

Cremation

(The Burning of the Dead)

“Learn not the way of the heathen” **Jeremiah 10:2**

~ **Christian or Pagan** ~

There is nothing Christian about cremation. It is pagan in origin and is closely associated with idolatry. It has been the practice of heathen religions for centuries.

Cremation Is Unscriptural

God’s people have always practiced burial while many heathen religions have practiced cremation. For example, in America burial prevailed as the method for disposal of the dead mainly because of our Christian heritage. The increase of cremation in modern times shows the apostasy of this nation.

The believer’s body belongs to the Lord: it is not ours to destroy by fire. God Himself took careful attention in the burial of Moses’ body (**Deuteronomy 34**). Great care was taken with the body of Jacob after he died according to **Genesis 49** and **50**. The people mourned about seventy days and carried his body several miles from Egypt to the Promised Land for burial.

According to **Genesis 50:22-76**, Joseph’s body was kept in Egypt over four hundred years and then carried forty years in the wilderness journey before being buried in Palestine, the Promised Land. Joseph was not only concerned with his burial, he was also concerned where he would be buried. His desire was to be buried with his people in the Promised Land.

Great care was also taken with the burial of Jesus Christ according to **John 19:38-42**. Is He not our great example? In **Genesis chapter twenty-three**, the whole chapter is dedicated to the burial of Sarah, Abraham’s wife. Many others received a proper burial such as Abraham (**Genesis 25:8-10**), Rachel (**Genesis 35:19-20**), Isaac (**Genesis 35:29**), Joshua (**Joshua 24:29-30**), John the Baptist (**Matthew 14:10-12**), Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5**) and Stephen (**Acts 8:2**).

According to **II Chronicles 28:3**, cremation is associated with idolatry. (Also see **II Chronicles 33:6**, **II Kings 16:3**, **17:17**, **31**, **II Kings 21:6**, **Jeremiah 7:31** and **Jeremiah 19:5**). God commanded Israel not to let any of their seed pass through the fire in **Leviticus 18:21** and **Deuteronomy 18:10**.

Cremation Is Unnatural

For a person not to have a proper burial was considered a dishonor (**I Kings 21:23-24**, **II Kings 9:30-37**). According to **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**, even a criminal worthy of death was to have a proper burial. Cremation is not the natural method of disposal of the dead. In the Bible, fire is used as a sign of divine judgment. For example, hell is a place of torment by fire for the unsaved (**Luke 16:19-31**, **Revelation 20:11-15**). Fire is the most destructive way of destroying anything. It is the most horrible way to die. During war time, armies have been afraid of flame throwers more than any other weapon. Fire has the idea of destruction while burial has the idea of hope.

Please consider the following Scriptures:

Leviticus 20:14, 21:9, Cremation was a sign of shame.

Joshua 7:25, Cremation was a sign of public judgment.

Genesis 19:24, Sodom and Gomorrah were judged with fire.

Leviticus 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu were destroyed with fire.

Numbers 16:35, Korah and others were consumed with fire.

Exodus 32:20, Moses burned the idol with fire.

I Samuel 31:12-13, The body of Saul and his sons were burned with fire probably in reference to shame and God’s judgment (see I Chronicles 10:13-14).

Amos 2:1-2, God condemns Moab for burning the body of a king.

The following is a story of one missionary’s description of a cremation that I read some years ago. He witnessed the burning of a Hindu. *“The air was filled with the stench of burning flesh, the head was burnt beyond recognition and the skull split open due to the internal expansion from the heat of the fire. They had to poke the arms and legs to keep them in the fire. The bones were contracting and popping, the body organs were frying and the juices sizzling in the intense heat.”*

Cremation Is Unchristian

Burial is a part of the gospel story according to **I Corinthians 15:3-4**, *“how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that He was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* The Lord Jesus Christ said in **John 12:24**, *“except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,”* in reference to His death and burial. According to **I Corinthians 15:35-44**, the physical body is symbolic of a seed for the resurrected body. When a seed is planted it decomposes and the new plant comes forth. The resurrected body is not the same body put into the ground, but it is related. As a seed is planted, dies, decays, then life springs forth, the same is true of the body. As there is a mystery surrounding the germination of a seed, so there is a mystery surrounding the resurrection of the body.

Burial is a testimony to the resurrection. Cremation is a denial of the resurrection. As the Lord’s supper symbolizes the death of Christ and baptism symbolizes our cleansing, burial looks forward to resurrection. The heathen have no hope of resurrection and therefore many burn their dead.

A funeral home director once told me that in eight years they had about two hundred cremations. He said that he could not identify one of these families as being Christian. Most of these cremations were not done for economic reasons, but as a result of their lifestyle and disbelief in God’s word.

The Following Scriptures will show that God is interested in our physical bodies:

I Corinthians 3:16, *“know ye not that ye are the temple of God.”*

Romans 12:1, *“present your bodies a living sacrifice”*

Romans 6:12, *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body”*

II Corinthians 5:10, *“that every one may receive the things done in his body”*

II Corinthians 7:1, *“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit”*

Leviticus 19:28, *“ye shall not...print any marks upon you”*

Please consider the things that have been said in this brief article. According to the Scriptures, if a Christian’s body is burned, his eternal destiny does not change, for many Christian's have been burned at the stake for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God. But, if possible, every believer should practice burial for the sake of their testimony. It is God’s way.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Acts 16:31

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