

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

By Roelf L. Ruffner

The Roman Catholic Church is a collector of many artifacts from antiquity. They have many rare and priceless paintings, statues and works of art even from the time before the birth of Christ. In the past they declared certain objects, assumed to be associated with Bible times, to be venerated and worthy of worship: pieces of Christ's cross, mummified hand of John the Baptist, vials of Mary's breast milk, the spear that was thrust in Jesus side, and various and as sundry items from Catholic "saints." Cathedrals have been built around these items and millions make pilgrimages to see them and worship them. For several years many Catholics and non-Catholics have increasingly turned their attention to the Shroud of Turin as a possible artifact of veneration.

“The *Shroud of Turin* is a large rectangular woven cloth, approximately 14 ft by 3.5 ft. It appears to show the front and rear images of a naked man and is alleged by some to be the burial cloth of Jesus Christ. It is owned by the Catholic Church and stored in the cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, hence its name. It is rarely on display to the public. While some Christians vouch for its authenticity, many do not. Even the Vatican won't say it's authentic, which is in itself instructive.”

When a picture is taken of the shroud, the negative gives the shadowy impression of a naked man whose face looks remarkably similar to many modern day pictures and painting of Jesus. Yet no one knows what Jesus looked like and ALL are products of various artists' imaginations. Countless tests have been run on this cloth and all seem to conflict with each other. Radiocarbon dating shows it was manufactured sometime in the 14th Century A.D. That makes it almost 1,300 years too late to be associated with the crucifixion of Jesus. But the argument continues to rage on between supporters of the shroud and its skeptics who maintain that it is a fraud. Yet rarely in the arguments is the only historical source existing about the burial of Jesus Christ – the New Testament - consulted.

The burial cloth of Jesus is referred to six times in the New Testament: Matthew 17:59, Mark 15:45-46, Luke 23:53, Luke 24:12, John 19:38-40 and John 20:5-7. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke the word “wrapped” or *entyllísō* – “to roll up, wrapped together” (Thayer, 688) is used to describe what Joseph of Arimaethea and

Nicodemus did to prepare the lifeless body of Jesus for burial using a clean linen cloth. John goes further in his account and states, “Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in the linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury” (John 19:40). “Wound it in the linen clothes” or “bound it in linen clothes” (ASV). This is similar to how Lazarus was laid to rest. “And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes...” (John 11:44). In both cases the cloth was wrapped around the body or even in cloth strips not too dissimilar to the wrapping of an Egyptian mummy.

Yet the negative image of the Shroud of Turin clearly implies that the linen cloth was placed directly on top and on the bottom of the body in a horizontal position. This does not match the burial method described in the New Testament. Whoever concocted this fraud knew what they were doing, but they did know the New Testament.

Jesus Christ’s body was treated in much the same manner at His burial as it was at His birth. “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:12). And at His resurrection that burial cloth (Wound in with 100 lbs. of waxy, aromatic spices – John 19:39-40.) was lying empty in place like a cocoon, the face covering or napkin neatly wrapped up by itself (John 20:5-7). Further proof that Jesus’ body had not been stolen nor did He “swoon” in the tomb but was resurrected by the power of God. Even in His grave clothes my Lord showed Himself the master of detail and undeniable truth. Even His grave clothes He left behind are part of the “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3) that He had risen from the dead. These “proofs” we have recorded for us in the New Testament so we might believe (John 20:30-31). “Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed” (John 20:8).

<http://www.sillybeliefs.com/shroud.html> as of March 6, 2015.

Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977.