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Q&A: The Shroud of Turin

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The Shroud of Turin:

Question: John 20:7 mentions that the cloth that wrapped Jesus' face in burial was folded and separated from the other burial clothes. Is there a reason why John comments on this? What is its significance?

Answer: Unfortunately, we cannot speculate any further about Jesus' face napkin with any degree of assurance, simply because we are not told. It could be as simple as John thinking that it was interesting that they were separate and simply recorded the available data. But you're right that it does nothing to disprove the shroud of Turin, since the man in the shroud also appears to have a face cloth wrapped around his head.

Question: In John 20:7, John records that there was separate linen used for Jesus' face in his burial. However, the Shroud reveals the image of man on the entire linen, including the face, which is not isolated to a separate linen. Therefore, the Shroud seems to contradict the record that we have in John, and should not be believed to be Christ's cloth.

Answer: In my opinion, I don't think John 20:7 disproves the shroud of Turin at all. In our books on the shroud, Ken Stevenson and I argued that there was indeed a face cloth around the head of the man buried in the shroud. There appears to be a gap caused by something between the man's face and hair, keeping the hair from resting on the face. If this is the face cloth, it appears to be what is what is described in John. John 11:43-44 (Lazarus) and 20:7 (Jesus) are the only places in the New Testament where a face cloth is mentioned and in both places, it is described as being placed around the head or face. Further, as we describe in our book, the Jewish Mishnah commands that the jaw be bound up after death. On the shroud, it appears that this is exactly what happened. For example, the beard under the chin is also pulled back against the throat by the same invisible object that appears to be wrapped around the face of the man.