

## What does the Bible say about cremation?

**Question:** What does the Bible say about cremation?

**Answer:** Cremation is burning a corpse as opposed to burying it. The men of Jabesh-Gilead burned the bodies of Saul and his sons to keep the Philistines from desecrating them, but they also buried their bones (1 Sam. 31:12-13). The bodies of criminals and certain immoral people were to be burned (Gen. 38:24, Lev. 20:14, 21:9, Joshua 7:15, 25). In Amos 2:1, the Lord rebukes Moab for burning the bones of the King of Edom.

First Corinthians 13:3 says, "...and though I give my body to be burned..." which refers to martyrdom, not cremation. The Jewish custom was to honor the deceased by applying ointments and spices to the body. The body of Jesus was honored in this way (Luke 23:56). The early Church fathers preferred burial to cremation, which was practiced in the Roman world.

However, the New Testament doesn't forbid a person from being cremated, and generally speaking, whatever is not forbidden in Scripture is permitted. Cremation will not prevent that person from being resurrected. People who died thousands of years ago have disintegrated into dust. Cremation just speeds up the process. If a person cannot afford burial, cremation might be considered. Although cremation is not forbidden, burial has been the preferred practice for centuries.