

Pastor, Scientist Now Searching For Jesus' Descendants

A pastor and scientist have teamed up to find Jesus' living relatives.

Joe Basile, lead pastor of Encounter Road Church in California, and Oxford University geneticist George Busby used DNA evidence to examine the Shroud of Turin, The Sudarium of Oviedo and the newly discovered bones of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist.

"By extracting and analyzing samples of each of these holy relics, they hope to retrieve a sample of DNA that possibly belongs to Jesus or a member of his family. They believe that if they can find a strand of Jesus' DNA it could help identify who among us today are descendants of Jesus and provide us with new insight into the man many consider to be the most important person in history, Jesus," according to the History Channel.

Their results were revealed in a History Channel documentary, *The Jesus Strand: A Search for DNA*, which debuted Easter Sunday.

"The History channel really wanted accuracy," Basile said. "We used the Bible as a map combined with science. My role was to make sure we didn't get out of bounds."

Basile and Busby traveled through the Middle East and Europe to study these artifacts held sacred by the church.

"We were able to go to places no one else gets to and look at artifacts that are pretty incredible," Basile said. "It was a life-changing moment for me."

The project's goal was to find a strand of Jesus' DNA to find any living relatives. Since Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins, it would stand to reason they shared similar biological markers.

So what did the duo find?

"While DNA analysis can't prove that these are the artifacts some believe them to be, the hope is that these and other items could one day provide insight into the relationships between them and their modern descendants. Let's assume for a moment that contamination could be completely ruled out and that DNA analysis demonstrated that DNA from the Shroud was a familial match to DNA from the James Ossuary—and that they are both related to the Bulgarian bones. Could this then have been the DNA of Jesus and his family? To answer that, all you need is a little belief," Busby says. {eoa}