

Some one asked me not too long ago a question that many have asked before: Will we recognize each other in heaven? I have a basic belief that we will recognize each other there, even though the physical characteristics will not be evident by which we normally perform that function here on earth. This recognition ability might not be immediate, but there will be a way for it to work. Otherwise, all of the relationships we establish on earth would seem to be rather pointless.

Perhaps we will be injected with the knowledge that we need to recognize everybody. This way, even though we did not know them before, we could point out someone like James the son of Alphaeus from the crowd. I am reminded of the verse in Luke 12:2, "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." I also look to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and agree with the opinion of other commentators that when Jesus uses a real name in a parable, it is not to be taken lightly. It is hard for me to believe that Jesus would use such a parable that was not based on truth.

I don't believe that we will recognize each other on a physical basis, but a spiritual one. We will be looking at their soul, at the many characteristics that a personality holds. Imagine a multi-dimensional graph of these characteristics; each fruit of the spirit having its own axis and a distribution along it. This would look like beautiful flowers that have many petals and colors. Of course we would have to imagine also that they have some mobility.

In this way we would recognize those whom we knew extremely well, and would be able to remember others that we might meet in heaven. My mom, for instance, would have a look in character-space that I could relate to her kind heart and other attributes; in a way I could see the hot tea that she used to bring me on Saturday mornings and the Christmas bread that she would distribute to so many families.

We will be fully revealed in terms of the make-up of our hearts. And so it would seem to me that there would sometimes be difficulties in recognizing people. Those who were not honest and did not show their true feelings we could not know at first. They will be unrecognizable because they are in actuality so different from what they appeared. They will not be excluded, but they will be fakes that have been forgiven. And in truth, none of us are perfectly what we seem.

There will be great glory in heaven when all of the saints are assembled and are resting in the infinite Goodness of God. Whether we recognize each other or not, we will not fail to recognize God and fall down in worship at his feet.