

# TUTANKHAMEN

It was the afternoon of November 26th, 1922, at the foot of a sloping passage cut into the cliff of the Valley of the Kings that two men stood before a door sealed some 3,300 years before.

Howard Carter had searched for this door for 30 years and his patron Lord Caernarfon had financially backed him for the last 8 years.

Cautiously Carter prised at the door. Making a hole just large enough to shine a light inside. Carter peered inside. "Can you see anything?" said Lord Caernarfon. Carter stammered, "I see wonderful things - wonders."

Carter widened the hole and the first objects they saw in the first chamber (26ft x 12ft) were three large couches carved in the form of elongated animals, covered in gold. Then they saw two life-sized, gold-kilted black statues of men facing each other-armed with maces standing as sentinels before a sealed door. Wherever the light moved other wonders were revealed: inlaid caskets, beautifully carved chairs, alabaster vases, model boats and bake houses, game boards, gods, a gold throne, musical instruments, weapons and gold chariots (etc). Close by stood a half-filled bowl of mortar- that had been used to seal the door, and a fingerprint left by a workman who had probably tested a freshly painted surface, little touches showing human contact.

The tomb was a time capsule of life in Egypt of over 1,300 years before Christ. Of the four rooms, this first one held 171 different objects; in all there were nearly 5,000 items, all from an insignificant short-lived pharaoh! Evidence shows that robbers had entered the first two rooms, but had been surprised and abandoned their loot on the floor. The tomb had then been re-sealed.

The burial chamber guarded by the life-sized statues was undisturbed and in it was the greatest treasure of all; almost the size of the room stood four gilded shrines within each other. They contained a yellow quartzite sarcophagus which had a nest of three coffins within. Each coffin bore an effigy of the king represented as the god Osiris.

The innermost coffin was of solid 22ct gold (2,448 lbs) and inside lay the mummified remains of the 18-year-old Tutankhamen. The mummy wore 22 layers of cloth and a death mask of solid gold carved into a portrait of the king, and 143 pieces of jewellery. His upper body was covered with a floral spray of cornflowers, lilies and lotus.

The king's body was prepared with priestly liturgy and ritual. After the internal organs were removed, the abdomen was washed with palm-wine and filled with myrrh, cassa and other aromatics. The body was then soaked for 70 days in natron after which followed the laborious task of bandaging. First each finger and toe were bandaged separately, then the limbs and finally the whole body. During this process unguents were liberally applied. The internal organs, bandaged, like a mummy were stored in 4 miniature golden coffins (39.5cms. high) inlaid with carnelian and glass paste. These were then placed in an alabaster chest, called a canopic chest, and the whole was enclosed by a gilded shrine protected on each corner by the goddesses of Egypt - Serket, Isis, Nephthys, and Neith. The top, sides and doors of the shrine are decorated with scenes of Tutankhamen and Ankhesenamun his young wife.

In the treasury, from one of the rooms that had been raided by ancient robbers, came a strange find. Two small wooden coffins were opened and they revealed a six and seven month old foetus. Archaeologists assume these were still-born children of Tutankhamen and Ankhesenamun.

Just who was Tutankhamen? His parentage is unclear. He could have been a son of Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV c.1379-1362 BC) but not of his beautiful Queen Nefretiti; or a son of Amenophis III and Queen Tiye (c.1417-1379 and builder of the Colossi of Memnon.) Or was his title to the throne secured by his marriage to the eldest daughter of Akhenaten, Ankhesenpaaten (later Ankhesenamun)?

What we do know is that Tutankhamen, the last of the 18th dynasty pharaohs, was only 9 years old when he came to the throne of Egypt in place of Akhenaten.

Akhenaten attempted a reform of Egypt's religion away from the worship of many gods to the worship of one god ATEN the creator. His changes included, a move of Egypt's capital away from the Amen-Ra religion centred in Thebes to Amarna\*, in Lower Egypt. Such pressure was

brought to bear on Tutankhamen by the priests of Thebes that even though Tutankhamen tried to carry on the monotheistic religion of Akhenaten for 9 years the capital reverted to Thebes and the worship of Amen-Ra was restored. At first Tutankhamen's name was TUTANKHATEN (image of Aten) after his god, but was changed to TUTANKHAMEN (image of Amen) after the god Amen-Ra.

He had the choice to remain true to the purer religion of his predecessor and perhaps loose his kingdom, the power and wealth it brought. To do so, would mean a surrender of principle so that he could remain on the throne. The choice probably cost him his life, for soon after, he was murdered. Compare this with another prince, Moses who chose to serve God than have the power and treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24, 25). In a previous programme (see Exodus handout) we showed how Hatshepsut was probably the princess who adopted Moses and so made him "son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Exodus 2).

Had Moses not taken the stand he did, we may be looking at his mummy and viewing his material wealth in a museum! But the New Testament book of Jude tells us that Moses is resurrected and with God. But Moses chose a different path, one which Jesus spoke about in Matthew 16:26 where he advised, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

We too make our choice. This world would be a happier place if more chose to live for principle, like Moses, rather than for self like Tutankhamen.

*\* See handout on the Amarna letters that show parallels between his reign and the Hebrews invasion of Canaan after the Exodus from Egypt.*

***Prepared for Digging Up the Past Series by Paul Haworth***