

Cremation Truths & Myths Is It Biblical?



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.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

**Dave Winstead
Harvest Baptist Church
Family Care Ministry
404 Collinwood Drive
Burlington, NC 27215
(336)260-2474**



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What Does The Bible Say About Cremation? Should Christians Be Cremated?

The Bible does not give any specific teaching about cremation. There are occurrences in the Old Testament of people being burned to death (1 Kings 16:18; 2 Kings 21:6) and of human bones being burned (2 Kings 23:16-20), but these are not examples of cremation. It is interesting to note that in 2 Kings 23:16-20, burning human bones on an altar desecrated the altar. At the same time, the Old Testament law nowhere commands that a deceased human body not be burned, nor does it attach any curse or judgment on someone who is cremated.

Cremation was practiced in biblical times, but it was not commonly practiced by the Israelites or by New Testament believers. In the cultures of Bible times, burial in a tomb, cave, or in the ground was the common way to dispose of a human body (Genesis 23:19; 35:19; 2 Chronicles 16:14; Matthew 27:60-66). While burial was the common practice, the Bible nowhere commands burial as the only allowed method of disposing of a body.

Is cremation something a Christian can consider? Again, there is no explicit scriptural command against cremation.

The question of burial or cremation is within the realm of Christian freedom. A person or a family considering this issue should pray for wisdom (James 1:5) and follow the conviction that results.

Can A Cremated Body Be Resurrected?

**“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:

**Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with
them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:**

and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Some believers object to the practice of cremation on the basis it does not recognize that one day God will resurrect our bodies and re-unite them with our soul/spirit (1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). However, the fact that a body has been cremated does not make it any more difficult for God to resurrect that body. The bodies of Christians who died a thousand years ago have, by now, completely turned into dust. This will in no way prevent God from being able to resurrect their bodies. He created them in the first place; He will have no difficulty re-creating them. Cremation does nothing but “expedite” the process of turning a body into dust. God is equally able to raise a person’s remains that have been cremated as He is the remains of a person who was not cremated.

Whether your body has turned back to dust in a coffin, is cremains in an urn on the mantle, or the contents left on the floor of the ocean by a shark that ate you when you fell overboard, God will one day resurrect your old worn out body, regardless of condition, and make it a glorified body. The Bible says we don’t know what it will be like but that it will be like Jesus.

Billy Graham Gives His Answer

Question:

Does the Bible forbid cremation? This has been a controversial topic in our family recently, because an aunt of mine died not long ago and directed that her body be cremated. One of our cousins, however, claims the Bible says you can't go to heaven if you're cremated. Is he right?

Answer:

No, this isn't what the Bible says, and I find nothing in the Bible that forbids cremation as a means of disposing of a person's body.

It's true that burial was the common practice in the Bible, and cremation was rare. When cremation was practiced, it showed contempt for the person (e.g., Achan, who disobeyed God and brought defeat to the Israelites—see Joshua 7:25). Cremation is often practiced today in cultures that have no respect for the human body or see it as evil; Christians in those societies reject cremation. We believe God gave us our bodies, and they should be treated with respect. After creating the human race, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

One reason burial has been preferred by Christians is because the Bible teaches that one day those who die in Christ will be raised from the dead and given new bodies. But God is able to bring together whatever has been scattered: "And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens" (Mark 13:27).

I hope your family won't be divided over this issue. Pray for peace in your family—and may each of you face the reality of death, and rejoice in the hope we have of eternal life because of Christ's death and resurrection for us.

Charles Stanley Addresses What The Bible Teaches About Our Resurrection Bodies

There are tombstones all over the world that say, "Here lies ..." and the person's name. But that really isn't accurate, because those who were Christians are in heaven with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). However, someday they'll be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection. This is not only the hope of every believer but also the promise of our Savior (John 6:39-40). Despite this great hope we are guaranteed, many believers are still afraid of physical death and what follows. Thankfully, the Bible is very clear about what we can expect in that moment and throughout eternity. God clearly answers many of our questions. Let's begin by reading 1 Corinthians 15:35-54:

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else ... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. – 1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-49

Now that we've read the passage, let's take a closer look at what it says about our bodies after the resurrection.

WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE?

Our resurrected bodies will not be exactly like our earthly ones (1 Cor. 15:35-37). Paul likens the mortal body to a seed and the resurrection body to a plant. Just as the plant is more impressive than the seed, so our new bodies will far exceed our old ones in beauty, function, and glory.

Our spiritual bodies will be raised imperishable in glory and power (1 Cor. 15:42-50). Because of sin, we're currently subject to weakness, aging, and death. But in the resurrection, the carnal sin nature that influences our mortal flesh is completely removed.

WHEN WILL THE RESURRECTION OCCUR?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 tells us that those who have died in Christ will be resurrected when He comes back for His church. Then believers still alive at that time will be caught up with them in the air to be with Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 adds further insights: The transformation from perishable to imperishable (those who have died) and from mortal to immortal (those who are alive) will occur instantaneously at the last trump. (See 1 Thess. 4:16.)

Our resurrection is sure. On that day, no believer in Christ will miss out. The condition of the body (whether buried, cremated, or never found) doesn't hinder the power of God to resurrect it. When the trumpet sounds and Christ calls us forth, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

Common Cremation Myths

More and more people are choosing cremation, and for many reasons, including saving money, enjoying more options, and more acceptance of cremation by many religions. 56% of all bodies will be cremated this year. Still, the cremation process is mysterious to many people. To help you understand your options better, let's dispel some common myths:

Myth 1: Cremation involves fire.

The modern cremation process is quick, clean, and does not involve fire. The body is exposed to extreme heat in a specially-designed furnace, which reduces it to gases and bone fragments. The fragments are then placed in an electric processor, which converts them to the cremains that are returned to the family.

Myth 2: Cremation is different for pets and people.

The process of cremating a pet's remains is actually almost identical to the process used for human remains. You may be able to arrange cremation services through your veterinarian, or you can work directly with a crematorium that specializes in pets' remains.

Myth 3: Cremation is eco-friendly.

Unfortunately, no. While cremated remains do take up less space than a full-body burial, and can be disposed of in ways that commune with nature, such as sprinkling in nature and burial in biodegradable urns, the actual process of cremation is not eco-friendly. The modern cremation process requires large amounts of fossil fuels, and cremation has always produced carbon emissions and dangerous fumes. Crematoria are required to install emission-reducing air filtrations systems, but the carbon output is still significant. An

eco-friendly alternative is gaining acceptance: bio-cremation, in which the remains are dissolved by an emission-free chemical and liquid process.

Myth 4: Cremation is not sanctioned by my religion.

This, of course, depends entirely on what religion you practice, but cremation is gaining acceptance in many faiths that once required whole-body burial. For example, the Roman Catholic Church recently clarified its stance, stating that cremation is an option, although burial is preferred. If you're in doubt, ask your local clergy about your religion's and denomination's current stance on cremation.

Myth 5: Cremation is a strange and exotic way to lay someone to rest.

Cremation is becoming increasingly popular, and is now quite common in the United States and other industrialized countries. Once the remains have been cremated, the options for what to do with the cremains are almost endless, from the traditional—such as burial, scattering, or keeping in an urn in your home or a columbarium—to the highly creative.