

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT CREMATION?

The bible doesn't approve or disapprove of cremation. There are no specific verses that tell us if it is right or wrong. We can however find verses in the bible that help us come to a conclusion on this matter.

Cremation was practiced by heathen nations in biblical times, but it was not practiced by the Israelites in the Old Testament or by the New Testament believers.

THE RECORD CONNECTED TO THE BODY

If we want to know what God thinks about any subject, we should turn to the bible. The bible records His will and way.

- THE BIBLE SPEAKS PRIMARILY OF BURIAL FOR THE BODY

The Jew's custom was to bury their dead.

Jn 19:40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

The Jews were concerned about the place they were buried. Often, their place of burial had a spiritual significance.

Joseph instructed his brethren to carry his body (bones) with them when they left Egypt and went to the Promised Land.

Ge 50:25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

Sarah was buried. In fact, an entire chapter is dedicated to describing the details of her burial.

Ge 23:19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

Abraham was buried.

Ge 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah...

God buried Moses

Dt 34:5-6 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab...

Rachel was buried.

Ge 35:19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

Asa was buried.

2 Ch 16:14 And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

Lazarus was buried.

Jn 11:17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

The greatest example of burial, is Jesus himself.

Mt 27:59-60 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb

- BURNING A DEAD BODY IS OFTEN USED AS A FORM OF JUDGMENT IN THE BIBLE

The reproach of sin lives beyond the grave.

Judah was going to have his daughter burnt because of her sin.

Ge 38:24 And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

A man who sinned with his mother-in-law was to be put to death and burnt.

Le 20:14 And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you.

If the daughter of a priest became a prostitute, she was to be put to death and burnt with fire.

Le 21:9 And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.

Achan's body was burnt because of his sin.

Jos 7:25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

Manasseh sacrificed his own son to a false god by burning him.

2 Ki 21:6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

God commanded the idols to be burnt with fire, which was a clear sign of judgment.

Dt 7:25 The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God.

God punished Moab for burning the bones of the king of Edom.

Am 2:1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

When Josiah burnt the bones of those who had died it desecrated the altar.

2 Ki 23:16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

- THERE ARE TIMES WHEN JUDGMENT INCLUDED NOT HAVING A PROPER BURIAL

This would seem to imply that burial is expected.

The prophet who disobeyed God was refused burial in his family's tomb.

1 Ki 13:22 But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

Part of the judgment during Jeremiah's day was the dead not being buried.

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

THE REASON CONNECTED TO THE BODY

God gave man a body for a reason. Our bodies are to be used for His glory.

But, does God care what is done with a lifeless body? After all, the body is just the lifeless shell we lived in. I believe, according to the bible, the answer is "Yes, He does care".

It matters because all things are important to God. We are to do *all* things to the glory of God.

- WE ARE TO GLORIFY GOD IN OUR BODIES

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

If we are to do "*all*" things to the glory of God, that would include making plans for what happens to our bodies after we die.

- WE ARE TO PRESENT OUR BODIES TO THE LORD AS A LIVING SACRIFICE

Ro 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

1 Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

- WE SHOULD HONOR OUR BODIES BECAUSE THEY ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1 Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

THE RESPECT CONNECTED TO THE BODY

The body is to be respected, in life, and in death.

- A FUNERAL AND BURIAL IS A MEANS OF HONORING THE BODY GOD GAVE US

As in life, so it should be in death. We are to glorify God with the plans for our body after death.

The greatest example of this is the burial of Jesus. There have been funerals that cost more, but there has never been a time when more care was given to a body after death.

The tomb Jesus' body was placed in a tomb that belonged to a rich man named Joseph. The description indicates great care being given to His body.

Joseph and Nicodemus carefully and tenderly took care of the body of Jesus.

Jn 19:38–41 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

Later, some ladies came to finish the preparation of the body of Jesus.

Lk 24:1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

If the burial of Jesus tells us anything, it tells us we should have respect for the bodies of those who have passed on.

The amount of myrrh used for Jesus would cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000 today. This is not to say that a funeral has to be something extravagant. The amount spent on some funerals is staggering. Ronald Regan's funeral cost \$400 million, Queen Elizabeth's cost \$12.5 million, Princess Diana's cost \$11.8 million, and Michael Jackson's cost \$1 million.

The cost of a funeral and burial is not the only way of showing respect to the deceased. Unfortunately, there are times an extravagant funeral is an attempt to make up for neglecting the person who has passed on.

THE JEWS SHOWED GREAT RESPECT FOR THE BODY AFTER DEATH

- They buried the body as soon as possible, many times the same day of death

Lazarus was buried the day of his death because his body had been in the grave four days when Jesus arrived (Jn.17).

- They washed the body

Ac 9:37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

- The body was wrapped in strips of cloth

Jn 11:44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.

- Spices were placed in these cloths as they wound them around the body

These spices helped keep the aroma down as decomposition began.

- A procession would carry the body to the place of burial

Lk 7:12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

This procession of family and friends would go from the family home to the family tomb.

- After the burial, the time of mourning continued

For seven days, the immediate family of the deceased would stay at home. If they left the home at all, they would leave only to visit the grave. When Mary left the home after Lazarus' death, they assumed she was going to the grave.

Jn 11:31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

- The bones were moved to an ossuary

One year after death, the family of the deceased returned to the tomb and moved the bones from their resting place on a shelf, and put them in a box called an ossuary.



THE REMAINS CONNECTED TO THE BODY

Burial provides the means of the body returning to its original state.

God formed man from the dust of the ground.

Ge 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

God had spoken His creation into existence before He made man (Gen.1:3; 1:6; 1:14). He made everything from nothing, but He made man from the dust of the ground.

The corruptible nature of the human body causes it to decompose after death. After Adam sinned, God told him his body would return to the dust from which He made it.

Ge 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.

Speaking of the body of Lazarus, Martha said, "*By this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days*" (Jn 11:39).

Ec 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Ec 3:20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

THE RESURRECTION CONNECTED TO THE BODY

The believer's body will be resurrected.

Some believe cremating the body would make it impossible to be raised. The method of decomposition of the physical body has nothing to do with the resurrection.

People have died in various ways. Some have had their bodies totally destroyed by bombs or consumed by wild animals. It doesn't matter if our bodies decay in a normal manner, burnt to ashes, consumed by wild beasts, or blown into pieces, the Lord of heaven will have no difficulty in raising them at the Rapture.

Jn 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

Those who died by drowning in the ocean will be raised.

Re 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it...

The condition of the remains will not prevent God from raising them at the resurrection. He created them the first time, He will have no difficulty recreating them.

The believer's body will be delivered from its bondage. God has something special in store for our bodies. These corruptible bodies will be changed to an incorruptible bodies.

1 Co 15:51-57 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death for the child of God is likened to sleep. The fact that the body is sleeping indicates the fact that there is coming a time when it shall awake.

CONCLUSION

Even though the bible does not speak specifically about cremation, it would seem burial is the preferred

method of dealing with the bodies of those who have passed on. We should certainly not allow this to be an issue to divide us or cause division among the family of God. Our focus should be on walking with God, pleasing Him, and reaching the lost.