

Experts split on supposed Jesus tomb

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Archaeologists, biblical scholars and other experts met in Jerusalem this week to discuss a tomb that might be that of Jesus and his family.

James Charlesworth, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey, organized the conference, Time reported. Last year, the Discovery Channel aired a controversial program, "The Lost Tomb of Jesus," that was criticized for sensationalism and shoddy scholarship.

The conference ended with no firm conclusions and with experts divided on the likelihood of the tomb containing Jesus's family. Charlesworth has not made up his own mind.

"I have reservations, but I can't dismiss the possibility that this tomb was related to the Jesus clan," he said.

Israeli archaeologists excavated the tomb in the hills near Jerusalem in 1980. They found ossuaries labeled with the names Joseph, Mary, Jesus, son of Joseph, and Judah, son of Jesus. Another ossuary was labeled Mariamne, and some scholars say it might be that of Mary Magdalene, who could have been Jesus' wife.

The widow of Joseph Gat, who headed the excavation, told the conference that he thought Jesus was buried in the tomb but did not publicize his conclusion because he feared an anti-Semitic backlash.

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