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JAMES CAMERON
Divisive flick's producer.

By DAN KADISON
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"Titanic" director James Cameron yesterday came to Midtown to display an ancient stone box he claims may once have held the bones of Jesus.

The claim — if true — could rock a major corner of Christianity: that Jesus Christ was physically resurrected and then buried in the tomb.

Also suggested that Jesus and Mary Magdalene might have had a son — because another bone, inscribed with the name "Jesus," was buried in the tomb.

The researchers claim that in 1980, a construction crew developing an apartment complex in the Tzippori section of Jerusalem uncovered a tomb, which they found to be a first-century AD burial chamber.

CHRIST'S 'BONES' UPROAR HITS N.Y.



Getty Images; Discovery Channel

Filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici (clockwise from above), a 16th-century Christ portrait, the cave where ossuaries were found, and an ossuary thought to have contained the remains of Mary Magdalene.

to first wrap a body and put it in a museum until it decomposed down to the dust, then put it in a bone box. The ancient inscription on one box reads "Martha of Mary." Another filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici, who directed the documentary, said that in early Christian texts, Magdalene is the name of Mary Magdalene.

Bones that were found in the two small ossuaries in 1980 were reburied in keeping with standard procedure with archeological finds in Israel.

The team did DNA tests on "bits of matter" in the "Jesus Son of Joseph" and "Martha of Mary" ossuaries and determined the two were not siblings — and so could have been a couple.

But Dr. Frank Cannolly-Wentert, professor of biblical theology at St. John's University in Queens, said, "We don't know the remains in the box are those of the person whose name is on the box. Sometimes they reek of those bones."

"The names that are on these bones are in very common use in the first century," he said. "Jesus wasn't the only one to have this name. It doesn't prove anything."

If Jesus bones were, in fact, in an ossuary, it could create a theological first for Christians, who believe in the resurrection.

James Tabor, a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina, said at the press conference that

although liberal interpreters of the Bible say Jesus' physical body rose from the dead, "one might affirm resurrection in a more spiritual way, in which the hulk of the body is left behind."

But Cannolly-Wentert said that "they know full well that this is a hot spot with Christians to challenge the resurrection of Jesus. Christian faith maintains that Jesus was resurrected — and it wasn't just in people's hopes or dreams or in their imaginations... It was a real physical body."

If there was even a trace amount of human material in the ossuary to be used in a DNA test, then that would imply the was not totally raised from

the dead and that would run counter to mainstream Christian teaching that Jesus was physically raised from the dead," Cannolly-Wentert said.

"He was totally raised by God — there wasn't anything left behind," he said.

Most Christians believe that Jesus' body spent three days at the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem's Old City — not near the site of the tomb. But Jacobovici said the flick doesn't dispel the resurrection.

"Some believers are going to say, 'Well, this challenges the resurrection,'" he said on the "Today Show."

"I don't know why if Jesus rose from one tomb, He couldn't have

risen from the other tomb."

Some theologians think the new claim are a series of "unsubstantiated theories" and is unbecomingly as a Hollywood script.

"I looks extraordinarily fanciful," said Cannolly-Wentert. "It's so speculative that if somebody was giving you a million to one, you wouldn't put a dollar on it."

"This is sensationalism," said Cannolly-Wentert. "This is picking up on the Davinci Code" and innuendo about Jesus' supposed secret sex life, and it's playing this up, so people will watch it and it will sell."

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