

## Married Jesus? New book adds fuel to conspiracies (Update)

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Canadian-Israeli documentary film-maker and writer Simcha Jacobovici, right, and religious studies professor Barrie Wilson, the authors of "The Lost Gospel" pose for photographs after giving a press conference with a copy of an ancient manuscript at the British Library in London, Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014. A researcher who has attracted attention and criticism with revisionist Biblical theories says he has found new evidence that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that early Christians considered her a deity. Jacobovici says an ancient manuscript in the British Library relates the story of Jesus, his wife Mary Magdalene and their children. He and Wilson outline their theory in "The Lost Gospel", published Wednesday. (AP Photo/Matt Dunham)

A researcher who has attracted attention and criticism with his revisionist Biblical theories says he has found new evidence that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that early Christians considered her a deity.

Canadian-Israeli documentary-maker Simcha Jacobovici says an ancient manuscript in the British Library offers a glimpse at an early version of Christianity radically different from the faith practiced today.

"This shows that Mary Magdalene really got ripped off" in mainstream Christian theology, Jacobovici said Wednesday at the launch of "The Lost Gospel," a book co-authored with York University religious studies Professor Barrie Wilson.

But many religious scholars are skeptical about the latest addition to the crowded field of Biblical conspiracy theories.

"The Lost Gospel" is built around a new interpretation of an ancient text, "The Story of Joseph and Aseneth." Jacobovici and Wilson studied a 1,500-year-old Syriac-language version of the story in the London library.

Most religious scholars think the text explains why the Hebrew patriarch Joseph came to marry a gentile, but Wilson and Jacobovici say it is a coded tale that actually relates the story of Jesus, his wife and their children.

Jacobovici said that in the document, Mary Magdalene is "not just Mrs. Jesus. She's a co-deity, a co-Redeemer."

But Greg Carey, professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary, said the story was already well known to Bible scholars and "doesn't require any decoding."



Canadian-Israeli documentary film-maker and writer Simcha Jacobovici, left, holds a copy of an ancient manuscript as he and Canadian religious studies professor Barrie Wilson give a press conference for their book "The Lost Gospel" at the British Library in London, Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014. A researcher who has attracted attention and criticism with revisionist Biblical theories says he has found new evidence that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that early Christians considered her a deity. Jacobovici says an ancient manuscript in the British Library relates the story of Jesus, his wife Mary Magdalene and their children. He and Wilson outline their theory in "The Lost Gospel", published Wednesday. (AP Photo/Matt Dunham)

"That's not to deny that some early Christians interpreted the story allegorically," he added. But he said there was no evidence for "the idea that it's about Jesus and his wife and their two children."

Jacobovici has a record of headline-grabbing but contested claims.

He co-wrote "The Jesus Family Tomb," which was strongly criticized by scholars and archeologists for alleging that a tomb found in a Jerusalem cave contained the remains of Jesus and possible family members.

Other researchers also have claimed to have found references in ancient texts to a married Jesus. Dan Brown used such theories as the basis for blockbuster thriller "The Da Vinci Code."

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