, when Saul failed to get any response from the LORD, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets (1 Samuel 28:3-8), he sought out a spirit medium. The problem was that earlier he had ordered all the mediums in Israel killed or exiled, according to the law. Therefore, when a medium was located in the nearby town of En Dor, Saul disguised himself and went to her to seek counsel from the dead regarding upcoming battle with the Philistines.

Here is a practical note to consider about this account of trying to find out about the future. We know that Samuel had knowledge of Saul’s future because he was a prophet. However, nothing in Scripture indicates that demons know any more about the future than what God has revealed to people. Of course, there is an important lesson here. There are some things concerning the future that we are better off not knowing and being ignorant about. In this case, Saul would probably have been better off not knowing he would die the next day. It’s interesting that even after knowing this, Saul still went into battle evidently convinced that he could alter the will of God in some way. Saul still had not learned that God was to be his sovereign master.

Well, this is a rather bizarre event in the life of King Saul who tried to use a medium to call up Samuel from the dead. The normal process of necromancy (contacting the dead through demons) would not get true results. Instead, demons would mimic ancestors and try and deceive those who wanted to contact the dead. This is because they are lying spirits.

Biblical expositors and commentators disagree as to what actually happened here. Some feel that an evil spirit impersonated Samuel, which is what actually occurs in séances (demons impersonate dead loved ones to fool and lead those who are living astray). Some have suggested that the woman tricked Saul into thinking that the person he saw was Samuel. Others believe that God interrupted the séance unexpectedly by allowing the real Samuel to appear and speak. I believe the Bible is teaching that this witch or medium did contact Samuel. There are several reasons to come to this conclusion.

First, the medium was startled by the sudden appearance of Samuel in place of the familiar spirits (demons) with whom she was used to dealing. This implies that she did not really expect to raise up Samuel but only a satanic imitation. Necromancers or mediums have no real power over the deceased. They can only produce counterfeit voices and reproductions of the deceased through demons throwing their voices and impersonating people.

Second, the text specifies that it was Samuel. This leads us to believe that it was actually Samuel. The medium saw Samuel, or his apparition, coming up out of the earth (what is known as the netherworld). The ancients connected the area under the surface of the earth with the place of departed spirits because they buried people under the surface of the earth.

Third, the spirit prophesied accurately what would happen the following day. Israel would be defeated, Saul would be killed, and David would become King. You cannot make up this stuff! On this rare occasion, God allowed a spirit medium (a Satanist) to contact the realm of the underworld, where Samuel was residing, prior to the resurrection of Christ. Samuel appeared in some type of visionary form or apparition and spoke with King Saul. Of course, God does not normally perform this type of

action which involves bringing someone back from the dead (Heb. 9:27). However, while the Bible was being written, He sometimes allowed visions and other unique occurrence to take place, to reveal and communicate His Word. Today, such occurrences are not necessary (1 Cor. 13:10).

What does this incident tell us about summoning the dead through mediums? It certainly does not mean that we can use a medium to contact our loved ones. In fact, we will expose ourselves to demonism if we pursue this type of thing.

Baldwin states:

“The incident does not tell us anything about the veracity of claims to consult the dead on the part of mediums, because the indications are that this was an extraordinary event for her, and a frightening one because she was not in control.”

In this case, God was in control! We could say many more things about this experience. However, what I want you to see is that King Saul actually recognized Samuel, who was now in the afterlife. When the witch of Endor summoned Samuel from the realm of the dead, Samuel was known and recognized by King Saul. This is yet another Biblical account that confirms there will be recognition in the afterlife. There can be no doubt about it. We will know each other on the other side! As we turn throughout the pages of the Bible, we repeatedly discover that God’s Word informs us that there will be recognition in the afterlife. If we truly believe God’s Word is the final authority on everything, then we will believe that we will know our loves ones in the next life.

#### **4. The recognition of children**

Many people have always had questions about children and the afterlife. Do babies go to Heaven, and if so, how do they appear in Heaven? What age would they be? Will there be little children in Heaven? Will God allow aborted babies to grow up in Heaven? What about that mother who lost a baby in the birthing process? Will she see her baby again and know her child? People often wonder about the eternal destiny of unborn, babies and those unable to intellectually understand the Gospel. The Bible offers

some information on this. Based on an understanding of the character of God and several passages of the Bible, we can develop a good idea of how God works in these situations.

We can all agree that there is nothing quite so agonizing as the death of a child.

Someone said,

"The death of a child is like a period placed before the end of a sentence."

It is ironic that every day of the week, many of us walk out our door and never look back, figuring everything is forever, including the physical life of our children. Often we are too busy to realize that the most precious things we have also can be the most fleeting.

Do babies and children go to Heaven when they die? In finding an answer to this question, we will also find an answer to recognizing children in Heaven.

**a. The character of God suggests that children go to Heaven.**

Psalm 86:15

"But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

The character of God's mercy and grace is coupled with His justice and wrath. The character of God's mercy and grace teaches us that God must be merciful and loving toward babies and children in view of the fact that they cannot respond to any revelation or light provided by God, whether it is general revelation (the message portrayed nature) or specific revelation (the message portrayed in the Gospel).

First, Scripture teaches that condemnation before God is based on the clear rejection of God's revelation, whether it is general revelation found in nature or specific revelation found in Scripture.

## Romans 1:18-20

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

The Bible says that humanity is without excuse when it comes to the general revelation found in nature, the world, and the universe. However, we cannot conclude that the unborn and young children have comprehended the truth displayed by God's general revelation in nature, which renders them "without excuse" and “condemned” before God. A child is incapable of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and incapable of understanding and fully comprehending about God’s hand in creation.

Therefore, babies and children cannot be included in the group of people who are condemned before God on the basis of general revelation. Of course, the adult heathen of this world that have never heard the Gospel explained to them are NOT included in the group of babies and children who are not condemned by God. This is because they have developed intelligent minds and are not without the knowledge of God's existence.

This means we cannot treat the question, "Is my child in Heaven?" the same way we treat the question, "Is the heathen in Heaven?" This is because adult men and women have had the opportunity to consider and to reject the witnesses that God has given of Himself. However, babies and children, on the other hand, are guilty of having a sin nature, but they have not weighed the evidence and rejected God. They have not rejected any light. They have not been condemned for rejecting any of God’s revelation and for their own actions as the heathen have.

So, babies and children cannot be condemned by God for rejecting general revelation found in nature. For this reason, when babies and children die, they will not be condemned by God but enter Heaven.

Second, Scripture also teaches that condemnation before God is based upon rejecting God's special revelation found in the Bible, which is the Gospel revelation of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Jesus taught in John 3:18:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Since babies and children cannot comprehend the content of the Gospel message, and since they cannot respond in any way to the Gospel message, God does not hold them accountable for rejecting it.

Children may sense when they disobey their parents and go against their wishes or commands. However, we know that infants and children are not able to sense their personal sin against God and their separation from God (Rom. 3:23). They are not able to sense their need for salvation, nor are they able to place their faith in Christ, since these faculties are not given to them. However, children have not developed enough to recognize these things and fully understand the severity of their sin and separation before God. They have not reached an age of moral awareness before God and therefore they have not reached an age of accountability before God, where God holds them responsible for their sin and rejection of the Gospel message.

Children are sinners when they are formed in the womb and draw their first breath, but they are NOT accountable to God for their sins when they are born. We must make a distinction between a child's liability before God for possessing a sin nature and a child's liability before God for practicing sin without understanding the difference between right or wrong before God.

Isaiah speaks of the time "before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (Isa. 7:16). It's very evident that little children do not have the ability to make moral decisions and to take responsibility for their sins based upon God's revelation.



In Jonah 4:11 God states:

“And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?”

God was referring to 120,000 children and babies which were in Nineveh. Jonah was to have compassion upon these little ones who could not even discern between their right and left hand, who could not at this point make any moral judgments regarding sin. Of course, this does not dispute the fact that all babies and children are sinners and need a Savior.

Here is the important point to remember. The Bible teaches that everyone will be judged according to the light they have received. Condemnation before God is not based on the ignorance of His revelation or light but the ability to understand and respond to it (Luke 10:16; John 12:48; 1 Thess. 4:8). Since babies and children possess ignorance about the Gospel and their spiritual condition, they cannot despise God and the Gospel and be therefore condemned by God. As a result, God takes them to Heaven to live with Him forever.

Don't misunderstand what I am teaching here. Scripture is very clear that children and the unborn have original sin, including both the propensity to sin, as well as the inherent guilt of original sin. Two passages in Psalms tell us about the true nature of children and their condition before God. Psalm 51:5 says, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Psalm 58:3 also states: “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” There are no exceptions. Even babies are born sinners. Understanding (something a baby cannot do) that you are a sinner who has sinned against God is not required for being under the penalty of sin. All of us are born with a sin nature; even though we have not yet done anything wrong, our nature is sinful. Therefore, every baby needs a Savior, just as every adult does. This is because everyone inherits Adam's original sin and sin nature and should be condemned for this sin (Romans 5:12).

This is where God's character comes into the picture. God's character of mercy, grace, justice, righteousness, and wrath work synergistically

together in the case of unborn babies, living babies, and children. His justice and wrath should condemn them for their sinful nature and alienation from God, but His mercy and grace cannot allow Him to bring about their condemnation in hell.

Why is this? It's because of a child's moral inability to decipher their sin. It's because God cannot make babies and children accountable for something they could not understand, believe, or reject. In view of the character of God's justice and mercy, He must do something very wonderful for babies and children. Apparently God applies the death of Calvary's cross, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, to the souls of unborn infants, living babies, and children.

The Bible addresses a baby's need to have Christ's blood applied to their lost estate. Jesus tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). Therefore, Jesus' blood was provided for the salvation of all mankind (men, women and children). Until we reject the promise of God's salvation, the benefit of His death is still available to us. Even though babies are not innocent, they have not rejected God's salvation. The blood of Jesus Christ is there for them!

“Jesus died for all the children  
All the children of the world  
Red, brown, yellow  
Black and white  
They are precious in His sight.  
Jesus died for all the children  
Of the world.”

As a result of Christ paying sin's penalty for children, when they die in a state of infancy, during the time they are incapable of rendering any moral awareness or personal accountability to God's revelation, God does not condemn them for their original sin in Adam. Instead, He takes them to Heaven. In the case of babies and children, God's mercy and wrath kiss one another! I can confirm this. Christ's death on the cross paid for the guilt and condemnation for these helpless ones throughout all time (John 3:16; Hebrews 2:9). Since this is true, it is Scriptural and credible to believe that a child who dies at an age too young to have made a conscious, willful

rejection of the revelation of God in nature or the revelation of salvation in the Gospel, will be taken to be with the Lord. God is gracious and just to these little ones. An overview of Scripture and a uniform testimony of Scripture seems to conclude that at the moment a baby or child dies, Jesus applies the benefits of His death on the cross to that child, thereby saving him or her.

One author writes:

“So what happens if your child dies before he is aware of what is morally right or wrong? He is still guilty of his sins and must pay the penalty for his sins. That's where the blood of Jesus Christ comes in. Young children have not rejected the blood of Jesus as the heathen have. It is there for them, covering their sins, washing them clean, even though they have not had the ability to exercise faith in Jesus, which is required for the salvation of men and women who understand the consequences of their sin. A child's lack of understanding doesn't deter the power of Jesus' blood. Only rejecting the blood deters its power, and babies haven't done that.”

Yes, the character of God's mercy and justice working together remind us that babies and children, who have not reached the age of moral awareness and personal accountability before God for their sins and rejection of God's revelation, do go to Heaven when they die.

The death of young Willie Lincoln on February 20, 1862 came as a devastating blow to the President. At times he covered his face with his hands and wept convulsively. In the days that followed, his spirits were so low that he could hardly resume his work. The first Thursday after his son died, Mr. Lincoln shut himself in his room, and no one knew to what extent he gave way to his sorrow. The next week it was the same.

Then he received a visit from Dr. Francis Vinton of Trinity Church in New York, who told him he was behaving like a heathen and that it was a sin to give way so completely to his grief. "Your son is alive in Heaven," he said. At first Lincoln seemed deaf to his words - then somehow they reached him. "Alive? Surely you mock me!" "No, sir," said Dr. Vinton. "It is a most comforting doctrine of the church, founded upon the words of Christ Himself." For a few minutes the President sobbed and repeated, "Alive!

Alive!" After that he no longer shut himself up, and with a mighty effort he turned his attention to the affairs of state.

**b. The revelation of the Bible suggests that children go to Heaven.**

Various Bible passages would lead us to believe that babies and children go to Heaven when they are aborted (murdered) or when they die. There is a passage of Scripture in the Book of II Samuel which offers great comfort for those who have lost a child. It also provides us with information about children dying and entering Heaven, which during David's day was paradise, a place of bliss and happiness in the center of the earth.

David lost the child which was born through his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. The loss of the child broke his heart but God's Word reveals some important details about children dying and going to Heaven.

There are several lessons we can learn from this inspired Bible passage.

➤ **We learn about God's providence over the death of children.**

2 Samuel 12:13-15

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed (his adultery with Bathsheba and in seeking to cover it up he made sure Uriah was killed) thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick."

When I was reading this Bible passage, I was certainly awakened to the fact that it was God who actually killed this baby and not the devil ("And the LORD struck the child" – vs. 15). In this case, we discover that God directly struck this child with a sickness or illness which eventually took his life. We are reminded once again that not all sickness is the result of the devil's work. God sometimes has a direct hand in sickness and illness. God in His providence worked out His plan and purpose in relation to this child's life and chose to take the child from David and Bathsheba.

Exodus 4:11 also speaks of His providence over sickness:

“And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?”

We need to stop talking about the demon of the deaf, dumb, and the blind. The devil is not the only one who can inflict illness and disease. We discover that in a world of sin and depravity, God is also working out His plan and purposes, even as they relate to sickness, disease, and deformities. God reserves the right to directly inflict someone with a malady, even children, if He so pleases. God sometimes has a direct hand in bringing sickness into the life of a person. At all times, God is sovereign over our illnesses, whether it relates to children or old age.

We must also remember that many times our sicknesses and diseases are simply the result of the Genesis Curse taking effect upon our bodies and life (Gen. 3:17-19). And who was in charge of the Genesis curse? God was which means that He is in some sovereign way also in charge of our diseases and illnesses. He will not allow anything to happen to us without His approval.

This once again reminds us that we cannot possibly know what is going on behind the spiritual veil or curtain. But we can know that God makes no mistakes, even when it comes to taking the life of a child. The important thing is that we do not question God's character at this point. We know that God always does what is right (Genesis 18:25), even when it comes to the death of a child. Heaven certainly recognizes that God's ways are always right.

Revelation 15:3 reveals this about the singing in Heaven:

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.”

The Bible also reveals that God took this child in view of David's sin for it states: “because by this deed (vs. 14 - because of his adultery with Bathsheba and making sure Uriah was killed) thou hast given great occasion

to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.”

Why did God take the life of this child when it was David who sinned? We are prone to think that the child should not be punished for what David did. This seems wrong to us. But we need to remind ourselves that God knows what He is doing in all situations. In fact, even today innocent children suffer from the things their parents do and God allows it to happen in His providence to bring about His greater purposes.

One man shares this story:

“I once sat at the funeral of a child who had been accidentally killed by a drunk man riding through the community on a motorcycle. In the funeral message the minister tried to convince those of us present that God had a purpose in the child’s death as though it were something God had planned. I was revolted by what he said because he took an evil event and made God the cause.”

Well, we need to think about this. Certainly God did not tempt the man to drink and become drunk. God did not make the man on the motorcycle run over this child. To be sure, God was not the direct cause of this event since God is holy, absolutely impeccable, and cannot solicit people to do evil acts (James 1:13). And yet, when we view the Bible, we can come to the conclusion that God in His sovereignty allowed this event to occur in conjunction with His purposes that relate to a fallen world. It did not happen by chance. No deaths happen in the world without God’s approval and timing, even the death of a baby.

Matthew 10:29

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

The idea is that sparrows do not fall to the ground without the Father’s providential will, knowledge, and care over their lives. We are reminded that no death happens by chance, not even the death of a sparrow. This would be true of all deaths, including abortions and the murder of untold millions of innocent children. It is certain that the devil is behind all murder

and the taking of children's lives by the hands of murderous butchers who call themselves doctors. However, behind these dreadful occurrences, we see God's sovereign hand and purposes coming to pass in a world that is depraved and which possesses no moral compass. God has a greater purpose coming to pass in all the events associated with sin and death. Let us never forget this.

➤ **We learn about God's grace extended to little children.**

2 Samuel 12:16-23

"David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 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. 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? 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.

"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. 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. 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? 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."

The servants were shocked by what happened after David received news of his child's death. David ceased his mourning and fasting and began to go about life normally. David's response to the child's death was the reverse of what they had expected. When they could not restrain themselves any longer, they basically asked him pointedly, "Why have you responded this

way?" David's response is found in verses 22 and 23. It is here that we can find the faith and hope to go on living after the death of the child.

"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." David assumed and was reassured that he would be able to recognize his son in the blissful afterlife, despite the fact that he died as a baby. The attitude of David at the death of his child shows that Israel's King believed in recognition in the afterlife. He had fasted and wept in the hope that God would be gracious to him and allow the child to live. But when final word was received that he was dead, David ate food, wiped the tears away from his eyes, and found comfort in a hope that he expressed in the words: "I shall go to him."

Is not this a promise of reunion and recognition in the afterlife? This statement indicates there will be complete understanding and the recognition of one another in the next life. David knew that one day he would be reunited with his lost child and that he would know the child and rejoice with him.

Would there be any comfort for David if he had to go to his child whom he would not know? What would a blind person get out of going to look at a sunset? What would a deaf person get out of going to hear a musical concert? David was comforted in the fact that he would actually know his child in the next life beyond the grave. 2 Samuel 12:23 suggests strong evidence for a heavenly destiny of the unborn and children who die at a young age.

We, like David, may also be assured that children are with the Lord. Our confidence in this rests in the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary which has paid their penalty for sin. We encounter no problem with a parent recognizing their child in Heaven and the afterlife. When we think of Christian mothers who have died giving birth to a child, and the child growing to full maturity and becoming a Christian, we still believe that the mother shall recognize her son or daughter, even though her last view of the child was in its state of infancy.

"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."



A little girl whose baby brother had just died asked her mother where Baby had gone. "To be with Jesus," replied the mother. A few days later, talking to a friend, the mother said, "I am so grieved to have lost my baby." The little girl heard her, and remembering what her mother had told her, looked up into her face and asked, "Mother, is a thing lost when you know where it is?" "No, of course not." "Well, then how can Baby be lost when he has gone to be with Jesus?" Her mother never forgot this. It was the truth.

David's particular inspired record, among others, teaches us that babies and all those children who die, prior to the age of moral accountability before God, do enter a state of bliss and joy in the afterlife. In any event, we see that David had the assurance of reunion and recognition with his child someday. Dearly beloved, if we know the Lord as our Savior, we too can have this hope and assurance in our hearts. We will meet our children on the other side.

We often sing, "Yes, we'll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river, gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God." We know this will be true. Thank God that it is true! However, will there be children swimming and having fun in the river? Will there be children in Heaven playing, laughing, and possessing the privilege to grow up in a perfect state and enjoying their childhood experience? Will children, who die in a state of infancy, enter Heaven in their childhood state, or are they fully mature in years when they enter Heaven. If babies enter Heaven, then how do they appear in Heaven? What age would they be? Many theologians have grappled with these types of questions over the years.

We do know that there will be no deformed, deficient, nor decrepit bodies in Heaven which are affected by sin since in Heaven and eternity "there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3). When we all get to Heaven, we will no longer be subject to the effects of the curse, which means we will not suffer any more pain, disease, sorrow or death.

Some Bible teachers have taken this revelation even further by stating that infancy is an immature stage and an imperfect state of existence. They claim that Adam and Eve were not infants when God made them but were adults. In other words, it's reasoned by some that when God makes or

creates someone new, without any sinful defects, that he or she always appears in the adulthood stage. Therefore, this must be the way it will be in Heaven. Of course, this is simply conjecture.

Jesus was conceived in the womb and born as a baby in a perfect, pristine state. He grew up in a state of perfection as a child without ever sinning or doing anything wrong. The same might be true regarding children in Heaven. The Bible does not say that birth or young age is part of the Genesis curse – only death (Gen. 3:19). Cannot God allow children to live and grow up in a state of perfection within Heaven? Cannot children be delivered from the Genesis curse without being fully grown? Furthermore, the fact that all things will be made new in Heaven (Rev. 21:5) does not override the fact that children can experience a newness in the afterlife, a new life without sin, a perfect state of existence without the curse affecting their lives.

We cannot be dogmatic regarding children existing in a state of infancy within Heaven, since Scripture does not definitively say one way or another. However, we have already discovered that David possessed the assurance of seeing his child in the afterlife (2 Sam. 12:23). Of course, David made no statement about the age that his child would be, when he enters the next life, but his plain statement seems to suggest that, if he were to die, he would see his actual child. Perhaps this is an indication that children remain in some phase of childhood in the afterlife and are able to grow and mature while existing in a perfected state without sin. If David knew that he could depart at any time and see his child in the afterlife, this would suggest that he had the glorious prospect of seeing his beloved child.

The words of Jesus about children entering the earthly messianic kingdom may also have some significant application to our question about children in the afterlife.

Matthew 18:3-4

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Let me be very clear about something. The “kingdom of heaven” is not Heaven. If Jesus wanted to reference the place called Heaven, He would have done so, as He did elsewhere (Matt. 6:1, 9-10, 20). The “kingdom of heaven” is an expression related to the time when Jesus Christ rules planet earth, when Heaven comes to earth, a time when Jesus confirmed that “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

It’s interesting that Jesus accepted and taught the fact that children were prepared to enter the earthly kingdom. Those who were older needed to be converted through faith in the Messiah. However, children were a special class that were singled out as already being spiritually prepared to enter the kingdom.

Jesus was teaching that humble, little children will enter the earthly kingdom when He establishes it over the earth. Kids would be in the kingdom (Isaiah 11:8; 65:20). We cannot miss what Jesus is teaching here. All others must receive entrance into the earthly kingdom by possessing childlike faith, trust, and humility toward Jesus Christ, as the young children did who sat in Jesus’ arms.

Jesus taught the same thing in Matthew 19:13-15:

“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.”

Jesus reveals once again in these passages of Scripture that there will be children in the kingdom. I am not pointing to these earthly kingdom references as definitive proof that children will enter Heaven in a state of infancy. However, if the Lord Jesus in His grace approves of children entering the earthly kingdom, would He not also approve of them entering the heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18) and the heavenly city (Heb. 12:22-23), and allow them to live out a normal life of childhood in their perfect heavenly state?

Jesus' statement about being gracious to children and allowing them to enter the earthly kingdom may suggest a similar attitude, plan, and purpose in allowing children to enter Heaven as well.

Because of David's statement about his child and what Jesus said about children in the kingdom, a number of theologians suggest that children could also enter Heaven in some kind of state of infancy, without sin, and be able to grow to God's intended stage of perfect development. Although the earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3) is not the same as the heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18), we might consider God's mindset on allowing children to grow up in Heaven.

Charles Spurgeon believed that children would be in Heaven. Spurgeon wrote: "I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them!"

In Matthew 18:10, Jesus also revealed the Father's special love for children: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

This verse is not teaching that children become angels in the next life! If you believe this, you have been listening to the Hollywood crowd who are basically clueless about spiritual things. Some expositors conclude that the context of Matthew 18 is not talking about small children at all but is only referencing His disciples who have become humble like small children. However, this seems to be missing something that Jesus wanted to actually teach about children or "these little ones" (Matthew 18:6), while relating children to His disciples or followers, who have humbled themselves.

Jesus is definitely teaching here that God has entrusted the care of little children to a specific group of His angelic beings ("their angels" – Matt. 18:10) who are in constant touch with the heavenly Father. In other words, these angels are constantly in the presence of God, beholding His face. This means that they wait attentively for His commands to serve little children in various ways.

Jesus is referencing how children have guardian angels, who are constantly reporting back to Heaven's throne. Before the throne of God angels receive instructions that somehow revolve around the lives of little children. Sometimes, these angels may receive instruction regarding the protection of little children, the bringing of God's vengeance against those who are offending little children, and also when to bring children to Heaven. Angels are fulfilling God's purposes, related to children, in the midst of a fallen and sin-cursed world.

In Matthew 18:10, Jesus reveals the Father's great love for little children. His providential, loving care and concern for children on earth is certainly an indication that He will certainly care for them in the next life, by allowing them to enter Heaven and live with Him. The angels will make sure of this as they carry out the Father's will concerning these little children. In fact, they will likely carry them to Heaven to live in the great heavenly city. The Father's special love for little children is another indicator that He might allow them to enter Heaven in a state of infancy and perfection.

"Jesus loves the little children  
All the children of the world  
Red, brown, yellow  
Black and white  
They are precious in His sight.  
Jesus loves the little children  
Of the world."

In fact, we can conclude that He loves them so much that He not only will take them to Heaven, expressing His loving compassion toward them, but also that He might allow them to grow up in Heaven. Revelation 7:9 may also have something to say about children in Heaven. It records a prophetic incident of a great mass of people who die during a coming world conflict called the Tribulation Period. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

This verse teaches that a countless number of people from all over the world, who die during the Tribulation Period, will enter Heaven when they die. Here is the point. Would not some children be represented as some of this “great multitude” which no man could number? According to what Jesus taught, children will be included in the number who lose their lives during this horrible time period on planet earth (Matthew 24:19).

I’m reminded of what D. L. Moody said as he hovered in the twilight zone between life and death. “Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go.” His son who was standing by his bedside said, “No, no, father, you are dreaming.” “No,” said Mr. Moody, “I am not dreaming: I have been within the gates: I have seen the children’s faces.”

It’s also interesting to note that God left little children enter the Promised Land. The Bible reveals in Deuteronomy 1:39: Then the servant of the LORD made this statement: “Moreover your little ones...which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.” We see a repeated picture throughout the Bible as it related to God’s heart and children. He allows children to enter the Kingdom and He allows them to enter the promised land. Could not the same be true about Heaven? A uniform testimony in Scripture suggests that God is gracious toward children and will allow them to enter Heaven, as children, in some form of their earlier child development.

These little tidbits of information found in Scripture (2 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 18:3-4, 10: 19:13-15; Mark 10:15-16; Rev. 7:9) may give us some inspired insights that would lead us to believe that children do go to Heaven when they die as infants, prior to their resurrected state, and are able to grow and mature in their years.

Think about the high mortality rate of infants in many countries of the world today. The abortion epidemic and starvation alone claims the lives of millions of babies. Scripture suggests that children may enter Heaven at some phase of their childhood experience. They may be given the

opportunity to grow and mature without possessing any effects of a sin nature or manifesting acts of rebellion in their lives.

One day, a woman was working in the nursery at the church and overheard a 3-year-old girl talking to her mom. "Mommy," she said, "When Jesus takes us to Heaven, will I have to go to the nursery?" Well, I cannot confirm that there will be a need for nurseries in Heaven, but there may very well be children there who are able to run, laugh, play, and enjoy a perfect state of infancy. God may very well bring a child into Heaven that is coherent of its surroundings, a child who is old enough to possess a knowledge about God the Creator, as all of Heaven recognizes (Rev. 4:11). He may also allow a child in Heaven who is also able to fellowship with God, as all in Heaven will enjoy (Rev. 21:3), while at the same time allow that child to grow up to the perfect age.

It is possible that children may enter Heaven and enjoy their natural growth process. Of course, this can only be true before the resurrection occurs and we get our eternal bodies. Prior to our transformation or resurrection at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-18), God may allow children to grow and mature within in Heaven. However, once the Rapture and resurrection for God's saints occurs, we will obviously enter our eternal state and the perfect age, which some have suggested will be similar to the age of Jesus when He was resurrected. Only Heaven will reveal the exact and final answer to all of these questions. Ultimately, the secret things belong to the Lord (Duet. 29:29).

We have done enough Biblical research to confirm that the Bible reveals we will be recognizable after death (1 Thess. 2:19; 4:17-19), and that we will know one another in Heaven, even our children, in whatever age they might appear in the next life.

On one occasion, on an airplane flight, Dr. Criswell found himself seated beside a well-known theologian. He desperately wanted to start a conversation and they did get to talk. The man told Dr. Criswell about how he had recently lost his little boy through death.

Dr. Criswell listened as he told his story. He said he had come home from school with a fever and we thought it was just one of those childhood things, but it was a very severe form of meningitis. The doctor said we cannot save your little boy. He'll die. And so this seminary professor, loving his son as he did, sat by the bedside to watch his coming death.

It was the middle of the day and the little boy whose strength was going from him and whose vision and brain was getting clouded said, "Daddy, it's getting dark isn't it?" The professor said to his son, "Yes son it is getting dark, very dark." Of course it was very dark for him. He said, "Daddy, I guess it's time for me to go to sleep isn't it?" He said, "Yes, son, it's time for you to go to sleep."

The professor said the little fellow had a way of fixing his pillow just so, and putting his head on his hands when he slept and he fixed his pillow like that and laid his head on his hands and said, "Good night Daddy. I will see you in the morning." He then closed his eyes in death and stepped over into Heaven.

Dr. Criswell said the professor didn't say anymore after that. He just looked out the window of that airplane for a long time. Then he turned back and he looked at Dr. Criswell with the tears coming down his cheeks and he said, "Dr. Criswell, I can hardly wait till the morning." Dearly beloved, joy comes in the morning!

### **Our spiritual existence and the afterlife.**

Someone wrote these words on their tombstone:

"Beneath these clouds and beneath these trees,  
Lies the body of Solomon Peas;  
This is not Peas; it is only his pod;  
Peas has shelled out and gone Home to God."

Don't you wish your name was Solomon Peas so you could have this on your tombstone! This is a strange epitaph and yet it is true of what occurs



when a believer in Jesus Christ dies. His body (shell) is left behind and his spirit (what inhabits the body) departs to be with Christ.

Through the years, some Bible teachers have taught that we will receive a temporary physical body between death and the resurrection. This has been labeled by some as an intermediate body that fills the time gap between death and the physical resurrection. It's concluded by various Bible expositors that we need a physical body to be able to recognize each other by possessing our senses (taste, touch, hearing, seeing) in the next life beyond the grave. However, the Bible nowhere teaches about a temporary body between death and the resurrection.

The Bible teaches that we will recognize one another in our spiritual state of existence in the next life. In fact, we have concluded by our above study that God's saints will be able to maintain recognition of one another in their spiritual sphere of existence after death.

God's people looked forward to their spirit departing after death and entering Heaven. They never spoke of receiving a body after death. The Bible reveals that people will be without bodies until the time of their resurrection. The Scriptures teach in both Old and New Testaments that the spirit lives on after death without the human body and the body is lost until the resurrection.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Job 19:25

"For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth. And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Solomon and Job give a very clear witness regarding the departure of the human spirit from the body and the body awaiting a future resurrection. There is no mention or any indication that they would receive a human body until the resurrection. Being joined with their body was something that would occur way off in the distant future.

We can be sure that God has a resurrection program, but until that program is initiated, we will exist and remain in the spiritual realm of existence, a time when our spirits reside in Heaven without a body.

“When the holy angels meet us  
As we join their happy band,  
We shall know the friends that greet us  
In that glorious spirit-land.  
We shall see the same eyes shining  
On us as in days of yore.  
We shall feel the dear arms twining  
Fondly, round us as before.”

James spoke of the spirit leaving the body behind at the time of death (James 2:26). Paul spoke about Jesus reuniting the spirit with the body at the coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:14) and John spoke about the dead not receiving a body until the resurrection (Rev. 20:5) and the reuniting of the spirits of the lost with their bodies for the final judgment (Rev. 20:13-14). Jesus did not possess a body between death and the resurrection for he dismissed his spirit (John 19:30; John 2:19-21; Matt. 12:40) and neither will we. These Bible verses teach that we will not possess a human body between death and His bodily resurrection.

Revelation 6:9 provides us with this information:

“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.”

John witnessed the souls of people in Heaven. Some suggest that the word “souls” in this verse has reference to the total physical and spiritual existence of people, including the body, as it sometimes portrays in the Bible (Job 7:15; Ezek. 18:4; Acts 2:41; 27:37; Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 3:20; Rev. 20:4). However, the term “souls” can also refer to just the immaterial part of human existence and many times this is the meaning or understanding of the word in Scripture (Matt. 10:28; 11:29; Mark 12:30; 1 Pet. 1:9; Heb. 4:12). Such is the case here.

Since these people were seen to be killed or “slain” (Rev. 6:9) and their resurrection has not yet occurred, as taught and witnessed by John in Revelation 20:4, it would suggest that these souls are referencing the immaterial, or invisible part of their human existence. The Bible is teaching us that when we die, the body is left behind, but the spiritual or incorporeal part of man’s existence lives on after death.

Revelation 6:11 continues to speak about the martyred dead in Heaven: “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.”

Some argue, from this verse, for the existence of an intermediate body between death and resurrection, since they reason that immaterial souls in the spirit world cannot wear robes. Randy Alcorn, who has written a popular book on Heaven, states: “Disembodied spirits don’t wear robes.” Of course, this is Alcorn’s reasoning and not God’s. I’ll believe what the Bible says on this matter! The Bible ascribes wings, faces, feet, and hands to spirit beings who exist in the spirit world (Isa. 6:2, 6; Rev. 10:1-2, 5, 8, 10) and portrays them wearing clothing (Matt. 28:2-3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10; Rev. 15:6). Our problem is that we are so earthbound to physical things, that we can’t think in the heavenly, or spiritual dimension, and believe that an entire world exists and operates apart from the physical. It’s evident that the soul, or the immaterial part of man’s human existence, lives on after death, without a physical body.

Although George Whitefield disagreed with John Wesley on some matters, he was careful not to create problems in public that could be used to hinder the preaching of the Gospel. When someone asked Whitefield if he thought he would see Wesley in heaven, Whitefield replied, “I fear not, for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance, we shall hardly get sight of him.”

Whitefield’s answer reminds us that we will know one another in Heaven, even in the immaterial world of our existence, and that together we will rejoice with the Lord around His glorious throne.

Philippians 1:23

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”

Paul recognized that when he died, he would “depart” from his body and this present physical, earthly existence. He understood that he would in the next life exist in the spirit world apart from a physical body. The Bible never mentions about entering into another temporary or intermediate body after the time of death. What would God do with these bodies when it’s time for His saints to be raised?

2 Corinthians 5:8 states:

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Paul says we can also be “confident,” or persuaded, that when we are “absent from the body,” we will be “present with the Lord” in Heaven. Paul could be referring to the intermediate state between death and resurrection (Phil. 1:21-23), when the human spirit does not yet possess a body in which to reside (James 2:26; Heb. 12:23). Paul mentions this as the time when he would be “unclothed” (2 Cor. 5:4). He may be reassuring us that if the Rapture and the transformation of his body does not occur in his or our lifetime, we would still be with the Lord in Heaven. When our spirit leaves our body, we could be absolutely confident that we would be with the Lord.

When John Quincy Adams was eighty years old, a friend said, “How is John Quincy Adams?” He replied, “John Quincy Adams himself is very well, thank you; but the house he lives in is sadly dilapidated. It is tottering on its foundations. The walls are badly shattered, and the roof is worn. The building trembles with every wind. And I think that John Quincy Adams will have to move out of it before long. But he himself is very well.”

“Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Him I roam  
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day's march nearer home.”

In 2 Corinthians 5:8, Paul may be talking about the time his spirit will depart from his body and immediately be with the Lord in Heaven. However, Paul could also be staying with his previous theme and referencing the eternal state with Christ, the time when he will possess a new eternal body in the heavenly city, a body which is said to be “eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). If this is the case, Paul would never be “unclothed” but immediately receive his eternal body – absent from his earthly body but present with the Lord in a new body.

You see, Paul was looking forward to the Rapture and receiving his new and eternal body at the coming of Christ. At the Rapture, it would be like taking off the old body, but immediately getting a new and eternal body. When raptured, we will immediately leave and be absent from our earthly body, but at the same time, we would be present with the Lord in our new and eternal body, which would replace the old and worn-out body that we now have. Like Paul, we should be “earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Cor. 5:2).

Most ladies love to shop, probably even more than men. I was talking to a man in Park City, our shopping mall, who said that he was sitting in the middle section of the mall drinking cokes and eating ice-cream because his wife was shopping for clothing. Men, we have an excuse to eat a lot of calories when we take our wife shopping for new clothing!

Paul is teaching us that receiving a new body at the time of the Rapture would be like putting on a new set of clothing (“so that being clothed we shall not be found naked” - 2 Cor. 5:3). Paul did not expect to be without a body (“not for that we should be unclothed – 2 Cor. 5:4) which means he did not expect to live in the spirit world after he dies because he was looking for Jesus to return (Phil. 3:20-21), who would be like a divine seamstress, and give him and each one of us a new and eternal body at the Rapture. In other words, Paul was not looking to die but to be changed in a moment and meet the Savior at His coming (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

The fact that Paul looked forward to a body that was “eternal” (2 Cor. 5:1) argues against receiving some kind of temporary body between death and resurrection. The promise that Paul gives to us in this passage is that we

would receive an eternal body someday in the future – not a temporary body between death and resurrection. We are only getting one body in the future – not two. We don't need a temporary body to hold us over until the resurrection. Here is the point. We will live in the realm of the spirit world until we receive our body at the Rapture.

“Someday the king of glory will part the clouds, praise His name.  
Someday all pain and sorrow will erase.  
Someday I'll see my Savior face to face.  
Someday, someday He is coming back for me!”

Hebrews 12:22-23 records this about the departed spirits of the saved: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

In this heavenly scene, which is prior to the resurrection, human spirits are seen residing in Heaven without bodies. Today Heaven is said to be filled with the “spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23). There is no mention of any form of a physical body in Heaven – only the spirits of God's redeemed saints. People exist in the spiritual dimension, or the unseen and incorporeal world, prior to the resurrection. Some conclude that this is merely referencing the human spirits of people but not excluding the possibility of a physical body. However, this passage, along with the other revelation given of the afterlife, prior to the resurrection, seems to give us the repeated emphasis that only the immaterial part of a person's existence resides in Heaven until the resurrection of the human body.

Our body is made for an earthly existence and senses, but our eternal soul is designed to exist in a spiritual world that can possess similar senses and stimuli (human responses and activities). Jesus taught this to be true when speaking about death and the afterlife (Luke 16:19-31).

It is wrong to assume that we need some kind of physical or intermediate body to function and operate in life beyond the grave. Believers in the Lord remain as spirits in a disembodied state until the future day of resurrection.

Some of the verses mentioned above give us a rare glimpse into the spirit world or the afterlife prior to physical resurrection. Apparently there will be recognition of God's saints prior to receiving their physical bodies at the resurrection. We will be able to recognize one another in the spirit world and enjoy one another's company and presence.

It's interesting that the Bible verses which deal with angels (spirit beings) sometime speak of them battling or fighting with each other (the good and the bad angels) and they reveal that these same spirit beings can actually identify each other in the invisible spirit world and the afterlife (Rev. 12:7-9; 20:1-2; Jude 9). What is true about these spirit beings will also be true regarding God's people, as they live in the realm of the spirit world between death and resurrection. We will be able to recognize one another in the invisible and incorporeal world, even when we do not possess a human body, prior to the resurrection.

When God removed the veil between the spirit and physical world, Elisha and his servant could see the entire spiritual world that existed beyond the physical world that Elisha and his servant knew (2 Kings 6:15-17). It will be the same way, if we get to Heaven, without possessing our bodies. We will be able to recognize one another in a different world of spiritual existence.

Thomas Carlyle wrote concerning the death of James Carlyle, his father: "And now, beloved father, farewell for the last time in this world of shadows! In the world of realities may the great Father again bring us together in perfect holiness and perfect love! Amen."

Yes, we will be together in Heaven, as God's children, and we will recognize one another, even in the spiritual or immaterial world of existence. It is noteworthy to mention that everywhere the immaterial part of man is seen, following death, the person is found experiencing normal senses and functions that pertain to our present experience connected with our bodies (Luke 16:23-31; Isaiah 14:9-11; Revelation 6:9-10; 15:1-3).

This means that in between the death and resurrection of God's saints, they will be able to see and function in another world, the unseen spirit world, with the same senses that we now possess in our present world. We

will be able to see things and wear things (Rev. 6:11) and function normally only in another dimension. This may sound spooky, but it is exactly what the Bible teaches.

Many feel that a human body-grid or some kind of body mechanism is always needed by people in order to receive external stimuli, communicate, and transmit their thoughts, emotions, and decisions. However, Scripture seems to teach otherwise. It can be verified in Scripture that the spirit world has all of these perceptions and abilities to transmit expressions, feelings and thoughts without possessing a body structure.

Our spiritual state between death and resurrection will not appear any different in respect to perception, function, feelings and reality even though we enter into another type of world and sphere of existence. Beloved, the half has not been told!

Dr. Lehman Strauss handles this difficulty of spiritual recognition in the afterlife by saying: "After death the spirit is clothed with a spirit body that is recognizable." In some sense this must be true, since in the spirit world immaterial spirits can recognize one another and do battle with one another (Rev. 12:7).

There is obviously some kind of spiritual structure even in the immaterial world that is recognizable by spirit beings. The same would be true for the spirits of departed saints (Heb. 12:24) who have gone to Heaven. We will possess some kind of recognizable structure, even in the spirit or invisible dimension, which maintains our personality and identity. This is why we will know one another in Glory even prior to the resurrection of our human bodies. What else can we say as we reflect upon our heavenly existence and recognition between death and the resurrection?

"By and by, when the morning comes,  
All the saints of God are gathering home.  
We will tell the story how we've overcome  
We will understand it better by and by."



## **Our Glorified Bodies and the Afterlife**

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?” Do you really think that you will know less in Heaven than you do on earth?

The Bible teaches that we will know one another in Heaven, even when we possess our newly transformed and resurrected bodies. Someday our bodies will be fully redeemed (Rom. 8:18-23 – “the redemption of our body”) and glorified (Romans 8:30). A fully redeemed and glorified body means that we will be forever set free from our human frailties of sickness and death and receive a body that is perfect, without limitations, and one that is full of great splendor and magnificent.

This would clearly suggest that we will receive a type of body that possesses great knowledge, capabilities, and potential, which we did not previously possess, due to the Fall and curse in Genesis. The resurrection promises a type of body that will be curse proof and free of the limitations that the Genesis curse brought upon our human bodies. If Adam and Eve could know one another in their pristine and perfect bodies, prior to the Genesis curse, then we will certainly know and recognize one another in our bodies, which are someday brought back to the way God intended us to exist and live in our human bodies.

Our resurrection bodies will be in a perfected state and not possess any physical or spiritual limitations that we might possess today in our bodies. We are going to someday receive a perfect and pristine body without any defects and flaws. This is great news!

Here is the point. Since we can already recognize one another in our present bodies which are filled with many limitations, we will certainly be able to recognize one another in our new, glorified, and redeemed bodies. Folks, we will not know less in our glorified bodies than we know today which are riddled with many humiliations, limitations, and weaknesses. Yes,

we will be able recognize one another in the eternal state, when we have received our eternal bodies and live with God forever in Heaven.

Philippians 3:20-21 records the coming transformation:

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

The Bible suggests that our bodily redemption includes a full recovery from the physical effects of the Genesis curse. But it also includes many additional physical functions which are far greater than we could ever imagine. Our redeemed body will possess even greater capabilities than our fallen bodies possessed while living on earth.

Certainly, if we can retain knowledge of each other in this life, without a redeemed body, we will certainly be able to retain knowledge of each other in the next life and know one another with a fully redeemed body, which will retain greater understanding and knowledge. The Bible suggests that man would not be fully redeemed if he could not recognize one another in Heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:54 says:

“So when this corruptible (body) shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Yes, no more death or suffering the limitations that relate to our present earthly bodies, which are moving toward the grave. Someday we will experience a glorious transformation. Our old bodies will be made completely new and eternal. They will be redeemed from the effects of sin and our glorified bodies will be filled with great magnificence, splendor, and glory. All of this suggests that we will recognize one another in Heaven. We will not know less in our glorified bodies.

“I belong to the King,  
And His promise is sure,  
That we all shall be gathered at last.  
In His kingdom above,  
By life’s waters so pure,  
When this life with its trials is past.”

We must also remember that Jesus was recognized by His disciples after His resurrection.

John 20:24-29

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.”

The disciples knew who Jesus was after He had risen from the dead. At one point, His appearance as Jesus, was verified by over five hundred brethren at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6). There are many people who recognized Jesus even after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4-7; John 20:16, 20; 21:12). If Jesus was recognizable in His glorified body, we also will be recognizable in our glorified bodies. The same will be true of all of us throughout eternity. We will be recognizable to each other and be able to enjoy one another’s company in the resurrection.

Likewise, we must remember that Jesus returned to Heaven as the man Christ Jesus (Acts 1:10) who would be recognized by His disciples as the “same Jesus” who would one day return to earth (Acts 1:11). In other words, the resurrection and the afterlife will not cause us to lose the

memory of our dear loved ones and what they have meant to us while living on earth. The Bible teaches that we will know each other in Heaven, even after we have received our new resurrection bodies, and will enjoy the eternal company of our beloved friends.

“On that bright and cloudless morning  
When the dead in Christ shall rise,  
And the glory of his resurrection share;  
When his chosen ones shall gather  
To their home beyond the skies,  
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.”

There is another Biblical passage that complements the concept of recognizing our loved ones in Heaven, following the resurrection.

Matthew 27:52-53 records another interesting resurrection incident:

“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

The Bible teaches that after Christ’s resurrection, many bodies (not all the bodies of the saints) which occupied tombs were resurrected proving that there would be a future harvest of all the resurrected saints. The Bible does not say whether these risen saints died again or went to Heaven with the Lord Jesus. I’m of the opinion that they died again and will be raised in conjunction with God’s resurrection program at Christ’s coming (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

So, these people, like Lazarus, were restored to life, given a temporary resurrection (not the eternal resurrection body). However, they rose from the dead to send the message that there was coming a time when all of God’s saints would be raised from the dead. Their resurrection was like a trial run of what it would be like when all of God’s saints would be raised from the dead.

Perhaps Matthew mentioned the resurrection of these Old Testament saints here to help us understand and appreciate the fact that Jesus’ death

provided the basis for the resurrection of believers who died before the Cross as well as after it. It's interesting that these resurrected saints obviously appeared in their same physical form with their same faces and voices that they possessed prior to their death. The fact that they "appeared unto many" would suggest that they were recognized by others as people, who had previously died, but who now came back to life. This is the way it will be in the resurrection. Those who are raised from the dead will be recognizable and known among all the saints.

Having studied about our renewed friendships and fellowship in Heaven and the afterlife, we must also remember that our relationships in eternity will not be exactly as they were while living on earth.

Jesus taught this in Matthew 22:23-30:

"The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

Jesus did not teach that we would not know each other in the resurrected and eternal state. He simply said there would be no marital relationships in the resurrection state. Our relationships will be different. We will be like the angels in the sense that we will not marry. We will no longer have physical relations and family relationships.

This verse should not be misconstrued to mean that people actually become angels when they get to Heaven. The text says that we shall be "as the angels" but not become angels in the resurrection state. Let's read our Bibles correctly. In what way will we be like the angels? Like the angels, we will not be able to procreate or give birth. This is because there will be no

marriage and no more physical relations in Heaven and throughout eternity. Our bodies will no longer have the same physical drives that we now possess and there will be no desire to generate life any more. Husbands and wives will no longer be married in the afterlife and bring forth children.

Jesus taught that heavenly life and love among the saints in the eternal resurrected state are not the same as in our earthly state. This means that things will be different in our relationships; however, this in no way contradicts the fact that we will recognize and enjoy people in Heaven. The fact is that our relationships in Heaven will be far superior to anything we have known on earth (Rev. 21:5).

“Beyond the Sunset,  
O glad reunion,  
With our dear loved ones  
Who’ve gone before;  
In that fair homeland  
We’ll know no parting,  
Beyond the sunset for evermore!”

We feel about the subject of recognition in the afterlife, as Robert G. Lee, the great preacher of the South, felt, who said: “I believe in recognition in Heaven as surely as I believe there is a God. If consciousness, character, love, memory, fellowship, are in that life, why should there be any question about it? May God help me for your sakes to take the doctrine of Heavenly Recognition out of the region of surmise and speculation into the region of absolute certainty.”

Yes, we will know one another in Heaven. The Bible repeatedly teaches that we will enjoy the fellowship of renewed friendships among God’s saints in the afterlife. We will meet them again someday, recognize them, and enjoy their presence on the other side.

William Graham Scroggie said:

“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 once again.

“Shall we gather at the river,  
Where bright angel feet have trod,  
With its crystal tide forever  
Flowing by the throne of God?

Yes, we’ll gather at the river,  
The beautiful, the beautiful river;  
Gather with the saints at the river  
That flows by the throne of God.”