



BURIAL

IS THE CHURCH O.K. WITH CREMATION?

“FOR YOU ARE A HOLY PEOPLE TO THE LORD YOUR GOD”

It might surprise you to learn that the view of fellow Christians concerning cremation is a lot more accepting than you might expect. What has happened with Biblical teaching concerning burial? Why has cremation become an increasingly popular option in the past hundred years?

I. THE BIBLE CONCERNING BURIAL

Examples that indicate burial is the preferred method of caring for a corpse.

- A. Abraham went to a great deal of trouble to buy a cave for his wife Sarah - Gen. 23:3-20
- B. Isaac and Ishmael bury Abraham in their mother's cave, later used for OT patriarchs/matriarchs - Gen. 25:8-10
- C. The Lord Himself buried Moses - Deut. 34:6
- D. An act of kindness - II Sam. 2:5-6
- E. Israel's and Judah's kings were buried alongside their ancestors.
- F. The burial of Jesus was proclaimed by OT prophets - Is. 53:9
- G. John the Baptist - Matt. 14:10-12
- H. Lazarus - John 11:1-46
- I. Mary's anointing of Christ's body - Matt. 26:12; John 19:38-42
- J. Peter and the incident of Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 5:5-10
- K. Stephen - Acts 8:2

II. THE BIBLE CONCERNING CREMATION

The Bible talks about cremating corpses most often in contexts of divine judgment against wickedness.

- A. Sodom & Gomorrah - Gen. 19:24-28
- B. The penalty if a man lies with both a woman and her mother—Lev. 20:14
- C. The penalty if the daughter of a priest becomes a prostitute - Lev. 21:9

- D. God exterminated Korah and 250 Israelites for opposing Moses - Num. 16:35
- E. The penalty for deceit for Achan and his family - Joshua 7:18-26
- F. Josiah took the bones of the prophets of Baal and polluted the "high places" altar - II King 23:16
- G. The command not to "pass through fire" - Lev. 18:21; Jer. 19:5
- H. The penalty to Moab for burning the bones of the king of Edom - Amos 2:1

III. BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

This relationship is emphasized by the apostle Paul as the pattern for the Christian life.

- A. What does it mean that "we were buried with him by baptism unto death"?
 - 1. Romans 6:4
 - 2. Colossians 2:11-12
- B. How is this same symbolism applied in I Cor. 15:35-55?



"Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord...and have buried him." -II Sam. 2:5

IV. CONCLUSION

Research finds a weak Biblical stand by Christian authors for burial or against cremation. We are then left with the following questions:

- 1. Why should we discuss before our death what should happen to our "corruptible" bodies?
- 2. Is there any place in scripture that suggests that burial/cremation is a salvation issue?
- 3. With all the Biblical examples, why would a child of God consider being cremated? (For additional insight: Dr. N. Kloosterman)
- 4. If God has amazingly provided the means for the decaying process, why do we even contemplate cremation? Should we talk with family members with a different view?

F.Y.I. CORNER

- 1. **CREMATION** - (Latin) "Cremo" means to burn, particularly the dead. This involves an application of high temperatures between 1400 and 2100 Degrees (F) and approximately 3-5 hours to complete the process.
- 2. **BURN** (Hebrew 8313) - to be set on fire; consumed. (Hebrew 5930) - a step or ascending, a holocaust; a burnt offering.
- 3. **DECOMPOSITION** - refers to the reduction of the body into simpler forms of matter. This begins at the moment of death, caused by two factors: autolysis, the breaking down of tissues by the body's own internal chemicals and enzymes; and putrefaction, the breakdown of tissues by bacteria.

VERSE of the WEEK

"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." -Gen. 3:19

SOURCES

See page 2 for annotated bibliography.