

A Critique of "Jesus Family Tomb"

Film Summary: James Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici produced a "documentary" concerning a tomb uncovered in Talpiot, Jerusalem in 1980. Ten ossuaries were recovered from the tomb. Six of them had names that are similar to Jesus and his family. Based on this similarity, the producers are claiming that this is the burial tomb of Jesus, his wife, son, and family. They suggest that even if the bones of Jesus were discovered that would not contradict the resurrection or ascension of Jesus into heaven as they could have been "spiritual" events.



The Problem: But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. (1 Co 15:12-14).

Jesus' Family from the Scripture and Tradition: (Mark 6:3 & Matthew 13:55)

Joseph, husband of Mary, father of Jesus' siblings.

Mary, wife of Joseph, mother of Jesus and his siblings.

Jesus, firstborn of Mary.

James, became leader of the Jerusalem church, martyred about 62 AD, buried alone in near the Temple.

Joseph, "Joses", became a traveling missionary.

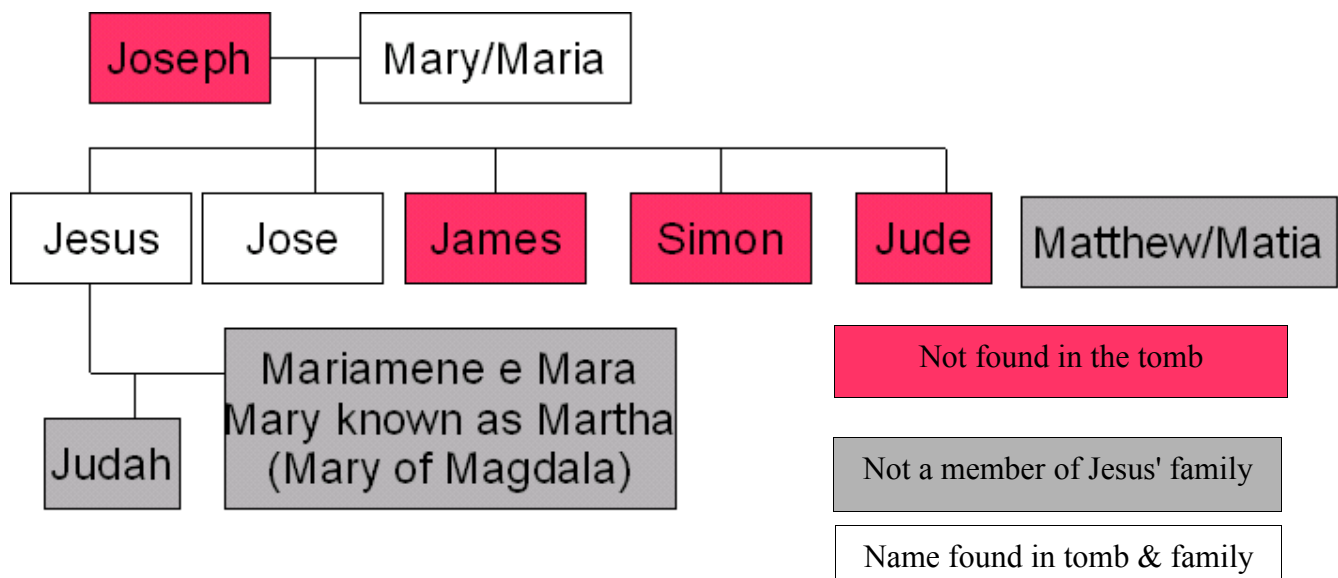
Simon, became a traveling missionary.

Jude, or "Judas" became a traveling missionary, author of "Jude"

Sisters, actual number unknown, tradition identifies two: Salome and Mary.

What was found in the Talpiot tomb?

- 10 ossuaries, 6 with names, 4 without. (Can't tell if the other 4 are adults, male or female)
- Bones, but were disposed of without a record of how many individuals were in each box.
- The location of each box in the tomb was not recorded, no relationships can be inferred from position.
- A symbol on the outside of the tomb looking like a chevron or peaked roof over a circle. This same symbol was found on another ossuary from a "Judeo-Christian" cemetery.
- DNA (mitochondrial) was recovered from the "Jesus" and "Mariamene" ossuary.



From what we know of Jesus' family, only three of his family members names are represented in the tomb. Four of the family are not present. James died in Jerusalem and was buried by the temple, although the producers will argue that the disputed ossuary of James came from this tomb. Eusebius of Caesarea said Mary accompanied John to Ephesus, where she died. (Roman Catholics claim she died in Ephesus or Jerusalem and that her body was taken into heaven. There is "Mary's tomb" in Jerusalem.)

The names found in the tomb are all very common. The only name that would make this tomb really different would be "Mary Magdalene." However, that name was not found in the tomb. The connection to this tomb would come from a Gnostic book that said Mary Magdalene was known also as Mariamene. For a family tomb, this one is missing a lot of Jesus' known relatives' names.

Tal Ilan, who compiled the *Lexicon of Jewish Names* and who vehemently disagrees with the assertion that this could be Jesus's tomb, says that the names found in the tomb "are in every tomb in Jerusalem. You can get all kinds of clever people who know statistics who will tell you that the combination is the unique thing about [these names], and probably they're right - if you want just exactly this combination it's more difficult to find. But my research proves exactly the opposite - these are the most common names that you could expect to find anywhere." (Scientific American, web article)

The *Lexicon of Jewish Names* was the basis of the statistical calculations used by the producers to try to say that this was the family tomb of Jesus.

The unknown "secret" symbol



A similar symbol was found on an ossuary in another cemetery that was "Judeo-Christian," implying a link to the "Jesus family tomb." This "symbol" could be anything, including a decoration over the tomb entrance. Many tombs had a pyramid or cone on their roof.



Perhaps it is simply a form of script. Carved Aramaic letters in some cases look like Phoenician characters. In this case two of them could make up the "symbol." Gimmel and 'Ayin together look a lot like the symbol. Both of these letters are also associated with meanings. Gimmel - "camel" and 'Ayin - "eye." So, playing the daring archaeologist, I propose the tomb belonged to a wealthy family who owned the "Camel's Eye" tavern. Or maybe a family that made their money from trading caravans so they would keep their "eye on the camel." ☺



Modern Roman	A	B	G	D	E	F	Z	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Early Latin	A	B	C	D	E	F	Z	H	Ꝛ	K	L	M	N	Ꝑ	ꝑ	Ꝓ	ꝓ	Ꝕ	ꝕ
Greek	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ	Κ	Λ	Μ	Ν	Ξ	Ο	Π	Ρ	Σ	Τ	Υ
Phoenician	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒
Early Aramaic	ܐ	ܒ	ܓ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ	ܕ
Nabatian	Ⲁ	Ⲃ	Ⲅ	Ⲇ	Ⲉ	Ⲋ	Ⲍ	Ⲏ	Ⲑ	Ⲓ	Ⲕ	Ⲗ	Ⲙ	Ⲛ	Ⲝ	Ⲟ	Ⲡ	Ⲣ	Ⲥ
Arabic	ا	ب	ج	د	هـ	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن	س	ع	ف	ق	ص