

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

The Jesus Dynasty
By James B. Tabor

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Have you ever wondered if modern Christianity accurately reflects the teachings of Jesus? How can we be sure of what happened 2,000 years ago when the only written record was created decades after the fact? Did you know Jesus had 4 brothers and 2 sisters? And that his whole family was involved in his movement?

The Jesus Dynasty is based on recent archaeological research combined with interpreting the New Testament of the Bible. The author argues that Paul hijacked the messiah movement started by Jesus and John the Baptizer. He presents many novel ideas that have caused me to give a lot of thought to what Christianity is all about.

Tabor's theory is that Jesus joined the movement which John the Baptizer started and only took over when John was executed. He also argues that the concept of the virgin birth, and Jesus dying and being resurrected in the flesh were not originally part of the movement. James was Jesus's brother and took over when Jesus was crucified. Upon James's death, another brother, Simon, took over. Meanwhile, Paul was out spreading his brand of Christianity to the gentiles. His theology ultimately won out.

Many Christians are vehement when it comes to taking the Bible as absolute, literal truth. I think they miss the point. All that matters to me is that I turn my will and my life over to God so that I do His will in my life to the best of my ability. Whether He came from a virgin birth, reanimated His fleshly body or any other tenets of western Christianity are true is irrelevant to my commitment to love God with all my heart and soul and mind; and love my neighbor as myself.

This book does provide a lot of food for thought. But if you are the sort of Christian who is very set in your religiosity you may not want to read what Tabor has to say.

One shortcoming of the book is Tabor's failure to comment on the miracles Jesus performed. Those powers show God incarnated on earth. The proof of His truth for me is how he came into my life guiding me, loving me, healing me. My experience speaks louder to me than arcane disputes over theology.