



The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity

James D. Tabor

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The Jesus Dynasty offers a startling new interpretation of the life of Jesus and the origins of Christianity that is grounded in careful analysis of the earliest Christian documents and recent archaeological discoveries, including the much-discussed "Jesus family tomb."

In *The Jesus Dynasty*, biblical scholar James Tabor brings us closer than ever to the historical Jesus. He explains the crucial relationship between Jesus, a royal descendant of David, and his relative John the Baptizer, a priestly descendant of Aaron and Jesus' teacher. When John was killed, several of his followers -- including Jesus' four brothers -- joined with Jesus, who continued John's mission, preaching the same apocalyptic message. After Jesus confronted the Roman authorities in Jerusalem and was crucified, his brother James succeeded him as the leader of the Jesus dynasty.

James Tabor has studied the earliest surviving documents of Christianity for more than thirty years and has participated in important archaeological excavations in Israel. His reconstruction of the life of Jesus and his followers, and of the early years of Christianity, will change our understanding of one of the most crucial moments in history.

The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity Details

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האמת היא שיש לנו ראיות רבות המראות לנו שהיה זהו אדם ממש, ולא דמות או סיפור. ראיות אלה כוללות כתובים עתיקים, ממצאים ארכאולוגיים, והיסטוריה של התקופה. כל אלה מצביעים על כך שהיה זהו אדם אמיתי, שחי ופעל בארץ ישראל בתחילת המאה הראשונה לספירה.

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The Shroud of Turin is a fake and dates to 1300 AD.

It discusses the burial box of James, the brother of Jesus.

Roman leaders wanted to wipe out anyone who was considered of the House of David. Both Jesus and Mary were of that lineage.

Mary, the woman who ended up the wife of Joseph, was pregnant before they ever got married or had relations. It was probably by a Roman soldier. She was 14 at the time.

Using a name such as 'Jesus son of Mary' in those days indicated a child born out of wedlock. Otherwise he would be known as 'Jesus son of Joseph.'

Jesus may have had four brothers and two sisters.

Joseph, already an old man when he married, probably died early on since there is no reference to him at all after the initial birth of Jesus story.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, might have married Joseph's brother. A widow marrying her husband's brother was not unusual in those days.

Jesus' family was poor.

Jewish people discussed the Torah a lot.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus baptized people.

The author believes that Jesus read certain passages of the Scriptures and applied them to himself. Along with John the Baptist and others they became involved in a Messianic Movement which believed that the Kingdom of God was due soon and the Romans would be driven out.

The execution of John the Baptist threw the group following Jesus into confusion. That was one thing they didn't expect. (Why they would not expect that is hard for me to figure out since the Romans had made an established policy of killing anyone who they might suspect were behind a movement against Rome. The Romans certainly had no problem killing people. Lots of people.)

The book discusses whether it was the Romans or the Jews who were behind the killing of Jesus.

After Jesus died, his brother James took over the movement only to be later stoned to death. Paul had a great deal to do with the form of Christianity practiced today.

There's also a whole lot of other material in this book. If you believe the traditional story of the resurrection of Jesus then you might not like this book but if you are open to other possibilities then this book is for you.

Xenophon Hendrix says

I have been looking for a book like this one for over twenty years, an account free of religious doctrine of the historical Jesus and the earliest days of Christianity. Given the relatively scant amount of evidence available, I can't say that I believe Dr. Tabor has provided a history that is definitely true and unchallengeable, but his

story makes sense, and to my layman's eyes there appears no straining to get the puzzle pieces to fit. The result is fascinating and highly recommended.

Dr. Tabor restores the historical importance of John the Baptist, James the brother of Jesus, and the rest of Jesus's family. He explains just where Paul fits into Christianity and where he got his ideas. (Paul's teaching came almost entirely from his own mystical visions.) Tabor explains what Jesus and John the Baptist were trying to accomplish and the importance of the Q document. He helps clear up the mystery of what Jesus was doing between childhood and the start of his ministry. In an epilogue, Tabor gives strong evidence that the tomb of Jesus and several members of his family has been found.

The book is well and clearly written. The author does not throw around unexplained jargon. Useful maps and a timeline are provided. The book is copiously footnoted, and references to the Bible are inline so that they can be easily looked up for the reader who wants to check them out for himself.

The author also has a website that provides additional material: <http://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/peop...>

Crystal Hunter says

Challenging, interesting, thought-provoking.

Petra says

In this book, Dr. Tabor looks at the original gospels & texts, as well as recent archaeological finds, ancient Jewish customs & beliefs and puts them all together, trying to find Jesus the man. This is an interesting look at the findings and he has some extremely interesting ideas of where the evidence is taking the story of Jesus, his times and his family.

This book was well laid out, well explained and well thought out. Dr. Tabor never says that the evidence can only be read one way; he states that more research is needed and more findings.

Some interesting ideas in this book: who is Jesus' earthly father? is a fairly recently discovered tomb the tomb of Jesus' family? What did Jesus & John have in mind when starting the movement? Who was Jesus? Why was Jesus' family (very much a part of his group) effectively written out of the gospels?

An interesting and enjoyable read.

EJ Knapp says

Having been raised a Christian, a religious concept I rejected pretty early on, I have a particular fondness for the historical Jesus. During my years in college I did a lot of reading on this subject so, when I came across *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* by James D. Tabor recently, I snatched it up.

Dr. Tabor is the chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina and is considered an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls and on Christian origins. I am familiar with some of his earlier work and found *The Jesus Dynasty* to be both an informative and enjoyable read.

By examining recent archeological finds in Israel and through the careful reading of existing and more recently discovered ancient texts, Dr. Tabor has painted a much fuller picture of the historical life of Jesus than I ever got back in my college days. A picture which has been grossly edited by later writers to fit Jesus more neatly onto his Christian throne than he ever intended to be. Indeed, it is my belief the poor guy is spinning at a rather high rate of speed inside his ossuary in whatever tomb, possibly as yet undiscovered, that ossuary might be sealed in.

As a writer, though, the thing that struck me hardest during my read of *The Jesus Dynasty* was not so much the facts and informed speculations Dr. Tabor made but rather the picture of the times in which Jesus walked the earth; the poverty and oppression of the populace, the cruelty of the Roman conquerors, the barbarism of the Jewish leaders over their own kind, all of which fomented an undercurrent of rebellion which Jesus and John the Baptizer emerged the leaders of.

This Jesus became more human to me, more real, than any religious exposure to him had ever shown me. It was a story of passion and rebellion, of deceit and danger at every turn. Jesus and John, the King and the Priest foretold of in the prophecies of the time, had nothing less in mind than the complete overthrow of the Roman yoke and the coming of the kingdom of their god.

And in the end it's a tragic story. The priest beheaded, the king, through some judicious rereading of the prophecies to account for this unexpected event, walking boldly into the lions den, fully aware of the danger awaiting him, believing that though his god demanded his suffering, he would, in the end, save him from death there-by heralding a new day when the Romans would be vanquished, the overlords scattered and the chosen people would live free and in peace.

What a disappointment he must have suffered, along with all the other horrors of the cross, when death came instead of his god.

Pete daPixie says

Tabor is chair of religious studies at the University of North Carolina. He uncovers the family of Jesus that has been hidden by time and early Christianity. Excellent interpretation that takes us closer to the truth of Jesus, his family and movement.

Kristin says

I borrowed a copy of this book out from my local library.

This book was so cool to read. I loved how the author used more sources than just the Gospels, outside sources, and explained things in a cultural perspective. This year I have tried and tried to sit down and read the Bible, even a little a day and get through the whole thing. In January I did really well. As the days progressed though, it became harder and harder for me to fit it into my schedule, and the readings seemed to get longer and longer. However, the little that I did read either brought up more questions, or some suspicion. After all, did Noah really live to 900ish years?

Getting back to the point, the author of this book made it very believable in his hypotheses, even using statistics to lend a very credible air to his argument that the probability of the "Jesus tomb" being the tomb of the one in the Bible was pretty darn convincing. The way that he explained the way Jesus probably thought culturally, was inspiring.

The only thing I didn't like was towards the end, the author seemed to be very anti-Paul. However, maybe it should be, maybe the real Jesus would have been.

Ray says

Similar to Zealot, this book questions the way we view Jesus' life and claim to divinity. Although the premise is interesting, the logic the author makes sometimes seems to be a bit thin and the author seems to make conclusions that do not necessarily follow from the evidence. Overall, a decent attempt at bringing up a novel view of the life of Jesus, but definitely could be a bit more rigorous. It is a good introduction to the topic, but would definitely require further study.

Vegantrav says

Before saying anything else, I must say that this book has absolutely nothing to do with the inane ideas that Jesus survived his crucifixion, married Mary Magdalene, moved to France, and had children whose descendants are alive even today. There is nothing in this book remotely similar to the ideas in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* or in books like *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. The implications of the title notwithstanding, *The Jesus Dynasty* is a serious work of scholarship by James Tabor, who is a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The dynasty referenced in the title refers to the leadership of Jesus's messianic movement being passed from Jesus to his brothers.

Tabor offers a unique perspective on Jesus. Whereas most of the recent historical Jesus work tends to see Jesus as some sort of social and/or religious reformer or revolutionary (Crossan, Borg) or as an apocalyptic prophet (Schweitzer, Sanders, and, to a degree, Wright), Tabor paints a portrait of Jesus as primarily a political rebel: according to Tabor (who, unlike most New Testament scholars, sees the genealogies in Matthew and Luke as being somewhat accurate), Jesus was a descendant of David, and thus a legitimate claimant to the throne of Israel, who saw himself as one of two Messiahs (Tabor argues that Jesus shared the beliefs of the Qumran community that there would be two Messiahs: a priestly Messiah, whom Jesus identified as John the Baptist, and a royal Messiah, Jesus himself) who would lead Israel in its overthrow of Roman rule and usher in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was not some spiritual notion for Jesus; rather, according to Tabor, it was an actual kingdom on earth that would be ruled by God's Messiah, Jesus, in accord with the law (Torah) of God.

While Tabor's thesis is fascinating, the evidence to support his view is lacking. He makes some rather Carl Lewis-esque leaps to his conclusions. He begins with few solid historical facts and then extrapolates about what might have or could have been the case. This is not terribly good history, but it is great historical speculation. Now, this is not to say that Tabor is wrong in his conclusions but just that he does not have sufficient evidence to prove his case.

What I liked best about this book was Tabor's strong presentation of the case for James, the brother of Jesus, being the most important figure in the early Jesus movement, at least until Paul. Clearly, from Paul's letter to the Galatians and even in Luke's account of the Jerusalem Council in Acts, James was the leader of the Jerusalem Christians, even more important than Peter.

I also found fascinating Tabor's argument that James and several other brothers of Jesus (Simon, Joseph/Joses, and Judas) were all among Jesus's twelve disciples, but other than the similarity of names of some the disciples and Jesus's brothers, there is no real evidence to support this speculation, and yet it seems

to me that this would have been quite probable.

Tabor also makes a very strong case for Paul basically inventing orthodox Christianity, which is largely a mainstream idea in contemporary New Testament scholarship. Paul never knew Jesus personally and based his theology almost exclusively on his personal visions and revelations. Paul's Christianity, which focused on the Jesus himself and Jesus's death, differed markedly from the Jewish Christianity of James, which focused on the message and mission of Jesus. The Jewish Christians, even after the death of Jesus, tried to carry on Jesus's work, which was the overthrow of the Roman Empire: they were an apocalyptic congregation preparing for the rapidly approaching end of the current age of Roman rule; they anticipated the coming of the kingdom of God when Israel would no longer be subject to foreign masters, and God's justice would rule the world. Obviously, such a temporal, political Christianity is radically different from Paul's otherworldly Christianity where Jesus, rather than being a political revolutionary, serves as an atoning sacrifice who reconciled God and humanity. With the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the eventual complete defeat of the Jewish rebels following the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 CE coupled with the amazing success of Paul's missionary efforts, Paul's Christianity became orthodox Christianity, supplanting Jewish Christianity and the mission that Jesus himself had begun. Tabor argues, and here I agree with him, that the Ebionites, a sect of Jewish Christianity condemned as heretical by the orthodox church historian Eusebius, were the true heirs of the Jesus movement.

Besides the evidentiary problems, there is one other major short-coming with this book: Tabor really does not address the resurrection. If we grant that his thesis is true, what role did the resurrection play in the Christianity of the Jewish Christians, and how did they come to believe that Jesus had been resurrected? I imagine that Tabor would argue that the belief in the resurrection (whatever the cause of this belief) came to symbolize God's justification of Jesus's life and mission, and the resurrection served as a sign that God had not, despite Jesus's devastating crucifixion and death, abandoned the Jewish people but would still intervene in history to bring about the kingdom of God.

All in all, despite not presenting strong evidence for his thesis, I found Tabor's arguments still plausible. Tabor presents a Jesus radically different from most of the reconstructions of the historical Jesus that New Testament scholars have presented over the last quarter of a century. This was a thought-provoking read and was also highly entertaining.

Izabela says

Mostly rubbish. What I expected from the book takes maybe 30-40%. The historical and geographical background is great, but the rest is sensationalism. The author admits most of it is speculation and he artfully uses the passages that suit his theory.

D.M. Kenyon says

It is difficult to find good material on the history of Jesus that is not laced with didactic case-making or atheistic case-breaking. James Tabor, however, present the what mankind knows about 1st Century Israel and the life of Jesus from a scholarly perspective based on archaeological data and not mythology.

Surprisingly, the life of Jesus actually takes on great meaning in this agnostic historical context as we learn about a young man who knowingly gave his life in an attempt to restore Judaism that had eroded under Roman Occupation. Tabor makes an incredibly strong case against many myths regarding the life of Jesus.

He present the evidence that Jesus was married and had children. We see glimpses of his mother and her ancestral line as well as her adopted father, Joseph.

The Jesus Dynasty in my mind is the beginning of a considerable scholastic effort to set the record straight about the real life of this most important historical figure. While it asks more questions than it answers, this book will serve as a marker for further research that will never be complete until outsiders are allowed in the Vatican Library.

This book depicts a hero that to my non-Christian mind is more impressive than the legend.

Faisal says

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Jo says

This non-fiction book was a great story of the historical Jesus. I discovered much about the time he lived and the people he loved, but I especially was enthralled with John the Baptist and his influence on Jesus.

Ani says

3.5 rounded up to 4

Cybercrone says

This had some interesting information about new discoveries and that was good.

However, when it comes to 'new interpretations' or any interpretations at all of ancient history, it all boils down to ifs piled on maybes, behind possibilities and probabilities and there isn't much to be done about that since the likelihood is that we will never know for sure. His suppositions are sometimes thinly based in any solid evidence but are good reading if you like books that make you wonder and say Hmmm

Martin says

A really interesting book. This author amplifies the difference between St Paul's Christianity and the Jewish version of Jesus' brother James. Although there are some unnecessary, somewhat sensationalist claims over tombs and excavated sites, it offered a new and convincing perspective for me.
