

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS REGARDING BURIAL VS. CREMATION

BURIAL - The care & concern for the body

New Testament-

The Mandate, “Glorify God in your body” 1 Corinthians 6.20

The Ownership, “You are not your own” 1 Corinthians 6.19

The Eternal Design, “the Lord will raise up” 1 Corinthians 6.14

The Necessity for Purity, “The body is not for immorality” 1 Corinthians 6.13

Old Testament Example-

There is an insistence and a resolve by Abraham to both bury & pay full price for his beloved wife’s burial - Genesis 23.

NOTE: Jeremiah 14.16; Psalm 79.3 “No one to bury them” Burial is equated with “lamenting” (Jeremiah 16.4)

Jacob & Joseph both request a burial in their own land... so important was this request that it was honored some 400 years later by Moses (Genesis 50; Exodus 13.19)

It is clear that Scripture does not advocate or encourage the body be discarded or disregarded in any way. Burial as in the case of our Savior was a sign of honor & respect for not only the person, but for God’s eternal purpose and promise for that person. In John 12.7, Jesus rebukes Judas (whose only concern was money) saying “Let her alone in order that she may keep it for the day of my burial” John 20 reiterates the care & concern those who loved Christ had towards the body of Christ.

CREMATION - The burning of the body, on the other hand, was a sign of:

A Curse- Judah, upon hearing of Tamar’s harlotry declares “...bring her out & let her be burned”
Genesis 38.24

“A curse devours the earth... therefore the inhabitants are to be burned” Isaiah 24.6

Note: This was to be the way in which a priest’s daughter who had committed harlotry would be disregarded (Leviticus 21.9)

Divine Displeasure- “The Lord will trouble you... & they burned them with fire...” Joshua 7.25

“Their corpse lay like refuse on the middle of the streets...” Isaiah 5.25

Divine Judgment- The false priest were to have “their bones burned on their altars I Kings 13.2;
2 Chronicles 34.5

Pagan Worship- “burning their children in fire” 2 Kings 17.31; Jeremiah 7.31

The Destroyer’s Disregard for Man-“He has no regard for man.. The peoples will be burned to lime...”
Isaiah 33.8,12

A Transgression Against God- God declares that He will not revoke the punishment upon the Moabites because they transgressed & “... burned the bones of the King of Edom to lime.” Amos 2.1

A Final Note: Cremation has become popular in our day for several reasons & has become indicative of who we are & how we think-

1. We have disregarded that which is right, proper, traditional & lawful because we feel we should be able to do what ever we want (Matthew 24.12- lawlessness increased)
2. We have substituted convenience, utility and expediency in the place of honor, respect & love (Matthew 24.12; 2 Timothy 8.3- the love of many will grow cold)
3. We love money & worldly things above God & heavenly things... putting profit above people, pleasure above sacrifice. (Colossians 3.2; 1 John 2.15; 2 Timothy 3.2- lovers of money)