

WHO IS GOING TO HEAVEN?

John 5:28-29 *"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 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."*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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."*

That the Bible teaches that there is life after death is obvious. The most casual reader can easily see this. The question that most people have is: what will it be like to live again? There are some things about life after death that we cannot know now.

1 John 3:2 *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."*

We are told that the body that we have then will not be like the body we have now (1 Corinthians 15:35- 50). Some of the key terms used to describe the new body are glorious, incorruptible, powerful spiritual, heavenly, changed, and immortal. We can only guess at the wonders of such a body.

In addition to the new body, there will be a new dwelling place described as "a new heaven and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13). In what probably is highly figurative language conveying the thought of transcendent beauty, John says that the gates are of pearl and the street of pure gold (Revelation 21:18-21). Jesus said he would prepare a place for us in his Father's house (John 14:1-3). The grandeur of the world in which we now live is not to be compared with the magnificence of the world to come. Seeing the beauty around us in a world fraught with blemishes, yet, so wonderful, what marvels must await God's people in the eternal home?

Another question that often occurs is: shall we know one another in heaven? If so, will it not make us sad to realize that someone we have loved in this world is not there in the heavenly home with us?

Let's consider the second question first. The answer is to be found in our confidence in God that he will do what he said he will do. The possibilities of how he might handle that which seems to be so great a problem to us in our present world are many. It may be, in that the fleshly relationships will no longer exist (Matthew 22:23-32), we will have a much more complete understanding of what really went on in this life. It may be that those who are lost, whether we knew them or not, will be seen in their true light as enemies of Christ and his people. On the other hand, it is

also quite possible that God, in his infinite wisdom and power, may blot out of our memory any knowledge of having ever known anyone in this world other than those who are found to be with us in heaven. Whatever, the answer to the question may be, we are constrained to have faith and confidence in God and his power to fulfill his promise to "wipe away all tears" (Revelation 7:17; 21:4).

The answer to the first question is simply: yes! We will know one another in heaven! If we would not, how would we know ourselves? How could we be happy if we got there and did not know who we were? What reward would that be? The Bible is plain and simple concerning this question of identity of people after death. The witch of Endor and King Saul both recognized Samuel after he had been dead for some time (I Samuel 28:7-20). Moses and Elijah had been dead for many years when they appeared with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration and were recognized by Peter, James and John (Matthew 17:13). Lazarus, the beggar, was carried away to Abraham's bosom after death (Luke 16:22). What would be the point of such a statement if he did not know who Abraham was? Furthermore, in the same story, the rich man that died knew who both of them were. Paul's words in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 would have no meaning or hold forth any hope at all if it were not for the fact that we will know one another in heaven! One of the key words in that text is "together." Togetherness is meaningless if we do not know those with whom we are together.

Every person who has lived or will live on the face of the earth, from Adam to the end of time, will be raised from the dead (John 5: 28-29). Those who have done the will of God as revealed in the Bible will be raised to an eternal life of happiness. As in previous lessons, his will is that we should hear the gospel of Jesus, believe it, repent of sins, confess faith in him, be baptized into him, and walk in the light.

Questions:

1. Who will be raised from the dead?
2. What kind of a body will we have?
3. How does the Bible describe heaven?
4. Will we know one another in heaven?
5. If we know one another in heaven, how can we keep from being sad to know that someone we loved here in this world is not there?
6. Who is going to heaven?

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