

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

FEBRUARY 1993

No. 086

WILL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER AFTER DEATH?

Many years ago my youngest daughter asked, "Daddy, if you and me get to go to heaven, do you think we'll see Abraham and Noah?" I assured her that we would. Then this observation was made, "But we'll just see their souls, for their bodies stay down here!"

It is interesting to contemplate the prospect of again seeing those whose bodies lie buried outside in the cemetery -- even to see and to know our ancestors whom we never knew while they lived. This question is often asked. It has been the question of the ages. Will we, indeed, know one another after death?

THE HARVESTER
1120 Sun Hill Road
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Birmingham, AL
PERMIT No. 4624

Some Unusual Views and Misconceptions

There are some very unusual, as well as some vastly differing answers to this intriguing question. Our Mormon friends understand life after death to present opportunity for a man to have his same wife or wives in heaven, to produce children, and to eventually become a god ruling over a vast domain. Timberline Riggs states in *A SKEPTIC DISCOVERS MORMONISM*, "that we are the race of the Gods, destined to be Gods even as He now is" (p.24).

Some feel that the memory of the past will be completely erased. If this were not so, they suppose, then there would be sorrow and anguish when one determines that his loved ones are not also in heaven. Such thinking, of course, assumes that our understanding then will be limited as is our present human understanding.

These two extremes illustrate the diversity of views encountered in considering this question. None whom we personally know have ever been beyond death and returned. There is no one to whom we may go and have them tell us of their own personal observations. But we do have marvellous insight available in God's own word -- after all, He formed the world and sustains it; He holds the future in His hand, and He knows the proper answer to every question we might have.

But Many Details of Life After Death Are Not Revealed

Possibly we could not understand even if the details of life after death were revealed to us. Life beyond death involves a completely different realm from the material with which we humans are acquainted. We read with considerable comfort Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 5:8, "*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present*

with the Lord? But this comfort is in prospect of what we imagine, not what we have experienced. We can't really comprehend life apart from the material and physical in which we presently exist.

There is record of at least two inspired writers who were allowed to glimpse the marvels and beauty of heaven. Both of these were forbidden to reveal at least some of what they heard and saw. John expresses that restriction in these words, *"And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not"* (Rev. 10:4). Paul writes of a man who was allowed to ascend into the third heaven, *"and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter"* (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

We Are Left Without Complete Information

As to the exact nature of our state after death, God has not seen fit to reveal complete information. Even John himself acknowledges incomplete understanding when he writes, *"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"* (1 John 3:2).

But the Bible Does Give Us Limited Insight

1. We will experience a different state of being. Rather than in a physical world where a fleshy body is needful, the realm of existence after death will be spiritual. At death this present body is rendered useless and worthless. The simple wording of Eccl. 12:7 vividly shows what happens at death. *"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."* The body

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus
3265 Fowlers Ferry Rd.
Gadsden, AL 35901-9130
Phone: (205) 442-4181

decays and returns to dust, while the spirit, that part of us which continues to live, returns to its Owner. We will no longer be restricted by the limits of a physical body, but our eternal person will live in the presence of God. Paul describes it this way, *"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"* (2 Cor. 5:8).

2. It will be a different body.

Of this matter Paul wrote, *"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"* (Phil. 3:20-21). But we must not confuse Jesus' resurrected body, which He continued to use for forty days (John 20:20-27; Acts 1:3), with *"his glorious body"* of the heavenly realm. It was also needful for Lazarus to use his old, fleshy body (John 11:43-44) for as long as he continued to live on this earth.

Our question is age-old, for even in Paul's days it was observed, *"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"* (1 Cor. 15:35). He replied, *"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body"* (vs. 36-38). Comparing

the resurrection with what one observes in nature, Paul explains that the old body will have served its purpose and will be replaced by another, yet different form. Then he extends the application. *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body"* (vs. 42-44). Our being on the other side of death, therefore, will not be in this same physical body, but it will rather be in a new body, spiritual in nature.

3. Angels and humans possess some characteristics in common, but many of our human characteristics will not be found in heaven.

It is observed from the record of Jesus' encounter in Luke 20:27-36 that in heaven there will not be the human family relationships enjoyed while on earth, and no one will die any more. *"... And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection"*

4. We will retain our individual identity.

Several Biblical examples show identity after death of those who were known persons while on earth. Moses and Elias appeared some 1500 to 950 years after their deaths to Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1-3), yet they were recognized. The rich man of Luke 16:23 recognized and even called by name the beggar Lazarus -- after both had died. The witch of Endor in 1 Sam. 28:7-20 brought back Samuel,

who was recognized by and communicated with Saul.

5. We will be "as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

In Matthew's record of the discussion where the Sadducees used as an illustration a certain woman with seven husbands, *"Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven"* (22:29-30). It should be carefully noted that the righteous do not BECOME angels, but rather they are AS the angels. Let us see if we can determine some characteristics of angels which will also apply to the righteous in their new role.

Angels possess their own personal identity. The angel Gabriel is named two times in the book of Daniel (8:16 and 9:21). In the New Testament he was named and appeared to Zacharias (Luke 1:9) and to Mary (Luke 1:26). Michael is mentioned three times in Daniel, once in Jude, and once in Revelation. Lucifer, the fallen angel, is named in Isaiah 14:12. An angel whose name was mentioned but not revealed is spoken of in Judges 13:17-18. Even as the angels, we, too, can expect to have our own individual identity.

This identity and related recognition is also clearly evident in Jesus' own teaching. In Luke 13:24-28 Jesus said, *"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; . . . But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing*

of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out!" How marvellous it is to envision the grand prospect of being able to *"SEE Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets!"*

What a Wonderful Prospect is Presented
With This Understanding

This is not to suggest that we will have the same names we have now, nor that our same physical attributes or appearance will continue there. Our children who died in infancy will not be babies there, nor will those who were aged require a walking stick. Those with stammering speech will be free from that hinderance, and regardless of the blessing eye-glasses are now, we will not need them in the hereafter. Of the many, many things we cannot now know, it does appear joyfully certain from these Scriptures that we will know and recognize each other beyond death. But, after all, isn't that one of the joys of the Christian life -- the grand expectation of being reunited with those loved ones now gone on? No doubt David had this comforting thought in mind when of his own son he 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 Sam. 12:23).

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

HARRY COBB

Box 75

Wedowee, AL 36278

FOLLOW GOD AND NEVER BE LOST!

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who laid the foundation of the rebuilt temple and, according to Zechariah, would also complete it?
2. To what city was Paul going when he wrote Romans?
3. The man who marries a divorced woman does what?
4. When Babylon has fallen, what does Isaiah report will be shattered on the ground?
5. Was Moses the only person who could see the Lord in the form of a cloud?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. For what city was Jonah sailing after the Lord called him to preach? **TARSHISH (Jonah 1:3)**
2. Does the Lord deliver the righteous man from all his troubles? **YES (Psa. 34:19)**
3. What should we ask the Lord of the harvest for? **TO SEND FORTH LABORERS, OR WORKERS (Luke 10:2)**
4. What did the Psalmist ask God to shatter in the mouths of the wicked? **THEIR TEETH (Psa. 58:6)**
5. What book of the Bible says the word of God is not chained? **2 TIMOTHY (2 Tim. 2:9)**

Read ACTS, the book of Conversions!

Believing (Acts 16:31), Repenting (Acts 3:19),

Confessing (Acts 8:37), and being

Baptized (Acts 2:38) turned people
into NT Christians!