

Heaven: Family Reunion

Main point: In heaven, you will know and be known by Jesus and your loved ones.



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Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Several scriptures strongly suggest that in heaven, we'll recognize and be recognized by our loved ones. Let's look at three Bible passages.

2 Samuel 12:22-23: David and His Son

In this passage, King David is mourning the death of his son.

²² David said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept ... ²³ But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”

1. *What does David know about death? Can it be reversed?*
 - a. David hoped and prayed (“I fasted and wept”) that his son would live. But when his son dies, David knows his son is gone for good (“he will not return to me”).
 - b. David knows there’s nothing he can do about death. He says, “Why should I [keep fasting and weeping]? Can I bring him back again?”
 - c. Bodily death is not reversible; it’s a one-way street.
2. *However, how does David view his own death? Where does David say he’ll go?*
 - a. “I shall go to him.” David says his own death will mean going to his son: They will see and know each other again.

Matthew 17:1-4: The Transfiguration

¹After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And Jesus was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

1. *Who are the named people in this story?*
 - a. Jesus, Peter, James, John.
 - b. Moses and Elijah.
2. *Who are Moses and Elijah? Are they living people?*
 - a. Moses and Elijah are patriarchs of the Jewish faith who died centuries before this event.
3. *Had Peter, James, and John ever seen Moses and Elijah in person?*
 - a. No! *But does Peter recognize Moses and Elijah?*
 - i. Yes! Peter calls Moses and Elijah by name, as distinct people, living and identifiable, just like the rest of them.
 - b. Even after hundreds of years in heaven, Moses and Elijah have not lost their identity.

Luke 20:37-38: Jesus Responds to Questions About the Resurrection

In this passage, Jesus is answering questions from people who did not believe in the resurrection.

[Jesus said,] ³⁷"[T]he dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸Now God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him."

1. *What does Jesus say happens to the dead?*
 - a. The dead are raised. According to Jesus, there are no ifs, ands, or buts: The dead will live again.
2. *Who does Jesus talk about in his answer?*
 - a. Jesus references the story of Moses encountering God in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6). In that story, God says to Moses: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
 - b. *Who are the people Jesus names in this story?*
 - i. Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – all real, known people who lived and died.
3. *Because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have died, does Jesus lump them into a nameless mass?*
 - a. No. Jesus specifically calls them out one by one: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."
4. *So are these men who have died "gone"? Have they ceased to be who they were when they were alive?*
 - a. No! Jesus talks about them as people who are very much alive, "the same men as they used to be, and known as who they are."¹
5. *In heaven, is God hanging out with a bunch of dead people? What does Jesus say?*
 - a. "God is not God of the dead, but of the living."
 - b. Each person's individuality, created by God, remains in heaven – all the good and none of the bad.

Taking all these stories together:

1. *What do you think these stories say about recognizing people in heaven?*
2. *How do these passages make you feel?*
3. *Who do you look forward to seeing again in heaven?*

1. Ask for prayer requests for today.
2. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
3. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace.

¹ Charles Spurgeon, excerpted from "Departed Saints Yet Living," referenced in We Shall See God, by Randy Alcorn
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Matthew 17:1-4

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