

CREMATION - A BIBLICAL STUDY

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(Bible Verses are shown in both KJV and NIV)

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INTRODUCTION - A Brief History

When we first published our email news item on Princess Margaret being cremated (see Appendix 10), we were surprised at the number of questions we received. Many included comments such as the Bible has nothing to say on cremation, or isn't it just an option that Christians can choose or reject. It is true that the word Cremation does not occur in the Bible, but a quick study of words associated with death, i.e. burial, tombs, dying, grave, burning, fire, reveals it has much to say on the subject of how to dispose of the dead. We have opted for combining the questions into an article rather than answering them all separately. Many quality Bible dictionaries, Theological Commentaries and encyclopedias are worth studying the subject of burial, to follow through these points, so let us give you a quick tour on what we have discovered. We trust you are blessed by it.

"Ashes to ashes and dust to dust" are familiar words at many funerals. Engraved into our minds by Hollywood, the Military and the Anglican prayer book for a burial service as appropriate words for a Christian funeral, yet only 50% of them can be found in the bible. In fact the words are so familiar, many Christians today consider cremation just another option on how to dispose of a loved ones remains. Most are shocked when they are told that until mid 1900's most Christians would have considered cremation a pagan method of disposing of the dead. It is easy to prove this.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica under the heading “Cremation, the Burning of Human Corpses” states. “This method of disposal of the dead was the general practice of the ancient world, with the important exceptions of Egypt, where bodies were embalmed, Judea where they were buried in sepulchres, and China, where they were buried in the earth.” ... There can be little doubt that the practice of cremation in modern Europe was at first stopped, and thereafter prevented in great measure, by the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body: partly also by the notion that the Christian’s body was redeemed and purified. The encyclopaedia also reports that in 1883 the first cremation was performed in Wales. In 1885 the first cremation in England took place at Woking. By 1906 crematories were established in Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland. Thereafter the practice became widespread through Europe. (Ref: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1962 Vol 6, p665,666).

For those who may still think cremation has had a long history in the west we need to remember that it was not until the year 1873 that Sir Henry Thompson advocated the introduction of cremation into England on the basis of sanitation. The first crematory was not built in the USA until 1875 at Washington, Pennsylvania.

BIBLICAL BURNINGS Moab

We start with the prophet Amos. In chapter 2, Amos brings his report from God about the Lord’s coming judgement on Moab and the reason for it. Amos tells us:

Amos 2:1-2

“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: [2] But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:” (KJV)

“This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he burned, as if to lime, the bones of Edom’s king, [2] I will send fire upon Moab that will consume the fortresses of Kerioth. Moab will go down in great tumult amid war cries and the blast of the trumpet.” (NIV)

There can be no doubt that the offence committed is that the Moabites desecrated the body of the King of Edom by burning it. God is going to judge them in kind. He will send fire to burn them up. The Moabites were descended from Lot’s incestuous mating with his elder daughter (Genesis 19:37). The Edomites were descendants of Edom (See Esau Genesis 36:1-17).

What is intriguing about this passage is that the Moabites were non believers - they had a false god. The Edomites were also non believers. They had a fierce hatred of the Jews even though they were blood relatives. Despite the fact the Moabites were outside the body of God’s people, God’s anger was unleashed against them for the act of cremating another pagan. They had defaced the body of the King of Edom and they would suffer God’s anger through fire.

Sodom

The Apostle Peter expressed similar sentiments when referring to God’s punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah for their blatant homosexuality and open blasphemy.

2 Peter 2:6

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;” (KJV)

“If he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;” (NIV)

Achan

God’s wrath by fire is also seen against individuals amongst the Israelites as punishment for a crime. Joshua 7:26 tells about Achan, who had stolen the pagan gold and silver objects, which God had commanded to be burnt. As a result Achan had brought shame upon the Israelites and defeat in battle. When exposed and found guilty he was stoned to death, and by God’s instruction deliberately burned to ashes. A mound of stones was erected in the place to mark his shameful demise. Achan’s punishment by burning was the ultimate disgrace.

Another insight into the link between idolatry and burning human remains is found in I Kings 13:13. This is similar to God’s response to Achan’s sin, which involved deliberate defiance of God’s instruction about pagan idols. Burning to ashes is presented as God’s punishment for serious idolatry. King Jeroboam had set up a pagan altar in Bethel and the Lord sent a man from Judah to prophesy against it. The prophet predicted that the altar would eventually be desecrated by being used to burn human bones. This was fulfilled in the days of Josiah, who ordered that the bones of the pagan priests who had officiated at the altar be removed from their tombs and burnt on the altar

2 Kings 23:14-16

“And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. [15] Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. [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.” (KJV)

“Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones. [15] Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin--even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also. [16] Then Josiah looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things.” (NIV)

Saul

The first king of Israel God appointed was Saul, who later turned his back on God and sought the advice of witches and demons. The result being that God abandoned Saul to his enemies. He was slain and his body cut up and the pieces hung on a wall. His body was then burned by his own people prior to any remaining bones being interred in a tomb, only because he was a king. The implication being, if he had not been the king - he would have been left in the shame of a non burial. I Samuel 31:8:13 and 2 Samuel 21:14. The men who burned his body buried his bones under a Tamarisk tree but David brought them back to the burial ground of Saul’s tribe (Benjamin).

Even though pagan kings often desecrated the bodies of their defeated enemies, Israel’s godly leaders (and sometimes not so godly) buried their defeated enemies, e.g. Joshua buried the defeated kings of Ai and the Amorites under piles of rocks. (Joshua 8:29, 10:27)

CRIMINAL LAW IN SCRIPTURE

The death penalty in Israel had been ordered by God for murder, and certain other crimes, but God also gave an instruction concerning the criminal’s body.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

“And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: [23] His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.” (KJV)

“If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, [23] you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.” (NIV)

Even the murderer’s body was not to be shamed or maltreated. Such a criminal was to be rapidly buried after death. This should strike a cord with students of prophecy.

Jesus had been killed as a criminal. Jesus’ body hung on a tree. He had to be removed from “the tree” before sunset and rapidly buried. He was killed as a sinner, and hence the Law of God applied to Him. Under God’s law he could not be burned. He had to be buried. Cremation, a mark of extreme shame, was not ordered, even for the criminal who was executed by hanging.

Christ was not only lovingly taken off the cross, and lovingly wrapped in a burial cloth (John 19:48-42) He was buried in the grave of a rich man because this was God’s prophecy for Him (Isaiah 53:9). Burial, because it was God’s norm. Burial, because it was even God’s Law concerning the disposal of the body of a criminal hung on a tree to avoid desecrating the land, and burial because He would not have fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah if he had simply been cremated. You do not need to bury ashes. You do need to bury a body.

CHRIST

For those who have asked couldn’t God have raised Jesus from the dead even if He had been cremated, the answer is God could have, but He wouldn’t have! The reason is simple. Think through what Jesus did with His body after the resurrection. He showed Thomas His hands and His feet. Thomas the doubter. If Jesus had been cremated, Thomas would not only have been impressed to see Jesus body again, but would have known one thing for sure - the nail marks in Jesus hands and feet were fakes and that would have defeated the whole purpose. The Jesus who rose from the dead, had to be exactly the same Jesus who went into the grave. He was the one who had to rise bodily to remove the sting from the fear of being a dead body in the grave (1 Corinthians 15:55, quoting Hosea 13:14). The Scripture is emphatic Christ was not removing the fear of becoming lifeless ashes in the urn. The well known hymn “Abide with me” by Henry Lyte (1793-1847) also uses this reference source.

It’s not as if the Israelites in Christ’s day didn’t understand what cremation was. They had been ruled over by Rome, a pagan nation that practised cremation on a widespread scale. Which should also make us ask, why the catacombs of Rome where early Christians fled by their thousands from Roman persecution and lived in hiding for many years, are full of bones, not ashes. The reason is simple. The early Christians came from a Roman background where anybody outside the ruling class was treated as little more than an animal. Even the children of the ruling class could be disposed of at will, along with unpopular wives, husbands and politicians when necessary, These Christians were familiar with Roman death practices. Romans cremated their friends, their relatives, and their enemies. They burned Christians alive at the stake. They soaked them in tar and used them as torches. They treated the human body as nothing and of no value. Christians in the catacombs had come from this background and they knew one thing - burning the body was pagan in its origin. So they buried their dead.

It must have been difficult to treat the corpse of a Christian with such respect in the catacombs. They were overcrowded. Sanitation would have been a problem. The smell of death would have been a problem. It would have been easier to discard dead bodies outside or burn them - but they didn't. Their respect for the human body as having an heritage in the image of God, alive or dead, was such that they gave honour to the body and buried it.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

We can go to the opposite extreme and investigate God's treatment of His favoured saints - those that walked this earth with him. There are first of all those who did not die - Enoch and Elijah. They were spared death and burial because of their godly walk with the Lord. But the rest including men such as Moses, give us an insight into God's attitude to disposing of the dead body of His people.

The book of Deuteronomy Chapter 34 tells us that when God took Moses' life, He buried him. The New Testament has an interesting incident relating to this when it tells us in Jude (vs 9) that the devil and the angel Michael disputed over the body of Moses. Whilst we don't know for sure what the dispute was about, one thing that we do know is that God could have avoided this problem simply by burning Moses' body to ashes. But He did not. He buried it and He told nobody where. Many have speculated that God's reason was to stop human beings deifying the body of Moses. One can easily understand the temptation Israelites would have had to mummify Moses' body and revere it to the point of worship. He had been the great man of God who had led Israel out of Egypt and performed miracles. Again the Lord could have easily prevented this temptation by turning it into ashes, but He did not. He buried it.

Another thing we know about this God who buried Moses is that the Scripture says he's "unchanging". God the Son, Jesus Christ "*is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8). (See also I Samuel 15:29, Psalm 110:4, (quoted in Hebrews 7:21), Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17.) Whatever His attitude was a thousand years ago, it will be a thousand years from now. Whatever His attitude was at the time of creation, or at the time of the burial of Moses, it has not changed and it will not change. The Lord never accommodates Himself to circumstances we may regard as extreme. He never changes His rules to suit our beliefs. In fact He demands the opposite.

Elijah

Despite its use to justify cremation, the popular concept that Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire was not so. The Scripture tells us Elijah was taken to Heaven, in a whirlwind, not a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11). The fiery chariot and horses were sent to separate Elijah from Elisha.

KINGS OF THE UK

It's of interest to note that in the history of the kings of England, the royal tradition since the time the first English king became a Christian midway in the first millenium, has been to bury their dead. They were long used to cremating them. This was the way of the ancient Celtic Druids, but when they became Christians, this pagan tradition stopped. They were so committed to the burial of the dead and the resurrection of the dead bodily, that many kings who history has treated as 'bad eggs', went to their execution firmly convinced of the resurrection of their body. In the London Dungeon Museum, a macabre collection of some of the worst events in British history, you can find a mock-up of the execution of King Charles 1 of England who was beheaded on 30th January 1649. His body was then taken to Windsor Castle where his head was sewn back onto his body before he was buried in St George's Chapel. He had left specific instructions that prior to his burial his head was to be re-sewed on in preparation for the resurrection. Whilst you may question the theological necessity of him doing this, what it does indicate is his commitment to the belief that the body had to be honoured even in burial. Even if the king was regarded as a criminal, by his own nation,

God's rule in Deuteronomy still applied. Both the thief and the good man were to be given an honourable burial.

THE EXCEPTIONS

Many asked about those who are incinerated accidentally in car accidents, or those saints who were burnt to death by the Romans - will God judge them unfavourably because their bodies have been burnt. There are two principles involved here.

1. The Scripture reminds us that we can always trust "the God of the heavens and the earth to judge correctly". Genesis 18:25

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (KJV)

Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (NIV)

2. Never make exceptions the rule by which you judge things.

Since God always judges the intent of the heart in the case of Christian martyrs, the people who burnt them to death would be the ones who were judged for defacing the human body, and desecrating the image of God. The saints who were desecrated are those who were pleading before the throne in the book of Revelation, waiting upon the Lord to bring revenge for the unjust death of His saints.

Revelation 6:9-10

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: [10] And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (KJV)

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. [10] They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (NIV)

(See also Revelation 20:4)

Obviously it is just as easy for a God who can raise a body from the dust worms have made, or from the dissolved minerals of Christian sailors, as it is the ashes of his saints who have accidentally been burned up, or those deliberately burned as punishment by pagan authorities wishing to shame them. However such a fact never overrides God's original instructions concerning disposal of the dead. In the same way a mother's alleged suicidal tendencies are not to be used as an excuse to dispose of a baby via abortion. God never once hints that sanitary precautions are to be used as an excuse to cremate the dead in big cities. Who would argue that because John the Baptist had his head chopped off (and he was a saint of God), this justifies Christians having their heads chopped off prior to burial. I am sure you can see the ridiculousness of using the 'exception as the rule'. "How precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Psalms 116:15

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (KJV)

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (NIV)

God's plan for Adam was quite unmistakable and sadly after Adam sinned God had to implement His warning that death would be the result of sin. He told Adam in Genesis 3:19 that out of the ground he was taken. Dust he was and to dust he would return. Ashes to ashes was not part of God's original funeral arrangement for Adam. Dust to dust was God's statement about man. And there is no indication He has ever changed despite what is commonly stated in modern church funeral proceedings.

YOUR BODY

We live in a world where people regard their body as their own, but no Christian can have such an obsession. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that their bodies were temples of the Holy Ghost. They were all members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-20), they were not free to live as they pleased. The Corinthians had not long become Christians from a very pagan background which included an intimate knowledge of cremating the dead. Paul also wrote to the Roman Christians who were even more familiar with cremation, that dead or alive their bodies belonged to God. The Christians' bodies had been created "in Adam" by God in the image of God, and recreated by redemption and were fit to be the temple of the Holy Spirit, their body was not to be defaced alive or dead. It is not surprising that cremation played no part in early Christian's funeral proceedings.

ANGELS WINGS

The modern attitude to dead bodies is intriguingly revealed by a pilot who joked about his career choice. He and a friend had started a company which distributed the ashes of cremated people for a fee, at whatever location they chose - over the ocean, over the mountains, into a lake, whatever. Whilst publicly the company portrayed itself as being "Angels Wings", privately he and his friend's attitude was "You ash 'em, we trash 'em" and "You fry 'em, we fly 'em". He told of many humorous first attempts to dispose of ashes from their small plane, and how the up-draught and cabin pressure had repeatedly blown the late Uncle Henry or Aunt Martha back through the cabin, whereupon they had to land and vacuum them up again. Never revealed of course to the relatives.

CONCLUSION

Satan sowed the seeds of disbelief in the awfulness of sin, the tragedy of death and the joy of the resurrection, right from the beginning in Eden: "*You will not surely die*", he said to Eve (Genesis 3:4). The Jews held to belief in bodily resurrection until Plato's teaching corrupted those in Alexandria, so that by the time of Christ the resurrection was a hot topic; the Pharisees believed it, the Sadducees didn't (Acts 23:8). The Christian church has gone through the same attack from the same source. There is no doubt historically that the reintroduction of cremation into the Western Christianised world, was intended by its promoters to destroy and deny the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of the saints. The resurrection of the dead is central to the Christian faith and any attack on it should be taken seriously - exposed and opposed. It's a matter of death and life.

APPENDIX 1 ANATOMICAL USE OF THE DEAD by Dr Diane Eager

The following is my experience as first a Biology student and later a University lecturer in Medical Biology, with the use of dead bodies for the study of anatomy.

I was a medical student at the University of NSW in the early 1970's. We studied anatomy using human bodies that had been embalmed and preserved in formalin. These were kept and used in a laboratory area that was only used by staff and students of the medical school. Visiting scientists and doctors doing research at the medical school were allowed to work in it but otherwise it was strictly off-limits and there were large red signs informing any unauthorised visitors they were not

allowed in. The same rules applied to the anatomy and pathology “museums” – collections of dissected specimens kept in Perspex containers. These restrictions were not just for the normal reasons of protecting university property from theft and damage but specifically because they contained human remains. Human remains, we were informed, must be treated with dignity and respect. As part of this respectful treatment of the specimens we had to wear clean white coats at all times. These were not just to protect our clothes from the preserving solution. (Nowadays because of stricter occupational health and safety rules students wear gowns like surgical gowns to protect their clothes and skin.) When not in use for teaching or research the lab was locked.

The same rules that protected the specimens preserved in formalin from the morbidly curious also applied to human bones. In those days medical students had to buy real bones from the medical school. On enrolment day we were directed to a small room presided over by a cheerful chap who helped us choose a good set of bones with the same polite courtesy as if he had been selling cars or jewellery. He had hundreds of small boxes each containing one set of human bones. The skulls were kept in separate cardboard boxes labelled “sectioned skull.” (This means it had been cut across so that the top could be lifted off so you could study the inside.) We were told that we must keep them in a safe place in their box when not actually being used. We had to bring to classes the appropriate bones for whatever body part we were studying at the time. When being transported they must be wrapped up or carried in the bag where they would not be seen. I remember travelling by bus back to my lodging holding the boxes on my lap with hand firmly over the label on the skull box feeling very conspicuous but no-one asked me what I had in the boxes.

As members of the last generation in Australia to receive a Christianised education we accepted these rules and the reasons for them as normal. “Respect for the dead” was still taken seriously then. Now it is regarded as a pious platitude or a joke.

Behind these university rules are serious laws about disposal of human remains. Bodies must be buried, cremated or donated to a licensed scientific institution. Anything else is considered “body snatching” and is a crime. Bodies can only be donated to scientific institutions by individuals who want it for themselves, by making arrangements prior to their death. These laws are not just for dealing with biological hazards or preventing foul play. Our laws still work on the principle that human beings are intrinsically different from animals, and human remains must be treated differently. I’m sure that somewhere in the past these laws were also formulated to protect human remains from being used in occult practices.

During my time as a university lecturer I noticed a large change in the attitude of students to human remains. In the 1980’s I worked in the anatomy department of a college where the same rules about the cadaver lab I had been given as a student were clearly spelt out. One afternoon a young student barged into my office and asked if she could show her boyfriend the dead bodies. She was annoyed when I said she could not and we meant what we said about visitors not being allowed in.

I gained some more insight into the laws about disposing of human remains when we had to dispose of some specimens that were no longer useful. They could not be simply disposed of by the usual biological hazard process that was used for dead lab animals. Because they were human remains they had to be buried or cremated according to the persons’ instructions given prior to death. This meant that all the dismembered parts from each body had to be gathered together and placed in coffin. Because of this law all body parts were tagged with catalogue numbers so the right pieces could be collected together. The body parts were then checked with the original death certificates, confirming the cause of death. I became involved in this procedure because I was the only “real doctor” in a department full of PhD’s.

The first time our department wanted to dispose of some bodies our Head of Department (one of the PhD's) nearly caused a bizarre industrial dispute. He thought he could get the college carpenter to make some coffins for the bodies we wanted to dispose of. However, coffin making was (and probably still is) considered a specialised trade and the college was informed that it had to buy coffins from a coffin supplier or the coffin makers would go on strike. (The college was situated next to the largest cemetery in Sydney and funerals were a significant local industry.)

Later I joined the Faculty of Applied Science at the University of Canberra. The Dean of the Faculty wanted to use real human specimens for teaching anatomy and I was co-opted to help the Faculty obtain a licence to have a cadaver lab (again because I was the only "real doctor" in a department full of PhD's.) In order to get a license for this we had to refurbish a lab area so that it was more secure and could not be entered or even seen into by any casual visitors to the Faculty. When this was done I and another lecturer were given the task of obtaining the first specimens from the Sydney University medical school. This meant we had to go to Sydney University, work in their lab for a week preparing specimens and then bring them back ourselves. They could not be moved by courier.

We also had to obtain specific permission from both the NSW and ACT Health authorities for the movement of the specimens across the NSW/ACT border. Without this, some bureaucrat in the Department of Health told us, the University would be guilty of body snatching. When news of our plans and the bureaucrat's pronouncements got around the Faculty, our work became known as the "Body Snatching Expedition".

This caused some black humour amongst some Faculty staff but the University lawyer was not amused. He was a very proper stiff upper lip Englishman who had never imagined that being a university lawyer would involve him in such macabre affairs. I had a bizarre interview with him where we speculated on what possible misadventures could happen between Sydney and Canberra whilst we were transporting the specimens. These included the possibility that our vehicle was stolen, crashed or hijacked and my colleague and I were killed or rendered unconscious and unable to explain an apparent superfluity of body parts. Because of these possible disasters we had to carry a letter from the university explaining what we were doing. Some bad planning by the University transport department meant we could not have a University vehicle and we had to use a hired one. We didn't tell the car hire firm what we did with it.

During this time the Faculty also obtained some real human bones, which were subject to the same security rules as the preserved specimens. Some of the students thought we were being unreasonably authoritarian and decided to play a joke on us by hiding some of the bones. When the technical officer in charge of the lab reported to me that the bones were missing, I informed our Head of Department and Pro-vice Chancellor in charge of administration. By law we had to inform the police but the university authorities decided to give the technical staff a couple of days to search for the bones before informing the police. The bones were found. The students were shocked into silence when I gave them a lecture about what could and could not be done with human remains and how they narrowly missed out on a police investigation for a serious crime. It never occurred to them that their prank was more than minor misuse of university property. (I didn't tell them or the university authorities I was concerned that the bones had been stolen for use in some occult practice. Witchcraft is rife in Canberra.)

It seems that within 30 years there has been a complete turnaround in regard to the seriousness of human death. Many rock music groups and T-shirt brands use death and dead bodies in various

states of decay as part of their image. However, the worst sign of this attitude has to be this report from New Scientist:

“A man sits contemplating a chessboard. Part of his skull has been removed and his brain is exposed. A woman stands naked. Her dissected belly reveals a seven-month-old fetus. They tried to ban this exhibition in Berlin, but over a million people went to see it. The churches condemned it in Cologne, but it still attracted two million visitors - including a group of nuns who arrived early in the morning so no one would recognise them. Gunther von Hagens is responsible for this furore. He is a professor of anatomy who exhibits plasticised, dissected bodies in lifelike poses. Von Hagens insists that ‘death is not gruesome, it is ordinary’. New Scientist talks to the man whose aim is to liberate anatomy from the anatomists and bring us all face to face with our own biology.”
(<http://www.newscientist.com/opinion/opinterview.jsp?id=ns23355>)

I’m sure this is all part of Satan’s work. He is not only desecrating the Image of God. By downgrading the seriousness of death Satan is deceiving people into not seeking to be saved from it.

APPENDIX 2 JOSEPH

The godly Joseph whilst high in authority in Egypt commanded his servants to embalm his father, Jacob. He then carried his body back into Canaan and buried it in the grave his father had already prepared, in obedience to his father’s request (Genesis 50:1-7). Joseph buried his father in the Cave of Machpelah which Abraham had bought many years earlier and in which were also buried Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah.

The same Joseph made his brothers and his children promise that when they left Egypt they would take his body back with them and bury him in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:25,26). Almost 300 years later, we read in Exodus 13:19 that “Moses took up the bones of Joseph with him”. In Joshua 24:32 another 40 years on, we read that the bones of Joseph were buried in Shechem in a plot of ground which Jacob had bought. Can you imagine carrying an embalmed body around the wilderness for 40 years in order to keep a promise made 300 years earlier. There is no doubt it would have been more convenient to simply carry Joseph’s ashes after burning his body. However, whilst the people of Israel complained about many things in the wilderness, we never read of them complaining about having to carry Joseph’s body, Nor do we even get a hint that Joseph’s body should have have been burnt, such was their respect for the body of the dead, particularly those who were servants of the Lord.

APPENDIX 3 FUNERAL BURNINGS IN ISRAEL

Amos 6:9-10

“And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. [10] And a man’s uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.”
(KJV)

“If ten men are left in one house, they too will die. [10] And if a relative who is to burn the bodies comes to carry them out of the house and asks anyone still hiding there, “Is anyone with you?” and he says, “No,” then he will say, “Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD.” (NIV)

Note that burning here in Amos does not refer to cremation, but to the custom of honouring the dead by burning of spices as we see in the following verses from Chronicles and Jeremiah:

2 Chronicles 16:12-14

“And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

[13] And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. [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.” (KJV)

“In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. [13] Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his fathers. [14] They buried him in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier covered with spices and various blended perfumes, and they made a huge fire in his honor.” (NIV)

Jeremiah 34:5

“But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.” (KJV)

“you will die peacefully. As people made a funeral fire in honor of your fathers, the former kings who preceded you, so they will make a fire in your honor and lament, “Alas, O master!” I myself make this promise, declares the LORD.” (NIV)

There can be no doubt that the Israelites did not practice cremation as a means of disposing of their dead, despite the fact that such was common practice in the ancient world.

APPENDIX 4 IN THE TOMB

The mind boggles at what Jesus would have done if Lazarus had been cremated. The empty tomb would not have the significance it had if Jesus’ body had been cremated. When Peter and John found the grave clothes in the empty tomb John *“saw and believed”* (John 20:8). If the body had been cremated there would have been no grave clothes.

APPENDIX 5 RESURRECTION

Concerning the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns: Obviously, even the bodies that were buried will have disintegrated. Christ will make glorious new resurrection bodies for all who have died believing in Him as their Saviour, whatever happened to their earthly bodies. The resurrection will be an act of creation just as when God made human bodies from dust in the first place. When people stop believing in Genesis they become woolly thinkers about everything else. Whatever happens to a body after death due to human sinfulness or the second law of thermodynamics, makes no difference to the fact that humans were made in the image of God and therefore human remains have a special status beyond being biological hazards.

APPENDIX 6 ANGLICANS

The term “ashes to ashes” in the Anglican funeral service is in the original prayer book, compiled by Cramer (date?) which pre-dates any practise or the legalisation of cremation by several hundred years. It is now included in a prayer that is used when the body is committed to the grave or crematorium, irrespective of whether the body is to be buried or cremated. Retired Anglican clergyman and CMS missionary, Rev. Joe Mullins, thinks it comes from Job’s statement in 30:19 *“I am reduced to dust and ashes”* which is a reference to decay and the ephemeral nature of our earthly bodies, by Job who would not have even contemplated the thought of Cremation. People in 16th and 17th Century Reformation England were far more Biblically literate than today and the term “dust and ashes” was probably a common expression for anything that has decayed to fragments and had no reference to cremation at all.

The true story of pilots and their flying ashes (p.7), illustrates the changing attitude to human remains of any kind. Even those who believed in cremation 40 years ago would have not considered the idea of throwing ashes from an aeroplane. When cremation first became accepted the ashes (in an urn) were always buried, sealed in a niche in a memorial wall or placed in a family vault. There is even a service for “Interment of Ashes” in the modern Anglican Prayer Book and it is meant to be conducted with the same solemnity as burying a body. People have forgotten that a Christian funeral is not just to give thanks for the life of the departed and comfort the bereaved. It is also “to dispose reverently of the mortal body.” (An Anglican Prayer Book, Funeral Service, 1978, p583)

APPENDIX 7 THE CATHOLIC VIEW

From the Catechism of Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II - Life in Christ. Published in Latin 1989 UK Edition 1994 (a disputed translation).

2300 Respect for the dead

The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy 19 : it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit. (91CF.Tob1:16-18)

2301

Autopsies can be morally permitted for legal inquests or scientific research. The free gift of organs after death is legitimate and can be meritorious.

The church permits cremation provided it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body. 92(Cf. CIC, can.117693)

APPENDIX 8 SAILORS

Tradition has it that European sailors used to wear gold earrings so they would always have the cost of a Christian burial on them. They feared that if they died in a pagan place their bodies would not be properly treated.

APPENDIX 9 ASH WEDNESDAY

Is the “ash” in Ash Wednesday of the “sackcloth and ashes” variety, i.e. a symbol of mourning and repentance for sin? Most Anglican churches have a service on Ash Wednesday with a theme of repentance. Psalm 51 is the usual Bible reading and sermon subject. Very few Anglican churches actually sprinkle ashes on people. Some Catholics still do.

APPENDIX 10 ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Princess Margaret to be Cremated “in a break with tradition” reported major news services following the Princess’s death in mid February, which raises 2 questions: why the tradition of burying UK Royalty, and why break it and burn their bodies in the 21st Century. The following article extract received from the UK is enlightening.

[It is interesting to note following the death of the Queen Mother on Easter Monday 2002, the news announced that she would be buried alongside her husband who died 50 years ago. A particular note was made of the fact that she worshipped regularly in chapel. Princess Margaret’s ashes were stated to be added into a coffin when she would be buried. Princess Margaret was never given the comment that “she regularly worshipped”.]

A Calendar of Customs and Folklore from “Evergreen” Summer 2001. “Dr William Price was one of the most colourful and controversial characters in Welsh history. A druid, a radical thinker and an excellent doctor, he is best known as being the founder of modern-day cremation... At the age of 21, he became the youngest ever member of the Royal College of Surgeons... Through his wide reading and study of ancient languages, Dr Price became a druid. He could regularly be seen practising druidic rituals at the Rocking Stone on Pontypridd Common... In 1871 his book entitled *Gwyllis Yn Nayd* (The Will of my Father) was published. It was intended to explain his druidic beliefs but, as it was written in a language of his own invention, few people could ever understand the book!... The most controversial phase of William Price’s life began in 1883 when his young partner Gwenllian Llewelyn (he rejected marriage based on the delusion that he was the legal lord of South Wales and therefore above the laws of Parliament) gave birth to his son. In a deeply religious society he dared to name the child Iesu Grist, meaning Jesus Christ. When the boy died aged just five months old, Price further angered the people of Llantrisant by trying to cremate the body in Caerlan Field... In ancient times cremation had been commonly accepted in Britain, but with the advent of Christianity it had become a forbidden practise... In his later years, Price made meticulous plans as to how he was to be cremated. These instructions were implemented when he passed away in his cottage on 23rd January 1893... In September 1947, Price’s daughter Penelope unveiled the stained glass windows of the chapel in Glantaf, Treforest (the first crematorium in Wales) as a memorial to her father... The most notable tribute to Dr Price is the statue which was erected in the Bull Ring in Llantrisant in May 1982. Inscribed at the foot of the statue are the words “Dr William Price (1800-1893). Surgeon, Chartist, Self-styled Druid.”...”

ED. COM. Just 3 thought provokers (1) If the ancient Jews had regularly practised cremation Christ wouldn’t have risen bodily from the dead. (2) When God was dealing with the body of his servant Moses - God practised burial - not cremation and (3) The coming of the Creator-Christ (Christianity) to the UK put an end to cremation. The rebirth of paganism (evolutionism - nature worship) has brought it back. Pray for the British Royal family at present.

APPENDIX 11

Talking to those from the same time (as the Queen Mother) - eg my own father and mother, whom we buried not long ago - it is interesting to note that Mum, who did have a church upbringing queried me at length about burial vs cremation, particularly when Dad said he didn’t care what happened to his body and they could burn it because it was cheaper. He was both a Scotsman, and

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unbeliever (he had rejected the church from his late teens apparently) and Mum had reservations othat were purely from her church upbringing but vague and she didn't like the idea of cremation at all. Dad was brought up in Scotland and often visited the estate of the Duke of Sutherland where his grandfather worked. Dad's father was Chief of Police in Edinburgh. Dad claimed he allegedly knew the Queen Mother before she was Queen. Both eventually opted for burial.