

Will we recognize our loved ones in heaven?

When this question comes up, you can't just turn to a verse that says, "Ye shall recognize your loved ones in heaven." So, you have to look at other verses where people who had died or left the earth appeared.

As an example, look at Matt. 17:1-4. This is the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James and John recognized who Moses and Elijah were when they saw them. Yet they had no prior knowledge of what they looked like. Moses had died more than 1450 years before this appearance. Elijah had been taken up more than 900 years before they saw him with Jesus.

For another example, let's look at the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. They knew each other while they were on the earth. When they died, Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom (where all Old Testament saints went when they died) and the rich man went to hell. In Lk. 16:23, the rich man saw Lazarus and Abraham and talked to them. In other words, he recognized them although Abraham had died more than 1800 years before.

Still another example is found in 1 Sam 28. In verses 11-14, Saul instructed the woman with a familiar spirit to bring up Samuel, so that Saul could inquire of him. When Samuel came up, she described his form, "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle." Saul knew immediately "that it was Samuel," (verse 14).

Now, when we who are New Testament saints die, we will not have the same physical characteristics that we have in these bodies. Our appearance will change. We will look like Jesus. 1 Jn. 3:1-3 says that, "when he shall appear, we will be like him; for we shall see him as he is." In Matt. 22:30, Jesus told the Sadducees that in the resurrection we "neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

So, although our physical features will be different, our ability to recognize each other will still be the same. We will have a divine recognition. It's like what the Lord told the Sadducees in Matt. 22:32, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Therefore, as each of these Old Testament saints retained their individual names and identities in eternity, we will likewise have individual identities in heaven.