

CREMATION CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?



Dennis D. Helton

CREMATION: CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?

**By
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to faithful Christian women who have stood in the gap
so many, many times.

Dennis D. Helton
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Cremation process

Cremation itself is the process of reducing the body remains to bone fragments and ashes through burning with open flames. The temperature of 1,600-2000 degrees Fahrenheit is maintained for approximately two to three hours (note: tin melts at 450 deg. F; lead melts at 662 deg. F). The ashes of a body's cremation are usually mingled with the ashes of a body of a previous cremation. The larger bones remaining are usually ground up to smaller pieces.

The writer's opinion

Today, even Christians are exploring cremation as an option to burial. The writer does not believe that cremation is acceptable for the Christian. Cremation has always been practiced by pagans and adherents of false religions. For example, the Hindus and Buddhists do not believe in a resurrection of the body; they believe that their soul is reincarnated (transmigrated) into another unrelated body or even a non-physical existence. By burning the bodies of the dead, they superstitiously hoped to prevent that body's spirit from remaining in the local area and haunting the living. Of course, as Christians, we know death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the dead body.

*Jeremiah 10:2: Thus saith the LORD,
Learn not the way of the heathen.*

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Origin of the practice of cremation

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* reported,

“The Scandinavians favored cremation, believing that it helped free the spirit from the flesh and also that it kept the dead from harming the living. These pagan practices paralleled the Greek and Roman epic cremations.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, p. 726).

The Encarta Encyclopedia 2005 says,

“Evidence of cremation dates from antiquity; ashes of several individuals have been found throughout Europe. Between 1400 BC and AD 200, cremation was the preferred burial custom, especially among Roman aristocrats.”

Between the 3rd and 19th century, anemic Christianity forbade cremation because of the belief that the body could not be resurrected if it were destroyed. Early Jews also prohibited cremation, believing it was the desecration of a work of God. Orthodox Jews, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and Muslims are still forbidden to cremate their dead. Other groups of people, especially in India, continued to practice cremation and still do today. Today, cremation is practiced by some Jews and Christians. It is also practiced by Buddhists, Sikhs, and Hindus.

Beginning of English speaking people to practice cremation

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A society advocating cremation was founded in England in 1874. The first crematorium in the United States was established in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1876.

Initially, there was opposition to cremation out of the fear that forensic evidence of murder might be destroyed.

Today there are memorial gardens and buildings called *columbaria* with niches where ash-filled urns can be stored and visited by relatives. Cremation has rapidly increased in the United States from 8.5 percent of deaths in 1978 to 15.3 percent of deaths in 1988.

Why cremation has gained acceptance

There are three principal reasons that cremation has gained such popularity (other than the civilized becoming tainted with paganism):

- a) **economics**
- b) **sanitary (health) considerations**
- c) **lack of and cost of burial space**

a) Economics: Explosive population growth has lessened space for burial plots and land has become scarce and expensive. Adding to the already high cost of the burial plot is the vault, casket, marker, opening of the ground, perpetual care, and the mortuary expense of about \$6,000.00 (at the time of this writing in Greenville, SC).

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b) Sanitary Considerations: In-ground burial can **contaminate** water supplies for entire communities. It is especially serious when death has been caused by a highly contagious disease and threatens to contaminate underground water tables. At one time, arsenic was part of the embalming process. Caskets and corpses have risen from in-ground burial to above ground many times during severe flooding,

However, you cannot separate cremation from *paganism* and *heathenism*. Cremation (burning) has a close affinity to **Hell fire** (Matthew 13:50; 18:8, 9; Mark 9:43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48)!

c) Lack of burial space: According to Mike Gipson at the Tidewater Cemetery Corporation of Virginian Beach, Virginia, "a thousand people can be buried in one acre of land." He also indicted that, "in some of the local cemeteries there are two bodies in some graves." Of course, the limiting factor for many low income people without sufficient insurance coverage is the cost of the burial plots themselves.

Cremation statistics

In the United States (presently 2,000 AD), with over 22,000 Funeral Homes:

- 28 cremations were recorded between 1876-1884
- by 1977, 7 % of all bodies were cremated
- by 1993, nearly 20 % of all bodies were cremated