

# The Image on the Turin Shroud Is “*The Sign of Jonah*” For Our Generation!

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## ABSTRACT

What specifically was “the sign of Jonah” that we find Jesus promising in two of the Four Gospels? The interpretation and identification of that *Sign* has been debated and has been somewhat of a riddle. Even so, the three related passages do reveal identifying markers whereby the genuine *Sign of Jonah* should become evident. These markers should form a set of criteria so that the genuine *Sign* can be distinguished from false contenders. This paper will argue that, following the Ascension of Jesus, His burial cloth—bearing its extraordinary miraculous image—was the Father’s witness, His gracious gift for every doubting Thomas, and was intended to be *the Sign of Jonah* for every ensuing generation. Next to love, the image on the Shroud is the supreme apologetic for the Church!

*Tags:* Shroud of Turin; Sign of Jonah; New Testament; Church history; Matthew 12:38-42; Matthew 16:1-4; Luke 11:29-32

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year the Lord brought Erik and his wife, Kaylee, into my life. She, a Registered Nurse, had no religious upbringing as a child and was Biblically illiterate. Erik, on the other hand, was brought up to believe in the Christian Faith. However, years before we met, he had become disillusioned with the Church and, after graduating from college, professed to be an atheist. Now, however, they were hosting a high-school exchange student, Moana, from Switzerland. She was attending the activities of a Presbyterian youth group in our city. Erik and Kaylee were intrigued by her faith. When I met Erik, he wanted to ask me questions about why I believe in God and in Jesus.

I began by asking both to reflect on several questions dealing with apologetics: *Why is there something, rather than nothing? How did something come from nothing? How did order come from chaos? Does design demand a designer? Where did objective morality come from? And, who was Jesus?*

However, it was evidence associated with the Shroud of Turin that really made a difference for Erik! It wasn’t long before both he and his lovely wife became followers of Jesus and were baptized, along with Moana, in the Spokane River. Today they are

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rejoicing and growing in their walk with the Lord. Erik will tell you that he attributes the miraculous image on the Turin Shroud as a major reason for his conversion. For him, the image was *a sign from heaven* testifying to the truthfulness of the Gospel of Christ!

A story about an unparalleled person named Jesus has been passed down through the centuries. Is there any tangible, extraordinary evidence corroborating what the Bible calls “the Gospel” story? Yes!

Today a visual witness exists affirming the authenticity of the Jesus story! It is, in fact, an artifact that has been studied by scientists more than any other artifact in history. An ancient burial cloth displays the faint image of a crucified man and shows the unique wounds mentioned in the Biblical narrative of Jesus' death. Yet, surprisingly, scientists have been unable to either fully replicate this image or to explain how this remarkable image could have been naturally formed. In that regard, *"Its origin remains a mystery wrapped in an enigma."*<sup>2</sup>

The ghostly image has properties associated with being a high-definition, three-dimensional, photographic negative!<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the image bears witness to “Intelligent Design.” Yet, it was not the work of an artist!<sup>4</sup> How can that be?

“The man on the cloth” bears witness to only one man and to only one story known throughout all of history!<sup>5</sup> Does this cloth, known today as “the Shroud of Turin,” provide evidence for both the Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus? Could this artifact have anything to do with the Father’s witness—an “attesting miracle from heaven”—which Jesus promised before his death and labeled “The Sign of Jonah”?

*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she*

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<sup>2</sup> Viviano, “Why Shroud of Turin's Secrets Continue to Elude Science,” *National Geographic*, April 17, 2015, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150417-shroud-turin-relics-jesus-catholic-church-religion-science.html>

<sup>3</sup> For a summary revealing the findings of science regarding the Shroud of Turin, see Robert J. Spitzer, “Science and the Shroud of Turin,” *Magis Center of Reason and Faith* (May 2015) 1–33, [https://2i7i0l43ftgic4pas6ndtk6b-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Science\\_and\\_the\\_Shroud\\_of\\_Turin.pdf](https://2i7i0l43ftgic4pas6ndtk6b-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Science_and_the_Shroud_of_Turin.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> This was a strong conclusion stated by the team of scientists who were invited to study the cloth up close in 1978. See “A Summary of STURP's Conclusions,” accessed October 25, 2019, <https://www.shroud.com/78conclu.htm>

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the evidence for the Shroud being the genuine burial cloth of Jesus see Marc Borkan, “Ecce Homo? Science and the Authenticity of the Turin Shroud,” *Vertices: The Duke University Magazine of Science, Technology, and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1995) 18–51.

*came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*<sup>6</sup>

From the three “Sign of Jonah” passages recorded in the Gospels of Matthew<sup>7</sup> and Luke,<sup>8</sup> this question emerges: What *specifically* was “the sign of Jonah” that Jesus promised? The answer to that question has been the subject of much debate. “*The saying is a riddle.*”<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately there is a degree of ambiguity due, in part, to grammatical options and to differences between what the three passages say.

*“In the phrase τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ (the sign of Jonah) some take the genitive as an appositive genitive (the sign which was given in the prophet Jonah), some as a subjective genitive (the sign which Jonah gave), and some as an objective genitive (the sign which Jonah experienced).”*<sup>10</sup>

## 2. INTERPRETATIONS SUGGESTED FOR “THE SIGN OF JONAH”

Exegetes differ in their opinions and have put forward several interpretations for “*the sign of Jonah*”:

- A. The saying originally referred to *John the Baptist* but was later misapplied to the prophet Jonah.<sup>11</sup>

This interpretation puts an emphasis on the spelling of the name Jonah, which was an abbreviated form of John in the Greek language.<sup>12</sup>

- B. The “*sign of the dove.*”<sup>13</sup>

This next suggestion places an emphasis on the meaning of the name Jonah, which is “dove.”<sup>14</sup> The “sign of the dove” would recall the earlier story of Jesus’ baptism and “*the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*”<sup>15</sup> Yet, if this is indeed the correct interpretation of the metaphor, why is the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost described as “tongues of fire” (Acts 2.3), rather than as a “dove”? A second objection to both of these first two

<sup>6</sup> Matt 12.38–42 (NASV)

<sup>7</sup> Matt 12.38-42; 16.1-4

<sup>8</sup> Luke 11.29-32

<sup>9</sup> J. Schniewind, *Das Ev. nach Mt., NT Deutsch*, 2.9 (1960), cited by Rengstorff, “σημεῖον,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) VII.233, n. 224.

<sup>10</sup> Joachim Jeremias, “Ἰωνᾶς,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) III.408. English translation of τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ added by the current author.

<sup>11</sup> C. Moxon, *ExpT*, 22 (1911), 566–67; J. H. Michael, *JThSt*, 21 (1920), 146-59, cited by Jeremias, “Ἰωνᾶς,” 408, n. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremias, “Ἰωνᾶς,” 408.

<sup>13</sup> Runze, *Das Zeichen des Menschensohnes* 74, cited by Jeremias, *ibid*, n. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremias, “Ἰωνᾶς,” 408.

<sup>15</sup> Matt 3.16–17

interpretations is that neither of them, in any way, witness to the three-day and three-night period of Jesus' death.

- C. Jonah's *preaching* to the Ninevites which became renewed in the call of Jesus' preaching for repentance.<sup>16</sup>

Although this understanding for *the Sign* does have a contextual basis in Matthew and Luke (both making mention of "the preaching of Jonah") this interpretation is likely incorrect because of the future tense of the verb in Luke 11.30, "*For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.*" Although Jesus is already involved in a ministry of preaching, "the sign of Jonah" is something still to come.

- D. The *death* of Jesus prefigured earlier by Jonah's sojourn in the belly of the sea monster.<sup>17</sup>

Only Matthew's account includes the typological reference to Jonah's "*three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*"<sup>18</sup> This typology appears to be very important to Matthew's understanding of *the Sign*. Therefore, this suggested interpretation has much to commend it. Yet, it is inadequate! Surely Jesus' death alone is insufficient for our understanding of *the Sign*, just as Jonah's ministry did not end with him being inside the belly of the sea monster.

- E. The miracle of the deliverance of Jonah from death later to be paralleled by the *Resurrection* of Jesus.<sup>19</sup>

The most common interpretation found for "*the sign of Jonah*" is to equate it with the Resurrection of Jesus. Both Jonah and Jesus were delivered from death. And "*Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites*" only after he was delivered from death. But, like the previous interpretation, this one is also inadequate by itself since Matthew puts emphasis on the period while the Lord was in the tomb.

- F. Jesus' *death-and-resurrection* together.<sup>20</sup>

This last suggestion for how we should understand the promised *Sign* seems to be the best of all the options listed above. "*The sign of Jonah*" was to be something

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<sup>16</sup> W. Brandt, *Die Evangelische Geschichte u. d. Ursprung des Chrts.* (1893), 459, n. 2, cited by Jeremias, *ibid*, 409. One contemporary study Bible offers this interpretation: "What was the sign of Jonah? God had asked Jonah to preach repentance to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Jesus was affirming Jonah's message. Salvation is not only for Jews, but for all people." *Life Application Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000) 1770, footnote for Luke 11.29-30.

<sup>17</sup> P. Bonnard, *Matthieu* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1970), 184, cited by Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 574.

<sup>18</sup> Matt 12.40

<sup>19</sup> J. Gnllka, *Das Mattheusevangelium*, (1986), 1:466, cited by Bruner, *ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> E. Schweizer, *Matthew* (1975), 291, cited by Bruner, *ibid*.

that would provide a witness to both the death and subsequent Resurrection of Jesus.

In keeping with that conclusion, Luke provides this explanatory statement: “*For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.*”<sup>21</sup> How exactly and how literal does Luke intend for us to understand the typology between Jonah and Jesus?<sup>22</sup> Since the prophet Jonah was an actual person, is he telling us that the forthcoming *Sign* will be the person of Jesus himself? Or might it be something like the Shroud that depicted his crucified body and bears evidence of his Resurrection in glory? It is intriguing, in this Biblical narrative, that Jesus repeatedly speaks, not of “*someone greater is here*” but, rather, that “*something greater is here*” (Matt 12.41, 42; Luke 11.31, 32).<sup>23</sup>

This author thinks either of the two options suggested above is possible. The coming *Sign* might be the person of Jesus himself or something that testified to his Resurrection in glory. If we decide in favor of a literal understanding of the forthcoming *Sign*—and, thereby, equate *the Sign* with the living, post-Resurrection (glorified) body of the Lord—a significant problem arises. However, this problem does not exist when *the Sign* is equated with the Shroud. I will discuss this matter shortly. If one decides to interpret Luke literally here, he or she should still treasure and seek to comprehend each Gospel writer’s perspective on this and any other topic.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Luke 11.30.

<sup>22</sup> Luke has given us this statement in place of Matthew’s typological statement regarding the entombment: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12.40).

<sup>23</sup> One would expect for him to have used the masculine “someone” but, surprisingly, he chose the neuter form of the comparative πολύς: “something greater”. Why the neuter form (πλεῖον)? Might this be a hint that the good *Sign* to come will be “something” attesting to the death-burial-and Resurrection of Jesus, rather than equating the sign with the literal person or body of Jesus himself? The neuter form of a different comparative (μέγας), “something greater,” appears in the larger context back in verse six with Jesus contrasting himself with the temple. Why is the neuter form of this other comparative twice used now when the contrast is, supposedly, between Jesus and Jonah/Solomon? Nowhere else in the Four Gospels do we find the neuter comparative used this way of Jesus! Its only here in this pericope, and it is in both Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts.

<sup>24</sup> This author thinks it is best to respect and to listen to what each Gospel is trying to communicate while not emphasizing or requiring that any one Gospel writer be forced to harmonize with what another Gospel states. For example, a critical reading of Luke’s account of the Last Supper (22.14-20) seems to indicate that Jesus was fasting that evening. But one doesn’t get that impression from the other Gospel accounts. Likewise, from the Synoptic Gospels we are led to believe that the Last Supper took place on the evening of Passover. While that was true for Jesus and his disciples, from John’s Gospel we learn that, officially speaking, Passover took place the following evening (19.14, 31, 42). In addition, while each of the Four Gospels records the feeding of the 5,000, it is only from Mark’s account (6.7-13, 30-45) that we perceive it to have been an occasion when the disciples had gathered an army of men to make war. Certainly, other examples could be given. My point is that Matthew doesn’t inform us as to what exactly *he* understood the future *Sign of Jonah* would be, but Luke apparently does (although not without some ambiguity). And Mark simply states that “no sign shall be given to this generation” (8.11-12).

### 3. A REQUEST FROM JESUS' OPPONENTS

Luke's account of *the Sign of Jonah* is shorter and, likely later than Matthew's record. It is instructive to consider the setting behind Matthew's earlier account. The twelfth chapter of Matthew is a chapter of conflict in which the Pharisees, in four separate incidents, feature prominently: (1) opposition to Jesus' disciples picking heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath (Vv. 1-8); (2) opposition to Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath (Vv. 9-14); (3) opposition to Jesus healing a demon-possessed man who was also blind and dumb; and then there is our passage, (4) the desire for a sign (Vv. 38-45).

"The Pharisees" took exception to Jesus' claim to be the "Lord of the Sabbath" (v. 8) and countered that he was able to cast out demons because he was empowered by Satan (v. 24). These Pharisees "went out and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (v. 14). Jesus continues the confrontation by calling them a "brood of vipers" and, in the form of a question, accuses them of being "evil" (v. 34). In response, "*some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying: 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You'*" (v. 38).

So we should take note that it is in response to a request made by His opponents that Jesus promised a future *Sign of Jonah*.

What else can we discern from the request itself? In essence, His opponents ask for a "sign." What did a "sign" entail?

The Greek word for "sign" is σημεῖον (sēmeion). The idea behind this word is a "miracle of divine origin"<sup>25</sup> or a "miracle by which God authenticates the men sent by him."<sup>26</sup> In this context, an appropriate translation would be an "attesting miracle." The word for the miracles of Jesus in both Matthew and Luke is δύναμις (dunamis), never σημεῖον. Although Jesus has worked several spectacular miracles, his opponents have rejected the source of his miracles as being from God above.

If the future *Sign* Jesus promises is to satisfy the criteria of his opponents then, based on the actual request made, it should contain at least two identifying markers.

To begin with, it should be a sign that will be seen by his opponents. "*Teacher, we want to see a sign...*" This would seem to be a weakness of Luke identifying the Sign with the Resurrected Jesus. Who witnessed the Resurrection itself? No one! The tomb was found empty. The greatest miracle of all had no witnesses! To whom did Jesus appear after his Resurrection? To his disciples! Paul provides a list of appearances. It includes an appearance "to more than five hundred *brethren* at one time."<sup>27</sup> Once Jesus came forth from the tomb, I am not aware of any appearance Jesus made to his opponents

<sup>25</sup> W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 755.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, trans., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1889) 573.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 15.6

that would cement Luke’s identification of *the Sign of Jonah* with the living, Resurrected Lord. “*Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites.*”<sup>28</sup> The men of Nineveh saw Jonah after he came forth from the belly of the sea monster. But did the men of Jerusalem—the very ones who demanded Jesus be crucified—see the Lord alive after spending three days and three nights in his tomb? No!

So, the above problem does arise when one equates the post-Resurrected glorified body of the Lord with *the sign of Jonah* that Jesus promised would come. His opponents had no opportunity to behold *the Sign*! However, this problem is non-existent when the Shroud is understood as being the fulfillment of the promised *sign of Jonah*. It was possible for non-disciples to visibly see the Shroud after the Ascension of Jesus, and it continues to be possible up to the present time.

Another criteria (or identifying marker) for a sign requested by his opponents is that **it be “from heaven.”**<sup>29</sup> Even the two spectacular miracles Jesus performed earlier in this chapter, leading to their request for a sign, were not enough to convince them that he was heaven’s messenger. They are demanding one extraordinary (signature) miracle by the very hand of God,<sup>30</sup> something unequivocally with God’s signature affirming and testifying to the fact that he is Daniel’s Son of Man.

Like God Almighty bringing down fire from heaven to consume the offering on the altar during the ministry of Elijah of old,<sup>31</sup> these Pharisees are challenging and demanding that God above do something to demonstrate that Jesus is truly the Anointed One, the Christ.

Did the early Church view the image on Jesus’ burial Shroud as a “Sign from heaven”?

The Greek word, ἀχειροποίητα (acheiropoieta), began to be used for an image of Jesus on linen cloth no later than 554 AD.<sup>32</sup> This Greek word literally means “**not made by human hands.**”<sup>33</sup> It would be another way of saying the image was “from heaven” and not a product of human creation.

#### 4. JESUS’ RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR A SIGN

Now let’s move away from focusing on the request made by Jesus’ opponents and analyze the Lord’s response. In doing so we will see that his response also contains some

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<sup>28</sup> Luke 11.30

<sup>29</sup> Matt 16.

<sup>30</sup> It might be that they are demanding to see something in the sky above that can, unequivocally, be attributed to the hand of God. In that regard, Luke 17.24-25 is an interesting text in light of how the Shroud might have originated from an intense burst of light. That theory is discussed later in this paper.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Kings 18.16-40

<sup>32</sup> Jack Markwardt, “Modern Scholarship and the History of the Turin Shroud,” *St. Louis International Shroud Conference* (Oct 2014) 21-23. <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/stlmarkwardtpaper.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> This Greek word is strikingly similar to οὐ χειροποίητος (“not made by human hand”) which was used by the writer of Hebrews (9.11) in a context which, this author believes, should very likely be seen as a veiled reference to the Shroud of Turin within the New Testament. See the author’s paper, “The Early Christians Identified Jesus’ Shroud with His Priestly & Royal Robe!” at [www.Shroud.com](http://www.Shroud.com).

identifying markers which should assist us in identifying the genuine *Sign of Jonah* from false contenders.

To begin with, it should be noted that **Jesus did promise one good, visible sign!** “*But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it **except** the sign of Jonah the prophet.*”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the authentic *Sign of Jonah* should be one extraordinary, visible sign concerning the Resurrection—God’s signature miracle—that will affirm Jesus as being heaven’s unique agent.

Matthew’s narrative continues by informing us that there will be some sort of typology between Jonah’s stay in the belly of the sea monster and Jesus’ burial in the tomb: “*for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*”<sup>35</sup>

So, the future *sign of Jonah* should reveal visible **evidence of Jesus being dead for a short period of time**—for “three days and three nights.” The Turin Shroud certainly does show signs of a dead man! The corpse reveals signs of rigor mortis. But what is especially interesting is that the pathological evidence suggests, somehow, the body was removed from the cloth without disturbing the bloodstains. Removing the body from the cloth should have smeared or broken the blood clots. Therefore, this evidence suggests the separation of the body from the cloth was not by normal means. Furthermore, no signs are evident that the body had begun the process of decomposition!<sup>36</sup> This means “*the upper limit for the removal of the body (from the cloth) at roughly forty-eight to seventy-two hours after death.*”<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the typology of being dead for a short period of time, the Sign to come should also parallel Jonah’s deliverance of being **set free from the captivity of his tomb.**

In place of the “three days and three nights” comparison, Luke simply states: “*as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.*”<sup>38</sup> What would cause the Ninevites to believe that God Almighty had commissioned Jonah to travel to their country and demand repentance? What sign exactly “struck their eye”?<sup>39</sup> Was there something unique about his appearance?

<sup>34</sup> Matt 12.39 (emphasis added).

<sup>35</sup> Matt 12.40. It is best to understand the mathematics of the text here with the Hebrew method of reckoning a part for the whole (synecdoche): starting with late Friday afternoon (before the new day of Passover began at sunset), continuing with all day Saturday, and ending sometime early Sunday morning (cf. Esther 4.16, 5.1; Gen 40.13, 20; 2 Chron 10.5, 12). Jesus was likely in the tomb for approximately 36-38 hours (give or take a little). See Bruner, *Matthew*, 574.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Bucklin, “Postmortem Changes and the Shroud of Turin,” *Shroud Spectrum International* (March 1985) 14: 5.

<sup>37</sup> Borkan, *Ecce Homo?*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Luke 11.30

<sup>39</sup> Behind “sign” (σημεῖον) there is generally a visual element, something that “strikes the eye.” Σημεῖον was an “outward distinguishing mark.” James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, “σημεῖον,” *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1930) 572.



Over the years, cases have been reported of sailors being swallowed by sperm whales. Such stories sound incredulous and most, if not all of them, are likely myths. One incident in 1891 is reputed to have been investigated carefully by a prominent scientist whose name was provided. Once the sailor was rescued the account states: “*His face, neck and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness and took on the appearance of parchment.*”<sup>40</sup> It does seem reasonable that stomach acid within the large sea creature would cause a bleaching effect to the skin.

Should we expect similarity between the post-captivity *appearance* of Jonah and the appearance of *the sign of Jonah* Jesus is promising in the future? Such a question seems appropriate to ask. In that regard, it is intriguing to ponder the startling, ghostly image of the “man on the cloth” on the Turin Shroud.

In review, we discovered two criteria for identifying the promised *Sign of Jonah* from the request made by the scribes and Pharisees:

- A sign (attesting miracle) that his opponents will be able to see!
- This spectacular sign must be from heaven!

So far from Jesus response we have discerned that *the Sign of Jonah* should be:

- One good, extraordinary, visible sign!
- Show evidence of having been in the tomb for less than seventy-hours! &
- Reveal additional typological evidence of having been delivered from the captivity of his tomb!

Are there any additional identifying markers?

Here is another marker from Jesus’ response: *The Sign of Jonah* will **function as a warning of Judgment** to come upon an “evil and adulterous generation.”

A definite judgment motif exists in both Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts of the forthcoming *Jonah sign*. The words “**condemn**,” “**repented**,” and “**the Judgment**” are all found. Specifically Jesus speaks of condemnation for his own “evil and adulterous<sup>41</sup> generation.”<sup>42</sup> Both writers speak of “*the men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago: 1974) 314, n. 9; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1969) 906-11.

<sup>41</sup> The idea behind “adulterous” is covenant breaking.

<sup>42</sup> Mt. 12.39; 16.4; Lk. 11.29

<sup>43</sup> Mt. 12.41; Lk. 11.32

Both writers also speak of how “*The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation<sup>44</sup> and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold something greater than Solomon is here.*”<sup>45</sup>



What does the image on the Turin Shroud reveal? It graphically shows the inhumane torture and crucifixion of a young man, approximately 30-35 years of age, 5’-11” tall and weighing 175 pounds.<sup>46</sup> He looks to have been in excellent physical health. His unique wounds are exactly in keeping with the Biblical story of Jesus. And in that story, we learn how Jesus, as an *innocent* man, was *unjustly* tortured and sentenced to a very cruel death.

47

Jesus spoke of his mission as calling “sinners to repentance.”<sup>48</sup> “*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*”<sup>49</sup> The Passion of the Christ had a redeeming purpose rooted in the love of God satisfying the justice (wrath) of God.<sup>50</sup> Jesus was on a heavenly mission to rescue humanity from the punishment they deserved!

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.*<sup>51</sup>

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century (around the same time the “Image of God Incarnate” emerged in the Byzantine area of Cilicia) a particular portrait of Christ began to surface, and it has retained a prominent place in the iconography of the Eastern Church to the present day. This popular portrait of Christ is known by the Greek name “Pantocrator” (παντοκράτωρ), which means “Ruler over all.” When the Hebrew Bible was translated into the Greek

<sup>44</sup> Luke is considerate of the women and writes “the men of this generation.”

<sup>45</sup> Mt. 12.42; Lk. 11.31

<sup>46</sup> Vittorio Guerrera, *The Shroud of Turin: A Case for Authenticity* (Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 2001) 1.

<sup>47</sup> © Vernon Miller, 1978. No unauthorized reproduction of Material on other Websites is allowed without prior written permission from the shroudphotos.com copyright holder. Original photos are available for free at [www.shroudphotos.com](http://www.shroudphotos.com).

<sup>48</sup> Luke 5.32

<sup>49</sup> Luke 19.10

<sup>50</sup> Rom 3.21-26; 5.6-11

<sup>51</sup> John 3.16-19

Septuagint, Pantocrator was used in rendering both *YHWH Sabaoth*, "Lord of Hosts,"<sup>52</sup> and for *El Shaddai*, "God Almighty."<sup>53</sup>



Pictured is the oldest example of the *Pantocrator* icon, discovered in 1962 at Saint Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai desert. The face appears somewhat asymmetrical. It seems the artist worked a theological message into the image. "The left side of the face shows Christ with a gentle gaze and his hand raised in blessing and mercy to all of humanity ... *Savior*. The right side of the face shows Christ with a severe expression and a penetrating gaze as he holds the *Book* that contains the Law ... *Judge and "Ruler of All."*"<sup>54</sup>

What was the artist's source for his portrait of Christ? Using a "Polarized Image Overlay Technique," two researchers found one hundred and seventy points of congruence between this *Pantocrator* image and the face image on the Shroud of Turin.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, a French scientist, prior to WWII, identified fifteen recurring odd markings existing on early *Pantocrator* portraits that are also found on the image of the Turin Shroud. His hypothesis is akin to using fingerprinting to demonstrate the influence of the Shroud on those early *Pantocrator* portraits of Christ.<sup>56</sup>

A case can be made (based on the *Pantocrator* icon) that early Christians associated the image on the Shroud with Jesus being the *Savior, Judge, and Ruler of All*. Such a portrayal of Jesus is in keeping with Daniel's apocalyptic vision of "One like a Son of Man" being presented before the Ancient of Days in the heavenly court, when the books (associated with the Judgment) are opened and the "Son of Man" is given an everlasting kingdom.<sup>57</sup>

That leads us to a final identifying marker for *the Sign of Jonah* to be discerned from Jesus' response to his opponents for a spectacular sign: The *Sign* should have **evidence connecting Jesus with Daniel's "Son of Man."** Jesus uses this term for himself in the

<sup>52</sup> 2 Samuel 7:8; Amos 3:13

<sup>53</sup> Job 5:17; 15:25; 22:25

<sup>54</sup> John Jackson, *The Shroud of Turin: A Critical Summary of Observations, Data, and Hypotheses* (The Turin Shroud Center of Colorado: [www.shroudofturin.com](http://www.shroudofturin.com), 2017) 18.

<sup>55</sup> Mary and Alan Whanger, *The Shroud of Turin, An Adventure in Discovery* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1998) 48.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Vignon, "Le Saint Suaire de Turin devant la Science," *l'Archeologie, l'Histoire, l'Iconographie* (la Logique, Paris: Masson, 1939) 131-9.

<sup>57</sup> Dan 7.9-14; cf. 12.1; Rev 20.11-15

Jonah passages both in Matthew and Luke. “*For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will **the Son of Man** be to this generation.*”<sup>58</sup>

Later in this paper I will present further evidence (in addition to the *Pantocrator* icon) suggesting the early Church understood this connection between the burial Shroud of Jesus and Daniel’s Son of Man.

## 5. THE TURIN SHROUD IS *THE SIGN OF JONAH* FOR OUR OWN GENERATION

Having analyzed the three passages concerning *the sign of Jonah*—both from the perspective of the request made by Jesus’ opponents and from the perspective of Jesus’ reply—this author suggests the following solution (thesis) to identifying the promised *Sign* Jesus foretold:

The live appearances Jesus made (in His glorified body) after the Resurrection could be viewed as the extraordinary visible *Sign of Jonah to His disciples*—testifying that the Father had worked His signature miracle affirming the identity of Jesus as the Christ, Daniel’s “Son of Man.”<sup>59</sup> However, did those appearances actually fulfill all the stated criteria? A visible *Sign* was both requested by Jesus’ opponents and was stated by Jesus Himself to be the one *Sign* for “*an evil and adulterous generation.*” Furthermore, that one *Sign* was to serve as a warning of judgment to come upon that generation. So how did the appearances to His disciples fulfill those conditions? This author fails to understand how they did. The live appearances made only to His disciples did *not* satisfy all the identifying markers. Fortunately, following the Ascension, God graciously provided a surrogate *Sign* for that evil generation and for future generations: **Jesus’ burial cloth—bearing its incredible miraculous image—was the Father’s witness to the Gospel and the *Sign of Jonah* for every ensuing generation!**

The narrative of the Resurrection in John’s Gospel provides textual support from the New Testament itself for the above thesis. The living, glorified body of Jesus became a sign for Thomas resulting in faith: “*My Lord and my God!*”<sup>60</sup> In addition, the burial linens became a sign for “the disciple whom Jesus loved” that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Something about the linen(s) itself produced faith: “*He saw and believed!*”<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere this author provides an exegesis of this passage in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>62</sup> For now, I simply ask the reader to take note how that specific passage informs us that both disciples came to faith in the Resurrection by means of a visible sign—for one it was the funeral linens and for the other it was the glorified body of the Lord!

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<sup>58</sup> Luke 11.30; cf. Matt 12.40

<sup>59</sup> Dan 7.9-14; cf. 12.1; Rev 20.11-15

<sup>60</sup> John 20.28

<sup>61</sup> John 20.8

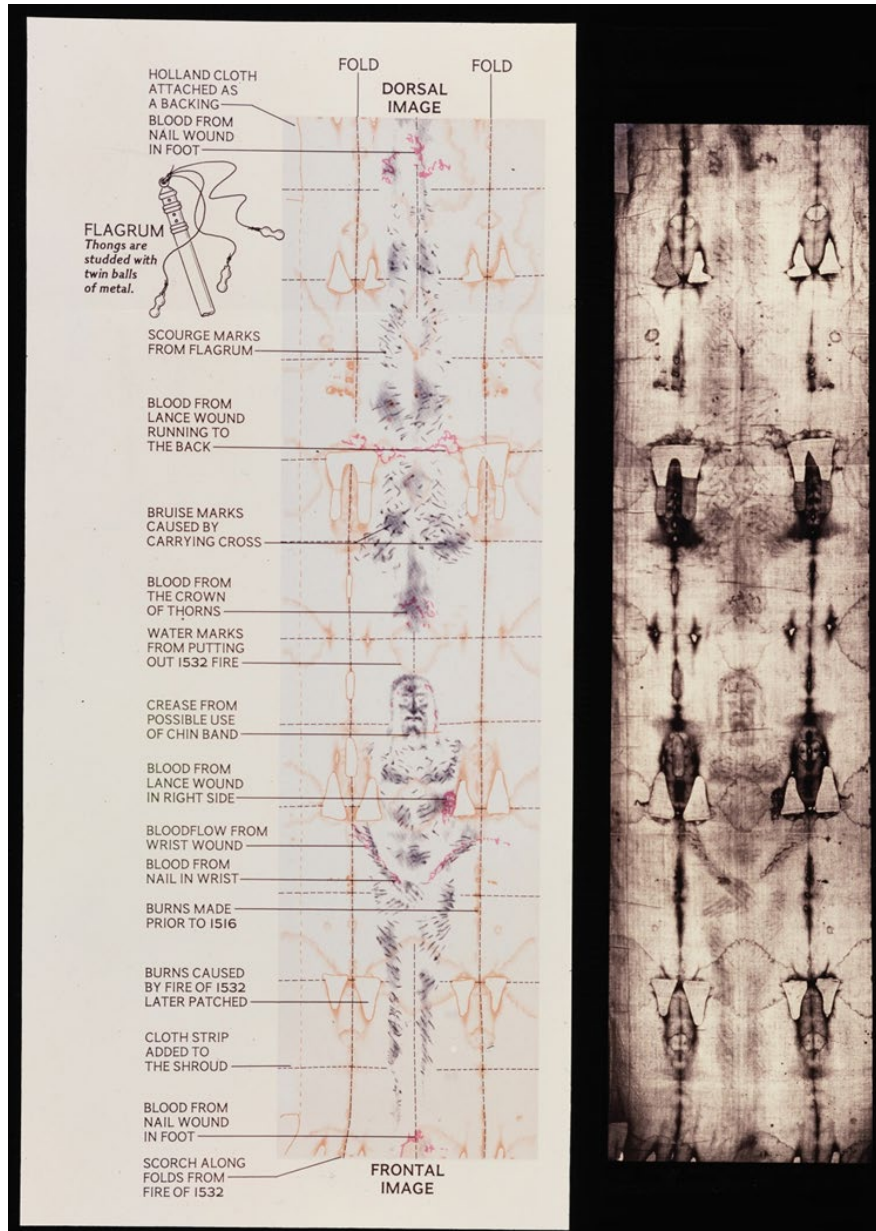
<sup>62</sup> See the author’s paper, “*He Saw and Believed!*” *Is the Shroud of Turin in the Background of John’s Resurrection Narrative?* at [www.shroud.com](http://www.shroud.com).



Our attention will now turn to other evidence in support of my thesis above.

Does the Shroud of Turin show the identifying markers we should anticipate—both from the request for a sign made to Jesus and the markers we should anticipate by his response? Does the Shroud show visible signs of the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus? The answer to both questions is an astonishing, Yes!

### 6-1. EVIDENCE ON THE TURIN SHROUD OF JESUS' DEATH AND BURIAL



On the inside of an ancient burial cloth, known today as the Shroud of Turin,<sup>63</sup> there is the ghostly image of a man who had been tortured and crucified. Crucifixion was outlawed in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century by the Roman emperor Constantine.<sup>64, 65</sup> “The man on the cloth” shows wounds of having suffered a unique crucifixion in keeping with the Biblical account of Jesus’ death. There are over one-hundred marks on the body from what, apparently, was a flogging inflicted using a Roman flagrum. There are also numerous

<sup>63</sup> The Shroud has resided in the cathedral of St. John the Baptist in the city of Turin (Italy) since 1578.

<sup>64</sup> Melissa Petruzzello, “Crucifixion: Capital Punishment,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/crucifixion-capital-punishment>.

<sup>65</sup> Photograph © Vernon Miller, 1978.

marks both on and around the top of the head, as if there had been a crown of thorns placed upon the man's head. A wound can be seen on one of the wrists, and also on one of the ankles, as if made by nails. And there is a large elliptical-shaped wound visible in the man's right chest, as if speared by a Roman lance. These wounds fit only one man and one story in all of history! *"The comparison of the New Testament and the Shroud image lines up at every point."*<sup>66</sup>

Could this burial cloth be the Father's witness to the "Gospel" story and His gracious gift to the doubting Thomas(s) of all generations? Could the Shroud of Turin be the promised *Sign of Jonah* following Jesus' Ascension into heaven?

In answering that question, let's consider—in more depth—the meaning of σημεῖον, the Greek word for "sign."

- Σημεῖον is *"a visual sign by which someone or something is recognized."*<sup>67</sup>
- *"Those who observe it may draw assured conclusions."*<sup>68</sup>

Matthew's Gospel informs us that Judas gave a σημεῖον to those ordered to arrest Jesus.<sup>69</sup> A "kiss" served to distinguish the one they were seeking.

Early in Luke's Gospel we read how an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds out in the fields bringing good news of the birth of Christ the Savior in Bethlehem. But how would they be able to distinguish which baby was the promised Savior? He said to them, *"And this will be a sign (σημεῖον) for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*<sup>70</sup>

Etymologically, σημεῖον (sēmeion), is developed from—and linguistically related to—the Greek word for "mark," σῆμα (sēma).<sup>71</sup> And, in some nuance, σημεῖον always retains the meaning of a "mark."<sup>72</sup>

The most prestigious, annual custom-car-show in North America is called SEMA. Car builders bring their best, signature<sup>73</sup> work wanting to leave their "mark" on the industry.

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<sup>66</sup> Kenneth E. Stevenson and Gary R. Habermas, *Verdict on the Shroud: Evidence for the Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1981) 45.

<sup>67</sup> Rengstorf, "σημεῖον," VII.204.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 232.

<sup>69</sup> Matt 26.48

<sup>70</sup> Luke 2.12

<sup>71</sup> Rengstorf, "σημεῖον," ed. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) VII.201-269.

<sup>72</sup> "...σημεῖον is always given its meaning by σῆμα." (Ibid, 204)

<sup>73</sup> Well into the Christian age (6<sup>th</sup> century) "an illiterate person puts three crosses on a document instead of his name and the scribe who draws it up makes this primitive subscription valid by putting the name of his client (Πέτρον) under the crosses along with the word σῆμα, which in context can only mean that Petros made the crosses himself and wished them to be understood as his signature." *Papyrus Grecs d'époque Byzantine*, ed. J. Maspero, (1911) II. 67, 163, 37, as quoted by Rengstorf, "σημεῖον," 205.



In essence, σημεῖον was an “outward distinguishing mark.”<sup>74</sup> In ancient Greece ships were known by their ensigns, and the admiral’s ship was marked as such with its own σημεῖον to set it apart from the other ships.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, the warrior’s shield was adorned with his σημεῖον which stamped on it the individuality of its owner.<sup>76</sup>

In the Septuagint σημεῖον is used for “the mark of Cain,”<sup>77</sup> for the blood on the Israelite houses,<sup>78</sup> for the rainbow in the sky, guaranteeing God’s covenantal promise,<sup>79</sup> and for the mark of circumcision as a “sign of the covenant” with Abraham.<sup>80</sup>

So, it is very interesting that the Shroud has numerous, visual *marks* on its surface that can be seen with the naked eye. These marks show evidence of crucifixion and burial. And, again, these *marks* fit only one person and one story in history!

## 6-2. A WARNING OF JUDGMENT TO COME

If this Shroud is the burial cloth of Jesus, then it corroborates the Biblical record of both a Roman scourging and crucifixion. Normally a victim received only one of these punishments. Scourging was administered for a non-capital offense. Crucifixion was reserved for capital offenses. In agreement with the Jesus story, this victim suffered the unusual punishment of both, in addition to what looks to have been a cap of thorns around the top of his head.

The New Testament records an innocent Jesus suffering a mock trial and a very cruel, unjust, punishment. By itself the Shroud cannot tell us whether its victim was guilty or innocent of his crime. But it does support the Biblical narrative of “an evil and adulterous generation” who rejected Jesus as their Messiah and unjustly put him to death. Thereby, the image on the Shroud *does* serve as damning evidence of judgment to come

<sup>74</sup> James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, “σημεῖον,” *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1930) 572.

<sup>75</sup> Herodotus VIII.92. Cited by Rengstorf, “σημεῖον,” VII.204.

<sup>76</sup> Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas* 387, 432. Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Gen 4.15

<sup>78</sup> Exod 12.13

<sup>79</sup> Gen 9.13

<sup>80</sup> Gen 17.11

upon that generation. It also functions as a call for repentance as demanded by the Gospel of God.<sup>81</sup>

The early church historian, Eusebius, wrote about the horrible judgment that came upon the Jews living in Jerusalem and throughout Judea at the hands of the Romans forty years after the injustice done to Jesus.

*...the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his apostles, finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth.... Divine vengeance did not long delay to visit them for their iniquity against the Christ of God.*<sup>82</sup>

### **6-3. EVIDENCE ON THE SHROUD OF JESUS' RESURRECTION?**

The image on the Shroud also bears evidence of being the spectacular miracle Jesus promised! “No sign will be given *except* the sign of Jonah.” The “marks” provide evidence of the death and burial of a real crucified man. Yet, scientists have determined the corpse was not covered by the cloth long enough for signs of decomposition of the flesh to take place.<sup>83</sup> What happened to the body? Removing the corpse from the cloth should have resulted in a distortion of the bloodstains, but no such distortion is present. The most interesting and complex question we can ask is how was the image formed?

#### **6-3a. Can the Formation of the Image Be Explained Naturally?**

Hypotheses of how the image might have been formed naturally fall into three general categories.<sup>84</sup>

First, there is what can be labeled the fraud hypothesis. These theories assert the image on the Shroud was produced by some form of fakery.

Suggestions that paints, dyes, powder, or acid were applied to the linen by some kind of applicator have abounded. Yet, X-ray fluorescence and other tests failed to reveal any foreign substance on the Shroud that would account for the image. In addition, there are no brush strokes of any kind and the image is very superficial, not even penetrating through one fiber of the cloth. Also, the three-dimensional characteristics of the image refute the fraud hypothesis.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, one must account for the blood being on the cloth *prior* to the anatomically perfect, photographic-negative image of the crucified victim! How could a forger possibly do that?

<sup>81</sup> E.g., 2 Cor 5:10-21; Acts 2.37-38; 10.34-43; 26.16-20

<sup>82</sup> Christian Frederick Cruse, tr., *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955) iii.v:86-87.

<sup>83</sup> See Ray Rogers' answer to question #11 under “FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)” at <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/rogers5faqs.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> Stevenson and Habermas, *Verdict*, 80-95 and 191-98, provide an excellent critique of these hypotheses.

<sup>85</sup> John Jackson, et. al., “The Three-Dimensional Image on Jesus' Burial Cloth,” in *Proceedings of the 1977 United States Conference on the Shroud of Turin*, Kenneth E. Stevenson, ed. (Bronx, New York: Holy Shroud Guild, 1977) 90.



After years of exhaustive study and evaluation of their data, the STURP scientific team strongly concluded that the image “*is not the product of an artist.*”<sup>86</sup> The image was not formed by dyes, chemicals, vapors, or scorching. No findings have surfaced since their report to seriously challenge that conclusion.

In 1988 a single sample taken from the cloth was dated by means of radiocarbon dating and assigned a medieval date (1260-1390 AD). However, since then a number of peer-reviewed articles have been published in scientific journals seriously challenging the conclusion of that experiment.<sup>87</sup> Not only were long-established protocols violated during that experiment,<sup>88</sup> but these subsequent studies seriously called into question the purity and the quality of the sample tested.<sup>89, 90</sup> Professor Harry Gove, the very inventor of the radiocarbon dating method utilized on the Shroud sample, characterized the experiment as “a rather shoddy enterprise.”<sup>91</sup>

The vaporgraph hypothesis is a second general category where we can put natural explanations for how the image was formed. “*These theories assert that the Shroud image was created by the diffusion of gases upward onto the burial cloth from sources such as sweat, ammonia, blood, and burial spices.*”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See footnote 4 above.

<sup>87</sup> Raymond N. Rogers, “Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin,” *Thermochimica Acta* 425, no. 1-2 (January 20, 2005) 189–94; Tristan Casabianca et al., “Radiocarbon Dating of the Turin Shroud: New Evidence from Raw Data,” *Archaeometry* (March 22, 2019), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/arcm.12467>.

<sup>88</sup> Vittorio Guerrera, *The Shroud of Turin: A Case for Authenticity* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Tan Books, 2001) 112–39.

<sup>89</sup> “The dating which comes from a piece at the top edge [of an uncut sample] is very different from the date which comes from a piece taken from the bottom edge,” stated Dr. Marco Riani of the University of Parma in Italy, as quoted by Frank Viviano, “Why Shroud of Turin’s Secrets Continue to Elude Science,” *National Geographic* (April 17, 2015), <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150417-shroud-turin-relics-jesus-catholic-church-religion-science.html>. See also the discovery of a “bioplastic coating of bacteria and fungus” on the linen fibers that has been growing for centuries, reported by Jim Barrett, “Science and the Shroud Microbiology Meets Archaeology in a Renewed Quest for Answers” in *The Mission* (A Journal of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio) (Spring 1996).

<sup>90</sup> One carbon-dating expert (who is also an archaeologist) has stated: “Over the years a whole host of difficulties have come to light with C14, e.g. modern living samples which give ages of hundreds or thousands of years, or centuries-old samples which give dates in the future. The causes of these phenomena are known, but in many other cases anomalous dates have not been satisfactorily explained.” “As an archaeologist with 25 years of experience using C14 for the dating of excavated samples, I know what most archaeologists do when C14 produces a date which conflicts strongly with other evidence from a site: 1) run more dates on different samples from the same context, and then 2) put the aberrant dates down to some unidentified problem (usually in a footnote to the site report if mentioned at all)... This happens often in archaeology, even on sites and samples which were thought to be ideal for C14 dating. Very rarely is the problem of these individual aberrant dates ever resolved or even addressed.” William Meacham, “C-14 Debate from the Shroud Newsgroup: alt.turin-shroud” (1998), accessed July 12, 2019, <http://www.shroud.com/c14debat.htm>.

<sup>91</sup> Harry E. Gove, *Relic, Icon or Hoax? Carbon dating the Turin Shroud* (London: The Institute of Physics Publishing, 1996) 242.

<sup>92</sup> Stevenson and H Habermas, *Verdict*, 193-94.

What does science suggest concerning the image being a product of gases or vapors?  
A number of problems arise with such a hypothesis:

- Vaporgraphs cannot account for the three-dimensional nature of the Shroud image.<sup>93</sup>
- Vapor images are of poor quality and will not yield a clear, high resolution image like that which exists on the Shroud.<sup>94</sup>
- The image is limited to the uppermost surface of the fibrils, and vapors would penetrate further into the fibers.<sup>95</sup>
- Vaporgraphic theories cannot account for the presence of hair on the Shroud's image.<sup>96</sup>

And here is one final nail in the coffin: "*vapors from chemicals on the body (or from the body itself) could not have produced a perfect photographic image on the area of the cloth which did not touch the body.*"<sup>97</sup>

The third and final category where hypotheses can be grouped to explain a natural formation behind the image falls under contact theories. Here the image is explained as resulting due to either natural contact with a body or by such contact due to fakery.

However, many objections exist as to why this natural explanation for the formation of the image fails the test of science. They include:

- Contact images would not be three-dimensional.<sup>98</sup>
- The Shroud image is pressure independent, whereas the contact hypothesis would be pressure dependent requiring the dorsal image to bear the entire weight of the body.<sup>99</sup>
- Not all areas of the body contacted the cloth, such as certain parts of the face. Yet, even these "drop out" areas show up in the Shroud's image!
- Why don't other burial garments bear such an image? Many grave clothes exist, but the image on the Turin Shroud is both very complex and unique!

The STURP scientific team concluded that the image is the result of an aging of the linen fibers by some rapid, unidentified process involving dehydration and oxidation of the cellulose: "*... the image recording mechanism involved some cellulose*

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<sup>93</sup> Eric Jumper, "Considerations of Molecular Diffusion and Radiation as an Image Formation Process on the Shroud," in Stevenson, *Proceedings*, 184.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>95</sup> Spitzer, "Science and the Shroud," 27.

<sup>96</sup> Jumper, "Considerations," 182.

<sup>97</sup> Spitzer, "Science and the Shroud," 23.

<sup>98</sup> Jackson et. al., in Stevenson, *Proceedings*, 83-84; John P. Jackson, "A Problem of resolution Posed by the Existence of a Three-Dimensional Image on the Shroud," in *ibid*, 223.

<sup>99</sup> Jumper, "Considerations," 186-87.

oxidation/dehydration process.”<sup>100</sup> But, again, the process whereby the linen became aged or degraded has been elusive.

### 6-3b. *If the Image Cannot be Explained Naturally, What Then?*

If a natural explanation for the formation of the image is possible then why hasn't someone successfully stated it and proven it by replicating the image?<sup>101</sup> Instead, seeking a natural explanation profoundly leaves one with “*a mystery wrapped in an enigma.*”<sup>102</sup>

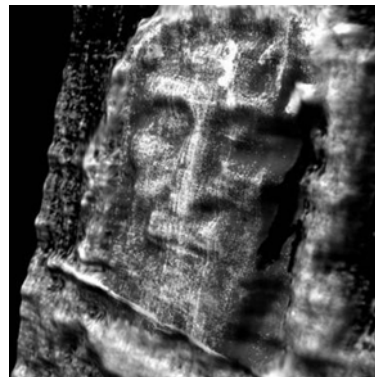
*“It’s fair to say that, despite the seemingly definitive tests in 1988, the status of the Shroud of Turin is murkier than ever. Not least, the nature of the image and how it was fixed on the cloth remain deeply puzzling.”*<sup>103</sup>



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106

<sup>100</sup> Lawrence A. Schwalbe and Roy N. Rogers, “Physics and Chemistry of the Shroud of Turin: Summary of the 1978 Investigation,” 44, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/Physics%20Chemistry%20of%20Shroud%20Schwalbe%20Rogers%201981%20OCRsm.pdf>.

<sup>101</sup> In a summary of the STURP conclusions there is this statement: “*The dilemma is ... that no technologically-credible process has been postulated that satisfies all the characteristics of the existing image.*” Schwalbe and Rogers, “Physics and Chemistry,” 45.

<sup>102</sup> Viviano, “Why Shroud of Turin's Secrets Continue to Elude Science,” *National Geographic*, April 17, 2015, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150417-shroud-turin-relics-jesus-catholic-church-religion-science.html>

<sup>103</sup> Philip Ball, “Shrouded in mystery,” *Nature Materials* 7, no. 5 (May 1, 2008) 349, <https://www.nature.com/articles/nmat2170>.

<sup>104</sup> This is how the face on the cloth appears to the natural eye, the status of which resembles a photographic negative. © Vernon Miller, 1978.

<sup>105</sup> This is how the face looks when a photograph is taken and the negative is then developed, its properties now resembling a normal (positive) photograph. © Vernon Miller, 1978.

<sup>106</sup> 3-D enhanced image. © 2003 Mário Azevedo.



107

When every *known* natural cause for the formation of the image is eliminated shouldn't an open-minded person consider the possibility of a supernatural explanation?

Only one unconventional hypothesis begins to explain the formation of this unique and mysterious image and also account for several perplexing enigmas associated with the image.<sup>108</sup> Dr. John Jackson (and other physicists) theorized that a short, intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation might be the source behind the image. The needed radiation would be in the form of “light” (protons), rather than in the form of “heat.”<sup>109</sup> The radiation would be emitted evenly throughout a mechanically transparent body as the cloth collapsed through it.

*I propose that, as the Shroud collapsed through the underlying body, radiation emitted from all points within that body and discolored the cloth so as to produce the observed image.*<sup>110</sup>

*We must assume that the Shroud initially covered a body shape [at the time that blood was being transferred to the cloth], but, for some reason, that body did not impede the collapse of the Shroud during the time of image formation.*<sup>111</sup>

In 2010 a team of six physicists from three research centers were able to partially confirm the Jackson hypothesis. Using an extremely brief burst of ultraviolet radiation from a powerful excimer laser they were able to successfully achieve a coloration of the outermost part of the fibers of a linen material similar in appearance to the Shroud's image.<sup>112</sup> They concluded that the exact shade, texture, and extremely shallow depth of

<sup>107</sup> This is a full-body, 3-D, holographic, computer generated image. © Castex 3D Processing 2011.

<sup>108</sup> For a detailed analysis of this theory and the enigmas associated with the image, see Spitzer, *Science and the Shroud*, 23-28.

<sup>109</sup> The STURP investigation concluded the image was not the product of scorched or heated linen because the image did not fluoresce. See comment by STURP member Barry Schwartz, in “The Image on the Shroud of Turin is Not a Scorch” in *The Shroud of Turin Blog*—shroudstory.com, 2012, <http://shroudstory.com/2012/02/10/the-image-on-the-shroud-of-turin-is-not-a-scorch/>.

<sup>110</sup> John P. Jackson, “An Unconventional Hypothesis to Explain all Image Characteristics Found on the Shroud Image” in *History, Science, Theology and the Shroud* ed. by A. Berard (St. Louis: Symposium Proceedings) 1991, <http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2012/01/john-p-jackson-unconventional.html>.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. See also John Jackson, “Is the image on the Shroud due to a process heretofore unknown to modern science?” *Shroud Spectrum International*, No. 34 (March 1990) 3-29.

<sup>112</sup> Paolo Di Lazzaro, D. Murra, A. Santoni, G. Fanti, E. Nichelatti, and G. Baldacchini. “Deep Ultraviolet Radiation Simulates the Turin Shroud Image,” *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology* (July-August, 2010) 1-6.

the imprints on the Shroud could only be produced with the aid of ultraviolet lasers. Yet, a single laser alone could not explain the 3-D image over the full length of the body. The director of the team estimated, to do that, it would take 34 trillion watts of energy coming from 14,000 such lasers emitting “pulses having durations shorter than one forty-billionth of a second.”<sup>113</sup> He added: [The ultraviolet light necessary to form the image] “exceeds the maximum power released by all ultraviolet light sources available today.”<sup>114</sup>

Dead bodies do not naturally emit a flash of light able to color a piece of linen, let alone one with the energy of 34 trillion watts! Has God graciously provided our current generation with extraordinary evidence of Jesus’ Resurrection on His ancient burial cloth? Is the mysterious image on the Shroud evidence of His natural, dead body transforming into what the Apostle Paul called His “glorious,”<sup>115</sup> “spiritual body”<sup>116</sup>? It is something that science is unable to prove as it lies beyond the scientific method and falls into the realm of the miraculous. Even so, a believer arriving at such a conclusion is not required to take a leap of faith in the dark, believing in something that is baseless and irrational.

As a side note, I think it is both confirming and very interesting that researchers from Northwestern University, in Chicago, have captured on film a “bright flash of light” at the very moment human life begins when a sperm meets an egg.<sup>117</sup> *“An explosion of tiny sparks erupts from the egg at the exact moment of conception.”*<sup>118</sup> Fascinating indeed!

From the Scriptures these statements are also contemplative:

- *“And Jesus was transfigured (metamorphosed) before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.”*<sup>119</sup>
- *“For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”*<sup>120</sup>
- *“And it came about that as he (Saul of Tarsus) journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to*

<sup>113</sup> Sergio Prostack, “Scientists Suggest Turin Shroud Authentic,” *Sci-News.com* (December 21, 2011), <http://www.sci-news.com/physics/scientists-suggest-turin-shroud-authentic.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Viviano, “Shroud of Turin’s Secrets,” 3.

<sup>115</sup> Phil 3.20-21

<sup>116</sup> 1 Cor 15.35, 41-44

<sup>117</sup> Sarah Knapton, “Bright flash of light marks incredible moment life begins when sperm meets egg,” *The Telegraph* (April 26, 2016), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/04/26/bright-flash-of-light-marks-incredible-moment-life-begins-when-s/>.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Matt 17.2

<sup>120</sup> Luke 17.24-25. I credit Michel A. Iacono of Montreal Canada for suggesting a possible connection between this statement and the Shroud. The context both here in Luke and in Matthew 24 seems to be the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem in 70 AD. Even so, in the immediate passage, “the flash of lightning” is presented as something connected to and arriving after the Passion. So—knowing what we do about the Shroud—it is interesting to contemplate the statement in that regard.

*the ground, and heard a voice saying him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he answered, ‘Who art Thou, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting...’ And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight ...”<sup>121</sup>*

- *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.... In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye ... we shall be changed.”<sup>122</sup>*

The reader will recall that one of the identifying markers for the promised *Sign* should be a connection of some sort between *the Sign* and Jesus designating himself as Daniel’s “Son of Man.” Did the early Christians make such a connection with the Shroud? I believe we have strong evidence they did.<sup>123</sup> In the New Testament itself we have these three astonishing statements from John’s Apocalypse:

- 1) *“And in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, **CLOTHED IN A ROBE REACHING TO THE FEET**<sup>124</sup> .... And His head and His hair were **white like white wool, like snow**; and His eyes were like **a flame of fire**; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to **glow in a furnace** ... and His face was like **the sun shining in its strength**.”<sup>125</sup>*

Parts of this description are taken from Daniel’s “Son of Man,”<sup>126</sup> and other aspects are drawn from Daniel’s description for “the Ancient of Days”.<sup>127</sup> Daniel speaks of the Son of Man being “**dressed in linen**.”<sup>128</sup>

- 2) *“And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and **a sharp sickle in His hand**.”<sup>129</sup>*

The metaphor of the sharp sickle is in reference to the Judgment. As we learned, the motif of Judgment was another identifying marker characterizing the genuine *sign of Jonah*! Daniel has this motif in his Son of Man vision too!<sup>130</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Acts 9.3-5, 8-9.

<sup>122</sup> 1 Cor 15.23, 52

<sup>123</sup> For additional references from the period of the early Church that appear to make this connection, see the author’s paper, op. cit., “Jesus’ Royal & Priestly Robe” at [www.shroud.com](http://www.shroud.com).

<sup>124</sup> Evidence suggests the early Church perceived the burial Shroud of Jesus typologically and identified it with His priestly-kingly robe! Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Rev 1.13-16 (emphasis added).

<sup>126</sup> See Dan 10.5-6, 16. Particularly here, “His hair were white like white wool” is used in describing the Ancient of Days in Daniel (7.9). But note how here in Revelation, just a few verses earlier (1.9), Jesus (who begins to be described at verse 5) is described as “the Alpha and the Omega ... the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, **the Almighty (Pantocrator)**” ... and “ruler of the kings of the earth” (1.5) who has been given a “kingdom” (1.6). “Him who is and who was and who is to come” was used for the Father in verse 4.

<sup>127</sup> See Dan 7.9

<sup>128</sup> Dan 10.5 (emphasis added).

<sup>129</sup> Rev 14.14 (emphasis added).

<sup>130</sup> See Dan 7.10, 22



- 3) “*And on His **ROBE** and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’*”<sup>131</sup>

## 7. HOW DID THE EARLY CHRISTIANS VIEW THE BURIAL CLOTH OF JESUS?

If the thesis of this paper is correct than, surely, the early Christians would have perceived the image on Jesus’ burial cloth as being *the Sign of Jonah!* How could they possess such a priceless treasure and not regard it as such??? Even so, does evidence exist from the early Church affirming that Christians recognized the burial cloth of Jesus as a witness to the Gospel story and as being a special “sign from heaven”? Yes, indeed!

Several strands of evidence exist. They permit certain conclusions to be reached about how early Christians viewed the burial cloth of Jesus.

- The “disciple whom Jesus loved” came to faith as a result of the funeral linens serving as a visible sign of the Resurrection!<sup>132</sup>
- The Greek word *ἀχειροποίητα* began to be used for a linen cloth bearing the image of Jesus. The word means “not made by human hands.” That is another way of saying the image was “from heaven”!
- The *Pantocrator* icon was derived from the image on the Turin shroud! It has enjoyed a prominent place in the iconography of the Eastern Church since the 6<sup>th</sup> century! The theology behind the icon likely goes back to Daniel’s vision of *One* like a “*Son of Man*”!
- The Shroud was used by Church leaders as a miraculous *Sign* for the purpose of evangelism, testifying to non-believers about the truthfulness of the Gospel story!<sup>133</sup>
- In their spiritual and typological understanding of the Shroud, early Christians identified the linen cloth with the Royal & Priestly Robe of Jesus!<sup>134</sup> The miraculous image on the Shroud provided a link (sign) between the earthly and heavenly realities. The kingly-priestly aspect of this imagery went back to typology between Jesus and Melchizedek,<sup>135</sup> as well as to Daniel’s heavenly vision of *One* like a “*Son of Man*” who was given dominion over an everlasting kingdom!<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Rev 19.16; cf. Deut 10.17 & Ps 136.3.

<sup>132</sup> John 20.8

<sup>133</sup> I develop this thesis in another paper. See Stalley, “The Crucified Christ Seen by the Galatians: A Literal Context for ΠΡΟΕΓΡΑΦΗ (Galatians 3.1)” at [www.shroud.com](http://www.shroud.com).

<sup>134</sup> See my paper, op. cit., “Jesus’ Royal & Priestly Robe!” at [www.shroud.com](http://www.shroud.com).

<sup>135</sup> Heb 5.6; 7.1,17, 21. Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Dan 7.13-14

- Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews apparently went deeper with his typology regarding the Shroud. He likely identified Jesus' linen burial cloth with the "outer compartment" of the real Tabernacle (representing Jesus' time in the tomb) and then also as a "type" of the "inner veil" that His flesh had to pass through to enter the "inner compartment" of the heavenly Tabernacle (granting Him release from captivity) and, thereby, present His superior sacrifice in the "Holy of Holies" before the "Ancient of Days"!<sup>137</sup> Such typology connects *all* aspects of "*the Sign of Jonah*"—Jesus' Passion, Burial, and Resurrection (as well as, His Exaltation)—with the Shroud!
- In an early non-canonical, allegorical poem the image on the prince's glorious robe is referred to as "*the image of the king of kings*" and as the "*one sign of the king.*"<sup>138</sup> Might this "sign" concerning the "garment of light" be a reference from the early Church connecting the Shroud with *the sign of Jonah*? Might this "garment of light" be the same object that Eusebius spoke of when, in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century, he related how Peter took "*the precious merchandize of the revealed light*" from the east to Rome?<sup>139</sup>
- About a dozen texts from the period of the early Church exist (from both canonical and non-canonical sources) that serve as excellent candidates for being "veiled references" to (what we know today as) the Shroud of Turin! These texts help us to understand how the early Christians perceived this priceless gift from the Father!<sup>140</sup>

With the evidence we have in hand, and with the image on the Turin Shroud satisfying all the necessary criteria, we should ask ourselves this question: How could the early Church be in possession of this miraculous treasure and *not* regard it as the promised *Sign*?

## 8. CONCLUSION

Is there *one* piece of objective, visual evidence that offers strong evidence for the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus? The answer is, yes! There is *one*! The miraculous image left on the burial cloth of Jesus is the *one* tangible sign that bridges the gap of history with the Gospel story of Jesus! In that regard, the Shroud of Turin is a game-changer for the theologian in search of the historical Jesus!<sup>141, 142</sup> Science has enabled

<sup>137</sup> Heb 9.3, 11-12; 10.20; Dan. 7.13-14. Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Edgar Hennecke, "Acts of Thomas," *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964) 2:502-503, lines 86 & 80. This amazing poem is analyzed, and the thesis of the Shroud being Jesus' Royal Robe is developed, in the author's paper, Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1955) II.XIV, 64. See *ibid*.

<sup>140</sup> I provide a brief analysis of these texts in my paper, "Are There Veiled References to the Shroud of Turin in the New Testament?," at [www.shroud.com](http://www.shroud.com).

<sup>141</sup> Secular agnostic and textual scholar, Bart Ehrman, wrote in 2011 that there is no physical or archaeological evidence for Jesus. [Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011) 43.] Either Ehrman (1) overlooked the Turin shroud, or (2) he is bias against the Shroud, or (3) he hasn't kept up with the scientific,



our current generation to perceive the miraculous nature of the image better than any previous generation could. Today the Shroud of Turin is where science touches faith!

The image provides strong evidence in support of the death and burial narrative recorded about Jesus in the Four Gospels. But no natural explanation can explain how the image was formed! Nor has anyone been able to replicate the image with modern technology! The reader will have to evaluate the evidence for him or herself in order to personally decide whether the image was formed by a miracle “from heaven” or remains simply a puzzling mystery that one day will be explained by natural causes.

Even so, this paper has demonstrated how the profound image on the Turin Shroud satisfies all the criteria necessary to be perceived as being the one, good *Sign of Jonah* that Jesus both predicted and promised. Only in this image do all the identifying markers come together as required by the request made to Jesus from his opponents, as well as by the markers necessary from Jesus’ response to them!

Especially is that last paragraph true for our current generation! Whether or not earlier generations perceived this image as the promised *Sign of Jonah*, science has enabled today’s generation to both see and perceive this incredible image better than any generation previously could! Therefore, we should certainly embrace the Shroud of Turin as God’s powerful witness to the Gospel message and as His gracious gift to every doubter today. Next to love, the image on the Shroud is the supreme apologetic for the Church!

The incredible Shroud of Turin is the miraculous *Sign of Jonah* for today’s evil and adulterous generation!

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archaeological, and historical research that has been done on it! For indeed the Turin Shroud “is an authentic archaeological artifact.” Furthermore, the weight of the multidisciplinary evidence concerning the Shroud in recent years is such that, “according to high probability, the man buried in the Shroud is none other than Jesus.” [Stevenson and Habermas, *Verdict on the Shroud*, 118, 129.]

<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, most bible scholars have not kept up with the scientific research related to the Shroud and have dismissed it as either unimportant or as unauthentic. However, the Turin Shroud has the potential to greatly impact the theologian’s search for the historical Jesus! Since the Enlightenment there has been a tendency to demythologize the New Testament and to view the resurrection as something that existed only in the minds of Jesus’ followers. As a consequence, the Christ of history is blurred and the Christian’s assurance of hope beyond the grave is attacked. In both of those matters, the Shroud of Turin is a game changer!