

THE SO-CALLED SHROUD OF TURIN

Text: John 19:40

INTRO: For a number of years there was quite a bit of discussion and controversy over the so-called shroud of Turin, a piece of linen cloth 14 feet long by 3 & 1/2 feet wide. Some individuals insist that it was the actual burial cloth of Jesus Christ.

More recently, scientists with their dating methods ruled that the cloth is not nearly old enough to be the burial garment of Jesus. I do not know how accurate their dating methods are, nor how thoroughly their rulings will be accepted by those who formerly insisted that the cloth was Christ's shroud, but I know by Biblical and Biblically related proofs that the so-called shroud cannot possibly be the burial garment of Jesus Christ.

I. THE MYSTERY OF THE CLOTH.

A. The linen cloth has a faint discoloration which, when photographed & over developed, appears to be an image of a man, full length, front & back.

B. The image on the cloth bears the resemblance of a bearded, long-haired man who was crucified, or died in a fashion very similar to crucifixion.

B. Beyond these evident facts, there is much dispute even between experts or self-proclaimed experts as to the nature & significance of the cloth.

1. The Paint Theory.

a. The "shroud" was 1st mentioned historically in 1356. A Bishop Henry wrote to the Pope declaring that the shroud was a fraud, & that he had discovered the artist who admitted to having painted the image on the cloth.

b. The evidence behind the paint theory is sparse, however. First, the image takes on the appearance of a photographic negative. What should be dark is light & what should be light is dark. The photographic process was not developed till about 500 years after the first historical mention of the cloth. It is not likely that a 14th century painter would have that to duplicate such an unknown process, if the shroud were a deliberate fraud.

c. Also, modern investigators who have examined the cloth have found no trace of any known type of paint on the surface or in the fibers of the cloth.

2. The Blood Theory. Experts who examined the cloth in 1937 claimed there are particles of blood on the shroud, even around the hairline where a crown of

thorns might have been. More modern equipment used in 1976 found no evidence that the coloring agent on the cloth is blood.

3. The Pollen Tests. Pollen tests taken at the U. of Zurich have shown that the cloth contains more than a dozen kinds of pollen that are common in & around Jerusalem. But the same types of pollen were also found in the area of southeast Turkey, so again, the tests were inconclusive.

4. The Chemical Theory. It has been theorized that the image on the cloth is a chemical reaction formed as a result of the combination of the ammonia in human sweat with the chemical elements in the spices used in ancient embalming. This theory presupposes that the cloth is really a shroud, which it may not be. Also, the evidence is not at all solid that such chemical theory is reasonable.

5. The Scorch Theory. Some parties argue that the image was produced by "a sudden radiance of our Lord's body at the moment of resurrection." It is said that when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima to end WWII, the shadows or image of many who were killed were permanently etched into concrete pave-

ments. From this it is argued that the magnificent power of the resurrection was such that it etched the image of Jesus on His burial cloth. Obviously, this theory presupposes that the cloth is really the shroud of Jesus, a supposition that both Bible & scientific evidence denies.

II. AT THIS POINT, WE NEED TO REALIZE THAT EVEN IF THE CLOTH WERE AN AUTHENTIC BURIAL CLOTH OF SOMEONE WHO WAS CRUCIFIED, & EVEN IF IT COULD BE DATED IN THE 1st CENTURY, THE ODDS WOULD STILL BE HEAVILY AGAINST ITS BEING THE BURIAL CLOTH OF JESUS. Crucifixion was a common form of capital punishment in the Roman Empire for hundreds of years. It was also used by the Assyrians, Persians, Phoenicians, Greeks & Egyptians. In fact, at least 2 other men were crucified near Jerusalem the same day as Jesus, LK 23:32.

III. THE EVIDENCE IS STRONG THAT JESUS DID NOT HAVE LONG HAIR.

A. Biblical evidence.

1. Paul had seen Jesus, 1 Cor 15:8 & encouraged the Corinthians to imitate Jesus, 1 Cor 11:1. In the same chapter he insists that long hair is a dishonor to a man, vs. 14. It is not at all likely that Jesus dishonored Himself with long hair.

- a. H.S. "long hair a dishonor to a man," 11:14
- b. Jesus had Spirit without measure, JN 3:4
- c. Therefore Jesus did not have long hair.

- a. It is good to imitate Jesus, 11:1
- b. Not good for a man to have long hair, vs. 14
- c. Therefore Jesus did not have long hair.

2. The O.T. priests were forbidden to grow their hair long.

Ezek 44:20, Nor shall they shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long; but they shall keep their hair well trimmed.

READ HEBREWS 8:4-5. Not likely that Jesus in fulfilling what those priests represented, groomed Himself contrary to the instructions given them.

- a. O.T. priests typified Jesus, Heb. 8:5
- b. O.T. priests forbidden to have long hair.
- c. Therefore, Jesus did not have long hair.

B. Historical evidence.

1. The early drawings on catacomb walls portray Jesus with short hair. Drukley: Beyond the Gospels, pg. 57.

2. TALMUD, oral traditions of the Jews put into written form, specified that a priest should cut his hair every 30 days & wear it in a Julian style (like J. Caesar). The priests, as leaders of the people, set the style that was commonly followed by others. There is no evidence that Jesus differed from others in this matter.

3. Gundry, Survey of the N.T.: "Men wore their hair short & shaved with straight razors... In Palestine men grew beards. Their hair was somewhat longer, but still not so long as portrayed in the usual pictures" pg. 26-27.

4. Wycliffe Bible Enc.: "The sexes were distinguished by the long hair of the women (LK 7:38; JN 11:2; 12:3; 1 Cor 11:6) & the frequent clipping to a moderate length by the men. The ordinance for the priests & thereby probably followed by the rest of the community, was that the hair was to be polled, i.e., neither shaved nor allowed to grow too long" pg. 744.

5. Harpers Bible Dict: "N.T. Christian men were opposed to long hair (1 Cor 11:6ff)" pg. 241.

6. Jesus dressed & looked enough like others to enable Him to slip out thru a crowd, LK 4:30; JN 8:59--& to need to be specifically pointed out by His betrayer, MT 26:48. It is not at all likely that He wore His hair in the fashion of a woman, or otherwise bore the effeminate look with which He is commonly depicted.

IV. BUT THE CLEAREST REASON TO REJECT THE IDEA THAT THE "SHROUD OF TURIN" IS THE BURIAL CLOTH OF JESUS, IS THAT IT DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE BURIAL CLOTHES OF JESUS AS THEY ARE DESCRIBED IN THE N.T.

A. The general custom of the Jews was to wrap the body in strips of linen cloth & cover the face with a separate cloth. NOTE: NIV

JN 11:44, [Lazarus] came out, his hands & feet wrapped with strips of linen, & a cloth around his face.

Acts 5:6, Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his [Ananias'] body & carried him out & buried him.

B. This custom was followed in the case of Jesus.

JN 19:40, Taking Jesus' body, the 2 of them [Joseph of Arimathea & Nicodemus] wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

John 20:3-7, Peter therefore went out, & the other disciple, & were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, & the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down & looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, & went into the tomb; & he saw the linen cloths lying there, & the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

Note: the burial clothes of Jesus, strips of linen cloth, with a separate covering for the head bears almost no resemblance at all to the 14X3½ foot cloth known as the shroud of Turin.

CONCLUSION: What then is the shroud of Turin? I don't know, but I do know it is not the burial cloth of Jesus. I see a little benefit to be derived from legitimate findings which help to further confirm the truth of the Scriptures. To look for such in the shroud of Turin is to seek a false hope & in reality is an attempt to undermine what the Bible teaches

with regard to certain aspects of the life & death of Jesus. And even if men were to find the strips of linen in which the body of Jesus was buried, God would want us to worship & adore Jesus—not the cloth that once encased His dead body.

La Porte, TX, December 17, 1978

Exton, PA, May 7, 1989

Shiloh, Mexia, TX May 31, 1992

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, November 28, 1999