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## *The Lost Tomb Of Jesus A Compelling Comparison*

Simcha Jacobovici repeatedly states that information presented in the “Lost Tomb Of Jesus” is compelling. A compelling argument is one which leads us to an inescapable conclusion. Are the arguments “compelling” and the conclusions inescapable? Following the broadcast on March 4th, Ted Koppel moderated a discussion of religious and nonreligious scholars. Here is some of the dialog that I thought was interesting. The excerpts are taken from the first panel discussion which included archaeologists and historians. I present these to show the reactions that were encountered which highlights apparent flaws in the presentation. (**Jacobovici**): I think the evidence is compelling. That it is because the alternative, as we said at the end of the film, is that at the same time as the time of Jesus there was another Jesus, and that’s possible, who also had a father named Joseph. That’s also possible. Who also had two significant women in his life, one called Maria, one called Mariamne, and another significant male. Significant enough to be buried next to him with the nickname Jose. Same cluster of names, and he wasn’t Jesus ... and that’s possible. My job was to be skeptical ...” (**William Deever, University of Arizona, retired, 40 years experience with digs in the Middle East**): Speaking of the film overall: “Certainly it’s of some interest and I think I’m open minded. I’m certainly not trying to defend the Christian tradition. I’m not a believer ... I’m trying to be a good scholar and an honest historian and stick with the facts and not go beyond them. One of the problems that I have as an archaeologist with the whole project is it puts archaeology in a rather bad light. It perpetuates the notion that among many nonspecialists and the public, that archaeology’s a kind of game. A romantic, mysterious treasure hunt, in which amateurs can make great discoveries. For me this represents the worst kind of Biblical archaeology, even if it is antibiblical because it seems to me the conclusions are already drawn in the beginning. And that’s my real problem. I think the argument goes far beyond any reasonable interpretation. Is it possible? Of course it’s possible. I don’t think it’s very likely.” (**Jonathan Reed, Prof Religion and coauthor of the book *Excavating Jesus; Beneath The Stones Behind The Text***) When asked if he was impressed with the science in the film: “The thing that I really oppose is the approach to it. That is to say, someone is trying to make a chain and takes a series of links. We’ve nailed this one, now let’s move on the next one. We move on to the next one and at the end they’ve created a chain. There are so many if’s in that chain. What you need are scientists, archaeologists, Biblical scholars step back and dialog and peer review, evaluate how much weight can that chain bear. And at the end of the day when we do that, overwhelmingly, archaeologists, scientists will weigh in and say this can’t be supported. Can we prove this is not true? No, we probably can’t but it’s very unlikely.” (**Ted Koppel, moderator speaking of the DNA analysis**): “In a sense what you’ve tried to do here is prove a nega-

tive but you have drawn an inference from that negative and said, because we cannot show that they are in any way related therefore we can conclude that they were married.” Koppel had asked at the outset of the reaction statement why DNA samples were not taken from all of the ossuaries that were in the tomb and tested. Jacobovici responded that they hoped that this would happen now. The interesting thing is that based on such limited testing, the reason for the scientific argument against his conclusions, he does not have enough evidence to make the assertions that he has. There were also notations that the statements by external experts were taken out of context. One of those was from the mathematician who performed the analysis on the name assumed to be that of Mary Magdalene, who was quoted as replying, “I must work from the interpretations given to me and the strength of the calculations are based on those assumptions. If for some reason one were to read it as just a regular form of the name Maria, in that case the calculation produced is not as impressive and the statistical significance would wash out considerably.” (**Andrey Feuerverger, University of Toronto**). The basis for this assumption lies within the gnostic texts that were used which conflicts with writings from the time of the first century. Overall observations concerning the film were also interesting. (**Ted Koppel, speaking of dramatizations in the film**): “This is drama not journalism.” (**William Deever**): “It’s a very clever film. It will be very persuasive to millions of people. It presented itself as the only proper conclusion. You rewrite history is what you do ...” (**Ted Koppel**): “Visual imagery carries a certain power that even the spoken or written word does not. You put into this documentary recreations, recreations in which you show Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Recreations in which you even show the son of Jesus. You don’t say we know for sure that it happened but by depicting it that way you lend a power to the theory that it wouldn’t otherwise have.” (**William Deever**): “Archaeology doesn’t have anything to do with faith. In the end people will believe what they are inclined to believe.” The film weaves a very well crafted tapestry of speculation and apparent factual conclusions drawn from extremely limited evidence. In the comparison of the above statements, it is notable that even those who do not believe in the Bible found the procedure for arriving at these conclusions to be flawed. Jacobovici has done a remarkable job at presenting a biased view of events that external history from reliable sources do not agree with. The end result is that there will be those who will not think about the presentation critically enough and will be drawn toward a rejection of the scriptural account of Christ and his life.”

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