

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

How We Will Relate to One Another

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-16

Tonight again we return to our series on heaven. This is part 5, "Looking Toward Heaven." And we're really not examining any one particular portion of Scripture, so get your Bible handy. We're going to be on the move tonight. You need to have a Bible and maybe a piece of paper so you can jot down some of the Scriptures that we're going to be calling your attention to as we think together on the subject of heaven. I was thinking earlier as I was praying with some of the elders that whenever I get to the Christmas season, I note that there seems to be a little bit of a helter-skelter mentality among people. We always sort of kiddingly say that the closer you get to Christmas, the more useless people are at work. Now, you've probably experienced that same thing. Everybody sort of gets very, very distracted. And I think we're sort of getting into the season of distraction. But one of the things that happens that is not a distraction is that children begin to focus in on one day and one great moment, and that's the moment when they get to open all the things that you have purchased for them. And I remember as a kid the anticipation building and building and building until that wonderful Christmas morning when we would wake up and march down the hall with all the expectation in our hearts to receive what had been prepared for us. And I was thinking, too, that there's something like that kind of anticipation that ought to be in our hearts as we think about heaven, only even more so. I fear, however, that there is even less anticipation than that, not more. And that may tell us a little bit about where our preoccupations are.

I had occasion to read a little bit of a book this week that was quoting some things from Mark Twain. And I thought they were interesting as just kind of a beginning of our thoughts tonight. Mark Twain, who was the great American humorist and popular author, reflected a very sad view of eternal reality. He wrote in his autobiography these words: "The burden of pain, care, misery grows heavier year by year. At length, ambition is dead. Pride is dead. Vanity is dead. Longing for release is in their place. It comes at last, the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them, and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, where they achieved nothing, where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness." End quote. Quite a cynical view of eternal reality. Mark Twain in his arrogant cynicism even went so far as to mockingly equip on one occasion, "You take heaven; I'd rather go to Bermuda."

That showed the fact that he believed that this life was all there really was: a shallow short-sighted treatment of eternity. And it really goes against the grain of the human heart. In Ecclesiastes 3:11 it says, "God has set eternity in the hearts of men." There is a tug, and a pull, and a yearning, and a longing for an afterlife. And people generally find it hard if not impossible to believe that this life is all

there is and when it's over there's nothing but going out of existence. It's the cynic that looks at life and sees nothing more than a mistake and a failure and foolishness. But when you don't have hope for the life to come, you wind up a cynic, much like Macbeth. You remember, after the queen's death said that life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing. That's the cynicism of people who have no hope in the life to come.

But we, as those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, have that kind of hope. And I think it's high time in the church of Jesus Christ that we begin to focus our attention on heaven. There was a time, I believe in the last century, the 19th century, when the hope of life after death was a major theme in literature and a major theme in sermons. There were many poems written on immortality. There were many sermons preached on it. There were many sermons and poems and literary works written on the very subject of heaven itself, and not a few were written even on the theme of eternal hell. But we don't talk much about heaven anymore. Our modern self-indulgent life style has affected a great change. As society has made this life more comfortable, it has less and less concerned itself with the life to come. As this life begins to deliver to us more and more of the things we lust after and desire, we have less and less cravings for the life to come. The subject of heaven, and frankly the subject of hell, have for all intents and purposes, vanished from the pulpit and the page. And you need only ask yourself the question when the last time was that you heard a definitive sermon on either of those subjects. That's just something that's not common.

It seems to me today, in fact, and over the last maybe 15 years that the only people who seem at all interested in the life to come are in the cults, or in Eastern religion, or in psychic circles, or in some form of pseudoscience that attempts to study death and dying and those near-death experiences. There have been plethora of books on death and dying, and returning from the dead, and speaking about mystical lights, and tunnels, and restlessness, and weightlessness, and floating sensations, and so forth. But it seems as though the preoccupation with those things is tied more with the psychic and occult world than it is to the church of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me shock you a little bit, if I might. Today on our earth, 100,000 people plus went to those two places today. It didn't make the headlines, and it won't. But another 100,000 people tomorrow will go to those two places. That's a Rose Bowl full of humanity. Every seat occupied descends into hell or ascends into heaven every single day of our lives. And there's no news coverage. In fact, for the most part we don't seem at all concerned or even interested in such a reality. And yet, down in the heart of every individual, there is this sense of the impending reality of death. I'll never forget reading an article a number of years ago that said the average teenager thinks about dying once every five minutes. There is that foreboding threat of the reality that the saddest, most fearful, most devastating moment faces every one of us, that is the moment of death. And frankly, a fear of death is well founded since most people will enter into eternal hell. The vast majority of those 100,000 people who died today went to hell.

What is hell? The Bible says it is that wicked place somewhere in this universe, in the universe and yet apart from the presence of God where unredeemed sinners who refuse God's salvation in Jesus Christ go forever to experience unmixed and unending pain and torment of both body and soul in eternal wretchedness and imperfection, out of God's presence in utter and eternal aloneness and ugliness.

Now, on the other hand, today out of the 100,000, some went to heaven. And there's some rejoicing in heaven because there's some new arrivals. Even in this moment of time somewhere on this earth some folks are entering heaven. And we who know the Lord Jesus Christ can rejoice that we're headed there as well to that place of joy, that place of love, that place of peace, that place of praise, that place of perfection where we will forever be with the Lord. And what I'm trying to do in this series is to excite our hearts about the reality of heaven. And as I noted last time, as we concluded our study, if you find your joy and contentment in this life, that is irrational, that is unspiritual and that is unwise. If you're not more excited about heaven than you are about this life, then you are idolizing the passing cursed world. You are contracting the promised goal of God in your salvation. You are seeking what can never be found and settling for less than God wants to give you, and you are aggravating your misery because you will never find what you pursue here. I want us to set our treasures in heaven, not on earth. And so, we're looking closely at the subject of heaven.

Now, our approach has been to ask and answer a number of questions. Question number one: what is heaven? You remember what we said? We said it is a place where God dwells with all the redeemed of all the ages forever. And it is also a condition of being to which all believers on earth belong through salvation. We are going to heaven; we live in the heavenlies.

The second question was where is heaven? And we said heaven is what? Up. In the third heaven beyond the atmosphere, beyond the stratosphere. We said that heaven is the infinite abode of God that surrounds the expanding universe.

The third question we asked: what is heaven like? And we said it is a glorious, perfectly, righteous, pure, holy, indescribable place of infinite joy, infinite love, infinite peace and infinite satisfaction where God dwells in radiating beauty and His presence permeates everything and everyone.

The fourth question we asked was last time and that is: what will we be like in heaven? Do you remember the answer? We said that we will experience the perfection of body and soul, through which the full expression of absolute righteousness and holiness will be made manifest. And in that perfected life, believers will be able to enjoy all of the longings and desires of the redeemed nature perfectly expressed through a perfectly redeemed body.

Now, tonight we come to question number five, our fifth lesson. And it is this: what will our relationships with others be in heaven? What will our relationships with others be in heaven? Now, I want to give you three categories of relationships, all right? We're going to look around the Scripture; we're going to have a little Bible study. Just imagine you're sitting around a table somewhere with me and we're just talking about Scripture, because I don't want to preach to you a sermon, I want to just take you through the Scripture and let's think together on what the Word of God has to say.

Now, the first group of beings we want to find out about are the angels. Okay? So, we want to find out what is our relationship to angels in heaven. Martin Luther wrote, "An angel is a spiritual creature without a body created by God for the service of Christendom and the church." We know that to be true. They are moving about always attending to the presence of God. God dwells with His heavenly hosts. So, when we go to heaven if God is there, angels will be there as well. Scripture indicates to us that the angels are in heaven repeatedly. We need not even pursue such a line of thought since Scripture is loaded with references to the angels which are in the presence of God, the God who is the God known as the Lord of hosts, that is surrounded by the hosts of His glorious holy angels. So, God always has holy angels in His presence. And if we're going to ever be with the Lord, as 1 Thessalonians 4 says, then we're going to ever be with angels, too. And we want to know how we're going to react and interact with angels.

Well, let's find out, okay? First thing, the first thing we're going to do with angels is fellowship with them. Let's look at Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12 and this is a passage that we will refer to in numerous occasions in studying heaven. Verse 22 says, "You have come to Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," here it comes, "and to myriads of angels." Myriads is the highest number in the Greek language for which there is a word, and it expresses the idea of innumerable angels. When we come then to the heavenly Jerusalem and verse 23, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and when we come to the presence of God and the spirits of righteous men made perfect and when we come into the presence of Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, we will be coming into the presence of myriads of angels, innumerable angels. It says in Daniel, and even in Revelation, thousands upon thousands because there's no word beyond that word to express a number. The thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousands of holy angels will be in heaven with God and we will have fellowship with them. We will interact with them in fellowship. All of the elect angels and all of the elect saints joining together to form the elect company of inhabitants in the eternal new heaven and new earth.

And you say, "Well, what will angels be like?" They're spirit beings. They do not have bodies. They can, and they have, and they do take on the form of a human body on occasion when God so designs. But in and of themselves, they are spirit beings. You say, "Well, how will we in our glorified bodies interact with spirit beings?" I don't find that will be a problem at all. I can interact over the telephone with somebody I can't see. And we'll have the spiritual eyes that can perceive what to us in the physical world is now invisible.

So, first of all, we'll fellowship with them as the assembly of the elect. They the elect angels and we the elect saints. And that's going to be wonderful, you know that? And I'll tell you why. Because there may have been in my life occasions when angels were around. You say, "Well, now wait a minute, you're not mystical." No, you know me better than that. But I do know that Hebrews chapter 13 verse 2 says, "Be careful how you take care of strangers, some have entertained," what? "Angels unawares." And that refers, of course, back to Genesis where in the case of Abraham, he entertained two angels and even the presence of God. He and Sarah prepared a meal as they came to visit him. Be careful how you treat folks, show hospitality, be loving to one another because some people have entertained angels. Now, it may well be that I have entertained an angel here or there. It may well be that an angel has come to my aid. It may well be that angels have been surrounding me from time to time, fending off the demons of hell who wanted to destroy me. And the sad part of it is, I didn't know they were there. But when I get to heaven, I'm going to know they're around, and I'm going to know who they are and I'm going to have fellowship with them as the elect and holy angels of God. And I can't think of anything much more exciting than just having a very long discussion with angels, finding out all about them.

And I think my first couple of choices, and everybody will have to get in line for Michael and Gabriel, but they would be the ones I'd like to talk to. There are others as well. I'd like to talk to the one who slew 185 thousand Assyrians and some like that. But, that's going to be a wonderful thing when we will be able to consciously fellowship with angelic beings whom we cannot fellowship with now. You say, "Well, are they really around?" Of course they are. Hebrews 1:14 says that they are sent to minister to the church and for the church. They're ministering spirits sent from God on behalf of the church. There was an angel in the book of Daniel who came to assist Daniel, who was needing ministry from God in answer to his prayer. That angel was being withstood by a demon and God had to send Michael to get that angel loose so he could get on with the task of ministering to Daniel. The angels of God minister to us, and for us, and on our behalf. In Matthew chapter 18 it says there angels do always behold the Father's face. The angels who concern themselves with the church always watch the face of the Father to see His concern reflected so they can be dispatched to the aid of the redeemed who have need. In this life then we have the wonderful reality of ministering angels, but we can't say thanks because we don't know they're around. They're doing their work unappreciated. And we'll have real fellowship with them in the life to come in heaven.

Secondly, we're going to enjoy rejoicing with them. Look at Luke chapter 15, and this tells us a little more about their attitude toward us. You say, "Well, now maybe angels will be jealous of us. You know, the angels have had the monopoly on heaven. They've sort of been the ones who attended to the work of God. They are the ones who are in their already perfected state. We're not yet perfected. When we get fully perfected, will the angels be jealous of us? Could there possibly be a war between redeemed saints and redeemed angels?" Well, of course there can't be since both will be utterly and absolutely and eternally holy. But just to put your mind at rest, I want you to notice in Luke 15, these

three great parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. These are primarily not parables about lost coins, lost sheep, and lost sons; they're primarily parables to illustrate the heart of God. And I want to show you why. When the sheep was lost, first of all, verses 4 to 7, and the sheep was found, it says in verse 6 that the man called his friends and said, "Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep which was lost." And here comes the point of the story. "I tell you in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance." In other words, God and His holy angels are going to rejoice over the repentance of a sinner.

The second parable in verse 8. A woman lost a coin. She found the coin. She called her friends, verse 9, "Rejoice with me," verse 10, "In the same way I tell you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." And here we find not only God rejoicing but the angels rejoicing. They're not jealous of the redeemed church. They rejoice over the redeemed church. And the same thing is depicted in the wonderful story of the prodigal son which ends, "That we had to be merry and rejoice for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live and was lost and has been found." And the picture is of the father rejoicing and all of his servants have been called to the feast and they rejoice. And they're pictures of the angels who rejoice over the salvation of lost men and women. And what those three parables tell us is primarily how God and the holy hosts of heaven rejoice over the conversion of men.

Now, listen, think of it this way, if God and the holy angels rejoiced over our conversion, how much more will they rejoice over our coronation? How much more will they rejoice when we, fully expressing the perfection of body and soul forever and ever, are the epitome of what God set out to do in the process of redemption?

So, what will be our relationship to angels? We will fellowship with them. And secondly, we will be a source of their eternal joy. A source of their eternal joy. They will love us. They will be thrilled with what has happened in our lives, and what has been done to perfect us and bring us to the holy presence of the God they worship and adore.

Thirdly, our relationship to angels is expressed, if you will, go with me to Revelation chapter 4 and we find that we will join the angels in praise and worship. We'll say more about this in a future study when we talk about what are we going to do in heaven. But let's look at it at least initially. Verse 4 of Revelation 4, "Around the throne," the throne of God described in the first few verses, "were 24 thrones and on the thrones 24 elders sitting, clothed in white garments and golden crowns on their heads." These are emblematic of the redeemed saints. Some believe the 24 elders refer to the church. I tend to believe that. Some would say 12 of them refer to the Old Testament, one each from a tribe, 12 the New Testament, one each of the Apostles making the 24. But either way, they refer to the redeemed saints. And you see them there. They have their white garments, the golden crowns are on their heads. What are they doing? Well, they're going to be praising God.

But added to them you find in verse 6 there is a sea of glass-like crystal and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. And they're described much like those in Ezekiel chapter 1 and I believe it is clear that they are angels. And so, you have those 24 elders representative of redeemed men. You have those four living creatures, representative of holy angels. And together they cry, ceasing never, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God," verse 8, "the Almighty who was and who is and who is to come. And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne saying, 'Worthy art Thou, O Lord,'" and so forth. And there we are praising and worshiping God together with His holy angels.

Chapter 5 verse 6 again portrays a similar scene. The elders are there. And the four living creatures in verse 8 are there, along with the 24 elders. They have harps and golden bowls full of incense. And they sing the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song, "Worthy Art Thou," and so forth, singing to the glory of Christ. Verse 11, follow it. "I looked additional voices come in with the saints, I heard the voice of many angels." Now, angels are not physical beings, but they have a voice; they can express themselves. They gather around the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders and the number was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands." And they're all saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Verse 13, "Every created thing says to Him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb, Blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And so, we know that one of the things we'll do with the angels is engage in praise and worship forever and ever and ever and ever.

Now, let's go to Hebrews and let me show you a fourth area. And this, I think, will be helpful to us. We've already alluded to Hebrews 1:14, but let me expand your thinking a bit. Referring to the angels in verse 13, the word angels appears, verse 14 says, "Are they not all," follow this, "ministering spirits. Ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" Angels are ministering spirits whose duty it is to serve the heirs of salvation. Now, in chapter 1 they're contrasted with Christ. The destiny of Jesus is to reign. The destiny of angels is to serve. Did you get that? They were created to serve the redeemed. Mark that. That, I don't believe to be temporary; that, I believe to be eternal. And I believe that when we go to glory, the angels will serve us there. They will serve us there as they have served us here. We will reign with Christ and they will who serve Christ serve us. Incredible thought. But when we get to heaven the angels will be our willing holy servants. Incredible to think of your destiny to be served by the angels forever.

That's Jesus' destiny to reign. And the time will come when we leave this world, and we go to heaven that we will reign with Jesus Christ. We will reign with Jesus Christ. And when we reign with Jesus Christ, it says we will sit on His throne. We will sit on His throne. Ephesians 1 says He had put all principalities and powers, all angelic beings beneath Himself. He reigns supremely over them all, and we will reign in Christ in just such supremacy. In Revelation 3:21, He says to those who are true

believers, overcomers, “I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Beloved, let me say it simply: we are promised that we will sit on the throne of Christ at the right hand of God. No angel was ever given that promise. We reign; they serve. Back to Hebrews 1, “To which of the angels did God ever say, Sit at My right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet?” To none. Angels don’t reign, they serve. Christ reigns. We in Christ reign in Him. So we will fellowship with angels, we will rejoice with angels. We will worship and praise God with angels. But we will rule over angels. And they will serve us in heaven.

First Corinthians, key passage, chapter 6 verse 1, “Does any one of you when he has a case against his neighbor dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?” In other words, don’t sue other believers and drag it into a court of unbelievers. “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” In other words, if you’re going to judge the world, you certainly ought to be able to handle your own disputes. And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? You say, “What does this mean?” Listen, beloved, some day when Christ sets up His earthly kingdom, we’re going to judge the world. We’re going to be His ambassadors, and His rulers, and His kings, and His princes, and His leaders. We’re going to sit in judgment on the world carrying out, meting out the judgment verdicts of Christ.

But beyond that, verse 3 says, “Do you not know that we shall judge,” and the word is govern or rule, “angels?” That couldn’t be any more clear. Throughout eternity, we will govern, rule over angels. We will fellowship with them. We’ll rejoice with them. We’ll worship and praise God with them. They will serve us as we reign with Christ over them. And they will do our bidding as we do the bidding of Christ, now mark it, and all in perfect, holy, glorious, marvelous harmony. That’s going to be our relation to angels. And we’re going to love them in the process. And we’re going to know them in the process just as they are known to God and the Son, even by name we will know them. And they in the fullest joyful expression of their created capability as holy beings will do the thing that we ask of them because it is the thing God desires, and they exist to His glory, and they give joy for all He has done in the church.

Secondly, let’s talk about relationships to our family, all right? People always ask me this question, “Will I be married to the same woman in heaven? Or can I make another choice?” Or, some say, “I don’t want to lose my wife, I can’t imagine going to heaven and not being married. I mean, I can’t imagine going down the street and saying, ‘Oh, hi, Patricia, I remember you. You used to be my wife. It’s so nice to see you. I haven’t run into the kids lately, are they around?’ I can’t handle that. I can’t imagine that. I can’t imagine not having intimacy with my own family, and deep and profound and wonderful communion. And I would love to have my family, just once, perfect, and all together perfect so I could enjoy it all. I’d hate to have them all be perfect and scattered all over infinity so I couldn’t find out what they’re like when they’re perfect.” We ask those kinds of questions because our minds are so trapped dimensionally. Will we have family love? Will we have family affection? Will we have family fellowship? Will it be like it is here?

Well, obviously from a general viewpoint, we'll all be perfect and so they'll be perfect love, perfect peace, perfect joy, perfect harmony, perfect trust, perfect fellowship, perfect relationships in every single dimension of existence. Perfect relation. Can you imagine a family like that? Can you imagine a place where there are absolutely perfect relationships? Everybody is perfect, there's never any sadness, there's never any sorrow, there's never any disappointment. There's never any discouragement. Nobody ever does anything wrong, says anything wrong, thinks anything wrong. Everybody acts perfectly as the way God would act in any given situation and every given situation. Can you imagine all the people in your house acting exactly like Christ would act at every single point in their existence? And what would even make it more remarkable, you'll act the same way. Perfect love, perfect harmony, perfect joy, perfect peace, perfect contentment, perfect satisfaction, perfect harmony, perfect bliss, perfect blessedness, perfect function, perfect relationships.

You say, "Well, what about marriage and family?" Scripture speaks to that. First Corinthians, let's go there, chapter 7. First Corinthians chapter 7 verse 29, "But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened," that is, the time until the coming of the Lord, the judgment of this world, "so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none." Now, I want to explain that because somebody could really take that as their life verse and split. And I don't want you to do that, that's being done quite enough. That's not what the Scripture intends to teach. Follow along in the thought. Verse 30, "Those who weep as though they didn't weep, those who rejoice as though they didn't rejoice, those who buy as though they didn't possess, and those who use the world as though they didn't make full use of it for the schema, the form or structure of this world is," what? "Passing away." What is passing away here? I'll tell you what is passing away. Go right back to the list. Marriage, because he says those who have wives should be as they had none. Weeping, earthly rejoicing, buying and possessing, using the world, all of that schema of the world is passing away. Marriage is part of the schema of the world. It is the form of the world. The word means fashion, it means manner of life, it means way of doing things and it's not permanent.

What he is saying is, "Look, learn how to take what life gives, marriage and it's a blessing." Peter calls it the grace of life. "Learn how to weep, and rejoice, and buy and possess, but don't get yourself too engulfed in it because it's all part of a schema that is passing away. It's all part of a form that is temporary. Don't get over entangled." The responsibilities of marriage, yes they're wonderful and they're there, but don't get over entangled so that your marriage becomes an excuse for your failure to serve God, an excuse for your failure to put treasure in heaven, an excuse for your failure to set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth. Yes, you should emote in sorrow and joy and you should buy the things you have to buy, but don't let your emotions and your possessions control you so that you are literally engulfed as a victim of the human passing world. None of it is eternal.

He even goes so far as to say if you can stay single, stay single, stay single. Verse 33 he says, verse 32 rather, "One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord how he may please the Lord, but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife and his interests are divided." So, if you can stay single, stay single and just concentrate on the things of the Lord, because marriage is a part of a temporary provision that is passing away. Now, that doesn't say to me make yourself indifferent to your marriage; what that says to me is that God has given us a wonderful gift in the scheme of things here and we need to enjoy it to the fullest.

It is the grace of life, but it is passing away. Look at Matthew chapter 22, another of our Lord's great, great confrontations with the Sadducees and the Pharisees. They wanted to trip Him up, the Sadducees who denied the resurrection. Verse 23, "On that same day some Sadducees," parenthesis: who say there is no resurrection, that they said because they only accepted the Pentateuch, and they said the Pentateuch does not teach resurrection, "they came to Jesus and they questioned Him." Now, their question was bouncing off the Pharisees because the Pharisees who believed in resurrection taught this: they taught that in the next life you would have the same relational status you had here. You'd be married to the same woman, have the same family, and that it would go on forever like that. So, the Pharisees taught that the next life is just like this life. The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection and they tried to take the Pharisees theology and paint an absolutely absurd portrait. Here was a question designed really to show the stupidity of the Pharisaical view of resurrection, thinking they could capture Jesus in it. "Teacher, Moses said if a man dies having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife and raise up an offspring to his brother." A man dies, doesn't leave any offspring to his wife. He has an unmarried brother, it's his responsibility to take her on from her widowhood and raise up an offspring. All right, that's a Mosaic principle. That taught in Deuteronomy chapter 25.

And so, here's their hypothetical picture, right? There were seven brothers with us, the first married and died. And having no offspring left his wife to his brother. Also the second, and the implication is he died, the third, and he died, four, five, six, they died, seven, and he died. And last of all the woman dies. Somebody ought to check that house. And I'll tell you what, if I was number five, I'd be running for some other country. So, there's the question, verse 28, "In the resurrection therefore whose wife of the seven shall she be?" And they're just going, this is hilarious. If we're all going in there in the same status we had here, whose wife shall she be? Listen, that's not such a bizarre question. You could ask the same question today. If we're going to carry our marriage into heaven, it's going to get very confusing for some people, very confusing. And since God doesn't even tolerate polygamy here, He certainly won't tolerate it there. And you can rest assured that if you've had three or four wives here, you're not getting them all back forever in heaven. But that's the question they asked, assuming they could stump Jesus with the silliness and folly of that.

Verse 29, He said, "You're mistaken. You don't understand the Scriptures, and you don't understand the power of God." You don't understand the Scripture which teaches resurrection and you don't

understand the power of God which enables resurrection. "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven." Angels don't marry. Do you know all the angels were created at one time? Angels don't procreate. You don't have two angels come together and produce little angels. They were all created in one point in God's economy. They do not procreate. What it means, you will be who you are. If you're a man here, you'll be a man in eternity. If you're a woman here, you'll be a woman in eternity in a glorified form. But there will be no marrying, and no giving in marriage, but like the angels in heaven.

Why will there be no marriage and no giving in marriage? Because the reason there is marriage here is that man needs a helper, woman needs a protector, and God has designed them to produce children. In heaven, man doesn't need a helper, he's perfect. Woman doesn't need a protector, she's perfect. And there won't be anybody produced in heaven because only the redeemed will be there. There will be no birth, no procreation. So, there's no point in marriage. You say, "But I'm happily married. I love my wife. She's my best friend, my dearest companion, my choicest comrade in every area of life." Good, you'll have that with her in heaven forever and ever and ever and ever, and not only with her but with every other single soul in heaven as well. And if it's wonderful to have the best of everything that you have with each other, imagine how wonderful it will be to have the best of everything in a human relationship glorified to the point where you have it equally with every being in existence. Incredible, bliss, variety, joy unspeakable.

So, marriage is for here and now. It's for complementing man who needs a helper, complementing woman who needs a protector and a provided. It's for intimacy to fulfill the desire of man and the desire of woman. It's for procreation. We won't have any unfulfilled desires. We won't have any desires that aren't satisfied. We won't be able to procreate. We won't want to procreate. We won't be incomplete. We won't need marriage. And the idea does not mean that we won't be who we are. We'll still be glorified men and women, but so perfect that we need no one to complement us, no one to fulfill us. You say, "Does that mean we won't have the good relationship?" No, what it means is you'll have a better relationship than you've ever dreamed possible, but you'll not only have it with your wife and your precious family, you'll have it with every other being in existence. Incredible.

Now, I know that blows your fuses. I heard one guy say one time, "We'll all be 33 years of age like Christ, male." Listen, if you're a woman, you're going to be a woman in heaven, a glorified woman. If you're a man, you're going to be a glorified man. And since there's no time in heaven, we won't be any age. That sounds wonderful to all of us.

Let me take you to a third category briefly and I'll close. What about our relationship to other believers? What will that be? And I've hinted at it already. First point I want you to get, we will be who we are now. I will be forever John MacArthur. I don't want to think about that now but that will be okay in heaven. I'll feel differently about it. But we will be forever who we are. Let me give you a little insight into this. This is just powerful when you begin to grasp the thought. Genesis chapter 25 verse

8, "And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age an old man, satisfied with life and he was gathered to his people." It says the same thing in Genesis 35:29, Genesis 49:29. It says the same thing in Numbers 20:24, the same thing in Judges 2:10. When people died they were gathered to their people. In other words, they maintained their identity. They went to their people. Second Samuel 12:23, David's little baby died. He said he can't come to me, I will go to him. He will maintain his identity, I will maintain my identity. He is still him and I will be me. All people maintain their identity. We will be a diverse company of individual people.

Let me take you into the New Testament and show you that further. Luke 22:8 as a wonderful statement and a glorious insight. We'll start down a little further. Verse 14, "He reclined at the table with the apostles." He said, "I've earnestly desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer." And He talks to them about the Passover and so forth. And then, He says, "Take this and share it among yourselves, the bread and the cup." Then, verse 18, "For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the Kingdom of God comes." I'll drink it with you in My Kingdom. In other words, we'll be together again. You'll be you and I'll be me, and we'll do this again, maintaining our fellowship. Matthew chapter 8 gives us another insight into this, not quite so veiled as the last few. Matthew 8 says, "I say to you," verse 11, "many shall come from east and west," speaking of the Kingdom, "and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven."

Look at Revelation chapter 19. And I'm hurrying a bit; I want to wrap this up. Revelation chapter 19 verse 7, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And He said to me right, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." When we go to heaven, listen, we're going to be in a marriage supper. He is the lamb; we are the bride. Who are the invited guests? They must be Old Testament and Tribulation saints. We'll all be there. The Lord will be there. The church will be there. The Tribulation and Old Testament saints will be there as well. It will be the party of all parties, folks. And it will go on and on and on from that unique marriage supper of the Lamb to the glorious communion and fellowship of forever, where all of us maintaining our identity will go to be with all the other redeemed, who maintain their identity, only in a perfectly glorified form forever and ever. Take your choice. You can have a fellowship with Enoch, or Noah, or Abraham, or Jacob, or Samuel, or Joshua, or Esther, or Elijah, or Elisha, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel, or David, or Moses, or Peter or Barnabas or Paul or anybody that you want and they'll be them and you'll be you.

Do you remember on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter, James and John went to the mount with our Lord and it says there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah? Moses and Elijah appeared on that mount. That tells us that those two men who had died centuries before still maintained their identity. Secondly, Peter, James and John apparently recognized them, which tells us that we will be able to recognize those we've never seen. So, the transfiguration is a reaffirmation of maintained personal identity in heaven as well as the recognition of that identity by those who've never seen

those people. We will instantly know them all, fellowship with them all, and we'll continue to be exactly who we are and nobody differently. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "This day shall thou be with Me in," what? "Paradise." You and Me are going to be together. We don't get neutered and washed into some big glob. We stay who we are. We stay who we are.

Well, that's a great thought. Abraham will be there, and Isaac will be there, and Jacob will be there. And you'll be there and I'll be there and everybody who loves the Lord will be there. And we'll not only be there and be who we are only in a perfected state, but we'll be able to fellowship with one another throughout all eternity because we'll recognize each other perfectly. And in that Matthew 22 passage where the Sadducees tried to stump Jesus, He says in the final verse, verse 32, "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living." What did He mean? Abraham is living and Isaac is living and Jacob is living and I am their God, not was their God. I am their God and they are My people.

Now, somebody asks the question, "Will there be reunions in heaven?" One other thing that I ought to mention, it just comes to mind, is in Revelation. This is so important, I can't let this go. Let me just pass this by you briefly. Revelation 2:17, "To the one who overcomes," it says, "I will give him a new name written on the stone." Boy, you're going to have a new name forever so you're going to be who you are only your name is going to be purged and purified. Then, in verse 5 of chapter 3, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garment, I will not erase his name from the book of life, I will confess his name before My God." His now perfected name will always be his name and I'll confess it before God. Verse 12, "To the one who overcomes, make him a pillar in the temple of My God and he will not go out from it anymore, he'll always be in heaven, I'll write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes out of heaven from My God. And my new name," you're going to have all kinds of names. You're going to be a perfect holy John, in my case. One with all the redeemed and bearing the name of God and bearing the name of Christ and not in a cultic way, in a genuine way. Great thought. Great thought.

Well, we are going to be who we are, and we're going to fellowship. Now, the question comes, will be reunited with other loved ones? Of course we will. That goes without saying because we'll maintain our identity. In fact, in 1 Thessalonians, you remember the promise of the Rapture of the church in chapter 4? And he says at the end of this passage, he says, the angels are going to come and blow a trumpet and the voice of the archangel and the dead in Christ will rise, and they'll come first and then we who are alive will be gathered with them and we'll go up to heaven in a cloud, and all of that. And then, it says in verse 18, "Comfort one another with these words." Why was that comfort? Because of the prospect of reunion. There was a fear that some who had died might miss that eternal glory, and they're encouraged to be comforted over the fact that those who died had not missed the coming of Christ. He would come and He would gather them first out of the grave, then those that are alive would be gathered and we'd all be together again, comfort one another with that great, great hope. The very prospect of comfort speaks then of the prospect of reunion. And we believe that we will have

that glorious reunion with the redeemed when we go to be the Lord. Since we know everybody, we're going to know the ones we specially want to know.

What kind of relationships will we have? Maybe we could just wrap it up by looking at one final passage, Revelation 21:5. Revelation 21. Well, actually we ought to do 1 to 5, "A new heaven and a new earth I saw for the first heaven and the first earth passed away and there is no longer any sea." And John looks at the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride, adorned for her husband. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be among them." And here are some things that help us understand our fellowship. "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." It will be a fellowship without tears. There shall no longer be any death; it will be a fellowship without separation. "There shall no longer be any mourning, crying or pain." There will be a fellowship without pain, a fellowship without death, a fellowship without sorrow, a fellowship without anxiety. What makes fellowship hard here? Tears, crying, pain, death, it will all be removed. We'll have a relationship like we've never, ever, ever experienced. There will be beauty in heaven. I believe there will be perfect humor in heaven because God even gave us that.

AA 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 activities must all be rational, moral, emotional, voluntary and active. There must be the exercise of all the 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." End quote. What a great statement. Is it any wonder then that the psalmist said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints?" Oh what a hope we have. Glorious relationships await us. Let's bow in prayer.

We remember, Father, the words of the old hymn, "I will sing you a song of that beautiful land, the far away home of the soul where no storms ever beat on the glittering strand while the years of eternity roll. Oh how sweet it will be in that beautiful land, so free from all sorrow and pain, with songs on our lips and with harps in our hands to greet one another again." We long for that, Father, and we long for the reunion there. We remember the words of Longfellow who said, "There is no flock however watched and tended but one dead lamb is there. There is no fireside howsoever defended, but has one vacant chair. A mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a family member, a dear one, we all have someone there. We all have a vacant chair. We all have a dead lamb in the flock of our own life. And we long for the glorious reunion that heaven provides for us." We say with John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Father, bless us as we sing a hymn in parting, set our affections on things above for the Savior's sake. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).