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Jesus 2.0

From New Evidence to New Narratives

**How the Shroud of Turin Is Changing
Our Understanding of the Resurrection**

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2. Death or Apparent Death – What Does the Cloth Show?

Many people who turn to the Shroud of Turin do so out of religious interest. For devout Christians, it is a fascinating artifact that authentically depicts the story of Jesus' suffering—a silent confirmation of their faith.

And indeed, the shroud tells the impressive story of a man who was flogged, crucified, and whose body was then wrapped in a linen cloth. The New Testament also reports that Jesus was wrapped in a linen cloth and laid in a rock tomb. It is taken for granted that this must have been the burial of a dead man. Jesus died on the cross—for our sins. This message is deeply engraved in the DNA of Christianity.

That is why many believers consider it heretical to question this idea. Anyone who claims that Jesus was not dead at all but survived the crucifixion seems to be attacking the heart of the Christian faith: the work of redemption, the Passion, the Resurrection. No wonder, then, that this idea is usually rejected immediately and harshly—as "impossible," "blasphemy," or simply "nonsense."

But what if the shroud itself contains clues that suggest precisely this possibility? What if there are traces that are difficult to explain with a dead body, but easy to explain with a seriously injured, unconscious, but still living person?

Many Shroud researchers do not even ask this question. They consider it superfluous, absurd, or dangerous. Others refer to forensic reports by believing doctors who declare with certainty that the man under the cloth was dead, of course. But anyone who approaches the cloth with an open mind and scientific curiosity cannot help but ask

themselves this uncomfortable question: **What if the man under the shroud was still alive?**

This question is not a matter of faith. It is not about believing in miracles or not. It is about a sober analysis of the evidence provided by the shroud. And this is precisely where the conflict between religious dogma and scientific logic begins. Because, from a scientific point of view, a truly dead person cannot come back to life. If it does come back to life, then it could not have been truly dead before.

Of course, an almighty God could have power over the laws of nature and act independently of them. Who wants to prove the opposite? But that is not the point. The decisive factor is:

If the Shroud of Turin is indeed the original burial cloth of Jesus—and there is much to suggest that it is—then it is not just a textile artifact. It is a silent witness. It “knows” what really happened in the tomb. This is precisely why it has the potential to shed light on the greatest mystery of Christianity.

So the central question is, **does the shroud show us a dead man or a survivor?**

The Traditional Teaching: Jesus Was Dead

The traditional Christian teaching is clear: Jesus died on the cross. He was executed by Roman soldiers, placed in a tomb after his death, and only **after** he had been dead for two days—according to the faith—did he miraculously rise from the dead. This is not just some theological detail. This idea forms the backbone of the entire Christian dogma. As Paul writes: *"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins"* (1 Cor 15:17).

But implicit in this statement is a dangerous imbalance. For it also means **that if Christ was not really dead, then the entire dogmatic system collapses**. In this logic, Jesus' death is not a historical event that can be investigated and verified, but a dogmatic necessity. And that makes it so difficult to think openly about alternatives.

It is by no means the case that the idea of Jesus' apparent death or survival only arose with the modern interest in the shroud. Islam explicitly denies Jesus' death on the cross: "It only appeared so to them." (Sura 4, verse 157) Even during the Enlightenment, and especially in historical research on Jesus in the 19th and 20th centuries, there were isolated theologians, historians, and physicians who considered this hypothesis at least worthy of discussion. But it was never seriously pursued—not because it had been refuted, but because it was theologically "useless."

It must be clearly understood that the doctrine of Jesus' death is not a purely historical finding, but a prerequisite of faith. It is embedded in a complex logic of salvation: only a dead Son of God can have died in place of the sins of mankind. Only a Jesus who had passed through death could achieve victory over death.

From a dogmatic point of view, a Jesus who had survived would no longer be a savior—but merely a misunderstood prophet, a surviving

martyr. And that is precisely what makes this idea so provocative for many people.²⁸

But should scientific investigation depend on whether the result is “theologically useful”? Shouldn’t science be characterized by continuing to search even when the results are inconvenient? By examining evidence—and not allowing itself to be held back by dogma?

If we take the shroud seriously, then we must be prepared to ask precisely this question: What if, contrary to all appearances, Jesus survived the crucifixion?

- Despite the severity of his injuries. The spear thrust should have killed Jesus, if nothing else.
- Even though there were no medicines like there are today.
- Even though a Roman execution squad had the task of killing a man and making no mistakes in the process.

What if the resurrection did not consist of a dead person coming back to life, but of a **person believed to be dead** surviving—and coming out of the tomb as a living human being?

Is that less miraculous? Or perhaps even more human, more understandable—and yet deeply spiritual?

²⁸ The article by Fanti et al. “The Death of the Shroud Man: an Improved Review” www.shroud.com/pdfs/ohiofaccini2.pdf contains an overview of the arguments in favor of a dead person. These will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. [July 21, 2025]

Forensic Evidence Suggests Life

Leading thesis: Every trace on the Shroud of Turin seems to scream: **This body was alive!**

I invite you to follow the evidence piece by piece in the following pages – like in a forensic thriller, except that here the key witness is the holiest artifact of Christianity.

The first voice of doubt (1950)

In 1950, after a personal vision, German mystic **Hans Naber** claimed that the man under the shroud must have survived the crucifixion: *"A corpse doesn't bleed like that!"* The Vatican dismissed him, the press ridiculed him, and Naber even ended up in prison for fraud. But the seed had been sown. In 1969, Cardinal Pellegrino convened a **secret commission of experts**. Their official verdict: death.

Unofficially, however, the cloth was thus the subject of a medical "autopsy" for the first time.

Rodney Hoare and the council of forensic scientists

Rodney Hoare was chairman of the British Shroud Society in 1984 when he visited a team of London forensic pathologists with enlarged photographs under his arm to have the cause of death explained to him. His expectation: the spear wound must have been fatal.²⁹

After intense debate, the team gave him the following joint diagnosis:

"The wound is above the critical zone. If the man had been admitted

²⁹ The story is presented in detail in: Rodney Hoare, *The Turin Shroud is Genuine*, 1994

in the 20th century, he would have been declared in a deep coma, not dead."

This was the first time that conventional medicine had made such a statement: **the lance puncture was diagnostic** (to determine death) and **not to kill**.

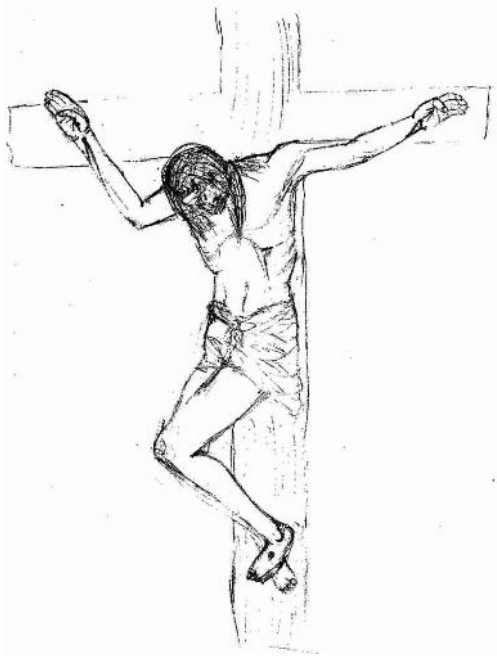
- Location: Between the 5th and 6th ribs, on the right side, pointing upwards.
- Anatomy: Too high for the heart and large vessels, too far to the side for the liver.
- Consequence: A mixture of blood and serum (pleural fluid) flowed out—a classic sign of *a living person with hemothorax*.

Note: An executioner who wants to kill stabs into the center of the heart, not into the flank.

Rigor mortis? None!

Rigor mortis begins approximately 30 minutes after death and is fully developed after 3–6 hours. If the person was exposed to great stress and strain before death, rigor mortis develops more quickly. It subsides after 36–90 hours. If the man had been taken down from the cross dead, **his arms, legs, and neck** would have been **stiff in the crucifixion position**. However:

- His arms lie **loosely** across his abdomen on the cloth.
- The **head** was obviously resting on a soft surface; the neck and back of the head are pressing into the fabric.
- The **legs** are stretched out, the fabric is flat – there is no indication of bent knees.



12. Reconstruction of the position on the cross in a lifeless state. The body is tilted to one side, the head bent forward.³⁰



13. Reconstruction of the actual position in the grave

³⁰ See the illustration in: "*The Way of the Cross in the light of the Holy Shroud*" by Msgr. Giulio Ricci.

Dr. Miguel Lorente (Spanish forensic pathologist)

Instead of rigor mortis, Lorente diagnoses **muscular hypertonia due to hypocalcemia** – a classic sign of shock. His key statement:

The invisible thumbs prove vitality: if the man had been dead, all his muscles would have relaxed immediately. The cramp in the thumbs would have disappeared, the thumbs would have moved outward, become visible again, and thus been fixed in place by rigor mortis. However, the thumbs are invisible, so the cramp was still present in the grave, which was only possible if the man was still alive.³¹

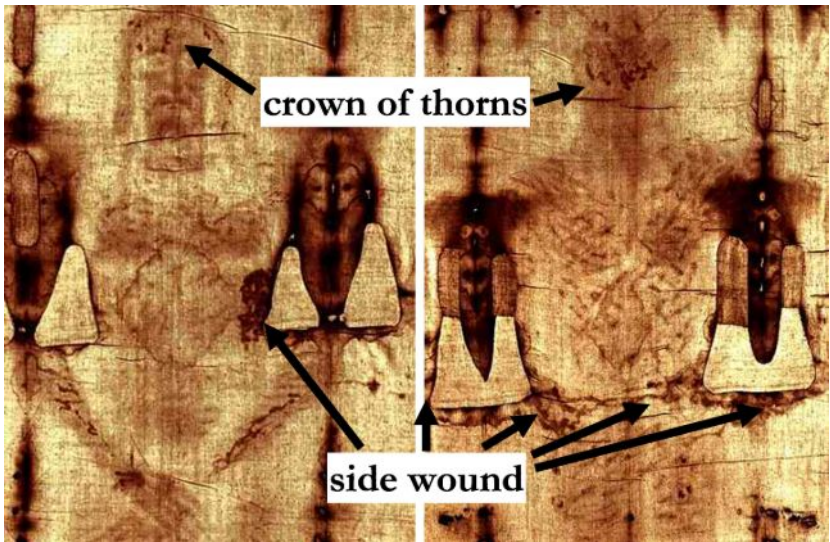
This refutes the frequently cited counterargument that "the thumbs were cramped in death."

The blood speaks – at least 28 active wounds

Blood was found on the tissue, which flowed from **at least 28 exit points** from the body only after burial. Particularly striking:

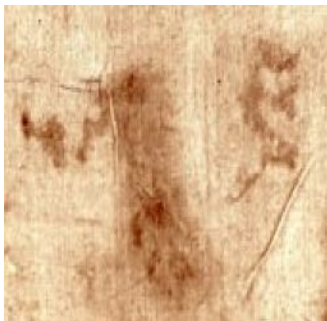
Side wound: The blood crept through capillary action **on both sides** up to 20 cm beyond the body contour – this is only possible if **fresh, uncoagulated blood** flowed continuously over a longer period of time.

³¹ <https://fliphtml5.com/pxsx/vovq/basic> [July 21, 2025]

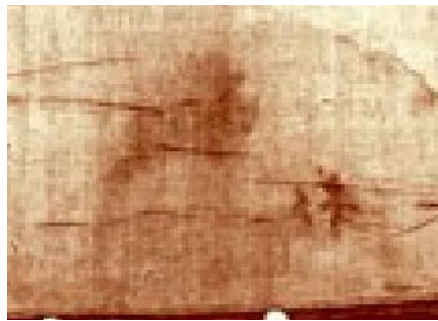


14. Bloodstains from the side wound and the crown of thorns (Enrie)

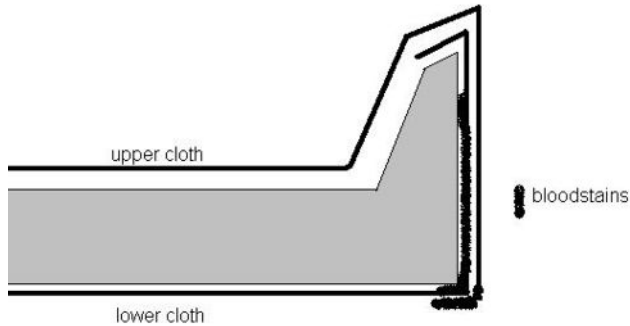
Foot wounds: Three layers of fabric are soaked with blood, which could only have been released in the tomb when the cloth was already in place.



15. Footnail: lower



... and upper half of the cloth



16. Folding of the cloth in the area of the feet

Prof. Wolfgang Bonte

Bonte received anonymous pictures of the side wound. His response, without initially knowing the object:

"Such a horizontal blood pattern is impossible on a corpse. It requires an intact circulatory system."

Later, he was informed about the origin of the images. He stood by his statement: The opening of the spear wound (right front chest wall) would be located almost exactly at the highest point of the body, lying on the back.

He therefore considered spontaneous postmortem blood drainage to be inconceivable, as the **blood level** in the body must have been **lower than the wound opening**. In such a case, no blood could escape from a corpse.

In other words, when a person dies, the blood follows gravity and collects in the lower part of the body, for example, in the buttocks of

a person lying down, which swell accordingly. The blood is then missing in the upper part of the body, and a blood level forms: the blood "stands" in the lower part of the body, while it is missing in the upper part. Therefore, no more blood can escape from the body in the area above the blood level.

He also contradicted Prof. Bollone, who assumed that the blood would have escaped during transport of the corpse:

"Of course, I agree with Professor Bollone that during the transport of a corpse, blood can also leak passively from a stab wound in the chest. However, one must ask whether the shroud was already wrapped around the corpse at the beginning of the transport. I believe that in this case, no static pattern of traces and impressions would have been created, which would have allowed for a direct topographical correlation to a lying body without exception. Rather, I would have expected numerous smear marks, whose location would have been more random and irregularly scattered.

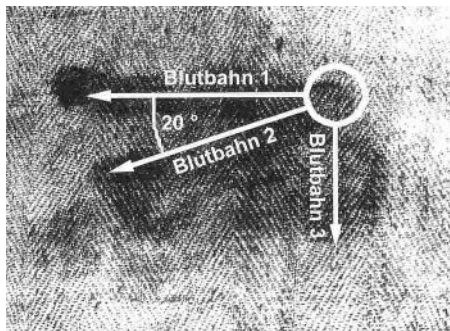
In my opinion, the pattern that can actually be seen suggests that the person in question was only wrapped in the cloth at the time of burial, most likely in such a way that the body was first laid on the cloth and then the other half was placed over the body. I cannot imagine that this method of laying the body could have resulted in the passive discharge of large amounts of blood."³²

Bloodstains on the right hand

Two longer, clearly defined blood trails are visible on the back of one hand. They are at an angle of approximately 22° to each other. A third, wide, nearly circular blood trail is perpendicular to the other

³² Detailed description in Karl Herbst, *Kriminalfall Golgatha*, p. 97ff., Kuhnke p. 75ff and Kersten and Gruber

two. This trail is not clearly defined and only appeared when the hand was lying down.



17. Bloodstreams on the hand

Trace	Formation phase / shape	Significance
1	The body is unconscious, tilted to the right Long and narrow, as there is no movement	Requires blood pressure
2	The body is still hanging vertically from the cross Wide and irregular	Indicates struggle

Bloodstains were painted on the arms of a test person, who was then hung from a cross with ropes. Clearly, one of the two longer bloodstains formed when the body was hanging upright on the cross (blood trail 2). The other bloodstain must have formed after the person lost consciousness and fell to the side (blood trail 1). If you look closely, you will notice that blood trail 1 is narrower and completely

straight. This is because, when blood trail 1 was formed, the body was hanging motionless on the cross. In contrast, the movements of the body caused the blood to be distributed irregularly on the arm in blood trail 2.

The alternative interpretation, namely that the two longer bloodstains were created when the crucified man occasionally changed position to gain temporary relief, can be ruled out, as the two bloodstains would then have been smeared and merged into one another. *"After intensive testing, this theory has recently been proven untenable."*⁶³ The width and irregularity of bloodstain 2 give an idea of the suffering and pain caused by these movements.

The existence of bloodstream 1 therefore provides strong evidence that the man on the cross was alive the entire time. If he had been dead, this blood stream could not have formed due to a lack of blood pressure.

The deeply religious medical examiner Frederick Zugibe found the following explanation to counter this: the two blood trails only formed when the body was taken down from the cross and the nail was pulled out of the corpse.³⁴

Let's take a closer look at this hypothesis. The blood trails are located on the back of the hands, i.e., on the side facing the cross. All known crucifixion nails have a total length of about 16–17 cm. With a forearm thickness of about 5 cm, there must have been a distance of several centimeters between the arm and the beam. The nails cannot, therefore, have been driven in so far that the arms were pressed firmly against the wood by the nail heads. Why would the executioners bother to drive the nails deeper into the wood than necessary?

It is also plausible to assume that the nail wounds would have bled while the body was still alive on the cross, causing blood to flow down the forearm, as can be seen on the shroud.

³³ Frederick T. Zugibe, *The man of the shroud was washed*, Sindon N. S., Quad. No. 1, June 1989.

³⁴ Zugibe (2005) p. 222

It is implausible, even absurd, to assume that the bloodstains only formed when the nail was pulled out. This action must have created a suction effect. Blood residue could therefore only have formed on the side of the hand where the nail left the body, i.e., on the underside, which is not visible in the cloth. In addition, during the descent from the cross, the arm would have had to remain in both positions for a long time—and for approximately the same amount of time in each position—which is impossible. Since this interpretation assumes that the body was already dead, it is also questionable whether and how much blood could have flowed from this wound at all.

It is therefore much simpler and more plausible to assume that these bloodstains were simply formed while the body was hanging on the cross. This example shows the kind of argumentative contortions that are sometimes made to maintain the assumption of a dead body.

No signs of decomposition

Crucially, there are no signs of decomposition. No bloating, no tissue collapse, no bacterial pooling. The cloth shows a body that never began to decay.³⁵

All evidence combined

- No rigor mortis pattern – **contrary to death**
- Blood pressure-dependent flow traces – **pro life**
- Capillary migration and multi-layered soaking – **pro life**
- Thumb position and muscle tone – **pro vital reaction**
- Absence of autolysis traces – **against decomposition**

It is therefore extremely unlikely that the man under the shroud was dead.

³⁵ Otangelo Grasso, *The Shroud Reimagined: A Forensic Reconstruction*, Academia 2025

Conclusion – The shroud as the last witness

Anyone who examines the facts objectively must decide: Either the man on the shroud was a biological miracle who bled in a way and in places that is not possible for a corpse, who lay on the cloth as if relaxed despite rigor mortis and showed no signs of decomposition – or **he was alive.**

I choose – without hesitation – the second option. As we will see, there is another decisive reason that speaks in favor of a living body: only then can the formation of the image be explained naturally.

Nevertheless, one thing is clear: nothing can be proven with certainty, because 100% proof is only possible in mathematics. What can be said, however, is this:

- Based on the evidence, it is more plausible to assume that the cloth is a genuine shroud of a crucified person and not the work of an artist.
- Based on the evidence, it seems more plausible to assume that Jesus of Nazareth lay under the cloth and not another crucified person from antiquity.
- Based on the evidence, it seems more plausible to assume that the man under the cloth was alive than that he was dead.
- Based on the evidence and considering today's scientific worldview, it seems plausible to assume that no supernatural miracle occurred at that time, but rather that an almost unbelievable drama took place, namely the rescue of a seriously injured person.

This casts the resurrection stories and the dogmatic religion that developed from them in an entirely new light.

Why Knowledge Counts More Than Conviction

“It’s easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.”

Unknown but attributed to Mark Twain

The Shroud of Turin is not direct proof – neither of life nor of death. What we see are traces, clues, indications. And these challenge us: **What is the more likely interpretation?** How you, dear reader, interpret these signs is up to you. But this decision should be based on knowledge—not on habit, fear of new thoughts or emotions.

Immanuel Kant put it aptly: *“We cannot know the thing-in-itself; we know only its appearance to us.”* Our truth is often not objective but a mirror of our thinking. Those who change their thinking change their world.

In this sense, the shroud is more than an artifact—it is perhaps also a touchstone for our worldview. Anyone who honestly engages with the forensic findings will recognize that **the facts fit better with a living person than with a corpse.**

But this is precisely where resistance begins. Our minds do not want contradictions. When something does not fit into the picture, we are quick to say, *“That cannot be true!”* This is understandable.

Even in Galileo’s day, people preferred to condemn the discoverer rather than change their worldview. Even today, it is more convenient to suppress doubts than to face the consequences. But anyone who seriously examines the shroud has no excuse:

You have to decide.

Science means examining, comparing, and asking about probabilities with an open mind. Those who seek proof for what they already believe are not practicing science—they are engaging in confirmation bias. Thomas Henry Huxley put it this way: *"Science commits suicide when it adopts a creed."*

Even faith can be tested. Those who truly believe have no need to fear facts. On the contrary, **a faith based on knowledge is stronger than blind obedience.**

The shroud does not show a medical death certificate. It shows blood, postures, folds in the cloth. It shows everything—except proof of death. Therefore, the question must be allowed: What if the cloth reveals the greatest error in church history?

This question does not mean losing faith; it invites us to believe more deeply—with open eyes, an open heart, and a clear mind.

Perhaps the truth is greater than what we previously thought possible.