

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Don't Make Them Guess?

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I Hope So

Bill Brinkworth

Although it was a solemn event, there were whispering conversations throughout the chapel. One exchange in the far back was very concerned about the reason for the gathering. Worrying and weeping soon whipped the group into an uncontrollable frenzy.

Aunt Jane tried to soothe those distraught by simply stating, "Well, my brother was a very good person. I believe he is looking down on us right now. He is in a better place and certainly deserves it with all he has put up with in this life."

Several in the group remained silent but showed they agreed or hoped their aunt was right. A few just quietly sobbed at the loss of their friend and brother.

Closer to the front, another party shared their opinions about the deceased friend. One in the group tried to assure other mourners that there was no reason to be sad, as they were sure the dead friend was in Heaven.

Although a listener to the conversation knew it was inappropriate to voice a question, he wondered. He doubted if the man was really in Heaven. He reasoned, "He never went to church and showed no signs of being a Christian. How are these people so sure he is in a 'better place'?"

While waiting for the funeral service to begin, another concerned relative sat next to the preacher, who would give the message. He turned to the pastor and sought some assurance. "Preacher, my uncle was a nice man. He always got me to laugh and was just good to me. All these other folks are convinced he's in Heaven, but I wonder. He never went to church that I know of. I can't recall anything he ever did that would indicate he was a Christian. On Sundays, he usually went fishing, and I don't think he has ever even gone to church since I have known him. Is he really in Heaven? Can anyone really know that another has gone there?"

The preacher knew he would have to start the service soon, so he carefully weighed what he was going to say. "Son, our opinions and beliefs, if they are not in concordance with what God's Word says don't really matter. Only what God says matters. And He says the only way to have assurance of going to Heaven is His way.

"According to the Bible, one has to be born-again to go there. One must be saved from Hell by trusting that there is nothing anyone can do to earn Heaven. The only way is to believe that God's

only son, Jesus, who never sinned, paid the price for our salvation with His blood. Good works won't get anyone higher than the coffin lid."

Then the preacher stopped the conversation as it was time for the service. As he approached the pulpit, he remembered that this might be the last time those gathering may realize that they will one day be in the same position as the deceased.

The pastor knew it would not be what all the mourners would want to hear, but it was his responsibility to tell the biblical truth about what the Bible says about our eternity. He planned to make sure all that gathered would hear God's way to spend eternity with Him. Just like the inquiring young man wanted to know, he was sure others did as well. If he did not tell them God's way of getting to Heaven, there might never be another opportunity for them to hear the truth.

Perhaps to comfort relatives at funerals or even themselves, most want to believe the deceased is in a "better place." Imagining a departed friend or relative is agonizing in the tormenting Hell is not a thought any would want to consider, even if it is true. So, to keep from "ruining" the funeral and examining their own eternal, future destination, most services dwell more on the good thoughts rather than taking the time to make sure all listeners know of the only way to Heaven. However, eternal futures may be at stake.

Many preachers at funerals will not take the opportunity, while hearts are sensitive to their own eternity, to tell listeners about God's way to Heaven. It is not biblical to suppose that all are in Heaven. The Bible even says that not all that die go there.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13-14

Good deeds, marvelous works, and religious routines and rituals are not the way to Heaven. Too many believe they are and will one day sadly learn the truth when they do not open their eyes in Heaven.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

When one is genuinely saved and trusts Christ's payment for their sins as the only way for an eternity with our Lord, His life will change. The changes will be from the inside out, and most may see that a Christian's life is different.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Corinthians 5:17

So, when it is your time to be remembered in the funeral home, leave a memory that all will know where you are spending eternity. Hopefully, those honoring your death will not suppose you are with Jesus. They will know!

People should not have to search desperately for some clues that you may be in Heaven. It should be clear where you have gone because you lived a Christian life and had a godly testimony.

Current Whereabouts Unknown

Bill Brinkworth

I remember how we would laugh about going to Hell. “Yeah, we’ll be together in Hell. We’ll have a good time partying,” I laughed.

“Sure,” my friend scoffed as he guzzled down another beer. “Yea, just one big party — forever and forever!”

Years went by. After heartaches, learning the hard way, and much of God’s grace and mercy, I got saved. Christ became my Saviour, and I tried to live for Him.

My friends could tell something was different about me. I no longer wanted to party with them. They were uncomfortable around me as I shared with them what I had learned from the Bible. Soon we grew completely apart and seldom spent time together.

As I grew in the Lord and studied the Bible, I learned more about the reality of Hell. All the things I had heard about the place of torment were true. What a horrible place it is! It should not be taken lightly! Then, I remembered the friend with whom I had scoffed at Hell. I was burdened to see and warn him of the place, so he would not have to go there.

I visited his home. He was still living with his parents, even though he was 35 years old. We went up to his bedroom to talk. Sin had taken a toll on his life. The drugs and booze were a constant companion in his life — over 15 years of non-stop abuse. He was not the same friend with whom I had grown up.

He was searching. I could tell. He had tried Buddhism for a while and even memorized a long chant from one of their books. Still, that religion did not fill the empty spot he had in his life.

Later, he was involved with the Jehovah’s Witnesses, hoping they had the answers he sought. I remember him telling me they were nice to him. He was impressed that they had spent time with him, and he started attending their meetings.

I told him what the Bible says one must do and believe to have God’s promise of eternity in Heaven. He admitted to me, “I thought the Witnesses had something, but as I got closer, I found that nobody had any real peace. Bill, I still haven’t found any yet, and I don’t have the promise of eternity you have.” His voice was sorrowful. He had searched but found nothing to fill the emptiness his soul had.

“You know how I was and how the Lord has changed me. He’s given me peace, help, and a lot of promises. He’ll give them to you too, if you’ll accept Him as Saviour,” I pleaded. However, the other cult’s teachings he had been involved with brought doubt and confusion to his thoughts.

I explained and explained. I did everything but beg, but my friend was even more confused. Man-made religion had done much damage to his thinking. When I left, he was still unsaved. I urged him to at least visit the church where I had attended. I’m not sure he ever did.

From time to time, I heard tidbits about my friend. He had gotten involved in some indecent sin, probably the fruit of all the pornography that polluted his mind. Once, the law required him to go to a psychiatrist, and my friend was put on drugs to keep him from feeling miserable. His mental problems were probably from years of taking drugs. (I remember his bragging about how “pot will

never hurt me.”) It certainly sounded like he was getting lonelier. His behavior became more bizarre. He hardly had any friends and never married. What a lonely, empty life he lived.

I thought about him a lot. Sometimes I prayed for him to get saved.

It had been years since we had seen each other when I got a telephone call from my mother. Her voice was sad as she read me a story from her newspaper: “Last Wednesday, the body of a 40-year-old man was found at the foot of a 100-foot cliff at... Park. He was rushed to the... Hospital. The man’s name....”

I interrupted my mother’s voice, “It’s G., isn’t it?” I knew it was him before she had even finished. His sad, hard life had come to an end after an accident.

The hardest thing to grasp was where my friend went: Heaven or Hell? Unless he had gotten saved, and I hope he did, he is in Hell.

Hell is a real place. There is no party there! There’s no way out.

Are you sure that you would go to Heaven if you were to die right now? You can know for sure! It may be too late for my friend, but perhaps you can learn from his mistake.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Romans 10:9

If you do not know for sure that you would spend eternity in Heaven, ask a preacher, or a saved friend. If you do not know of one that can tell you what the Bible says, please e-mail me at brinkworth@frontier.com. I would be honored to share the biblical way to Heaven with you. You need to know where your future whereabouts will be!

“Don’t let scoffers laugh you into Hell. They cannot laugh you out of it.” — D. L. Moody