

What about the practice of cremation? Is it Biblical in origin? Should a child of God allow themselves to be cremated when they die? What is the true origin of this ritual? But aside from the problems involved in cremation, what about the practice of cremation itself -- is it Biblical? Is cremation a sin? Should Christians cremate their dead loved ones? Should a Christian be cremated, in order to save money? Many think it makes no difference. How one's body is disposed of is up to the individual's own wishes. They believe the Bible is silent on the matter, and God leaves the decision up to each one of us. But is this necessarily true?

STAT: "The cremation rate in the United States has been increasing steadily with the national average rate rising from 3.56% in 1960 to 40.62% in 2010 and projections from the Cremation Association of North America forecasting a rate of 44.42% in 2015 and 55.65% in 2025"

## THE ORIGIN OF CREMATION

### **Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible:**

Cremation was not practiced by Jews or early Christians, as it was on occasion by Greeks and Romans.

### **New Catholic Encyclopedia:**

The Aztecs were the first to introduce the burning of corpses in Central America, and from their area it spread northward.

India, on the other hand, even before Buddhism, became the classic land of cremation. . . . cremation was practiced from the beginning of Buddhism. With the spread of Buddhism as a universal religion, cremation also spread into the lands of the Far East"

**Isaiah 2:6** For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with **eastern ways**; They *are* soothsayers

From Apostolic times Christians followed the Semitic practice of burial and abstained from cremating their dead, a practice common in Rome during the empire. In the course of the early persecutions the bodies of martyrs were sometimes cremated by their persecutors and the ashes scattered in an indication of contempt.

Scandinavians have believed that the burning of the body frees the spirit from the flesh so that it [this immortal soul] may ascend

**It is a PAGAN custom!**

**Encyclopedia Americana:**

the practice of cremation was used in idolatrous pagan fire worship. Burning, according to pagan belief, prevents the possible return of the ghost, purifies the soul, and wards off evil spirits.

The Hindus and Chupchi of Siberia cremate their dead, based on their “belief in a heavenly abode for the spirit of the deceased. The flames of the funeral pyre, leaping upward, are thought to facilitate the ascent of the soul [to heaven].”

Leviticus 18:21 And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through *the fire* to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD.

**The Two Babylons:**

Parents sacrificed their children to Moloch believing “that the fire that consumed them also perfected them, and made them meet for eternal happiness. . . . Both the passing through the fire, and the burning in the fire were essential rites in the worship of Moloch or Nimrod.”

Jeremiah 32:35 And they built the high places of Baal which *are* in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.'

Who do you think is the real originator of these ideas?

**BIBLICAL OCCURRENCES OF BURIAL**

***Good Examples***

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 23: 8-17; 25:9-10)</li><li>• Rachel (Gen 35:19)</li><li>• Isaac (Gen 35:29)</li><li>• Jacob (Gen 50:13-14)</li><li>• Miriam (Num 20:1)</li><li>• Aaron (Deut 10:6)</li><li>• Joshua (Josh 24:30)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joseph (Gen 24:32)</li><li>• Eleazar (son of Aaron, Josh 24:33)</li><li>• Gideon (Judges 8:32)</li><li>• Samuel (1 Sam 25:1)</li><li>• David (1 Kings 2:10; Acts 2:29)</li><li>• Solomon (1 Kings 11:43)</li><li>• John the Baptist (Matt 14:12)</li><li>• Stephen (Acts 8:2)</li></ul>
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Other's that were buried include the Christians that were resurrected after Christ's had risen.

[Matthew 27:51](#) Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

[Matthew 27:52](#) and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the **saints who had fallen asleep were raised;**

[Matthew 27:53](#) and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Also, it is intriguing to contemplate the fact that the physical resurrection of Lazarus may have been nullified had Lazarus's corpse been burnt instead of being buried in a tomb (John 11:38-44).

### ***God's Example***

We actually have record of the way God handled this subject of burial versus cremation.

[Deuteronomy 34:5](#) So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

[Deuteronomy 34:6](#) And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day.

God BURIED His dedicated, righteous and faithful servant Moses.

### ***Jewish Practice (taken from the Bible)***

No where in the Bible do we find that the Israelites resorted to cremation for the disposition of dead bodies.

The dead were:

- washed (Acts 9:37)
- anointed (Mark 16: 1)
- wrapped in linen garments with spices enclosed (John 19:40)
- limbs were bound and the face covered with-a napkin (John 9:44)

### ***Jesus: The Ultimate Example***

In life and death

[1 Peter 2:21](#) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

Jesus could have set a process in motion so that His body could have been taken care of in one of many different ways, but He and the Father chose burial for many different reasons, one of which is that He was setting an example in much the same way He did for us with baptism (Matthew 3:13-15). Christ was sinless and did not need to bury the old/sinful man (Romans 6:6), which is the purpose of baptism. Jesus did it nonetheless to set an example for us to follow.

Notice then the example that Jesus left for us in this respect:

**Matthew 27:59** When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

**Matthew 27:60** and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.

Jesus was buried!

**John 19:38** After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave *him* permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus.

**John 19:39** And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.

**John 19:40** Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, **as the custom of the Jews is to bury.**

**John 19:41** Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

**John 19:42** So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation *Day*, for the tomb was nearby.

It was also very relevant in that it was a significant aspect in the only sign that He gave that He was the Messiah.

**Matthew 12:40** For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights **in the heart of the earth.**

Paul confirms that indeed Christ was buried and resurrected

**1 Corinthians 15:3** For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

**1 Corinthians 15:4** and that **He was buried**, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Paul goes on in the chapter to show that what we could go through would be the same as what Christ did. The main difference is that we would be in the ground for longer.

### ***For Sinners***

Even though the righteous were always afforded a burial in scripture, it was not exclusive to them.

**Deuteronomy 21:22** "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,

**Deuteronomy 21:23** his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but **you shall surely bury him that day**, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

Interestingly enough, this scripture is quoted in reference to Christ hanging on the wooden stake in which He was crucified (Galatians 3:13).

In another example God's strikes the people dead because of their sin and encapsulated in the new name given the place where the event occurred is the fact that they were buried.

**Numbers 11:33** But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.

**Numbers 11:34** So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, **because there they buried the people** who had yielded to craving.

In what is one of the most compelling arguments for burial is the account of impending defeat of Gog. Though Israel will have enough material in and of itself to make fires for seven years just from the armament (**Ezekiel 39:9-10**), they are not allowed to burn the bodies of the invading army.

**Ezekiel 39:11** "It will come to pass in that day *that* **I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel**, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there **they will bury Gog and all his multitude**.

Therefore they will call *it* the Valley of Hamon Gog.

**Ezekiel 39:12** **For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them**, in order to cleanse the land.

**Ezekiel 39:13** Indeed **all the people of the land will be burying**, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD.

**Ezekiel 39:14** "They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and **bury those bodies remaining** on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search.

**Ezekiel 39:15** The search party will pass through the land; and *when anyone* sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, **till the buriers have buried** it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.

**Ezekiel 39:16** The name of *the* city *will* also *be* Hamonah. Thus they shall cleanse the land." '

It is unimaginable, if it did not matter which method of internment we were allowed to use, that burying would be the easiest and most efficient way to dispose of the bodies. If it were left up to individual choice surely cremation would be the preference, but we see that God has commanded that even our enemies deserve a burial...after all they will also have the opportunity to be resurrected in the future.

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE?

### *Saul*

In the last battle of his life, Saul and his three sons lost their lives and their dead bodies were hung and displayed on the wall of the city. Some brave men rode all night removed the bodies and rode back home over the time span of at least 3 days (1 Samuel 31:6-12).

Upon arrival they burned the bodies (1 Samuel 31:12), but we must take note of the fact that in the next verse we see that the bones are preserved (1 Samuel 31:13).

There are at least 2 possibilities for what happened here.

- One is that the bodies had become or were becoming putrid and out of necessity they removed the matter that was rotting.
- Secondly, it was act of kingly honor that was bestowed upon Saul as it was King Asa (2 Chronicles 16:14). In this case, as well as others it was a burning of spices and not the body (2 Chronicles 21:18-19; Jeremiah 34:4-5).

Nonetheless, this was not a cremation to ashes as is done in all other modern and ancient cases of past and present. In fact, David after lauding the men for the kindness and respect shown to Saul (2 Samuel 2:4-7) actually took the bones and reburied them in Saul's home country with his father Kish (2 Samuel 21:12-14).

### *Paul*

Another scripture that some have said refers to cremation is found in:

**1 Corinthians 13:3** And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and **though I give my body to be burned**, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

This is in an obvious allusion to a sacrifice and not a means of disposition. The context of the sentence is giving of his goods and now even of himself -- sacrificing what he has for the brethren. Paul further talks about the living sacrifice that we are to be in Romans 12:1 and so his meaning to the Corinthians is then symbolic and a reference to the burnt offerings and sacrifices that were no longer in effect after the ultimate sacrifice Christ made for us.

### ***Because of evil ways***

...they were not afforded a burial:

Jeremiah 16:1 The word of the LORD also came to me, saying,

Jeremiah 16:2 "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place."

Jeremiah 16:3 For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land:

Jeremiah 16:4 "They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, *but* they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth."

Jeremiah 16:5 For thus says the LORD: "Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people," says the LORD, "loving kindness and mercies.

Jeremiah 16:6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them.

Jeremiah 16:7 Nor shall *men* break *bread* in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother.

### ***Aachen***

Even for ungodly act that he committed, though he was executed, then burned, it wasn't to ashes as scripture indicates he was buried under stones afterwards.

Joshua 7:14 In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man.

Joshua 7:15 Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.' "

Joshua 7:25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel **stoned him with stones**; and **they burned them with fire** after they had stoned them with stones.

Joshua 7:26 **Then they raised over him a great heap of stones**, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

## BURIAL ANALOGIES AND SYMBOLISM

### *Baptism*

Just as we are "buried with [Christ] by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4),

Where would this analogy and symbolism be without burials?

### *The Hope of the Resurrection*

The World Book Encyclopedia tells us: "Burial is the most common method of disposal in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim countries. Human burial developed from the belief that the dead rise again. Like a seed, according to this belief, a body is planted in the earth to await rebirth."

The RESURRECTION from the dead is the center piece of the plan of God. The Bible is replete with references indicating that God will raise us up from the grave where we are buried.

1 Corinthians 15:42 So also *is* the **resurrection of the dead**. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is **raised** in incorruption.

1 Corinthians 15:43 It is sown in dishonor, it is **raised** in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

1 Corinthians 15:44 It is sown a natural body, it is **raised** a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—

1 Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the **dead will be raised** incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first**.



1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

David knew he was to wait in the grave for the return of Christ.

Psalms 71:20 *You*, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And **bring me up again from the depths of the earth.**

Psalms 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; **My flesh also will rest in hope.**

Psalms 16:10 For **You will not leave my soul in Sheol [the grave]**, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

## WHO IS CREMATION RESERVED FOR

### *Wicked, Accursed and Profane*

Leviticus 20:14 If a man marries a woman and her mother, it *is* **wickedness**. They shall be **burned with fire**, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you.

Leviticus 21:9 The daughter of any priest, if she **profanes** herself by playing the harlot, she **profanes** her father. She shall be **burned with fire**.

### *Sodom and Gomorrah*

As a wicked and evil place and people God brought down fire and brimstone utterly destroying them all. This was a type of the 3<sup>rd</sup> resurrection to the lake of fire and an indicator of who it is reserved for.

Genesis 19:24 Then the LORD rained **brimstone and fire** on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.

2 Peter 2:6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;

## *Ultimate Fate of the Wicked*

**Revelation 21:8** But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the **lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**"

**Malachi 4:1** "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, **all who do wickedly** will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall **burn them up**," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

**Malachi 4:2** But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

**Malachi 4:3** You shall trample **the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet** On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts.

**Revelation 19:20** Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two **were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.**

**Revelation 20:10** The devil, who deceived them, was **cast into the lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet *were*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

**Revelation 20:15** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was **cast into the lake of fire.**

**Matthew 13:41** The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and **those who practice lawlessness,**  
**Matthew 13:42** and will **cast them into the furnace of fire.** There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Burning signifies the final judgment of God and the destruction of human beings, systems and influence. Until then though, we all have a chance to know God and repent of our ungodly ways.

And finally even the whole earth and all that is in it will be burned up making way for the new heaven and new earth.

**2 Peter 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both **the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**

**2 Peter 3:11** Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

**2 Peter 3:12** looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

**2 Peter 3:13** Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

### **IS THERE HOPE FOR THE CREMATED**

Does this mean that any who have been cremated cannot be resurrected? Does this mean that any who die by being cast over-board from a ship, who are eaten by wild animals, who die without being buried for any reason have lost their chance for salvation?

Of course not! God has all power! He can resurrect anyone, no matter what happens to their body!

**Act 24:15** And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

**Revelation 20:12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book* of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

**Revelation 20:13** The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

**Revelation 20:14** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

### **WHY WE FOLLOW THE BIBLE**

For Christians, the Bible is our guide and our example that we live by. Being human it is easy for us to reason around or justify why we do what WE want to do. It is easy to dismiss a little here and a little there, but if we are conscientious with all the words that we have been given then it is difficult to come to any other conclusion other than we are to follow the examples of burial laid out before us (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Romans 15:4; Luke 4:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

**Genesis 3:19** In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return."