

A Question about Cremation:

"Is it against the Bible for a person to be cremated after they die?"

Although Scripture constantly condemns *murder* (which would include the burning of *living* people), it does *not* give any universally applicable command or prohibition regarding *cremation* (the burning of *dead* people). This means we cannot say that cremation is always sinful.

Having said this, there may be certain situations in which it could *become* sinful - if the *reasons* or *motives* for the cremation were sinful. One possible example of this can be found in Amos 2:1, where the nation of Moab was condemned for burning the bones of Edom's king. (The exact circumstances surrounding this event are now unknown. It may have been an expression of defiance or contempt.)

In Israel, cremation was not the normal practice. But there are some recorded instances in which bodies *were* cremated (or bones were burned) and nothing in the context of those events describes the act of cremation as sinful. For instance, in Joshua 7:25, cremation was part of the judgment for a serious sin against God, committed by Achan and his family (who apparently participated by helping to conceal the crime). In 1 Samuel 31:12, the bodies of King Saul and his three sons were cremated, probably to prevent the Philistines from dishonoring them any more than they had already done (when they hanged their dead bodies on a wall for public display). In 2 Kings 23:20, King Josiah burned human bones on some altars that had been used for idolatry, in order to desecrate the altars.

If cremation were being done as part of a religious rite (promoting a false "god concept"), it would be sinful (and perhaps superstitious). But it would be so, because of the idolatry that was accompanying it, not because of the cremation itself.

Here is a modern example, in which cremation would probably be considered sinful - or at least foolish: I once heard about some atheist who wanted to be cremated after he died, as an act of defiance, because he was convinced that God - if he existed - wouldn't be able to resurrect him for the day of judgment!