

The Chosen People



Volume XIII, Issue 4 May 2007

He Is
Not
Here.
He Is
Risen!

A Response to Jesus and the Talpiot Tomb
by New Testament scholar Dr. Darrell Bock

Cover photo by Kelly Coleman ©2006.

**INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE:**

God's Handiwork in a Doubtful Age • The "Jesus Family" Tomb •
Jewish Burial Customs at the Time of Jesus • Jesus and the Talpiot Tomb

Dear friend of the Jewish people,

Shalom from New York City.

I am sure you will join me in wishing Israel a happy 59th birthday! What a remarkable achievement. Against all odds, tiny Israel has been able to survive the relentless onslaught of wars, terrorism, internal strife, and the denouncement by world leaders that would have broken the back of any other nation. The story of Israel's continued existence is a testimony to the power of God and the truth of His promises.

There is no doubt in my mind that the continued existence of the nation of Israel is one of the great cosmic pieces of evidence that God is real and His Word is eternally true. Do you agree? We all come to faith in different ways, but over the years I have met many Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus who have followed the miraculous path of Israel's national existence to the foot of the Cross.

Have you ever noticed how arguments attempting to debunk the existence of God, the truth of Scripture and the Messiahship of Jesus get more attention than arguments in favor? This is especially true today. In this issue of *The Chosen People* newsletter we will show how recent claims about a tomb found in Israel are being used to try and do this very thing. But, dear friend, it is hard to argue with the objective witness of Israel's existence. I would take to heart the evidence of a living nation over a tomb of bones.

Whose Bones Are They?

The recent discussion in most major news magazines regarding the



Kelly Coleman ©2006



Louise Derr ©2007

Israel: God's Handiwork *in a Doubtful Age*



ossuary that supposedly contains the bones of Jesus, Mary and His brothers is simply one more argument against the truth of the Gospel message. After all, if His bones are on earth, then how could Jesus have risen from the dead and ascended to heaven as is clearly stated in the New Testament?

We also heard from the army of not-so-silent Gospel detractors who believed that *The DaVinci Code* is true and that the *Gospel of Judas* as well as other hidden gospels filled us in on the "real" truth about Jesus!

I know you will enjoy the articles in this issue, as we respond to some of the theories that allegedly claim to disprove the Gospel message and the

integrity of the New Testament. Dr. Darrell Bock, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, Chosen People Ministries Board member and author of *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, will respond for us. I know you will enjoy his article.

Israel – Sure Evidence for the Existence of God

The arguments of those who love darkness rather than light will continue until Jesus returns. Today it is a discovery of bones and names on an ossuary and tomorrow it will be something else. Is there any type of objective evidence for the truth of the Bible and of Jesus being the promised Messiah of Israel? I believe

there is, and the evidence is the existence of modern Israel. God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and that he would be given a land.

If you look on an ancient map, you will see that modern Israel only exists on a portion of the Promised Land. I do believe the day is coming when the entirety of God's promise will be fulfilled and the Promised Land in all of its glorious boundaries will be given to the Jewish people. In that day—the day when Jewish people embrace the Messiah Jesus—the peace of God promised in the Scriptures will fill the land. Jews and Gentiles will worship together around the throne of God—in Jerusalem!

We are not yet at this prophetic point in time. But the fact that Israel is now in Jewish hands and the Chosen People control Jerusalem is further evidence of the truth that God will one day fully implement His plan and promises.

In light of Jewish history and of our international wanderings, don't you think it is simply amazing that the Jewish people are back in the Land of Israel? How can the truth of God's Word be denied when we take the time to compare what happened in 1948 with the multitude of Old Testament passages that outline these promises to Israel regarding the Land?

The evidence of God's existence and the truth of His Holy Word are made powerfully evident through the existence of modern Israel. I am not suggesting that this is the end of the story. It is not—there is more to come. But faith is built upon the past and we know that the same God who

restored Israel today is the One who will bring all of His promises to pass.

Israel's Glorious Future

What will the glorious future of the nation of Israel look like? Let me try briefly to describe some of what the Bible tells us will happen in that future day of prophetic fulfillment. There are so many relevant passages in the Bible; allow me to focus on some from the latter portion of the book of Isaiah.

Israel will be characterized by national righteousness through faith in the promised Messiah Jesus.

— Isaiah 62:1, 11



Israel will be the light to the nations that God intended her to be.

— Isaiah 62:2

Israel will dwell permanently in the Promised Land and be at peace with her neighbors.

— Isaiah 62:4-9

The Jewish people will be a nation gathered and not a people scattered.

— Isaiah 66:20

These are just a few of the wonderful promises in God's Word that will one day be completely fulfilled. The partial fulfillment of many of these promises, such as Isaiah 66:20, is already evident to us in the modern State of Israel. Some believers do not believe that the Jewish people should control the "title deed" to the Land of Israel—especially without faith in Jesus. I disagree! The Abrahamic promises assure the Jewish people of their right to the Land. But clearly, peaceful possession of the promises of God will only take place when the Jewish people turn to the Lord. We pray for that day.

Until then, we will look at modern Israel and marvel at the way God keeps His Word. We will continue to live in hope and expectation that the remainder of His promises will come to pass. Israel has a glorious future because we have a glorious God who keeps His Word.

And you too have a glorious future—because the same God who is faithful in His promises to the Jewish people will be faithful to you! Thank you for your prayers and support as we continue to reach Jewish people with the rest of the story—that Jesus is the Messiah. He has come, and salvation is available today by placing our trust in Him. Once we do this, we can leave the rest of the promises in His mighty hands. He will never let us down.

So, don't let every new archaeological discovery shake your faith. Enjoy Dr. Bock's response and the rest of this issue!

Your brother,

Mitch
Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President



AP Photo/Kathy Willens

The “Jesus Family” Tomb

Can We Separate Jerusalem from Hollywood?

The release in early March of the television special about the “family tomb” of Jesus at Talpiot, a site in Jerusalem, has created quite a sensation. But in reality, it’s an old story now being recycled in an effort to make far more of it than the evidence really justifies.

First, there is a suggestion that this is a family tomb of Jesus. But the problem here is that when Jesus was in Jerusalem, it was as a pilgrim—not as a Jerusalem resident. In the aftermath of His death, how did His family have the time to buy the tomb space, steal the body and continue to preach that Jesus was raised bodily, not merely spiritually? This point is important, because the earliest Christianity came out of a Judaism that believed in a physical resurrection (2 Maccabees 7); a claim about only needing a spiritual resurrection does not fit with historical Christianity.

Second, we have to believe that this family tomb included some who were not in the family—such as Matthew. There is no record of a Matthew being a part of the family of Jesus. Explanations that place him there because he wrote a Gospel are mere speculation. Also, if Matthew can be there as a non-relative and a significant disciple, then couldn’t the same be true of Mary?

Third, we would have to accept that the mourning family scrambled to steal the body from Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb (where several knew the body was originally placed). This would mean they preached an empty tomb and resurrection when they actually knew that Jesus was not raised, doing so at the risk of their own lives as Jesus’ half-brother’s death (James) in 62 AD shows. Furthermore, they had to have already prepared an ossuary over a year’s period (see accompanying article). This is quite unlikely.

Fourth, there is great fuss about the name Mariamne. But this name, a variation of Mary, is one of the

by
Dr. Darrell Bock
New Testament Scholar



most common of names of the time. In fact, 21% of Jewish women were called Mariamne. The chances of the Mariamne among the ossuaries being Mary Magdalene of the New Testament are slender—and there is no evidence anywhere that she was married to Jesus.

Fifth, there is the DNA showing that the Mariamne and Jesus DNA residues do not match. This evidence does not prove she is a wife. At most, it would only prove that Jesus and this Mary are not biologically related.

Lastly, the attempt to link the *Acts of Philip* and the *Gospel of Mary Magdalene* to show that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene is not evidence. This idea was already vetted in the *Da Vinci Code* discussion. (See my book *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*.) In other words, we have no way of knowing if Mary/Mariamne is Mary Magdalene, a very key point that has to be true for this claim to work. Without that, there is not even a possibility of a connection. In fact, the Harvard professor who sees Mary Magdalene in the *Acts of Philip* says this tomb theory is nonsense.

Fact or Fiction— You Be the Judge!

There are just too many questions and holes for all of those claims to line up and work. Movies are about stories that look real but are not. This TV special is compelling and dramatic perhaps—but in the end, it is complete historical fiction. Hopefully, our times have not slid to the point where we can no longer tell the difference between Jerusalem and Hollywood.

What can we make of the claims about the “Jesus family” tomb at Talpiot? The first place to start is with reliable scholarship. Last May, months before the Discovery Channel aired its special, Chosen People Ministries in Toronto was privileged to host an outreach featuring Dr. Craig Evans of Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia.

Professor Evans is a renowned Biblical scholar with a specialty in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship and first-century archeology. One of his lectures dealt specifically with the question of ossuaries—the very thing upon which the theory of the Talpiot tomb TV special hinges. Dr. Evans’ valuable scholarship sheds welcome light of clarity and provides us with information to help us separate fact from fiction.*

What is an Ossuary?

Throughout the world, burial customs often follow a prescribed set of rites designed to pay respect to the dead and to aid the grieving survivors. This was certainly true in Israel during the time of Jesus. As Dr. Evans explains, according to the Scripture, the Talmud and ancient history, the following picture emerges.

Jewish funerals were public affairs and were not hidden from view; the community grieved along with the immediate family. The affluent had expensive tombs,

while those with less means used caves or cut trenches. Burial was required within 24 hours of death. If the deceased died at home or in the vicinity, the body would be washed, perfumed, wrapped and placed in the family tomb or in the graveyard outside of the village.

The first intense period of mourning would go on for seven days—a Jewish practice continued to this day that is called “sitting *shiva*” (seven). Observant families stay home for seven days to grieve and receive condolence calls.

At the time of Jesus, a body that was placed, let us say, in a tomb carved from limestone, would decompose rapidly, leaving only the bones. After a year, the bones would be gathered and placed in an ossuary—a depository for the bones of the deceased that was roughly the size of a living person. Many such ossuaries, including those at Talpiot, have been discovered in and around Jerusalem.

The question then becomes, as Dr. Bock points out in his article, could the remains of Jesus rest for the twelve months required for the bones to be finally moved to an ossuary while His disciples preached a resurrection certified by an empty tomb?

* The DVD of Dr. Evans’ lecture is available through the Chosen People Ministries Canadian headquarters. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, call 1-888-4-HALLEL.

Jesus and the Talpiot Tomb

Who, then, is the Jesus of the Talpiot ossuary? Actually there is more than one “Jesus” found at the Talpiot site! One intriguing hypothesis that Dr. Evans advances is that the name of Jesus inscribed on these ossuaries may not have indicated the name of the person inside at all. Dr. Evans posits that these ossuaries may actually have been those of some of the early Jewish believers who proclaimed their faith in the risen Messiah by having His name carved upon their final resting place.

Despite false conclusions by sloppy scholars, Dr. Evans asserts that Jewish burial traditions are important and should be studied, for they shed light on Jesus’ teachings as well as on the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah.

Ancient tomb in Israel

Jewish Burial Customs at the Time of Jesus

See the THROUGH JEWISH EYES Bible

by Daniel Goldberg, Th.D., D.D.



Zion (Jerusalem): The Holy City of David

Zion is the name that often designates the land of Israel and more specifically, Jerusalem, its capital—the holiest city in Israel since the 10th century B.C. Most likely, the Hebrew name “Yerushalayim” (Jerusalem) is a contraction of “Yerusha” (heritage) and “Salem” or “shalom” (peace). Historically, Jerusalem has signified the City of Peace. Its earliest Biblical reference is when Abraham came to “Salem” after rescuing his nephew Lot (Genesis 14:18).

JERUSALEM'S EARLY HISTORY

According to the Jewish sages, Jerusalem was founded by Shem and Eber, ancestors of Abraham. Archaeological discoveries indicate the existence of a Canaanite settlement on the site in the early Bronze Age (3000-2000 B.C.). The

city came under Egyptian control from about 1600-1300 B.C. and was governed by Canaanite rulers who paid tribute to the Pharaohs.

The Canaanites dwelling in the territory of Jerusalem and its environs were called Jebusites (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 11:3). The Canaanite people had dwelt in the hill areas since the time of Moses (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 11:3), particularly in the Jerusalem territory (Joshua 15:8; 18:16).

DAVID'S CONQUEST (2 Samuel 5:6-8)

Jerusalem was an attractive location for David's capital city because of its elevated geographical position. It was easy to defend because it was 2500 feet above sea level and was also a very comfortable place to live.

The Jebusites who controlled the city were descendants of a son of Canaan

(Genesis 10:16; 1 Chronicles 1:14). Having successfully controlled their city since the days of Joshua, the Jebusites were confident about their ability to defend it. Their challenge to David was this: “... You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you...” (2 Samuel 5:6). In their haughty self-security, the Jebusites boasted that they did not even need to employ healthy and powerful warriors to resist the attack made by David.

Chronicles clarifies that Joab actually took the city and defeated the Jebusites (1 Chronicles 11:6), who had controlled the city for nearly 400 years. No doubt, his men secretly entered the city by means of the water conduit.

JERUSALEM'S SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Jerusalem became both the political and religious center of Israel after David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the city. However, David's request to build a house (temple) for the Ark was denied by God. Instead, the Lord promised him that his son Solomon would build a greater house that would be established forever (1 Chronicles 22:8-10; 28:2-6).

God's intention for Jerusalem to be Israel's unique dwelling place is very clear: “... I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously” (1 Chronicles 17:9).

The Lord instituted an important covenant with David that involved tremendous Messianic implications (2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14). We will discuss this covenant in our next issue.

May God help us faithfully to “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem...” (Psalm 122:6)—and, as Isaiah reminds us, “... give Him no rest till He . . . makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isaiah 62:7). ✧



ISRAELI YOUTH HEAR ABOUT THE LORD

In Israel, one of our committed missionaries received a call from his daughter's classmate that a group of 50 young people in a pre-military program from Northern

Israel were coming to Jerusalem and one of the things they wanted to learn about was Messianic Judaism! They arranged for an Israeli believer to speak to the group and the audience just exploded with questions! It was an evening of personal testimonies and thoughtful discussion—with no antagonism at all! Their interest was overwhelming. The meeting lasted even longer than planned and, by the end of the night, about 30 Bibles were eagerly received as gifts! God is doing great things in our Land!



WHAT DO THE RABBIS SAY?

Staff member Doug P. is a handy man to have in New York City—particularly because he specializes in the rabbinic commentary known as the Talmud. This, combined with his fluent Hebrew language skills, gives him numerous opportunities to reach

out to the ultra-Orthodox Jewish population. He recently encountered two Orthodox Jewish men at his doctor's office who noticed him reading in Hebrew. "Do you keep all the laws?" they asked curiously. This led to a lively discussion about Messiah's ministry and when they parted, Doug was able to give them his card with the web site of the book he has just written, *What the Rabbonim (Rabbis) Say About Moshiach (Messiah)*.

WHEN WE ARE WEAK, HE IS STRONG

Anyone who has ever driven long hours knows how hard it is to keep going sometimes. When Vice-President of Church Ministries Rich Freeman found he was scheduled to speak at two "Messiah in the Passover" services in Tennessee and that he was facing a twelve-hour drive to get there because all planes were grounded, he called his son Brian, and together they made the twelve-hour drive from Florida! After a three-hour nap, the day began,



and, following the morning presentation, Rich asked if there was anyone who wanted to receive what Jesus the Messiah, the Passover Lamb, had done for them. As he finished praying, he noticed that a woman was raising her hand to receive the Lord! She later said that the "Messiah in the Passover" presentation had made everything clear. Was the drive worth it? Just ask Rich and Brian!

FAITHFUL WITNESS LEADS DYING WOMAN TO NEW LIFE

Phil Plotnek and his co-worker Rita Ivenskis in Australia have been continuing their Bible studies that minister to Russian Jewish seekers, and this network has provided precious opportunities for additional outreach. At one of these meetings they were told of a Russian Jewish lady with only a short time to live. They made contact and the dying woman asked them to come and see her. When they arrived, the woman requested to speak in English as her husband only spoke Russian and would not have approved of their views. After they shared the Gospel with her, she prayed with them to receive the Lord. They also prayed for her healing. Please pray for "Z" as she faces her illness and pray for the Lord to soften her husband's heart to Messiah.



POSITION AVAILABLE IN NEW YORK CITY

Full-Time Personal Executive Assistant to the president of Chosen People Ministries, Dr. Mitch Glaser. Must be well-organized, have excellent personal skills and writing abilities, and have good references and a strong recommendation from a pastor or congregation elder. Position is now available in New York City. Salary is commensurate with experience. Preference will be given to those viewing this job as a career position. Enjoying bagels, Jewish humor and the everyday camaraderie of fellow believers is a plus! Please send résumé and all inquiries to Julia Sedaca (jsedaca@chosenpeople.com) 212-223-2252.

Messianic Summer School
June 11 - July 25, 2007

Courses leading to Master of Divinity in Messianic Jewish Studies

Jewish Studies Centered on the Messiah

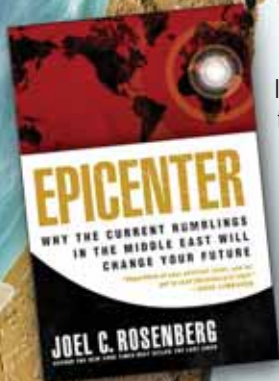


Contact us now for information on programs offered in 2007.

1-888-2-YESHUA ✪ info@feinbergcenter.com

www.feinbergcenter.com

God's View of Israel in the News



In his latest book, Joel Rosenberg shows why the current rumblings in the Middle East will affect your future. The eyes of the world are on the epicenter...Iran's president vows to wipe Israel "off the map" and says the end of the world is just two or three years away. A leading U.S. presidential candidate says that if Iran goes nuclear, "we could have Armageddon." Russia signs a billion-dollar arms deal with Iran and helps Iran build nuclear facilities. The President of the United States refuses to rule out preemptive nuclear strikes to stop Iran. What does the future hold? How will it affect your world? The politics of the Middle East can be murky and confusing. But one thing is increasingly certain: the eyes of the nations are riveted upon Israel and her neighbors, the epicenter of the momentous events shaking our world and shaping our future.

Epicenter [3113] . . . \$21.95^{US}

Order online at www.chosenpeople.com,
or for phone orders in the U.S. call 1-800-333-4936.

Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.

Summer Training & Evangelism Program

STEP is an exciting week of in-depth training, engaging evangelism and Jewish cultural excursions.

Jewish Evangelism

- Minister among Russian Jewish immigrants.
- Be a part of our Brooklyn and Upper West Side congregation plants.
- Meet Jewish young people and students.
- Prayer-walk through Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods.

Training Seminars

- Share the Gospel with your Jewish friends.
- Understand the Jewish roots of your faith.
- Witness through a better understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jewish Cultural Experiences

- Take a walking tour through the Lower East Side.
- Taste good Jewish deli food at Katz's.
- Worship at a Messianic Congregation.



STEP in
New York City
June 16-23, 2007



Want more information?

Contact our short-term

missions team

1-888-2-YESHUA

(1-888-293-7482)

opportunities@

chosenpeople.com

As the nation of Israel struggles to regain control of the land...as Arabs fight and riot against her...how can we know that Israel's future will indeed be glorious? By exploring the ancient prophecies, Harold Sevenson reveals the faithfulness of God to the everlasting covenants.



Israel's Glorious Future [3038] . . . \$10.95^{US}

See more Messianic Jewish resources at
www.chosenpeople.com.



The Chosen People Newsletter

Chosen People Ministries has been taking the love of the Messiah to Jewish people worldwide since 1894.

Chosen People Ministries U.S. Board of Directors: Mr. John Holbrook, Jr., Chairman • Mr. Roy Adams • Dr. Darrell Bock • Mr. Jeffrey Branman • Ms. Cindy Forbes • Dr. Mitch Glaser • Dr. Gregory Hagg • Mr. Eugene Johnson • Mr. Tom McHugh • Dr. John L. Pretlove • Mr. David Schiller • Mr. Gary W. Smith • Dunewood Truglia, Esq. • Mr. David C. Weland

Serving in: Argentina • Australia • Canada • France • Germany • Israel • Mexico • Russia • Ukraine • United Kingdom • United States

The Chosen People newsletter is published monthly by Chosen People Ministries. For more information or to receive The Chosen People newsletter, write to: Chosen People Ministries, International Headquarters, 241 East 51st Street, New York, NY 10022. In Canada, write to: Box 897 Station B, North York, ON, M2K 2R1. In Great Britain, write to: P.O. Box 47871, Golders Green, London, NW11 1AL (www.chosenpeople.org.uk). In Australia, write to: Celebrate Messiah Australia, P.O. Box 304, Caulfield, South Vic 3162, Australia (www.celebratemesiah.com.au). Editors: Zhava Glaser, Andrew Sparks; Staff Writer: Alan Shore; Design: Lois Gable.



N0705

Visit us on the Web at www.chosenpeople.com

Our Spanish website is www.pueblolegido.com. ©2007 Chosen People Ministries.

Please remember
Chosen People
Ministries in your
will. "I will bless
those who bless
you." (Genesis 12:3)



A higher standard.
A higher purpose.

Printed in the USA.