

CREMATION OR BURIAL?

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Intro: Our subject is cremation, or burial; which is right? We are talking about what is right for Christians, not non-Christians. Now, I have never had the interest to study this matter. I was asked about it some time ago and then I saw an article in a paper on this subject and read it and then I got an interest to study it.

It might be that you say, "Why speak on this. It is not an issue here?" Some years ago Calvinism was unheard of here except for what I had preached. We may next have a charismatic church. I have covered at least some of the main issues. And it could be that you may be called on to make a decision regarding the subject of cremation through some family issue, and you will at least have heard a message on it.

Why speak about this? One article said, "For the first time in American history, a majority of Americans (50.2 percent) have chosen cremation rather than burial (48.5 percent) after their death. The National Funeral Directors Association expects the trend shifting from burial toward cremation to continue over the next 20 years, with the projected rate of cremation reaching 78.8 percent of deaths by 2035." Maybe you will be asked to make some sort of decision in the future and you will be aware of the subject.

Both cremation and burial are called funerals and I ask, why do we have funerals? Well, you might say, we have to take care of dead bodies. You can't just leave them to decompose. My next question is this: Is a funeral simply to get rid of a body? If so, why not have one big hole somewhere and as soon as someone dies, just put the dead body in the hole and let it decompose. Why not take dead bodies to the landfill? It would take no plot of ground and a lot less finances. Or maybe best yet, why not have a place for the body somewhere where the birds can get at them and when they are dry put all the bones in one place.

Maybe we could cremate our best friends and sell the shredded bones to make bone china or fertilizer. Why don't we do that? There are various things that can be done with the bone ashes, which, I understand, are not actually ashes. Or, could we not just make pet food from the dead bodies and have a place for the bones and we could maybe make some money off of our loved ones.

Why not? I am asking, why a funeral? If we find some of these suggestions offensive, then we realize there is a need for funerals.

I was at the place that commemorates where Moses gave the law at Mount Sinai. There, the priests who take care of the monastery were left somewhere until there were only bones left. Then the bones were stacked in a building. If I remember right, all the skulls were in one place, and other bones in a separate place. What I remember is that one of the skulls was quite red, and someone said, "Oh look, there is Red Skeleton." Other tried to keep their laughter down, and a stern look either from the priest who led us or someone else quieted everyone down in this most somber place.

Today, we are leaving the traditional funerals for what is called a celebration of life. Now why would we celebrate life when it is death that is before us? I believe that is a way of seeking to avoid the reality of death or the certainty of our own death. In death we should learn what is important in life. I believe children need to learn what death is.

Well, we are talking about a Christian funeral. What does the Bible say about funerals? Should dead bodies be buried or cremated? Or does it matter?

I will refer to an internet article several times it is called: "The FAQs: What Christians Should Know About Cremation."

We are going to look at what a funeral is; What cremation is; What the views about cremation are; What does the Bible say about burial; What does the Bible say about cremation; and what are my personal views about cremation?

I. WHAT IS A FUNERAL?

So we begin with this question: Just what is a funeral? If we loaded up a person's dead body and hauled it to the landfill, would that be a funeral? If someone died on a ship and the person who found him just slid him into the water, would that be a funeral? What is a funeral?

Here are some dictionary definitions. The Cambridge online dictionary says a funeral is, "a ceremony honoring someone who has recently died, which happens before burying or burning of the body." So it is a ceremony plus burial.

Miriam/Webster online says a funeral is, "the observances held for a dead person usually before burial or cremation."

Dictionary.com says a funeral is, "the ceremonies for a dead person prior to burial or cremation..."

Wikipedia says: "A **funeral** is a ceremony connected with the final disposition of a corpse, such as a burial or cremation, with the attendant observances."

So, by the word funeral we mean more than the disposing of a dead body. It involves whatever ceremonies go along with it. If there is no ceremony of any kind, it is not correctly called a funeral, it is simply the disposal of a dead body. It is like getting rid of any carcass.

II. WHAT IS CREMATION?

What is cremation? The site I mentioned said: "Cremation is a funerary process in which intense heat is used to transform the human body back to its basic elements. Most of the body, such as tissue, is vaporized, leaving only the remains of bone. The remaining bone particles are commonly referred to as cremains or ashes." So here are some new words for most of us: Funerary, having to do with funerals; and cremains, for the remains of what is left after cremation.

It then went on to answer this question: What is the cremation process? And the answer was given like this:

"The cremation process occurs in the cremation chamber (sometimes called the retort), a masonry-lined enclosure that can produce and withstand temperatures in the range of 1800°F to 2000°F.

"The deceased body is placed in a casket made of wood or cardboard and placed in the chamber. Within a few hours the body is vaporized and reduced to bone fragments. These fragments are removed from the cremation chamber and placed on a table where the crematory operator removes, by hand or with a magnet, all metal debris such as screws, nails, surgical pins or titanium limbs/joints.

"The fragments are then placed in a special processor that pulverizes the bone to a fine powder. These cremains are

placed in a plastic bag within an urn or a temporary cremation container and returned to the deceased's family."

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-what-christians-should-know-about-cremation/>

One article said: "What's really returned to you is the person's skeleton. Once you burn off all the water, soft tissue, organs, skin, hair, cremation container/casket, etc., what you're left with is bone. When complete, the bones are allowed to cool to a temperature that they can be handled and are placed into a processing machine. It looks like a mean margarita blender, and they are processed down to the consistency of ash, where they get their misnomer name." End quote.

When a body is cremated, I understand it is not actually ash that remains. It is shredded bone that does not burn. These are called cremains. These cremains are not usually buried. They are left in an urn or scattered at some designated place. It differs from burial, where the whole body is placed in a hole in the ground.

III. IS THIS A MORAL ISSUE?

So, let me ask this question: Is cremation a moral issue? What are the views?

A. It Is Not a Moral Issue

There is the view that how you do a funeral is amoral. That means either way is acceptable and it is not a sin to burn the body. Quoting from the same article as earlier it says:

"The consensus among most Christian traditions—including evangelicals—is that because the Bible does not directly forbid cremation, it is not a sin. As Timothy George says, 'While the weight of Christian tradition clearly favors burial, the Bible nowhere explicitly condemns cremation.'" End quote.

John MacArthur, for example, has said, "the state of what remains of the old body is unimportant" and then

he says that we need not focus on "how to dispose of our earthly bodies." And again:

"Obviously any buried body will eventually decompose ([Eccles. 12:7](#))," MacArthur adds, "So cremation isn't a strange or wrong practice—it merely accelerates the natural process of oxidation."

I expect that by now most Christians would feel that way. But I wonder, would these same Christians say it is OK to make dog food, of the flesh part, and use the bone remains to make bone china or use it for fertilizer or whitewash?

Another article said:

"A creative and innovative way to honor your loved one's memory is by making their cremated remains part of a special object or piece of art. A portion of the cremated remains can actually be remains can even be mixed with paint and used to create incorporated into crystal or other keepsakes which allow the family to carry a small part of their loved one with them at all times. New technology also allows for the creation of *cremation diamonds* which are genuine diamonds generated from a small portion of the cremated remains. These gems are a beautiful way to celebrate a life and often become family heirlooms. Cremated a portrait of the deceased or mixed with materials to create a memorial sculpture. And even more options for final disposition of ashes continue to become popular every day."

By the way the cremains of an average person weighs about 5 pounds and I don't know if the monetary value is more than a dollar.

Well, this first view says this is a non-moral issue.

B. Burial is Preferable

A second view says that burial is preferable to cremation. Here is what it says, "In contrast, Russell Moore counsels Christians to reject cremation:

"The question is not simply whether cremation is always a personal sin. The question is not whether God can reassemble "cremains." The question is whether burial is a Christian act and, if so, then what does it communicate?

"Of course God can resurrect a cremated Christian. He can also resurrect a Christian burned at the stake, or a Christian torn to pieces by lions in a Roman coliseum, or a Christian digested by a great white shark off the coast of Florida.

"But are funerals simply the way in which we dispose of remains? If so, graveyards are unnecessary, too. Why not simply toss the corpses of our loved ones into the local waste landfill?

"For Christians, burial is not the disposal of a thing. It is caring for a person. In burial, we're reminded that the body is not a shell, a husk tossed aside by the "real" person, the soul within. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord ([2 Cor. 5:6-8](#); [Phil. 1:23](#)), but the body that remains still belongs to *someone*, someone we love, someone who will reclaim it one day."

So this view says it is kind of a moral issue. If it was not we might take dead bodies to the garbage dump. Let me say that the word "honor" is used by both those who cremate and those who bury, which might indicate that it is not just an amoral issue.

IV. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BURIAL

Our next question now is, what does the Bible say about burial? Let us begin with Genesis 3:19. Turn to it. I have said that most if not all major doctrines lie in seed form in the first three chapters of the Bible. Man had sinned and therefore must now die and therefore funerals. Verse 19 says:

19 *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For **dust** you are, And to **dust** you shall return."*

Now notice it says, "Until you return to the ground." I suppose one could argue both views. Certainly in both methods man returns to the ground. But it goes on to say that man returns to the ground from which he was taken. Then further, it says, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return." It seems to me that at least there is a point to burial here.

The first reference to burial is found in Genesis 15:15. It says:

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

Now this took place around 2,000 years after creation and the picture is that this was the standard way of disposing of a body after death. I expect that the doctrine in seed form is found in the words, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

The word to bury occurs 131 times in the OT. You will read again and again, "...and was buried..." Beyond all question, it was the most common way to dispose of dead bodies in both testaments. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ was buried after He died.

In the NT the word "buried" occurs 10 times. The word to bury is found six times. Listen to John 19:40:

*40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to **bury**.*

One writer said that nations surrounding Israel knew that the Jews did not burn their dead, but rather buried them. The Gospel of John verifies that here.

V. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT CREMATION?

So we ask, what does the Bible say about cremation? Turn to Leviticus 20. The surrounding chapters are full of instructions to Israel as given by God to Moses. Here, there are instructions for many different kinds of matters. Now the heathen in the Land of Canaan had committed about every kind of sin known to man at the time. That is why God sometimes had them destroyed, man, woman and child. The depravity was so bad that it could only be rectified by the death of them all.

Now I have never understood how God allowed for polygamy, but it seems He did, though it is never recommended. But look at Leviticus 20:14. It says this:

14 If a man takes a woman and her mother also, it is depravity; he and they shall be burned with fire, that there may be no depravity among you.

Now all cremations mentioned in the Bible except one are not cremations in the modern sense because bones don't burn, not even in a kiln. So they were burned and then still buried. But this is the first occurrence of cremation in the sense of burning bodies in Israel and from this verse, would you see cremation as an honorable end to life, or dishonorable? To cremate the body of such a sinner was a sign to Israel that they did not deserve a proper funeral.

Turn to Joshua 7 for the second occurrence of cremation. Israel has just entered the promised land. They had taken Jericho and now they were going up against Ai, and they thought it was a small place and so they only sent a few men but they lost the battle.

Well Joshua was devastated and asked the Lord why He had brought this loss on them. Turn to Joshua 7. And the Lord said the fault was not with Him but with Israel, because someone had sinned at Jericho and taken that which He had commanded them not to take. And so Joshua proceeded to find

out who had committed this sin and Achan was found to be guilty.

We go to verses 24-25. It says:

24 Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor.

25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

Achan was stoned. This is a shameful death. Then he and his family were cremated. This was the sign of a shameful funeral. This was not how funerals were held among Israelis. Again, cremation is a sign of a dishonorable life.

The third occurrence of cremation in Israel is found in 1 Samuel 31. Saul had been seriously wounded in battle and asked another to kill him, but he would not. So he turned his sword blade up and fell on it, committing suicide. The next day the Philistines came to rob the dead and they found Saul. They cut off his head, took his goods, and sent the message throughout the land. When those who lived at Jabesh Gilead heard about this, here is what verses 11-13 say:

11 But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,

12 all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there.

13 And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

I found this passage very interesting. We'll read through from verse 1 and I'll comment as we go:

1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

2 Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.

3 The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers.

4 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it.

5 And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him.

6 So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day.

7 And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

Saul died a dishonorable death. He died on Mount Gilboa.
Verse 8:

8 So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

9 And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent word throughout the land of the Philistines, to proclaim it in the temple of their idols and among the people.

10 Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.

Everything that happened to Saul was dishonorable. First, they took any valuables. Then they cut off his head and stripped his armor. Then they sent messages to all their cities to proclaim this victory in their temples. They put his armor in the temple of false gods, and then they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. This area was given to the tribe of Mannaseh when the eleven tribes each got an area of Canaan. But the Israeli's never could drive out the peoples that inhabited Beth Shan.

Verse 11:

11 Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,

12 all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there.

13 Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

Rather than being taken to Jerusalem, which was on the same side of the Jordan where Saul died, he is taken away from there across the Jordan to Jabesh Gilead. Now they went and got Saul because at one time Saul had come to their rescue and saved them from terrible torture and death.

Later, when David had become king he made some of Saul's wrongs right with those he had wronged. And then David went to Jabesh Gilead and brought the bones of Saul and Jonathon to the land of Benjamin, for Saul was a Benjamite, and he buried them there. I do not think anything favorable could be said about cremation in the case of Saul.

There is another passage that speaks of cremation. We go to Amos 2. We begin in verse 1:

1 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, And it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; Moab shall die with tumult, With shouting and trumpet sound.

3 *And I will cut off the judge from its midst, And slay all its princes with him," Says the LORD.*

It says the king of Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. This is probably the only place where cremation took place where even the bones are in fine pieces. In all other cases bones were left and they were buried. Here the bones were burned to lime. It takes a very high temperature to make bone so it can be turned into lime. It must be heated to at least 1292 degrees Fahrenheit. In modern day cremation the chambers can be heated to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Now what we note here is that God takes a very dim view of burning bodies until there are only fine bone fragments left. Because Moab so dishonored the king of Edom, though both were ungodly men, God said He would burn the palaces of Kerioth and Moab would die. God would cut off the judge from their midst and slay its princes with him. To turn a body so not even the bones could be buried is viewed here as a very serious crime.

I read that there are no ashes left when a body is cremated. Here is what one article said:

"You don't get ash back. What's really returned to you is the person's skeleton. Once you burn off all the water, soft tissue, organs, skin, hair, cremation container/casket, etc., what you're left with is bone. When complete, the bones are allowed to cool to a temperature that they can be handled and are placed into a processing machine. It looks like a mean margarita blender, and they are processed down to the consistency of ash, where they get their misnomer name."

<https://www.elementalnw.com/2014/05/26/9-things-cremation/>

So the article says to call it ashes is to misname the cremains. In our reference, the Bible calls it lime. I have read that you can make lime or whitewash from burnt bones. You can make a number of other things as well.

It is difficult to say what exactly happened in Amos 2. What we can say is that this is not a normal case of death or a normal funeral. Jamieson, Faucett and Brown comment like this: "The Hebrew tradition is that Moab in revenge

tore from their grave and burned the bones of the king of Edom, the ally of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat, who was already buried. Probably the "burning of the bones" means, "he burned the king of Edom alive, reducing his very bones to lime" [MAURER].

This is probably the only real case of cremation in the Bible where bones and all are turned to powder. In the Bible, the Israelis, when bones were left, buried them. They did not scatter the bone fragments. In cremation, even the bones are pulverized. In our passage the bones were burned to lime.

When Josiah became king he cleaned up the horrible idolatry that had happened in Jerusalem before he took over. When he saw the graves of idolatrous priests and worshippers he took the bones out and burned them. That is what he also did with the altars used for false worship. Albert Barnes says: "To burn human bones was contrary to all the ordinary Jewish feelings with respect to the sanctity of the sepulchre, and had even been denounced as a sin of a heinous character when committed by a king of Moab. **{Am 2:1}** Joshua did it, because justified by the divine command (marginal reference)." End quote. That is an involved story and you can study it in 2 Kings 23. The burning of the bones showed the same extreme disgrace to these idol worshipping Jews as they showed when they offered living babies in the fires of Moloch, which happened where their bones were burned. Amazingly, this event was prophesied 326 years earlier, and Josiah was named at that time (1 Kings 13).

There is yet another passage in Amos 6. We begin in verse 8:

8 The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, The LORD God of hosts says: "I abhor the pride of Jacob, And hate his palaces; Therefore I will deliver up the city And all that is in it."

Amos prophesied mostly to the northern kingdom of the Jews, but this chapter addresses both. Verse 1 says:

1 Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria, Notable persons in the chief nation, To whom the house of Israel comes!

Woe is pronounced here on Zion, the southern kingdom, and those who trust in Mount Samaria, the northern kingdom. Shortly after this prophecy, Assyria would come and the destruction in the northern kingdom would be almost indescribable.

Verse 9:

9 Then it shall come to pass, that if ten men remain in one house, they shall die.

And it might be that of all those who lived in one house, that is a big house with many servants, if ten survived the battle, they will die. Albert Barnes says, "They died, it seems, at once, and so probably through the plague, the common companion of the siege." JFB agree that those left remaining died of the plague brought about by dead, uncared for bodies.

What I expect is that the Assyrians give the task of cleaning up the city to any remaining Jews who still lived. Verse 10:

10 And when a relative of the dead, with one who will burn the bodies, picks up the bodies to take them out of the house, he will say to one inside the house, "Are there any more with you?" Then someone will say, "None." And he will say, "Hold your tongue! For we dare not mention the name of the LORD."

Here is what I envision. The decomposing bodies are hauled out to some place where they will be burned. It may be that the only way to clean them up is by burning, or it may be that the Assyrians required the Jews to burn the bodies because they knew it would serve as further humiliation to them.

And so one man calls and says, "Are there any more with you?" That is dead bodies to take out. And the answer is, "None." And the other says, "Hold your tongue! For we dare not mention the name of the LORD." I expect the Assyrians are standing by forcing these Jews to clean up the dead. It is something like the Jews in Germany who were healthy that had to haul dead bodies to the gas chambers.

So the man inside might have wanted to say, "None! Praise be to Jehovah!" But as soon as he said "None!" the other

cut him off, knowing they could not say this name in the presence of the Assyrian guard.

So like the burning of Saul, this was a situation far out of the normal. It was not willing or chosen cremation.

Albert Barnes further comments on these verses like this: "The pagan noticed that it was matter of piety with the Jews (Tac. Hist. v. 5) "to bury rather than to burn bodies." End quote. The only exceptions are the history of Saul, and this place. Both were cases of emergency. The men of Jabesh-Gilead doubtless burned the bodies of Saul and his sons (1 Samuel end), for fear the Philistines might disinter them, if buried, and renew their insults upon them. The Israelites still buried what would not be disturbed or could be concealed – the bones. David solemnly buried their remains in the sepulchre of Kish, Saul's father. {2Sa 21:12-14} So probably here also, it is mentioned as an aggravation, that one who loved them, had to burn their bodies."

John Gill says in part: "...but it is best to understand it of one whose business it was to burn the dead; which, though not commonly used among the Jews, sometimes was, **1Sa 31:12**; and so should be at this time, partly because of the infection, and to stop the contagion; and chiefly because a single man could not well carry whole bodies to the grave, to bury them; and therefore first burnt their flesh, and then buried their bones..." End quote.

Now all of that does not add up to any support for cremation at all, unless the person who died was very wicked. In such cases cremation is viewed as punitive rather than honorable.

And then I might add that there is no place in Scripture where a saint is ever cremated when life is normal. It was always burial.

VI. WHAT IS MY PERSONAL VIEW ABOUT FUNERALS?

Let me give you my view of funerals, for whatever it might be worth to anyone. I have never liked the idea of burning a human body but after this study, I would not be free to say it is not a moral issue. We find no command in the Bible to bury, or not to cremate. I think we can say that

by biblical example we learn that burial is honorable for the dead and that cremation is dishonorable. Some things are caught, not taught. They are caught by example. What I catch from Scripture is that burial is the honorable way to take care of the dead and we could look at many, many examples of burial. We have a few examples of cremation, and none are positive. To cremate and then turn the bones to lime, it seems to me, was viewed as a huge sin by God.

I do not have a lot of experience with funerals but I believe a funeral should be an honorable way of disposing of the body of any human who dies, but especially of a loved one. You have heard of people talking about closure after death. Sometimes someone may have died but they are not found, and people talk about wanting closure. I believe the funeral that is most honorable is burial, and I believe it gives the most complete closure. I believe that seeing the body of the dead for one last time and then burial helps for this. I believe a Christian funeral should always, if possible, have a message geared for salvation in some way or another. At no time are people more receptive to the truth than at a funeral. When all is well, we are the most unreceptive.

Then I believe it is best for those who were close to the deceased to go to the burial place. It is also best for them to see the lowering of the body into the hole, and then I believe it is advisable for the closest people to the deceased, if they are up to it, to put a shovel full of dirt onto the casket. I think where possible, it is best if those who grieve stay at the site until the grave is mounded over and final words are spoken. Why do I believe all this is best? From my experience as a pastor I would say that no funeral is as complete and brings such closure, especially to a grieving family, as this type of funeral. I also know that it is most comfortable to miss all this, but this makes everything final and brings closure.

Today we have what is called a celebration of life. People recognize the difference between a traditional funeral and a celebration of life. Here is what one article said:

"While a funeral, as we've described it above, has more to do with the orderly and often spiritually-defined transition of the deceased from one social status to another; a celebration-of-life **is more concerned with telling the story of the deceased.**" In our culture, we have

all of what I described and after that we have a Faspa meal which takes place after the funeral, and then we share about the life of the one who has passed away.

Here is what another article said:

"A funeral is more rooted in tradition, while a celebration of life is more informal. Both serve to do three things: **Help the bereaved family**, and their community, publicly acknowledge the death of one of their own. ... Honour the memory of the deceased."

I think if you do not want to face the facts of death, a celebration of life eases one out of considering one's own end. It won't touch one where one is most vulnerable. I believe a funeral should bring us face to face with the final realities of life. I have decided I will not do a ceremony at a celebration of life.

CONCL: And to conclude, I believe that the Bible shows by example that honorable burial is how the dead should be taken care of. From my studies, I find no example of burning of bodies as being appropriate unless they have lived such a bad life that honor is not appropriate. This is what king Josiah did with the bones of those who had so horribly violated the one true God (2 Kings 23). When the king of Moab burned another king to lime, God said He would burn Moab.

So let me ask you: Is cremation a non-moral issue?

Here are a few key things in a funeral from my own point of view: First, honor the dead with a proper disposal of the body. We need to remember we are not just getting rid of a body, we are honoring someone who was made in the image of God. Second, have a funeral in such a way as to bring the best closure for friends and family. One of the key things helpful to bring closure is the grieving that takes place in the whole process. Third, when it is all done, eat together and let each one share with the family what they wish to encourage them. It is amazing what each of these points does for the bereaved.