

The first conversation I had about cremation was the summer I worked at a GM Plant. One of my co-workers was a Christian, but was not living for the Lord. He believed that he had lost his salvation (an impossibility, since it depends on God not us), and thought that if he were cremated he could escape the resurrection and judgment. I assured him that wasn't the case for the Bible says in **Hebrews 9:27**, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"*

Furthermore, the Bible says in **Revelation 20:13**, *"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."*

So no matter how a person died and what was done to their remains, everyone will be resurrected and face the judgment of God.

Having got that out of the way – what does the Bible teach about cremation and burial? There is a wide disagreement among Bible scholars. For example,

"The Bible **does not clearly define about cremation** as a means to dispose of the dead.

However, there is no scriptural prohibition of cremation in the New Testament. The Bible **neither favors nor forbids** the process of cremation." (www.cremationresource.org)

Dr. John MacArthur states, "Therefore, cremation is an acceptable means of dealing with the dead. Cremation does not conflict with the Bible nor does it interfere with God's ability to resurrect the dead. Those who are considering cremation should also consider the impact of their decision on their survivors." (www.lifehopeandtruth.com)

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Others strongly disagree. One writer concludes: "Cremation is devil worship, by desecrating and destroying a good gift from God in a pagan practice copied from the darkest nations and tribes on earth. It does not matter what your

motive or reasons might be, for the devil is behind all false worship, especially such a practice taken from the most deluded and profane peoples on earth." (www.letgobetrue.com)

Obviously, all these opinions can't be right, and I can't settle the issue once and for all. I can urge you to consider the following:

The Penalty for Sin

God did not make man for death, but life. But God did give Adam and Eve a choice. We read of this choice in **Genesis 2:16-17** *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."*

Adam choose to disobey God (sin) and he and us (his descendants) are still paying a high price for his disobedience.

Romans 5:12, *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"*

Since all of us "have sinned" we all face the same penalty –**Romans 6:23a**, *"For the wages of sin is death..."*

God told Adam in **Genesis 3:19** *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."*

NOTE: The Word of God suggests "dust to dust" not "ashes to ashes" as sometimes claimed.

The Practice of the Saints

The first death in the Bible was Abel, but there is no mention of the disposal of his body, nor is there any description of the people who died before Abraham. But then a pattern emerges –

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burial of the dead.

Abraham, the friend of God, purchased the first family cemetery upon the death of his wife. Later he and many other family members were buried there by oaths and promises. (Genesis 15:15; 23:1-20; 25:9-10; 35:8,19,29; 47:29-31; 49:28-33; 50:1-14)

Joseph wanted his bones carried out of Egypt, so he could be buried in Canaan, though they had to keep his embalmed body in a coffin for about 400 years until the Exodus. It would have been so much simpler to carry an urn of his ashes to Canaan! (Genesis 50:24-26; Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32).

God buried **Moses** himself, since he wanted to hide the body. He could have simply cremated it and scattered the ashes, but He did not. Moses was buried, and his unknown grave was guarded by Michael the Archangel. (Deuteronomy 34:5-8; Jude 1:9).

Eleazar, the son of Aaron the high priest, was buried in a family plot on property owned by his son Phinehas. (Joshua 24:33)

King Saul's decapitated and defiled body was burned, but it was still buried. Even criminals who had been put to death were to be buried. And Achan and his family, though stoned and burned for their terrible sin, were buried under a pile of stones. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Joshua 7:24-26; I Samuel 31:8-13; II Samuel 2:5-6)

King David was carefully buried; and the location of his tomb in Jerusalem was still well known 1,000 years later. (I Kings 2:10; 11:43; Acts 2:29; 13:36)

John the Baptist was buried, though Herod's men of war had cut his head off and given it away for a birthday present. Why did the disciples not just leave the body for the jailors to dispose of it? Because it was important to his disciples to bury John's body. (Matt 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29)

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The **Lord Jesus Christ** was buried. Even though his body had been mangled, and there was no funeral, they still took the pains to prepare his body for burial and place it in a very secure tomb. (Matt 27:57-60; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-53; and John 19:38-42).

Even criminals were to be buried:

Deuteronomy 21:23 "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

There is no question that believers in both the Old and New Testament buried their dead, and that was the practice of the early church.

The Picture of the Seed

Burial is compared to the planting of a seed in the Word of God. For example, **1 Corinthians 15:42-43** states, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:"

The Principles of the Scriptures

Using cremation for disposing of the dead was and is practiced in pagan nations. For the Western world, it came out of Greek philosophy which taught that spiritual is good, but physical is bad. This is contrary to what the Word of God teaches.

1. Your body was created by God

Psalm 139:14 "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

2. Your body is owned by God

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1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is

in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

3. Your body is sealed by the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 1:22, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

4. Your body should glorify God

1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

5. Your body will die

Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

6. Your body will be resurrected

Daniel 12:2 "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

God created man as a triune being – body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). When a person dies the body and soul/spirit are parted. The spirit/soul returns to God, while the body remains. The body returns to "the dust," and waits for the resurrection.

Conclusion: Based on the truths considered here, I conclude that burial is the preferred method of caring for the dead (if possible).

But no matter what happens to the body after death, all will be resurrected. The most important question is not how you go into the ground, but how you come out (everlasting life or death).



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THE TRUTH ABOUT CREMATION



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