
More Stat Talk and a Few Other Points- March 5

Submitted by bock on Mon, 2007-03-05 15:59.

It seems clear that one of the more fascinating elements of this discussion are the stats and how they were put together. See the recent comments sidebar below- Correspondence and new Stat Facts.



I also have recieved a paper from Charles Quarles of Louisianan College on this and other elements. Here are soem highlights.

On Mary Magdalene claim:

"One of the key elements of the statistical argument offered by the book is the assumption that "Mariamne also called Mara" is Mary Magdalene. The Jesus Family Tomb claims that the Acts of Philip refers to Mary Magdalene as Mariamne. Since our earliest extensive manuscript of the Acts of Philip is a 14th century text, the value of the testimony of the Acts of Philip is questionable at best. However, this theory that Mariamne is Mary Magdalene is not confirmed by the Acts of Philip at all but is actually the speculation of Francis Bovon. The Acts of Philip portrays Mariamne as the sister of Philip but never identifies her explicitly as Mary Magdalene. Mary is never identified as Mariamne in the New Testament or, for that matter, in any other known text.

Jacobovici and Pellegrino also argue that the name "Mara" is actually the title "master" or "lord" and identifies Mary Magdalene as a female apostle. This element of the argument involves an enormous amount of speculation based on questionable evidence. The researchers could not

cite one ancient text in which Mary was designated a master or lord or in which that word “mara” was used as a synonym for “apostle.” Most importantly, the researchers are likely incorrect in their assumption that the “Mara” of the inscription was a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word meaning “master.” In fact, “Mara” was the eighth most commonly used name among Palestinian Jewish females in the period 330 B.C. to 200 A.D. and the name was recognized by two specialists in ancient inscriptions including one of the members of the original archaeological teams to be a mere abbreviated form of the name “Martha.” Since Mariamne-Mara is clearly not Mary Magdalene, this name should not be included in the statistical analysis.”

On the figuring of the stats:

The most compelling argument raised by the book is that although none of the individual inscriptions is remarkable, the combination of so many names associated with Jesus is so unexpected that this must be Jesus’ family tomb. The team initially insisted that the probability of these names associated with Jesus of Nazareth all appearing in one tomb was 1 in 2.5 million (a figure later reduced to 1 in 600 due to criticism from expert statisticians). Several factors account for this calculation: a) the false assumption that Mariamne is Mary Magdalene, and b) the assumption that Jose refers to the brother of Jesus mentioned in Mark 6:3, and c) the assumption that Maria was Jesus’ mother. The probability analysis sometimes confuses the probability of finding a tomb with this particular group of names with the probability that the Jesus of Talpiot was Jesus of Nazareth.

First, as discussed above Mariamne is clearly not Mary Magdalene. Second, the possibility that this Jesus had a relative named Mary does not increase the probability that this Jesus is Jesus of Nazareth. The name Mary was the most common name for females in the period

ranging from 330 B.C. to 200 A.D. The researchers claimed that 1 out of every 4 Jewish women in Palestine during the ossuary period were named Mary (I believe the correct ratio is 1 in 4.67). Consequently, 1 out of 760 (1 out of every 1,672 families based on Bauckham's stats) Jewish men in Palestine during the period of ossuary use were named "Jesus, son of Joseph" and had a mother named Mary. However, unlike the Jesus ossuary which specifies the nature of the relationship of this Jesus to Joseph (Jesus, son of Joseph), the nature of the relationship between this Jesus and this Mary are unknown. Since this Mary could have been his mother, aunt (and he probably had several), sister (and he may have had several), sister-in-law, or close female cousin (and he probably had many), he probably had several close female relatives with the name Mary. If any Palestinian Jewish male of the period had 12 close female relatives (e.g., 1 mother, 2 aunts, 2 sisters, 2 sisters-in-law, and 5 female cousins), 3 of these close female family members were probably named Mary. Consequently, the presence of a Mary in this tomb does not increase the probability that the Jesus of the ossuary is Jesus of Nazareth at all.

Third, Jose is a shortened form of Joseph. Joseph or Jose is the second most common male Jewish name from this period. The researchers calculated that 1 out of 20 Jewish men were named Joseph or Jose (I think that 1 in 12 is more accurate). However, since this "Joseph" could have been the father (as the inscription on the Jesus ossuary implies) of the Talpiot Jesus, the Jose inscription may not affect the probability at all. Furthermore, even assuming the family tomb theory, the probability of any person having a close male relative named Jose was quite high. Let's assume that a first-century Jewish man had 1 father, 2 uncles, 2 brothers, 4 male cousins, and 2 sons. The probability was 1 in 2 that a man had a close male relative named Joseph/Jose. If the Joseph and Jose of the ossuaries are two different people, this Jose would not be Jesus' father and would probably not be his uncle (since parents were

unlikely to give two sons such similar names). Furthermore, since the Judah inscription (Judah, son of Jesus) explicitly identified the son of this Jesus, we can assume that Jose was not his son. Thus the probability was 1 in 4 that this Jesus would have a close male relative named Jose. The probability that a Jewish man in Palestine during the ossuary period would be named Jesus, son of Joseph, and have close family members named Mary and Jose is 1 in 760 (1 in 1,432 using Bauckham's name frequencies). The likelihood that the Jesus of the ossuary is Jesus of Nazareth though is made doubtful by one important consideration. If Jose were the brother of this Jesus (Mark 6:2), then one must explain why Jesus was identified as "son of Joseph" but Jose was not. Although I will allow that this Jose was the brother of this Yeshua for the sake of argument, I think that the lack of the "son of Joseph" description significantly decreases the probability that Yeshua and Jose were siblings.

Matthew ranks as the ninth most common name from the period. Furthermore, since even the research team recognized that it was improbable that this Matthew was Matthew the Apostle, they speculated that this Matthew must have been a first cousin of Jesus who is unmentioned in the New Testament. Obviously, the presence of this Matthew in the tomb contributes nothing to their case.

Since the probability of bearing the name Jesus, son of Joseph and having close relatives named Mary and Jose was 1 to 760 (1 in 1,432 using Bauckham's name frequencies) and since the male population of Jerusalem during the period of ossuary use was at least 80,000, somewhere between 56-105 male Jews in Jerusalem would have met the criteria of the Talpiot tomb. Thus even if one rejected the New Testament claim that Jesus of Nazareth's body was resurrected, the probability of this tomb containing his remains would be 1 in 56 to 1 in 105. In other words, it is 56 to 105 times more likely that this tomb housed the bones of a Jesus other than Jesus of Nazareth than that it contained the bones

of the Jesus of the Gospels. Consequently, the statistical argument does not prove at all that the Jesus of the ossuary is Jesus of Nazareth. On the contrary, it is much more likely that this Jesus is another Jesus.

The probability that the Jesus of the ossuary is someone other than Jesus of Nazareth is even greater when one considers certain features of this archaeological find that do not fit descriptions of Jesus in our most ancient sources. For example, no ancient document describes Jesus as married, romantically involved with a woman, or fathering a child. The fact that one of the ossuaries bears the inscription, "Judah, son of Jesus" makes it highly unlikely that this tomb belonged to Jesus of Nazareth. This statistical analysis also does not reflect the scholarly uncertainty over whether the most important inscription actually reads "Jesus, son of Joseph." Nor does this analysis take into account the improbability of a family that resided in Nazareth would be buried in Jerusalem! If one denies the bodily resurrection of Jesus, one would have expected the bones of Jesus to be transferred to Nazareth for interment in a family tomb there. The claim that statistical analysis proves the Jesus of the Ten Ossuaries to be the Jesus of the Gospels grossly misinterprets the archaeological and historical evidence.

Jacobovici and Pellegrino Name Frequencies

Jesus, son of Joseph Maria Jose Probability

eliminating unmatched name Mariamne $1/190 \cdot 1/4 \cdot 1/20 = 1/15,200$

accounting for other possible family relations $1/190 \cdot 1/1 \cdot 1/4 = 1/760$

Richard Bauckham Name Frequencies

$1/358 \cdot 1/1 \cdot 1/4 = 1/1,432$

Total male population of 80,000 / 760 = 105

Total male population of 80,000 / 1,432 = 56

Probability that Jesus of ossuary is Jesus of Nazareth: 1 in 105 to 1 in 56

(.9 to 1.8 %)

This probability analysis does not account for negative factors that

significantly diminish the probability that the Jesus of Talpiyot was Jesus of Nazareth. In combination, these negative factors may preclude the identification of the Jesus of Talpiot as Jesus of Nazareth"

On the Resurrection Theology (something I addressed on Koppel last night):

"Christians must not be deceived by the claim that they can embrace this find as the authentic tomb of the Jesus of the Gospels without compromising their faith. The authors claim that Jesus' resurrection body was a "spiritual body" without any real connection to his physical body. Consequently, it does not really matter if his bones were buried in Jerusalem and are now deposited in an antiquities warehouse. This claim is based on a gross misunderstanding of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul described the resurrection body as a "spiritual body" and contrasts that body with a "natural body." Some interpreters incorrectly assume that a spiritual body is a body composed of spirit, i.e. an immaterial body. However, the adjectives "natural" (psuchikos) and "spiritual" (pneumatikos) are used frequently in Paul's writings and particularly in 1 Corinthians. In other contexts it is clear that they do not refer to persons or objects as either made of matter or spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, for example, the terms refer respectively to people influenced by human drives versus people under the control of the Spirit. It is likely that Paul's use in 1 Corinthians 15:44 is related to this earlier use. Furthermore, if Paul had wished to state that the resurrected body was made or composed of spirit, he would likely have used another adjective (pneumatinos) or equated the body with spirit. In light of this evidence, Paul described the resurrection body as a "spiritual body" because it is a body completely under the control of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection body will no longer experience the war that is presently waging between flesh and Spirit described in texts like

Galatians 5:16-18. The resurrection body will be perfectly suited to the Spirit's domination and control and will joyfully comply with his will. In the words of my friend Craig Evans, the view of the resurrection body suggested by Jacobovici and Pellegrino confuses Easter with Halloween. The resurrected Jesus was not a mere ghost. His tomb was empty because the very body that had been laid in the tomb rose and walked out."

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