

BBC UPDATE

The Bible and Cremation

Dr. Thomas Strouse



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Introduction

In post-Christian America, many professed Christians have embraced heathen practices out of ignorance of Scripture. One such practice is that of cremation, or the burning of the body of the deceased. Although cremation is much more inexpensive than burial, there are several lines of arguments favoring burial as the Christian's only Christ-honoring option.

Examples of "Cremation" in Scripture

Several examples occur in the Old Testament of individuals whose bodies were burnt or "cremated" in fire. For instance, King Zimri ended his seven day reign over Israel by committing suicide with fire. Scripture states, *"And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died"* (I Ki. 16:18). Obviously, suicide by fire does not commend cremation. In another example, malevolent Manasseh murdered his son by fire, as Scripture revealed, saying, *"And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger"* (II Ki. 21:6). Murder of children by cremation does not promote God-honoring behaviour. Another example of "cremation" involved King Josiah, who fulfilled biblical prophecy (I Ki. 13:2) about three hundred years later by burning the bones of idolatrous priests and condemning the apostasy perpetuated by Jeroboam. Again, Scripture stated, *"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... And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem"* (II Ki. 23:16, 20). None of these examples has divine countenance for the disposing of believers' bodies.

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Biblical Perspective on Burial

The Bible gives several arguments for the importance of burial for deceased believers. These lines of argument follow. **First**, the Bible declared that for a body to go unburied was a disgrace. In the case of slain Saul and his sons, the Philistines mutilated the bodies and hanged them on the public wall. The men of Jabesh-Gilead removed the bodies and burned them, while carefully retrieving the bones for some semblance of burial. Scripture elaborated, saying, *“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 Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days”* (I Sam. 31:12-13). David’s response is telling: *“And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him”* (II Sam. 2:5). David appreciated that the men spared Saul of complete indignity by burying at least his bones. Apparently, partial burial is superior to partial cremation. David’s son Solomon continued the divine perspective of burial by declaring that the most ignoble of lives would be a large family, many years, yet no satisfaction in this life and no burial of one’s body. He stated, *“If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is*

better than he” (Eccl. 6:3).

Second, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob took great care to insure burial in the Promised Land. For instance, Scripture reveals Abraham’s purchase of and his ultimate burial in the cave of Machpelah. Scripture states, *“And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you”* (Gen. 23:8-9). The cave of Machpelah became the burial spot for his family, as the Bible revealed, saying, *“There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah”* (Gen. 49:31). Joseph had the desire to be buried in the Promised Land and received embalming for the preservation of his body until burial, according to Scripture (Gen. 50:26; see also Mk. 16:1). Later, David was buried (Acts 2:29). Many biblical references indicate that the prophets and kings of Israel were buried (II Ki. 13:20; II Chr. 35:24 et al).

Third, the New Testament saints were buried. John the Baptist was buried, even though he was beheaded (Mt. 14:12). The Lord’s friend Lazarus was buried (Jn. 11:17). Many saints were buried and emerged from their graves after the Lord’s resurrection (Mt. 27:52-53). Church members received burial (Acts 5:6, 9, 10). Even the rich man was buried (Lk. 16:22).

Fourth, the Savior Jesus Christ, in whose steps the believer is to follow (I Pet. 2:21), received burial. His burial was prophesied (Isa. 53:9) and fulfilled (Mt. 27:59-60; Mk. 15:42-47; Lk. 23:50-56; and Jn. 19:38-42). The Lord taught that one of the greatest miracles in the Old Testament signified His burial, saying, *“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Mt. 12:40).

Fifth, the Apostle Paul revealed that the burial of Christ is an integral part of the Gospel, saying, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand...For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (I Cor. 15:1, 3-4). Death demands burial, Paul asseverated, and baptism by immersion is the biblical example depicting the repentant sinner dying to self, and his subsequent burial, and new resurrected life. He stated, *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”* (Rom. 6:4-5). Cremation destroys the symbolism of the Gospel and its pictorial teaching in believer’s immersion (Col. 2:12).

Six, Paul’s analogy of a planted or buried

seed depicted the Gospel message of death, burial, and new life, which physical truth came from the Creator to teach the Gospel from the natural realm (see the Lord’s teaching in Jn. 12:24). He said, *“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: 38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body”* (I Cor. 15:37-38). If one were to ask the question about possibility of the resurrection of a cremated person, the answer would be similar to Paul’s response to the reality of the resurrection of the dead. He said, *“thou fool.”* Of course God can and will resurrect all men, even the cremated (Jn. 5:29)!

Seventh, Gnosticism, based on the lies of the Garden which are deathlessness and deification of man (Gen. 3:4-5), despises, demeans, diminishes, and dismisses the salvation of the body with its mantra *“flesh is evil”* (cf. I Tim. 3:16-4:3). The world’s religions (Babylonianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Greek mystery religions, pseudo-Christian religions and cults, etc.) including paganism and the occultic teach some form of reincarnation (cf. I Cor. 15:12; II Tim. 2:17-18), which rejects any value of or need for the resurrection of the body (Acts 17:32; 23:8). Cremation is their counter answer to the resurrection doctrine of Scripture, perpetuating the worthlessness of the body and showing the purposeful disregard of and disrespect for the dignity of the body.

Conclusion

Scripture gives the pattern and rationale for the burial of the body of a deceased Christian. There are no Scriptures which give a favorable countenance for cremation. The Bible is replete with examples of believers desiring and demanding the burial of their respective bodies. The ultimate example is that of the Christian's Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ Whose burial was prophesied, fulfilled, and did picture the Gospel. Paul's argument for the foundational Christian doctrine of the resurrection is based on the burial of the body, not its cremation. Finally, Satan's lies of the Garden necessarily promote the teaching of reincarnation and the practice of cremation, denying the reality of resurrection and the dignity and honor of the body. It behooves the Christian to follow the biblical pattern of and scriptural rationale for the burial of deceased believers.

BBTS COMMENCEMENT

The culmination of another year for Bible Baptist Theological Seminary will occur on the weekend of May 21-22, 2016. Two Filipino pastors are candidates for seminary degrees and one Irish pastor. Pastor Emmanuel Tanierla and Pastor George Totica, both from Iloilo, Philippines, will receive their degrees along with Pastor Les Hill from Ireland. Bible Baptist Church members will host a graduation banquet on Saturday, May 21, honoring these candidates and their families (Mrs. Elvie Tanierla and Emmanuel, Jr., Mrs. Alma Totica, and Mrs. Jenny Hill) along with a few invited guests. On Sunday, May 22, Pastor Les Hill will teach Sunday School at 10 AM, and Pastor Emmanuel Tanierla will preach the 11 AM message. Special music will be provided by the visitors. For the seminary commencement message at 1:30 PM, Dr. Thomas M. Strouse, pastor and dean, will preach the biblical challenge to the candidates and church body. Pray that the Lord will be honored and all will be challenged to live for Christ





Dr. Enoch Kumar

Dr. Enoch Kumar

One of the graduates of Bible Baptist Theological Seminary, Dr. Enoch Kumar (ThD, 2011), is a church planter in India and educator of Indian nationals. He has sensed and experienced the pressure of satanic opposition to his biblical ministry. Pray for the welfare of him, his family, and ministry. He writes the following:

"The Kumars are national missionaries, and thus we are targeted by the Hindutva-Hindu Government. The repeated and escalating incidents of intolerance have only increased the sense of despondency over the past two years towards Christian Missions, Missionaries, and ongoing Church activities. The VHP- Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bajarang Dal are raising objection to our activities.

Our ministry is attacked by the state government, and they are working towards gaining control over every area of our ministries. There is a hidden agenda! Our nation has a new prime minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. The Bible says- "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2). The Indian democracy has elected a fairly bullying government. "The Hindu Nationalist" political parties such as "B.J.P" (Bharatiya Janata Party), "R.S.S" (Rashtriya Seva Sanga), "Shiv Sena," and "Sri Ram Sena," etc is highly divisive and destructive. They attack the freedom of religion which is enshrined in our constitution. We expect persecution and torture from Hindu militancy. Please be in prayers as we press on amidst Hindu militancy and political bureaucracy for the next 2 years.

On the 3rd of April (Sunday), our sister Church in Orissa was attacked by the Naxalites. The Naxalites are a group of far-left radical communists, supportive of the Maoist political sentiment and ideology encouraged by Hinduism. Initially the movement had its centre in West Bengal. In recent years, it has spread into less developed areas of rural central and eastern India such as Chhattisgarh, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh through the activities of underground groups.

Bro. Anand and four others from his assembly have been beaten and assaulted. They have been told to relocate further away from their current location, which is a village surrounded by dense jungles. We are in the process of finding a suitable and safe place for them to worship. Some funds (total of \$1,200) from this month personal support has been given to them to help with hospitalization, treatment, and advance amount to procure a new facility. There is still a need of \$1,000 dear friends. This has depleted much of our support that we will receive the end of this month, nevertheless, our faith is anchored in HIM who is acquainted with each need. Amen!! If you can, please help us help these precious and faithful people of God.

Since our last report, Hindu Militancy is only growing, penetrating insidiously into many states with a "Hidden Agenda." Forced re-conversions back to Hinduism have shaken the country, instilling fear in the hearts of thousands. This is called as Ghar Vapsi (coming back home). Isolated incidents of Churches being attacked is reported, but with little being said. Satan and his minions are at work, but our OMNIPOTENT God is with us (Psalm 37:28; Isaiah 41:10; Jude 24)."



LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE



Pastor Cas Reeves

I am a conservative. For many years I have thought on the differences between those who call themselves liberals and those who call themselves conservatives. To me it has always seemed as though there was a wiring difference in our minds as to how we view, and consider things, and how to go about the implementation of solutions. I am not sure that I can ever change a liberal's way of thinking or they mine. However, I would submit the following for your consideration and discernment.

First, as a Christian, God has given us a standard of truth to help us to think and act correctly toward Him and toward our fellow man. It is a standard of truth to be followed by God's creation, just as the US Constitution is a standard to be followed by our nation's citizens. This body of truth that God has given us, this standard to be followed by God's creation for mutual success and happiness is the Scriptures of the Holy Bible.

Secondly, Unlike what some, not all, liberals who believe that Jesus Christ was a liberal revolutionary, He was not. He was the Son of God, the Word of God, the Lamb of God and the Savior from God to man. He brought freedom in truth and from falsehood and enslavement to sin to make each man truly free, we are charged to think like Him.

Christ Jesus declared that the Word of God, the inspired Scriptures, was truth (John 17:17). Therefore if we are to think like Christ in truth we must use the Scriptures as a standard of thinking and acting. At times principles must prevail over

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

DEVOTIONAL CORNER

feelings and what may seem right at the time or in a certain situation. The Scripture gives much guidance in this area.

Thirdly, Each of us should develop a strong conviction that if the words of God are truth, then they should be followed as a standard at all cost. We must not let our emotions, our empathies, our situations or any thing else sway us from what God's Word tells us to do in fact or in principle when it comes to what is right and wrong.

Fourthly, We need to beware of deceitful philosophies of life that follow man's ideas rather than God's ideas or principles, which are found in the Scripture. Public classrooms from grade school through graduate school are filled with deceitful philosophies that have been learned and are past on as truth. Remember it is the Scripture that is truth. Therefore God warns us to be careful lest your thoughts and actions be spoiled.

In conclusion, it's not so much how you are wired that makes you a liberal or conservative, but rather from your standard of life. Is your standard of life from God, whose standard is truth and always the same, or is it from man – his feelings, his philosophies, which are always changing to the situation?

-CAR

Quotes From the Past:

Erasmus Roterodamus

1466-1536

Dutch Renaissance Theologian



Erasmus Roterodamus

"Give light, and the darkness will disappear of itself."

"No one respects a talent that is concealed."

Grow in Grace for Women

Jonah 1:1 "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,"

v.2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

v.3 "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."

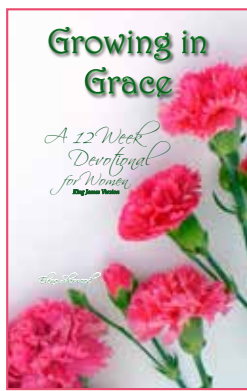
Reflection: Twice in verse 3 we read that Jonah flees "from the presence of the LORD". In Jonah's disobedience, he is dealt with by the LORD who works all things in this situation for Jonah's chastening and eventual repentance. But in the meantime, there were consequences. Is there an area in your life in which you are also running from the Lord?

Challenge: While reading Jonah Chapter 1 and 2 what are some of Jonah's consequences? Jonah previously was a faithful prophet of the LORD (II Ki. 14:25), but even mature believers need to remain faithful and obedient or likewise suffer chastening from the LORD.

The Lord has a repentant heart toward us when we, repent and turn from our evil ways, asking the Lord Jesus for forgiveness when we sin. What can you learn about the character of the LORD from Jonah 3:10?

Jonah 3:10 "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

"Growing in Grace: A 12 Week Devotional for Women"



This 12 Week Devotional is a ministry of Bible Baptist Church in Cromwell, CT. It is designed for women, and is meant as a support for victory in daily Christian living. Spiritual victory comes by having the Genuine Christ, Accurate Biblical Teaching, Applying the Infallible Word of God, and a Humble Heart.

Using this Devotional Each day you will be given a daily Scripture followed by thoughts upon which to reflect and a challenge for the day. To get the most out of this book, it is encouraged that you take the time each morning to reflect upon and apply each devotion.

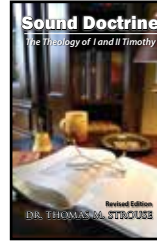
Psalm 119:2 "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart."

Please contact Bible Baptist Church (Elenas6259@gmail.com) if you would like a complimentary copy.

THE BOOK CORNER

The Book Corner

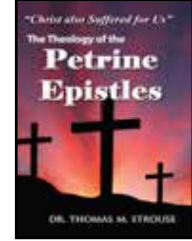
These Books may be purchased through **Bible Baptist Church**:
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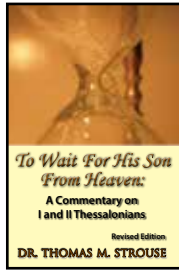
I & II Timothy
\$20.00



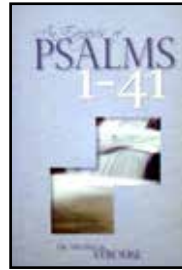
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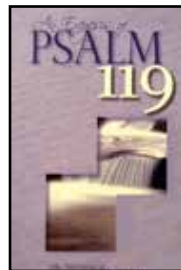
Peter
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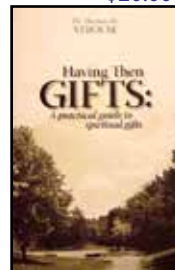
I & II Thessalonians
\$20.00



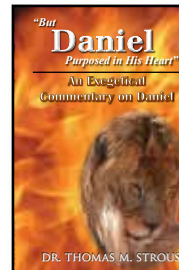
Psalms 1 - 41
\$20.00



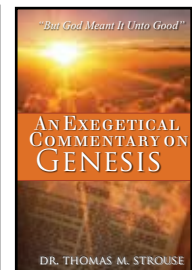
Psalm 119
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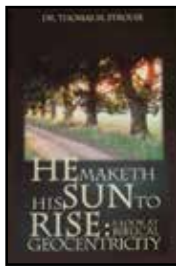
Spiritual Gifts
\$8.00



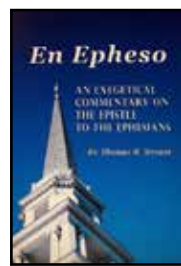
Daniel
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Genesis
\$20



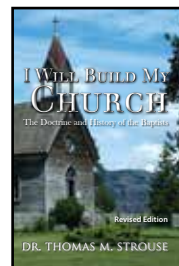
Geocentricity
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Jonah
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I Will Build My Church
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BBC Calendar of Upcoming Events

May 21, 2016
Graduation Banquet

May 22, 2016
BBTS Commencement Service

May 30-June 3, 2016, Sunday
Ireland Module
"Psalm 119"
"Prison Epistles"

June 13-17, 2016
BBTS Module, Quakertown, PA
"The Book of Romans"

July 25-29, 2016
Calvary Baptist Independent Church
Plymouth, NH
"TBA"

August 22-26, 2016, Sunday
Fairhaven Baptist College
"TBA"

If you have any news for the next issue of the BBC Update, please send email to:

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