

## Cremation

Written by K B Napier  
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At the outset let me advise that this paper offers opinion rather than authority of scripture. This is because the matter is not directly covered by God's word. For this reason the paper will be very brief.

The question is: "**Is cremation to be avoided by Christians, or not?**" Note that some local authorities are moving towards using less public land and only allowing cremations. In this case Christians may not have a choice.

It is fact that most references to disposal of a body is to burial. Jesus Himself was buried in a tomb. On the other hand, there is no specific reference to burial as a command, or to cremation/burning of bodies as something to be avoided, probably because it was taken for granted that burial was the acceptable method of disposal. The burning of animals is shown to be acceptable, if not required.

Deuteronomy 7 and 12 speak of the Hebrews burning pagan idols used alongside altars, and the groves. There is also an instance of God destroying stone altars with fire. We also know that the unsaved will burn forever in hell (though we are unsure as to what 'burn' means in this context).

Pagans burnt their children on altars. For example, see Jeremiah 7:31,

*"And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart."*

Jeremiah 19 also refers to pagans burning their children to Ba'al. 2 Kings 3 gives us the shameful spectacle of the king of Moab burning his own son and heir to his gods, on the city walls.

Conversely, no Hebrew priest was allowed to touch a dead body, let alone burn it. To touch one

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meant several days spent in cleansing. A body hanged on a tree was to be removed and buried the same day (Deuteronomy 21:23), which is one text used to explain the removal of Jesus' body after He was crucified (apart from the Sabbath rule). No mention of being cremated, only buried.

In 1 Samuel 31:12 (and see 1 Chronicles 10:12), we see that warriors burnt the bodies of Saul and his sons, and took the resultant bones to be buried. We are not told why they were burnt. But, this example does not thereby give us cause or command to cremate. Job 19:26 implies burial as normal, as does Jeremiah 26:23. Daniel prophesies the burning of an evil 'horn' (Daniel 7:11).

Even Paul alludes to being burnt (as an example, not as a command): 1 Corinthians 13:3. His teaching in chapter 15:35-on implies burial as the norm. On the other hand, we are told that our *current*

body cannot enter Heaven: chapter 15:50. This is why we will all have a new body consistent with our spiritual home. Note that many Christians were burnt alive by pagans. This does not stop their

*new*

bodies being taken to be with the Lord (15:44).

Interestingly the statistics show that most cremations are in pagan societies, such as India (100%:letgodbetruer.com). Rome approved of it in 1963, but this cannot be taken as an authority. Cremation in the USA has risen steadily since 1900, but is slow to take root in 'Christian' Europe.

Some argue that because we are the 'temple of the Lord' we should not cremate... but this is not logical since a buried body decays to nothing anyway. On the other hand, respect for the body made by God is good, even after death. This is given special force because we should not follow heathen such as Hindus, in our practices and beliefs. Jesus will indeed come for us soon, but the bodies He will resurrect will NOT be the bodies we die in. They will be brand new. So, any argument based on this event are not logical or particularly biblical. There are many other illogical arguments given by well-meaning believers.

The biblical scenario is almost always that of burial and God Himself buried Moses. 2 Kings says that the Israelites were commanded not to follow the practices of heathen (the fires of Molech, etc). In short, the burning of bodies was regarded as heathen, and burial was the

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normal way of disposing of them.

It is my personal opinion, then, that burial is the Christian answer, because of the past and present activities of heathen and pagans, who favour cremation. It is how I perceive scripture on the matter. We must never copy what pagans do; it is better to bury, which, though still grievous, follows what appears to be a godly pattern. I must admit that I have feeling of repugnance for cremation. The choice, then, is yours.

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