

DOES *THE JESUS FAMILY TOMB* DISPROVE HIS PHYSICAL RESURRECTION?

René A. López

ON FEBRUARY 26, 2007, a major press release given by two well-known figures in the film industry claimed to have possibly discovered the family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth. Oscar-winning James Cameron (of the *Titanic* [1997] and director and producer of other blockbusters including *The Terminator* [1984], *True Lies* [1984], *Aliens* [1986], *The Abyss* [1989], and *Terminator 2* [1991]), and Emmy-award-winning Simcha Jacobovici together produced a documentary claiming Jesus' family tomb had been found. This aired—not only nationally but worldwide—on the Discovery Channel on Sunday evening, March 4, 2007. The documentary drew millions of viewers. Related to the documentary is the book *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History*, by Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, which was published by Harper-SanFrancisco on March 1, 2007.¹ They have recently reworded the subtitle and revised and updated the book by adding comments by Jacobovici and answers to objections by James D. Tabor.²

Could this tomb near Jerusalem actually have contained the bones of Jesus? Does the cluster of names in the same tomb mean that this is Jesus of Nazareth's family tomb? Could one of the os-

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¹ Charles R. Pellegrino is a paleobiologist and documentary filmmaker who also aided Cameron and Jacobovici.

² Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Evidence Behind the Discovery No One Wanted to Find* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), 213–34. James D. Tabor is a theologian on the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte who advised the team on historical and theological matters.

suaries discovered in the tomb be that of Mary Magdalene?

This tomb was discovered in 1980. Was it kept secret because the Israelis thought it might destroy their tourist economy if Christians realized Jesus did not rise physically from the dead? The documentary reported that DNA tests were used to see whether the person in the *Jesus son of Joseph* ossuary (bone box) and the person in the *Mariamne*—believed by some to be Mary Magdalene—ossuary were perhaps married. Also it was alleged that a tenth ossuary could be the controversial *James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus* ossuary that was perhaps stolen or concealed. Statistics were offered to show that this was Jesus' family tomb and thus that Jesus probably rose spiritually, not physically.³ The purpose of this article is to expose pertinent matters not disclosed by *The Lost Tomb of Jesus (LTJ)* documentary and *The Jesus Family Tomb (JFT)* book and to examine whether the Jesus of Nazareth ossuary and His family's tomb were actually discovered.⁴

TALPIOT CONSPIRACY

This tomb was discovered on Friday, March 28, 1980, while the Solel Boneh Construction Company, led by chief engineer Efraim

³ *The Jesus Family Tomb* advocates made many more allegations. For example they alleged that Thomas the disciple could have been Jesus' son (named Judas) who was kept undercover for fear of being killed. They say Judas Thomas was probably the disciple whom the Gospel of John mentions as the one Jesus loved. The presence of different languages in one tomb, they claim, helps support their premise. The Nazarene and Ebionite groups were the real followers of Jesus. The chevron sign over the tomb stood, like the Christian fish sign of early Christianity, as a sign of an unfinished temple that Jesus predicted will be built in the third millennium. The X mark on the ossuary *Jesus son of Joseph* stood as a Christian symbol of the cross. It is important to investigate these issues, but the ones covered in this article will show that *The Jesus Family Tomb* advocates have a faulty cause. For a complete discussion of all these issues see René A. López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century, 2008).

⁴ Immediately after the documentary aired and the book was published, evangelicals posted answers to these allegations on websites and blogs. Later several books were published, including Darrell L. Bock and Daniel B. Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus: Exposing Popular Culture's Quest to Unseat the Biblical Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 193–213; Dillon Burroughs, *The Jesus Family Tomb Controversy: How the Evidence Falls Short* (Ann Arbor, MI: Nimble, 2007); Gary R. Habermas, *The Secret of the Talpiot Tomb: Unravelling the Mystery of the Jesus Family Tomb* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007); Charles L. Quarles, ed., *Buried Hope or Risen Savior: The Search for the Jesus Tomb* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008); James R. White, *From Toronto to Emmaus: The Empty Tomb and the Journey from Skepticism to Faith* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian, 2007). The present writer's volume *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined* covers all of the debate besides presenting evidence for the physical resurrection of Jesus.

Shochat, was clearing away rubble with a bulldozer after having dynamited a section in the Jerusalem suburb of Talpiot.⁵ Suddenly after clearing the area, the entire front south side of a door to a tomb lay bare for all to see. Ten ossuaries (bone boxes) were found and some were inscribed with the names *Jesus son of Joseph*, *Judah son of Jesus*, *Mariamne* and (or also known as) *Mara* (Martha or Mary Magdalene, the master), *Mary*, *Jose*, *Matthew*. Three of the ten were ornamented but noninscribed ossuaries, and one ossuary was nonornamented and noninscribed.⁶

The *LTJ* documentary and the *JFT* book implied that Israeli authorities and Christians conspired to keep the Talpiot tomb a secret. “Looking at the Judeo-Christians was—and is—an exercise fraught with potential controversy. It’s likely to get you into hot water with both Jews *and* Christians, because it involves shedding light in the dark corners of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. It’s certainly not something that the Kloners of this world want to get involved with. Why should the Judeo-Christians pose such a problem?”⁷ They claimed that because of a lack of media coverage and publications about the discovery for the past twenty-eight years there must be a conspiracy to keep this matter a secret.

However, immediately after the Talpiot discovery in 1980 Joseph Gat, the leading archaeologist on the team, published the discovery in 1981 in the Jerusalem journal *Hadashot Arkheologiyot*.⁸ In 1994 L. Y. Rahmani published a book titled, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*, which included findings of numerous ossuaries (ornamented and inscribed ones) along with nine of the ten ossuaries of the Talpiot tomb (80.500–

⁵ Two acceptable spellings exist for the name of the area where the tomb was found: either *Talpiyot* or *Talpiot*.

⁶ While Jacobovici investigated the “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” ossuary, he discovered that a tomb containing these names associated with Jesus of Nazareth had been discovered a number of years earlier. See Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History*, 32–34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 35 (italics theirs). The documentary and book are filled with secrecy and conspiracy-type implications conveyed by comments found almost everywhere in the book. The term “the Kloners” comes from the name Amos Kloner, who was one of the archaeologists who worked for the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM), now named Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). The conspiracy advocates said that leading Israeli authorities would not want to disclose such a discovery if it was the *real* family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁸ Joseph Gat, “East Talpiyot,” *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 76 (1981): 24–25.

80.508).⁹ Amos Kloner wrote an article in 1996 that refers to the 1981 article by Joseph Gat and also Rahmani's catalogue.¹⁰ An article titled "The Tomb That Dare Not Speak Its Name" was published in the British newspaper *The Sunday Times* on March 31, 1996. A week later a BBC special documentary titled "The Body in Question" aired on a British television series *Heart of the Matter*. On April 1, 1996, headlines in *The Irish Times* read, "Holy Family Tomb Find Discounted," and on April 3, 1996, a caption in the *USA Today* newspaper read, "Coffin in Israel Is Not That of Jesus' Family, Experts Say." In the same year (1996) James D. Tabor posted on a web-board named Orion Center at Hebrew University the discussion of the Jesus Family Tomb. Later John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed's book, *Excavating Jesus*, published in 2003, also discussed the Talpiot ossuaries.¹¹

Thus it becomes difficult to prove that Israeli authorities and Christians conspired to keep the Talpiot tomb a secret. The publications soon after the discovery and subsequent media coverage hardly support the idea of an attempted cover-up.

SECONDARY BURIALS

Secondary burial (known as *ossilegium*) was typical of the first century. Family members placed the body of a deceased person in a rock-cut tomb, where the body decomposed in about a year.¹² The bones were then placed in an ossuary with other family ossuaries. Ossuaries are boxes composed of limestone that usually are rectangular and about twelve to eighteen inches high and twenty-four

⁹ Levy Yitzhak Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*, ed. Ayala Sussmann and Peter Schertz (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994), 222–24. Rahmani did not include the tenth ossuary because it has no inscription.

¹⁰ Amos Kloner, "A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," *Atiqot* 29 (1996): 15–22.

¹¹ John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts: Revised and Updated*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 2001), 19–20.

¹² Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 54. See also *m. Eduyyot* 2:10, which states, "The judgment of the wicked in Gehenna is twelve months." From the end of the first century to the third century A.D. rabbis interpreted the decomposition as a necessary expiatory event humans went through in order to get rid of sin (see *b. Sahn.* 47b; and Rachael Hachlili, "Burial," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 1:790).

inches long.¹³ Though secondary burial was done among other nations,¹⁴ in Judea this practice began around 40 B.C. and ended abruptly with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.¹⁵ Though hard limestone ossuaries ceased being used, the practice of using other materials (like clay, soft limestone, and the combination of hard and soft limestone) continued up to A.D. 135.¹⁶

While the Sadducees practiced *ossilegium*, they must have done so for cultural reasons because of their denial of the physical resurrection.¹⁷ This point is important since the very use of ossuaries argues for the common first-century belief in a future physical, *not* a spiritual, resurrection.¹⁸

Poorer classes of Jewish families normally buried their dead in simple individual trenches dug into the ground. Sometimes a small rough tombstone was placed at one end.¹⁹

Joseph of Arimathea was rich and buried Jesus in a wealthy tomb (Matt. 27:57–59; cf. Isa. 53:9), but no evidence exists to sug-

¹³ This is a general figure since some ossuaries were made smaller for children or larger for tall individuals. See also Hachlili, “Burial,” 790.

¹⁴ Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon, 1953), 1:37; and Eric M. Meyers, “Second Burials in Palestine,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 33 (1970): 2–29.

¹⁵ Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 29–30. He also notes that Josephus mentioned Herod’s use of limestone and the employment of a number of stonecutters from that period until A.D. 64 (*The Jewish Antiquities* 15.11.2 §390; 15.11.2 §399; 20.9.7 §219).

¹⁶ Hachlili, “Burial,” 791; L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Roman Byzantine Lead Coffins from Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1999); and idem, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 22.

¹⁷ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 53–54.

¹⁸ See the discussion later in this article of evidence showing the common first-century belief in a physical resurrection.

¹⁹ Jodi Magness, “Has the Tomb of Jesus Been Discovered?” <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=640>, 2007 (accessed October 15, 2007). “A plain ossuary would not have been too expensive—an inscription prices one at a *drachma* and four *obols*, or just over a day’s wages for a skilled laborer, and the style, decorations, and workmanship of the James ossuary in no way imply that extraordinary wealth was available. The more prohibitive factor was the plot of land for the burial in shafts and secondary burial in ossuaries. . . . But not every family in first-century Jerusalem had a parcel of land with a burial chamber, nor could many afford an ossuary. For every one of the hundreds of ossuary and *kokhim* burials examined by archaeologists, we must assume thousands of bodies were deposited in shallow graves without any protection from decomposition and disintegration in the soil” (Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 282, 288). Therefore, although plain ossuaries may not have been too expensive for poor families like that of Jesus of Nazareth, many could still not afford them. Nor perhaps would Jesus’ family be able to afford a plot of land with a family tomb.

gest that all of Jesus' family, including His father Joseph, who died years earlier, were also buried in the same tomb. To support this notion one would have to posit the theory that Joseph of Arimathea donated a family tomb. If such a theory were true, surely the Bible or church tradition would have mentioned this fact. However, no such evidence exists.²⁰

Furthermore Rahmani says, "In Jerusalem's tombs, the deceased's place of origin was noted when someone from outside Jerusalem and its environs was interred in a local tomb."²¹ Joe Zias, IAA curator from 1971 to 1997, along with Jodi Magness, corroborates this.²² Thus the burden of proof is on those who claim that the Talpiot tomb belonged to a Galilean family like that of Jesus of Nazareth, since the place of origin does not appear on any of the inscriptions.

OSSUARY INSCRIPTIONS

The inscription *ישוע בר יהוסף* (*Yeshua* [?] *son of Yehosef*) in Rahmani's catalogue appears as ossuary number 704/80.503. This is a nonornamented ossuary inscribed in Aramaic.²³ Since "Jesus" and "Joseph" were common names in Jerusalem, one should not be surprised to find a number of tombs with the inscription "Jesus son of

²⁰ Tabor implies that Jesus' family may not have been poor later in life. He adds that Jesus' "family had artisan skills" and had supported their families and mother, and He had loyal followers who financially supported Him (Luke 8:1–3). Also he says that Joseph of Arimathea could have donated a tomb (Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *Jesus Family Tomb Revised and Updated*, 221–22). No evidence of such a donation exists, a donation that likely would not have gone unnoticed if it took place. Why does Tabor not address the Holy Sepulchre burial place of Jesus instead of positing such a highly improbable hypothesis? Along with James and Jude, probably all of Jesus' family became believers after His resurrection. If they were not rich before becoming believers, the likelihood of their becoming wealthy after becoming believers is low (see Acts 15 and the epistles of James and Jude). Since Christians were harshly treated in Jerusalem, once a Jew made an open profession of Christ, making a living became more difficult. Perhaps that is what gave rise to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Jewish-Christians were under pressure to return to Judaism. In addition the evidence suggests that the Jerusalem church had poor saints and needed financial assistance later on, which Paul helped provide (Rom. 15:25–27; 2 Cor. 8–9).

²¹ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 17.

²² See Magness, "Has the Tomb of Jesus Been Discovered?" and Joe Zias, "Deconstructing the Second and Hopefully Last Coming of Simcha and the BAR Crowd," <http://www.joezias.com/tomb.html>, March 7, 2007 (accessed September 10, 2007).

²³ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 223.

Joseph.”²⁴ In fact an ossuary with the inscription “Jesus son of Joseph” was found more than fifty years earlier than the Talpiot ossuary.²⁵ Eleazar Lippa Sukenik found that ossuary in 1926, in the warehouse basement of the IAA, and he published the find in 1931.²⁶ No reputable scholar has ever suggested this ossuary contained the bones of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁷

Furthermore the inscription on this ossuary, unlike the one on the Talpiot tomb ossuary (704/80.503), is clearly written. Though almost all scholars have conceded that the Talpiot ossuary reads “Jesus son of Joseph,” it must be noted that they have done so with reasonable doubts. Hence Amos Kloner, who documented the find, places a question mark after *Yeshua*: “Yeshua (?) son of Yehosef.” Because it is difficult to read, he had to corroborate the interpretation by looking at another ossuary (no. 2, 702) where the word appears in the inscription *Yehuda son of Yeshua*.²⁸ Two years before Kloner’s article in 1996, Rahmani also questioned the certainty of the first name of the inscription “Yeshua (?), son of Yehosef,” and he concluded, “The first name, preceded by a large cross-mark, is difficult to read, as the incisions are clumsily carved and badly scratched.” Like Kloner, he confirms the word *Yeshua* by looking at the unambiguous ossuary engraved *Yehuda son of Yeshua*.²⁹

Even if one grants the reading “Jesus son of Joseph,” the question must be asked, Would Jesus of Nazareth’s followers inscribe the name of such an honored person in such a scrappy way or graffiti-like manner?³⁰ Another question not addressed by the *JFT*

²⁴ Charles L. Quarles, “Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?” https://www.lacollege.edu/ifl/jesus_tomb.pdf, March 4, 2007 (accessed October 18, 2007). See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 85; and the “Statistical Analyses” section below.

²⁵ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 77.

²⁶ Eleazar Lippa Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber Jerusalems um Christi Geburt* (Jerusalem: Azriel, 1931), 19.

²⁷ Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, 94.

²⁸ Kloner says, “The first name following the X mark is difficult to read. In contrast to other ossuaries of this tomb, the incisions are here superficial and cursorily carved” (“Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 18).

²⁹ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 223.

³⁰ Tabor tries to deemphasize the unclear writing of the name *Yeshua* on this inscription by stating that this is typical of inscriptions since even the inscription of “Joseph, son of Caiaphas, the wealthy and influential high priest who presided over the trial of Jesus, is quite difficult to read” (Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb Revised and Updated*, 222–23). However, the opposite is true (for a

book and the *LTJ* documentary is this: If Jesus was married, why are the names of His wife and child not found on the same ossuary, which was a common practice?³¹ These questions were not asked by the *JFT* advocates, which makes their entire premise faulty at best and deceitful at worst.

Another ossuary has the inscription יהודה בר ישוע (*Yehuda son of Yeshua*). It is listed in Rahmani's catalogue as number 702/80.501. This is an ornamented ossuary with the inscription in Aramaic.³² *Yehuda* (Judas or Judah) was the third most popular Jewish name between 330 B.C. and 200 A.D. According to Tal Ilan, of 2,509 males 179 were found with this name.³³ *Yeshua* (Joshua or Jesus) was the sixth most common name of the same period. Of the 2,509 males, 103 individuals bore this name.³⁴ Nothing extraordinary appears in this inscription since both names were common.

This *Yehuda*, of course, could not be the son of Jesus of Nazareth for three reasons. Biblical evidence, extrabiblical evidence, and church tradition all verify that Jesus did not father children. Almost all conservative and liberal theologians agree on this point. The burden of proof lies with anyone saying otherwise.³⁵

picture of Caiaphas's inscription see figure 8 in chapter 2 in López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined*), and most ossuaries documented in Rahmani's catalogue are clearly readable. But the *Yeshua* inscription is not clear; and this is why Rahmani added a question mark next to this name and not others.

³¹ Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices, and Rites in the Second Temple Period*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 304.

³² Kloner, "Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," 18; and Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 223.

³³ Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, ed. Martin Hengel and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2002), 55–56. This is a slightly different figure from Kloner's article since Ilan has updated the study. See Kloner, "Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," 18.

³⁴ Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, 55–56. There is also a different count in Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 70. He lists Judah as the fourth most popular name (164 times), but still lists Joshua as the sixth most popular (99 times). Hachlili has yet another count ranking Judah (96 times) as the fourth most common name used and Joshua (60 times) as the sixth most common name (Rachel Hachlili, "Hebrew Names, Personal Names, Family Names and Nicknames of Jews in the Second Temple Period," in *Families and Family Relations: As Presented in Early Judaism and Early Christianities: Texts and Fictions*, ed. Jan Willem Van Henten and Athalya Brenner [Leiderndorp: Deo, 2000], 114).

³⁵ James D. Tabor originally denied that Jesus was married; he called it a "gripping fiction" that is "short on evidence" (*The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family and the Birth of Christianity* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006], 4). He has now changed his mind. The only so-called "strong evidence" he

The inscription יוסֵה (Yose) appears in Rahmani's catalogue on ossuary number 705/80.504. This is a plain ossuary inscribed in Hebrew.³⁶ The *JFT* book and the *LTJ* documentary claim that the inscription of *Jose* (lit., *Yose*) is rare, since only one ossuary out of 519 male ossuaries has been discovered with this inscription.³⁷ Why have the *JFT* and *LTJ* authors chosen not to include the Greek rendering of *Jose* of the Hebrew name *Yose* in their calculations? If they mention the spelling of the nickname *Jose* (Ἰωσήτος, a known contraction of Joseph)³⁸ in Mark 6:3 as Jesus' brother and link it to the Talpiot inscription, why not include in the calculation the Greek spelling of the name when it appears on other ossuaries? Numerous first-century ossuaries have the Greek spelling of the inscription name *Jose* as documented by Rahmani, P. B. Bagatti, and J. T. Milik in the 1958 *Dominus Flevit* excavation, and others.³⁹ In fact the name *Jose* appears in three places in the Bible alone (Mark 6:3; 15:40, 47). This omission exemplifies a prejudicial way of using evidence to fit a desired conclusion.

The inscription מַרְיָה (*Marya*) appears on an ossuary numbered 706/80.505 in Rahmani's catalogue. This is a plain ossuary.⁴⁰ The inscription uses Hebrew letters to transliterate the Latinized version, "Maria," of the Hebrew name "Miriam" (מִרְיָם).⁴¹ It is one of the most common Hebrew female names. Ossuaries throughout the region have the name Mary. This inscription proves absolutely nothing about the tomb unless other assumptions are introduced.

The inscription מַתְיָה (*Matya*) is listed in Rahmani's catalogue as ossuary number 703/80.502, a plain ossuary inscribed in He-

claims is Paul's lack of reference to Jesus' singleness when recommending celibacy, which Tabor thinks would have clinched Paul's argument (Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb Revised and Updated*, 226). Tabor falsely assumes that since Jesus' singleness is not mentioned, He must have been married.

³⁶ Kloner, "Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," 20; and Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 223.

³⁷ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 77.

³⁸ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 90.

³⁹ P. B. Bagatti and J. T. Milik, *Gli Scavi del Dominus Flevit (Monte Oliveto—Gerusalemme)*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1958), 89, fig. 21, 4; Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 90, 176, 202; and Victor A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4.

⁴⁰ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 223–24.

⁴¹ Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, 20.

brew.⁴² Though the name “Matthew” appears in Mary’s genealogy in Luke 3:24–26, nothing else can be said about this ossuary. In the New Testament Matthew is one of Jesus’ disciples, and that is the sole connection made directly to Him. To say more than that is pure speculation.

The inscription Μαριαμηνου (η) Μαρα (*Mariamenu [e] Mara*) appears in Rahmani’s catalogue on ossuary number 701/80.500. This is an ornamented ossuary and the only one found in the Talpiot tomb with an inscription written in Greek.⁴³ This inscription is key to the thesis of the *LTJ* and *JFT* advocates. According to them this inscription should be interpreted as “Mary Magdalene, also known as master.” Two elements are key to their definition. The name Mariamne refers to Mary Magdalene in the Gnostic writings, specifically the *Acts of Philip*, and “Mara” must be a transliterated Aramaic word that means “Lord or Master.”⁴⁴ However, there are two better interpretations of this inscription.

Four ossuaries are not inscribed. Three of these are ornamented and are cataloged by Rahmani as 707/80.506, 708/80.507, and 709/80.508.⁴⁵ Rahmani did not document the fourth ossuary that the *JFT* and *LTJ* advocates think belongs to Jesus’ brother James because it is nonornamented and has no inscription. Kloner, however, one of the original excavators at the Talpiot site in 1980, documents the ossuary as “IAA 80.509 60 x 26 x 31.5 cm. Plain.”⁴⁶ This ossuary is discussed later in the section “The So-called ‘Missing’ Ossuary.”

MARY MAGDALENE’S OSSUARY?

If the inscription *Mariamne* (or *Mariame* or *Mariamene*) (*e*) *Mara* refers to Mary Magdalene, the *LTJ* and *JFT* advocates have a strong case that Jesus of Nazareth’s family tomb has been discovered. But if not, the foundation crumbles.⁴⁷

⁴² Kloner, “Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 20; and Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 223.

⁴³ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 222.

⁴⁴ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 19, 76, 95–96, 102.

⁴⁵ Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 224.

⁴⁶ Kloner, “Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 21.

⁴⁷ Stephen J. Pfann said, “The name ‘Mariamene’ is of central importance to the story line of the documentary *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* and its companion book. Since

The *JFT* proponents claim that the *Acts of Philip* 8:94 (a late fourth-century A.D. Gnostic text) refers to Mary Magdalene. “It came to pass when the Saviour divided the apostles and each went forth according to his lot, that it fell to Philip to go to the country of the Greeks: and he thought it hard, and wept. And *Mariamne* his sister (it was she who made ready the bread and salt at the breaking of bread, but *Martha* was she who ministered to the multitudes and laboured much) seeing it, went to Jesus and said: Lord, seest thou not how my brother is vexed?”⁴⁸

Harvard University professor François Bovon said, “‘Mary Magdalene—’ is clearly *Mariamne*.”⁴⁹ But nowhere does the text say that this is Mary Magdalene. Actually Bovon was not identifying her as the Mary Magdalene of the New Testament. He stated in a Society of Biblical Literature online article that the fourth-century *Acts of Philip* might have represented Mary Magdalene by the name *Mariamne* as a *literary* rather than a *historical* figure. He also admitted in the article, “I must say that the reconstruction of Jesus’ marriage with Mary Magdalene and the birth of a child belong for me to science fiction.”⁵⁰ Furthermore a glance at the context shows this *Mariamne* fits better the Mary of Bethany, where her brother Philip is from (according to the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip*), not Mary of Magdala. This explains why most scholars have rejected identifying this person as Mary Magdalene.⁵¹

‘*Mariamene*’ is unique (and likewise, ‘*Mariamne*,’ is rare) among the ossuaries, this name is also highly significant when creating statistics and probabilities concerning the uniqueness of the Talpiot cave and its inscribed ossuaries” (“Mary Magdalene Is Now Missing: A Correct Reading of Rahmani Ossuary CJO 701 and CJO 108,” <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=653>, 2007 [accessed April 23, 2007]). James R. White makes a similar observation. “In my opinion, if the argument fails here, the rest of the entire film and book are left without any basis or foundation” (*From Toronto to Emmaus: The Empty Tomb*, 47).

⁴⁸ Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), 446 (italics added). See the online article <http://www.gnosis.org/library/actphil.htm>.

⁴⁹ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 100.

⁵⁰ Bovon, “The Tomb of Jesus.”

⁵¹ Bock and Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus*, 204. Even if one were to believe that Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene were the same person, nothing here identifies *Mariamne* as the historical Mary Magdalene. Gnostic literature uses this figure to promote its agenda and does not require that she be a real person. See François Bovon, *New Testament Traditions and Apocryphal Narratives*, trans. Jane Haaio-seva-Hunter, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995), 153; François Bovon, “Mary Magdalene in the Acts of Philip,” in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*, ed. Christopher R. Matthews and F. Stanley Jones, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 79, n 20, and 82, n 33; Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary*

Two other views fit the evidence better than interpreting this inscription as “Mary Magdalene, also known as Master [or apostle].”⁵² For one, Rahmani and Kloner read the inscription as *Mariamenu (e) Mara*, which means “Mariamene, who is (also called) Mara.”⁵³ The first name is a way of referring to “Maria” or “Mary,” the name “Mara” is a contraction of “Martha,”⁵⁴ and the inscription uses two names to refer to the same person. Extrabiblical and biblical evidence abounds showing how this occurs. For example the Babylonian Talmud *Pesaḥim* (113b–114a) mentions a person named Judah, nicknamed “lion’s whelp” (from Gen. 49:9).⁵⁵ Simon was called Peter (Matt. 4:18), James and John were also named Boanerges, which means “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17), and Thomas was also called “the Twin” (John 11:16).

An even better reading of the inscription understands it to record two names belonging to two women buried in one ossuary—“Mariam and Martha.” Since Kloner has already admitted that about seventeen people were buried in the Talpiot tomb, it seems highly likely that more than one person’s bones were placed in this ossuary.⁵⁶ Furthermore Steven J. Pfann, president of the University of the Holy Land, in an online article carefully analyzes this inscription and shows that its Greek letters say *μαριαμη και μαρα*. He also notes that the inscription displays two different handwritings, one for *μαριαμη* and another for *και μαρα*. He makes a compelling case based on detailed observation and the handwriting styles of other ossuary inscriptions.⁵⁷ In fact years before, in the dig at *Do-*

Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2003).

⁵² As Quarles correctly observes, “Jacobovici and Pellegrino also argue that the name ‘Mara’ is actually ‘master’ or ‘lord’ and identifies Mary Magdalene as a female apostle. This element of the argument involves an enormous amount of speculation based on questionable evidence. The researchers could not cite one ancient text in which Mary was designated a master or lord or in which that word ‘mara’ was used as a synonym for ‘apostle.’ . . . In fact, ‘Mara’ was the eighth most commonly used name among Palestinian Jewish females in the period 330 B.C. to 200 A.D.” (“Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?”).

⁵³ Kloner, “Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 17; and Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 222–23.

⁵⁴ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 89; Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, 422–23; and Kloner, “Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 17.

⁵⁵ See also *bGittin* 34b; Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices, and Rites in the Second Temple Period*, 319; and Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 14.

⁵⁶ Kloner, “Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 22.

⁵⁷ Pfann, “Mary Magdalene Is Now Missing.”

minus Flevit, an ossuary inscription was discovered with both names, “Martha and Maria” (written three times on the same ossuary),⁵⁸ as well an ossuary with as many as five names inscribed on it.⁵⁹

Contrary to the *LTJ* and *JFT* advocates, nothing in the inscription *Mariamenou e Mara* documented in Rahmani’s catalogue (701/80.500) has convinced the majority of scholars to read the inscription as “Mariamne, also known as master” or to interpret it as referring to the New Testament Mary Magdalene.

DNA EVIDENCE

DNA tests were made on biological matter from the ossuaries of Jesus and Mariame (or Mariamne). The results showed there was no match.⁶⁰ The *JFT* advocates on that basis claimed that these individuals must have been married, since nonrelatives would not reside in a family tomb. Is this the whole story?

Other options needed to be explored. First, without conducting tests on other ossuaries one should not reach this conclusion. For example Mariame could have been married to Jose or Matthew. She could have been this Jesus’ paternal half-sister, aunt, cousin, sister-in-law, or mother-in-law, since the testing involved *maternal*, also known as mitochondrial, DNA. Mariame could have been an adopted daughter or even an exceptional servant who was loved like a daughter, and so buried in the family tomb.

Second, since many people were buried in this tomb, this strongly hinders the testing of DNA evidence.⁶¹

Third, as Witherington notes, having no DNA control sample from Jesus’ family to compare with the Talpiot DNA samples makes it impossible to know which Jesus this DNA belongs to. That Jesus and Mariame are not related means nothing, since one

⁵⁸ Bagatti and Milik, *Gli Scavi del Dominus Flevit*, 75, 77–79; see ossuary 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 91, 97–98.

⁶⁰ For Darrell L. Bock’s interview with Stephen J. Pfann in Jerusalem in 2007 see “Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Stephen J. Pfann to Help Identify Inscriptions,” <http://media.bible.org/mp3/bock/profpfann030807.mp3>, 2007 (accessed April 4, 2007).

⁶¹ Pfann notes the same thing in his interview with Bock (*ibid.*). Advocates who believe that at least thirty-five people were buried in the Talpiot Tomb are listed in Kloner, “Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” 22. See also “Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Amos Kloner to Help Identify Talpiot Discovery Issues,” <http://media.bible.org/mp3/bock/profkloner030807.mp3>, 2007 (accessed April 4, 2007).

can never compare the Talpiot DNA with DNA from Jesus of Nazareth.⁶²

THE SO-CALLED MISSING OSSUARY

Since a tenth ossuary was noninscribed and nonornamental, the IAA placed it in a courtyard with other noninscribed, nonornamental bone boxes. Then years later the *JFT* people alleged that this ossuary is that of James, Jesus' brother. They called it the "missing" ossuary because they suggested that the IAA had kept it a secret from the public, but that it was now made known. But it was never "missing" or kept secret; it was simply set aside as unremarkable along with many others.

Four arguments are marshaled by Tabor and the Talpiot advocates in an effort to validate the notion that this ossuary is that of James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus. First, they allege that a conspiracy explains the "disappearance" of the tenth ossuary. Second, the time of discovery and the name connect them to the Talpiot Jesus family. Third, Tabor claims that the dimensions of the tenth ossuary of Talpiot (80.509) and the "James" ossuary are the same size "to the centimeter."⁶³ Fourth, patina samples seem to support the idea that the "James" ossuary and the "Jesus" ossuary were in the same family tomb.

As already noted, no evidence supports a cover-up theory. Furthermore Kloner, one of the original archaeologists at Talpiot, said he saw the plain tenth ossuary, placed it in a nearby courtyard, and recorded it before the tomb was resealed. His account of the tenth ossuary clearly argues against the "James" theory.⁶⁴

Moreover, the James ossuary cannot belong to the Talpiot tomb discovered in 1980 because at Oded Golan's trial, evidence pointed to a date of purchase *four years earlier*. As Zias reports, "Well, last week ago a small problem suddenly arose when Oded Golan, the owner of the ossuary in question, who is on trial for forging objects, produced a photograph of the ossuary with a time stamp 1976, four years before the Talpiot tomb was accidentally

⁶² Ben Witherington III, "The Jesus Tomb? 'Titanic' Talpiot Tomb Theory Sunk from the Start," <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/02/jesus-tomb-titanic-talpiot-tomb-theory.html>, February 26, 2007 (accessed September 7, 2007).

⁶³ Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty*, 32.

⁶⁴ Kloner, "Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," 21; and "Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Amos Kloner to Help Identify Talpiot Discovery Issues."

discovered!”⁶⁵

Tabor claims that the dimensions of the tenth ossuary are “precisely the same, to the centimeter, to those of the James Ossuary.”⁶⁶ However, in Bock’s interview Kloner completely denied that these ossuaries were the same size. Kloner describes the James ossuary dimensions as 56 centimeters long at the top and 50.5 centimeters long at the base, similar to André Lemaire’s specifications.⁶⁷ Kloner adds that one could make a mistake in measurement by half a centimeter or even a whole centimeter but *not* by measurements of an ossuary measuring 60 centimeters compared to another measuring 56 centimeters at the top and 50.5 centimeters at the bottom rim.⁶⁸ Zias supports Kloner’s report.⁶⁹

Patina samples are samples of mineral layers that form on a particular ossuary “unique” to its burial location, thereby pointing to a particular section or tomb. The *JFT* advocates claim that the James ossuary mineral samples match those of the Talpiot tomb. Certain factors that were not disclosed, however, weaken their theory substantially. For one thing a key consideration in the patina argument is that similarities do not prove identity. The fact that two things are similar does not prove they are identical.⁷⁰

Another factor is that no other samples were taken from surrounding areas near Talpiot. “Patina from similar tombs (like the one found just north of the Talpiot tomb) where *terra rosa* had entered the tomb around the same time would be needed for a meaningful comparison, and that kind of study was not done.”⁷¹ Crime laboratory director, Robert Genna, whom Jacobovici and Pellegrino quote in the documentary to seek to validate their theory, did not corroborate their point. After the documentary he said the follow-

⁶⁵ Zias, “Deconstructing the Second and Hopefully Last Coming of Simcha and the BAR Crowd.”

⁶⁶ Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty*, 32.

⁶⁷ André Lemaire, “Burial Box of James the Brother of Jesus,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 28 (November–December 2002): 33. See also William D. Barrick, “Curiosities or Evidence? The James Ossuary and the Jehoash Inscription,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 14 (spring 2007): 2–3.

⁶⁸ “Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Amos Kloner to Help Identify Talpiot Discovery Issue.”

⁶⁹ Zias, “Deconstructing the Second and Hopefully Last Coming of Simcha and the BAR Crowd.”

⁷⁰ White, *From Toronto to Emmaus: The Empty Tomb*, 94.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

ing in an interview with Ted Koppel. “The elemental composition of some of the samples we tested from the ossuaries are consistent with each other. But I would never say they’re a match. . . . No scientist would ever say definitely that one ossuary came from the same tomb as another. . . . We didn’t do enough sampling to see if in fact there were other tombs that had similar elemental compositions. . . . The only samples we can positively say are a ‘match’ from a single source are fingerprints and DNA.”⁷²

Thus the patina testing of the James ossuary and the Talpiot tomb ossuaries proves nothing about a connection between them.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Finding a cluster of names like those on the Talpiot tomb ossuaries seems unusual. The *LTJ* and the *JFT* advocates conclude that the odds of the Talpiot tomb belonging to Jesus of Nazareth are 600 to 1. Here is how they get this figure. Professor Andrey Feuerverger, a leading statistician at the University of Toronto, multiplied each ossuary inscription according to the number of appearances per ossuary in tombs discovered in Jerusalem, totaling about 1,000. (1) There is a 1 in 190 possibility of finding an ossuary with the name “Jesus son of Joseph,” (2) a 1 in 160 possibility for “Mariamne,” (3) a 1 in 40 possibility for “Matia,” (4) a 1 in 20 possibility for “Jose,” and (5) a 1 in 4 possibility for “Maria.” Multiplying these figures yields a total of 97,280,000.⁷³ By leaving out the ossuary “Judah son of Jesus,” he took a more conservative approach. He further reduced the figure by dividing the number 97,280,000 by 40, and by taking out the Matia ossuary, which reduces the number to 2,432,000. This he rounded to 2,400,000. To account for “unintended bias” in the historical sources since other family names of Jesus of Nazareth do not appear in the Talpiot (e.g., Joseph, the father of Jesus, and His other brothers) he further reduced the number 2,400,000 by a factor of 4, thereby bringing the number down to 600,000. This number was divided by 1,000, which Feuerverger assumes is the “maximum number of tombs that might have existed in Jerusalem, dating to the first century.” The number 600,000

⁷² Robert Genna, “Cracks in the Foundation: The Jesus Family Tomb Story: The Experts Weigh In and Bow Out: Disclaimers from the Film’s Own Experts on the Record,” http://www.uhl.ac/Lost_Tomb/CracksInTheFoundation.html, 2007 (accessed August 28, 2007).

⁷³ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 114.

divided by 1,000 yields the figure of 600.⁷⁴

Though this may suggest that this family tomb included the bones of Jesus of Nazareth, when various details are disclosed the impressiveness vanishes.

Statistical analyses begin with a number of assumptions, but if these assumptions are wrong the results will also be wrong.⁷⁵ Feuerverger admits this. “The results of any such computations are highly dependent on the assumptions that enter into it. Should even one of these assumptions not be satisfied then the results will not be statistically meaningful.”⁷⁶ These are some of the assumptions they have made in their analysis that has already been noted as replete with errors. (1) *Mariamne e Mara* should be interpreted as “Mary Magdalene, the master,” (2) Jose is Jesus’ brother, (3) Mary is Jesus’ mother, and (4) Jesus married and had a son named Judas.⁷⁷ As already discussed, nothing favors the interpretation that *Mariamne* refers to Mary Magdalene. Even less certain is the suggestion that Jose is brother to the Jesus of the tomb and that Mary is mother when both of these names were two of the most common names of the first century, as shown below. Jose and Mary could have been this Jesus’ cousins, uncle and aunt, adopted children of the family, or beloved servants. Both liberal and conservative scholars acknowledge that the available evidence indicates that Jesus did not marry or father children. Without these assumptions the *JFT* and *LTJ* advocates’ statistics are not relevant.

Of the 231 ossuaries inscribed, two have the inscription *Yeshua bar Yehosef* (“Jesus son of Joseph”). This makes a big difference, according to Pfann. “That means 1 out of 115½ inscriptions we are going to have one inscribed ossuary with the name “‘Jesus son of Joseph.’”⁷⁸ Even assuming a correct reading of the inscription “Jesus son of Joseph” proves nothing. There are at least 99 individuals with the name Jesus and another 218 individuals with the name Joseph from this general era (330 B.C. to A.D. 200). Twen-

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ White, *From Toronto to Emmaus: The Empty Tomb*, 81.

⁷⁶ Andrey Feuerverger, “Dear Statistical Colleagues,” <http://fisher.utstat.toronto.edu/andrey/OfficeHrs.txt>, March 12, 2007 (accessed July 25, 2007).

⁷⁷ Quarles notes that the *LTJ* and the *JFT* advocates must make three of these four assumptions in order for their statistics to work. But he shows the impossibility of their conclusions (“Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?”).

⁷⁸ “Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Stephen J. Pfann to Help Identify Inscriptions.”

ty-two ossuaries have the name Jesus and 45 ossuaries have the name Joseph. Jesus is the sixth most used name of this period and Joseph is the second.⁷⁹ So common are these names that two other ossuaries inscribed with the name “Jesus” were discovered in *another* Talpiot tomb.⁸⁰

Furthermore a lack of any genealogy found in the first century (except for Jesus’ genealogy through Joseph [Matt. 1:1–17] and Mary [Luke 3:23–34]) hinders the view of the *JFT* advocates, since no other list exists by which to compare it.⁸¹

Of all names used in the first century 75 percent “involve the use of only sixteen male and female names.”⁸²

<i>Names</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Ossuaries</i>
Simon/Simeon	243	59
Joseph/Joses	218	45
Lazarus (Eleazar)	166	29
Judas (Yehudah/Judah)	164	44
John (Yohanan)	122	25
Jesus (Joshua)	99	22
Ananias (Hananiah)	82	18
Jonathan	71	14
Matthew/Matthias	62	17
Manaen	42	4
James (Jacob)	40	5
Mary (Mariam)	70	42
Salome	58	41
Shelamzion	24	19
Martha	20	17
Joanna	12	7

⁷⁹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 85. See also Quarles, “Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?”

⁸⁰ Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices, and Rites in the Second Temple Period*, 262. For more on the statistical fallacies of the *JFT* advocates see William A. Dembski and Robert J. Marks II, “The Jesus Tomb Math,” in *Buried Hope or Risen Savior? The Search for the Jesus Tomb*, ed. Charles L. Quarles (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 113–51.

⁸¹ “Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Stephen J. Pfann to Help Identify Inscriptions.”

⁸² Bock and Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus*, 202. Bock cites figures from onomastic expert Tal Ilan (*Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, 56–57). Standard works on Jewish names are Bagatti and Milik, *Gli Scavi del Dominus Flevit*; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*; Hachlili, “Hebrew Names”; and Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*.

Thus the name of Jesus was so common (not just on ossuaries) that Jewish historian Josephus mentioned fourteen first-century figures with this name, ten of whom lived during Jesus' time.⁸³ Bock concludes, "These are just Jesuses who made a historical impact! When we add to this fact the simple, even sloppy, nature of the inscription, the likelihood is that the Jesus whose ossuary was found at Talpiot was not, in fact, Jesus of Nazareth. Every expert I interviewed (Pfann, Kloner, and Ilan) agreed that the names were too common to support the documentary."⁸⁴

SPIRITUAL OR PHYSICAL RESURRECTION?

The most troubling aspect of the documentary and book is the theory that Jesus' resurrection was spiritual instead of physical.⁸⁵ For the spiritual-resurrection view to be acceptable, the advocates must show that this was the common Jewish, postapostolic, and Christian understanding. However, the evidence shows otherwise.

Predominant belief of second-temple Judaism on resurrection came to the fore unambiguously through the martyrs of the Maccabees. As the Syrian oppressor Antiochus Epiphanes tortured a Jewish mother and her seven sons to death, they claimed that they would return victoriously in a new body at the resurrection. "After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, and said nobly, 'I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again'" (2 Macc. 7:10–11).⁸⁶

Apocalyptic literature of this period, like that of *1 Enoch* 51:1–2 (though at times it is not explicitly clear),⁸⁷ makes a bold claim

⁸³ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 85.

⁸⁴ Bock and Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus*, 203–4.

⁸⁵ Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 70–71. Interestingly the spiritual-resurrection view is not new. After a four-day symposium in Jerusalem on January 13–17, 2008, James Charlesworth, a Methodist minister, concluded, "I don't think it will undermine belief in the resurrection, only that Jesus rose as a spiritual body, not in the flesh." He added, "Christianity is a strong religion, based on faith and experience, and I don't think that any discovery by archaeologists will change that" (Tim McGirk, "Jesus 'Tomb' Controversy Reopened," <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1704299,00.html>, January 16, 2008 [accessed February 14, 2008]).

⁸⁶ See also 2 Maccabees 7:9, 14, 20–23, 28–29; 12:43–46.

⁸⁷ *1 Enoch* 1:8, 25–27, 37–71 does not make it clear, although a few verses mention a future world to come in which the righteous will dwell. This would imply physical

for bodily resurrection. “And in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, and Sheol also shall give back that which it has received, and hell shall give back that which it owes. For in those days the Elect One shall arise, and he shall choose the righteous and holy from among them.” Similar to the “Elect One,” the “Son of Man” with a righteous remnant will receive a bodily resurrection in a judgment scene described in Daniel 7:13; 12:2; and Isaiah 52–53. *First Enoch* 91:10 also says, “And the righteous shall arise from their sleep, and wisdom shall arise and be given unto them.” Other passages make the same point of the righteous attaining to a future bodily resurrection.⁸⁸

Many rabbis viewed the Hebrew Scriptures as teaching a bodily resurrection, as seen in the Talmud and the Mishnah. For example Gamaliel said, “From the Prophets: as it is written, ‘Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you that live in the dust, for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead’ (Isa. 26:19).”⁸⁹

Josephus also held the view that God will raise the dead bodily at the end of time. “God himself affords such a one, he believes that God hath made this grant to those that observe these laws, even though they be obliged readily to die for them, that they shall come into being again, and at a certain revolution of things receive a better life than they had enjoyed before.”⁹⁰

Though not as dogmatic as the rabbis, the Qumran community also believed in a bodily resurrection of the dead. “That bodies, covered with worms of the dead, might rise up from the dust to an et[ernal] council; from a perverse spirit to Your understanding (1QH_a 19:15).”⁹¹

Thus rabbis in second-temple Judaism believed that God

resurrection since the future world is analogous in form, without the sin element, to the present world.

⁸⁸ See *1 Enoch* 96:1–3; 102:4–11; 103:4; 104:1–4; 108:11–15; *Pseudo-Phocylides* 102–5; *Testament of Moses* 10:8–10; *Life of Adam and Eve* 13:3–6; 41:2; 43:2–3; *Sibylline Oracles* 4:179–92; *Testament of Levi* 18:3; *Testament of Judah* 25:4; *Testament of Zebulon* 10:1–3; *Testament of Benjamin* 10:6–9; *4 Ezra* 7:28–44 [Daniel 12:2]; *2 Baruch* 30:1–5; 42:8; 51:5; and *Psalms of Solomon* 3:11–16.

⁸⁹ *b Sanh.* 90. See also the complete quotation in *b Sanh.* 90–91; and *m Sanh.* 10:1; *m Ber.* 9:5.

⁹⁰ Josephus, *Apion* 2.218. See also idem, *The Jewish Wars* 2.163; 3.374; and idem, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.14. For excellent discussions see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 1:323–27; and idem, *The Resurrection of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 177–81.

⁹¹ See also 4Q521; 1QH_a 14:32–40.

would raise everyone bodily, as Daniel 12:2–3 clearly states.

Similarly the church fathers also believed in a bodily resurrection but with a slight variation. They taught that a future resurrection is possible because of Jesus' present bodily resurrection.⁹²

Yet the most telling New Testament passage informing Christians that Paul clearly believed Jesus rose bodily is 1 Corinthians 15:44. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." By a metaphor about seeds sprouting (vv. 36–38) and by several contrasting analogies (vv. 39–41) Paul explained that the resurrection body contains continuity though it is discontinuous from one's former earthly existence. The contrasts in the analogies do not denote two different *substances* of human existence ("immaterial spirit" versus "material flesh"). Instead they refer to two different *kinds* of material substance ("material spirit-controlled" versus "material fleshly controlled"). The resurrection body will not be of the same kind of material substance that people now possess; yet it will have some material substance. Paul was not saying that the "spiritual" resurrection body will be an "immaterial" body. Instead he was saying that the resurrection body will not be subject to weakness, sickness, and all the elements of the fallen world that control it now and can influence believers to sin. In fact Paul's use of the adjectives "natural" (ψυχικός) and "spiritual" (πνευματικός) in the Corinthian letter do not refer to objects or persons composed of immaterial or material substance.⁹³ Instead he employed the terms to emphasize what kind of *powers* control a person.⁹⁴ Either *fleshly, carnal, or human* forces control a person, or the *Holy Spirit* controls the person (1 Cor. 2:13, 15; 3:1; 14:37).⁹⁵

⁹² See *1 Clement* 24:1, 5; 26:1; 50:3–4; *2 Clement* 9:1–6; 11:7; Ignatius, *Letters of Ignatius to the Trallians* 9:2; idem, *Letters of Ignatius to the Philadelphians* 8:2; 9:2; idem, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 1:2; 2:1; 3:1–3; 12:2; Polycarp, *Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians* 2:1–2; 5:2; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14:2; 19:2; *Didache* 9:4; 16:6–8; *Letter of Barnabas* 5:6; 15:8–9; 21:1; *Shepherd of Hermes* 60:1–4 (*Similitudes* 5.7.1–4); *Diognetus* 6:6–8; and *Fragments of Papias* 3:12; 7:3; 16:1.

⁹³ Anthony C. Thiselton observes, "On rare (always non-Pauline) occasions in the New Testament, πνεῦμα may denote a ghost or spirit being (almost exclusively Mark 14:26; Luke 24:37; Acts 23:8), but such a use is generally avoided because of its association with evil spirits (Mark 9:25; cf. Mark 1:34, δαιμον)" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 1276).

⁹⁴ Quarles, "Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?"

⁹⁵ Paul used πνευματικός ten times in 1 Corinthians (2:13, 15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3; 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44, 46).

Jesus' numerous appearances, in which He was seen, ate, and was touched (Luke 24:34–43; John 20:19–25; 1 Cor. 15:5), reveal what first-century believers expected to occur at the end of the age (e.g., John 11:24; see also Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2–3). Because of what transpired in Jesus' bodily resurrection, all believers can be assured that they too will have a bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1–50).

CONCLUSION

Though the Jesus family tomb was found in Talpiot, Jerusalem, in 1980, there was clearly no attempted cover-up since media coverage and publications soon followed the discovery. The tenth ossuary was never "missing." Since Kloner documented the ossuary as plain and noninscribed, it was treated like other plain ossuaries.

Clearly the inscription name *Mariamne* (or *Mariame*) does not refer to Mary Magdalene but to another Mary of the first century.

DNA testing disproving motherly kinship between the *Jesus son of Joseph* ossuary and the *Mariamne* ossuary does not establish anything since no other DNA testing was done. Relevant possibilities concerning the DNA were not considered, which hinders the documentary's theory. *Mariamne* could be this Jesus' half-sister, cousin, or a beloved servant who was interred in the family tomb. Even more bizarre is the idea that Jesus was married, since no evidence exists to validate such a claim.

The statistical analysis is only as good as the assumptions behind the formulas used to create it. That is, if one piece of the formula fails, it all fails. According to the *JFT* and *LJT* proponents, *Mariamne* was Mary Magdalene, *Jesus son of Joseph* is Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus was married and fathered a son named Judah, and Jose was Jesus' brother. But various facts have shown the improbability of these hypotheses.

Judaism and the early Christian church exhibited the common expectation of a future bodily resurrection. Hence the Gospel accounts that mention Jesus' resurrection should not be understood as speaking of a spiritual resurrection, especially when the Gospels record that Jesus ate and was touched by individuals. Interpreting Jesus' resurrection as spiritual misreads the very point Paul made in 1 Corinthians 15:44. When *The Jesus Family Tomb* theory is exposed to careful scrutiny, one can readily see that the real conspiracy lies with those who want to manipulate the evidence to try to prove that Jesus Christ did not rise physically from the dead. Such efforts obviously fail miserably. The words the women heard at the empty tomb are still true: "He has risen from the dead" (Matt. 28:7)!