

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

CREMATION OR BURIAL?

1. CREMATION

The following are some of the reasons given to justify cremation :-

- a. It is claimed that cremation is more hygienic, cleaner and cheaper
- b. It saves space - especially in places where land is at a premium
- c. It eliminates the need for grave site maintenance

Historically cremation has been practised among people such as the Hindus, who do not believe in a future bodily resurrection; they believe in reincarnation. An example of this is a testimony given by a missionary :-

" A few years ago I stood three or so feet from a burning corpse with a missionary pastor from Singapore and his wife who were visiting us. The head was already burnt beyond recognition and the skull was split open due to internal expansion from the heat of the fire. The lower legs and feet were unscorched, as they were protruding from the pile of burning wood and stubble upon which the man's body lay. The professional Hindu burners were poking the body from time to time to keep the members in the fire and adding stubble and wood as needed. The bones were contracting and popping; the bodily organs were frying and the juices sizzling in the intense heat. My wife, a nurse with experience working with lepers in a hospital in a very remote part of Asia and in an intensive care ward in the USA, stood with another friend observing the ghastly sight from a distance, unwilling to come closer. The air for an hundred yards or more was filled with the unmistakable, stomach-turning stench of burning human flesh. When the fire had burnt most of the body, the ashes and remaining members were shoved into the river."

NOTE : The Bible tells us not to follow heathen practices - Jer 10:2

The heathen also practise cremation, because for them when you are dead, 'that is it!', there is no life after death.

Through out the Bible the destruction of a body or object by fire is a sign of God's wrath!

eg Sodom & Gomorah - I Peter 2:6; Nadab & Abihu - Lev 10:1,2 ;
Those who rebelled with Korah - Numbers 16:35

2. BURIAL

Through out the Bible we see that God's people were buried. eg Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Samuel, Stephen.

Note: The Lord Jesus was buried.

Burial is a witness to the living of our faith in the resurrection our bodies one day. I Cor 15:20-23, 35-44 ; Job 19:25-27

COMMENTS

- a. Historically , in foreign lands where the gospel is accepted, heathen practices go - including cremation
- b. Cremation is one of the fruits of evolutionary thinking in our day. As some one has said " As the Bible goes; cremation comes.
- c. What if a Christian is not buried? eg drown at sea. It makes no difference to salvation! It is still, absent from the body, present with the Lord!