

## Perfect Relationships: One Another

Scripture: Matthew 8:11

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“*Will we really know each other?*” is a frequently heard question about heaven. And the answer is yes. We will forever be who we are now—only without any of our faults or infirmities. Scripture repeatedly affirms this.

For example, in the Old Testament, when a person died, the biblical writers said he was “gathered to his people” (see Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:29; Numbers 20:24; Judges 2:10). When David’s infant child died, he confidently said, “I shall go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23). David evidently expected to see the child again—not just a nameless, faceless soul without any clear identity, but that very child.

The New Testament indicates even more clearly that our identities will remain unchanged. While sharing the Passover meal with His disciples, Christ said, “Take this [cup], and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:17–18). Christ was promising that He and His disciples *would* drink the fruit of the vine together again—in heaven. Elsewhere Jesus makes a similar, but even more definite, promise: “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11).

All the redeemed will maintain their identity forever, but in a perfected form. We will be able to have fellowship with Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, Moses, Joshua, Esther, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, David, Peter, Barnabas, Paul—any and all of the saints we know from Scripture.

Remember that Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration. It had been centuries since Elijah was famously transported into heaven in a chariot of fire. Centuries more had passed since Moses died in the wilderness. They had been all that time in heaven, yet they still maintained their clear identities (Matthew 17:3). They had not been changed into some sort of generic beings, devoid of distinctive characteristics; they retained their essential personalities—only in glorified and perfected form.

When the Sadducees tried to trap Jesus about the resurrection, he cited God’s words to Moses: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6). Then Jesus commented, “He is not God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22:32). His plain meaning was that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living *as* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not in some nameless or indistinct identities. Moreover, Jesus’ account of the rich man and Lazarus indicates that *both* men not only maintained their identities, but they remembered and recognized one another (even though Lazarus was in heaven and the rich man in hell).

Another common question is this: “*Will I be reunited with my family and friends in heaven?*”

Obviously, the answer to this question is implied by all that we have seen so far. The answer is yes, of course. We will be reunited not only with our own families and loved ones, but with the people of God from all ages. In heaven we will all be one loving family. The immense size of the family will not matter in the infinite perfection of heaven. There will be ample opportunity for close relationships with everyone, and our eternity will be spent in just that kind of rich, unending fellowship.

Describing the Lord’s appearing and the resurrection of the saints who have died, Paul writes, “We who are alive, who are left, will be caught up *together with them* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be *with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Paul’s purpose in writing was to comfort some of the Thessalonians who evidently thought their dying loved ones would miss the return of Christ and that they would then be separated from them forever. Paul goes on to say, “Encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The *encouragement* lies in the promise of reunion. Little encouragement this would be if in the reunion we could not even recognize one another. But Paul’s promise that we will all be “together with them [and with] the Lord” forever implies that we shall renew fellowship with every redeemed person whom we have known.

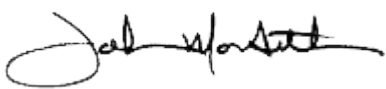
Theologian A. A. Hodge wrote:

Heaven, as the eternal home of the divine Man and of all the redeemed members of the human race, must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structure, conditions, and activities. Its joys and its occupations must all be rational, moral, emotional, voluntary, and active. There must be the exercise of all faculties, the gratification of all tastes, the development of all talent capacities, the realization of all ideals. The reason, the intellectual curiosity, the imagination, the aesthetic instincts, the holy affections, the social affinities, the inexhaustible resources of strength and power native to the human soul, must all find in heaven exercise and satisfaction. (A. A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1976], p. 400.)

If you’re worried about feeling out of place in heaven, don’t. Heaven will seem more like home than the dearest spot on earth to you. It is uniquely designed by a tender, loving Savior to be the place where we will live together for all eternity and enjoy Him forever—in the fullness of our glorified humanity.

Is it any wonder that the psalmist said, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”? (Psalm 116:15).

Of all the relationships we will enjoy in heaven, the greatest delight of all of them will be the personal relationship we will enjoy with our Creator for all eternity. That subject will form the climax of this series next time.



(Adapted from [\*The Glory of Heaven\*](#); all Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version.)

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