

St John's 'Strips of Linen' and the Holy Blood of Bruges, Belgium.

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For Christians, the sacred blood of Jesus is very precious so it is reasonable to presume the linens of Christ's tomb still survive today. If the Shroud of Turin is the burial shroud of Jesus, it is possible there are no thumbs on the image because a 'strip of linen,' described by St. John, was used to tie them into place. As this strip would contain the blood of Jesus then it probably still exists today.



The image above shows what the hands could have looked like when tied into place. One end of the strip would be very close to one of the five major wounds of Jesus: the area of the nail wound in the base of the hand. We cannot see the wound in the right wrist area of the Shroud of Turin because the left hand covers the right. However, the blood flow down the forearms is the same on each arm suggesting two puncture wounds.

Is there a small piece of linen in existence soaked in the blood of Jesus? If so where is it? One possible candidate is the strip of linen, soaked in the blood of Jesus, known as the Holy Blood of Bruges. It has always been associated with Joseph of Arimathea, who, with Nicodemus laid out the body of Jesus for burial.



The relic is kept in the Basilica of the Holy Blood and is deeply venerated and adored. The Basilica website <http://www.holyblood.com/?lang=en> describes this as follows:

‘For about 750 years the population of Bruges and its neighbourhood faithfully and intensively venerates the relic of the Holy Blood. The Noble Brotherhood of the Holy Blood, being aware of the importance attached by the inhabitants of Bruges to their relic, made in the course of centuries every effort to keep up the tradition. The relic of the Holy Blood is displayed each Friday, before and after the Mass, to be venerated by the faithful. This age-old practice reaches a peak on Ascension Day: Bishops and prelates carry the shrine in the streets of the city on occasion of a solemn and colourful procession of more than 1800 actors.

Its history is also explained:

‘According to the old tradition, Derrick of Alsace, Count of Flanders, brought the relic of the Holy Blood with him after the second crusade, having received it in the Holy Land (1150). (However) the oldest document concerning the relic of the Holy Blood in Bruges dates back to 1256. Thus, between 1150 and 1256 there is a gap of a century! Could it be that the relic arrived in Bruges later than 1150? Probably, because at that time there was a relic of the Holy Blood in Constantinople, namely in the Maria Chapel of the imperial palace of Bucoleon. This relic belonged to a whole series of relics connected with the suffering of Christ. In 1203 Constantinople fell into the hands of the crusaders. The imperial city was sacked during the 4th crusade (1204). Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders, was chosen as the new emperor. Presumably he sent looted relics to Flanders and particularly to Bruges. His daughters Johanna and Margaretha were in charge of the county. It is likely that this is the way Bruges came into possession of the relic of the Holy Blood. Also the manner in which the rock-crystal flask is cut indicates an origin in Constantinople and has documentary evidence dating back to 1256.’

The flask has not been opened since its arrival in Bruges and a seal, visible below, remains intact. Through the crystal, the colour of linen is clear and the blood remains red, like the blood on the Shroud of Turin. The size of the pool of blood which has soaked into the material suggests proximity to a major wound.

More research needs to be done to explore this possible association between the ‘strips of linen’ described by St John and the Holy Blood of Bruges. Further research into the Shroud itself might establish if strips were used elsewhere on Jesus’ body. Also, there may be other authenticated examples of the blood of Jesus



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