

# Treatment Of Our Body

## (cremation, autopsies, organ donations, tattoos, body piercing)

**Introduction:** For the purpose of this study, we will divide the above procedures into two general categories. Though there are other ways men treat or mistreat their bodies, we will limit our discussion to these.

### I) Cremation, Autopsies, Organ Donations

- \* May a Christian provide for the burning of his body (cremation), or the cutting of it for determining cause of death (autopsy), or the donation of organs or the entire body for medical benefit or science?
- \* Some of the rejection or acceptance of cremation may be more associated with the culture of the times, than with Biblical principles. It might have to do more with its association with idolatry in early times, than with a strict prohibition of God. Some cremation concerns may be due to the Catholic Church's official ruling against it in 1886. We must be careful to distinguish properly.
- \* Some Scripture references about burning in death: Lev. 10:2; 20:14; 21:9; Num. 16:35; Josh. 7:15-26; I Sam. 31:11-13; II Kings 23:20; Amos 2:1; Matt. 10:28; I Cor. 13:3
- \* Many references to burial: The great effort of Joseph to have his bones transported back to the Promised Land for burial; God seeing to the burial of Moses' body and the Devil disputing with Michael over it; David was buried, the corpse of John the Baptist was buried, Jesus, of course, was buried, Stephen was buried, and there are others.
- \* To not be given proper burial viewed a tragedy and dishonor - Jer. 16:6; 22:19; Eccl. 6:3
- \* Cremation only hastens the natural process that eventually affects the body when the spirit is separated - decomposition; dust to dust. For those buried at sea, or torn asunder (even eaten) by wild beasts, burned at the stake, or in any number of ways killed and their bodies disposed of by men, God has not attached the hope of their resurrection. If so, then evil men could ruin the blessed hope of the saved in one last dastardly deed.
- \* If disposing of parts of the body is wrong after death (when not under your control) then how much more beforehand, while still alive, through amputations, removal of diseased organs and/or donating organs to save another's life. If not, why not?
- \* If cutting on a cadaver is unacceptable after death, when not under your control, how much more the surgeries we voluntarily have performed, in some cases elective surgeries. If not, why not?
- \* True, in the process of cremation through extreme heat and finely grinding the remains, ultimately some of the residue is left in the chamber, subsequently mingled with the next body cremated. And then some scatter the ashes over some favorite spot anyway. But, before and after death, many people who choose burial do not have all of their original body when buried. And then sadly, sometimes grave robbers and floods move the remains of even those buried.
- \* Burial may be the preferred method of dealing with a corpse, but there seems to be no Scripture violated if otherwise. If that be so, then what else is done with the body, i.e. autopsy and organ donation would likewise be a matter of personal judgment, not Scriptural obligation.

### II) Tattoos and Body Piercing

- \* May a Christian have permanent markings made in his/her skin? May he/she pierce certain areas of the body for the purpose of wearing jewelry?
- \* An OT prohibition - Lev. 19:28

\* Not absolute - circumcision is a cutting of the flesh ordained of God for Jews of old. And it was not claimed to be for hygienic purposes.

\* Jesus even figuratively uses the idea of writing an identifying mark on the forehead of those that are His (Rev. 14:1).

\* The debate for most is not whether women, but may men have their ear pierced and wear a ring.

1. Some Scriptures: Gen. 35:4; Ex. 32:2-3; 35:22; Job 42:11; Ex. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; Num. 31:50.

2. It would seem Scripture does not forbid it, but there are still some areas of concern for the devout Christian male: Is it perceived as cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5); gang related; symbolic of homosexuality or some other lifestyle than Christ's, violating cultural norms, etc.?

\* How about body piercing and tattoos? No NT Scripture per se, but follow these guidelines:

1. I Cor. 6:19-20 - Is it glorifying God?

2. Is it obedient to parents (Eph. 6:1)?

3. Is it severe, excessive treatment of the body (Col. 2:23)?

4. What is the motive? Is it godly? or worldly?

5. Are there health concerns? Is it risky?

6. Is it going to be providing the best influence for Christ?

7. Is it modest, within moderate bounds, symbolic of someone professing godliness (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Pet. 3:3-4)

**Conclusion:** Though both of these categories allow room for personal scruples, it is obvious that God's word needs to be considered in this, as in all things we do.







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