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This short work is based on a group podcast with the pastors of Berean in March 2014. The article around which we discussed this topic has been excised from this document so the reader can more quickly “get to the point” more quickly. Below will be enumerated several reasons why Christians should not have their loved ones cremated. There are, perhaps, other things to discuss...like whether a family should have a funeral or memorial service for their loved one; or whether the church and its leadership should have something to say in these family processes; or, whether a church should have its own cemetery to the exclusion of unbelievers. These discussions will need to wait for another time.

We do have families that have been faced with deaths and they are concerned about budgeting and debt. You can save 60% of funeral costs by having a loved one cremated. We don't think it's because they love their loved one any less, nor do we think it's because they don't want their loved one to be cared for or honored. In some cases it is nothing more than being financial or emotional expedience. Also, it could be a legal requirement for will and testament reasons. Here are some reasons that we, the pastoral staff, feel like you should not choose cremation for your loved one.

1. It seems that there is an honorable way to care for that which God gave to be the temple of His spirit while on earth. 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 indicates that the reason we behave ourselves while living is because we are the house of God. Perhaps it is a stretch, but **it seems there are better ways to dispose of that which was the house of God than burning.** There is a biblical stewardship of this body, it seems. Why not make stewardship decisions now that your children or others behind you would otherwise have to make? Moreover, this is a decision that the community of faith should be able to approve. If weddings should be that which the church observes, how much more the funeral? How much more the burial of the loved one? This is the final opportunity you have to show respect for the contribution that this person made in your life.
2. Burning, in Leviticus, was a demonstration of God's consuming wrath poured out on the specific sacrifice, and the finality of God's consuming fire. The priests are to burn these sacrifices up completely. That's what the Roman Catholic Church did with John Wycliffe at the Council of Constance. They exhumed his bones, burned them, and threw them in the river. He was still haunting them even after his death so they said, "Dig up his bones and burn them." That was a way of communicating finality. "We're done with him. He will never bother us again." Burial, however, does not speak of finality. **Burial is a witness to an enduring reality**—such as in Ecclesiastes 3:14. Burial grounds become resurrection grounds.
3. John 19:40 speaks to the fact that **it was the custom of the Jews to bury.** Paul said, "To the Jews was committed the oracles of God," (Romans 9:1-4) so certainly the method by which the Jews took care of bodies should be an example to Christians if the oracles of God were committed to them. They become for us very foundational and we have to have a legitimate reason for abandoning a Jewish custom. For example, circumcision is no longer a legitimate custom that we follow because of the circumcision of the heart created by God in regeneration. So we have to have a legitimate Christian alternative when we abandon a Jewish one. We don't practice the Passover because we have the Lord's Supper. I don't believe that there is anything that we communicate that allows for cremation as the legitimate replacement for the Jewish custom of burying bodies. Lazarus was buried, at great expense, as seen in John 11.

How many guys did it take to carry Joseph from Egypt in a box? How many times did they think, “this is getting a little old. He's not going to know. Let's just bury him right here,” there is no way Joseph wanted to wake up in Egypt. He wanted to be in the Promised Land. Since we are, by and large, recipients of the relationship of the Covenant God, perhaps we should adopt some of those old practices if they reflect the God of the Covenant until, like Peter regarding his diet, we receive further revelation.

4. **Burning is usually a treatment God uses for His enemies.** It is as if He is forecasting their future after death. We get an account of Moses being buried. However, God burnt Korah. He burned up the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, in Leviticus.
5. **We are most like Christ in burial, not burning.** Some accounts place the cost of the linens and the perfumes and the ointments at almost 50 pounds of weight, a considerable cost. Earlier in Passion Week, Mary anointed Jesus with a very costly perfume and Jesus said that she anointed His body for burial. They loved Jesus. "Yes, he's gone but we can still manifest our love for Jesus."
6. **We have a place to respect the departed.** While we understand one can still go to a mausoleum to see a collection of ashes in an urn, this more speaks to the idea of an outright "cremation and sprinkling the ashes somewhere" sort of scenario. Being able to visit and rethink God's work in the life of one's loved one who has since departed is really a privilege and is one that we feel should be honored in view of our increasingly busy world. It's a place to plant flowers, to clean headstones, to tell stories, to prompt questions, etc.... God's people are consistently required to build monuments for His glory, and we can always go and remember and tell stories at a marker.
7. **It is a traditionally Christian practice to bury one's dead.** It is not that we only have two options: be archaic; or, be progressive. These are not just political dispositions. No, it is possible to enjoy both technological advancements and to preserve some meaningful norms that depict Christian consensus. In other words, sometimes we do things because "we have always done it that way" and our identity as Christians is important. 2 Thessalonians 3 says "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how you ought to follow us..." So we have him saying something about tradition and we have something saying "follow them." We don't want to reduce this to his merely bringing us some sort of extra-canonical body of truth that we're supposed to follow, but certainly there were some things that were not on the level with doctrine but were still important enough to be observed.

If we're going to be Christian, let's be distinctively Christian. "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10). While some brethren think that means in the context you shouldn't have a Christmas tree, it seems there are some more weighty matters, especially in the church today.

Conclusion: If you have had your loved one cremated, you may be wondering how that affects the resurrection. In Genesis chapter 22, Abraham believed that God could resurrect a cremated body or he would not have had the mind of burning his son, a burnt offering, and then promising their companions that they would be back after worship. Knowing that he was about to kill his son if God didn't intervene, he was willing to "offer" his son and yet he made the promise, "We'll be right back." Abraham believed that God could raise up his son from ashes on rock, if necessary, to fulfill his promise through the seed, Isaac.

One final note: There isn't a better expenditure for someone on active duty or Army Reserves than to spend about \$18 a month to get \$100,000 of life insurance on your wife and \$10,000 on each child. I know \$10,000 won't cover an entire funeral (especially if you want to relocate your loved one), but I do know, if you want to talk about wise stewardship, money won't be the primary consideration if you'll sacrifice the cost of one fast food meal for your family each month for that insurance.