

Is Cremation Wrong? By Trey Sullins

When was the last time you brought up cremation around the dinner table? We probably have never brought that up around the dinner table! Cremation is not something that many people talk about or spend much time thinking about. However, as life goes on, we are all faced with the problem of physical death, and particularly, we have to ask ourselves the question what do we want done with our bodies when we die? Because of this, sometimes people have asked the question is cremation wrong for the Christian to choose at the end of their physical life?

Cremation often has a negative connotation to it and there are many possible reasons for that. First, the burning of bodies has often been associated with punishment throughout history and in the Bible. Achan and his family's bodies were burned after death (Joshua 7:24-26). Again, Leviticus 20:14 shows a situation of a man who takes his wife's mother as wife also, and they should both be burned by the law. Second, many societies around the world have traditionally buried bodies. Even going deep into history ancient societies, which influenced the modern western world, used burial for various reasons. Furthermore, the Bible shows many examples of burials (Genesis 35:19; Numbers 20:1; 1 Kings 2:10). Third, the final resurrection of the dead as presented in the Bible often gives people the idea that our bodies need to remain on the earth. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." On the surface of this we might think to ourselves, "If God is going to raise the dead on the last day, then He needs something to raise right? He needs a body to bring forth from the grave." There are certainly many other reasons for the popularity of burial, but is cremation morally wrong?

First the Bible answers the question as to whether cremation is morally right or wrong. It is important to note that the Bible never gives command or instruction on how to preserve a body after death. Furthermore, we have to remember that God is more concerned with the spiritual things rather than the physical. In fact, the very reason that the resurrection will happen in the day is so that our bodies might be changed into a spiritual form. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-55, Paul is revealed this very thing to the Christians at Corinth. He explained that in the last day we will all be raised from the corruptible, physical existence, and changed into incorruptible, spiritual existence. Notice he wrote, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" meaning that these dead Christians will not have their physical bodies raised, but instead they are raised as spiritual bodies. Even more proof that our physical bodies are not needed in judgement as 1 Corinthians 15:50 says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption."

By examining this question logically we can also determine the answer. God is always fair, just and wants us all to be saved (Isaiah 45:21; Zephaniah 3:5; 2 Peter 3:9); Would it be fair and just for God to condemn a righteous person whose body was burned for their faith? Certainly not. Consider also that the first Christians lived near 2,000 years ago. Unless well preserved, it only takes about 100 years for the body to decay to dust or almost nothing in the grave. If God condemned someone whose body was non-existent at the judgement time, then nearly all Christians from A.D. 1 to A.D. 1900 would not make it to heaven! Now what about Abraham, Sarah, Noah, and so many other righteous people who date back thousands of years more; how will they fare on judgement day?

Ultimately Jesus said it best in Matthew 10:28, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” God’s focus, and therefore our focus, is not on what will happen to our bodies when we die. Rather, it is about what will happen to our souls when we die. While the tradition for burial has been most common in our world, the Bible does not give that command. We do have the choice to decide what will happen to our bodies after we die, but the Bible instead commands that we should focus on the spiritual things and live for God!