

The Lost Tomb of Jesus -03- Critics of the Documentary

While the claims made by James Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici are spectacular, the criticisms from other scholars have been almost unanimously negative. Why have so many people heaped scorn on their work?

A Summary of the Challenges

1. Although at first glance, the names of "Joseph", "Jesus" and "Mary" sound extremely Biblical to a 21st century Christian, the names apparently were very common. "Jesus" is the equivalent name of the Old Testament hero "Joshua" and "Joseph" of course is the young Jewish hero from ancient Egypt. "Jesus" appears in at least 99 tombs and on 22 ossuaries. "Joseph" appears on 45 ossuaries. "Mary" is the most common female name in the ancient Jewish world.
2. According to the film, the bones' DNA was tested to determine if the people were related. Since the bones of the "Jesus" ossuary and the bones from "Mary" were determined to be unrelated, the film makers jumped to the conclusion that the two people must have been married. The DNA evidence establishes no positive links in this tomb whatsoever.
3. The statistical odds computed in the study in comparison to Jesus of Nazareth has been widely criticized as flawed.
4. There is no early historical nor tomb connection to Mary Magdalene.
5. The "Jesus" and "Joseph" of this tomb do not fit the description of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - It is assumed that Joseph died long before Jesus since he disappears from the New Testament after the story of Jesus birth. The "Jesus" in the tomb was known as "Son of Joseph," but the earliest followers of the New Testament Jesus didn't call him that.
 - Jesus was not from Jerusalem, making it unlikely that Jesus' family tomb would be located there.
 - A tomb full of ossuaries is likely from a wealthy Jewish family. Jesus was from a very poor family.
 - Jesus was never married, unlike the Jesus found in the tomb.
6. The "mystery of the tenth ossuary" has been accounted for without recourse to the "James" ossuary as told in the film.
7. For the film disagrees with all Biblical accounts of the burial and resurrection of Jesus. There is strong evidence to support the claim that the burial tomb of Jesus of Nazareth was empty.

Regarding the Names on the Ossuaries

Nehemia Gordon who holds a Masters Degree in Biblical Studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Bachelors Degree in Biblical Studies and Archaeology from the same university commented on the claims of the uniqueness of the names mentioned by documentary film, The Family Tomb of Jesus.

One of the ossuaries contains the name Joses or Yose which is an abbreviated form of Joseph. The film claims that this is a unique name that must therefore be the brother of Jesus of Nazareth.

"Contrary to this claim, Yose was an extremely common nickname for Joseph... So the claim that there was something particularly rare about the nickname Yose is simply not factual."

Gordon goes on to say "an odd claim in the documentary is that the name "Maria" מריא, written on one of the ossuaries in Hebrew characters, is 'a rare Latinized version of Mary'. It is not clear to me why someone would write a Latin form of the name Miryam in Hebrew characters on a 1st century ossuary... The Hebrew letters מריה would most naturally be read as Merayah, which appears as the name of a male priest in Nehemiah 12:12. So rather than being a Latinized form of Maria, the ossuary in the "Talpiot Tomb" was probably from that of a man named Merayah. "

Quotes from Amos Kloner

Amos Kloner was the reporting archaeologist in the 1980 discovery and excavation of the Talpiot Tomb.

"There is no likelihood that Jesus and his relatives had a family tomb," Kloner said. "They were a Galilee family with no ties in Jerusalem. The Talpiot tomb belonged to a middle-class family from the 1st century CE."

"In their movie they are billing it as 'never before reported information,' but it is not new. I published all the details in the *Antiqot* journal in 1996, and I didn't say it was the tomb of Jesus' family," said Amos Kloner, now professor of archaeology at Israel's Bar-Ilan University and author of the original excavation report for the predecessor of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

"I think it is very unserious work. I do scholarly work…," Kloner said. "[This film] is all nonsense."