

Why did Jesus fold the napkin?

Why did Jesus fold the linen burial cloth after His resurrection?

John 20:7 tells us that the napkin, which was placed over the face of Jesus, was not thrown aside like the grave clothes. The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded and was placed at the head of that stony coffin. Early that Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body and I don't know where they have taken Him!"

Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the napkin that had covered Jesus' face was folded up and lying to one side. Is that important? Absolutely! Is that really significant? Yes! In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand a little bit about the Hebrew tradition of that day. The folded napkin had to do with the Master and Servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition.

When the Servant set the dinner table for the Master, he made sure it was exactly the way the Master wanted it. The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out of sight, until the Master had finished eating. The Servant would not dare touch that table until the Master was finished.

If the Master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded napkin meant, "I'm finished". I did not know this.... If the Master got up from the table, and folded his napkin beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because....the folded napkin meant, "I'm coming back!" He is coming back!