

Will we know our loved ones in heaven?

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Note: The scripture and reference citations are included in the foot notes

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Introduction

How does the widespread modern conception of heaven compare to what the Bible teaches? This article will concentrate on one aspect of this question that captures the essence of modern thought on this subject. Will we know our earthly loved ones in heaven? Our only safe ground here is on what the Bible clearly states. Much could be said based on conjecture or logic but both sides can argue from that basis. I will therefore keep closely to the scriptures.

We will be like the angels

Matthew 22:29 (Mark 12:18, Luke 20:27-40)

²⁹ Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures^c or the power of God.
³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage;^d they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’^{b?e} He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”¹

Commenting on this passage Matthew Henry states:

(2.) It is like the state angels are now in in heaven; *They are as the angels of God in heaven*; they *are* so, that is, undoubtedly they shall be so. They are so already in Christ their Head, who has made them *sit with him in heavenly places*, Eph. 2:6. The spirits of just men already made perfect are of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels, Heb. 12:22, 23. Man in his creation was *made a little lower than the angels* (Ps. 8:5); but in his complete redemption and renovation will be as the angels; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, like the uncompounded vehicles of those pure and holy spirits (1 Co. 15:42, etc.), swift and strong, like them. We should *therefore* desire and endeavour to do the will of God now as the angels do it in heaven, because we hope shortly to be like the angels who always behold our Father’s face. He saith nothing of the state of the wicked in the resurrection; but, by consequence, they shall be like the devils, whose lusts they have done.²

Jesus clearly teaches that life in heaven will be based on the life of angels, as they currently live in heaven. The overall pattern is not what we find on earth but what exists now in heaven. Obviously, this passage centers on marriage and procreation, not on the family as such. Many commentators correctly stress this aspect of what Jesus is teaching here. How that change affects other family relationships is not elaborated on in Jesus teaching here. We are taught though that by the power of God the earthly forms will undergo change. We cannot simply equate what happens now with what will happen in heaven.

^c Jn 20:9

^d Mt 24:38

^b Exodus 3:6

^e Ex 3:6; Ac 7:32

¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Mt 22:29–32). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (pp. 1729–1730). Peabody: Hendrickson.

1 Corinthians 15:35 – 54

³⁵ But someone will ask,^f “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”^g ³⁶ How foolish!^h What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.ⁱ ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.^j ³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor,^k the moon another and the stars another;^l and star differs from star in splendor. ⁴² So will it be^m with the resurrection of the dead.ⁿ The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;^o ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;^p it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;^q ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.^r If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”^{f,r}; the last Adam,^s a life-giving spirit.^t ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the

^f Ro 9:19

^g Eze 37:3

^h Lk 11:40; 12:20

ⁱ Jn 12:24

^j Ge 1:11

^k Ps 19:4–6

^l Ps 8:1, 3

^m Da 12:3; Mt 13:43

ⁿ ver 12

^o ver 50, 53, 54

^p Php 3:21; Col 3:4

^q ver 50

^r Gen. 2:7

^r Ge 2:7

^s Ro 5:14

^t Jn 5:21; 6:57, 58; Ro 8:2

spiritual.^u ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth;^v the second man is of heaven.^w ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.^x ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man,^y so shall we^g bear the image of the heavenly man.^z ⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood^a cannot inherit the kingdom of God,^b nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.^c ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery:^d We will not all sleep,^e but we will all be changed^f—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound,^g the dead^h will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishableⁱ must clothe itself with the imperishable,^j and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”^{h k 3}

^u ver 44

^v Ge 2:7; 3:19; Ps 90:3

^w Jn 3:13, 31

^x Php 3:20, 21

^y Ge 5:3

^g Some early manuscripts *so let us*

^z See Ro 8:29

^a Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14

^b See Mt 25:34

^c ver 42, 53, 54

^d 1 Co 13:2; 14:2

^e See Mt 9:24

^f 2 Co 5:4; Php 3:21

^g See Mt 24:31

^h Jn 5:25

ⁱ ver 42, 50, 54

^j 2 Co 5:2, 4

^h Isaiah 25:8

^k Isa 25:8; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:14

³ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (1 Co 15:35–54). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Chapter 15 of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians reveals a great deal about the resurrection of believers. As with the passage from the Gospels above it does not teach us anything specific about family relations in heaven. It does however reveal a great deal about the great change that will take place when our earthly bodies are changed for a heavenly one. One commentator summarizes this change in a very clear manner.

In vv. 42–44a the apostle applies this to the truth of the resurrection of the body. God can take the mortal body, perishable (Gal 6:8), dishonored, humiliated because of sin (Philippians 3:20, 21), and weak (Mark 14:38)—a natural body like those of the animal world—and bring that body that “is sown” in death (cf. John 12:24) into a different order of life in a spiritual body. Such a body will indeed have immortality (2 Tim 1:10), glory (Philippians 3:21), and power. It will have a spiritual way of functioning similar to the way heavenly bodies function in contradistinction to earthly bodies (St. John Parry). That by “spiritual” here (v. 44) Paul means completely nonmaterial is incompatible with the whole context, which discusses the differing organizations of material substance. The spiritual body is an imperishable yet utterly real body—one of a different order and having different functions from the earthly body; it is a body given by God himself—a body glorified with eternal life.⁴

Jesus teaching on the family

Honoring our fathers and mothers is fundamental teaching of the Bible. It is the fifth of the ten commandments.

¹²“Honor your father and your mother,^v so that you may live long^w in the land^x the LORD your God is giving you. ⁵

¹⁶“Honor your father^p and your mother,^q as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long^r and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you. ⁶

⁴ Mare, W. H. (1976). [1 Corinthians](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians* (Vol. 10, p. 290). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

^v See Ge 31:35; See Dt 5:16; Mt 15:4*; 19:19*; Mk 7:10*; 10:19*; Lk 18:20*; Eph 6:2

^w Dt 6:2; Eph 6:3

^x Dt 11:9; 25:15; Jer 35:7

⁵ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Ex 20:12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^p Mal 1:6

^q Ex 21:17; Lev 19:3; Eze 22:7; Mt 15:4*; 19:19*; Mk 7:10*; 10:19*; Lk 18:20*; Eph 6:2–3*

^r See Dt 4:40; 11:9; Pr 3:1–2

⁶ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Dt 5:16). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’^{a r} and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’^{b s} ⁵ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ ⁶ they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷

⁶ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.^g ² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”^{a h} ⁸

²⁵ Near the cross^g of Jesus stood his mother,^h his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.ⁱ ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother^j there, and the disciple whom he loved^k standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman,^b here is your son,” ²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. ⁹

As the above scriptures illustrate the Bible clearly teaches the fundamental importance of giving honor to our parents. Nothing in the New Testament alters this important truth. It is also a fact however, that the Lord Jesus adds something additional to our understanding of this important truth.

^a Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16

^r Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; Eph 6:2

^b Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9

^s Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9

⁷ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (Mt 15:3–6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^g Pr 6:20; Col 3:20

^a Deut. 5:16

^h Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16

⁸ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (Eph 6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^g Mt 27:55, 56

^h See Mt 12:46

ⁱ Lk 24:18

^j See Mt 12:46

^k See Jn 13:23

^b The Greek for *Woman* does not denote any disrespect.

⁹ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (Jn 19:25–27). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Something in fact that is almost shocking. With the coming of the Kingdom of God (life in and through the Lord Jesus Christ) there is a new emphasis.

The following scriptures show this:

³¹ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived.^r Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." ³³ "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. ³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."¹⁰

¹⁹ Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. ²⁰ Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers^k are standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹ He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."¹¹

²¹ Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ²² But Jesus told him, "Follow me,^d and let the dead bury their own dead."¹²

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.^m ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.ⁿ

^r ver 21

¹⁰ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Mk 3:31–35). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^k Jn 7:5

^l Lk 6:47; 11:28; Jn 14:21

¹¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 8:19–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^d See Mt 4:19

¹² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Mt 8:21–22). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters,^a make every effort to confirm your calling^v and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble,^w ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom^x of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.^y ¹³

¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists,^y should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.^z ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy^a and those who are made holy^b are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.^g ^c ¹² He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.”^h ^d ¹⁴

These passages clearly show several things: Our original love and duty to our parents has not been reduced in any manner. However, something additional has been added. This can be seen in two senses. First, we can only truly obey Gods command with regard to our parents if we have God as the first and most important thing in our hearts. God must be the most important. In fact, our love to God must be such that we do not place anything whatsoever before him. As is common in Jesus’s teaching he uses hyperbole in stating that we must “hate” even our family members in comparison to how much we care for him. Obviously if we hated a family member without cause, we would be disobeying God. The point is that God must be first in our lives. We must part with any or all our loved ones on earth if need be. If any family member or anything else is more important to us than God himself, we are sinning against

^a The Greek word for *brothers and sisters (adelphoi)* refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family.

^v See Ro 8:28

^w Ps 15:5; 2 Pe 3:17; Jude 24

^x Ps 145:13; 2 Ti 4:18

^y 2 Pe 2:20; 3:18

¹³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (2 Pe 1:10–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^v See Ro 11:36

^z Lk 24:26; Heb 5:8, 9; 7:28

^a Heb 13:12

^b See Eph 5:26

^g The Greek word for *brothers and sisters (adelphoi)* refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family; also in verse 12; and in 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22.

^c See Mt 28:10

^h Psalm 22:22

^d Ps 22:22; 68:26

¹⁴ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Heb 2:10–12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

God. Putting this as simply as possible; unless God is first in our lives we will not be going to heaven. Secondly, the relationship that exists between those who are truly saved takes priority over earthly relationships. Our earthly family relationships do not cease to exist. However, when anyone is truly saved they become part of God's family.

Some passages on what the Bible teaches about heaven and what we will be like.

Revelation 21:1-8 God the center of heaven

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”^{a m} for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,ⁿ and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City,^o the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,^p prepared as a bride^q beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.^r They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.^{s 4} ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes.^t There will be no more death’^{b u} or mourning or crying or pain,^v for the old order of things has passed away.”^{w 5} He who was seated on the throne^x said, “I am making everything new!”^y Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are

^a Isaiah 65:17

^m See 2 Pe 3:13

ⁿ See Rev 6:14

^o ver 10; Ne 11:18; Isa 52:1; Rev 11:2; 22:19

^p ver 10; Heb 11:10; 12:22; Rev 3:12

^q See Rev 19:7

^r Ex 25:8; 2 Ch 6:18; Eze 48:35; Zec 2:10

^s See 2 Co 6:16

^t See Rev 7:17

^b Isaiah 25:8

^u Isa 25:8; 1 Co 15:26; Rev 20:14

^v Isa 35:10; 65:19

^w See 2 Co 5:17

^x Rev 4:9; 20:11

^y ver 4

trustworthy and true.”^z ⁶ He said to me: “It is done.^a I am the Alpha and the Omega,^b the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost^c from the spring of the water of life.^d ⁷ Those who are victorious^e will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.^f ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars^g—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.^h This is the second death.”ⁱ ¹⁵

Clearly the center of our existence in heaven will be God himself. “the old order of things has passed away.” Also, we will be God’s children in a special sense. Everything will be made new. – as 1 John 3:2 states (² Dear friends,^p now we are children of God,^q and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears,^a ^r we shall be like him,^s for we shall see him as he is.^{t16}) we will have spiritual bodies and be like Christ in this respect.

^z Rev 19:9; 22:6

^a Rev 16:17

^b Rev 1:8; 22:13

^c Isa 55:1

^d See Jn 4:10

^e See Jn 16:33

^f ver 3; 2 Sa 7:14; 2 Co 6:16; See Ro 8:14

^g ver 27; Ps 5:6; 1 Co 6:9; Heb 12:14; Rev 22:15

^h See Rev 9:17

ⁱ See Rev 2:11

¹⁵ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Re 21:1–8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^p See 1 Co 10:14

^q ver 1, 10; See Jn 1:12

^a Or *when it is made known*

^r Col 3:4; 1 Jn 2:28

^s Ro 8:29; 2 Pe 1:4

^t Ps 17:15; Jn 17:24; 2 Co 3:18

¹⁶ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (1 Jn 3:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Revelation 4: 1-11 Worship in Heaven

4 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing openⁱ in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet^j said, “Come up here,^k and I will show you what must take place after this.”^l ² At once I was in the Spirit,^m and there before me was a throne in heavenⁿ with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper^o and ruby.^p A rainbow^q that shone like an emerald^r encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders.^s They were dressed in white^t and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.^u In front of the throne, seven lamps^v were blazing. These are the seven spirits^{a w} of God. ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass,^x clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures,^y and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.^z ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a

ⁱ See Mt 3:16

^j Rev 1:10

^k Rev 11:12

^l Rev 1:19; 22:6

^m See Rev 1:10

ⁿ ver 9, 10; 1 Ki 22:19; Isa 6:1; Eze 1:26–28; Da 7:9; Rev 20:11

^o Rev 21:11

^p Rev 21:20

^q Eze 1:28; Rev 10:1

^r Rev 21:19

^s ver 10; Rev 5:6, 8, 14; 11:16; 19:4

^t See Rev 3:4, 5

^u Ex 19:16; Rev 8:5; 11:19; 16:18

^v Zec 4:2

^a That is, the sevenfold Spirit

^w See Rev 1:4

^x Rev 15:2

^y ver 8, 9; Eze 1:5; Rev 5:6; 6:1; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4

^z Eze 1:18; 10:12

face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.^a ⁸ Each of the four living creatures^b had six wings^c and was covered with eyes all around,^d even under its wings. Day and night^e they never stop saying: “ ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’^{b f} who was, and is, and is to come.”^g ⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne^h and who lives for ever and ever,ⁱ ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders^j fall down before him^k who sits on the throne^l and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹ “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,^m for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”ⁿ ¹⁷

Without question our life and happiness in heaven will center upon God and his Glory. The central theme of the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. The story of his person and work is the heart of scripture and the glory of heaven. As 1 John 4:19 says we love him because he first loved us. God’s love for us and our love to him with overshadow any earthly love or care. If we recognize any earthly person we will see them in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Things that are so important now will simply cease to be important considering the new existence we will have as heavenly beings.

^a Eze 1:10; 10:14

^b See ver 6

^c Isa 6:2

^d Eze 1:18

^e Rev 14:11

^b Isaiah 6:3

^f Isa 6:3; See Rev 1:8

^g See Rev 1:4

^h ver 2; Ps 47:8; See Rev 5:1

ⁱ See Rev 1:18

^j See ver 4

^k Dt 33:3; Rev 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16

^l See ver 2

^m Rev 1:6; 5:12

ⁿ Ac 14:15; Rev 10:6

¹⁷ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Re 4:1–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

2 Corinthians 11:2,3; Revelation 19:6-8; The Church (all saved Christians) is the bride of Christ – married to Christ.

I promised you to one husband,^g to Christ, so that I might present you^h as a pure virgin to him.

³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning,ⁱ your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.¹⁸

⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude,^k like the roar of rushing waters^l and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah!"^m For our Lord God Almightyⁿ reigns.^o ⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!^p For the wedding of the Lamb^q has come, and his bride^r has made herself ready.⁸ Fine linen,^s bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts^t of God's holy people.)¹⁹

Salvation is not primary for ourselves. One of the concepts that the Scriptures use to convey this truth is that we are being prepared to be married to Jesus Christ in heaven for all eternity. As the husband is the head of the wife now (see Ephesians 5:22) Christ will be our head in heaven. We will be so taken up with him that all other things will seem insignificant in comparison.

Ephesians 5:22-33 – we are the body of Christ.

^g Hos 2:19; Eph 5:26, 27

^h See 2 Co 4:14

ⁱ Ge 3:1–6, 13; 1 Ti 2:14; Rev 12:9

¹⁸ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (2 Co 11:2–3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^k ver 1; Rev 11:15

^l See Rev 1:15

^m ver 1, 3, 4

ⁿ See Rev 1:8

^o Rev 11:15

^p See Rev 11:13

^q ver 9; Mt 22:2; 25:10; Eph 5:32

^r Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17

^s ver 14; Rev 15:6

^t Isa 61:10; Eze 44:17; Zec 3:4; Rev 15:4

¹⁹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Re 19:6–8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands^s as you do to the Lord.^t ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,^u his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands^v in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives,^w just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her^x ²⁶ to make her holy,^y cleansing^b her by the washing^z with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself^a as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ^b ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives^c as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body.^d ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”^c ^e ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife^f as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. ²⁰

Our lives as true Christians are so intimately entwined with Christ even in this life that we are spoken of as being part of his body. How much more will this be so in heaven! We will be so united to Christ that we will make up one entity, one whole person. The apostle Paul gives us some glimpse of the bliss we will enjoy when he tells us of an experience he had of heaven.

^s Ge 3:16; 1 Co 14:34; Col 3:18; 1 Ti 2:12; Tit 2:5; 1 Pe 3:1, 5, 6

^t Eph 6:5

^u See Eph 1:22

^v See ver 22

^w ver 28, 33; Col 3:19

^x See ver 2

^y Jn 17:19; Heb 2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12

^b Or *having cleansed*

^z See Ac 22:16

^a See 2 Co 4:14

^b Eph 1:4

^c ver 25

^d See Ro 12:5; See 1 Co 12:27

^c Gen. 2:24

^e Ge 2:24; Mt 19:5; 1 Co 6:16

^f ver 25

²⁰ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (Eph 5:22–33). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

12 I must go on boasting.^r Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations^s from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ^t who fourteen years ago was caught up^u to the third heaven.^v Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.^w ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up^x to paradise^y and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. ⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.^z ⁶ Even if I should choose to boast,^a I would not be a fool,^b because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say,⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations.^c Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh,^d a messenger of Satan,^e to torment me.²¹

Clearly life in heaven will be radically different from our life on earth. The bible describes it in earthly terms because that is the only reference point we have. The Old Covenants teaching about the Jewish tabernacle is a good example. God gave specific detailed instructions about all aspects of building the temple and the worship practices that the Jews were commanded to practice. Any deviation resulted in death and separation from God. God used these earthly things, gold, silver, wool, incense, cattle, doves etc., to teach us about heavenly things. They are the type and heaven is the reality (arch-type). God was teaching the Jews that he was separate (holy) and that complete separation from ungodliness was required to have fellowship with him. We dare not expect God to bless our earthly preconceived ideas of what heaven should be like. Only his word (the Bible) can be a safe guide.

^r ver 5, 9; 2 Co 11:16, 30

^s ver 7; See 1 Co 2:10

^t See Ro 16:3

^u ver 4; See Ac 8:39

^v Eph 4:10

^w 2 Co 11:11

^x ver 2

^y Lk 23:43; Rev 2:7

^z ver 9, 10; See 1 Co 2:3

^a 2 Co 10:8

^b ver 11; 2 Co 11:16

^c ver 1; See 1 Co 2:10

^d Nu 33:55

^e See Mt 4:10

²¹ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (2 Co 12:1–7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Revelation 5:11-14 Angles and all creation worshipping God

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.^m They encircled the throne and the living creaturesⁿ and the elders.^o ¹² In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb,^p who was slain,^q to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”^r ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth^s and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne^t and to the Lamb^u be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”^v ¹⁴ The four living creatures^w said, “Amen,”^x and the elders^y fell down and worshiped.^z ²²

All of heaven and all of earth will unitedly worship God. God will be the center of all things. He will receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise. There will be untold millions of souls redeemed by the cross of Christ, countless angles and other heavenly being as well as all other created things joined in this worship and adoration.

Scriptures used to support the view that we will recognize our loved ones in heaven

2 Samuel 12:22,23

^m Da 7:10; Heb 12:22; Jude 14

ⁿ See Rev 4:6

^o See Rev 4:4

^p ver 13

^q ver 9

^r Rev 1:6; 4:11

^s ver 3; Php 2:10

^t See ver 1, 7

^u ver 6; Rev 6:16; 7:10

^v 1 Ch 29:11; Mal 1:6; 2:2; See Ro 11:36

^w See Rev 4:6

^x Rev 4:9

^y See Rev 4:4

^z Rev 4:10

²² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Re 5:11–14). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²² He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows?’^p The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.”^q ²³ But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him,^r but he will not return to me.”^s ²³

Keil & Delitzsch in their commentary on the Old Testament have this to say about verse 23: *2 Samuel 12:23* is paraphrased very correctly by Clericus: “I shall go to the dead, the dead will not come to me.” I believe this summarizes the teaching on this verse. David would go to the same place and state as his son had gone. He believed in life after death and found hope in that.

It is a fact that many commentators, including John Gill, draw the inference from this passage that David will recognize his son in heaven. On this passage he says:

Ver. 23. *But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?* etc.] And pray; it is to no purpose, no end can be thought to be answered by it: *can I bring him back again?* from the state of the dead, bring him to life by fasting, and praying, and weeping; that is not to be expected: *I shall go to him*; to the state of the dead, to the grave, where his body was, or would be; to heaven and eternal happiness, where his soul was, as he comfortably hoped and believed: from whence it appears, that the Old

Testament saints did not suppose an annihilation at death; but believed the immortality of the soul, a future state after death of eternal life and bliss: *but he shall not return to me*; in the present mortal state, though at the resurrection they should meet again.

Gills comments illustrate the fact that a great deal is read into this passage even by otherwise very sound scholars. Based on an understanding of the Old Testaments saints concept of death these assumptions are unwarranted. In the Old Testament the concept of death is very closely associated with Sheol. Its important to understand this concept to correctly understand passages like 2 Samuel 12:23. Here is what one reference source has to say about this.

Sheol

See also: *Hades*, p. 297 and *Hell*, p. 303

Hebrew expression: *she'ol*

Pronunciation: *sheh 'OHL*

Strong's Number: 7585

KEY VERSES

^p Jnh 3:9

^q Isa 38:1–5

^r Ge 37:35

^s See 1 Sa 31:13; 2 Sa 13:39; Job 7:10; 10:21

²³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (2 Sa 12:22–23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Job 26:6; Psalm 16:10; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Isaiah 14:11

The concept of Sheol is difficult to grasp immediately. It is a Hebrew term of unknown origin. In ordinary usage it means ravine or chasm. It is used synonymously with pit, death, and destruction. Sheol swallows the wicked. When Korah rebelled against Moses' leadership (Num. 16:30), Moses foretold that Korah and his followers would descend alive into Sheol. Job said that Sheol consumes sinners in the same way that drought and heat consume snow waters (Job 24:19, NASB). Jacob spoke of going down to Sheol (Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29) but his use of the term may be virtually equivalent to saying "I am going to die."

In order to begin to understand Sheol in the Old Testament, we must approach it from two perspectives: (1) other concepts used in connection with Sheol; and (2) physical descriptions of Sheol.

In the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament, we are often given information about a particular concept through other terms used in parallel contexts. There are a number of such images meant to convey the notion of the abode of the dead that are used alongside Sheol. Sheol is the opposite of heaven (Ps. 139:8; Isa. 7:11)—and appropriately, as heaven is up, so Sheol is down (Ezek. 32:27; Amos 9:2). Sheol is described as death itself (2 Sam. 22:6; Ps. 6:5; Isa. 28:15), the pit (Ps. 16:10; Prov. 1:12), the grave (Ps. 55:15), or the place of destruction (*'abaddon*; Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11). Darkness pervades Sheol (Job 17:13). Some type of life does continue in Sheol (Isa. 14:9; Ezek. 32:21), albeit a life with significant limitations (Ps. 6:5; Eccl. 9:10).

Is Sheol identical with the Christian concept of hell? While Sheol and hell share similarities, our understanding of hell from the New Testament is a far clearer concept than of Sheol in the Old Testament. Hell is almost always used to name a place of punishment for those who have refused God's mercy in Christ. Sheol, on the other hand, often refers to a place but it is simply part of expressions that sometimes refer to death and not a place of the dead.

Righteous and unrighteous go down to Sheol in the sense that they all die. It is a mistake to view Sheol as an intermediate state in the sense that purgatory, in Roman Catholic teaching, is characterized as an intermediate state.

Though the overall picture of Sheol is grim, the Old Testament nevertheless affirms that God is there (Ps. 139:8; Prov. 15:11) and that it is impossible to hide from God in Sheol (Job 26:6; Amos 9:2). Moreover, God has power over Sheol. He is able to redeem His people from its depths (Pss. 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13; Job 33:18, 28–30). Most of these cases speak of restoration to physical life, although Psalm 49:15 seems to foresee the Christian understanding of eternal life with God.²⁴

The point I'm making here is one that is widely acknowledged; the Old Testament teaching about the afterlife is very vague. Even the godliest of people, such as David understood only a small part of what

NASB New American Standard Bible

²⁴ Carpenter, E. E., & Comfort, P. W. (2000). In [Holman treasury of key Bible words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew words defined and explained](#) (pp. 168–169). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

we in the New Testament age take almost for granted. Sheol is the primary concept they had of what happens after we die. David was not saying that he would be with his son in heaven, only that he would go where his son was.

1 Samuel 28:9-15ff

⁹ But the woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off^q the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap^r for my life to bring about my death?” ¹⁰ Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this.” ¹¹ Then the woman asked, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” “Bring up Samuel,” he said.¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me?^s You are Saul!” ¹³ The king said to her, “Don’t be afraid. What do you see?” The woman said, “I see a ghostly figure^a coming up out of the earth.”^t ¹⁴ “What does he look like?” he asked. “An old man wearing a robe^u is coming up,” she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. ¹⁵ Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”²⁵

Here we have a servant of Satan, a witch or necromancer, calling up a manifestation of the Prophet Samuel. It’s passing strange that supposedly sound Christian scholars flock to such a verse to teach that the saved will recognize each other in heaven. The passage says nothing at all about heaven. The manifestation comes up “out of the earth” It is called up from under the earth not down from heaven. Satan not God performs the deed and that through his servant the medium. One commentator has this to say about the debate that swirls around this passage:

The fascinating story of the medium at Endor was long remembered in ancient Israel (cf. its brief summary in 1 Chronicles 10:13–14) and has been the subject of intense debate since the earliest times: “Was the woman actually able to raise up the righteous dead (i.e., Satan having power over the saints) or was her craft one of mere delusion? Was Samuel resuscitated or was this a demon? Did Samuel appear due to the necromancer’s craft or did God intervene and raise Samuel himself?”

^q ver 3

^r Job 18:10; Ps 31:4; 69:22; Isa 8:14

^s See Ge 27:36; 1 Ki 14:6

^a Or *see spirits*; or *see gods*

^t ver 15; See Lev 19:31; 2 Ch 33:6

^u 1 Sa 15:27

²⁵ [*The New International Version*](#). (2011). (1 Sa 28:9–15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

(Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, p. 115 n. 39). Individual proponents of one or more of these views, as well as of others of a similar nature, are not far to seek²⁶...

Clearly any consensus of opinion is lacking as to what took place. I agree with that commentator quoted above, as to the most likely answer; that Samuel was raised or seemingly raised by a Satanic act. What if, for the sake of argument, we lean to the supposition that God raised up the real Samuel to pronounce his will to Saul. This would clearly place God himself in a similar position as Saul in this instance. God would be using satanic means to accomplish his own purposes. To any true Christian this is utterly detestable and unthinkable. So desperate are some to provide a biblical foundation to a false teaching that they stoop to such a low level.

Matthew 17:1-8 (Luke 9:28 and Mark 9)

17 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John^v the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. ²⁷

In this passage we have the virtual opposite of the account from 1 Samuel 28 above. God the Father and God the Son are the initiators and main actors in this scene. One would expect that here if anywhere we should find proof for knowing our relations in heaven. Jesus is transfigured, and Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Christ. We are specially told that three of the disciples were chosen to go with Christ, Peter, James and John. It is very clear that the transfiguration, appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the voice of God are for the benefit of the three disciples. This is summarized well in the Expositor's Bible Commentary.

That Jesus was transfigured "before them" implies that it was largely for their sakes: whatever confirmation the experience may have given Jesus, for the disciples it was revelatory. As they would come to realize, they were being privileged to glimpse something of his preincarnate glory (John 1:14; 17:5; Philippians 2:6-7) and anticipate his coming exaltation (2 Peter 1:16-18; Rev 1:16). Their confession of Jesus as Messiah and his insistence that he would be a suffering Messiah (Mt 16:13-21; 17:9) were confirmed. Therefore they had reason to hope that they would yet see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (16:28). The contrast between what Jesus had just predicted would be his fate (16:21) and this glorious sight would one day prompt Jesus' disciples to marvel

²⁶ Youngblood, R. F. (1992). [1, 2 Samuel](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel* (Vol. 3, p. 779). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

^v See Mt 4:21

²⁷ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Mt 17:1-3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

at the self-humiliation that brought him to the cross and to glimpse a little of the height to which he had been raised by his vindicating resurrection and ascension.²⁸

What is purpose of the appearance of the two Prophets? Both play a pivotal role regarding the end times. Elijah is referenced many times in the Gospels (Matt 3:1–3; 11:7–10; 17:9–13 for example). He was forerunner heralding the coming of Jesus. Moses was the model for end times prophet. Deuteronomy 18:18,19 states:

¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet^e like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words^f in his mouth.^g He will tell them everything I command him.^h ¹⁹ I myself will call to accountⁱ anyone who does not listen^j to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.^{k29}

The Expositor's Bible Commentary is very helpful in this regard as well:

Now, however, the glory is Jesus' glory, for it is he who is transfigured and who radiates the glory of Deity. Both suffered rejection of various kinds (for Moses, cf. Stephen's summary, Acts 7:35, 37; and for Elijah, cf. 1 Kings 19:1–9; Matt 17:12). Together they may well summarize the Law and the Prophets. This is the more plausible when we recall that these two figures very rarely appear together in Judaism or in the NT (possibly Rev 11:3; cf. Zech 4:14; J. Jeremias, TDNT, 4:863–64). All these associations gain importance as the narrative moves on and Jesus is perceived to be superior to Moses and Elijah and, indeed, to supersede them (Mt 17:5, 8).³⁰

The presence of the two prophets signifies the summing up of all the teaching of the Bible in Christ. He is the "end plan" of God. Nothing whatever indicates that either prophet came from heaven to be present at the transfiguration. The vision was for the benefit of the apostles that were present. All the

²⁸ Carson, D. A. (1984). [Matthew](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 385). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

^e See Ge 20:7

^f Isa 2:3; 26:8; 51:4; Mic 4:2

^g See Ex 4:12

^h Jn 4:25–26; See 14:24; Ac 3:22*

ⁱ Jos 22:23; Ac 3:23*; Heb 12:25

^j See Ex 23:21

^k See ver 7; See Lev 19:12; 2 Ki 2:24

²⁹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Dt 18:18–19). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

TDNT Kittel: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

³⁰ Carson, D. A. (1984). [Matthew](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 385). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

emphasis is of Christ and his Glory. This passage is on no benefit to support the loved ones in heaven theory.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

¹⁷ But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought),^m out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.ⁿ ¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan^o blocked our way.^p ¹⁹ For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown^q in which we will glory^r in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?^s Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory^t and joy. ³¹

This is another passage that is used to demonstrate that believers will recognize each other in heaven. This passage deals with believers in general, not just our natural family. It is used however to show that we will know our relations in heaven. The following quotation from Crosswalk.com uses this verse in this way:

“Paul makes it clear that the believers he loved on earth will be his joy in heaven. “For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?” (1 Thessalonians 2:19). When Paul says this, he clearly anticipates that relationships forged on earth will continue in heaven.”

(This is a quote from Colin Smith – UnlockingTheBible.org - <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/will-we-know-each-other-in-heaven.html>)

Based on this passage we are told in the above quotation that Paul “clearly anticipates that relationships forged on earth will continue in heaven.” The clear fact is however, that this passage is not referring to life in heaven at all. Paul is speaking about the *bema* – the “judgment seat” of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV) ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.). When Christ appears Paul’s (and all believers) works will be evaluated. Paul is so confident in the Thessalonians that

^m 1 Co 5:3; Col 2:5

ⁿ 1 Th 3:10

^o See Mt 4:10

^p Ro 1:13; 15:22

^q Isa 62:3; Php 4:1

^r 2 Co 1:14

^s See Mt 16:27; See Lk 17:30; See 1 Co 1:7; 4:5; 1 Th 3:13; 2 Th 1:8–10; 1 Pe 1:7; 1 Jn 2:28; See Rev 1:7

^t 2 Co 1:14

³¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (1 Th 2:17–20). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

he speaks of their perfection in Christ as being his wreath of victory at that judgment. As he expresses it is in the book of Colossians he wants to present “present everyone perfect in Christ” at Christ’s return.

The Bible verses examined above are among the most commonly used to give the idea that the Bible teaches the continuation of close relationships on earth in heaven. The fact is that the Bible does not teach this doctrine. There is a well-known example of the misuse of scripture, making it to express something it does not. That example takes two short phrases and places them together. The first phrase refers to Judas. The second to something Jesus told an expert in the law. Together they go like this: “he went away and hanged himself, go and do likewise.” This point is that unless we pay close attention to the context and meaning of any given passage we can make it teach just about anything we like. Because we can give the appearance of truth to a doctrine in no way means that it is a true doctrine.

Conclusion

Based on the scriptures I do not expect to know my loved ones in heaven except in our new oneness with Christ Jesus. Any earthly intimateness will be transformed into some angelic, holy, pure and spiritual; centered in God and taken up with him. There will be no death, no sickness, no pain and no sorrow. It will take all eternity to even begin to see something of God’s glory shining through our Lord Jesus Christ. The scriptures tell us all we need to know in this life. They are not and never were intended to tell us about everything we might wish to know. If our hearts are right with God, we will be content to leave any uncertainty to Him. Our purpose is to love, obey, thank and glory in God through our Lord Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus expressly prays that believers will see his glory, the glory he had from all time that they may be one with him.

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,
²¹ that all of them may be one,^t Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.^u May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.^v ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me,^w that they may be one as we are one^x—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me^y and have loved them^z even as you have loved me.

^t Jer 32:39

^u ver 11; Jn 10:38

^v ver 3, 8, 18, 23, 25; See Jn 3:17

^w Jn 1:14

^x See Jn 14:20

^y ver 3, 8, 18, 21, 25; See Jn 3:17

^z Jn 16:27

²⁴ “Father, I want those you have given me^a to be with me where I am,^b and to see my glory,^c the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.^d ³²

^a See ver 2

^b See Jn 12:26

^c Jn 1:14

^d ver 5; See Mt 25:34; See Jn 1:2

³² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Jn 17:20–24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.