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## Southwestern professors make no bones about Christ's resurrection

by *Benjamin Hawkins*

FORT WORTH, Texas (SWBTS) – Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professors Steven Ortiz and William Dembski make no bones about the reality of Christ's resurrection. Both contributed essays to the recently published *Buried Hope or Risen Savior: The Search for the Jesus Tomb*, a response to the supposed discovery of Jesus' bones last spring.

A year in the making, B&H Academic's *Buried Hope or Risen Savior*, edited by Charles L. Quarles, counters claims in *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, a documentary produced by award-winning director James Cameron and aired on the Discovery Channel last March. According to the documentary, the Talpiot tomb in southeast Jerusalem contained an ossuary—or bone box—holding the remains of Jesus of Nazareth. In the tomb was an ossuary with the inscription "Jesus, son of Joseph," alongside ossuaries with the names of other New Testament characters, such as "Mary," "Mary the Master," "Jose" (Joseph) and "Matthew."

Although the tomb was actually excavated by professional archaeologists in 1980, the makers of *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* suggested that the experts did not consider the significance of these remains residing together in a family tomb. They proposed that the tomb actually held the remains of Jesus of Nazareth, with his supposed wife Mary Magdalene and son Judah. According to the film, this group of names being found together in a tomb is a statistical "slam dunk," proving that the "Jesus son of Joseph" in the Talpiot tomb was Jesus of Nazareth.

According to Dembski, research professor of philosophy at Southwestern Seminary, the statistics actually point to the opposite conclusion. "The Jesus Family Tomb people miscalculated the relevant probabilities for deciding statistically whether this is or is not likely to be the tomb of the New Testament Jesus," he said in a recent interview. Dembski co-authored an essay titled "The Jesus Tomb Math" alongside Robert J. Marks II, in which they show that it is more reasonable to believe that the Talpiot tomb does not contain Jesus of Nazareth.

Examining the archaeology of *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, Ortiz, associate professor of archaeology and biblical backgrounds, concluded that it contains only a sensational, pseudo-archaeology reminiscent of the "Hollywood model of Indiana Jones." In his essay, titled "The Use and Abuse of Archaeological Interpretation and the Lost Tomb of Jesus," he notes ten attributes of this sensationalism and offers a realistic view of archaeology.

"I think the Hollywood image is that archaeologists are treasure seekers, usually after objects, and also that everything is solved within an hour. And archaeology is not like that," Ortiz said in an interview. *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* gives the appearance of a one-hour discovery, he added, but the tomb is actually well-known and has been documented and discussed by archaeologists.

As opposed to the Hollywood model of archaeology, Ortiz compared this field of study to piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. Any one dig just adds a piece to the puzzle, he said, "and it takes time to put all these pieces together to say something significant historically."

According to Ortiz, *Buried Hope or Risen Savior* not only provides a response to *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* and its claims, but also lays a foundation for understanding the resurrection, the study of names from the first century, and ancient tombs and burials from the second-temple period. Scholars Craig A. Evans, Richard Bauckham, Gary R. Habermas, Michael Licona and Darrell L. Bock also contributed to these theological and historical discussions in the book.

### About Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Southwestern Seminary celebrates its centennial in 2008. Since its founding, the seminary has trained and sent out over 40,000 graduates to serve in local churches and mission fields around the world. In 1908, B.H. Carroll established the seminary on the campus of Baylor University. It was moved to its current location on Seminary Hill in Fort Worth in 1910 and was placed under the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925. Paige Patterson

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