



THE SHROUD OF TURIN

I'm reluctant to place this article in the "fringe file", since I believe the Shroud to be authentic, but it's still a controversial subject. I'll just present the facts and let you come to your own conclusion!

What is the Shroud?

The Shroud of Turin is an ancient burial cloth that has "imprinted" on it the life-size image of a crucified man. (I use "imprinted", as in "*to fix indelibly or permanently*", for want of a better word, since no one has been able to explain how the image appeared on the cloth.) It is called the "Shroud of Turin" because it currently resides in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, in Turin, Italy.

It came to light in the Middle Ages, although there is compelling evidence to suggest that it existed and was "hidden" before this time. When it was photographed for the first time in 1898, it was discovered that the image is actually a photographic negative, which is remarkable in itself since the Shroud is known to have been in existence hundreds of years before the invention of photography. In other words, what should be the positive image on the Shroud is very faint, but the negative image looks like an actual photograph. This suggests the image was made by some kind of light source—one of several theories.

Because of the unique characteristics of the image, it has been linked to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which is described in [Matthew 27](#), [Mark 15](#), [Luke 23](#), [John 19](#). John's account is the most detailed.

The Shroud has survived at least two fires, and over the years has been carefully patched and repaired.

The Cloth

The cloth which bears the image is fourteen and one half feet long, and three and one half feet wide. It is made of linen and is consistent with cloth manufactured in the Middle East. The body appears to have been laid on one half of the cloth with the other half folded over the head and laid on top. The image on the cloth shows the front and back of the body. Scientists have identified pollen on the cloth from the Palestine area, as well as from regions through which the Shroud is thought to have been carried. Dirt on the feet and the front of the nose (where the man apparently fell face-first) has been detected on the cloth, which scientists confirm is also from the Palestine area, and specifically, from the Damascus Gate area in Jerusalem. The initial carbon dating, later shown to be flawed, dated the cloth from the Middle Ages.

No paints or pigments have been detected on the cloth, and the water used to douse a fire left only water stains, with no running of any other liquid substance.

The first known public exhibitions of the Shroud began in 1355. Its history before that time is unknown, although much research and study has been done by scholar Ian Wilson. He, among others, believes that the Shroud is the same as what was called the "cloth, or image, of Edessa", also known as the Mandylion, which was a framed "portrait" strongly resembling the head of the man on the Shroud, often appearing in public exhibitions *prior to* the Middle Ages. It is theorized that the Shroud had been folded so that only the face showed within the frame. There are many medieval works of art attesting to the existence of this cloth. Before that time, it is believed that the Shroud was continuously hidden by Jesus' disciples, namely in the city of Edessa, Turkey (known today as Urfa), and

Constantinople (known today as Istanbul.) [See [Appendix C.](#)]

Briefly, the *documented* history of the Shroud began in 1349 when a French knight was known to be in possession of the Shroud, which he could possibly have acquired in Constantinople after the city was sacked by Crusaders. In spite of efforts by the Catholic church to obtain ownership of the Shroud, it continued to be owned and passed down within private families until 1983. At that time the current owner died, bequeathing the Shroud to the Pope “and his successors”, providing that the cloth remain in Turin. For a detailed chronology, see Wilson’s [Shroud History](#).

In 1978, the Shroud was closely examined by a team of scientists. This was called the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP). [Click here](#) for a summary of their conclusions.

(For information on a cloth associated with the Shroud of Turin, see [Appendix A](#)).

The Image

The image is that of a bearded man, approximately six feet tall, who has been beaten severely about the face, scourged, stabbed in the side, and has had some sharp object pressed upon his head which left puncture wounds. There are abrasions which left practically no skin on his shoulders where he may have carried a heavy object, and on his knees, as the probable result of one or more hard falls. There are puncture wounds in the palms/wrists and feet. Parts of his beard have been torn out.

The more than one hundred scourge marks are consistent with the Roman flagrum, which was a whip containing pieces of metal and bone. There are indications of the flesh being literally ripped out.

Whoever the man of the Shroud was, he was brutally beaten and mutilated, which had to have been almost to the point of death, even before he was affixed by nails to what is consistent with the properties of a cross (due to the direction of the blood flow from the wrist wounds). The image suggests that rigor mortis has set in and the knees are slightly raised.

Some scientists claim to be able to see coins placed over the eyes of the man with inscriptions dating to the first century. Thus far, this is inconclusive.

What caused the image to appear on the cloth? No one has been able to duplicate such a unique image using a corpse, or by any other mechanism. If modern technology has failed, we can presume any method of producing the image would not have been available during the Middle Ages.

[SIDEBAR:] Many Christian scholars and scientists theorize the image was created by some kind of light at the moment of resurrection, assuming that the image is indeed that of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, some scientists believe the “light”, or radiation, came from *inside* the body, rather than from outside.

The Blood

The blood stains on the Shroud (documented as Type AB) contain hemoglobin and serum albumin. They also contain bilirubin, which is produced in the human body by traumatic injury.

There have been several headlines in recent news that the bloodstains cannot be authentic, due to comparing blood splatter with the positioning of the body on the cloth. Conversely, studies were done by experts decades earlier, which indicate that the *blood flow patterns perfectly match* the way a body would hang on a cross.

The way in which the blood fell on the cloth could be a matter of conjecture, depending on unknown circumstances (such as how the body was laid out on the cloth, how much it was jiggled around while being handled or carried, etc.).

PLEASE SEE THE BIBLE STUDY ARTICLE, “[WHY WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED?](#)” FOR INFORMATION ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLOOD.

The Carbon Dating Scandal

In 1988, the Vatican agreed to allow carbon 14 dating of the Shroud. A sample was taken, and the results seemed to show that the cloth was only a few centuries old, dating from 1260 to 1390 AD. The authenticity of the Shroud was effectively debunked. However, due to the efforts of many carbon dating skeptics, the entire process was shown to be flawed and the results have since been in serious doubt.

The sample used for the carbon dating test was taken from the very edge of the cloth, which was not only

contaminated by much handling, but had actually been “repaired” by well-meaning persons who were trying to match the appearance of the main part of the Shroud, including the intertwining of original linen fibers with procured cotton fibers, and dyeing the cotton to match the linen.

Even though carbon dating has often been found to be in error, it seems that it wasn’t the chemical process here that was at fault, but the location of the sample that was taken. The plea to use multiple samples had been declined or ignored by the Shroud custodians. (See [Appendix B](#) for a detailed chronology of the carbon dating.)

Many other contaminants could be listed which would skew testing results of any part of the Shroud, including the heat of the fires to which it has been exposed, water dousing (which can alter results by hundreds of years), and even the unknown mechanism by which the image appeared.

Conclusion

There are many aspects of the Shroud that cannot be understood or explained. Skeptics will always seek ways to disprove its authenticity, just as believers will try to prove it. Since it is impossible to prove the Shroud is genuine, the burden of “disproof” falls on the skeptics.

Every time the skeptics make a “discovery”, such as with the (skewed) carbon 14 dating and the theory on the blood patterns, the news is quick to proclaim, “Shroud of Turin Proved to Be a Hoax!”

If it’s ever proven beyond the shadow of a doubt to be a hoax, I have to say it wouldn’t affect my faith. I worship the Son of God, not his shroud.

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In one of the videos referenced below, it was attempted to show what Jesus may have looked like according to the characteristics of the man on the Shroud. But as one wise young woman said: “It doesn’t matter how he looked, it’s what he did that counts.”

Websites:

<http://www.historian.net/shroud.htm> Please be sure to look at the [end of the web page](#) for what any forger would have to know before being able to create this image!

<https://shroudencounter.com/index.php> Includes several interesting YouTube videos.

www.shrouduniversity.com/Apologetics.php
An extension of the Shroud Encounter website.

<http://www.shroud.com/> Official Shroud website with photos and links to scientific papers and articles.

<http://www.datingtheshroud.com/Pages/Events.htm>
Article on the carbon dating of the Shroud.

http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/ojc/edu/kiyo_2008/kiyo_38_PDF/04.pdf Another paper on the carbon dating.

<http://www.shroud.com/bucklin.htm> Medical analysis of how Jesus died.

Videos:

[A Scientific View of the Shroud of Turin](#) (audio quality not very good but very interesting and informative).

[Real Face of Jesus from the Shroud of Turin](#) (not necessarily the real face, but probably close).

Books:

[The Shroud: The 2000-Year-Old Mystery Solved](#) by Ian Wilson.

[The Shroud of Turin and the C14 Dating Fiasco](#) by Thomas W. Case.

[The Blood and the Shroud: New Evidence that the World's Most Sacred Relic is Real](#) by Ian Wilson.

[Unlocking the Secrets of the Shroud](#) by Gilbert Lavoie, M.D.

[List of books and DVDs about the Shroud](#) by Russ Breault and others, Prophecy Watchers website.

Movie:

“The Passion of the Christ” (Graphic, [not for children](#)). Directed by Mel Gibson, starring Jim Caviezel.

APPENDIX A: *The Sudarium of Oviedo*

The Sudarium of Oviedo is a napkin, or head cloth, which has been linked to the Shroud of Turin and now resides in a cathedral in Oviedo, Spain. It does not contain an image, but is believed to be the cloth that was placed over Jesus’ head after his removal from the cross to staunch the flow of fluid from his nose and

mouth. *John 20:7 – “And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.”*

THE FOLLOWING IS FROM A SCIENTIFIC PAPER WRITTEN BY MARK GUSCIN, BA, M PHIL, MEMBER OF THE INVESTIGATION TEAM OF THE CENTRO ESPAÑOL DE SINDONOLOGÍA AND THE BRITISH SOCIETY FOR THE TURIN SHROUD:

“There are many points of coincidence between all these points and the Shroud of Turin - the blood group, the way the corpse was tortured and died, and the macroscopic overlay of the stains on each cloth. This is especially notable in that the blood on the sudarium shed in life, as opposed to post mortem, corresponds exactly in blood group, blood type and surface area to those stains on the Shroud on the nape of the neck.

If it is clear that the two cloths must have covered the same corpse, and this conclusion is inevitable from all the studies carried out up to date, and if the history of the sudarium can be trustworthily extended back beyond the fourteenth century, which is often referred to as the Shroud's first documented historical appearance, then this would take the Shroud back to at least the earliest dates of the sudarium's known history.

The ark of relics and the sudarium have without any doubt at all been in Spain since the beginning of the seventh century, and the history recorded in various manuscripts from various times and geographical areas take it all the way back to Jerusalem in the first century.

The importance of this for Shroud history cannot be overstressed.”

Click here for the full article in PDF: [RECENT HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON THE SUDARIUM OF OVIEDO](#)

See also: [The Sudarium of Oviedo](#):

APPENDIX B: Chronology of the Carbon-14

Dating by Ian Wilson, renowned Shroud scholar and researcher) from the official Shroud website [Shroud History](#). (I have pulled and paraphrased just the references to the carbon dating).

1986 – A protocol for radiocarbon dating of the Shroud is proposed. Seven laboratories submit their proposal to the Pope and the Cardinal of Turin.

1987 – The Turin press announces that “only two or three laboratories would be involved in the testing”. This is protested by the original seven laboratories who state that this change in the procedures “may lead to failure.” The Cardinal of Turin responds that only three of the original seven have been selected and that other details from the original proposal have been “scrapped”. The three chosen laboratories (Oxford, Arizona, and Zurich) write the Cardinal, saying they are “hesitant to proceed and request the matter be given further consideration”.

1988 – Two of the scientists involved openly state that the Pope is making a mistake and that “disregarding the protocol does not seem capable of producing a result that will meet the test of credibility and scientific rigor”. This protest and a subsequent appeal are declined.

1988 – The three chosen labs assemble at the cathedral and the sample site is selected and cut away.

Oct. 1988 – An official announcement is made that the cloth of the Shroud dates between 1260 and 1390. “Newspaper headlines immediately brand the Shroud a fake.”

2002 – A “restoration” of the Shroud is performed in secret, without consulting Shroud experts, which highly contaminates the Shroud.

2005 – A scientific paper is released stating that the radiocarbon sample was taken from a repaired part of the Shroud and “thus was not valid for determining the age of the Shroud.”

2008 – Through extensive testing, researchers Joe Merino and Sue Benford confirm that the sample was taken from a repaired area on which dye had been used. This was scientifically validated, therefore the sample taken was not representative of the whole object.

APPENDIX C: [Fold Marks as a Historical Record of the Turin Shroud](#) by John P. Jackson.

(This is a clip; please click on the title to read the full *highly technical* article.)

“For centuries the Shroud of Turin has attracted pilgrims who have come to see on its cloth surface the image of what appears to be a crucified man, believed by many to be that of Jesus.

However, the Shroud has one serious shortcoming in any claim it might have to being the true burial shroud of Jesus; the first 1300 or so years of its supposed 2000 year history are uncertain. Thus, there is legitimate concern among scholars regarding the Shroud's authenticity because it is unclear how the burial cloth of Jesus could have passed nearly thirteen centuries without better historical documentation.

An interesting solution to this problem has been offered by Ian Wilson, who hypothesized that the Shroud was the legendary Mandylion Cloth of Constantinople.

This cloth purportedly had an image of Jesus' face on it and was mounted in a frame. Wilson's proposed chronology of the Shroud/Mandylion begins with the assumption that the Shroud is the burial cloth of Jesus which was brought to Edessa, now the city of Urfa in Turkey, by a disciple of Jesus. In 944, the cloth was transferred to Constantinople.

Wilson assumes that during approximately the first millennium of its history, the Shroud/ Mandylion was continuously folded into a frame (or frames) so that only the facial part of the image could be seen. Thus, he speculates, its identity as a burial cloth remained essentially hidden from history until someone, possibly around the XIth century, removed the cloth from its frame.

In the following century, allusions to and reports of a burial Shroud in Constantinople bearing an image of Jesus began to appear in historical data. Robert de Clari, French crusader in Constantinople in 1203-1204, wrote that a burial shroud with a full-length image of Jesus was displayed there every Friday.

This cloth disappeared in the XIIIth c., only to reappear in France about a hundred years later, having been, according to Wilson, secreted away in the intervening years by the Knights Templar.”