

Knowing Your Family in Heaven

Disciple copy — Pleasant Springs Church, Discipleship School

Name: _____ Date: _____

The full six-lesson series: ps-church.com/discipleship/family-in-heaven

Two questions, not one

Everyone who has stood at a graveside eventually asks two questions. They sound like one. They are not.

1. Will I _____ them?
2. What about the one who _____ ?

The first has a much better biblical answer than most people have been told. The second has a narrower one — and a comfort that is not true is not a comfort.

1 • The Old Testament hides something in an obituary

Genesis 25:8 (ESV) — "Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was **gathered to his people**."

Genesis 25:9 (ESV) — "Isaac and Ishmael his sons **buried him** in the cave of Machpelah."

Gathered in verse 8. **Buried** in verse 9. Two _____ things, one verse apart.

Deuteronomy 34:6 (ESV) — "and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab... but **no one knows the place of his burial** to this day."

Aaron was gathered to his people on Mount _____ — far from where his ancestors were buried.

Moses was gathered to his people while God buried him alone, in a grave that _____ has ever found.

► So "gathered to his people" describes what happens to the _____ , not the body.

But the Old Testament is also honest

Psalm 88:10, 12 (ESV) — "Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you?... Are your wonders known in the darkness?"

That psalm never resolves. Its last word in Hebrew is _____. And Israel put it in the **hymnbook** — on purpose.

If you have ever stood at a grave and not been able to see anything — you are in the hymnbook.

2 • Jesus: the God of the living

The Sadducees ask a trick question built out of family: seven brothers, one wife — whose is she?

Mark 12:25 (ESV) — "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

Matthew 22:32 (ESV) — "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not God of the dead, but of the _____."

The whole argument is a verb tense. Not *was*. _____. Centuries after all three funerals, God still introduces himself by their _____.

► **An institution is removed. A _____ is not.**

Matthew 8:11 (ESV) — "I tell you, many will come from east and west and **recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** in the kingdom of heaven."

And the warning in the same breath:

Luke 13:28 (ESV) — "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but **you yourselves cast out**."

Being _____ to someone does not save anybody.

3 • Paul says it outright

The oldest surviving Christian letter was written because a young church had buried some of its own and was afraid the dead had **missed it**.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (ESV) — "And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up _____ in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

Paul could have written "you will be with the Lord." He added _____ words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (ESV) — "...that you may not grieve **as** others do who have no hope."

He does **not** say *do not grieve*. He says do not grieve _____ people who have no hope.

1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV) — "Now I know in part; then I shall know _____, even as I have been fully known."

Two words worth knowing

Ephesians 3:14–15 (ESV) — "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom **every family in heaven and on earth is named**."

The word behind "family" there is not a warm, general word. It is a _____ word — the word Israel used for a line of descent written in a census list. It appears **186 times** in the Greek Old Testament, mostly in Numbers and Chronicles.

Hebrews 12:23 (ESV) — "...and to the assembly of the firstborn who are **enrolled in heaven**..."

That word "enrolled" appears **6 times** in the New Testament. _____ of them are Caesar's tax census. The sixth is heaven's list.

► **God writes family lines down. In _____ . By _____ .**

4 • The family member who does not come

Four answers that are kind — and not true. Cross out the ones you have been given:

1. "Everyone will be there in the end."
2. "You won't _____ them."
3. "You won't _____."
4. "You already _____ who is lost."

Revelation 21:4 (ESV) — "He will **wipe away every tear** from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore."

You do not wipe a tear off a face that is not _____.

What we *can* say

Luke 23:43 (ESV) — "And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

The thief on the cross was converted with hours to live, with no witnesses but soldiers. **If he had been your brother, you would have buried him as one of the _____.**

John 11:35 (ESV) — "Jesus wept."

Romans 9:2–3 (ESV) — "I have great sorrow and **unceasing anguish** in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, **my kinsmen according to the flesh.**"

Romans 8 says nothing can separate us from the love of God. Romans 9 — the very next paragraph, the same man — carries _____ anguish over his own unsaved family.

► **He never resolves it. He holds _____, and then he prays.**

Romans 10:1 (ESV) — "...my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."

Where we stop: Scripture does not tell us how the redeemed will hold that loss. People have offered three or four explanations. **Not one of them is in the Bible.** So we will not hand you one.

Three things to remember

1. **"Gathered to his people"** is about the _____, not the grave.

2. "Caught up _____" — Paul added those words on purpose.
3. Assurance and anguish can be carried at the _____.

The one piece of homework

In every passage — in Scripture and outside it — everyone agrees on one thing: **the time to do something is now.**

Who is the phone call you have been putting off?

Closing prayer

Father, you are the God of the living, and you call the dead by name. Thank you that nothing love has made is lost to you. For the ones we have buried, we give you thanks. For the ones we fear for, we will not stop asking. And for the sorrow we cannot put down, we trust your own promise — that you will wipe away every tear from our eyes, with your own hand. Until then, make us the kind of family that talks while there is still time. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Take it further — the full series

Lesson	What it covers
1 Gathered to His People	The Old Testament's quiet assumption, Psalm 88, David and the child, Job, Daniel 12
2 The God of the Living	The Sadducees, the Transfiguration, Luke 16, the table with Abraham
3 Together With Them	1 Thessalonians 4, the census words behind Ephesians 3:15 and Hebrews 12:23
4 What the Fathers Hoped	The Jewish writers between the Testaments — witnesses, never Scripture
5 A Dense Crowd of Parents	Cyprian, Augustine grieving his mother, and what we actually teach
6 The One Who Does Not Come	The answers we refuse, and where Scripture stops

ps-church.com/discipleship/family-in-heaven — every lesson has the Greek and the ESV side by side, and the author and audience of every passage.

My notes

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