TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader / Opening Prayer by: Don Taylor
Morning Assembly Song Leader: River Lucy

#548 The Lily of the Valley
#23 Our God He Is Alive

Scripture Reading by: Joseph Girard
#180 Jesus Is Lord

Communion Devotional by: David Smith
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#71 As the Deer
Sermon: "A Fly in the Ointment"
Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:20

#712 Jesus Is Coming Soon
#794 Unto Thee, O Lord
Closing Prayer by: Gus Tristan

Our Small Groups will meet tonight.
Bobby Rader's group will meet tonight at
the building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Oct. 8, 2023

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Will We Know Each Other in Heaven?

Recently, several of us from church were sitting at a restaurant having lunch after services on Sunday, and a question came up: "Will we know each other in heaven?" That was not the first time this question has been asked: you can find entire sermons on it in old sermon books and whole chapters devoted to it in books dealing with the afterlife. It is a subject of great interest. A few years ago, I actually dealt with it in a Sunday morning Bible class series. But because not everyone is present for those—and, let's face it, even if we heard it, we sometimes forget—I thought it would be good to address it here.

To begin, we could do with a bit of clarification; this takes us into the realm of topics we have covered before in detail, and space precludes us addressing it again fully now. But it is worth asking, are we talking about our eternal state—that is, after the resurrection? Remember, that will be in a glorified body, just like Jesus (**1 Cor 15)**; we will not be disembodied spirits floating on the clouds the way some seem to imagine. Jesus' resurrection body had both continuity and discontinuity with his old one, but one thing we can say for certain is that he was recognizable. That suggests in itself we will know each other.

But perhaps people are talking primarily about the intermediate state—Sheol, Hades, whatever term we want to use—the place we go when we die while awaiting the resurrection. Still, I think the answer pretty clearly is yes! Of course, there is much in this realm we do not know; I cannot say, "Here it is, book chapter and verse, we will know each other." But it is the only answer that is consistent with the nature of God and the story of Scripture. We are created as human beings in the image of God; God obviously has personality—he has identity—and that does not depend on being embodied, because God is spirit. That means that identity must somehow transcend earthly flesh; there must be some way of knowing and being known apart from it. Moreover, God created us for relationship; he created us out of his love and to love him in return. If identity, relationship, consciousness, character, fellowship exist—well, how could we NOT know each other? God knows his own; how could we not be known to one another?

Simply from the great principles of the Bible, then, we could answer this affirmatively. With that said, we are not left to just reason it out from these big themes. We can point to some specific passages that, at the least, strongly imply it.

Old Testament Evidence
Let's begin by looking at some evidence from the OT, with the caution that much about the afterlife is not revealed until NT. Nevertheless, some passages imply recognition after death.

There's a refrain we find repeated in the Pentateuch that supports the idea. Consider the account of the death of Abraham: *These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife.* **(Gen 25:7-10)** That phrase "gathered to his people" is the significant one. That cannot be talking about his body; he was buried in a

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Ken Coleman had surgery Friday.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Patricia Prater, Edna Semien, Wilson Semien, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Kelly McCain, Wayne Noonkester

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

No Elders, Minister meeting this week.

Men's Prayer Breakfast, Saturday, Oct. 14th at 8:00 a.m. in the family life center. There will be a workday immediately after.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Oct. 19th at 8:00 a.m.

Homecoming is Sunday, Oct. 22nd. The meal will be catered and we will need to provide desserts.

Baby Shower for Kora Ward on Sunday, Nov. 5th. More information to follow.

Food Bank

We served 147 families on Tuesday, Oct. 3rd at our food bank. That equals to about 472 individuals. We had 18 volunteers.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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place he had purchased, while his ancestors were entombed hundreds of miles away in Mesopotamia. Notice, too, that he was gathered to his people before he was buried! This phrase is used over and over again: of Ishmael **(Gen 17)**; Isaac (**Gen 35:29)**; Jacob (**Gen 49:33)**; Moses and Aaron (**Num 27:12, 13)** This phrase is not about burial; the point is even made that God buried Moses no man knows where! **(Deut 34:6)** Rather, it indicates a reunion with (presumably faithful) loved ones in the afterlife; they join them in Sheol or Hades, the place of departed spirits. It implies recognition: a family reunion, with memories intact!

Then there are a couple of passages with fathers mourning their sons. Jacob was tricked into believing Joseph was killed by a wild animal and was inconsolable, crying *No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning* **(Gen 37:35).** He's not talking literally about some sort of common grave; he believed Joseph's grave was unknown, because he had been torn to pieces! He expected to be reunited with him after; recognition is implied. I have always thought the attitude of David at the death of his child was particularly moving. He had fasted, he had wept, hoping that God might spare him. But when he learned the child died, he washed, he ate, and he expressed his hope: *Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me* **(2 Sam 12:33).** That indicates not only a belief in the continued existence of the child, but that David would somehow recognize him and know him in that land. What comfort would there be for David to go to a child he did not know? We might also add the special case of Samuel, stirred up by the witch of Endor after his death, his spirit immediately known to Saul (**1 Sam 28:3-19).** He maintained his identity after death and was thus recognizable.

New Testament Evidence

The NT is even more clear. In **Matthew 8**, Jesus heals a Roman centurion's servant. Jesus was greatly impressed by his faith: *Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven* **(Mt 8:10-11).** The Kingdom of Heaven is pictured as a banquet; it's social. Gentiles will feast with the Patriarchs! Is this a real promise? Will they—will we—actually know Abraham, Isaac, Jacob? If it can't be fulfilled, it's no promise at all. Those 3 will recognize each other, and we will come to know them.

Or consider the Transfiguration, where Jesus appeared in his glory alongside Elijah and Moses. It is not said how the 3 disciples recognized them, but somehow they did—they were knowable. This is particularly interesting in a couple of ways. Not only were these men otherwise unknown to them—after all, they had died centuries before—they did not yet have their resurrection bodies. The implication, again, is something about identity exists apart from the body. If those whom we did not know in this life are knowable after death, then surely those whom we DID know will be too! Even more so!

There are a couple of passages where Paul talks about his expectation of being with his converts. To just give one example: *But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.* **(1 Thess 2:17-20)** Paul evidently expected to meet those he converted in Thessalonica when Jesus returns and to be able to distinguish them from others he had known. He anticipates those earthly relationships will continue after death.

The evidence could be multiplied, but this is sufficient to make the point. Will we know each other in heaven? Yes! Next week, we will consider some objections sometimes offered to that idea.

Bryant Perkins