

The Good Tidings

“...I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God...” (Luke 4:43)

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March/April 2007

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER
OF GOD UNTO SALVATION
(Romans 1:16)

The Good Tidings is an e-journal of New Testament Christianity published in portable document format and sent free to interested individuals via email. Its primary purpose and goal in publication is to “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:16); to teach those outside Christ about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to edify the faith of New Testament Christians. Subscribers are encouraged to assist us in this effort by forwarding *The Good Tidings* to all their email contacts and by printing out copies for folks who do not have access to email. Send articles and subscription requests to Michael Willey, Editor at mbwilley@yahoo.com

What Must I Do To Be Saved?
Hear the Word of God
John 8:45; Romans 10:17
Believe in Jesus Christ
John 3:16; 8:24
Repent of your sins
Luke 13:3, 5; II Peter 3:9
Confess Jesus is the Christ
Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37
Be baptized for the remission of
your sins
Acts 2:38; 22:16
Live faithfully everyday
Matthew 10:22

An Amazing Discovery???

In March 2007, an amazing archeological discovery was announced - the tomb of Jesus had been discovered - complete with **bones**. Was this important archeological find being reported by a reputable archeologist in a scholarly journal? **Not quite**. This announcement was made by Simcha Jacobovici, a TV director, and James Cameron, a movie director, at a press conference at which the publication of a book was also announced. In other words, two Hollywood types were attempting to cash in by riding the coattails of Dan Brown (author of *The DaVinci Code*) and attacking the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and avoiding, I might add, the usual scholarly process of publication and peer review of the research. The leaders of the Jews concocted a lie rather than acknowledge the resurrection of our Lord and Savior (Matt. 28:11-15). It seems enemies of the cross are more than willing to follow their example.

What follows is a collection of some of the best articles I've seen rebutting this preposterous notion and setting forth the truth. May we be ever set for the defense of the Gospel (Phil. 1:17).

Michael Willey

Those Bogus “Jesus Bones” by Wayne Jackson

News sources are filled with sensational reports that the “bones of Jesus” have been discovered in Jerusalem. This is but another tale for the illusional. Read about it.

Society has just been treated to the almost-yearly attempt of entertainment exploiters, who seek to line their pockets with “filthy lucre” by hitching a ride on the reputation of Jesus Christ.

It would be a laughable, though stupid enterprise, were it not for the fact that so many gullible souls ingest any trash that purports to have the endorsement of “science.” Never has the reputation of “science” been so low.

There is nothing new that is “scientifically credible” in this story. The knowledge of these “bones” has been around for more than a quarter of a century—scarcely raising an eyebrow.

In 1980 an archeologist by the name of Yosef Gat explored a tomb in the southeastern region of Jerusalem that dated from the time of Herod the Great (the ruler who was king when Jesus was born).

The main room of the tomb had six coffin-shaped chambers that housed ten ossuaries (stone bone boxes). According to the current reports, one box had an inscription, “Jesus, son of Joseph,” another was inscribed with “Mara,” and a third, “Yose”—the latter two, it is said, being “Mary” and “Joseph.”

Reportedly, DNA has been collected, and a few speculators have scientifically concluded that these bones are the remains of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—along with Mary Magdalene and a male named “Judah,” found nearby.

The claim is being made that there is only a 1 in 10 million chance that this is not “the holy family.” This wild speculation is based upon the assumption that these names were uncommon—as compared with the estimated population of Jerusalem at that time. Let us seriously look at some facts.

First of all, how in the name of common sense could a ton of DNA establish scientifically that these are the bones of Jesus Christ? “Jesus,” “Joseph,” and “Mary” were very common first century names.

“Jesus” is the Greek form of the Old Testament, “Joshua,” a Hebrew hero for whom thousands of Jewish lads were named. The name *iesous* is found frequently in the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament) of several different people. Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentioned 20 men by this name.

There are no fewer than six references (in addition to Christ) to the name “Jesus” in the New Testament; and the name was widespread throughout the Mediterranean world in the time of Christ (see Foerster, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, G. Kittel, ed., Eerdmans, 1965, III.284ff).

There are eight “Josephs,” apart from Christ’s foster father, listed in the New Testament, and seven “Marys,” besides Jesus’ mother. Countless ossuaries have been found bearing the names of “Joseph” and “Mary,” and several with the common name “Jesus.”

Professor Amos Kloner, one of Israel’s prominent archaeologists, and the scholar who supervised the discovery site 27 years ago, in a recent interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, declared emphatically that the current theory “is impossible. It’s nonsense.” He added:

There is no likelihood that Jesus and his relatives had a family tomb. They were a [poor] Galilee family with no ties in Jerusalem. The Talpiot tomb belonged to a middle-class family from the 1st century C.E.

Perceptive folks are able to employ common sense regarding this matter. How is it that modern sensationalists **finally** have found the “bones” of Jesus in this two-thousand-year-old tomb, when the Jewish and Roman authorities of twenty centuries ago could not locate the body of Jesus **three days** after his death? What are the mathematical “odds” on that?!

The apostles of Christ preached the concept of the resurrection of their Lord 50 days after his death,

and Christianity burst upon the landscape of the ancient world with the most tremendous historical explosion humanity has ever known.

All the Roman and Jewish forces needed to do was produce the corpse of Christ, and the Christian movement would have evaporated instantly. Those “bones” could have been (likely **would** have been) housed as a monument to the failure of a delusional and disruptive religion.

This is a catastrophically powerful argument that demolishes the “bone” fabrication that James Cameron, who made the movie *Titanic*, has foisted upon a naive society whose critical skills frequently are seriously lacking these days.

Further, it was the custom of the Jews that any criminal sentenced to death by the Sanhedrin was “not to be buried in the sepulchers of their fathers; but two burying places were appointed by the council, one for those that were slain by the sword and strangled, the other for those that were stoned [*who also were hanged*] and burnt” (John Lightfoot, **New Testament Commentary from the Talmud and Hebraica**, Oxford, 1859, 2.374; emp. original). See our article, **The Burial of Christ’s Body**.

The real evidence is solidly against the “Jesus bones” theory.

This baseless story doubtless will produce a temporary sensation; such claims always do. And the more radical they are, the more the flurry. Presently, then, the “bones” hoax will sink into the black hole of cerebral density it so justly deserves.

What effect will this have upon Christianity? None at all; gospel truth has weathered greater storms than this nit-picking charade.

—reprinted from the website for *The Christian Courier* at www.christiancourier.com/articles/those_bogus_jesus_bones

Have the Bones of Jesus Been Found? by Kyle Butt

Simcha Jacobovici, a television director, and movie director James Cameron (of *Titanic* fame) have teamed up to produce a television documentary for *Discovery Channel* titled “The Jesus Family Tomb.” In this production, Jacobovici suggests that the real tomb of Jesus has been discovered, complete with ossuaries for His body, Mary Magdalene’s body, His mother Mary’s body, and the body of Judah, allegedly the son of Jesus. This outlandish claim, although supposedly backed by scientific and historical “evidence,” is another sad example of senseless hype surrounding baseless claims about Jesus Christ.

The available historic evidence overwhelmingly

destroys the false assertions made by Jacobovici. First, the idea that Jesus' bones were buried would contradict the most historically accurate book ever written—the Bible. As *Newsweek* writers Miller and Chen wrote: “Good sense, and the Bible, still the best existing historical record of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, argue against Jacobovici's claims” (2007). Indeed they do. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most historically documented event in ancient history (see Butt, 2002). The New Testament documents have been examined with a scrutiny beyond any applied to other historical books, and their authenticity and reliability have dumbfounded the most skeptical observers. With one voice, the books of the New Testament declare that Jesus Christ was buried in a borrowed tomb, rose three days after His death, and ascended to heaven, leaving no bones behind to be buried in an ossuary.

Furthermore, besides the fact that Jacobovici's idea goes against the Bible, other details militate against the tomb being Jesus' (not that any are needed). For instance, the names on the ossuary were very common. In fact, almost one-fourth of women in Jerusalem at the time would most likely have been named Mary or some derivative form of the name (Miller and Chen, 2007). In addition, the tomb is of a wealthy family and was located in Jerusalem. But Jesus' family was poor from Nazareth. As Alan Segal, religion professor at Barnard College, stated: “Why would Jesus' family have a tomb outside of Jerusalem if they were from Nazareth? Why would they have a tomb if they were poor?” (as quoted in Miller and Chen).

In truth, this latest “discovery” is little more than an attempt to cash in on the hype created by Dan Brown (author of *The Da Vinci Code*) and his ilk. It is so devoid of truth and legitimate historical scholarship that it is more of a science fiction film than a documentary. This and a host of future attempts to cast doubt on the biblical narratives will come and go, but rest assured that “the Word of the Lord endures forever.”

REFERENCES

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Miller, Lisa and Joanna Chen (2007), “Raiders of the Lost Tomb?” *Newsweek*, March 5, [On-line], URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17328478/site/newsweek/>.

—reprinted from the website for Apologetic Press at <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/3269>. Another outstanding rebuttal, although too lengthy to reprint here is “Discovering the Truth About “The Lost Tomb of Jesus,” by Dewayne Bryant at <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/3322>

You can subscribe to *Reason & Revelation*, published by Apologetics Press for \$10.00 per year.

In Heaven or on Earth by Phil Sanders

Since the Discovery channel released the documentary, “The Lost Tomb of Jesus,” considerable speculation and debate have escalated on all sides. If indeed the bones of Jesus of Nazareth are in the Talpiot tomb, if he married Mary Magdalene, and if he had a son named Judah, then there is little reason to believe that Jesus is Lord and the Son of God. If, however, what Simcha Jacobovici has suggested is merely sensationalism and the Lord arose from the dead, Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be.

At the heart of this debate is whether the testimony of the four Gospels is trustworthy. We might quickly remind ourselves that if the bones of Jesus were buried in a family plot at Talpiot, the early church certainly did not know it. If Jesus did not arise from the dead, many early Christians suffered imprisonment, torture, and death out of a false confidence. Paul argued,

If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:14-19).

One cannot imagine a crueller hoax than to move the body of Jesus from the gravesite of Joseph of Arimathea to a secret family plot and spread the rumor that He had arisen from the dead. One must wonder how the disciples and family of Jesus kept the secret so long and so well as to fool every generation until now! That's what Jacobovici's documentary suggests, but that is not what the Bible teaches.

Never mind the family of Jesus would have had to open the tomb a year or so later to put the bones of Jesus in an ossuary. Never mind they would have had to go to a craftsman to make the ossuary and had Jesus' name put on it. Never mind they would have opened the tomb several other times and could see the clearly marked name of Jesus on the ossuary. Surely Jesus'

brother James knew where the family burial plot was. In all of this we are told they kept the secret about Jesus' body!

How could the family have kept the matter secret even from Jesus' brothers James and Jude, who wrote books of the New Testament and died for their faith? Both Eusebius and Josephus say the Jews hurled James from the pinnacle of the temple in 66 AD (*Church History*, II, 23.18 and *Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, ix, 1). If the bones of Jesus were in the family plot and James knew it, he was a cruel deceiver.

If the bones of Jesus were in the "secret" family plot, how could James have remained ignorant of the resurrection deception? If the resurrection is a hoax, how did so many people become so convinced? Why would James himself die for this deception? How could he have asked anyone else to die for a cruel hoax? How could a religious movement that spoke so highly of "truth" and forbade deception become so entrapped by such deception?

Never mind that the soldiers of Pilate made the tomb as secure as they know how (Matt. 27:65), Simcha Jacobovici is sure they moved the body. Never mind that the disciples that allegedly stole the body so dishonored Him that they left His grave clothes at the old site (John 20:6). Never mind the sighting of the angel who rolled back the stone and sat upon it. Never mind the Sanhedrin paid the frightened soldiers to tell a lie (Matt. 28:11-15).

Do we believe some enterprising twenty-first century filmmakers, whose desire for profit is unquestionable, or the eyewitness testimony of the earliest disciples, who saw no financial profit from their efforts? Do we believe the highly speculative suggestions of some would-be detectives, who are discredited by their own sources? Or do we believe the written, eyewitness testimony of men who gave their lives preaching their faith and who stood the test of peer review?

If Jesus arose from the dead, then Jesus is who He claimed to be: the Son of God, Lord and Christ. If Jesus is the Son of God, then His promise to lead the apostles into all truth in the first century has been fulfilled in the writings of the New Testament.

—reprinted from *Think*, April 2007, page 13. Subscriptions to *Think* are \$30.00 per year, but well worth it. Send subscriptions to Focus Press, Inc., 1600 Westgate Circle, Suite 125, Brentwood, TN 37027

The Lost Tomb of Jesus: A Scam of Titanic Proportions by John W. Moore

A discovery that "may rewrite the early history of Christianity" and "rock Christianity to its core," is what NBC and Discovery Channel announced this past month as a part of a lead story known as "The Lost Tomb of Jesus." The so-called discovery is actually a mere "reevaluation" of some very old ossuaries (stone funeral boxes) unearthed over twenty-seven years ago from a first century tomb located in the Jerusalem suburb of Talpiot. The tomb, as suggested by filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici and author Charlie Pellegrino, "could have once held the remains of Jesus of Nazareth and his family." The release of their book, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, and their television documentary, co-directed by Titanic's filmmaker James Cameron, suggest the ossuaries may substantiate a claim that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, fathered a son, and that their bones, along with the Lord's mother and two of His brothers, were once housed in these two-thousand year old containers. Their assertions are based on the crudely inscribed names found on six of the stone boxes: Yehuda son of Yeshua; Marya; Matya (short for Matthew); Mariam and Mara (though some misconstrue this to be Mariamne the Master and from there take a giant leap to Mary Magdalene); Yose (Joseph); and possibly Yeshua son of Yosef (though Yeshua is in question due to its illegibility).

In response, first notice that while some similarities do exist between the names inscribed on the Talpiot ossuaries and the names of biblical persons associated with Jesus of Nazareth, Jacobovici's overall conclusions are unsubstantiated. Yeshua (Aramaic for Joshua/Jesus) and all other names inscribed on the ossuaries have been found to be commonly used names in the years before and after Christ, according to the 1980 Talpiot excavations director, Dr. Amos Kloner. Jacobovici himself admits that Kloner denies any connection between the Talpiot tomb and that of Jesus of Nazareth (New York Public Library News Conference, Feb. 2007).

As a rebuttal, Jacobovici proffers a sort of smoking gun with the Mariam and Mara ossuary (or as he alleges, Mariamne). The Latin form for Mariam is Maria (the late fourth century name for Mary), and this name is used in the apocryphal book, *Acts of Philip*, to refer to the Mary Magdalene of the Bible. It is further alleged that a title, "mara," follows "Maria" and should be translated "the master" (thus suggesting that Mary Magdalene became an apostle of Jesus). This is "a real laugh," said Wycliffe professor, Dr. Stephen Notley, in reference to Jacobovici's "Mary the Master"

conclusion (www.wycliffecollege.ca/news). Dr. Jodi Magnes, of the University of North Carolina remarked, “This is a travesty to professional archaeologists and scholars of early Judaism and Christianity, and it is a disservice to the public” (www.bib-arch.org). But it isn’t just a *disservice*--it is a scam of Titanic proportions because millions will be duped into spending their hard earned cash on fabrications and sensational claims in yet another propaganda effort similar to Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code*. Truth be told, it’s all about selling books and making money. Regrettably, anything today that has to do with attacking the core beliefs of Christianity is big business.

Second, it must be remembered that archaeologists and epigraphers have known about the Talpiot ossuaries for years. That they have “been ignored tells you something,” said Dr. William Dever, professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Arizona. Dever also remarked, “It’s a shame the way this story is being hyped and manipulated” (www.y-sine.com). Indeed, by listening to network television sound bytes, one might very well be left with the impression that some new discovery had been made and some shocking evidence unearthed. Such is not the case. The only thing “new” to be analyzed was the DNA from bone residue (since actual bones were not found), literally scraped from the bottom of only two of the extant boxes. All that was discovered, however, was that the DNA from mystery person number one was not maternally related to mystery person number two. Shockingly enough, this was all that was needed to make the grossly egregious claim that “Jesus and Mary Magdalene might have produced a son named Judah” (www.discovery.com). Only Hollywood and pseudoscience could have concocted such irresponsible nonsense.

Sadly, many will fall prey to this sensationalistic journalism without ever investigating the facts. Because the Bible has been, by some, relegated to the garbage heap of fictional tales, the general public will swallow just about anything when it comes to religion. It’s amazing how many people will accept the word of a filmmaker instead of the proven witness of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Search it out for yourself. Truth has nothing to hide. The resurrection of Christ and the claims of the Bible have never been invalidated.

—reprinted from *The Gospel Journal*, April 2007, page 3.
Subscriptions are \$16.00 per year and can be sent to *The Gospel Journal*, P.O. Box 219, Cibolo, TX 78108-0219

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Thanks!

The Lost Tomb of Jesus by Dewayne Bryant

They’ve done it again.

No matter how far left the media gets, it can’t quite stay away from the Bible. From films and television to the nightly news, religion means big bucks. And it can mean even more with a little bit of controversy. If you want to know anything about its marketing potential, just ask Dan Brown. His book *The Da Vinci Code* has sold more than 60 million copies worldwide. People like controversy, especially when it comes to religion. The new Discovery Channel documentary entitled *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* does not disappoint.

In 1980, while digging the foundation for an apartment building, a construction crew uncovered an ancient tomb. Ten ossuaries (limestone bone boxes) lay undisturbed in the tomb waiting for archaeologists to rescue them. Experts were called to hurriedly document the site in a salvage operation before the tomb would be paved over (developers aren’t going to put multi-million dollar building projects on hold so that archaeologists can go “play in the dirt”). The authorities quickly rushed in to document the evidence. The names on the ossuaries sounded strangely familiar: Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Matthew, all names found in the New Testament. The archaeologists thought it nothing more than a coincidence, and off the ossuaries went into storage.

Twenty-seven years later on 4 March 2007, the documentary titled *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* premiered on the Discovery Channel. It claimed that the family tomb of Jesus Christ was found, along with scientific evidence that proves that the tomb in Talpiot was the final resting place of the holy family. Advertisements played up the fact that researchers claimed DNA

evidence and statistical certainty proved the legitimacy of the connection, which is billed as one of the greatest archaeological discoveries related to Jesus and early Christianity. But it also has the potential to turn the world of Christianity on its head. If the remains of Jesus have been found, then He did not rise from the dead or ascend to heaven (Acts 1:1-3, Rom. 6:4, 1 Cor. 15:12-19). If this is the actual tomb of Jesus, then Christians are to be pitied for believing in a man who was no less than the greatest con artist in history. But before we get into the implications of the discovery, we first must see what the evidence has to say.

The first pieces of evidence are the names on the ossuaries. The show argues that the incredible similarity in names means that these are the same individuals as recorded in the New Testament. Jacobovici and Cameron claim that statistical probability virtually assures that the tomb belonged to Jesus. Scholars disagree with this conclusion, however. The names Joseph and Jesus were among the six most common in the first century. Mary's name was the most popular among women, with nearly one in four having that name. It is difficult to show how the inhabitants of the tomb are the biblical characters when there were thousands of people with those names. But most importantly, the statistics rely on very broad assumptions, which is where the DNA evidence comes in.

The tests show that the people named Jesus and Mary (whom the show indicates is Mary Magdalene) were not related to each other, so the researchers immediately conclude that the two must have been husband and wife. If it is a family tomb, and if two people are buried together but not related genetically, the argument goes that they must be related by marriage. But this is only one possibility among many. Mary could have been Jesus' daughter-in-law, sister-in-law through marriage to a brother, sister-in-law from a previous marriage of his father's, mother-in-law from a subsequent marriage of his father, or a paternal cousin. You can see that to leap to the conclusion that the two had to be married is problematic, to say the least.

What do we make of this evidence? The DNA evidence says very little about the relationship between Jesus and Mary. But the statistical evidence that virtually proves the tomb is that of Jesus Christ *assumes* that the Mary is Mary Magdalene. That assumption is in dispute by scholars who are experts in personal names. If we factor in the other pieces of evidence such as the commonality of the names and the likelihood that the Jesus and Mary in this tomb were not married, the documentary suddenly looks suspiciously like a conspiracy theory.

There are at least two historical considerations where the documentary comes up short. The first is how the early Christian community took off with such explosive growth. In the Gospel accounts, after the death of Christ, the disciples are reduced to a rag-tag band of disillusioned dreamers. Their Messiah is dead. Their hopes and dreams are sealed in His tomb along with His body. But, inexplicably, the disciples quickly become powerful preachers scouring the Mediterranean world for souls, planting churches, opposing secular authorities, and converting the masses. Like uncontrolled wildfire, the Gospel races through the Roman Empire. Christians are so resolute in their faith that they would rather be tortured to death than renounce Christ. If Jesus was not the Son of God, the reaction of the early church to His imaginary resurrection would be the most bizarre story in human history.

The second area this is difficult to explain is how the early church shows no awareness of the tomb. Throughout church history, Christians have venerated important biblical sites, sometimes by building churches over them (such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, where it is thought the original tomb of Jesus was located). Somehow the church lost track of this tomb featured in the documentary despite the fact that it would have been in use for at least four generations, until the end of the first century. The most plausible explanation is that the tomb never belonged to Jesus' family in the first place.

For those not immediately familiar with the documentary, the emphasis on scientific evidence sounds compelling at first. That is, until the viewer turns a critical eye to the documentary, which has holes bigger than the one that sank the Titanic. It takes a couple of movie directors to blow open a case that archaeologists have already known about for nearly thirty years? After bringing us movies about time-traveling robots and tragic love on board a doomed ocean liner, Cameron turns toward a documentary on the family tomb of Jesus Christ. He makes it appear as if anyone can be a biblical scholar or professional archaeologist.

James Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici both admit that neither is an archaeologist. They are simply connecting the dots in an ancient detective story. This should immediately send up red flags for viewers everywhere. The show is billed as "providing scientific evidence to support the claims that the tomb found belonged to Jesus," but neither Cameron nor Jacobovici are specialists in any scientific area. It would be like a newspaper reporter writing a book on brain surgery.

Non-Christian scholars have criticized the documentary. Two of the men who originally worked

on the find, Amos Kloner and Joe Zias, have voiced their disagreement with the show's conclusions as well as its sensationalism. William Dever, a well-respected archaeologist and atheist whose early career included efforts to debunk the Bible, said that this production was not the fruit of scholarly research, but a "docudrama." The verdict is clear: specialists who are not Christians—and even atheists, no less—are frustrated with the lack of professional scholarship in sensational projects like this.

Amos Kloner has remarked that the makers of "The Lost Tomb of Jesus" are probably motivated by money, which calls its timing into question. It appears just before Easter, along with the expected annual articles in periodicals like *Time* and *Newsweek* that either try to debunk the historic Christian faith or reinterpret the evidence to make Christians squirm. Since controversy boosts sales, Kloner might be right. This could be exactly what the producers—and their wallets—are counting on.

The interpretation taken by the documentary does not harmonize the historical, biblical, and archaeological evidence. If anything, it throws the evidence into chaos and conflict. Experts disagree with the conclusions, the producers take liberties with the evidence, and holes in the theory are glossed over with slick visuals and pseudo-science. Is this the tomb of Jesus? For one fellow who lived sometime in the first century, yes. But for the Son of God? Not a chance.

—reprinted from *Think*, April 2007, page 13. Subscriptions to *Think* are \$30.00 per year, but well worth it. Send subscriptions to Focus Press, Inc., 1600 Westgate Circle, Suite 125, Brentwood, TN 37027

Way to Go Ted Koppel by Charles Williams

To the credit of the Discovery Channel, they presented a follow up discussion of the Sunday night two hour documentary, **The Lost Tomb of Jesus**. They had archeologists, biblical historians and others. Ted Koppel, the moderator, also did his "homework." It was quickly evident from the discussion that the writers and producers of the documentary based their theories on skewed and baseless information. One archeologist described their research as a **chain of "if" links**. He also called the documentary "archeoporn." A number of good articles have been written. ... The following is from *God and Science: Harmony Between the Bible and Science* by Rich Deem.

It was the custom in the first century A.D., that the bones of the deceased were transferred from burial caves to limestone boxes called ossuaries one year after their death. The practice was abandoned after the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D. Frank Moore Cross, a professor emeritus in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and

Civilizations at Harvard University, indicated, "The inscriptions are from the Herodian Period (which occurred from 1 B.C. to 1 A.D.). The use of limestone ossuaries and the varied script styles are characteristic of that time." Since **Jesus did not die until 30 A.D.**, the date is problematic for those claiming they represent the bones of Jesus.

The tomb containing the bones was first found by a construction crew in 1980 in the Jerusalem suburb of Talpiyot. According to the Jerusalem-based biblical expert Joe Zias, the tomb would have held more than 200 ossuaries. Ten ossuaries were taken to the Rockefeller Archeological Museum near Jerusalem, where one disappeared. Six of the ossuaries were inscribed with names that would be translated as Jeshua (Joshua or Jesus), Mara (Mary), Matthew, Josa (Joseph), Mariamene (Mary Magdalene ?) and Judah, son of Jeshua. Stephen Pfann, a biblical scholar at the University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, is unsure that the name "Jesus" on the ossuary was read correctly, since ancient Semitic script is difficult to read. He thinks **it's more likely that the name is "Hanun."** Bar-Ilan University Prof. Amos Kloner indicated that "Jesus son of Joseph" inscriptions had been found on several other ossuaries over the years. In addition, Kloner indicated, "There is no likelihood that Jesus and his relatives had a family tomb. They were a Galilee family with no ties in Jerusalem. The Talpiot tomb belonged to a middle-class family from the 1st century CE (B.C.)."

According to the film's website, DNA testing was attempted on only two samples - those of "Jesus" and those of Mariamene. The DNA was so degraded that no sequencing could be determined from the nuclear DNA (the main chromosomes). Only mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) was available for sequencing. Since mtDNA is much smaller than nuclear DNA, the average person's mtDNA differs from another's by only 8 base pairs. **The filmmakers assumed** they were married, and had a son named Judah (from the ossuary "Judah, son of Jeshua"). The assumption that Mariamene is really Mary Magdalene is quite overstated, since the name of "Mariamne" from the Acts of Philip is not the same as Mariamene. In addition, the Acts of Philip is the work of a heretical community that lived in the fourth century - at least two hundred fifty years after the events of the New Testament.

Jerusalem-based biblical expert Joe Zias has **called the documentary nonsense**, saying those involved in the project have **"have no credibility whatsoever...It's an old story that's been recycled. The story first broke in 1996 by the BBC. It burst in a couple of days."** The fact that the inscriptions on the ossuaries date to the beginning of the first century and Jesus and the others died much later, makes it extremely unlikely that "Jeshua" from the "Jesus Tomb" is really Jesus Christ.

—reprinted from the March 8, 2007 issue of *The Broadcast*, the bulletin of Nashville Road church of Christ, 1883 Nashville Pike, Gallatin, TN 37066