

## **Turin Shroud; What Does The Bible Say?**

Luke 24:12: 'Peter got up and ran to the tomb and stooping down and looking in, he saw the strips of linen cloths alone by themselves, and he went home, wondering about what had happened'.

John 20:5 to 7: 'Stooping down, John saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not enter the tomb. Then Peter came up after him and went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there; but the burial cloth which had been around Jesus' head was not lying with the other linen cloths, but was rolled up in a place by itself'.

We must always rely on the Word of God to show us the truth, and the scriptural description of Jesus' burial cloths, His torture and His crucifixion do not match that of the Turin Shroud. There are four verses that tell us Jesus was initially rolled up in a linen cloth for a short time while He was being carried from the cross to the tomb. 'Joseph took the body of Jesus down from the cross and rolled it up in a fine, clean linen cloth laid Him in his own fresh tomb, which he had hewn in the rock' (Matthew 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53). John says more: 'Nicodemus came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred (Latin) pounds. They took Jesus' body and bound it in linen cloths with the aromatic spices as is the Jews' customary way to prepare for burial. There was a garden in the place where He was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid' (John 19:39 to 41). These verses tell us Jesus was buried in a garden just outside Jerusalem. Once inside the tomb Jesus was buried properly by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus' body would have been washed then the Bible says He was anointed with the spices, myrrh and aloes, then they bound Him up using strips of cloth, as was the Jewish custom, and as it is written in the Bible. They probably tore the initial cloth into the strips. We can see by the scriptures that Jesus was initially rolled up in the cloth and later bound in several strips of linen cloth that were used for burial. That is very different to what we know about the shroud.

The shroud kept in Turin is in one piece with the face of the victim clearly outlined. The shroud victim was not rolled up in the shroud, he was carefully placed on half of the shroud then the other half was folded over his head and body. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus' body and bound it in linen cloths (plural). John saw the linen cloths (plural) lying there, then Peter saw the linen cloths (plural) lying there but the burial headpiece was not lying with the other linen cloths, but was still rolled up, that is wrapped round and round in a place by itself. Wrapped around and around as the cloths would have been when Jesus' head was wrapped up by the men. Logically, one shroud cannot possibly be in two separate places at once, and it cannot be both one piece of shroud cloth, and several strips of cloth at the same time. The Turin Shroud itself is real enough and it may have been the shroud of a victim of crucifixion, but it is not the burial cloth of Jesus; He simply was not buried in a one-piece shroud.

The facts written above on their own, should be enough to show people that particular piece of fabric was definitely not used to wrap Jesus' body. These verses from the Bible clearly discount the Turin Shroud as being authentic, but the Bible gives us even more proof the shroud was not used for Jesus, facts that people conveniently overlook, or it could be that they just do not know the Bible very well. Jesus' face was marred beyond recognition (Isaiah 52:14); the shroud victim's face was bruised but otherwise fully intact. Jesus' beard was ripped from His face (Isaiah 50:6); the shroud victim's beard was intact. Jesus had His side torn open with a spear and the gash was large enough to fit a man's hand (John 19:34; John 20:27); the shroud man was stabbed below the armpit but the wound was small. Jesus had huge nail holes in His hands and both feet large enough to fit a man's finger (John 20:27), plus the Bible clearly says Jesus had nail holes in His hands, and He showed His hands to Thomas. The shroud man had been crucified but the nail holes were much smaller and were in his wrists. As a Jewish male, Jesus was circumcised (Luke 2:21).

The shroud victim was whipped before being crucified as most victims of crucifixion were. The Jews never buried their dead with money, but the shroud victim had an imprint of a foreign coin over one eye. He was not washed nor did he have the traditional spices or anointing oil on his skin like Jesus did. There is little sign of the extreme torture that Jesus went through and there is no indication that the shroud victim was Jewish. It has been revealed that the man was probably Assyrian or Persian. Pollen taken from the shroud indicates the shroud was probably from Turkey or Northern Syria – not Jerusalem, and Persians used crucifixion as a means of judgement. The Turin Shroud is either fake or a hoax. During the time of Constantine, dozens of religious icons were made and claimed to be authentic and belonging to Jesus. Things like the supposed genuine crown of thorns, nails, spears, clothing, an umbilical cord and yes, burial shrouds deliberately made to resemble the wounds Jesus suffered by using the bodies of crucified men. The executioners and forgers worked together to achieve their icons. Some Christian men deliberately went through crucifixions, having

others inflict them with the wounds inflicted on Jesus so they could attain 'martyrdom' by suffering the same as Jesus did. The shroud could have come from any one of those men wanting to imitate the suffering on the cross. It is well documented in history that some early Christians showed a desire for martyrdom. Some early Christians who were to be crucified for their faith, sometimes goaded their executioners into crowning them with thorns, piercing them with a spear or other tortures, believing they would receive special rewards (Hebrews 11:35). It would have been very easy to imitate the wounds of Jesus and create a fake shroud. The fake icons were made in both Syria and Egypt for the benefit of gullible Christians, and it seems some Christians are just as gullible today as they were then. Extremists can still be found around the world today and every Easter some foolish people are crucified. When people hold on to a belief that is discredited by the scriptures, then the person who continues to hold that belief has turned the relic into their idol and it then becomes a myth and only serves to lead people away from God, not to Him.

We need to know the Lord intimately to be able to understand why He would never allow any such thing as the burial cloth of Jesus to survive. The Lord is invisible and we need to know Him by His presence, His works and His Word. That is all we have. We do not have a visual representation of Him on earth. Certainly some Christians see the Lord, some have visions, some see angels, some are taken to heaven and return but the Lord is invisible to the majority of people. We have to rely on His Word to teach us and His works, such as healings to encourage us. As we grow in God and get to know His ways, we can see just how much He loathes and abhors icons and idols. He knows that if we had anything on earth connected to Jesus, that 'thing' would be worshipped or at least revered. What the Lord wants from people, is for us to worship and revere Him. He does not want us to revere created things. As He says in His Word; 'They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the created rather than the Creator' (Romans 1:25). People who do not know the Lord intimately, prefer to have a visual religious icon to revere, thinking that the 'thing' will bring them closer to God, when scripturally it is the very thing that brings His wrath and judgement. We must learn to live by faith and that is to walk with our invisible God without having any idols of any kind.

By accepting icons like the shroud, detracts from the whole point of the first coming of Jesus. Jesus came to bring the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Jews first then the Gentiles. He came to take our judgement upon Himself. He was tortured for our healing, for our peace and He died for our sins. After He died He descended into hell to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the people who had died before He did. The day after the Sabbath He rose victoriously and continued to preach the Gospel around Jerusalem, then after forty days He commissioned the disciples to take over from Him and go into the whole world and preach to every person. Then He ascended to heaven to sit with the Father until the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom is completed, then He will return to earth as our King and rule from Jerusalem. That is a brief overview of the Gospel of the Kingdom and that is why Jesus came. He did not come to set up a new religion; He came to show us how to enter into the Kingdom of God and have eternal life, and to show people how to conduct themselves while on earth. To walk with Jesus in the way He intended is not religion, it is a whole way of life; it is a holy life. To try to keep Him 'dead' by pretending a bloodstained cloth is His, is despicable and it shows that the people who believe in the shroud do not know Jesus intimately. They are trusting in an idol and not in our Saviour.

According to the scriptures, what people need to do is not focus on worldly things like the shroud, but focus on our Saviour and the things of God. In the words of Jesus when He spoke to Nicodemus one night, He said we must all change our way of thinking, change our heart attitudes and embrace God's thoughts if we want to proceed to heaven, and God's thoughts are written down in the Bible. To describe that change of heart, Jesus called it being born-again, and He was the first Person to ever use the phrase. 'There was a man among the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews who came to Jesus at night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God for no one can do these miracles that You do unless God is with him."

Jesus answered him, "Most solemnly I tell you, that unless a person is born-again, he cannot ever see the Kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb again and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Most solemnly I tell you, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised at My telling you, You must all be born anew from above" (John 3:1 to 7).

To see and enter the Kingdom of God, we must be born-again, born of water, born of the Holy Spirit and born anew. Jesus said we should not be surprised when we are told we must all be born-again to enter the Kingdom of God. To be able to have the mind of God and think the way He does, we have to obey Him. The

whole Gospel message is to show people the way to heaven, and is not there to lead people to believe in 'things', but to believe in Jesus. It was God Who came up with the Gospel message of salvation by faith. It was not invented by man – but by God Himself. His ways are not our ways; His thoughts are not our thoughts, so whether we agree with Him or not, we have to accept what He said, and He said we have to be born-again. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8 & 9). Whether we like His 'ways' or not, it is the only way. There is no other way of salvation other than the way God invented, and that is through faith and belief Jesus and in the Bible. 'There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). Jesus is called the Word of God. 'In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself' (John 1:1). The Bible is God's Word and He knows what He's talking about when He shows us the only way of salvation.

Rather than focussing on the shroud which is solely of the world, we need to focus on the Spiritual truth that leads to eternal life. To be born-again as Jesus described, we must repent of all sin, give our lives to Him, be baptised in water and filled with the Holy Spirit as an act of obedience (Acts 2:38). After that we must continue walking with Him so we can be presented to God the Father and live in His presence (Colossians 1:22 & 23). When we refuse to accept what the Bible says and prefer to believe what man says, that is sin because we are indirectly telling God, we think we know more than He does. Focussing on an ancient relic shows that whoever does so, is not born-again, is not listening to God, does not have true knowledge of God and that is a shame. 'Awake righteously and sin no more. For some of you have not the knowledge of God. I say this to your shame' (1 Corinthians 15:34). We are told several times in the scriptures, not to believe things that are mere myths. 'Do not pay any attention to myths and endless genealogies which cause disputes rather than God's administration that is in faith' (1 Timothy 1:4). 'Refuse worthless fables, mere grandmothers' tales and silly myths. Express your disapproval of them and train yourself toward Godliness' (1 Timothy 4:7). 'Do not turn aside from hearing the truth and do not wander off into fables' (2 Timothy 4:4). 'Cease to give attention to myths given by men who reject the Truth' (Titus 1:14).

All the media attention regarding the shroud does nothing to lead people to salvation. All it is doing is bringing the shroud to people's attention instead of bringing the work of Jesus to our attention. The scriptures could not possibly make things any clearer. We need to be born-again, walk with God by faith and put all things like the Turin Shroud into the category where it sits – in the rubbish with other idols. We are not to place any importance on these things; not pay any attention to them nor believe in them for by doing so we are turning away from the truth and we are to express our disapproval of them. Only those who reject the truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom would embrace an idol like the shroud. The Bible is the true Word of God and the basis for all true faith. If people refuse to believe what the Bible says as being absolutely authentic, then those people do not know God, nor do they really know Jesus, Who is the human form of the Word of God. Indeed, one of the titles of Jesus is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). 'For although the people hold a form of religion, they deny the power of it' (2 Timothy 3:5). If there are people who prefer to hold onto the belief in the shroud, even after reading scriptural proof that it is not connected to Jesus in any way, then those people have nothing more than empty religion and are effectively worshipping an idol. That is what the scripture means when it says to cease giving attention to these myths because they lead people away from the truth. If people reject the truth, then they are rejecting the Gospel message. If they reject the Gospel then they are rejecting the salvation offered by Jesus. If they reject that, then they will be lost for eternity. Things like the shroud only serve to draw people away from God and that is what the shroud is doing. The very reason God would not allow the burial cloths used for Jesus to be kept, is evident in the way the shroud is revered. It is nothing more than a bloodstained piece of old cloth, yet people are foolish enough to revere it. The truth is written in the Bible and the Bible absolutely discredits the Turin Shroud.

Amen and God bless you.

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