

## MOTB SHROUD CONFERENCE

### OPENING REMARKS by Russ Breault

Saturday, January 18, 2020

I want to thank you all for coming. And I especially want to thank Jeff Kloha and the Museum of the Bible and all the staff members that have made this event possible.

The name of this event is: **The Shroud of Turin—Explore the Mystery**

If you Google “Top ten mysteries in the world”, the Shroud would make it to most every list.

National Geographic called it “One of the most perplexing enigmas of modern times”

Time Magazine called it, “The Riddle of the Ages”

But perhaps most significant is why Jake and Elwood of the Blues Brothers were on a mission from God? They were trying to put the band back together so they could raise \$5K in back taxes for the orphanage they grew up in Chicago. Anyone know the name? **St Helen of the Blessed Shroud Orphanage.** Just a little Shroud trivia for you.

Why is the Shroud a mystery anyway? The either-or proposition is quite simple. It either is the authentic burial Shroud of Jesus or its not. Yet if it was the obvious work of an artist, we could have figured that out a hundred years ago with a magnifying glass.

I don't want to encroach on anything our speakers will be covering, but if we just look at the big picture, the tantalizing prospect of the Shroud is all about possibility and potential. After several hundred thousand hours of scientific investigation, the fact that it remains a mystery seems absurd for something that was allegedly created by a medieval artist according to the nay-sayers. And yet it makes sense too because all the deep things of God are all mysteries aren't they? Anyone care to walk me though how the Word of God became flesh? How Jesus fed 5,000 people with a boy's lunch? How did he raise Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb? How do you calm a storm with a single command? The church may call them miracles, but they are all mysteries. So, wouldn't it make sense that if we were to discover the cloth that wrapped Jesus in the tomb at the point of resurrection—that it too would be a mystery?

In the 1960's a book on the Shroud came out called The Fifth Gospel. Could the Shroud itself be a gospel? As do the other four gospels, it testifies to the life, suffering, death and

resurrection of Jesus. But the Shroud has no need for translation, it speaks every language. Could it be a gospel written on linen? However, I have one issue with the book. The title was wrong. It's not the Fifth Gospel, it is the First Gospel. From John chapter 20; Peter and John ran to the tomb and saw the linen cloth lying there and believed...believed what? That he had risen! Remember, Mary was the first one to the tomb, she looks in and sees that the body is gone and runs to find the Apostles. She tells them "someone has taken the body and I don't know where they have put him." Her first reaction is that someone has taken or stolen the body, but she didn't go inside the tomb. Peter and John run back to the tomb, they stoop down, enter the tomb and see the linen cloth lying there. It is at this point when John saw the cloth lying there and believed. It begs the question, what did they see that Mary didn't see? The Shroud was the first piece of evidence that Jesus had risen from the dead.

In Acts 1:3 it says, "After his suffering he showed himself to be alive through many convincing proofs." I am sure the many post resurrection appearances of Jesus constitute most of these proofs. Yet the vacant linen cloth lying in the tomb was the first proof. Why is it such a stretch to believe that the last thing Jesus wore on earth would be preserved and passed down through the centuries as the bloodstained banner of the Church and a silent witness for all generations.

Fifty years ago, historian John Walsh described the Shroud this way: "It is either the most awesome and instructive relic of Christ in existence or it is one of the most ingenious, most unbelievably clever products of the human mind and hand on record. It is one or the other, there is no middle ground."

Or as someone else has described it, that would be me, "The Shroud is either the greatest hoax ever perpetrated, or it is a deliberate and purposeful sign from God."

Strangely and provocatively, the Shroud seems to ask the same question Jesus asked of Peter, "Who do you say that I am?"

Perhaps our speakers can help answer that question. Allow me to introduce our first expert...