

Mysteries and Revelations of the Shroud of Turin

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Rogier van der Weyden. *The Descent from the Cross* (1435). Madrid, Prado Museum

ABSTRACT

The author suggested that the image on the Shroud of Turin is a thermal photo of the hot body of a man crucified, but not dead on the cross. The hypothesis is discussed that a

similar story happened to Jesus Christ, and not by chance, but according to a plan developed by him.

The article was published in the Soviet popular scientific magazine "Chemistry and Life" («Химия и жизнь», 1991, No. 12, in Russian). Below is its translation into English (with minimal changes).

* * *

*But now the book of life has reached a page
Most precious and most holy. What the pen
Foretold in Scripture here must be fulfilled.
Let prophecy come to pass. Amen.*

Boris Pasternak.

‘The Garden of Gethsemane’.

(translation of Jon Stallworthy and Peter France in –
Boris Pasternak, *Selected Poems* [London: Penguin, 1984])

In Turin, in the Cathedral of St. Giovanni Battista (John the Baptist), an amazing relic is kept -- a white linen cloth, on which the image of a male body wounded by scourging and crucifixion shows through with brownish spots. According to legend, Jesus Christ taken down from the cross was clothed in this veil.

Over the past hundred years, the shroud has repeatedly become the object of attention of scientists. But it wasn't until 1988 that the church agreed to radiocarbon analyze a few small patches in laboratories in Arizona, Oxford, and Zurich. Everyone was looking forward to the results, and soon the experts delivered their verdict ("*Nature*", 1989, vol. 337, p. 611): the canvas was made in the 13th or 14th century. Although not everyone considers this conclusion convincing (see "*Nature*", 1991, vol. 349, p. 558).

In any case, another mystery remained unresolved: how did the image come about? Most likely the stains on the fabric are caused by dehydration of the cellulose, but it is not clear how such a strikingly detailed picture came about. There are disputes here, a variety of hypotheses are proposed.

I suggested that the shroud was wrapped around the body of a man who was crucified, but did not die on the cross -- see my paper in the journal "Science and Religion" (Наука и религия, 1989, No. 6, in Russian). R.K.Balandin came to the same conclusion in his brochure *Miracle or Scientific Mystery?* (M.: Знание, 1989, in Russian). He drew attention to the fact that, judging by the stains on the fabric, blood was flowing from the wounds of the person wrapped in it. So, his heart was beating -- he was alive.

It can be imagined that with a long exposure of a hot, inflamed body, a thermal photo of it on the fabric was obtained. The hotter places of the wounds caused more darkening, which can be seen on the shroud. Of course, chemists have the last word here.

Who was this person? This is still being debated. But it is important for us that being crucified, he did not die on the cross.

Let's try to look at the gospel story from this point of view. What is known about the execution of Jesus himself from Galilee?

EVANGELISTS WITNESS

From the canonical gospels, one can learn that Jesus and the two robbers crucified with him suffered on the cross for several hours. Then, in accordance with the religious precepts of Judaism (the Romans considered them), which demanded that the dead be buried before sunset (because the next day is a holiday), the soldiers had to accelerate the onset of death at the crucified and remove them from the crosses. To kill the victims, they usually struck a spear into the heart area or killed the shins with a sword. (To breathe on the cross, a person must lift his chest, leaning on his legs; if they are broken, death from

suffocation will occur in a few minutes. An article in the American medical journal — "JAMA", 1986, vol. 255, No. 11 is devoted to these special issues.)

The gospel of John says: *"So the soldiers came, and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with Him; But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."* This means that Jesus' legs were not broken, because they considered that he was already dead. We read further: *"One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear."* But after all, this blow could not have been fatal (by the way, on the Shroud of Turin, a trace of a wound is visible not on the left, but on the right side of the crucified), and by the time Jesus was taken down from the cross, Jesus could still be alive.

It is clear that if this were really the case, then the resurrection would have received a natural explanation -- an event that played a key role in the formation of a new religion. As one of its founders, the Apostle Paul, said: *"And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain, and our faith is also in vain."*

Of course, such an outcome could have turned out purely by chance: after suffering trials and several hours of torment on the cross, Jesus fell into a coma, so when the soldiers approached him to break his legs, they decided that he was already dead and did not do it. After lying in the tomb for a day and a half (from Friday evening to Sunday morning), Jesus came to his senses and left the place where he had been left. This fact formed the basis of the legend of his miraculous resurrect.

But let's look at what happened from a different angle. Reading the gospels, you see how well Jesus imagined in advance what awaits him, how confidently he walked towards his destiny. It is felt that everything that happened to him was not a spontaneous coincidence. So, strictly speaking, the Church also teaches: in Jesus the divine idea was embodied, realized. But even so, its very implementation, in my opinion, took place in a completely earthly way --through an idea that arose in a person's head.

HOW TO BRING THE NEW TRUTH TO PEOPLE?

A new truth was revealed to the son of a carpenter from Galilee, contrary to orthodox Judaism. The essence of the discrepancies is most clearly expressed in the Sermon on the Mount (from Matthew, ch. 5), in the repeated words: "*It is said .., but I tell you ...*" Moving away from the practical, legal in spirit of the teachings of the Torah, Jesus proclaims the highest, ideal relations between people: *Have you heard it said: «an eye for an eye, and tooth for tooth». But I say to you: do not resist evil. But whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also`.* Agree that even after two thousand years his instructions sound unusual and paradoxical: "*... love your enemies, bless those who curse you ... and pray for those who offend you ...*"

In the eyes of the high priests, Jesus acted as a dissident and heretic, undermining the foundations of faith. Later, the Talmud recorded that Jesus was a sorcerer who seduced Israel and pushed them to betrayal. Under Jewish law, such apostasy was considered a crime. By way of life, Jesus belonged to the itinerant preachers, whose activities often led to unrest and mass demonstrations. They were brutally suppressed by the Roman authorities and the priestly elite, and their inspirers were subject to severe punishment. So, the most popular of them, John the Baptist, was executed. It is clear that Jesus had a very limited opportunity to spread his views, and he could not even dream of changing the official teaching with his sermons.

In general, in the then Palestine, the church permeated all spheres of life, and the Jews were very zealous about their ancient religion, which, it was believed, Moses received directly from God. Yet minor church reforms were occasionally carried out. But how? In each case, it was required to prove that the proposed clarifications were by no means innovations, but, on the contrary, were expressed many centuries ago, consecrated by the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. Usually in such cases, people were informed that in one of the caches of the Jerusalem temple, a hitherto unknown book was found, written by the

hand of Moses himself or another authority, which just contains these provisions.

If someone, like Jesus of Nazareth, sought to establish a whole system of new views, to give a new religion, then he had only one, and even then, a fantastic way: to declare himself the messiah, that is, endow himself with divine attributes.

The fact is that in the books of the prophets, starting with Isaiah (VIII century BC), and further in Daniel, Hosea, Zechariah and others, the prediction of the coming of the Messiah -- the anointed of God (Christ in Greek), who will become king and savior of the Jewish people. With his appearance, justice will finally prevail -- *"He will judge the poor in truth, and decide the cases of the sufferers of the earth in truth ..."* This world mired in sins will perish, and a new happy era will come, the "golden age", the Kingdom of God on Earth: *«Then the wolf will live together with the lamb, and the leopard will lie with the goat, and the calf, and the young lion, and the ox will be together, and the little child will lead them ... they will not do evil.»*

The prophets foresaw that the messiah was destined to suffer greatly and accept martyrdom, which would become atonement for the sins of all people -- *"... He was wounded for our sins and tormented for our iniquities; ... and by His wounds we were healed", "He was tortured but he suffered voluntarily... like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter... cut off from the land of the living; for the crimes of my people he suffered punishment."*

But his life will not end there -- God will resurrect him: *"... He will see a long-lived offspring, and the will of the Lord will be successfully carried out by His hand."* Having resurrected himself, he will open the way to salvation and immortality to others: *And many of those sleeping in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to eternal life, others to eternal reproach and shame`.*

These eschatological prophecies described, often in great detail, the features and mode of action of the coming Messiah. It was said that the

descendant of David, the future King of Israel, would be born in the city of Bethlehem, that he would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, that he would be executed along with the robbers -- "*... and was numbered among the villains*", that his clothes would be divided by lot. Even the last words that he would utter before his death were called: "*My God! Oh my God! Why did you leave me?*"

So, the "scenario" of the future messianism -- albeit in different sources and often allegorically -- was already contained in ancient books. On the other hand, the mood of anticipation of the coming of the Savior among the people, who experienced the heavy oppression of the Roman invaders and their own kings, was very strong. Preachers pretending to be messiahs appeared from time to time, and people often followed them. So, many hoped that he was John the Baptist - "*... everyone thought in their hearts about John -- was he not the Christ.*" And then John himself allegedly asked Jesus: "*Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect another?*"

How could Jesus prove that he was not one of these false messiahs? To do this, it was necessary to do something extraordinary, because many people were able to show the "usual" set of miracles in the form of demonstrations of various tricks such as healing the sick. But doesn't Scripture say that the true Savior must die and rise again?

And here, it seems to me, Jesus could have come up with a crazy, at first glance, thought: to try to carry out the most important and difficult part of the "scenario" -- death and resurrection from the dead. After all, if he manages to do this, then his teaching will no longer be heresy, but, on the contrary, the fulfillment of the bequeathed. He said so: "*Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have come not to destroy, but to fulfill.*" When people are convinced that the Galilean is the savior promised by God, his preaching will immediately acquire the highest status. This means that both ordinary Jews and Levites will be forced to accept what he is trying in vain to convince them of.

Of course, the adoption of such a decision required from Jesus the mobilization of all spiritual forces (for forty days in the wilderness in solitude Jesus bore it in himself), complete self-denial, readiness to endure any torment in the name of establishing a new truth. But after all, people more easily perceive ideas that are paid for by suffering, even better by death -- Jesus understood that he simply had no other way to be heard.

PLAN

And from that time Jesus "*...began to reveal to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders and chief priests and scribes, be killed, and rise again on the third day.*" Later, when he entered the capital, he called the twelve disciples and said to them: "*... The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death; And they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and beaten and crucified; and on the third day he will rise.*" As we can see, Jesus was clearly aware of his fate.

This terrible secret, this Plan, which his disciples were unable to comprehend, became an invisible wall separating the teacher from his flock, giving the speeches and actions of Jesus a symbolic and sacred connotation.

Whenever possible, the Nazarene tried to ensure that his deeds coincided with the prescriptions of the script. However, if it was not difficult to enter the city on a donkey, then Jesus could not change the place of his birth or his origin. But he hoped that, having carried out the main thing, after the fact, in hindsight, it would be possible to somehow smooth out the inconsistencies, to adjust the actual to the prescribed. So then everything turned out, although later in the gospels many exaggerations and obvious contradictions will be found, which will give reason to doubt the historicity of Christ.

So, Jesus had to die and be resurrected. But how to do it?

The Jewish court of the Sanhedrin for various crimes provided for different types of execution: stoning, burning at the stake, beheading, hanging. For speaking out against religion, people were sentenced to stoning, and most likely, Jesus was threatened with this kind of deprivation of life. Crucifixion was used by the Romans in relation to non-Roman political criminals and slaves.

It is logical to assume that it was the latter type of execution that Jesus considered the most appropriate. Simply because there is still some chance of being taken down from the cross while still alive. But in order to get to the cross, a verdict was required not from the Jewish, but from the Roman court. Knowing the political structure and mechanism of legal proceedings in the state, Christ probably expected to achieve this by certain actions.

Of course, the implementation of the entire program remained extremely difficult, depending on unpredictable circumstances. It could only be realized by having influential accomplices, and, as we shall see, Jesus did indeed have them.

ASSOCIATES

At that time, people's faith in real liberation from the foreign yoke and the improvement of life was already undermined. Armed uprisings against the Romans usually ended tragically, with thousands and thousands of rebels dying on crosses. Under these conditions, the church elite (the party of the Sadducees) embarked on the path of conciliation with the invaders. Others (the party of the Pharisees) sought support in national traditions, in strict observance of all the prescriptions of Judaism.

In general, there were many different sects among the Pharisees. There were Zealots and Secarii who embarked on the path of terror, and one of Jesus' disciples, Simon, was a Zealot. The Essenes came out of the Pharisees, among whom many ideas of the future religion were formed, first of all, about a righteous teacher who suffered severely. Part of the

Pharisees saw the way out not in physical, but in moral, inner rebirth, in the cleansing of the ancient faith from bureaucratic layers and dogmatism.

These are the ideas that Jesus advocated. He rejected the division of people on the basis of property, asserted the equality of all before God -- "*do not allow another person to be considered insignificant or insane.*" It was a worldview that transferred the center of life from the external to the spiritual world of man. "*The kingdom of God is within you,*" Jesus insisted. All this helped to endure the hardships of life, to maintain human dignity. It is clear that the teachings of Jesus attracted both the common people and the educated Jews.

Therefore, among the Pharisees, Jesus could find those who would understand his Plan and become an assistant in the matter he had conceived. Are there any evidence in the New Testament of Jesus having contact with the Pharisees? Yes, there are. It is talking about Joseph and Nicodemus, who unexpectedly appear on Golgotha at the most crucial moment, enter into negotiations with the Roman authorities, agree with them on the removal of the bodies and ensure the burial of Jesus. Mark: "*And as the evening had already come... Joseph of Arimathea came, a famous member of the council, who himself was looking forward to the Kingdom of God...*" John: "*... Joseph of Arimathea is a disciple of Jesus, but secret from fear from the Jews... Nicodemus also came, who used to come to Jesus at night ...*" (By the way, the famous founder of the mathematical theory of sets, George Cantor, believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph of Arimathea.)

When Jesus was seized and brought before the chief priests, they asked: "*Did any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believe in Him?*" The answer is immediately there: "*Nicodemus, who came to Him at night, being one of them...*" So, it is clear that Jesus had secret followers from among the noble Pharisees - "*a famous member of the council.*"

Who else could help him? Women -- Mary of Magdala, enthusiastic worshipers of Jesus sisters Martha and Mary (one of them smeared his feet with myrrh and wiped them with her hair). It was about them that

Osip Mandelstam said: "... *To accompany the resurrected and for the first time to greet the dead is their vocation.*" Apparently, the charm of the person of Jesus, his compassion for the humiliated and rejected, the greatness of his teaching, which women perceived more with their hearts than with their minds, made them devoted friends. They didn't leave Jesus even at Calvary.

Probably out of love for the teacher, they helped him demonstrate miracles. So, the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead took place in the house of Martha and Mary (according to John, the Last Supper was also there). It is possible that, wanting to bring joy to Jesus, the sisters, without further ado, invented a dead brother for themselves, about whom there is no mention of up to this moment.

But why were the closest disciples -- the future apostles -- not initiated into the Idea? Firstly, these simple and poorly educated people would hardly understand the meaning of what was planned. The main thing is that they were assigned their own and very important role: to become witnesses and heralds of the accomplished Event -- the resurrection of Jesus. In the apocryphal gospel of the Ebionites, Jesus says, "*I want you to be the twelve apostles to be a witness to Israel.*" Until that climactic moment arrives, they should just watch, listen, and memorize what their rabbi does and says.

Then, shocked by his greatest humiliation, death and resurrection, they will have to rethink everything that they have witnessed, convince themselves and convince others that in the life of Jesus everything that the prophets proclaimed really came true. And until that time, they are preparing, unknowingly, for the fulfillment of their mission -- "*Now I tell you, before it happens, so that when it happens, you believed it was me.*" At the farewell party, Jesus said, "*The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things and remind you of all that I have told you.*"

So, Jesus preached, told parables, "*explaining the truth with the light of everyday life*" (B. Pasternak), restored sight to the blind and resurrected the dead, showed various miracles. There was nothing extraordinary in this, there have always been many such wandering philosophers and

magicians in the East. Perhaps if everything had been limited to this and he had remained in the outskirts of Galilee, no repressive measures against him would have followed. But this was not the intention of Jesus, and the main part of the tragedy -- the ascent to Golgotha -- was to be performed in the capital.

IN JERUSALEM

And then the decisive day arrived. Before the Easter holiday, when the rulers are especially wary of any political speeches, Jesus and his disciples enter Jerusalem. He proclaims himself king of the Jews, and the crowd gives him royal honors. But there are also doubters who say: *"... aren't you from Galilee? look, and you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee."*

Jesus' deliberately defiant behavior -- he even dares to drive the money changers out of Solomon's temple, the stronghold of the high priests -- immediately leads to a sharp clash with the authorities. The guards appear to arrest him, and Peter tries to defend Jesus with weapons in his hands. But he said to him: *"... put the sword in the scabbard; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?"*

In the eyes of the adherents of Jesus who do not know the Intention, this behavior of his, which inevitably brings death closer, came as a complete surprise. For Jesus, it was a consciously chosen path, his "chalice", but for most of the unsuspecting disciples, all this turned out to be an overwhelming test. To save themselves, they recoiled in horror from their shepherd.

So, in essence, everything was conceived: the stronger their sense of guilt towards the teacher, the greater the psychological effect will be when he appears to them alive. In addition, Jesus could once again show the power of his superhuman, in the eyes of the uninitiated, foresight: he told them, but they did not believe that one of them would betray him, the other would renounce, and they would all leave him. As usual in such cases, there are corresponding places in Scripture

about this: *“He who eats bread with Me lifted up his heel against Me,”* *“I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”* So, the prediction is indeed coming true.

The court of the Sanhedrin condemns Jesus to death, and it remains only to confirm the sentence with the Roman governor. Precisely, this moment had to be used in order to avoid stoning, that is, execution according to Jewish laws.

Probably, Pilate, who was trying to prevent unrest in the province entrusted to him, seemed strange both to the behavior of the impostor and the crowd accompanying him, for some reason so hostile to him. It is possible that the procurator tried to somehow settle the conflict, but, to his surprise, the Jews insisted on a death sentence. *“Pilate said to them, ‘Take him, and judge him according to your law’.* The Jews said to him: *‘We are not allowed to put anyone to death, and May the word of Jesus be fulfilled, which He spoke, making it clear by what death He would die.’*

It was then that the unceasing for centuries was heard: *“Crucify him, crucify him!”*. The stunned procurator could only submit to the will of these wild and fanatical, as he always believed, Jews.

This whole dramatic scene becomes understandable if we assume that the accomplices of Jesus, who at all costs needed to achieve a very specific type of reprisal against him (which he “let them understand”), were in a crowd of onlookers and managed to turn these people against Jesus. Probably, it was not very difficult to do this, given that in his sermons Jesus defended not so much national as universal human values. Therefore, in the eyes of the dark masses, he could be represented as a renegade, a traitor to vital interests.

In his well-known book, *‘Tales of the Evangelists’*, 3.Kosidovsky writes that there are many contradictions in the gospel presentations of the Sanhedrin court and that therefore some researchers consider this piece to be a late insert. It could have been done in order to place the main responsibility for the death of the Son of God on the Jews (in

order to facilitate the adoption of the new faith by other peoples who inhabited the empire). If this is so, then Jesus immediately, upon the denunciation of the high priests, appeared before the Roman authorities and was judged by them as a political criminal.

One way or another, but the task of obtaining the desired sentence was solved, and the road to Golgotha turned out to be open.

ON GOLGOTHA AND AFTER

Let us emphasize that what happened next -- mockery of Jesus, his scourging and crucifixion -- was not a sham. Jesus had to endure all these torments, and the overall outcome of the case remained unclear: at any moment, by some accident, the plan could fail, and he would simply die on the cross. To keep him alive, the final stage had to be carried out very clearly; naturally, this lay entirely on his accomplices.

When the time came to remove the crucified for burial, Joseph of Arimathea "*...dared to go in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.*" (Note that in the non-canonical gospel of Peter, Joseph is characterized as "*a friend of Pilate and the Lord.*") The procurator was surprised that the impostor, it turned out, was already dead, and called the centurion to confirm. Having received confirmation, Pilate allowed the body to be removed. I agree with R.K.Balandin that it was not difficult for a wealthy Pharisee to bribe the right people -- after all, for the Roman soldiers, the execution of some Galilean troublemaker was an absolutely ordinary event.

As a result, the main thing was reached: Jesus was taken down from the cross without breaking his legs, which, according to the hypothesis, saved his life. Reflecting on the "quick death" of Jesus on the cross, R.K.Balandin suggests that he knew how to fall into a state of imaginary death, which he could learn from the Egyptians or the Sumerians. In fact, when resurrecting the dead daughter of the head of the synagogue, Jesus said: "*... the maiden is not dead, but sleeps.*" It seems

that, being a healer of other people, the Nazarene really possessed the secrets of hypnosis, knew how to control his own psyche.

Apparently, Joseph and Nicodemus all the time while Jesus suffered on the cross, were somewhere nearby and controlled the course of events. They also supervised the burial: they washed the body, smeared it with incense -- a composition of myrrh and aloe, which Nicodemus brought ("*a liter of about a hundred*"), wrapped it in a shroud and put it in a new coffin carved into the rock. The rock was in the garden, which belonged to the same Joseph of Arimathea. And then what happened was what was intended: Jesus himself or with someone's help left the tomb. Mary Magdalene came on the third day to visit the body and found it missing. Word of this incredible event began to spread. How did they react to it?

The churchmen foresaw that the disciples of Jesus would try to steal his body, and they turned to Pilate in advance: "*... sir! we remembered that the deceiver, while still alive, said: "After three days I will rise again"; Therefore, order the tomb to be guarded until the third day, so that His disciples, coming at night, do not steal Him away and say to the people: "He is risen from the dead."* This is the line they adhered to: "*Say that His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we were sleeping.*" Then the evangelists will have to seriously refute this possibility. Thus, John says that Jesus was truly resurrected, because the thieves of the body would not carefully fold his covers.

Later, this prosaic interpretation of the loss of the body was repeatedly used by the opponents of Christianity, who tried to debunk the ideological core of the new belief -- the fact of the resurrection. There was also a version that it was not Jesus who was crucified, but another person, this means that Jesus did not resurrect because he did not die. For example, in one medieval Arabic source, the idea was carried out that Judas pointed the guard not at Christ (Judas kiss), but at someone else, and he was condemned. In Japanese legends about Christ, it was stated that the younger brother of Jesus ascended the cross. And the Kashmiri sources said that Jesus did not die on the cross, but survived,

after which he fled to India with his mother, Thomas and Joseph of Arimathea.

AGAIN, WITH DISCIPLES

And so, Jesus appears to the disciples, overcome by grief and remorse. *"They, confused and frightened, thought they saw a spirit."* The unexpected appearances of the disappearance of Jesus only reinforce this impression. Trying to convince them of his bodily resurrection, the rabbi broke bread with them and ate baked fish. To overcome Thomas' doubts, he allows him to examine his wounds. Still, the appalled disciples found it hard to believe (and in our time, the reaction of people in a similar situation would hardly be different).

Now it is the turn of the disciples to play their part, but they cannot understand it, and Jesus has to help them: *"... this is what I said while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the law of Moses in the prophets and in the psalms must be fulfilled."* But even this is not enough, what Isaiah wrote about comes true: *"You will hear and you will not understand, you will look and you will not see."* Jesus is forced again and again to explain to these limited and unskilled in Scripture people the meaning and significance of what happened: *Then He said to them: `O foolish and slow of heart to believe everything that the prophets foretold! Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer and enter into His glory`? And starting from Moses, he explained to them from all the prophets what was said about Him in all the Scriptures."*

Finally, what had been prepared for a long time began to bear fruit -- Jesus *"opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."* The disciples began to see clearly -- they really found in the sacred books a prediction of everything that happened to Jesus.

For some time, the resurrected one appeared among the people — *`...appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve; Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, and some have fallen asleep`.* What happened to Jesus after? There is

no clear evidence of this, its traces seem to be lost. It can be assumed that he soon died (for example, from blood poisoning). In any case, the idea of his ascension to heaven was included in the New Testament much later, in the 4th century.

WITHOUT JESUS

The main support of the new faith seems to be the indisputable fact of the resurrection — "*... he showed Himself alive after His suffering with many true proofs, and for forty days he appeared to them and spoke about the Kingdom of God.*"

The orthodox Jews faced a dilemma: on the one hand, the teaching of Jesus is heresy and it must be rejected, and on the other — his life, death and resurrection coincide with what was said in Scripture about the coming Savior, therefore, his teaching must be accepted. The fact that what was bequeathed by the prophets was fulfilled was a very strong argument, and it affected people. Thus, the brother of Jesus, James, the future leader of the Jerusalem community of Christians, believed after seeing the living Jesus.

The apostles began to preach among the Jews, convincing them that the promised and long-awaited Messiah was already coming, but they did not recognize him: "*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus, whom you betrayed and denied in the face of Pilate, when he thought to set Him free... However, I know, brethren, that you, as well as your superiors, did this out of ignorance; but God, as He foretold through the mouth of all His prophets that Christ would suffer, has fulfilled it.*"

They called people to repent and live according to the new laws proclaimed by Christ. Of course, this was met with resistance: "*When they were speaking to the people, the priests and the heads of the guards at the temple and the Sadducees came to them, annoyed that they were teaching the people and preaching the resurrection from the dead in Jesus.*" Nevertheless, the first Jewish-Christian communities

began to arise -- "*Many of those who heard the word believed; and there were about five thousand such people.*"

So, the foundation of the new church was based on the idea of the atoning sacrifice of the resurrection of his messenger by God. Paul and other preachers based their apostolic activity on this. As other nations became involved in this process, the emphasis began to shift: it was said not so much about the coincidence with the biblical prophecies (which was important for the Jews), but about the possibility of personal immortality for everyone, about the imminent second coming of Christ — "*God has resurrected the Lord, He will also resurrect us by His power*", "*... for He will sound, and the dead will rise incorruptible, and we will change.*"

Now only an external push was needed to start formalizing the new religion. It was the largest anti-Roman uprising -- the four-year Jewish war, which ended with a heavy defeat and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Then there was a sharp increase in Messianic aspirations, which found its expression in faith in Jesus Christ. Its written consolidation has begun.

ROSETTA STONE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CRYPTOGRAPHY

*The clarity of all events makes them
mysterious...*

Franz Kafka

Apparently, the gospels are based on events that actually took place, so the words of Josephus Flavius (1st century AD) according to an undistorted Arabic source seem completely reliable: "*At that time there was a wise man whose name was Jesus. His whole way of life was impeccable, and he was known for his virtue, and many people among Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to crucifixion and death. But those who became his disciples did not*

abandon his teachings. They said that he appeared to them three days after the crucifixion and that he was alive then; thus, he was, perhaps, the Messiah, whose miraculous deeds were announced by the prophets."

My hypothesis only adds to this that everything happened according to a plan drawn up by Jesus in advance. His teaching won, a new world religion emerged, which means that, on the whole, the Nazarene's providence turned out to be correct.

All these considerations were prompted by the Turin Shroud, which allowed me to shed light on the "miracle" of the resurrection. But, on the other hand, its very existence and the fact that, having been in the fires several times and survived so many cataclysms, this relic did not perish and reached us, can also be considered in some way a miracle. "*Manuscripts don't burn...*" Probably, not only manuscripts, but also everything that the disappearance of which could violate the integrity and self-consistency of history and culture.

Whatever it was, the truth revealed to Jesus, his ethical ideal — "... *because God is love*" — continues to shine, remaining the core of the entire spiritual life of mankind. As A.I. Herzen wrote, "... *the gospel solemnly proclaimed human rights, and people heard for the first time what they are.*"

I will finish with the words of Pasternak (from the same poem as in the epigraph):

*I shall descend and on the third day rise,
And as the river rafts float into sight,
Towards My Judgement like a string of barges
The centuries will float out of the night.*