



Conducted by
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**“A question which troubles me somewhat is, ‘Shall we recognise one another in Heaven?’
Could you please help?”**

This is one of those questions with great emotional significance. When a loved one dies the great expectation is that we shall meet them ‘on the other side’. Will the meeting be in Heaven? Shall we know them when we meet them? Will they be as they were when we knew them here on earth? If they have changed will they still be recognisable in spite of the change? These are questions of absorbing interest to Christians, and even though there may not be a definitive answer which says, “Yes, we shall know each other,” there is enough evidence in the Bible to point our minds in the right direction.

In order to further the learning process we should always lead the mind from the known to the unknown. We **know** that recognition can only take place because of the bodily form, and the inherent characteristics of that bodily form, e.g., it would be impossible to recognise a disembodied spirit. So we further know that we are talking about physiognomical form by which recognition is possible. This, of course, would involve there being a **body** of some sort.

It is Paul himself who poses the question and provides some of the answers. In 1 Cor. 15:35 he says, “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” He then severely rebukes the imaginary questioner and supplies the answer to the “how” question, “that which thou sowest is not quickened (made alive) unless it die.” We know that the sower sows **seeds** not plants, and we are told that the seed dies before the new plant comes. With particular reference to

natural man he says, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Now here we have a definite statement. We know and are familiar with the natural body, but Paul distinctly says, "there is a **spiritual body**." Now if we had to give a definition of the word 'body' we would have to say, "the material frame of man or animal," but the resurrection body cannot be material in the same sense as the natural body, i.e, made of flesh and blood, because we are told that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (v50). This being the case we must understand that the development of the spiritual body must be glorious beyond our conception; as Paul puts it in his letter to Philippi, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20,21). The frame of this new spiritual body may be beyond our comprehension, but we can be well assured that it is not beyond the power of Christ to perform. The spiritual body will be a body for glory.

Before we go any further with our study there is one thought which springs to mind. During discussions on this subject I have heard it said by many Christians, "Well, if I do eventually get to Heaven and I find my loved ones who have died before me are not there, then I shall be immensely disappointed and saddened. How shall I be able to live eternally in that condition." Dear fellow-Christian, I think we have learned that salvation is a very personal matter and that judgment will begin at the 'household of faith.' Furthermore, Christ died for all; He loved all, as the Word says, "greater love hath no man than this, than that a man will lay down his life for his friend." But Christ laid down His life for His **enemies** as well, and we believe that many millions of people who choose to remain in sin will never see Heaven. Are we then to conclude that there will be so much sorrow in heaven over lost souls that joy and happiness would be an intrusion? I think not. This would be an attitude of the natural mind, but we are spiritual. There are many blessings laid out for us in the Word; we **must** believe that there are many more laid up for us in Heaven.

Standing at the Judgment Bar

There are many who say that all recollection of our earthly existence will be wiped out when we die, but the Bible does not seem to support that view. It is recorded in Matthew 7:22,23, that the Saviour said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Obviously, Jesus here is projecting a scene which will take place at the judgment, and the people referred to pleading for divine favour in the name of Jesus. It is also very evident that such people are able to recall the things done while here on earth in the natural body, and the associations they had with others while doing those things. This is a rather significant point, I think.

There is also an important aspect of the foregoing which we should stop to consider. There is a vast difference so far as the Lord is concerned between attempting to do things **by using** His name, and by doing things **in His name** (by His authority). It is the difference in doing something by the name of Jesus for self-glorification, and of **obeying** Him because we love Him. This is why those who tried to curry favour by **using** His name were banished. The distinction is brought out quite well by the construction of the original text.

In Matt. 25:31-46 we see a new dimension of the same basic teaching. This is not the case of people **not being able to remember**, but rather of misinterpreting actions while on earth. They would no doubt remember when the Lord pointed things out.

Fact or Parable?

There are some who say that the teaching in Luke 16:19-31 is not factual, but should be classed as a parable. But does it really matter regarding the interpretation of it? Why should Jesus portray an incident by parable if there was no possibility that the incident could actually occur? Personally, I believe it to be factual.

The first point we notice is that Lazarus and the rich man died. It seems that Lazarus was carried by the angels straight into Abraham's bosom; the rich man was buried and evidently found himself in the torment of hell. From that place he saw and recognised Lazarus. That could only be possible if he had seen Lazarus on earth while they were both still living there; the scripture records this as being the case (vv19-21). There is also mention of 'water' in the place where Lazarus was, and 'flame' in the other place.

The first words recorded as spoken by Abraham were, "Son, remember." Now how could the rich man have done that if all recollection of events on earth had been wiped out? It is also stated that the rich man remembered his father's house and his five brethren there, because he asked for Lazarus to be sent to warn them about hell; the whole recorded dialogue indicates that communication of some kind was possible. The whole episode highlights the difficulties inherent in the preaching of the Gospel, for the rich man says, "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Well, one has risen from the dead and told about the horrors of hell, the Lord Himself, but sad to say many millions have not heard Him. We make great play on the 'wide gulf' which cannot be bridged, especially when preaching the Gospel; if this is factual, which it undoubtedly is, why should it be thought that the rest of this incident we have considered is non-factual?

In addition to the above, Paul records an experience of being caught up into Paradise (2 Cor. 12:1ff). He says that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body; he couldn't tell. Many have concluded that this was a trance in order to reveal more to Paul. But what greater revelation could have been given him than that on the Damascus road, and what was the purpose and benefit of the revelation to us, if he was not allowed to discuss it subsequently? In any case he 'saw' things, he 'heard' things, and his bodily condition — whether old or new — he could not distinguish. Surely this is some sort of a pointer to the 'spiritual body' that the same Apostle teaches us that we shall have in the future.

There are other indicators, such as the incident recorded on the Mount of Transfiguration, which lead me to believe that recognition will be possible in Heaven, and that this will not mar or destroy the joy and happiness we shall find there.

(All questions, please to:

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