



The Shroud of Turin

John 19:40 -- And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

John 20:6-7 -- Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrapping lying there, and the facecloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

Introduction

1. The Shroud of Turin is an ancient linen sheet, woven in a herringbone twill, measuring 14 feet 3 inches x 3 feet 7 inches and proclaimed by some experts as the genuine burial garment of Jesus.
2. More than 30 Popes have declared it authentic and Pope Paul VI said it is "the most important relic in the history of Christianity" (*U.S. Catholic*, May 1978, pg. 48).

A. Background

1. The Shroud's known history goes back to Geoffrey de Charny (1356) of Lirey, France, who went to his grave without telling anyone where he got it.
2. When it first appeared, the Roman Catholic Bishop, Henry of Troyes denounced it as a fraud, claiming that it was a money raising scheme of church leaders at Lirey:
"...procured for their church a certain cloth cunningly painted, upon which by clever slight of hand was depicted the twofold image of one man, that is to say the back and front, they falsely declaring and pretending that this was the actual shroud in which our Savior Jesus Christ was enfolded in the tomb" (*Ministry*, July, 1979, pg. 16).
3. Even the artist who found it confessed to forgery, but the matter was dropped until 1452 (*Popular Photography*, Nov. 1979, pg. 97). Note: for further documentation see *The Turin Shroud*, by Ian Wilson, and various websites.
4. Clement VII ruled (January 6, 1390) that the Shroud could only be displayed if an announcement was made that "it is not the true shroud of our Lord, but a painting or picture made of the semblance or representation of the shroud" (*Ministry*, pg. 16).
5. In 1458 the shroud was placed in the chapel at Chambery, France. There it remained until December 1532, when a fire destroyed the church and damaged the shroud. It then traveled to Turin, Italy, where it has remained until this day.

B. How Was the Image Produced?

1. Most popular theory is that it is imagery from high-energy release. Laser laps on similar material produced similar images as on the shroud.
2. The images were formed by herbs, with which the body had been buried. Some of the chemicals in the herbs reacted to light and age.
3. The image was painted on the shroud. Some of the greatest artists in history lived at the time the shroud was discovered, and they could copy almost anything. (Ernest H. Brooks II, president of Brooks Institute of Calif. In a lecture at Mobile, Oct. 7, 1980, Mobile Press).
4. The Shroud does not appear until 1356, yet it is not allowed to be tested to verify that it had an older date.
5. After heavy demand, the supposed bloodstains were tested (a few threads removed to do so), but the result was inconclusive. Also, "It has long been clear that the blood stains and the image are quite different..." (*National Geographic*, pg. 752).
6. The shroud actually shows two images, a front and a back, yet these images differ in height by almost two inches. The back image also shows the souls of the feet, where the knees had to be bent, while the image on the front shows straight legs.
7. There were at least a dozen other shrouds showing images. Why this one?
8. And with what evidence could we compare this image to ascertain that it is in fact that of Jesus? We have no picture of Him, no fingerprints, no dental records.

9. The only thing that makes this the shroud of Jesus is wishful thinking. The weight of evidence from all sources (historical, scientific, and Scriptural) all point to the fact that the shroud is not the actual covering of our Lord.

C. Critical Biblical Investigation

1 Thessalonians 5:21 -- But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

1. The Shroud does not harmonize with the Biblical record!
2. Jesus was not buried in a single shroud. In John's account, eye-witnessed, Jesus was buried according to the "custom" of the Jews: the body was washed, packed in aloes (allot: 100 pounds), and wrapped in cloth.
3. John 20:5-7 records that the linens (plural) were left laying in the tomb, the head wrappings separate from the body wrappings. No single shroud apparent.
4. There is a variation in the account of John and those of Matthew 27:59, Mark 15:46 and Luke 23:53 where it says that Joseph of Arimathea "wrapped Him in a linen cloth" (singular). However, the word for "wrap" (ἵκετο) is different, meaning "envelop, or enclose" (as per Moulton's Analytical and the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament). The word used in John is δεσναι, "to bind, tie". Further, the word for "cloth" is different. In the other accounts the word is χιτων meaning "an upper garment worn in summer, or used to envelope dead bodies". Basically a light tunic or body bag. John uses ἵκετο, "a swath, or bandage for a corpse." The difference, apparently, is that the others describe what Joseph did temporarily to remove the body and put it in the grave, while John adds the interval taken to prepare the body according to Jewish custom. Obviously washing it, packing it in aloes, and wrapping it tightly with many linens.

D. True Christian Worship

1 John 4:1 -- Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1. It is not a lifeless shroud that produces faith, but belief in a risen Savior and His teachings. The Jews made the mistake of thinking that the power was all in the Ark of the Covenant. Because of that God took it away from them once and gave it to their enemies, the Philistines. By Jeremiah's time (Jer. 3:16) God said, "It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made."
2. The point is the power is in Christ our Lord. An old shroud is as useless as the faith in it. The world is to proclaim His glory. We were not meant to worship things made by Him. This was the condemnation of the Gentile world.

Romans 1:21-23 -- For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculation, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man...

3. Worshipping a shroud makes us worship a *what*. It is a *Who* we need to keep our minds and hearts on. The false orthodoxies are always coming up with icons and visions. Paul warns:

Colossians 2:18-19,23 -- Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head... These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

4. While Peter reminds us that it is the wounds themselves by which we are healed and not the cloth over the wounds. It is His example of love that we are to follow in order to help us return to where we belong.

1 Peter 2:24-25 -- And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of you souls.