

# Will we be reunited with our loved ones in heaven?

Message for Sunday, Nov. 28 - by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** various

This is another “sermon by request.” Although one person asked about this, I think this will be a topic about which many of us would like to know what the Bible teaches.

How many funerals have had the assurance that Grandma has gone to a better place, and now she is reunited with Grandpa? How many people have prayed, “Lord, I’m ready to go. Please take me now. I am so looking forward to seeing you, and seeing my loved ones.” Does this belief have a foundation in Scripture, or is it just part of our culture, similar to the popular notion we see in cartoons that people in heaven spend their time floating on clouds, playing harps?

**Let me begin with a disclaimer:** I have not been to heaven. I have no firsthand experience to report to you. Some of you here have had near-death experiences, but even that doesn’t mean that you know what heaven is like. That would be like flying into Pearson Airport, catching a glimpse out the airplane window of the CN Tower, and then saying, “Oh yes, I know what Toronto is like.”

While doing some research for this message, I was at first amused, and then disturbed, by the number of writers and preachers who say things like, “It is obvious that...” and “Of course there is no doubt that...”

The plain truth is that this is one of those grey areas in the Bible. Different people hold different opinions: some say we will be reunited with one another in heaven, and some say we won’t. There are Scriptures to support both of those positions. My aim today is to show you some of those Bible passages, so you can think about it for yourself.

I’ll begin with the “Yes” side.

## 1) We WILL be reunited with loved ones in heaven

### a) Don’t be like those who have no hope

In this passage, Paul is giving comfort and hope to those whose loved ones have died. They may have been wondering, “What has become of them?”

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, New Living Translation:**  
And now, brothers and sisters, I want you to know what will happen to the Christians who have died so you will not be full of sorrow like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was

raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians who have died.

Paul reassures them, “You don’t need to grieve, like those people who have no hope. Your loved ones are OK. We will all be together, both the dead and the living, when Jesus returns.” This would be only a half-comfort if you just had to take his word for it; the fulfillment of that comfort would be to see our loved ones again, to be with them.

### b) Parable of the shrewd manager

**Luke 16:1-9, New Revised Standard Version:**

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.”

Read again that last sentence: “Make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.” If our business associates will meet us and welcome us in heaven, then surely our beloved family and friends will do the same.

### c) Brothers forever

Onesimus is a slave who ran away from his master, Philemon. Onesimus met Paul, heard the good news about Jesus, and became a Christian. After helping Onesimus to grow in his faith, Paul sent him back to his master, with the letter we have in the Bible called “Philemon.” In his letter, Paul asks Philemon to

welcome Onesimus back, not just as a slave, but as a brother in Christ.

**Philemon 1:15-16, New Revised Standard Version:**  
Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Note that phrase: “that you might have him back forever.” The relationship between the two men was going to be an eternal friendship. It makes sense to think it could be the same for our friends and family.

## 2) We will NOT be reunited with loved ones in heaven

### a) Marriage in heaven?

There is one passage which speaks to this question in the negative more powerfully than any other. It was when the Sadducees tried to trap Jesus. The members of this Jewish group believed there was no resurrection, no life after death. What you see is what you get; there’s nothing more.

Recognizing that Jesus was a great teacher (they didn’t recognize him as anything greater than that), they put this puzzle to him. It’s a very clever question and had stumped everyone else, so it seemed to conclusively prove their argument. Here’s their conversation with Jesus.

**Matthew 22:29-33, New International Version:**  
Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

What a brilliant question! How could anyone squirm out of that dilemma? Well, Jesus could.

The problem with the Sadducees is that they assumed that any life after death would be simply a continuation of life here on earth, just in a different place. They’re not alone in thinking like that; many modern people have the same idea about heaven: just more of the same.

That’s perfectly reasonable, once you think about it. After all, this life here on earth is the only thing you and I have ever experienced. This is all we know. So of

course we will imagine any future life in the same picture frame as our present life.

Jesus makes it clear: the future life will *not* be the same as life here on earth. He says we will be like the angels — *not* that we will become angels, but just be like them. In particular, marriage will not be necessary.

Again, once you think about it, that makes sense: aside from companionship, one of the purposes of marriage is to have children, to continue the human race after we die. But since we will be eternal beings, there is no need to keep on adding more.

### b) Our primary relationship in heaven will be with God the Father and Jesus the Son:

As for companionship, the images of heaven which we have in the book of Revelation make it clear: our primary relationship will be with our heavenly Father and his Son Jesus.

**Revelation 21:3-4, New Living Translation:**

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever.”

**John 14:1-3, New International Version:**

[Jesus said,] “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

All our earthly relationships pale in comparison to being in the presence of God, enjoying fellowship with our heavenly Father and Jesus the Son.

How pale? Will those other relationships even be important to us? Ahh, that’s the question. And I don’t have the answer. That’s up to you to ponder.

I just know this: Jesus has promised to prepare our home for us. I trust that it will be good. In fact, take your wildest imagination of what heaven is like: the reality will likely be nothing at all like that, but it will be a thousand times better.

Anyway, Jesus is looking after it. That’s good enough for me. The rest is just minor details.