

Will We Know One Another In Heaven?

HEAVEN #3 – Pastor Gary Combs – April 28, 2024 – Revelation 7:9-12

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our 6-week sermon series entitled: "HEAVEN: It's Better Than You Ever Imagined." In today's sermon, we will be asking, "Will We Know One Another In Heaven?"

Vision: But before we begin, I want to talk to you about the upcoming Citywide Prayer Rally. We're joining other Wilson churches to pray together for four consecutive nights beginning on TONIGHT! Sunday, April 28th.



Trans: Now, back to our sermon, today we're discussing "Will We Know One Another In Heaven?" As we learned in previous weeks, first God's Word calls us to "Seek and set our hearts and minds on the things of heaven." That's our motivation for this series on heaven. We're learning more about heaven that we might have our hearts and minds set on heavenly things. Then last week, we talked about what's heaven like and we learned that the Bible teaches that believers in heaven are: With Christ, Fully Conscious, Actively Engaged, and Eagerly Waiting. Now, let's consider today's question: "Will We Know One Another In Heaven?"

Need: Through the years, when someone loses a loved one, one of the most asked questions I get when I'm helping a family prepare for a funeral and helping them process their grief and pray with them, is this very question: "Will We Know One Another In Heaven?" Underneath this question are several others, like: "Will I still be me in heaven? Will I still have all my memories and personality? Will I look like me?" And, "Will I recognize my friends and loved ones who gone to heaven before me? Will I recognize other biblical saints? Will I know Jesus?" And this question, which I didn't think of, but that same person in my CG who's been asking heaven questions, asked me this: "Will there be humor in heaven?"

Trans: So, let's look to the Scriptures and see what God's Word reveals about these kinds of questions.

BODY: In the book of Revelation, the apostle John recorded his vision of believers in heaven knowing one another. We can be confident that believers in heaven will know one another. Why are we able to be confident that believers in heaven will know one another? The text gives **four answers** to why we can be confident that believers will know one another in heaven.

Today's text: Revelation 7:9-12 (ESV) ⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

WILL BELIEVERS KNOW ONE ANOTHER IN HEAVEN?

1. YES! We will retain our earthly identity.

EXP: (9) Notice first that John retains his own identity: "After this I looked." He knows who he is. Then notice that the "great multitude" retained their national and tribal identities as well as their languages. They retained their earthly identities in such a way that it was somehow visible to John.

"I looked" (9) (εἶδω, *eidō*) - to perceive with the eyes. John could see their earthly identities.

"Great multitude" (9) (ὄχλος, *ochlos*) - a crowd, a multitude.

"No one could number" (9) (ἀριθμέω, *arithmeō*) - to enumerate or count:—number.

"Every nation" (9) (ἔθνος, *ethnos*) - a tribe, nation, people group. Every ethnic group. Every race.

"Tribes" (9) (φυλή, *phulē*) - an offshoot, i.e. race or clan:—kindred, tribe.

"People" (9) (λαός, *laos*) - a people, people group, people of the same culture

"Languages" (9) (γλῶσσα, *glōssa*) - the tongue, language.

ARG: You will still be known by the name your parents gave you (Although Christ will give you a "new name" [Rev. 2:17; 3:12]. Like "Abram/Abraham, Jacob/Israel, Simon/Peter, Saul/Paul...)

Isaiah 66:22 (ESV) "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain."

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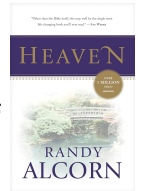
Matthew 22:32 (ESV) 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."

Believer's names are recorded in heaven.

Revelation 21:27 (ESV) But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Randy Alcorn in his book on heaven writes:

"You will be you in Heaven. Who else would you be? If Bob, a man on Earth, is no longer Bob when he gets to Heaven, then, in fact, Bob did not go to Heaven. If when I arrive in Heaven I'm not the same person with the same identity, history, and memory, then I didn't go to Heaven. If we weren't ourselves in the afterlife, then we couldn't be held accountable for what we did in this life. The Judgment would be meaningless. If Barbara is no longer Barbara, she can't be rewarded or held accountable for anything Barbara did. She'd have to say, "But that wasn't me." The doctrines of judgment and eternal rewards depend on people's retaining their distinct identities from this life to the next." — Randy Alcorn



ILL: When we think of individuality/identity we often think of introvert/extrovert or some other personality trait. We also think of people who are just naturally funny, born comedians. Back to my CG member's question: Will there be humor in heaven? According to Mark Twain (*perhaps thinking of how he himself and most humorists and comedians are actually miserable in real life*) ... no.

"Everything human is pathetic. The secret source of humor itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no humor in heaven." ~ Mark Twain

Who said, "If you're not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there"? Certainly not Mark Twain. Answer: Martin Luther

And who said:

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh... Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (*make these separate slides to give people time to answer*) Answer: Jesus (Luke 6:22-24)

APP: Believer, you will be you in heaven. But the you, you will be, will be better by far! Your redeemed self, your born again self, will be set free from the old flesh, the old sin nature. You will recognize yourself, but without sin and without the weaknesses and bad habits and old desires. You'll be like Jesus! And you shall laugh and rejoice and leap for joy!

2. YES! We will recognize others' individuality. (We will recognize other saints and fellowship with them)

EXP: (9-10) Notice the further evidence of individuality. This "multitude" made up of all these different people groups and cultures are "standing before the throne" (9) of the Lamb (Jesus), they are "clothed in white robes" (9), waiving "palm branches" with their "hands" (9), and "crying out" (10). These are unique individuals with the ability to stand, wear clothes, hold palm branches and cry out. And John recognizes them with the help of one of the elders:

Revelation 7:13-14 (ESV) ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation..."

"Standing before the throne" (9, 4x) (θρόνος, *thronos*) - Seat of kings, seat of power and authority. The mercy seat in the Temple was a type pointing to this throne. One commentator called it a chariot.

"Lamb" (9) (ἀρνίον, *arnion*) - a lamb, i.e. Christ. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

"White robes" (9) (στολή, *stolē*) - a loose outer garment extending to the feet, worn by persons of rank.

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“Palm branches” (9) (φοίνιξ, *phoinix*) - a date palm branch. Also seen in Triumphant entry (John 12:13).

“Crying out” (10) (κράζω, *krazō*) - to cry out, cry aloud, speak with a loud voice.

ARG: Hebrews describes heaven. It describes those whose names are written in heaven (“spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect” - Could this describe our bodies in present heaven before we receive our final resurrection bodies?)

Hebrews 12:22-23 (NLT) ²² No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. ²³ You have come to the assembly of God’s firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect.

When Jesus saw the faith of the centurion He declared... (We will eat with the saints of old)

Matthew 8:11 (ESV) I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven

ILL: **When David lost his infant son he said...** (Talk about how Stephen used this verse when Conner died)

2 Samuel 12:22 (ESV) ... I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”

APP: Believer, you will recognize and know one another in heaven! Yet, without the frailties of earth. Imagine meeting Joni Eareckson Tada in heaven someday. Joni is 74 today and has been a quadriplegic since her diving accident at age 17. Before her accident, she was a great athlete, but now is confined to a wheel chair. But in heaven, she’ll be better by far! Better the she was at 17! You won’t recognize her by her wheel chair, but by her beautiful and athletic glow! Think of it! We’ll be recognizable, yet better by far!



3. YES! We will experience perfect unity.

EXP: (9-11) We’ve noticed their earthly identities are retained and so is their unique individuality, now let us consider their perfect unity. For on earth our differences of “nation, tribe, people, and language” has caused division and racial sin and even war. If we retain these aspects, how will there be unity in heaven? Because of what we now have in common: “standing before the throne of the Lamb, white robes, palm branches, crying out the same words with a loud voice (9-10).

“White robes” (9) (στολή, *stolē*) - unique identities, but same uniforms, same shout, same throne of Jesus.

“Crying out” (10) (κράζω, *krazō*) - to cry out, cry aloud, speak with a loud voice.

“Loud voice” (10) (μεγάλη φωνή, *megalē phōnē*) - great sound, ie. “Megaphone.”

“Salvation” (10) (σωτηρία, *sōtēria*) - deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation

“Before the throne / around the throne” (9,11) - the saints, the elders, the heavenly host are one in perfect unity around the throne of the Lamb of God worshipping.

ILL: Just a few years ago, fans of the Seattle Seahawks football team set a world record as the loudest fans in the NFL. On December 2, 2013, during a third-down defensive stand against the New Orleans Saints, the Seahawks fans produced an ear-splitting 137.6 decibels. (The roar of a jet engine one hundred feet away produces 140 decibels.) The Seahawks fans’ “praise” was so loud it triggered a minor earthquake! The Pacific Northwest Seismic Network detected vibrations in the region that measured between a magnitude 1 and 2 earthquake during the game.” (“Seattle Seahawks Fans ‘Cause Minor Earthquake’ with World Record Crowd Roar,” Guinness World Records, December 4, 2013, <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2013/12/seattle-seahawks-fans-cause-minor-earthquake-with-world-record-crowd-roar-53285/>). Imagine the “mega-phone” shout in heaven!



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ARG: The REAL Lord's prayer. He prayed for us to be "perfectly one."

John 17:22-24 (ESV) ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

God's plan is to "bring to unity" all thing under Christ.

Ephesians 1:9-10 (ESV) ⁹ [God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

APP: Believer, you will know perfect unity with your believing spouse, family, friends, saints, and most of all the Lord Himself. You will be at one with everyone! Imagine this. No more being offended. No more feeling lonely or left out. No more arguing and complaining. Being right with self, others, and God is better by far!

4. YES! We will know and be known by the Lord.

EXP: (9-12) John recognized the Lamb (9, 10; 2X) and the throne (9-11; 4X). He also recognized the various members of the heavenly host: "elders, angels and four living creatures" (11). In v.11, John recognized everyone worshiping "before the throne of God." Will we see the Trinity? Perhaps something like John saw:

Revelation 4:2-5 (NLT) ² And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. ³ The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. ⁴ Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God.

"Angels" (11) (ἄγγελος, *angelos*) - an angel, a messenger of God. They are created spiritual beings with a will, intellect, personality, etc. They are "ministering spirits" (Heb. 1:14), and "ministers of fire" (Heb. 1:7).

"Elders" (11) (πρεσβύτερος, *presbyteros*) - the 24 elders on 24 thrones, wearing white robes and crowns (Rev. 4:4). These represent Israel (12 tribes) and the Church (12 disciples).

"Four living creatures" (11) (τεσσάρων ζώων, *tessarōn zōon*) - four; a living being, beast. They are described in more detail in Rev. 4 as having 6 wings and 4 faces (lion, ox, man, eagle).

"Fell on their faces" (11) (πίπτω, *piptō*) - to fall prostrate; used of persons rendering homage or worship.

"Worshiped" (11) (προσκυνέω, *proskuneō*) - Lit., to kiss the hand. To worship.

"Amen" (12, 2x) (ἀμήν, *amēn*) - verily, amen; at the beginning of a discourse - surely, truly, of a truth; at the end - so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled.

ARG: Actually, we will know the Lord and one another far better in heaven than we do now.

1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV) For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

APP: Believer, you will know the Lord as you are fully known by Him. You will be able to talk with Him and ask questions, just like His disciples did on earth, only better by far!

CONCLUSION: Will we know one another in heaven? YES! Believers you will ... 1) retain your identity, 2) recognize others, 3) experience perfect unity, and 4) know as you are fully known by the Lord. (Sing a little of "Wayfaring Stranger"). Let's pray.