

The Holy Shroud may not date back to the Middle Ages

Researchers from Catania: «All the certainties have been denied»

A study group of the Etna University, coordinated by professor Benedetto Torrissi, states without fear that, on the dating of the sheet that perhaps wrapped Jesus, it is all to be redone. The conclusion comes after having obtained data that until now was kept secret

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Thirty years after the attribution of the **Holy Shroud** to the medieval period, a multidisciplinary Etna team led by the statistician **Benedetto Torrissi** reaches the **opposite conclusion**. "It's all to be redone. There is full certainty that the Shroud **does not date back to the Middle Ages**," the lecturer reiterates to *MeridioNews* after a conference at the University of Catania. "Dating is still possible through new examinations of never analyzed remains", adds Professor **Paolo Di Lazzaro**, deputy director of the **International Center for the Shroud Studies of Turin**. Torrissi rewinds the tape: "There are two focal dates in the history of the Shroud: **1988**, when the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* endorsed that it could date back to the years **between 1260 and 1390**; and **23 May 2019**, the date on which that certainty was publicly overturned in an irrefutable manner ». The professor of the Department of Economics in Etna refers to the scientific publication in the **journal Archaeometry**.

The borderline between past and present, therefore, lies in the difference between probability and certainty. "The error in the past has been to **consider absolute an approximate truth** - the statistician continues - considering that the scientific techniques of the time could not have led to an outcome of this magnitude". Despite this, the *British Museum* for years **has secreted** the analyses carried out by laboratories in Arizona, Oxford and Zurich. "Three tests, it is true," adds Torrissi, "but all on **contaminated Shroud fabrics**, which have distorted the results. The *Nature* magazine was perhaps also in **a hurry** to validate, having taken only two months. Today, however, the situation has changed." Torrissi says that, together with **Tristan Casabianca**, a Shroud scholar, the team had access to the data that had been kept secret: "And so after more than a year of work we have arrived at a new truth".

If to overcome a dogma is an inalienable beginning, the discovery remains partial. Torrisi in fact dampens the enthusiasm: "**We cannot yet express ourselves on the actual dating, new analyzes are needed**". However, this would not excite **the Church**, owner of the fabric. The obstacle could be overcome according to the physicist Di Lazzaro. **There is an alternative way**: the analysis of the burnt threads of the Shroud, recovered **from the Chambéry fire of 1532**. "The burns of that stake pierced the original linen. In 2002 these parts were detached and preserved separately. Using them would have a twofold advantage: to **analyze the least contaminated tissue without altering the Shroud**". Paradoxically, Di Lazzaro adds, the burns "protect the fabric from agents that over time contaminate it and, in particular, from **moth-repellent thymol and mothballs**, probably used for the preservation of the Shroud".

The reliability of the analysis would then depend on the amount of **carbon 14** found in the fabric, thanks to which it is possible to trace the *death* of any **organic material**, including linen. Being a plant, death coincides with the time of harvest. In order to calculate its exact age it is necessary to quantify the carbon absorbed by the atmosphere, which decays very slowly in the entities without life, even in thousands of years. "**Counting the residual carbon atoms on the burnt strings of the Shroud**, we could finally go back to its dating, since it was made of uncontaminated fibers from 1532", concludes the researcher.