

T R A N S I T I O N S

November 2010

by Chris Ann Waters

LINEN WRAPPINGS

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb, and he saw the linen clothes lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. John 20:6

Growing up at my grandmother's side, I became accustomed to watching this skillful seamstress and artisan at work. Her knowledge of fabrics and their uses were extensive; I learned about linen early on. Similarly, when I completed post-graduate work in interior design, linen was not only an early presentation in a course in Fabric Science and Usage, linen was a fabric requirement to be used in various projects on which students were graded. According to the dictionary, linen is *a cloth made of flax and noted for its strength, coolness, and luster*. This is a serviceable fabric indeed, which is why its use for burial was essential and reasonable in ancient times for burial. Recently I saw this usage of linen on display as used by ancient Egyptians.

In New York City I went to view the King Tutankhamun exhibit on display at the Discovery Museum in Times Square. There are colorful objects with clear explanations of the use of these objects by the ancient Egyptians. The exhibit is somewhat anti-climactic for the tour ends with a skeletal replica of King Tut. The original no longer leaves Egypt due to the damage it suffered while on tour in America during the 1970's.

Amulets, spells from *The Book of the Dead*, nesting coffins, and canopic jars (jars used to separately house the organs of a body when it is buried), are featured in opulent colors and detailed craftsmanship. Linen wrappings were a prolific staple in the process of mummification of a body, wrapping it in sturdy linens for burial to sustain the soul and to protect the soul after death. King Tut's leadership in this quest for preservation of souls in the afterlife was strong and sincere. Sincerely wrong.

It is a provocative experience to observe the traditions of others. But sadly for these souls, there was not the afterlife for which they had believed in and sought to reach. Their sophisticated and beautiful preparations to send a soul to the afterlife were deficient. Jesus Christ is the only way to a peaceful afterlife. The artifacts that surrounded me in the museum represented false hope. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is fact. The linens that lay on the floor of Christ's tomb that morning long ago were not colorful, plentiful or detailed. But they are lovely evidence of an afterlife and truth that shines brilliantly in hearts of Christian believers worldwide.

The kind of death one will experience is not known. How our lives in this world shall end, is known only to God. But for persons who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour,

there is an assurance that the soul will be with Jesus forever. This does not take away the ache and grief that comes with missing a loved one who has died. It does not prevent a season of loss nor the emotional pain and longing for someone who has gone ahead. What belief in Jesus does do is serve as a comfort and a hope that quietly lives inside to sustain the spirit of one who grieves. Only the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit can allow this truth to settle inside and give assurance as time goes by.

*But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matthew 6:20). My treasure is in Heaven. Where is yours? Do you grieve someone? Something? Has life changed in such a way that loss has taken hold and you think that you will never be full again with optimism, peace or joy? Rest assured, that Jesus knows your answers to these questions. Be certain that His finished work on Calvary more than 2000 years ago, and His rise from death, still extends life and hope to you today. Jesus is with you. Let Him be with you. Give Him room. The Egyptians acted to perform serious and intricate works to gain hope and sustain life. Christians do it with words: *Yes, Jesus, I believe in You. No matter what, even when life and losses hurt, I know that You will sustain me. Thank You, Jesus.* That sustenance holds true not only for our eternal resting place but also for the life we live in this world until the time the Lord calls us Home. Believe in His promise and His love for you. Believe in what fell on the floor of Christ's tomb: His linen wrappings.*

Jesus of Life, You overcame death on the cross, rose from the dead, and left linen wrappings behind. This is the path believers in You have taken and shall take when it is the end of time in this world. Jesus, please comfort those who are afflicted by grief and its many challenging emotions. Come to each in Your personal way so that they will know Your peace and assurance. Jesus, please be with those who are conflicted about life after death. Holy Spirit, by Your leading grant inspiration and true hope to those who seek the Truth. In Thy Name, Lord Jesus, Amen.