

THE TRUTH ABOUT MEMORIAL SERVICE



I AM NOT PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

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INTRODUCTION: There is a great misunderstanding existing on the concept of memorial service. People have left the church for not honouring their request in honouring their dead relatives, and there are ongoing disputes even among men of God over this concept, other say to celebrate while some say not, but the Bible has it all. As Christians, the Bible provides guiding principles that help us to move towards the heavenly standards.

Any Christian ritual must be supported by the Bible, because it has it all, and it is God spoken word.

The Bible is unique and real. It has been tested and still in test, but everyday it passes the test of times. Many people have given their lives for this book, it is the world best book but less read.

Misunderstandings come in Christianity because of our individual understanding and approach to the Bible. The best way to understand this book is by allowing the Holy Spirit to rest in you, and teaches you the real meaning of God's thought for His creation (John 14:16; 16:13-14)

Christian doctrines must be divined, not rules taught by men, and a careful obedient to God's word brings you understanding more than understanding you can get of your degree.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Terms are defined in the context of this article:

- 1- **MOURN:** to feel and show sadness because somebody has died.
- 2- **MEMORIAL:** something that is intended to remind people of a person who has died.
- 3- **DEAD:** having passed from the living state to being no longer alive.
- 4- **SERVICE:** a specific religious ritual that is performed according to a prescribed form.
- 5- **MEMORIAL SERVICE:** a specific ritual performs which is intended to remind people of a person who has died. (Is there any prescribed form in the Bible about this event?)

MISCONCEPTIONS:

A- GENESIS 50:1-6 these Biblical texts have been used and still being use by people to support the celebration of memorial service: (^{Ge 50:1} Joseph threw himself upon his father and wept over him and kissed him. ^{Ge 50:2} Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, ^{Ge 50:3} taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days. ^{Ge 50:4} when the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, speaks to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, ^{Ge 50:5} 'my father made me swear an oath and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan." Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.' " ^{Ge 50:6} Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do.")

Egyptians were well known in their scientific practices. According to the text, verse 3, the process of the embalming took forty days (not only because he died in Egypt, and that was

the manner of the Egyptians, but because he was to be carried to Canaan, which would be a work of time, and therefore it was necessary the body should be preserved as well as it might be from putrefaction – see Matthew Henry’s note). The next exercise in this verse is Egyptians mourned. Were these seventy days mourning separated from the forty days embalming?

According to the definition of mourning, that is to feel and show sadness because somebody has died, so the 40 days of embalming were inclusive to the seventy days mourning, because the mourners start to show sadness from the day one of the dead.

A great concern over this verse is that, why the writer wrote ‘Egyptians mourned’ instead of the Israelites mourned? This is because the exercise is of an Egyptian custom (they either confined themselves and sat solitary, or when they went out, appeared in the habit of close mourners, according to the decent custom of the country – see Matthew Henry’s note) to mourn for a long period due to their ability to preserve the dead for a long time.

From Adam, the exercise of mourning was recorded with Abraham (Gen. 23:2). It might be he learned this from Egypt, because he had been to Egypt before the death of Sarah (Genesis 12:10). Failing to mention the period Abraham took to mourn for his wife is an indicator of a short period due to his inability to preserve her as compare to the Egyptians mourned for Jacob.

However, both Abraham mourning for Sarah, and the Egyptians mourning for Jacob took place before the burial. Why should this be grounds for memorial service to me conducted in the church?

The church has nothing against a family for preserving her dead relatives (as long as the preservation is well done), and during the period of preservation to mourn while waiting for proper arrangement to bury the decease. Even within this period, it is obligatory to the pastor to pay regular visits to the family to console them.

GENESIS 50:10 (^{Ge 50:10} When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father). This is another period of mourning (seven day mourning), was this a seven day after burial? According to the immediate perpetual conjunction (a simultaneous occurrence of events) “they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning.” It shows that immediately when they reached at Atad, the lamentation and Joseph mourning were done together before the burial. Though someone may uses verse 13 (“They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field”) to support this fact, because it comes after verse 10. However, it is not substantial, because this verse may be considered as a summary of event before this 7 day morning. But does this be grounds for conducting a memorial service in the church? No!

B- DEUTRONOMY 34:8 (The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over). Had it been Moses died in the hands of the Israelites, the thirty days of mourning and weeping should have taken place before the burial as the borrowed custom demands, as we have read from the preceding verses that talked about mourning. The Israelites had not the dead Moses in their possession to bury him, and to mourn has been part of their custom they borrowed from the Egyptians, so they need to mourn and weep for him though been buried. When the Israelites left Egypt, they did not only borrow the Egyptians’ silver and gold jewelry (Exo. 12:35-36), but they also borrowed the Egyptians’ cultural practices (Lev. 18:1-5), so we must be careful in accepting what we read from the Bible about Israelites’ attitude. “But the Israelites did it”.

Before the death of Moses there were priests (Lev. 8,9), and there were built sanctuaries (Lev. 27:3), but why no temple or church service to remember Moses after 30 days, or 40 days, or one year after burial? Simple, it was not part of the cultural practices for the death, neither Biblically warranted.

Why church members are forcing the church to conduct a memorial service for their dead relatives when nothing like this happen in the Bible among God's people? The Bible makes it pretty clear that ^{Ecc 9:5} "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten." ^{Ecc 9:6} "Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun." Ecc. 9:10 "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom."

ADVENTISTS MUST SAY NO TO MEMORIAL SERVICE; AGREE OR NOT?

It is true that mourn is from an old English 'mouran.' Ultimately from Ido-European base meaning 'to remember,' which is also the ancestor of English remember and memory.

It is not bad to mourn (to express sadness for the lost of someone) while the dead body is with us; before burial, because we even have to church the decease, but after the burial must there be a memorial service? Well let the Scripture answers;

PSALM 31:12 - Psalm 31 is a Davidic psalm plea for protection from God. He was surrounded by wicked people, but our main concern is the comparison he made with the state of the dead in verse 12 '**I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.**' This clearly shows that the dead has no portion in the memory of people. He is not consulted in anything, neither has he/she consulted.

Should people don't think about their loved dead? It is hard to forget our loved ones who are dead.

The concern of this article is, to gather people and celebrate the death of someone been buried is a waste of resources. Why the resources intended to be used should not be given to the decease relatives he/she had left behind?

PSALM 6:5 'No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?' If the dead cannot remember God, how can they receive additional punishment, or reward in the grave? Then if they cannot receive reward or punishment in the grave why should we pray for them? This is biblical ignorance.

Friends, whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your strength while you are alive. Don't wait people to pray for you while you are in the grave, it will not work, because there is nothing in the grave to change you (Ecc 9:10). You died a perished sinner you remain in the grave a perished sinner until Jesus come. The Holy Spirit is with us in the world while we are alive to; convert, teach, direct and so on, but once you die you remain in the grave as you have gone there till Christ's Parousia.

NO HOPE, NO REWARD FOR THE DEAD;

Ecc 9:4-6 'For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love,

and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.’ It does not take theology to understand that if the dead have no hope and reward memorial service is just a waste of resources and addition of sin to the left family, because during this occasion people drink and become drunk, even fornicate, and do a lot of evil things. One thing I want to understand is that what impact does memorial service has to the dead? Nobody has told me and cannot tell me because there is no impact. Whatever thing is done under the sun, the dead has no portion of it, and so memorial service is provoking the dead. Friends, we need to leave the dead people to rest.

THE DEAD HAS NO PORTION IN HIS/HER HOME:

JOB 7:9-10 ‘As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return. He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more.’ If there is life in the grave, then the dead has portion in his/her home. The above texts show that the dead is gone and vanished. He/she can never return in his/her home, and has no power over what he/she has left behind. He/she is not known any more (Job 7:10).

CAN THE DEAD ACT OR RE-ACT?

The dead cannot act, nor re-act, because he/she does not know anything that is happening. Even if he/she is honored, or his/her sons are honored, or brought low (Job 14:21- ‘If his sons are honored, he does not know it; if they are brought low, he does not see it’).

CAN MAN DO ANYTHING FOR THE DEAD TO SURVIVE?

Absolutely no! Man does not has the power to bring alive the dead from the graves, neither to intercede for them. The power to do that lies on our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (John 5:25-29). “A time will come when the dead will hear the Lord Jesus Christ’s voice and resurrect,” but how can the dead know the master’s voice? They can know it, because it was familiar to them when they were alive (John5:24).

Lazarus recognized the master’s voice in the tomb, because he has walked, talked and lived with Him when alive. It is an opportunity for you while you are still living to; walk, talk and live with the Lord Jesus Christ, so that when that big day of the first resurrection comes the Master’s voice will not be strange to you (1Thes. 4:13-17)

Some will not take part in the first resurrection, because the master’s voice will be strange to them.

Jesus says; ‘My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand’ (John 10:27-28)

Friends, if you believe in Jesus, though dead will bring you into eternal life (John 11:25-26). No man can do anything to change the perished dead, and no amount of money can bring a

perished soul to eternal life, if not so then the rich people will not perish, because their riches will be means to get them salvation (^{1Ti 6:18} Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

^{1Ti 6:19} In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.)

WHY PURGATORY?

HAA! HAA! PURGATORY! This is a doctrine implemented to raise money, because without it how can the sales of indulgences exist?

PURGATORY: A doctrine that teaches that there is a place in which the souls remain until they have expiated their sins before they go to heaven. This place is known to be extremely uncomfortable, painful, or unpleasant. The question is where is this place? Is it in the grave? No, because there is no life and action in the grave. Is it between the grave and the heavens? I cannot tell, because the Bible does not tell anything as such.

INDULGENCE: Remission of punishment for sin, a grant of partial remission of time to be spent in purgatory, or of some other consequences of a sin. In the middle ages, a practice of selling indulgence grew up.

By reasonable analysis of purgatory and indulgence, the dead can also be rewarded on their behalf (Ecc. 9:5).

There is nothing a man of God can do for you to get salvation, rather than preaching the good news of Christ to you, and nothing else you can do, but to live by faith (Rom. 1:17).

Friends, conducting memorial services, praying for the dead to be forgiven means we are compromising with the doctrine of purgatory. Don't wait to die and expect people to pray for you to receive salvation. This is salvific suicide. Now is the accepted time (2Cor.6:1-2).

As Christians, our focal assignment is to know the truth, because we want to be freed (John 8:32), and to obey God rather than man (Act 5: 29)

'Things that the world, or our culture and our society might view as fine, as normal, as just the way things are, could be precisely what the Bible condemns as wrong, sinful, even evil.' (Adult Sabbath Sch, 'Worship' the Gospel in Galatians- August 14 'in different Eyes').

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR THE DEAD?

Ecc. 6:3-4 'A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded.' The best we can do for the dead is to give them proper burial.

"Don't move by sentiments, neither by cultural practices which are against the standard of the Bible, but search the Scripture for what you should accept." (Joseph M. S. Tarawallie).

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS HAVE NOTHING LIKE MEMORIAL SERVICE. THE CHURCH UPHOLDS THE BIBLE AS THE ONLY RULE OF LIVE, BECAUSE IT IS GOD'S THOUGHT FOR THE HUMAN RACE. THE CHURCH HAS NOTHING ELSE TO RULE HER MEMBERS, BUT THE BIBLE, AND EVERY AUTHORITY, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICES MUST HAVE THEIR ROOT FROM THE BIBLE. ANY AUTHORITY THAT DISAGREES WITH THE SCRIPTURE, SUCH AUTHORITY MUST BE DENIED BY THE CHURCH.