

How Good Looking was Jesus?

We can all sleep better tonight now that we know what Jesus looks like. And apparently, He's everything some people want from a Messiah: tall and good-looking. After all, He's a king, so He ought to rise above the crowd and look regal and ... y'know, kingly.

One Italian professor would have us believe that Jesus was not just a nice-looking chap; He was "extraordinarily handsome." Professor Giulio Fanti from Padua University in Italy said,

"Jesus was a man of extraordinary beauty. Long-limbed, but very robust, he was nearly 5 ft. 11 in. tall, whereas the average height at the time was around 5 ft. 5 in. And he had a regal and majestic expression."

Fanti's view is based on a 3D carbon copy of the image on the Shroud of Turin. A lot of controversy surrounds this shroud, and Fanti's work only fuels the debate. The first recorded reference to this shroud goes back to the 14th century with the claim that this was the burial cloth Joseph of Arimathea used to wrap Jesus' body. Furthermore, Jesus' image was burned into the shroud at the moment of His resurrection.



Although most scholars dismiss the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, that does not keep people from venerating it as the actual burial cloth of Jesus. I do not give any validity to this belief, and frankly, I don't need a shroud to affirm the reality of Christ's resurrection. But my goal right now is not to give all the reasons I dismiss the Shroud of Turin; instead, I want to focus on the mistaken desire for Jesus to have that "star quality" and look physically superior to the rest of us.



The prophet Isaiah painted quite a different picture of the Messiah.

"He grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. **He didn't have an impressive form** or majesty that we should look at him, **no appearance that we should desire him.** He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was **like someone people turned away from**; he was despised, and we didn't value him" (Isa. 53:2-3).

Jesus was one of us. Unlike Professor Fanti's belief, I'm sure Jesus did not stand head and shoulders taller than those around Him. He was ordinary—plainly ordinary. Our human nature and our celebrity-driven culture are drawn to attractive people, but Jesus came to earth to become one of us—a plain ol' ordinary human—so that He could ultimately bring us to the Father. This matters.

We might wonder if God really understands what we're going through—especially during hard times. But Jesus didn't come to earth with a single thing in His favor. He was raised in a poor family. (When Jesus was first brought to the temple, Mary and Joseph offered the sacrifice prescribed for poor people.) Jesus worked hard to earn a living as a carpenter. Isaiah made a strong case that, instead of being good-looking, Jesus was *unattractive*.

I don't say that to belittle Christ, but to stress Jesus didn't make it easy for Himself when He came to earth. Does Jesus know how hard life can be? Yes, He does. In fact, He knows hardship and pain far beyond what we experience. Crucifixion still remains the cruelest and most violent form of death. Jesus knows what it means to suffer!

But His suffering was for our benefit. Salvation is ours. Eternal life is ours. So even though you may be in great pain, trust in the suffering Christ. What He did for you means that whatever hardship and pain you're facing will not last.

"Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:16-17).