

There are many questions that people have that we have no answer. This is why God tells us in Deut 29 that there are some things that only God knows and He has not revealed it to man. ***Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*** But one question that we have all pondered at one time or another is will we recognize one another in heaven; what will we be like or how will we look. While none of us will ever be able to answer those questions with certainty, there are a few clues given to us in scripture, which is the theme of this lesson.

Let's us begin by considering the events of Jesus transfiguration. ***Matthew 17:1-4 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, (2) And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. (3) And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. (4) Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.***

Peter, James, and John went with Jesus up a high mountain where they went to sleep. When they awoke they saw Jesus in a transfigured state talking with Moses and Elijah. Moses dies some 1200 years before the birth of Jesus and Elijah was taken into heaven in a whirlwind about 850 years before the birth of Jesus. What I want you to notice is that Peter recognized Moses and Elijah. There is no indication that Jesus introduced them nor did they identify themselves to Peter, but he knew who they were. Somehow there was identity to these two from the past. We don't know if it was appearance or by what they said, but Peter recognized them in presumably a spiritual state as was Jesus.

John 5:27-29 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the

resurrection of damnation. Jesus is giving us a snapshot of judgment. He tells us that all will come forth from the graves, both the good and the bad, after which they will receive their just reward. I want us to focus on the term “graves.” What does that mean? It is defined as “*a place of interment*” The same Greek word is translated as tomb and sepulchre. We associate the grave with the graves in our cemeteries and we envision the ground parting and the tombs opening up; but I don’t think it will be that way because when a person dies their soul is separated from the physical. The soul goes back to God who gave it. We see this in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Death did not stop life. So we conclude that the grave is a place where the souls of both the righteous and unrighteous continue to live until the return of Jesus.

This place for the righteous is called paradise before the death of Jesus and heaven after the death of Jesus. The reason for the two places is because of sin. God cannot associate with sin, and before the death of Jesus and the shedding of his redeeming blood, man had sin and could not coexist with God. But when Jesus died, his blood redeemed the righteous people before and after the cross. Some have said that the blood flows forwards and backwards. After the cross man can have his sins removed, thus he can coexist with God in heaven. I suggest both paradise and heaven would fit the definition of the grave. Using this line of reasoning, consider the following passages.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. (3) And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) (4) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Here the third heaven is called paradise.

Paul would tell us that being absent from the body is being present with the Lord. ***2 Corinthians 5:6-8 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*** Where is the Lord? In Acts 1 he ascended back into

heaven to be reunited with his heavenly Father.

Revelation 6:9-10 *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: (10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* Here we have martyred saints in heaven questioning when their avengers on earth will be punished. Point is, some righteous were in heaven while others were still on earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Here we have a scene of the return of Jesus. Paul wrote this information because of the concern of what will happen to the righteous that had already died. In essence Paul said, “*Don’t worry.*” Then verse 14 he adds, “*Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*” When Jesus returns, he will bring those that sleep in Jesus with him. Who is that; the righteous that have died. Where are they coming from? Where ever Jesus is – i.e. heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

When Jesus returns the righteous dead and the righteous living will be united in the air. At this time all of the righteous will be changed. So again the question is what will be like? To help us let’s go to 1 Cor. 15. ***1 Corinthians 15:50-52*** *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (51) Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,*

and we shall be changed. When Jesus returns, the righteous will be changed and the reason of this change is because *this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* How otherwise could the man be a fit inhabitant of the incorruptible regions. We must be changed to enjoy a new environment. A fish is adapted to live in water; a mole under the ground, and people on earth. But the righteous will be going for a new place prepared by God the Father.

Revelation 21:1-4 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Notice verse 2 speaks of this new place called New Jerusalem is from God and out of heaven. The terms holy and new distinguish the city. Because it is holy and new, it is different from any earthly city. It is significant that this glorious dwelling place of God and His people is described as the holy city. Cities are places where there are many people, and people interact with each other. This isn't isolation, but a perfect community of the people of God. According to v5 everything is going to be new. God is starting over with a new world consisting of only the righteous in spirit. ***(3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (4) And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither so.*** It is in this new city where there will be no more tears or death. The Hebrew writer puts it this way. ***Hebrews 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable***

This place is not heaven, the resting place for the dead saints that Jesus went away to prepare, but a new place prepared by God. To add clarification, notice ***Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*** So you will need a new body to live in this new environment.

But will we know one another? Back to 1 Cor 15. This is the same question that

they had some 2000 years ago. ***1 Corinthians 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*** Sound familiar? Paul by inspiration called them a fool for not understanding the life cycle. He then used agriculture as an illustration. For a plant to live, it has to first die. This takes place when you bury the seed in the earth. But when it comes forth it has a different appearance than the seed. It has similar characteristics but a different look. When you plant a wheat seed, a big wheat seed does not come up. Instead, a stalk of wheat comes up. So, even though our resurrection bodies come from our present bodies, we should not expect that they will be the same bodies or just “improved” bodies. So I conclude that we will take on a different appearance.

But the answer to what we will look like is in verse 38. ***1 Corinthians 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*** We will have a body that is pleasing to God. Paul gives four contrasts between our present body and our future resurrection body: corruptible against incorruptible, dishonor against glory, weakness against power, and natural against spiritual. On all counts, the resurrection body wins!

From there he draws a comparison between Adam and Jesus and makes the point that on earth we bore the image of earthly but in heaven we will bear the image of the heavenly. ***(47) The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. (48) As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. (49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.***

So I conclude that you will likely not recognize one another in a physical sense. Let me use my sister to illustrate. Elceone had a six year old son name Bart to die in an accident. Let's say Elceone dies and goes to heaven. To Bart would she have the appearance of a thirty year old mom or an eight-five year old woman? If we are to retain her earthly image which image are we to retain? This is not to say that there will be no recognition but it seems it will be more spiritual than physical. ***At the death of his son David said But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back***

again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me. 2 Samuel 12:23

Let me conclude with a message from John. *1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we*

Invitation